

**GENDER EQUALITY IN THE ISLAMIC
PERSPECTIVE ACCORDING
TO QURAN SURAH AN-NAHL VERSE 97**

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Abstract

This article examines the interpretation of Surah An-Nahl verse 97 in the context of gender equality within Islam. It addresses the prevailing discourse on gender discrimination, particularly against women, and examines whether Islamic teachings support or challenge gender equality. The study finds that Islam provides a strong foundation for equal rights and responsibilities for all individuals, emphasizing that both men and women will receive rewards for their good deeds. Through a literature review and interpretive analysis of classical and contemporary Qur'an tafseer, this study highlights the importance of Surah An-Nahl in advocating for gender equality and illustrates that historical Islamic figures exemplify women's active roles in society. The findings advocate for a contemporary understanding of Islamic teachings to combat gender discrimination and promote women's empowerment in modern contexts.

Keywords: gender equality, Islam, Surah An-Nahl, Qur'an tafseer, good deeds,

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji penafsiran Surah An-Nahl ayat 97 dalam konteks kesetaraan gender dalam Islam. Artikel ini membahas wacana yang ada mengenai diskriminasi gender, khususnya terhadap perempuan, dan mengkaji apakah ajaran

Islam mendukung atau menentang kesetaraan gender. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa Islam memberikan dasar yang kuat untuk persamaan hak dan tanggung jawab bagi semua individu, dengan menekankan bahwa baik laki-laki maupun perempuan akan menerima pahala atas amal saleh mereka. Melalui tinjauan literatur dan analisis interpretatif terhadap tafsir Al-Qur'an klasik dan kontemporer, penelitian ini menyoroti pentingnya Surah An-Nahl dalam mengadvokasi kesetaraan gender dan mengilustrasikan bahwa tokoh-tokoh Islam bersejarah telah mencontohkan peran aktif perempuan dalam masyarakat. Temuan-temuan ini mengadvokasi pemahaman kontemporer tentang ajaran Islam untuk memerangi diskriminasi gender dan mempromosikan pemberdayaan perempuan dalam konteks modern.

Kata kunci: kesetaraan gender, Islam, Surah An-Nahl, tafsir Al-Qur'an, amal saleh

Background

The issue of gender equality is a topic that is often discussed in this modern era. This concept emerged because of the discrimination and injustice that still often befell certain groups based on gender, especially women. Many people question the position of women in various aspects, especially from a religious perspective, including Islam, whether Islam has views that support gender equality or the opposite. On the other hand, Islam as a religion of rahmatan lil 'alamin has actually provided a fair foundation regarding equal rights and obligations for every individual, both men and women. One of the verses that is often used as a basis for discussions regarding gender equality is Surah An-Nahl verse 97, which states that everyone, both men and women, will receive a fair reward for their righteous deeds. The aim of studying the interpretation of Surah An-Nahl verse 97 on the issue of gender equality is to spread a more precise and comprehensive understanding of how Islamic teachings can be used as a basis for fighting for equality between men and women in society. With this approach, it is hoped that we can gain clearer and more science-based insight into Islamic views on gender equality, especially in responding to various social challenges that have emerged in modern times.

Theoretical Study

Gender equality is, first and foremost, a human right. It implies that women, men, boys, and girls of all classes and races participate as equals and have equal value. They enjoy equal access to resources, freedoms, and opportunities to exercise control. Thus, equality aims to eliminate gender-based discrimination that frequently leads one party to suffer, often women. The theoretical perspectives such as the Capability Approach through the works made by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum believe gender equality isn't solely about equality of access; it is also whether or perhaps not each woman has the full scope to develop their capabilities. This highlights the importance of substantive justice, which means creating the conditions for everyone to reach their potential, regardless of their gender.

Gender equality in Islam finds a solid theological foundation. The Quran approaches the topic of gender-based justice, one of which can be seen in An-Nahl verse 97:

“Whoever does good, whether male or female, and is a believer, We will surely bless them with a good life, and We will certainly reward them according to the best of their deeds.”

