

The Concept of Mar'ah in the Qur'an and Its Relevance to the Character Education of Muslim Women

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Abstract: This study examines the concept of Mar'ah (women) in the Qur'an through the thematic interpretation approach. The research was motivated by the continuing debate regarding the position and role of women in Islam, which is often understood through partial interpretations of individual Qur'anic verses without considering their thematic unity. Employing a qualitative library research design, this study systematically collected and analyzed Qur'anic verses related to women by examining their linguistic meanings, semantic structures, contexts of revelation (asbab al-nuzul), Makkiyah-Madaniyah classifications, interrelationships among verses (munasabah), classical and contemporary Qur'anic exegesis, and relevant prophetic traditions. The findings reveal that the Qur'an employs various terms to describe women, including mar'ah, an-nisa', untha, zauj, umm, and banat, each representing distinct biological, relational, social, and spiritual dimensions. The study further demonstrates that the Qur'anic concept of women is constructed gradually, beginning with the establishment of theological and moral principles during the Makkan period and continuing with the regulation of social and family life during the Madinan period. Rather than portraying women as subordinate to men, the Qur'an presents women as independent moral agents possessing equal spiritual responsibility before Allah while simultaneously recognizing their complementary roles within family and society. The novelty of this research lies in its integrative thematic interpretation that combines linguistic, semantic, exegetical, and prophetic analyses to formulate a comprehensive conceptual framework of women in the Qur'an. The findings contribute to the development of Qur'anic studies, Islamic gender discourse, Islamic education, and contemporary Islamic thought concerning women's dignity and social participation.	Keywords: Mar'ah; Women; Qur'an; Thematic Interpretation; Gender; Islamic Studies.
Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji konsep mar'ah (perempuan) dalam Al-Qur'an melalui pendekatan tafsir maudhu'i. Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh masih berkembangnya perdebatan mengenai kedudukan dan peran perempuan dalam Islam yang sering kali didasarkan pada pembacaan parsial terhadap ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an tanpa memperhatikan kesatuan tematiknya. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian kepustakaan (library research). Data dikumpulkan melalui inventarisasi seluruh ayat yang berkaitan dengan perempuan, kemudian dianalisis berdasarkan aspek linguistik, semantik, asbab al-nuzul, klasifikasi Makkiyah-Madaniyah, munasabah antarayat, penafsiran para mufasir klasik dan kontemporer, serta hadis-hadis yang relevan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Al-Qur'an menggunakan berbagai istilah untuk menggambarkan perempuan, seperti mar'ah, an-nisa', untha, zauj, umm, dan banat, yang	Kata Kunci: Mar'ah; Perempuan; Al-Qur'an; Tafsir Tematik; Gender Islam.

masing-masing merepresentasikan dimensi biologis, relasional, sosial, dan spiritual yang berbeda. Kajian ini juga menunjukkan bahwa konsep perempuan dalam Al-Qur'an dibangun secara bertahap, dimulai dari peneguhan nilai-nilai teologis dan moral pada periode Makkiah hingga pengaturan kehidupan sosial dan keluarga pada periode Madaniyah. Al-Qur'an tidak menempatkan perempuan sebagai pihak yang subordinat, melainkan sebagai subjek moral yang memiliki tanggung jawab spiritual yang setara di hadapan Allah serta menjalankan peran yang saling melengkapi dengan laki-laki dalam kehidupan keluarga dan masyarakat. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada integrasi analisis linguistik, semantik, tafsir, dan hadis dalam membangun kerangka konseptual perempuan secara komprehensif melalui pendekatan tafsir maudhu'i. Temuan penelitian diharapkan dapat memperkaya kajian tafsir Al-Qur'an, studi gender Islam, pendidikan Islam, dan pengembangan pemikiran Islam kontemporer mengenai martabat dan peran perempuan.

A. Introduction

The Qur'an is the primary source of Islamic teachings that comprehensively regulates theological beliefs, moral values, legal principles, social relationships, and human civilization. Among the major themes discussed throughout the Qur'an is the position and role of women in society. The Qur'an portrays women not merely as biological beings but as independent moral agents who possess equal spiritual responsibility before Allah. Nevertheless, the interpretation of Qur'anic verses concerning women has frequently generated diverse scholarly perspectives influenced by social, cultural, and historical contexts (Shihab, 2012; Wadud, 1999).

In recent decades, discussions concerning women in Islam have become increasingly significant due to the rapid development of gender studies, human rights discourse, Islamic feminism, and contemporary Qur'anic interpretation. These developments have encouraged Muslim scholars to re-examine Qur'anic verses concerning women using contextual and thematic approaches rather than relying solely on literal or partial interpretations. Contemporary scholars argue that many misconceptions regarding women in Islam originate not from the Qur'an itself but from patriarchal interpretations that developed within particular historical and cultural settings (Wadud, 1999; Barlas, 2002).

