The Discourse of Women's Leadership from The Perspective of Muhammad Shahrur

(A Critical Analysis of Muhammad Shahrur's Thought through the Maqashidi Exegesis Paradigm)

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Abstract

Interpretations of women's leadership in the contemporary era vary widely and have been examined by many scholars through different approaches. One exegete who has attempted to interpret the relevant verses is Muhammad Shahrur, a controversial Muslim thinker whose ideas tend to be liberal and whose educational background was not rooted in religious studies. At the same time, an approach known as Maqashidi Exegesis has developed. The Maqashidi Exegesis paradigm serves as a philosophical basis for interpretation that seeks to identify and examine the maqashid aspects of maqashid al-shariah and maqashid al-Qur'an within an interpretation. This approach is considered capable of highlighting the maqashid dimensions contained in the verses. Therefore, the authors are interested in analyzing Shahrur's thought from the perspective of Maqashidi Exegesis. To assess whether Shahrur's interpretation corresponds to the maqashid dimensions of the Qur'an, the authors relate his interpretation to maqashid values. After conducting a series of analyses, the authors find that although Shahrur adopts an independent approach, his interpretation addresses maqashid dimensions by arguing that leadership can be attained by anyone who possesses the necessary intellectual and economic capacities, and that leadership is not restricted by gender or other innate abilities. The discourse on women's leadership is important and fundamental. Women and men basically possess equal rights; therefore, studies of this subject should continue to be renewed in accordance with changing circumstances. Future researchers are expected to use the Maqashidi Exegesis method as a reference for interpretation in pursuit of public benefit.

Keywords: women's leadership, Muhammad Shahrur, Maqashidi Exegesis, gender equality, Qur'anic interpretation

Introduction

The Qur'an does not state that being male is a requirement for becoming a leader. Men's perceived advantages in physical strength and reasoning have led many societies to regard men as more suitable for leadership. Yet leadership exercised by men is not always good, and leadership exercised by women is not always bad. To this day, women have not been fully regarded as equal in their right to become leaders in both public and family settings. Social stereotypes that continue to regard women as a second social stratum after men have prevented women from being fully recognized as legitimate leaders. This situation is further reinforced by religious doctrines conveyed by some preachers who maintain that leadership is an exclusive right of men.

From the past to the present, Islam has never prohibited its followers from becoming leaders. This is illustrated by Q.S. An-Naml [27]: 23, which states: "Indeed, I found a woman ruling over them, and she has been given everything and possesses a great throne." The woman

referred to is Queen Balqis, who ruled the Kingdom of Saba. This indicates that there is no categorical prohibition against women becoming leaders. Discussions of leadership in Q.S. An-Nisa' [4]: 34 have continued from the classical period to the present and have generated debate. Some classical studies of this verse tend to privilege men because they were influenced by patriarchal bias, so that even within the family women were regarded as unsuitable leaders. Contemporary studies, by contrast, tend to emphasize gender equality, inspired by feminist movements that advocate equality between women and men.

One contemporary figure who interprets verses on women's leadership in a relatively comprehensive manner is Muhammad Shahrur. He can be considered bold in presenting interpretations that are independent and relevant to contemporary conditions. In interpreting Q.S. An-Nisa' [4]: 34, for example, he argues that the concept of al-qiwamah is not directed exclusively toward men but also encompasses women. This interpretation differs from many other interpretations. His educational background is also notable because he was trained as an engineer in natural sciences and physics. Nevertheless, he developed new understandings of Islamic law. This background has encouraged the authors to study Muhammad Shahrur's work.

Research on Muhammad Shahrur's ideas concerning women's leadership is no longer uncommon and has been widely discussed by other scholars. This indicates the continuing scholarly interest in his treatment of Q.S. An-Nisa'. Previous studies include Masthuriyah Sa'dan's study, "The Position of Women as Heads of Households in the Contestation of Exegesis and the Negotiation of Reality among Madurese Fishing Communities: A Study of Muhammad Shahrur." Another study discusses leadership in the family according to Islamic law through an examination of Q.S. An-Nisa' [4]: 34 by drawing on the interpretations of several classical and modern exegetes. Efa Rahmawati's undergraduate thesis, "An Analysis of Muhammad Shahrur's Opinion on Leadership in the Household," uses a descriptive-analytical method. A similar discussion appears in Afrida Arinal Muna's study, "The Existence of Women in Leadership Positions in the Qur'an: Application of Muhammad Shahrur's 'Hudud' Theory of Divine Legal Limits." Another related study by Moh. Khasan, entitled "Reconstruction of Women's Fiqh: An Examination of Muhammad Shahrur's Thought," uses a socio-historical approach followed by interpretive and holistic methods.

