

# Comparative Analysis of the Concept of Women's Leadership in *Tafsir Al-Misbah* and *Tafsir An-Nur*

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#### **Abstrak**

Kepemimpinan perempuan merupakan isu penting dan kontroversial dalam masyarakat Muslim kontemporer, di mana penafsiran Al-Qur'an tentang posisi perempuan sebagai pemimpin masih beragam. Sementara itu, data global menunjukkan masih adanya kesenjangan gender yang signifikan dalam posisi kepemimpinan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk membandingkan dan menganalisis secara komparatif pandangan Tafsir Al-Misbah karya M. Quraish Shihab dan Tafsir An-Nur karya Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy mengenai kepemimpinan perempuan berdasarkan ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an yang relevan, khususnya QS. An-Nisa' [4]: 34 dan QS. At-Taubah [9]: 71. Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan pendekatan analisis komparatif, yang membandingkan kedua tafsir tersebut secara mendalam. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kedua tafsir sepakat menempatkan laki-laki sebagai pemimpin di ranah domestik karena tanggung jawab pemeliharaan dan perlindungan, namun tetap membuka ruang bagi perempuan untuk memimpin di ranah publik selama memenuhi syarat amanah dan kapabilitas. Tafsir Al-Misbah cenderung moderat dengan mempertimbangkan aspek kodrati, sementara Tafsir An-Nur lebih progresif dan inklusif dengan menekankan prinsip keadilan, musyawarah, dan kesetaraan gender. Kontribusi dari penelitian ini adalah memperkaya wacana tafsir kontemporer dan menawarkan perspektif tafsir khas Indonesia dalam dialog global mengenai kepemimpinan perempuan dan keadilan gender dalam Islam.

Kata Kunci: Kepemimpinan perempuan; Tafsir Al-Misbah; Tafsir An-Nur

### **Abstract**

Women's leadership is an important and controversial issue in contemporary Muslim society, where interpretations of the Qur'an regarding the position of women as leaders still vary. Meanwhile, global data shows that there is still a significant gender gap in leadership positions. This study aims to compare and analyze the views of *Tafsir Al-Misbah* by M. Quraish Shihab and *Tafsir An-Nur* by Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy on women's leadership based on relevant verses of the Qur'an, particularly QS. An-Nisa' [4]: 34 and QS. At-Taubah [9]: 71. The method

used is qualitative with a comparative analysis approach, which compares the two interpretations in depth. The results of the study show that both interpretations agree on placing men as leaders in the domestic sphere due to their responsibility for maintenance and protection, but still open up space for women to lead in the public sphere as long as they meet the requirements of trustworthiness and capability. The *Tafsir Al-Misbah* tends to be moderate, taking into account natural aspects, while the *Tafsir An-Nur* is more progressive and inclusive, emphasizing the principles of justice, deliberation, and gender equality. The contribution of this research is to enrich the discourse on contemporary interpretation and offer a distinctive Indonesian perspective in the global dialogue on women's leadership and gender justice in Islam.

Keywords: Women's leadership; Tafsir Al-Misbah; Tafsir An-Nur

#### INTRODUCTION

Women's leadership is a topic that is getting more and more attention in various fields, both social, political, and religious. In the context of Islam, the role of women as leaders not only touches on cultural and social aspects, but is also related to a deep understanding of religion <sup>1</sup> This is because the Qur'an contains a number of verses that are the basis for debates about women's positions in leadership, but interpretations of these verses still vary <sup>2</sup> This phenomenon is interesting to study considering that World Economic Forum data (2023) shows that globally only about 30% of leadership positions are held by women, indicating a real gender gap <sup>3</sup> In the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Farjana Mahbuba and Sumaiya Rabeya, "Female Leadership in Muslim Societies," *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 8, no. 2 (August 12, 2023): 96-115, https://doi.org/10.55831/ajis.v8i2.541; Saima Rafiq and Shams-ur- Rehman, "Women Leadership as Head of State in Contemporary Muslim Thoughts: A Critical Analysis," *Al-Irfan* 8, no. 15 (June 30, 2023): 12-26, https://doi.org/10.58932/MULB0011; M. Ferry Irawan et al., "Women in Leadership: Exploring Potential and Challenges in the Islamic Context," *An-Nisa Jurnal Kajian Perempuan Dan Keislaman* 17, no. 1 (July 16, 2024): 55-66, https://doi.org/10.35719/annisa.v17i1.234; Aang Kunaepi et al., "The Role of Women's Leadership In Islamic Elementary Schools: A Gender Perspective Study," *Muwazah* 16, no. 2 (December 30, 2024): 281-306, https://doi.org/10.28918/muwazah.v16i2.8650; Nafiseh Ghafournia, "Muslim Women's Religious Leadership: The Case of Australian Mosques," *Religions* 13, no. 6 (June 10, 2022): 534, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13060534.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Marlina Marlina, Sarifa Suhra, and Andi Tahir, "Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Al-Qur'an Perspektif Kitab Tafsir Al-Mishbah," AL-WAJID: JURNAL ILMU AL-QURAN DAN TAFSIR 4, no. 2 (December 12, 2024), https://doi.org/10.30863/alwajid.v4i2.5709; Syamsul Bakri, "Womens Leadership In Islam: A Historical Perspective Of A Hadith," Indonesian Journal of Islamic Literature and Muslim Society 5, no. 2 (December 5, 2020): 219-34, https://doi.org/10.22515/islimus.v5i2.3276; Budi Ichwayudi and Mukhammad Alfani, "A Comparison of the Thoughts of Hadith Hermeneutics Figures Fatimah Mernessi and Syuhudi Isma'il," ISLAMIKA 6, no. 1 (January 1, 2024): 363-80, https://doi.org/10.36088/islamika.v6i1.4364; Arman Maulana and Ulummudin Ulummudin, "Controversy of Women's Leadership in Islam: Muhammadiyah's Perspective," Contemporary Society and **Politics** Journal (December 25, 2023): 11-23, https://doi.org/10.32939/cspj.v2i2.3279.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Jennifer McCollum, "Why The Leadership Gender Gap Matters – And What Organizations Can Do To Close It," *Leader to Leader* 2024, no. 112 (March 2024): 19–25, https://doi.org/10.1002/ltl.20809; Gina A. Zurlo, "Gender Gaps in World Christianity:

realm of the Muslim community, a Pew Research Center survey (2022) also shows that the level of support for female leadership varies between countries, with numbers varying between 20% and 45% <sup>4</sup> This condition emphasizes the need for an in-depth study of the position of women in leadership from a religious perspective as the main foundation.

In an effort to understand women's leadership from the perspective of the Qur'an, *Tafsir Al-Misbah* by M. Quraish Shihab and *Tafsir An-Nur* by Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy serve as two key references in the tradition of modern Indonesian Qur'anic interpretation. Although both employ contextual approaches, their differing methodologies and socio-historical backgrounds lead to varied interpretations of verses related to gender and leadership. For example, Quraish Shihab interprets Surah An-Nisa (4:34) in an egalitarian manner, emphasizing justice and the mutual roles of men and women, while Hasbi maintains a more normative interpretation that highlights women's inherent and domestic roles. This distinctive contrast in interpretive approaches remains largely unexplored in comparative tafsir studies, despite their strong influence and unique contributions to the Islamic intellectual tradition in the Indonesian context.<sup>5</sup>

Globally, contemporary studies have underscored the importance of reinterpreting religious texts to create space for more inclusive women's leadership. For instance, research by Essop (2025) and Mahbuba and Rabeya (2023) emphasizes that barriers to women's leadership often stem more from patriarchal cultural norms than from the religious texts themselves. However, specific studies comparing the interpretive methods of *Al-Misbah* and *An-Nur* on the issue of women's leadership remain very limited. Therefore, this study is crucial in filling that gap and enriching

Membership, Participation, and Leadership," Review of Religious Research 66, no. 4 (December 25, 2024): 512-36, https://doi.org/10.1177/0034673X241279593; Diego Gomes, "Global Employment Gaps," Gender Gender Notes 2024, 004 (December 2024): no. https://doi.org/10.5089/9798400294136.067; Bakhyt Altynbassov et al., "A Comprehensive Bibliometric Analysis of Trends in Higher Education Leadership in the Global South, 2013-2023: Contemporary Perspectives and Developments," International Journal of Educational Research 127 (2024): 102421, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2024.102421; Yasin Elhadary Hillo Abdelatti, "Gender Equality at Public Universities in Saudi Arabia: Achievements and Ambitions," Journal of Educational and Social Research 14, no. 4 (July 5, 2024): 40, https://doi.org/10.36941/jesr-2024-0084.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Pew Research Center., "The Future of Women in Muslim Countries" (Washington, D.C, 2022), https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/10/12/future-of-women-in-muslim-countries/.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Muhammad Mizan, Arif Firdausi N.R, and Muhammad Mukharom Ridho, "Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Al-Quran: Studi Komparasi Tafsir Al-Azhar Dan Tafsir *An-Nur*," *Al Furqan: Jurnal Ilmu Al Quran Dan Tafsir* 7, no. 1 (June 19, 2024): 72–91, https://doi.org/10.58518/alfurqon.v7i1.2541; Luqman Hakim, "Kesetaraan Gender Dalam Pendidikan Islam Perspektif M. Quraish Shihab," *Peradaban Journal of Interdisciplinary Educational Research* 1, no. 1 (August 18, 2023): 1–20, https://doi.org/10.59001/pjier.v1i1.101.

modern tafsir discourse by offering a uniquely Indonesian perspective within the global dialogue on gender justice in Islam.<sup>67</sup>

Based on this, this study proposes the following problem formulations: first, how the interpretation of *Al-Misbah* views women's leadership; second, how the interpretation of *An-Nur* views the same thing; and third, what are the similarities and differences between the two in interpreting the verses of the Qur'an about women as leaders. Thus, the purpose of this study is to comprehensively compare and analyze the views of the two interpretations, so as to provide a more contextual and in-depth understanding of the position of women in leadership according to contemporary Islamic interpretations.