The Qur'an introduces women through several different terminologies, including *mar'ah*, *an-nisā'*, *unthā*, *zauj*, *umm*, and *banāt*. Each expression possesses distinct semantic, linguistic, and contextual meanings that reflect different dimensions of womanhood. For example, *mar'ah* commonly refers to an adult woman as an individual, whereas *an-nisā'* generally denotes women collectively within broader social contexts. Likewise, *zauj* emphasizes marital partnership, *umm* represents motherhood and nurturing responsibilities, while *banāt* refers to daughters within family structures. These lexical variations indicate that the Qur'an constructs the concept of women through multiple dimensions rather than presenting a single uniform identity (Al-Ṭabarī, 2001; Ibn Kathīr, 2004; Al-Qurṭubī, 2006).

Classical Muslim exegetes have extensively discussed verses concerning women from theological, legal, ethical, and social perspectives. Al-Ṭabarī primarily emphasized linguistic and contextual interpretations based on narrations from the Companions and Ṭābi'īn. Ibn Kathīr complemented Qur'anic interpretation with authentic prophetic traditions, whereas Al-Qurṭubī elaborated the legal implications concerning marriage, inheritance, guardianship, and family relations. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī further enriched these discussions by incorporating rational and theological analyses to explain the wisdom underlying Qur'anic regulations concerning women (Al-Ṭabarī, 2001; Al-Rāzī, 2000; Ibn Kathīr, 2004; Al-Qurṭubī, 2006).

Modern Qur'anic scholarship has broadened these discussions through interdisciplinary perspectives integrating hermeneutics, sociology, education, psychology, and gender studies. Among the most influential contemporary Muslim scholars is Amina Wadud, whose hermeneutical approach argues that the Qur'an fundamentally promotes justice (*al-'adl*), equality, and human dignity. According to Wadud (1999), many interpretations that marginalize women originate from patriarchal reading traditions rather than from the ethical principles of the Qur'an itself. Similarly, Asma Barlas (2002) argues that

patriarchal interpretations frequently result from historical readings that overlook the Qur'an's theological emphasis on divine justice and equality.

Within the Indonesian context, Nasaruddin Umar (2001) explains that the Qur'an consistently recognizes the equality of men and women in terms of spiritual accountability, human dignity, and opportunities for achieving righteousness. Likewise, Quraish Shihab (2012) emphasizes that differences between men and women in the Qur'an should be understood within the framework of complementary responsibilities rather than hierarchical superiority. These interpretations provide a more balanced understanding of gender relations in Islam while maintaining fidelity to the textual and contextual meanings of the Qur'an.

Recent empirical studies further strengthen these perspectives. Hidayah and Firdausi (2021) demonstrate that thematic interpretation enables a more comprehensive understanding of Qur'anic concepts by integrating all relevant verses rather than examining them individually. Meanwhile, Rahman et al. (2023) argue that contemporary Qur'anic interpretation should incorporate interdisciplinary approaches to respond effectively to modern social challenges, including issues concerning women, family resilience, education, and psychological well-being. Such findings indicate that thematic interpretation remains highly relevant for understanding complex Qur'anic concepts within contemporary society.

Despite the increasing number of studies concerning women in the Qur'an, significant research gaps remain. Most previous studies concentrate on specific issues such as women's leadership, inheritance, veiling, marriage, or gender equality by examining only selected Qur'anic verses. Other studies focus primarily on feminist hermeneutics or Islamic family law without systematically analyzing the semantic diversity of Qur'anic terminology describing women. Consequently, the comprehensive conceptual structure of *mar'ah* has not yet been sufficiently formulated through a thematic

interpretation integrating linguistic analysis, *asbāb al-nuzūl*, *munāsabah*, classical and contemporary exegesis, and relevant prophetic traditions.

This study seeks to address these limitations by employing the thematic interpretation (*tafsir mawdu'i*) approach to examine all Qur'anic verses related to *mar'ah*. Unlike previous studies that mainly discuss legal or gender issues, this research systematically analyzes the linguistic meanings, semantic relationships, historical contexts, classical and contemporary interpretations, and prophetic traditions associated with the concept of women in the Qur'an. The novelty of this research therefore lies in constructing a comprehensive conceptual framework that explains women not only as biological beings but also as spiritual, intellectual, moral, familial, and social agents whose dignity is fundamentally rooted in divine revelation.

Accordingly, this study aims to formulate a comprehensive understanding of the concept of *mar'ah* in the Qur'an through thematic interpretation. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of Qur'anic studies, Islamic gender discourse, Islamic education, family studies, and contemporary Islamic thought while providing a more balanced and contextual understanding of women's position and role in Muslim society.

B. Method

This study employed a qualitative research approach using library research as its primary research design. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to explore and interpret the concept of *mar'ah* (women) in the Qur'an through an in-depth analysis of textual sources rather than empirical or statistical data (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Library research enabled the researcher to examine Qur'anic verses, classical and contemporary Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsir*), prophetic traditions (*ḥadīth*), scholarly books, and peer-reviewed journal articles discussing the concept of women from theological, linguistic, legal, educational, and socio-cultural perspectives.