Based on these works, studies referring to Q.S. An-Nisa' [4]: 34 or to Muhammad Shahrur's thought have not examined Shahrur's work through a maqashid approach. This distinguishes the present article from previous studies because it incorporates the maqashid dimension into the analysis of Shahrur's thought. Accordingly, this research develops previous scholarship. Analyzing Shahrur's thought through a maqashid approach is expected to reveal the underlying dimensions of Q.S. An-Nisa': 34, 35, 128, 129, and 130. The authors consider this method appropriate for analyzing Shahrur's theory concerning women's leadership, particularly leadership within the family.

This article aims to analyze Muhammad Shahrur's thought on leadership as expressed in Q.S. An-Nisa': 34, 35, 128, 129, and 130 from the perspective of Maqashidi Exegesis. The question addressed in this article is whether Shahrur's interpretation contains maqashid principles and functions. The authors hypothesize that Muhammad Shahrur's interpretation can be regarded as gender-equitable rather than patriarchal. Although he did not receive extensive religious education during his youth and is not formally recognized as a religious scholar, his

interpretation addresses maqashid functions and values that correspond to the Qur'an's objectives.

Methods

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative library-research design with a descriptive-analytical approach. The analysis focuses on Muhammad Shahrur's interpretation of women's leadership in Q.S. An-Nisa' [4]: 34, 35, 128, 129, and 130. The study uses Maqashidi Exegesis as the analytical framework, particularly its emphasis on maqashid values, the relationship between text and context, and the realization of benefit and prevention of harm. The approach follows the conception of Maqashidi Exegesis developed in the literature on maqashid-oriented Qur'anic interpretation (Mustaqim, 2019, 2021).

Sources and Data Collection

The primary source is Muhammad Shahrur's interpretation of the relevant Qur'anic verses, especially his discussion in Metodologi Fiqih Islam Kontemporer. Secondary sources include scholarly works on women's leadership, classical and contemporary Qur'anic interpretation, maqashid al-shariah, and previous studies of Shahrur's thought. The researchers collected relevant textual materials through documentary and literature study.

Data Analysis

The analysis proceeded in three stages. First, the researchers identified Shahrur's linguistic and contextual interpretation of leadership, al-qiwamah, nushuz, and related Qur'anic passages. Second, the interpretation was organized into thematic findings concerning leadership rights, leadership criteria, public leadership, family leadership, and conditions that may undermine leadership. Third, these findings were examined through maqashidi values, including humanity, equality, justice, responsibility, freedom, and the protection of religion, life, intellect, wealth, and the state. The analysis also considered an internal tension in Shahrur's argument concerning the use of the tashbih principle.

Results

Conceptual Basis of Leadership

Knowledge of leadership is an important subject to examine at the outset, before studying, understanding, analyzing, and eventually drawing conclusions from the discussion.
Etimologically, a leader is a person who is able to influence and persuade others to take action in order to achieve a common goal. In this sense, the leader becomes the starting point of the structure and the central point of the group process.

In the Qur'an, the concept of a leader can be expressed through several terms, including khalifah, imamah, ulu al-amr, sultan, and wali or awliya'. The word khilafah is the subject form of the past-tense verb khalafah, meaning to replace or take someone's place. This word appears in Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]: 30, where khalifah signifies Allah's designation of human beings as leaders on earth.

The term imamah in Maqayis al-Lughah derives from imam, meaning the leader of prayer. The expression ulu al-amr consists of ulu and al-amr. The latter is the verbal noun derived from amara-yamuru, meaning to command or require that something be done. Thus, ulu al-amr can be understood as those who possess authority. Another term is sultan, which in Arabic refers to government or authority. The term awliya' means closeness and can refer to

those who exercise authority, manage, govern, love, or help others. Indonesian Qur'anic exegetes define leadership as the ability to influence others so that they consciously and voluntarily move toward a desired goal.

Women's Leadership. Women's leadership from the classical period to the present remains an important topic of study. Women's involvement in politics has attracted the attention of many scholars seeking solutions that serve the public good. Women's leadership within the family has also received serious attention.

Men in the classical exegetical tradition were still regarded as possessing the highest authority over women. Such views were associated with misogynistic traditions and consequently produced interpretations that favored men.

In the contemporary era, gender equality has long been promoted, but its implementation remains contested. Cases that diminish women's status continue to occur. The article cites Afghanistan as an example, where the return of Taliban rule was described as restricting women's access to education, marriage choices, and movement outside the home. Such actions are presented as reflecting a patriarchal conception in which men are regarded as superior because of perceived advantages in reasoning and administration and therefore as more entitled to lead women.