This verse shows that Allah SWT does not differentiate between men and women in terms of spiritual values and rewards for good deeds. Gender equality in Islam is understood as providing fair rights and obligations in accordance with each individual's nature and capacity. This means, even though men and women have different roles in several aspects of life, they both have equal rights to develop themselves, obtain education, and contribute to society.

Historically, the life of the Prophet Muhammad SAW has been an example in implementing gender equality. The Prophet encouraged women to seek knowledge, as did Aisyah RA, a female figure who was known for her intelligence in various fields of knowledge, including religion and law. Apart from that, women like Khadijah RA also show how Islam provides space for women to participate in the business and social world. Gender equality from a general perspective and Islam have the same goal, namely providing equal rights to every individual regardless of gender. The general perspective focuses more on dismantling unjust social structures, while Islam focuses on justice based on human nature. By integrating these two perspectives, it can be formulated that gender equality is a concept that emphasizes eliminating gender-based discrimination, creating fair conditions, and providing equal opportunities for men and women to develop, both in spiritual and social aspects.

Research Method


This research uses a literature review method or literature study with an interpretive approach to understand the meaning of Surah An-Nahl verse 97 in the context of gender equality according to an Islamic perspective. The research process began with collecting relevant literature, such as classical (Ibnu Katsir) and contemporary (Quraish Shihab) tafseer, as well as academic articles discussing gender equality in Islam. By analyzing the interpretation of this verse, this research aims to understand Islamic views on gender equality, both in spiritual and social contexts. Through this method, this research aims to provide a deeper understanding of gender equality in Islam and how Islamic teachings can contribute to overcoming this issue in modern society.

Result and Discussion

Based on the results of the interpretation study, it can be concluded that Islamic teachings, through this verse, prioritize gender equality in terms of spiritual, social, and economic rights, even though there are differences in the roles and responsibilities of each gender.

1. Interpretation of Surah An-Nahl Verse 97

مَنْ عَمِلْ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ
حَيٰوةً طَيِّبَةً وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُم بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ



Whoever does good, whether male or female, and is a believer, We will surely bless them with a good life, and We will certainly reward them according to the best of their deeds.

In his commentary on Al-Misbah, Quraish Shihab underlines that Surah An-Nahl verse 97 is one of the verses that emphasizes the equality between men and women. He also mentioned that the word man/who at the beginning of this verse can refer to both male and female genders, but for the sake of emphasis, this verse deliberately mentions the phrase both male and female. This verse also shows how women are required to be involved in activities that are beneficial, both for themselves and their families, as well as for their community and nation, even humanity as a whole.

According to Ibn Kathir's interpretation of Surah An-Nahl verse 97, it is God's promise that is said to be addressed to people who do righteous deeds. What is meant by pious deeds are deeds that follow the instructions of the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet, whether he is male or female from among the children of Adam, while his heart is in a state of faith in Allah and His Messenger. And that the deeds he does are deeds that are commanded and prescribed by Allah. So Allah promised to give him a good life in this world and will give him a much better reward than his deeds in the afterlife.

It is also stated in Ibn Kathir's interpretation that the meaning of a good life is a life that contains all aspects of happiness from its various aspects. However, the correct opinion regarding the meaning of a good life states that the meaning of a good life includes everything that has been mentioned above.

2. Islam and Gender Equality

During the development of Islam, there have been many concrete examples in Islamic history that show gender equality, both in spiritual, social and economic rights. For example, Khadijah RA, the first wife of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, was an independent and successful woman in trading and had an important role in supporting the Prophet Muhammad's mission to spread the message of Islam in the early days of Islam's development. Khadija also played an important role in the early Islamic community, using her wealth to support the poor and needy.

Likewise, Aisyah RA was a female intellectual who was ahead of her time. Through his thoughts, he contributed to the development of Islamic scholarship, especially in the fields of interpretation, hadith, fiqh, medicine, and literature. What they have done shows that women in Islam have a high position and have made a big contribution to building Islamic civilization.