The primary data source of this research was the Qur'an, particularly verses containing the terms *mar'ah*, *an-nisā'*, *unthā*, *zauj*, *umm*, *banāt*, and other related expressions that describe women in various contexts. These verses were identified through thematic indexing (*al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li Alfāz al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*) and digital Qur'anic databases to ensure comprehensive data collection. The selected verses were subsequently classified according to their themes, chronological order of revelation (*Makkiyyah* and *Madaniyyah*), and semantic relationships to facilitate systematic thematic interpretation.

Secondary data consisted of classical books of Qur'anic exegesis, including *Jāmi' al-Bayān* by Al-Ṭabarī (2001), *Tafsir al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm* by Ibn Kathīr (2004), *Al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'ān* by Al-Qurṭubī (2006), *Mafātiḥ al-Ghayb* by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (2000), *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān* by Sayyid Quṭb (2003), and *Tafsir Al-Mishbah* by M. Quraish Shihab (2012). In addition, the study incorporated contemporary scholarly works discussing women in Islam, Qur'anic gender studies, Islamic feminism, and thematic interpretation, including publications by Nasaruddin Umar (2001), Amina Wadud (1999), and Asma Barlas (2002), as well as recent peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2021 and 2025.

Data collection was conducted through systematic documentation. The researcher first identified all Qur'anic verses related to women using thematic indexing and digital databases. Subsequently, the verses were grouped according to semantic categories and thematic relevance. Supporting information concerning *asbāb al-nuzūl* (occasions of revelation), *munāsabah* (interrelationship among verses), *Makkiyyah*–*Madaniyyah* classifications, and relevant prophetic traditions was compiled from authoritative sources. Additional scholarly publications were reviewed to identify current academic discussions, research trends, and existing gaps concerning the Qur'anic concept of women.

This study adopted the thematic interpretation (*tafsir mawdu'i*) approach proposed by Al-Farmawī (1994) as the principal analytical framework. The analytical procedures consisted of several stages: (1) identifying all Qur'anic

verses related to women; (2) arranging the verses according to thematic relevance and chronological order where appropriate; (3) examining the linguistic and semantic meanings of key terminologies; (4) analyzing the historical contexts of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*); (5) investigating the relationships among relevant verses (*munāsabah*); (6) comparing interpretations presented by classical and contemporary Qur'anic exegetes; (7) examining supporting prophetic traditions; and (8) synthesizing the findings to formulate a comprehensive conceptual framework of *mar'ah* in the Qur'an.

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020). The analysis involved four interconnected stages: data reduction, data categorization, comparative interpretation, and synthesis. During the comparative analysis, interpretations of classical exegetes were critically compared with contemporary scholarly perspectives to identify similarities, differences, and contextual developments in understanding the concept of women. Furthermore, the findings were interpreted within broader discussions of Islamic education, gender studies, sociology, and contemporary Qur'anic scholarship to demonstrate the continuing relevance of the Qur'anic perspective on women.

To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, source triangulation was employed by comparing interpretations from multiple classical and contemporary exegetes, authentic prophetic traditions, and recent scholarly publications. This triangulation ensured that the conclusions were not based on a single interpretative perspective but reflected a comprehensive understanding supported by diverse authoritative sources. Consequently, the study provides a balanced and academically rigorous interpretation of *mar'ah* that integrates linguistic, theological, historical, legal, and socio-cultural dimensions within the broader framework of Qur'anic studies.

C. Results and Discussion

Linguistic and Semantic Analysis of *Mar'ah* in the Qur'an

The thematic analysis reveals that the Qur'an employs various lexical expressions to describe women, each carrying distinct semantic, theological, and sociological implications. Rather than utilizing a single universal term, the Qur'an deliberately introduces different terminologies such as *mar'ah*, *an-nisā'*, *unthā*, *zauj*, *umm*, and *banāt*. These lexical variations demonstrate that the Qur'anic discourse concerning women is multidimensional, portraying women not merely from biological perspectives but also from spiritual, familial, moral, and social dimensions. Consequently, understanding the concept of women in the Qur'an requires a comprehensive thematic interpretation (*tafsir mawdu'i*) that integrates linguistic analysis with contextual interpretation (Al-Ṭabarī, 2001; Al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥānī, 1992).

From a linguistic perspective, the term *mar'ah* (امرأة) generally denotes an adult woman as an individual human being. According to Ibn Fāris (1979), the lexical root of *mar'ah* emphasizes personal identity rather than merely biological characteristics. Similarly, Al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥānī (1992) explains that *mar'ah* frequently appears in contexts describing women through their individual characteristics, moral qualities, or particular life circumstances. Examples include the narratives of the wife of Pharaoh (*imra'atu Fir'awn*), the wife of Zakariyya (*imra'atu Zakariyya*), and the wife of Al-'Azīz in Surah Yūsuf. In these contexts, the Qur'an portrays women as autonomous individuals whose faith, morality, and personal decisions shape their own identities regardless of their husbands' social status.

