

The Role Of The Husband As The Leader Of The Family In Islam (A Psychological Study Of Surah An-Nisa' Verse 34)

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Resume—Surah An-Nisa ayat 34 menegaskan peran suami sebagai *qawwām* atau pemimpin keluarga yang memikul tanggung jawab finansial, emosional, dan spiritual. Kepemimpinan ini bukan bentuk dominasi, melainkan amanah yang dijalankan dengan keadilan dan kasih sayang. Dalam Islam, suami dituntut untuk memimpin dengan musyawarah, melindungi, serta menjadi teladan sebagaimana dicontohkan Rasulullah saw. Secara psikologis, kepemimpinan suami yang ideal sejalan dengan gaya kepemimpinan otoritatif, teori keterikatan emosional, dan kecerdasan emosional. Dengan memahami ayat ini secara kontekstual, tercipta keseimbangan antara nilai-nilai Islam dan ilmu psikologi dalam membangun keluarga yang harmonis.

Keywords: *Ikhlās, Izzah*, People-pleasing, Muslim Adolescents, Islamic Psychology, Character Education.

Abstract—This paper discusses the husband's role as the leader within the family from both Islamic and psychological perspectives. Surah An-Nisa' verse 34 serves as the theological foundation affirming that men are responsible for being *qawwām* (leaders) in the family. However, this concept of leadership is sometimes misunderstood as a form of gender injustice toward women. This study examines the husband's leadership based on An-Nisa' verse 34 by integrating classical Qur'anic interpretations (*tafsir*) with psychological theories. The method used is library research with an interdisciplinary approach combining Qur'anic exegesis and family psychology. The findings indicate that the husband's leadership role is not a form of dominance but a trust (*amanah*) to guide, protect, and provide for the family with fairness and compassion. From a psychological perspective, ideal husband leadership aligns with the authoritative leadership style, attachment theory (emotional bonding), and emotional intelligence, all of which contribute to the family's psychological well-being. Therefore, the concept of *qawwām* in Islam reinforces the principles of justice, compassion, and responsibility in building a harmonious and prosperous family.

Keywords: *qawwām*, interdisciplinary, psychology, An-Nisa' verse 34.

I. INTRODUCTION

The family is the smallest social institution in society, strategically shaping its members' character and spiritual education. [1]. In Islam, the family structure is clearly defined, including the division of roles between husband and wife. One of the key verses forming the foundation for this is Surah An-Nisa' verse 34, which states that men are the leaders (*qawwām*) over women because Allah has given preference to some over others, and because they spend from their wealth [2].

This verse affirms the man's responsibility as the head of the household, encompassing economic provision, protection, and spiritual guidance. In classical and contemporary interpretations, *qawwām* is understood as a trust and responsibility, not as domination or injustice toward women. Al-Ṭabarī, for instance, explained that men are to educate and guide their wives in fulfilling

what Allah has obligated upon them [3]. Riḍā further emphasized that the role of a leader is to direct, not to impose coercive or repressive control [4].

However, some critics perceive this verse as misogynistic or discriminatory toward women. They highlight the potential for this verse to be interpreted as justifying male dominance within the household, or even legitimizing domestic violence in some instances [5], [6]. Such interpretations arise from a textual reading of the verse without considering the broader context of Islamic teachings, including the principles of justice (*'adl*) and compassion (*rahmah*) in marital relationships [7].

This distorted understanding presents a challenge in comprehending Islamic teachings holistically, especially in the modern era that emphasizes gender equality and justice. Therefore, an interdisciplinary approach is needed to bridge religious texts with contemporary society's social and psychological dynamics. One relevant approach is family psychology, which can help explain how a husband's leadership influences emotional well-being and interpersonal relationships within the family [8].

By examining Surah An-Nisa' verse 34 from a psychological perspective, it is hoped that a more balanced understanding will emerge—one that views a husband's leadership not as patriarchal domination, but as an active role in nurturing a harmonious, supportive, and psychologically healthy family. This study also corrects misconceptions about the verse and restores the spirit of justice and responsibility at the core of Islamic teachings.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using the library research method. The data were obtained from various relevant literature sources, including classical and contemporary tafsir works, books on family psychology, and scholarly articles. The approach used is interdisciplinary, integrating Qur'anic exegesis studies with psychological theories to find the intersection between the concept of *qawwām* in Surah An-Nisa' verse 34 and the concept of leadership in psychology. Data analysis was conducted in three stages: (1) identification and classification of sources, by collecting relevant verses, hadiths, tafsir interpretations, and psychological theories; (2) content analysis of the interpretations of scholars such as al-Ṭabarī, al-Rāzī, Riḍā, and Hamka to understand the meaning of *qawwām* comprehensively; and (3) thematic synthesis linking the tafsir findings with psychological theories. Through this method, the study aims to provide a comprehensive and balanced understanding between theological and psychological perspectives in explaining the husband's role as the family leader according to Islam.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Circumstances of Revelation (*Asbāb al-Nuzūl*) of Surah An-Nisa' Verse 34

To fully understand the meaning of Surah An-Nisa' verse 34, it is essential to trace the historical background of its revelation. One of the primary sources that discusses this is al-Wāḥidī in his *Asbāb Nuzūl al-Qur'ān*. He states that the verse was revealed concerning a domestic incident between Sa'ad bin Rabī' and his wife, Ḥabībah bint Zaid. In this story, the wife was considered to have committed *nushūz* (disobedience), prompting her husband to slap her. Feeling wronged, Ḥabībah and her father reported the matter to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who initially ruled for *qishāṣ* (retaliation). However, before the punishment was carried out, the Angel Jibrīl descended, bringing the revelation of this verse, Surah An-Nisa' 34 [9].