In Tafsir Al-Misbah by Quraish Shihab, it is emphasized that verses of the Qur'an such as Surah An-Nahl verse 97 reflect the principle of gender equality, where men and women have the right to contribute and receive rewards depending on good deeds they do.

According to Quraish Shihab, equality between men and women, both men and women, as well as between nations, tribes and descendants, is the main teaching and principle in Islamic teachings, in the Al-Qur'an. The thing that is underlined by these differences is that what elevates and lowers a person's status is the value of devotion and devotion to Allah SWT. Therefore, in Islamic teachings, men and women do not have fundamental and substantial differences in several main

things, including, the origin of the incident, their rights in various fields, and their position and role, duties and responsibilities. Even though there are different roles in Islam, they both complement each other and should not be used as a basis for discriminating against either party. Gender equality in Islam prioritizes a balance between rights and obligations based on piety, not gender.

3. The Relevance of Verses to Contemporary Gender Issues

In contemporary life, women are often stigmatized and treated discriminatorily due to religious misunderstandings. The interpretation of Surah An-Nahl verse 97 can be used as a valid argument against this stigma, by stating that Allah SWT will glorify and empower men and women in His actions based on their faith and righteous deeds. This is supported by Ibnu Katsir in his tafseer book "Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Adzim" Juz IV p. 601, namely:

لكتاب الله تعالى وسنة نبيه, من ذكر أو أنثى من بني آدم, وقلبه مؤمن بالله ورسوله, وأن هذا العمل المأمور
مشروع من عند الله بأن يحييه الله حياة طيبة في الدنيا وأن يجزيه بأحسن ما عمله في الدار الآخرة.

"This is a promise from Allah Ta'ala for people who do righteous deeds, namely deeds that follow the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet, both men and women from the descendants of Adam.

While his heart believes in Allah and His Messenger. And the deeds that are done are orders from Allah. Allah will give him a good life in this world and reward him with the best deeds he does in the afterlife."

From what Ibn Kathir explained, it can be concluded that Allah is fair to His servants by treating them equally.

Surah An-Nahl verse 97 is understood as a motivation for Muslim women not to feel ashamed or inferior when acting actively in society, and to get away from the operation of stereotypes and other gender problems.

Apart from that, Quraish Shihab in Tafsir Al-Misbah shows that this verse can be used as justification for the need to fight for women's rights, including educational rights, employment rights and political rights. Here the function of the Qur'an and hadith which provide a more inclusive, clear, structured and massive understanding of interpretation can be a solution to the problem of gender challenges in modern society, where women are often faced with inequality in various aspects of life. By using this verse as an inspiration, Muslim women will

become braver in taking a bigger role in building a healthy and just society according to Islamic principles. Islamic teachings must be implemented and applied in real life and allow women to grow and have the opportunity to take any action.

In the modern context, women still often face stigma and discrimination rooted in misconceptions about religion. Surah An-Nahl verse 97 can be used as a theological basis to fight this stigma, by emphasizing that Allah SWT gives equal rewards to men and women based on their faith and righteous deeds. Tafseer Ibn Kathir emphasizes that the reward from Allah includes spiritual, social and material aspects, which cover all human needs to live happily in this world and the hereafter. Gender equality in Islam, as emphasized in this verse, must be implemented in real terms to create an inclusive social environment and support women's empowerment.

Conclusion

Surah An-Nahl verse 97 emphasizes that men and women are equal in the reward of their deeds. This verse is proof that Islam supports gender equality, not only in spiritual aspects, but also in social and economic rights. Although there are differences in roles based on biological and social characteristics, they complement each other without being a reason for discrimination. Islamic history shows the great contributions of women such as Aisha RA and Khadijah RA, which shows that women have the space to play an active role in various fields. However, the application of this principle of equality in the modern era is still limited by stigma and misinterpretation of religious teachings. A more inclusive understanding and contemporary interpretation can be a solution to overcome existing gender inequality. If properly applied, Islam can provide a strong foundation for the struggle for gender equality and the empowerment of women in society.

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