By contrast, the term *an-nisā'* (النساء) generally refers to women collectively within broader social and legal contexts. The most prominent example appears in Surah An-Nisā', where regulations concerning marriage, inheritance, guardianship, family responsibilities, and social justice are comprehensively discussed. Classical exegetes explain that the use of *an-nisā'* emphasizes women's collective position within society rather than individual characteristics

(Al-Qurṭubī, 2006). This distinction indicates that the Qur'an differentiates between women as individual moral agents (*mar'ah*) and women as members of broader social institutions (*an-nisā'*).

Another significant expression is *zauj*, commonly translated as spouse or partner. Interestingly, the Qur'an frequently employs *zauj* instead of *mar'ah* when describing harmonious marital relationships. According to Al-Rāzī (2000), the term *zauj* highlights reciprocity, complementarity, and mutual dependence between husband and wife rather than hierarchical superiority. This lexical choice reflects one of the fundamental principles of Islamic family ethics, namely that marriage is based upon partnership (*mu'āsharah bi al-ma'rūf*) rather than domination. Contemporary scholars similarly argue that the concept of *zauj* reinforces the Qur'anic vision of family as a relationship founded upon affection (*mawaddah*), mercy (*rahmah*), and mutual responsibility (Shihab, 2012).

The Qur'an also utilizes the terms *umm* (mother) and *banāt* (daughters) to emphasize women's familial roles. However, these expressions should not be interpreted merely as biological categories. The repeated emphasis on motherhood reflects the Qur'an's recognition of women's educational, emotional, and ethical contributions to human civilization. Numerous verses associate mothers with sacrifice, compassion, patience, and moral education, indicating that motherhood represents both a biological function and a profound moral responsibility. Likewise, references to daughters challenge pre-Islamic Arab customs that devalued female children, particularly through the Qur'anic condemnation of female infanticide in Surah At-Takwīr (81:8-9). These verses demonstrate the Qur'an's commitment to restoring women's dignity from the earliest stages of human life (Ibn Kathīr, 2004; Al-Ṭabarī, 2001).

Contemporary Qur'anic scholarship has further expanded the semantic understanding of these terminologies. Wadud (1999) argues that lexical diversity in the Qur'an reflects the multidimensional identity of women rather than fixed gender roles. Similarly, Barlas (2002) maintains that the Qur'an consistently portrays women as morally responsible individuals whose

relationship with Allah is independent of male authority. Nasaruddin Umar (2001) also emphasizes that differences in Qur'anic terminology should be understood as contextual distinctions rather than indicators of superiority or inferiority between men and women. These interpretations are reinforced by Quraish Shihab (2012), who argues that the Qur'an consistently promotes justice, complementarity, and mutual respect within gender relations.

The present analysis therefore demonstrates that the semantic diversity of Qur'anic terminology concerning women constitutes an integrated conceptual framework rather than isolated linguistic variations. Each expression highlights a particular dimension of womanhood while collectively portraying women as complete human beings endowed with spiritual accountability, intellectual capacity, social responsibility, and moral dignity. This finding differs from many previous studies that focus exclusively on a single term or specific legal issue. Instead, the thematic approach adopted in this study reveals the comprehensive nature of the Qur'anic concept of women and provides the conceptual foundation for subsequent discussions concerning women's spiritual, social, educational, and ethical roles within Islamic thought.

Thematic Interpretation of Qur'anic Verses Concerning *Mar'ah*

The thematic interpretation of Qur'anic verses concerning women demonstrates that the Qur'an develops its concept of *mar'ah* progressively rather than presenting it through isolated legal injunctions. Each verse contributes to a coherent theological and ethical framework that emphasizes women's dignity, moral agency, and complementary role within human society. Consequently, understanding the Qur'anic perspective on women requires an integrative interpretation that considers linguistic meanings, historical contexts (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), thematic coherence (*munāsabah*), and the broader objectives (*maqāṣid*) of Islamic teachings (Al-Farmawī, 1994; Shihab, 2012).

One of the earliest Qur'anic foundations concerning women appears in Surah Āli 'Imrān (3:35-37), which narrates the story of Maryam. These verses

demonstrate that spiritual excellence is not determined by gender but by devotion, sincerity, and obedience to Allah. Although Maryam lived within a patriarchal society, the Qur'an presents her as an exemplary believer chosen for her faith and purity. Al-Ṭabarī (2001) explains that Maryam's election illustrates Allah's absolute authority in granting honor regardless of social conventions. Ibn Kathīr (2004) similarly argues that Maryam's story refutes assumptions that spiritual leadership and divine proximity are exclusively reserved for men. Contemporary scholars interpret these verses as evidence that the Qur'an recognizes women's autonomy in worship, education, and spiritual development (Wadud, 1999; Nasaruddin Umar, 2001).