This research is expected to provide wide benefits, including providing intellectual contributions to the study of women's leadership from the perspective of modern Qur'an interpretation. In addition, the results of this research are expected to be a valuable reference for academics, scholars, and social practitioners in understanding and developing the role of women in leadership with a strong scientific and religious foundation. Furthermore, this research opens up a space for constructive dialogue in Muslim society regarding gender and leadership issues that have been still debated, so as to strengthen the position of women in various fields of life.

#### RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses qualitative research methods with the type of literature and comparative research research. This approach was chosen because the main purpose of the study is to understand and compare the views of the *Tafsir Al-Misbah* and *Tafsir An-Nur* on women's leadership in depth based on existing tafsir texts <sup>8</sup> Literature study is used as the main method in data collection by examining primary sources in the form of the book *Tafsir Al-Misbah* by M. Quraish Shihab and *Tafsir An-Nur* compiled by Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy. The two books of tafsir were chosen because they are the main references in modern interpretation and have a contextual approach that is relevant to the issue of women's leadership.

The data collection technique was carried out through systematic analysis of interpretive texts by reading, recording, and grouping verses and explanations related to the theme of women's leadership. In this process, the researcher selects the relevant parts of the interpretation to be analyzed in depth. The data analysis

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Mahbuba and Rabeya, "Female Leadership in Muslim Societies."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Fatima Essop, "Advancing Gender Equality in Muslim Leadership," *African Journal of Gender and Religion* 30, no. 2 (January 5, 2025), https://doi.org/10.36615/ryntph87.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Nofitayanti Nofitayanti, Aam Abdussalam, and Edi Suresman, "Studi Komparasi Metode Tafsir Tahlily Dan Metode Tafsir Muqaran," *Civilization Research: Journal of Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (January 7, 2022): 54–76, https://doi.org/10.61630/crjis.v1i1.5.

technique used is a content analysis, where the content of *Al-Misbah* and *An-Nur*'s interpretation related to the concept of women's leadership is critically compared <sup>9</sup> This analysis aims to find similarities and differences in the views, arguments, and approaches of the two interpretations to women's leadership, so that it can provide a comprehensive and contextual picture.

#### **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

## **Definition of Women's Leadership**

Women's leadership in the Islamic context encompasses not only administrative or political abilities but also moral, social, and spiritual responsibilities. Verses such as Surah an-Nisa [4]: 34 and al-Mujadalah [58]: 11 have long been debated in relation to women's leadership roles. While classical interpretations often confine women to domestic spheres, modern interpretations by contemporary scholars offer a broader understanding—emphasizing that women's leadership is permissible as long as it aligns with sharia principles and does not neglect their domestic roles. This contextual approach reflects the evolving demands of gender equality and recognizes women's capacity to lead in social, political, and religious domains. It strengthens women's societal roles and upholds the values of justice and public benefit as promoted in Islam<sup>10</sup>.

## An Overview of Tafsir Al-Misbah and Tafsir An-Nur

Tafsir Al-Misbah by M. Quraish Shihab adopts a contextual and moderate approach that prioritizes the principle of wasaṭiyyah (moderation). The tahlili and hermeneutic methods are used to relate the text of the Qur'an to social reality, including the role of women in leadership. Quraish Shihab emphasizes the equality of human beings as caliphs on earth and allows women to lead as long as the requirements of sharia are met.<sup>11</sup>

*Tafsir An-Nur* is the work of Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy which carries a reformist and inclusive approach in interpreting the Qur'an. This interpretation was greatly influenced by the thought of Muhammad Abduh and the spirit of Islamic reform that developed in the archipelago. Thus, *Tafsir An-Nur* is able to accommodate

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Husni Idrus, Achmad Abu Bakar, and Halimah Basri, "Eksistensi Tafsir Dari Sudut Objek Dan Tujuannya Dalam Pengembangan Studi Al-Qur'an," *AL-AQWAM: Jurnal Studi Al-Quran Dan Tafsir* 2, no. 1 (January 10, 2023): 1–18, https://doi.org/10.58194/alaqwam.v2i1.525.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Rafiq and Rehman, "Women Leadership as Head of State in Contemporary Muslim Thoughts: A Critical Analysis."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Nur Huda, Nur Hamid, and Muhammad Khoirul Misbah, "Konsep Wasathiyyah M. Quraish Shihab Dalam Tafsir *Al-Misbah* (Analisis Hermeneutika Hans-Georg Gadamer)," *International Journal Ihya'* '*Ulum Al-Din* 22, no. 2 (November 30, 2020): 198–231, https://doi.org/10.21580/ihya.22.2.6768.

contemporary social developments and provide a wide space for women to hold leadership roles in various areas of life.