In addition to this narration, al-Wāḥidī also mentions two other reports from Sa'īd bin Muhammad and Abu Bakr al-Ḥārithī. Although these narrations share the same essence—domestic conflict and the demand for *qishāṣ*—they do not specify the individuals involved or the particular issue of *nushūz*. This suggests narrative variation within the *asbāb al-nuzūl* tradition, but all point toward the same core context: a domestic dispute that became the occasion for the revelation of the verse. [9].

Al-Suyūṭī, in *Lubāb al-Nuqūl fī Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, also cites three similar narrations from Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Jarīr, and Ibn Mardawayh. All affirm that Surah An-Nisa' verse 34 was revealed in the context of a marital conflict involving physical violence by the husband. Although the individuals involved are not mentioned explicitly, the content emphasizes that this verse was revealed to regulate and guide marital relations with justice and responsibility [10].

The Interpretations of Scholars on Surah An-Nisa' Verse 34

The verse "*al-rijāl qawwāmūn 'ala al-nisā'*" in Surah An-Nisa' 34 has been a central point in both classical and contemporary exegesis concerning the relationship between men and women within the family. Classical exegetes such as al-Ṭabarī, al-Zamakhsharī, al-Rāzī, Ibn Kathīr, and Hamka generally affirm that men hold a position of leadership within the household. Al-Ṭabarī viewed men as educators and guides for their wives according to Allah's commands [3]. Al-Zamakhsharī emphasized men's authority in managing and commanding, likening it to the relationship between a leader and his people [11]. Al-Rāzī reinforced the notion of men as *amīr* (leaders) and executors of law. [12], while Ibn Kathīr described men as *qayyim*, meaning those responsible for leading, judging, and guiding [13]. Both al-Alūsī and Muḥammad' Abduh emphasized that this leadership should not be repressive but rather persuasive [4], [14]).

Hamka, a leading Indonesian exegete, reaffirmed the classical understanding of male leadership over women. He argued that, naturally and socially, men are created to lead. Hamka even used analogies from the animal world, such as ducks and monkeys, to demonstrate the instinctive leadership of males. For him, this leadership is not merely a social construct but a natural inclination ordained by Allah—hence it requires no explicit command. Thus, male leadership is a divine order rooted in creation [15].

The foundation of male leadership in this verse lies in two reasons: *bi mā faḍḍalallāh ba'dahum 'alā ba'd* ("because Allah has preferred some over others") and *bi mā anfaqū min amwālihim* ("because they spend from their wealth"). Al-Ṭabarī interpreted this preference in material terms, such as dowry and financial responsibility [3], while al-Zamakhsharī and al-Rāzī emphasized intellectual, physical, and social advantages, including participation in *jihad*, leadership, and serving as witnesses [11], [12]. However, many of these attributes are socio-cultural rather than absolute, leaving room for contextual reinterpretation over time.

According to Riḍā, men's advantages over women are of two kinds: *fiṭrīyah* (natural) and *kasbīyah* (acquired). The natural advantage refers to men's stronger physical and psychological constitution—features such as beards are even seen as symbols of masculine completeness. The acquired advantage relates to men's social productivity and financial responsibility. He likened the relationship between man and woman to that of the head and the body, with male leadership necessary for the entire family's well-being [4].

The continuation of the verse, which mentions the obedience of wives, further reinforces this leadership structure. Ibn Kathīr and Hamka explain that a righteous wife obeys her husband, guarding her chastity and property in his absence. If *nushūz* (rebellion) occurs, Islam prescribes a gradual process—admonition, separation in bed, and, if necessary, light physical discipline, without causing harm. [13], [15]. Hamka emphasized that this final measure should be approached with great caution, avoiding any form of physical or emotional abuse.

The verse concludes with a moral warning: the husband must not seek excuses to mistreat her once the wife returns to obedience. The closing phrase "*innallāha kāna 'aliyyan kabīrā*" ("Indeed, Allah is Most High, Most Great") serves as a moral reminder to husbands not to misuse their authority. It signifies that while men are entrusted with leadership, their power is not absolute—it is bound by the principles of justice and mercy that form the foundation of marital relations in Islam [2].