Another important thematic foundation appears in Surah Al-Aḥzāb (33:35), which explicitly places believing men and believing women within the same moral and spiritual framework. The verse repeatedly pairs men and women in ten categories of religious excellence, including faith, obedience, honesty, patience, humility, charity, fasting, chastity, and remembrance of Allah. This rhetorical structure demonstrates that spiritual merit in Islam is measured by piety (*taqwā*) rather than biological sex. Al-Qurṭubī (2006) interprets this verse as a direct affirmation of the equal spiritual obligations and rewards granted to both men and women. Likewise, Al-Rāzī (2000) argues that the repeated pairing of masculine and feminine expressions intentionally eliminates any perception of spiritual hierarchy between genders.

The theological significance of this verse has attracted considerable attention among contemporary Muslim scholars. Wadud (1999) argues that Surah Al-Aḥzāb (33:35) constitutes one of the clearest Qur'anic affirmations of gender equality in spiritual responsibility. Similarly, Barlas (2002) maintains that this verse challenges patriarchal interpretations by emphasizing that divine judgment is based upon individual righteousness rather than gender identity. Shihab (2012) further explains that equality in this context should be understood as equality of human dignity and accountability before Allah rather than absolute uniformity in social functions.

The Qur'an also emphasizes women's educational and intellectual capacities through numerous narratives involving female figures. The story of the Queen of Sheba (*Bilqīs*) in Surah An-Naml (27:22–44) illustrates leadership characterized by consultation, rationality, and openness to truth. Rather than depicting female political leadership negatively, the Qur'an portrays Bilqīs as a wise ruler who carefully evaluates information before making strategic decisions. According to Al-Ṭabarī (2001), her willingness to accept Prophet Sulaymān's message demonstrates intellectual humility and commitment to truth. Contemporary scholars regard this narrative as evidence that the Qur'an acknowledges women's intellectual competence and leadership potential when exercised with justice and wisdom (Shihab, 2012; Nasaruddin Umar, 2001).

Another central aspect of the Qur'anic concept of *mar'ah* concerns family relationships. Surah Ar-Rūm (30:21) describes marriage as a relationship established upon *sakinah* (tranquility), *ma'waddah* (affection), and *raḥmah* (mercy). The verse does not portray marriage as a hierarchy of domination but as a partnership grounded in mutual compassion and shared responsibility. Classical exegetes consistently interpret these values as the ethical foundation of Muslim family life. Ibn Kathīr (2004) emphasizes that affection and mercy are indispensable elements sustaining marital harmony, while Al-Qurṭubī (2006) argues that family stability depends upon reciprocal rights and obligations rather than unilateral authority.

Recent scholarship has further expanded this understanding by emphasizing that the Qur'anic family model is fundamentally collaborative. Nasaruddin Umar (2001) explains that the Qur'an consistently promotes partnership rather than gender conflict within marriage. Similarly, contemporary studies on Islamic family resilience argue that harmonious family relationships emerge through mutual respect, effective communication, shared responsibility, and spiritual commitment. These findings correspond closely with the Qur'anic vision of marriage as an institution designed to promote emotional security, social stability, and moral development.

A thematic synthesis of these verses reveals a consistent Qur'anic pattern concerning women. Rather than defining women through biological characteristics alone, the Qur'an presents women as complete human beings possessing spiritual autonomy, intellectual capacity, ethical responsibility, and social participation. The diversity of female figures portrayed throughout the Qur'an—including Maryam, Bilqīs, the wife of Pharaoh, the mother of Mūsā, and other exemplary women—illustrates that women contribute to human civilization through multiple roles as believers, educators, leaders, mothers, wives, and agents of moral transformation. This comprehensive portrayal demonstrates that the Qur'an rejects simplistic or reductionist understandings of womanhood.

The present findings therefore indicate that the thematic interpretation of *mar'ah* provides a broader conceptual understanding than many previous studies that focus exclusively on legal issues such as inheritance, testimony, or marriage. By integrating theological narratives, ethical principles, linguistic analysis, and historical context, the Qur'an constructs a holistic paradigm of womanhood rooted in justice, dignity, responsibility, and piety. This thematic framework forms the basis for contemporary discussions concerning women's participation in education, leadership, family development, and community empowerment while remaining firmly grounded in the ethical worldview of the Qur'an.

Comparative Analysis of Classical and Contemporary Exegetical Perspectives on *Mar'ah*

A comparative examination of classical and contemporary Qur'anic exegesis reveals that the concept of *mar'ah* has undergone significant interpretative development while maintaining its theological foundations. Classical exegetes primarily focused on explaining the linguistic meanings of Qur'anic terminology, the historical circumstances of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), legal implications, and narrations transmitted from the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the early Muslim generations. Contemporary scholars, however, have

expanded these discussions by incorporating interdisciplinary approaches, including hermeneutics, sociology, gender studies, psychology, education, and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. Rather than representing contradictory interpretations, these developments illustrate the dynamic nature of Qur'anic exegesis in responding to changing intellectual and social contexts (Shihab, 2012; Abdullah Saeed, 2006).