In *Tafsir An-Nur*, the role of women as leaders is seen not only as a possibility, but as a manifestation of the values of justice and the benefit of the ummah. This interpretation emphasizes that as long as women are able to carry out the mandate of leadership with full responsibility and in accordance with the principles of Islamic law, then the existence of women in leadership positions is something legitimate and should be supported. This approach reflects an open and progressive attitude, which at the same time takes into account the dynamic socio-religious context and needs of today's Muslim society <sup>12</sup> The concept of women's leadership in this interpretation is seen as a manifestation of the value of justice and benefit.

# The Concept of Leadership in Islam

In Islam, leadership is not merely a formal position but a sacred trust that must be fulfilled with responsibility, justice, and a commitment to the welfare of the people. Qur'anic terms such as *khalifah*, *imam*, and *ulil amri* emphasize not only authority but also moral accountability. A leader is expected to uphold justice, be trustworthy, and always prioritize the public good. Justice in this context includes fairness, equality, and non-discrimination, while *amanah* reflects the weight of leadership as a duty that must not be abused.

Women, as part of humanity's role as *khalifah* on earth, share equal rights and obligations in leadership as long as they meet the moral and ethical criteria. Contemporary interpretations widely recognize that women are not inherently restricted from public leadership, provided they maintain a balance with their domestic roles. Leadership in Islam is a holistic concept rooted in values of justice, trust, and the public interest, and should be inclusive of women who are competent, morally upright, and committed to serving the ummah.<sup>13</sup>

#### Tafsir *Al-Misbah*'s View on Women's Leadership

*Tafsir Al-Misbah* by M. Quraish Shihab focuses on Surah An-Nisa' verse 34 which reads:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Mizan, Arif Firdausi N.R, and Muhammad Mukharom Ridho, "Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Al-Quran: Studi Komparasi Tafsir Al-Azhar Dan Tafsir *An-Nur*," June 19, 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Jamal Wahab, "Nilai Moralitas Kepemimpinan Pendidikan Islam," *Inspiratif Pendidikan* 9, no. 1 (June 11, 2020): 59, https://doi.org/10.24252/ip.v9i1.14124; Muh. Imam Sanusi Al Khanafi, Febi Tasriyah, and Ilma Nurkholifah, "Islamic Political Thought in Tafsir Al-Ibriz (Analysis of Leadership Verses)," *Rausyan Fikri Journal of Islamic Studies* 2, no. 1 (August 8, 2024): 68–78, https://doi.org/10.62283/rijis.v2i1.30; Nezar Faris and Mohamad Abdalla, "Leadership in Islam Based on Primary Sources," in *Leadership in Islam* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 9–25, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-66441-5\_2.

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالْهِمْ ، فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَانِتَاتُ حَافِظاتُ لِلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ ، وَاللَّالِيَ تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاحِعِ وَاضْرِبُوهُنَّ ، حَافِظاتُ لِلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ ، وَاللَّالِيَ تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاحِعِ وَاضْرِبُوهُنَّ ، وَاللَّالِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاحِعِ وَاضْرِبُوهُنَّ ، وَاللَّالِي اللَّهُ كَانَ عَلِيًّا كَبِيرًا فَوْنَ نُشُوزَهُنَ عَلِيًّا كَبِيرًا

"(Men are leaders for women because Allah has given some of them more than others and because they have provided for some of their wealth. Therefore, godly women are those who are obedient to Allah and take care of themselves when their husbands are not present, because Allah has taken care of them. To the women whose nusyuz you are worried about, then give them advice, separate them in bed, and beat them. If they obey you, then do not look for ways to trouble them. Indeed, Allah is Exalted and Exalted."<sup>14</sup>

In the commentary of *Al-Misbah*, Quraish Shihab explains that the term *ar-rijāl* specifically refers to the husband as the main person in charge in the household, not in general all men <sup>15</sup> The word *qawwāmūn* is defined as a leader who is responsible for the arrangement, guidance, and protection of his wife and family. Thus, the responsibility of men in the context of the doctrine is to provide sustenance, protection, and guidance so that wives obey Allah and their husbands.

Furthermore, Quraish Shihab emphasized that the roles of men and women have been regulated according to their respective natures and tendencies, as also emphasized in the Qur'an. An-Nisa' verse 32 mentions the different division of inheritance between men and women:

"And do not envy what Allah has given to some of you more than others. For men there is a part of what they strive for and for women there is a part of what they strive for. And ask Allah for a portion of His gifts. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing."