Culture and social environment have an important influence on exegetical works. Al-Tabari, as a representative of the classical exegetical period, interpreted Q.S. An-Nisa' [4]: 34 in a partial and atomistic manner. According to the account presented in this article, he treated the verse as legitimizing male authority over women, in a context where patriarchal culture was common. By contrast, the contemporary exegete Fazlur Rahman would approach the verse differently through his double-movement method because the context and ratio legis differ. For Fazlur Rahman, authority is associated with the ability to provide effective solutions to life, and therefore it may belong to either women or men.

To help promote recognition of women's leadership capacity, M. Quraish Shihab notes that women may exercise leadership through discussion and deliberation because leadership can be understood as an effort to influence others. A person may not formally hold a leadership position in an organization, institution, or household but may nevertheless become a leader through his or her influence on others.

Opponents of women's rights commonly refer to Q.S. An-Nisa' [4]: 34 and interpret it broadly. Some also refer to Q.S. Al-Ahzab [33]: 33 and interpret it textually, assuming that Allah commands women to remain at home and not leave unless there is an urgent and unavoidable need. Contemporary scholars challenge this interpretation. According to the discussion in the article, the verse concerns women and does not restrict their participation in social activities, including political activities. Women therefore have the right to participate in society and politics. Nevertheless, patriarchal culture continues to influence perceptions of women, especially by evaluating them according to their reproductive functions.

Negative stereotypes about women's physical and intellectual capacities and the assumption that women are weak have led some members of society to regard women as unqualified to lead. In this context, the Qur'an is presented as providing guidance for addressing social culture by adapting its application to changing social situations. The article argues that this makes the Qur'an relevant to the social order of seventh-century Arabia while also allowing its guidance to address later circumstances. Although contemporary patriarchy may not always

appear explicitly, the article points to cases outside Indonesia, such as Afghanistan, as evidence that patriarchal practices can re-emerge when Qur'anic texts are interpreted rigidly without considering social conditions.

The Qur'an is presented as promoting public benefit and respecting human beings rather than degrading one group in favor of another. It also presents every human being as a khalifah, as stated in Q.S. Al-An'am [6]: 165: "And He is the One who has made you successors on earth and raised some of you above others in rank, to test you with what He has given you. Surely your Lord is swift in punishment, yet He is certainly All-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

Muhammad Shahrur's Intellectual Background

Known as a relatively liberal contemporary Muslim thinker, Muhammad Shahrur Deyb was born on 11 April 1938 in Damascus, Syria, and died on 21 December 2019 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. Shahrur was the fifth child of Deyb ibn Deyb Shahrur (1902–2002) and Siddiqah binti Shaleh Filyun. He married Al-Wafiyah Azizah, and they had five children: Thariq, who married Rihab; Al-Laits, who married Olga; Rima, who married Luis; and Basil and Mahsun. Their names were regularly mentioned in the dedications of his works.

During his youth, Shahrur did not receive extensive religious education. He completed his schooling in 1957 at the Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakib educational institution in Midan. At the age of nineteen, he received a government scholarship for five years, from 1959 to 1964, to continue his studies at the Moscow Institute of Engineering in civil engineering. After obtaining his diploma in 1964, Shahrur was appointed as a professor in the Civil Engineering Department at Damascus University.

In 1957, Shahrur again received a government scholarship to pursue master's and doctoral studies at Ireland's Trinity College, Dublin, in the fields of soil mechanics and foundations. He completed his master's degree in 1969 and his doctoral program three years later, in 1972. According to the educational history presented in the article, there is no record of specialized religious education, formal training, certification, or other written evidence of such training.

Nevertheless, Shahrur's family appears to have maintained a good relationship with Shaykh Nasir al-Din al-Albani, a twentieth-century hadith scholar known for his conservative orientation. This relationship did not determine Shahrur's intellectual orientation because his interpretation did not follow the hadith perspectives associated with Albani or other classical hadith scholars. During his studies in Ireland, Shahrur became interested in Islamic studies, particularly Qur'anic studies. He also deepened his study of philosophy by engaging with thinkers such as Fichte, G. W. F. Hegel, Immanuel Kant, Alfred North Whitehead, Bertrand Russell, and others. Christmann therefore characterizes Shahrur's thought as unorthodox, emerging from a combination of idealist rationalism, speculative philosophy, and the mathematical and technical reasoning he had mastered.

Muhammad Shahrur argues that the hudud theory, or theory of limits, is an important concept for addressing contemporary challenges. He developed this theory in response to what he regarded as the failure to achieve modernization when past legal interpretations were used to regulate contemporary problems. According to Shahrur, the theory rests on two concepts. The first is al-istiqamah, represented as the straight line or fixed limit determined by Allah in the Qur'an. The second is al-hanifiyyah, represented as flexibility and the ability to bend in response to social conditions. Without these two concepts, Shahrur argues, Islam could not remain relevant across different times and places.