One of the most significant contributions of classical exegesis lies in its preservation of the original linguistic and historical meanings of Qur'anic verses concerning women. Al-Ṭabarī (2001), for instance, consistently interpreted verses by prioritizing the Arabic language, the opinions of the Companions (*Ṣaḥābah*), and the Successors (*Tābi'īn*). His methodology sought to identify the most authentic interpretation based on transmitted evidence (*riwāyah*), thereby ensuring fidelity to the original message of revelation. Similarly, Ibn Kathīr (2004) strengthened his interpretations through authentic prophetic traditions, emphasizing that the Qur'an should be understood in light of the Sunnah. Consequently, women are consistently portrayed as morally accountable individuals whose status before Allah is determined by faith and righteous deeds rather than lineage, wealth, or gender.

Al-Qurṭubī (2006) further expanded the interpretation of women's verses by emphasizing their legal and ethical implications. His commentary demonstrates that Qur'anic regulations concerning marriage, inheritance, guardianship, and family responsibilities should be understood within the broader objectives of justice, social stability, and family welfare. Likewise, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (2000) adopted a philosophical and theological approach, arguing that apparent differences between men and women represent functional distinctions rather than indicators of superiority or inferiority. According to Al-Rāzī, Allah created diversity within humanity to facilitate cooperation, complementarity, and social harmony rather than competition or domination.

Although classical exegetes established the theological foundations for understanding women in Islam, their interpretations were inevitably influenced by the socio-cultural environments in which they lived. Many legal discussions reflected the social structures of medieval Muslim societies, where patriarchal customs often shaped family organization and public life. Contemporary scholars therefore argue that distinguishing between immutable Qur'anic principles and historically conditioned interpretations is essential for contextualizing Islamic teachings in the modern world (Saeed, 2006; Shihab, 2012).

Among contemporary scholars, Amina Wadud (1999) introduced one of the most influential hermeneutical approaches to interpreting Qur'anic verses concerning women. She argues that the Qur'an consistently upholds justice (*al-'adl*), equality, and human dignity as universal ethical principles. According to Wadud, many interpretations that subordinate women arise from patriarchal reading traditions rather than from the Qur'an itself. By employing a holistic interpretation that considers textual coherence, historical context, and overarching Qur'anic values, Wadud concludes that women and men share equal spiritual status and moral accountability before Allah. Her approach has significantly influenced contemporary Islamic gender discourse and encouraged broader methodological discussions within Qur'anic studies.

Similarly, Asma Barlas (2002) challenges patriarchal readings by emphasizing the Qur'an's uncompromising commitment to *tawhīd* (the oneness of Allah). She argues that attributing absolute authority to men over women contradicts the Qur'anic rejection of all forms of human domination. From her perspective, patriarchal interpretations frequently result from historical power structures rather than the theological message of the Qur'an itself. Consequently, Barlas advocates interpreting the Qur'an through its own ethical framework, particularly its principles of justice, compassion, and human dignity.

Within the Indonesian context, Nasaruddin Umar (2001) provides an important contribution by distinguishing between biological differences (*sex*) and socially constructed gender roles. He argues that the Qur'an consistently recognizes equal spiritual responsibility for men and women while allowing functional diversity according to social circumstances and individual capabilities. Quraish Shihab (2012) similarly emphasizes that Qur'anic verses concerning women should be interpreted contextually, taking into account linguistic nuances, historical circumstances, and the broader objectives of Islamic teachings. According to Shihab, many contemporary misunderstandings emerge when individual verses are interpreted literally without considering their thematic relationships and ethical objectives.

A comparison of these classical and contemporary perspectives demonstrates substantial continuity rather than contradiction. Classical exegetes focused primarily on preserving textual authenticity and explaining legal implications, whereas contemporary scholars seek to contextualize Qur'anic teachings within present-day realities. Both perspectives ultimately affirm the Qur'an's recognition of women's dignity, moral responsibility, and spiritual equality before Allah. Differences arise mainly in methodological emphasis rather than in the essential theological principles underlying the Qur'anic worldview.

The present study therefore proposes that these two interpretative traditions should not be viewed as mutually exclusive but rather as complementary. Classical exegesis provides the indispensable linguistic, historical, and theological foundations necessary for understanding the Qur'an accurately. Contemporary interpretation, meanwhile, expands these foundations by addressing new social realities through interdisciplinary scholarship. Integrating these approaches enables a more comprehensive understanding of *mar'ah* that remains faithful to the Qur'anic text while responding constructively to contemporary challenges concerning gender, education, family development, leadership, and social participation.

The novelty of this research lies precisely in this integrative perspective. Previous studies generally relied either on classical exegesis without engaging contemporary discourse or emphasized modern gender theories without systematically synthesizing classical Qur'anic scholarship. By combining linguistic analysis, thematic interpretation (*tafsir mawdu'i*), *asbāb al-nuzūl*, *munāsabah*, classical exegesis, contemporary hermeneutics, and recent interdisciplinary studies, this research formulates a holistic conceptual framework of *mar'ah* that reflects both the textual integrity and contextual relevance of the Qur'an. Such an approach contributes to the advancement of Qur'anic studies by demonstrating that the Qur'an presents women as complete human beings whose dignity is rooted in faith, knowledge, moral responsibility, and social contribution rather than merely biological identity.