Quraish Shihab also refers to the commentary of Muhammad Thahir Ibn Assyria who states that *ar-rijāl* in the Qur'an does not always mean a husband specifically, but in the context of this verse it does refer to the general relationship between man and woman, which is further discussed more specifically about a pious wife and her obligations <sup>16</sup> He explained that *qawwāmūn* comes from the root *qama* which means to stand upright perfectly to carry out his duties. Therefore, the meaning of leadership here includes meeting needs, attention, maintenance, advocacy, and coaching.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Lajnah Pentashihan and Istiqlal, *Al Quran Al Karim* (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2022), https://quran.kemenag.go.id/.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> M. Quraish Shihab, TAFSIR AL-MISHBAH (Tangerang Selatan: Lentera Hati, 2000).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Deswanti Nabilah Putri, Wildan Taufiq, and Ahmad Izzan, "Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Tafsir At-Tabari Dan Tafsir Al- Mishbāh," *Mashadiruna: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 3, no. 1 (2024): 61–74.

Furthermore, Quraish Shihab emphasized that leadership is the ability to influence others consciously and voluntarily to achieve a common goal. Women can also become leaders in the household indirectly by influencing their husbands' decisions through deliberation. Therefore, women are encouraged to continue learning in order to be able to provide logical and scientific arguments so that they can become role models in the family <sup>17</sup>

In the context of the household, Quraish Shihab emphasized that the main obligation of women is to educate and give affection to children, in accordance with the words of Allah in QS. al-Ahzab verse 33:

"And you should stay in your houses and do not adorn and behave like the Jahiliyah of old..."  $^{18}$ 

This verse emphasizes the division of labor between men and women with women's main duties being at home, although it does not prohibit them from leaving the house for other activities.

Quraish Shihab also quoted QS. al-Jumu'ah verse 10 which emphasizes that men have the obligation to earn a living outside the home, while women are encouraged to stay at home, take care of the family, and carry out domestic duties:

"When the prayer has been fulfilled, then scatter yourselves on the earth and seek the bounty of Allah..."

In this interpretation, the difference between the nature of a firm and strong man and a gentle and affectionate woman is the natural reason why men are more appropriate to lead in the household. However, this does not close the opportunity for women to lead outside the home as long as they are able.<sup>19</sup> In addition, Quraish Shihab affirms that men and women are equal before Allah, and Islamic teachings advocate helping and deliberation between the two, as part of the principle of just and balanced leadership.

Quraish Shihab rejects views that use biological reasons such as menstruation to prevent women from taking part in politics. She argued that women who have gone through the menstrual cycle or who are not burdened with domestic affairs can become leaders in the public space, as long as they meet the requirements of competence and trust.

<sup>18</sup> Lajnah Pentashihan and Istiqlal, *Al Quran Al Karim*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Putri, Taufiq, and Izzan.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Putri, Taufiq, and Izzan, "Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Tafsir At-Tabari Dan Tafsir Al-Mishbāh."

# Women's Rights in the Tafsir Al-Misbah

In *Tafsir Al-Misbah*, M. Quraish Shihab presents a contextual and progressive interpretation of women's rights in Islam. His views cover multiple aspects including political participation, employment, education, and leadership roles, all while emphasizing the importance of maintaining sharia principles and social ethics. The following key points summarize his interpretation:

# 1. Women's Rights in Politics and Leadership

Quraish Shihab affirms that women have equal rights to participate in political and social affairs. He refers to Surah At-Tawbah [9]: 71) which emphasizes mutual cooperation between believing men and women, and Surah Ash-Shura [42]: 38 which highlights deliberation (*shura*) as a collective responsibility. These verses, according to Shihab, imply that women have both the right and duty to be involved in decision-making processes and leadership, provided they uphold Islamic values and do not neglect their domestic responsibilities.<sup>20</sup>

# 2. Women's Rights to Work

*Al-Misbah* strongly supports a woman's right to choose and engage in work, as long as it aligns with Islamic law and public morality. Shihab cites historical examples such as Khadijah RA, a successful businesswoman, and Al-Shifa, who managed the market during Umar ibn Khattab's rule. He argues that women can take on professional roles — even in sectors traditionally dominated by men — so long as religious ethics and responsibilities are maintained.<sup>21</sup>

## 3. Rights and Obligations to Seek Knowledge

Education is a universal obligation in Islam. Citing Surah Ali Imran [3]: 195, Shihab emphasizes that Allah equally rewards the efforts of both men and women. He notes that women during the Prophet's time actively sought knowledge and were given special sessions for learning. Thus, women have both the right and duty

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Ihda Shofiyatun Nisa', Aliyeva Patimat Shapiulayevna, and M. Najib Fikri, "The Role of Women in Islamic Politics: From the Early Period to the Contemporary Era through the Lens of Kimberlé Crenshaw's Intersectionality Perspective," *Kawanua International Journal of Multicultural Studies* 5, no. 2 (December 30, 2024): 271–81, https://doi.org/10.30984/kijms.v5i2.1252; Erika Amanda, "The Position Of Women In The Political Field: In The Islamic View Of The Time Of The Prophet Muhammad Saw," *Al-Masail: Journal of Islamic Studies*, July 31, 2023, 38–48, https://doi.org/10.61677/al-masail.vi.73.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Nisa', Shapiulayevna, and Fikri, "The Role of Women in Islamic Politics: From the Early Period to the Contemporary Era through the Lens of Kimberlé Crenshaw's Intersectionality Perspective"; Erika Amanda, "The Position Of Women In The Political Field: In The Islamic View Of The Time Of The Prophet Muhammad Saw."