The Husband's Role as Family Leader in Islam

The husband's role as the family leader is clearly affirmed in the Qur'an, specifically in Surah An-Nisa' 34, which states: "*Men are the protectors and maintainers of women...*" The word *qawwām* signifies a man's greater responsibility in managing family life—economically, protectively, and spiritually. According to Ibn Kathīr, this leadership is not an exercise of absolute authority but a weighty duty grounded in justice, compassion, and accountability toward one's family [13].

Surah An-Nisa' 34 outlines two primary reasons for male leadership: first, Allah's bestowal of certain advantages upon men; second, their financial responsibility. These do not imply absolute superiority but rather differences in roles and responsibilities—biological, psychological, and social. Economic responsibility and social protection rest upon the husband, making leadership a matter of duty rather than privilege [16], [17].

Leadership also includes moral and spiritual guidance. Surah At-Tahrim verse 6 instructs, "*Protect yourselves and your families from the Fire,*" signifying the husband's duty to guide the family in religious and ethical matters. This leadership is not authoritarian but nurturing, emphasizing communication, empathy, and wise conflict resolution—values echoed in psychological theories of supportive leadership [18].

Thus, the husband's leadership in Islam is multidimensional, requiring integrity, emotional intelligence, and moral responsibility. It is not an assertion of gender superiority, but a divine trust (*amanah*) aimed at building a harmonious, loving, and spiritually enriched family (*sakinah, mawaddah, wa rahmah*) [19].

The Husband's Leadership from a Family Psychology Perspective

From the lens of family psychology, the husband's leadership is vital for emotional stability and psychological well-being within the household. Effective leadership entails organization, direction, and role modeling for all family members [20]. A healthy leadership style fosters an emotionally secure environment conducive to the growth of both spouses and children.

Baumrind's theory of parenting and leadership styles—authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative [21])—offers valuable insight. The authoritative style, characterized by firmness balanced with warmth and empathy, aligns most closely with Islamic leadership principles. An authoritative husband sets clear rules while remaining open to dialogue and emotional understanding [22], mirroring the Prophet Muhammad's exemplary balance of firmness and gentleness.

Leadership is also closely tied to *attachment theory*, which emphasizes the importance of a secure emotional base (*secure base*). A husband who provides emotional security, consistency, and care fosters healthy attachment among family members [23]. This mirrors the Islamic ideal of *rahmah*—compassion—as the foundation of family relationships.

Moreover, *emotional intelligence* (EQ) plays a crucial role. Goleman [24] Argues that relationship success depends more on emotional management than intellectual ability. In a marital context, a husband who demonstrates emotional awareness, empathy, and maturity fosters healthier communication and conflict resolution, ensuring psychological well-being within the family.

Resilient family systems also rely on strong, empathetic leadership. According to Walsh [25] A resilient family can withstand and recover from adversity through the presence of emotionally supportive figures—typically the husband or father—who provide stability during crises.

The Compatibility Between Islamic and Psychological Views on Leadership

Islamic teachings on husbandly leadership align closely with several psychological theories. Baumrind's *authoritative style* emphasizes balanced control and warmth—mirroring the Qur'anic call for firmness tempered by mercy (*rahmah*) and consultation (*shura*) [21], [22]. Similarly, Bowlby's attachment theory parallels the Islamic ideal of the husband as a *secure base* providing emotional safety for his family [20], [23].

Goleman's emotional intelligence framework [24] Also resonates strongly with Islamic leadership ethics, which stress self-control, empathy, and fairness in handling marital challenges [19]. Moreover, the Qur'anic emphasis on *shura* (mutual consultation) in decision-making (Surah Ash-Shura: 38; Al-Baqarah: 233) aligns with family systems theory, which values open communication and shared responsibility. [26]. While Islam appoints men as *qawwām* due to their traditional economic and protective roles, it does not negate women's capacity for leadership. Instead, it structures familial roles based on harmony between natural disposition and social responsibility [27].

Therefore, modern psychological theories confirm that Islamic leadership within the family is far from patriarchal domination. Instead, it represents a moral and emotional framework designed to cultivate responsible, empathetic, and emotionally intelligent male figures who strengthen family resilience and harmony. Properly understood, the Qur'anic concept of *qawwām* supports the creation of just, compassionate, and psychologically healthy family relationships.

IV. CONCLUSION

Surah An-Nisa verse 34 provides a theological foundation for the husband's role as the leader (*qawwām*) within the family, encompassing financial, emotional, and spiritual responsibilities. This role is not a form of domination but a sacred trust (*amanah*) that must be carried out with justice, compassion, and wisdom. In Islam, household leadership emphasizes the principles of consultation (*musyawarah*), protection, and exemplary conduct, as demonstrated by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in his family life.

From a psychological perspective, this concept of husbandly leadership aligns with the authoritative leadership style, attachment theory, and the importance of emotional intelligence in fostering healthy family relationships. Sound leadership creates a stable environment that supports the emotional well-being of all family members. Therefore, understanding this verse contextually and comprehensively is essential to correct misconceptions and to strengthen the integration between Islamic values and scientific approaches in building a harmonious family.

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