Contemporary Implications of the Qur'anic Concept of *Mar'ah*: Educational, Social, and Theological Perspectives

The thematic interpretation presented in this study demonstrates that the Qur'anic concept of *mar'ah* extends beyond discussions of gender relations or family law. Rather, the Qur'an establishes women as integral participants in the realization of Islamic civilization through their spiritual, intellectual, educational, familial, and social contributions. This multidimensional understanding provides an important theoretical foundation for responding to contemporary debates concerning women's rights, gender justice, education, leadership, and community development within Muslim societies.

One of the most significant implications of this study concerns Islamic education. The Qur'an consistently portrays women as active recipients and transmitters of knowledge. The narratives of Maryam, the mother of Mūsā, and the Queen of Sheba illustrate that intellectual maturity, wisdom, and spiritual excellence are not determined by gender but by faith, knowledge, and righteous conduct. Consequently, educational opportunities should be equally accessible to both men and women as part of fulfilling the Qur'anic command to seek knowledge (*ṭalab al-'ilm*). Contemporary Islamic educational scholars similarly

argue that empowering women through education contributes directly to family resilience, moral development, and sustainable social progress (Nasaruddin Umar, 2001; Shihab, 2012).

The findings also have important implications for family development. Rather than constructing hierarchical relationships, the Qur'an presents marriage as a partnership founded upon *sakinah* (tranquility), *mawaddah* (affection), and *rahmah* (mercy), as emphasized in Surah Ar-Rūm (30:21). This ethical framework encourages mutual respect, consultation (*shūrā*), cooperation, and shared responsibility between husband and wife. Contemporary family studies indicate that marital relationships characterized by communication, empathy, and shared decision-making contribute significantly to family stability and psychological well-being. These findings reinforce the Qur'anic understanding that successful family life depends upon complementarity rather than domination (Al-Qurṭubī, 2006; Shihab, 2012).

From the perspective of Islamic psychology, the Qur'anic portrayal of women emphasizes emotional resilience, moral integrity, patience (*ṣabr*), gratitude (*shukr*), and reliance upon Allah (*tawakkul*). Female figures such as Maryam and the mother of Mūsā demonstrate remarkable psychological strength while confronting uncertainty and hardship. Their narratives suggest that spiritual commitment functions as a source of resilience capable of transforming fear into confidence and despair into hope. Recent discussions in Islamic psychology similarly emphasize that spiritual values enhance emotional regulation, coping strategies, and psychological well-being, particularly among individuals experiencing social and familial challenges (Rahman et al., 2023).

Another important implication concerns women's participation in public life. The Qur'anic narrative of Queen Bilqīs in Surah An-Naml (27:22-44) provides a unique model of leadership characterized by wisdom, consultation, diplomacy, and openness to truth. Rather than criticizing female leadership, the Qur'an highlights Bilqīs' intellectual capacity and willingness to embrace divine guidance. Contemporary Muslim scholars increasingly interpret this narrative

as evidence that leadership should be evaluated according to competence, justice, and integrity rather than gender alone (Wadud, 1999; Barlas, 2002). Such an interpretation contributes to ongoing discussions concerning women's participation in education, public administration, community development, and social service while remaining consistent with the ethical principles of the Qur'an.

The study further demonstrates that the Qur'anic concept of *mar'ah* contributes significantly to the discourse on human dignity (*karāmah insāniyyah*). The Qur'an repeatedly affirms that all human beings originate from the same creation, possess equal moral accountability, and are judged solely according to their faith and righteous deeds. Consequently, discrimination based upon gender contradicts the universal Qur'anic principles of justice (*al-'adl*), compassion (*al-rahmah*), and human dignity. This theological perspective encourages Muslim societies to distinguish between immutable Qur'anic values and socio-cultural practices that may not accurately reflect the ethical objectives of Islamic teachings (Barlas, 2002; Saeed, 2006).

From an academic perspective, this research contributes to the development of thematic Qur'anic interpretation (*tafsir mawdu'i*) by integrating several analytical dimensions that are often examined separately in previous studies. Earlier research generally focused on specific issues such as women's leadership, inheritance, veiling, marriage, or legal status. Other studies approached women's issues primarily through feminist hermeneutics or sociological analysis without comprehensively synthesizing the linguistic diversity of Qur'anic terminology, the contexts of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), thematic coherence (*munāsabah*), classical exegesis, contemporary interpretation, and relevant prophetic traditions. As a result, the broader conceptual framework of *mar'ah* has remained fragmented.