to pursue religious and worldly knowledge, contributing not only to their personal development but also to the well-being of their families and communities.<sup>22</sup>

# 4. Contextual Interpretation of Gender Roles

When interpreting Surah An-Nisa [4]: 34, Shihab acknowledges the natural and practical aspects of male leadership in the family. However, he distinguishes between domestic and public leadership. While men may lead at home due to biological and emotional factors, capable women may lead in public roles if they meet the criteria of trustworthiness, competence, and responsibility. His approach reflects the need to adapt religious understanding to modern social realities.

# 5. Justice and Public Welfare as Core Principles

Ultimately, *Tafsir Al-Misbah* advocates for justice, public benefit (*maslahah*), and inclusivity. Shihab urges society to appreciate women's contributions beyond traditional domestic roles. He draws from historical examples, such as Aisha RA's leadership in the Battle of Jamal, to support women's participation in politics and leadership. For Shihab, gender should not be a barrier as long as the individual's actions serve justice and benefit the ummah.

# Women's Leadership in the Tafsir An-Nur by Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy

Tafsir An-Nur by Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy presents a contextual and inclusive understanding of women's leadership in Islam. In interpreting Surah An-Nisa' [4]:34, Hasbi explains that male leadership (qawwamah) refers specifically to the household context, not a general prohibition against women leading in public life. He clarifies that the verse refers to men's responsibility in family maintenance and protection due to their financial and physical roles<sup>23</sup>. However, he firmly rejects the assumption that this verse restricts women from holding leadership positions in government or public institutions. According to Hasbi, as long as a woman possesses key leadership qualities—such as honesty (shiddiq), trustworthiness (amanah), intelligence (fathanah), and the courage to speak the truth (tabligh)—she has the right to lead, just like a man.

To support this view, Hasbi refers to Surah An-Naml [27]: 23–24, which recounts the leadership of Queen Balqis of Sheba: "Indeed, I found a woman ruling over them, and she has been given everything and has a mighty throne…".

He interprets this story as a Qur'anic acknowledgment of a successful female leader, describing her as wise, strategic, and capable of making decisions through consultation. This example serves as a rebuttal to claims that Islam prohibits women

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Hakim, "Kesetaraan Gender Dalam Pendidikan Islam Perspektif M. Quraish Shihab."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Lajnah Pentashihan and Istiqlal, Al Quran Al Karim.

from leadership, demonstrating that the Qur'an presents female rulers in a positive and honorable light.

Hasbi also emphasizes the equality of men and women in social and political participation. Citing Surah At-Tawbah [9]:71, he highlights that both believing men and women are allies who work together to promote good and prevent evil: "The believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong..." This principle of shared responsibility is also echoed in Surah Ash-Shura [42]:38, which underscores that community affairs are to be managed through shura (consultation) without gender exclusion: "...Their affairs are decided by mutual consultation among them." These verses, according to Tafsir An-Nur, establish the basis for gender-inclusive governance and joint decision-making in society.

In terms of professional and public life, Hasbi affirms that women are not confined to domestic roles. He references Surah An-Nisa' [4]:32 to support the view that both men and women have equal rights to the outcomes of their efforts: "For men is a share of what they have earned, and for women is a share of what they have earned..." Hasbi also draws on historical examples such as Khadijah RA (a successful businesswoman), Ummu Salamah and Shafiyah (female warriors), and Al-Syifa' (market administrator under Caliph Umar) to illustrate that women have long played important roles in economic, social, and even military affairs. Thus, women are encouraged to contribute actively in society while upholding religious values.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, Hasbi strongly upholds the right and obligation of women to pursue education. He views education as the foundation for women to build leadership capacity and social awareness. Citing Surah Al-Mujadalah [58]:11, he stresses that knowledge elevates the status of believers—regardless of gender: "Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees...". Women, in his view, must be empowered through education to take on meaningful roles in family, community, and public leadership. Hasbi also reminds that educated women shape future generations and strengthen moral and intellectual development in society.

In conclusion, *Tafsir An-Nur* provides a comprehensive, contextual, and egalitarian interpretation of women's roles in leadership. It challenges rigid, patriarchal readings of the Qur'an and instead promotes a vision of Islam that is just, inclusive, and rooted in benefit for the ummah (*maslahah*). Women's leadership, in Hasbi's view, is not only permissible but essential when grounded in ethical values and social responsibility.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Lajnah Pentashihan and Istiqlal, *Al Quran Al Karim*; Mizan, Arif Firdausi N.R, and Muhammad Mukharom Ridho, "Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Al-Quran: Studi Komparasi Tafsir Al-Azhar Dan Tafsir *An-Nur*," June 19, 2024; Hasbi, *Tafsir Al-Quranul Majid An Nuur*.

# Comparison Between Tafsir Al-Misbah and Tafsir An-Nur

# 1. The Context of Leadership in the Household

Both tafsirs, *Al-Misbah* and *An-Nur*, both understand QS. An-Nisa' verse 34 is the main foundation that discusses the role of men as leaders in the family. This verse emphasizes that men have special responsibilities as protectors and responsible for women in the household. This male privilege is not solely because of gender, but is related to the role and duty entrusted by Allah, namely providing sustenance and protection for the family.

In the commentary of *Al-Misbah*, Quraish Shihab emphasizes that the responsibility of maintenance borne by men is the main reason why men are given leadership positions in the domestic realm. The protection in question is not only in the physical aspect, but also in regulating and maintaining family harmony in accordance with Islamic law. Similarly, in the commentary of *An-Nur*, Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy emphasizes the role of men as protectors and responsible persons who are obliged to provide for the family as the reason why the position of leader in the household is in the hands of men. Both interpretations reject the view that this privilege means that women do not have the right or ability to lead outside the realm of the household.

This agreement shows that both interpretations understand the role of men in the family as a responsibility that is not only related to authority, but also a heavy obligation, especially in providing for and protecting. Thus, the position of men as the leader of the household is functional and aims to maintain the balance and good of the family as a whole.

## 2. Recognition of Women's Rights in Active Roles

Both *Tafsir Al-Misbah* and *Tafsir An-Nur* acknowledge that women are not limited to domestic or domestic roles. Both provide space for women to actively contribute in various areas of life, including in the political, social, and world of work. However, this recognition is accompanied by an important condition, namely that women who carry out roles outside the home must meet the criteria of trust, competence, and still maintain their main responsibilities in the family. In *Tafsir Al-Misbah*, Quraish Shihab explains that women can become leaders or play an active role in society as long as they do not neglect their roles as wives and mothers. This emphasizes the importance of balancing domestic duties and public roles so that women can continue to carry out their religious and social obligations well.

Similarly, Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy's *Tafsir An-Nur* explicitly supports women to take part in politics and social life, as long as they have the ability, trust, and responsibility. This interpretation even raises the story of Ratu Balqis as a real example of a woman who leads a kingdom wisely, proving that women are able to shoulder great responsibilities in the public sphere.

These two interpretations affirm that women's right to contribute outside the home is not a violation, but a mandate that must be carried out with full seriousness and responsibility. Women of skill and integrity have the right to participate in decision-making, lead organizations, and actively contribute to social and political development. In other words, the interpretation of *Al-Misbah* and *An-Nur* voices that Islam views women as equal partners of men in social life, as long as women are able to carry out their mandates and obligations in a balanced manner between domestic and public roles.

# **Emphasis on Deliberation and Justice**

Both *Tafsir Al-Misbah* and *Tafsir An-Nur* place the principle of deliberation or *shura* as the main basis in decision-making, both in the social and political realms. Deliberation is understood as a process of discussion and consultation involving all interested parties, including men and women, regardless of gender. In the context of Islam, *shura* is not only an obligation, but also a mechanism that ensures justice, balance, and sustainability in the governance of society. Both interpretations affirm that women's involvement in this deliberative process is part of their rights and obligations as responsible members of society.

Tafsir Al-Misbah highlights that decisions taken through deliberation will better reflect the justice and benefits of the ummah, because all voices — both male and female — can be heard and taken into account. Thus, deliberation is a means to avoid authoritarianism and ensure fair representation in decision-making. Likewise, Tafsir An-Nur emphasizes that shura involves women as equal partners, so that women have the same right to provide opinions, criticisms, and suggestions in government affairs and social life. This involvement is not just a formality, but part of the Islamic principle that emphasizes shared responsibility for the good of the ummah.

This *shura* principle is important because it ensures that the policies produced reflect the needs and aspirations of the entire community, and uphold social justice. Therefore, women's involvement in deliberation is a concrete manifestation of equality and justice in Islam, which these two interpretations expressly support as the foundation for legitimate and effective decision-making.

#### **Differences and Reasons for Differences**

Aspects	Tafsir Al-Misbah	Tafsir An-Nur	Reasons for Difference
Interpretive	Moderate, contextual	Reformist and	Differences in
Approach	with a hermeneutic	inclusive with an	background and
	approach and	emphasis on today's	pattern of mufasir; Al-
	wasaṭiyyah (moderate).		Misbah is more

		socio-religious	moderate, An-Nur is
		context.	more reformist and
			inclusive.
Leadership in	Emphasizing the	Rejecting	Al-Misbah considers
the	biological nature	authoritarian	biological factors
Household	(menstrual cycle) as	leadership in the	more, An-Nur focuses
	the reason why men	household and	more on social context
	are more suitable to	emphasizing	and gender justice.
	lead the household.	women's rights in a	
		broader social	
		context.	
Leadership in	Opening up	Explicitly supports	Different emphasis on
the Public	opportunities for	women's	the scope and
Sphere	women to become	involvement in the	legitimacy of public
	public leaders on the	public sphere,	women's leadership.
	condition that they do	including political	
	not abandon domestic	leadership and	
	obligations.	government.	
Examples of	Example of women	Raising the story of	An-Nur's
Women's	who play a role	Ratu Balqis as an	interpretation more
Leadership	through indirect	explicit example of	explicitly raises the
	influence in the	legitimate and	example of public
	household	respected female	women's leadership
		leadership	
Socio-	Be more careful with	More progressive	Differences in
Political	the emphasis on family	with an emphasis on	adaptation to
Views	balance and harmony	gender equality in	contemporary social
		socio-political	developments
		participation	