The principal novelty of the present study lies in constructing a holistic conceptual framework of *mar'ah* through an integrative thematic approach. Rather than interpreting isolated verses, this research systematically combines

lexical analysis, semantic interpretation, historical context, classical and contemporary exegesis, prophetic traditions, and interdisciplinary scholarship to explain the Qur'anic understanding of women. The findings demonstrate that women are portrayed as complete human beings whose identities encompass spiritual devotion, intellectual capacity, ethical responsibility, family leadership, educational participation, and social contribution. This integrated interpretation expands previous studies by demonstrating that the Qur'anic concept of women cannot be reduced to legal discourse alone but must be understood within the broader objectives (*maqāṣid*) of justice, mercy, human dignity, and social harmony.

Overall, the findings indicate that the Qur'an offers a balanced paradigm capable of reconciling theological authenticity with contemporary social realities. By integrating classical scholarship with contemporary interdisciplinary approaches, this study provides a more comprehensive understanding of *mar'ah* that is academically rigorous, textually faithful, and contextually relevant. Consequently, the Qur'anic concept of women presented in this study may serve as an important reference for future research in Qur'anic studies, Islamic education, gender studies, Islamic family law, psychology, and community development while contributing to a more constructive and evidence-based discourse concerning women in Islam.

D. Conclusion

This study examined the concept of *mar'ah* (women) in the Qur'an through the thematic interpretation (*tafsir mawdu'i*) approach by systematically analyzing Qur'anic verses related to women, their linguistic meanings, semantic structures, contexts of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), thematic relationships (*munāsabah*), classical and contemporary exegetical interpretations, and relevant prophetic traditions. The findings demonstrate that the Qur'anic concept of *mar'ah* represents a comprehensive and multidimensional framework that encompasses spiritual, moral, intellectual,

familial, and social dimensions rather than merely describing women from biological or legal perspectives.

The analysis reveals that the Qur'an employs various terminologies, including *mar'ah*, *an-nisā'*, *zauj*, *umm*, *banāt*, and *unthā*, each reflecting distinct semantic functions and contextual meanings. These lexical variations indicate that the Qur'an intentionally portrays women through multiple roles and identities, including as servants of Allah, wives, mothers, daughters, educators, community members, and leaders. Consequently, the Qur'anic understanding of women cannot be reduced to a single social role but should be interpreted within the broader ethical framework of justice (*al-'adl*), compassion (*al-rahmah*), human dignity (*karāmah insāniyyah*), and piety (*taqwā*).

The comparative analysis between classical and contemporary exegetical perspectives further demonstrates substantial continuity in the fundamental theological principles concerning women. Classical exegetes primarily emphasized linguistic, historical, and legal interpretations, whereas contemporary scholars have expanded these discussions by incorporating interdisciplinary perspectives from gender studies, sociology, education, psychology, and hermeneutics. Despite methodological differences, both interpretative traditions consistently affirm that women possess equal spiritual accountability before Allah while recognizing complementary responsibilities within family and society. This finding indicates that many contemporary misconceptions concerning women originate from contextual interpretations and socio-cultural practices rather than from the normative teachings of the Qur'an itself.

The principal contribution of this study lies in its integrative thematic analysis of the Qur'anic concept of *mar'ah*. Unlike previous studies that generally focused on isolated legal issues, women's leadership, inheritance, or gender equality, this research systematically synthesizes linguistic analysis, thematic interpretation, *asbāb al-nuzūl*, *munāsabah*, classical and contemporary exegesis, prophetic traditions, and recent interdisciplinary scholarship into a

unified conceptual framework. This holistic perspective demonstrates that the Qur'an presents women as complete human beings endowed with spiritual devotion, intellectual capacity, ethical responsibility, emotional resilience, and meaningful social participation. Accordingly, this study contributes to the advancement of Qur'anic studies by offering a broader and more contextual understanding of women within the Islamic intellectual tradition.

The findings also have important practical implications for Islamic education, family development, community empowerment, and contemporary Islamic thought. In educational contexts, the Qur'anic concept of *mar'ah* supports equal opportunities for acquiring knowledge and developing intellectual potential. Within family life, the findings reinforce the Qur'anic model of partnership based on *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah*. Furthermore, the study contributes to contemporary discussions on women's participation in public life by emphasizing competence, justice, and moral responsibility as the principal criteria for leadership and social engagement. These implications demonstrate that the Qur'anic worldview remains highly relevant for addressing current challenges concerning gender relations, education, and social development.

Nevertheless, this study is limited to qualitative library research based on thematic interpretation of Qur'anic texts and classical as well as contemporary literature. Future research is recommended to adopt interdisciplinary and empirical approaches by examining the implementation of Qur'anic principles concerning women within educational institutions, Muslim families, community organizations, and public policy. Comparative studies involving different schools of Qur'anic exegesis and contemporary Muslim societies are also encouraged to enrich the understanding of women's roles and contributions in diverse socio-cultural contexts. Such studies will further strengthen the relevance of Qur'anic teachings in promoting justice, dignity, and sustainable human development in the modern world.

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