# Implications of Understanding Women's Leadership

The understanding of women's leadership from the tafsir of *Al-Misbah* and *An-Nur* has significant implications in social, religious, and policy practices in contemporary Muslim society. *First*, both open up space for women to play an active role in public and political leadership, as long as they meet the requirements of competence, trust, and do not neglect their domestic responsibilities. This encourages the recognition of women's right to be leaders, not only at the family level, but also in the social and governmental spheres, thereby expanding women's participation in community development.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Kohinoor Hossain, "Woman Leadership In The Quran," *International Journal of Shari'ah and Corporate Governance Research*, December 31, 2022, 1–12, https://doi.org/10.46281/ijscgr.v5i1.2187.

*Second,* this understanding helps reduce the negative stigma that has been attached to women who want to take part in the leadership field, as well as remove the stereotype that leadership is a male monopoly. This has the potential to increase gender equality and women's empowerment in various fields.<sup>26</sup>

Third, an interpretation that emphasizes the principles of deliberation and justice as the basis for decision-making invites the community to create an inclusive and democratic leadership system, where women's voices have a fair place. This strengthens aspects of social justice and ensures women's representation in the decision-making process.<sup>27</sup> Fourth, this understanding encourages education and capacity building for women as the main capital in order to be able to assume leadership responsibilities optimally. This contributes to improving the quality of female human resources who are competitive and have integrity.<sup>28</sup> Fifth, in the religious context, this moderate and contextual understanding of interpretation enriches Islamic discourse and opens a constructive dialogue between tradition and modernity, so that Muslims can answer the challenges of the times without abandoning sharia values <sup>29</sup>.

The implication of this interpretation is the creation of a new paradigm in treating women's leadership more inclusively, fairly, and balanced, which has a positive impact on social, political, and religious progress in today's Muslim society.

#### **CLOSING**

The conclusion of this study shows that *Tafsir Al-Misbah* and *Tafsir An-Nur* have relatively parallel views on women's leadership in Islam. Both interpretations place male leadership in the context of the household based on QS. An-Nisa' verse 34, where men play the role of protectors and the person in charge of the family because of the responsibility of maintenance and protection. However, these two interpretations also provide space for women to contribute actively in the public, political, social, and occupational spheres, as long as they meet the requirements of competence, trust, and do not neglect domestic obligations. The principles of deliberation and justice are emphasized as the main foundation in leadership that involves men and women equally.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Haleemah Olajumoke Omotosho and Saheed Badmus Suraju, "Utilising Bint Ash-Shāṭi's Thought as a Panacea for the Misconceptions about Women Leadership in Modern Muslim Societies," *LECTURES: Journal of Islamic and Education Studies* 3, no. 4 (December 18, 2024): 309–24, https://doi.org/10.58355/lectures.v3i4.94.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Essop, "Advancing Gender Equality in Muslim Leadership."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Mahbuba and Rabeya, "Female Leadership in Muslim Societies."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> N Mdege et al., "Muslim Communities Learning about Second-Hand Smoke in Bangladesh (MCLASS II): Study Protocol for a Cluster Randomised Controlled Trial of a Community-Based Smoke-Free Homes Intervention, with or without Indoor Air Quality Feedback," *Trials* 20, no. 1 (2019), https://doi.org/10.1186/s13063-018-3100-y.

In particular, women are allowed to become leaders in the public sphere, including politics and government, as long as they meet sharia criteria such as honesty, competence, and trust. *An-Nur*'s interpretation tends to be more progressive and inclusive by providing concrete examples such as the story of Queen Balqis who led the kingdom wisely. On the other hand, *Tafsir Al-Misbah* is more moderate by considering aspects of nature and the balance of roles between men and women. Both interpretations encourage the recognition of women's rights in leadership based on the principles of justice and the benefit of the people.

As a suggestion, future studies need to broaden their focus by including other interpretations and empirically examine the role of women in leadership in various Muslim communities. In terms of implementation, it is important for religious and social institutions to develop special leadership education and training programs for women and build public awareness of the importance of accepting women as leaders. An open dialogue between scholars and stakeholders related to gender and leadership issues must also continue to be carried out in order to produce an inclusive and applicable understanding in accordance with contemporary social dynamics.

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