The theory introduces new methods of reinterpretation, including linguistic analysis, mathematical analysis, and hermeneutical interpretation. It consists of several forms. First, the minimum-limit theory (al-hadd al-adna) refers to the lowest limit determined by Allah, which human ijtihad may not reduce. Second, the maximum-limit theory (al-hadd al-a'la) refers to the highest limit determined by Allah. Human beings may exercise ijtihad, but they may not exceed that upper boundary. Third, the simultaneous minimum and maximum limits (al-hadd al-a'la wa al-hadd al-adna ma'an) combine the upper and lower limits, allowing ijtihad to move between them. Fourth, the simultaneous minimum and maximum limits beginning from a single point (al-hadd al-a'la wa al-hadd al-adna ma'an 'ala nuqtatin wahidatin) place both limits at the same point, leaving no room for choosing a lighter or heavier interpretation. Fifth, the maximum-limit theory approaching a straight line (al-hadd al-a'la bi khattin muqaribin li mustaqim). Sixth, the closed positive maximum limit, which cannot be exceeded, while the negative minimum limit may be exceeded.

Muhammad Shahrur, known as a contemporary Muslim thinker, was highly productive. His works include Al-Kitab wa Al-Qur'an: Qira'ah Mu'asirah (1990), Al-Iman wa Al-Islam (1996), Nahwa Ushul Jadidah lil-Fiqh al-Islami: Fiqh al-Marah (2000), Dirasat Islamiyah Mu'asirah fi al-Dawlah wa al-Mujtama': Manzumat al-Qiyam (1994), Ta'lif Manabi' al-Irhab (2008), The Qur'an, Morality and Critical Reason: The Essential Muhammad Shahrur (2009), Al-Qishah al-Qur'aniyyah al-Mu'asirah I: Madkhal ila al-Qishash wa al-Qishah Adam (2010), Al-Qishah al-Qur'aniyyah Qira'ah Mu'asirah II: Min Nuh ila Yusuf (2011), and Al-Islam wa al-Ihsan: Min Nataij al-Qira'ah al-Mu'asirah (2016). Several of his works have been considered controversial, including his interpretations of hijab, inheritance, polygamy, the meaning of faith, the meaning of sunnah, and leadership, particularly women's leadership.

Leadership Rights and Al-Qiwamah

Beginning with a linguistic analysis, Shahrur interprets the first phrase, al-rijalu qawwamuna 'ala al-nisa', by explaining that al-rijal is the plural of al-rajul and refers to adult men, while al-nisa' is the plural of imra'ah and refers to adult women. This indicates that adulthood represents a dimension of human maturity. Al-qawwamuna may mean caretakers or those who take responsibility, and it can refer to both women and men.

In the following phrase, Allahu faddala ba'dahum 'ala ba'd, Shahrur questions the assumption that the pronoun refers exclusively to men. If it did, the meaning would be that Allah has favored some men over women. Shahrur asks whether only men can receive such advantages and how the verse would account for women who possess greater abilities than men. He therefore argues that the reference encompasses both men and women, yielding the meaning that Allah has favored some men and women over other men and women. The assumption that male leadership is based primarily on physical strength is thus challenged. According to Shahrur, the relevant superiority does not refer merely to innate physical characteristics but to personal qualities such as effective management, cultural maturity, and wisdom.

Muhammad Shahrur expresses surprise that preachers rarely present Khadijah as an example of a woman who played a more dominant and superior role than a man within the family. In her relationship with the Prophet Muhammad, Khadijah took the initiative and, according to the historical account cited, proposed marriage to him. Her leadership did not end with the marriage. She managed the family's affairs while the Prophet was occupied with

preaching. For Shahrur, Khadijah provides an example of a woman exercising leadership within the household.

In linguistic terms, Shahrur distinguishes the word dhakar, which refers to the biological category of male sex, from rajul, whose plural is rijal and which carries a qualitative meaning. According to him, anyone who possesses the dimension of rujuliyyah, including mobility, power or capability, and responsibility, may become a leader, whether male or female. When a leader possesses rujuliyyah in the sense of being able to provide financial support, even a woman can exercise leadership and realize public benefit.

In the preceding discussion, Shahrur states that leadership is closely related to individual competence and capability, whether the individual is male or female. The second aspect of his interpretation of al-qiwamah concerns wealth and material resources as a criterion for leadership rights. Shahrur explains that even when a person who possesses wealth lacks cultural and environmental sensitivity or adequate capability, wealth may still provide leadership because the person has the power to distribute and manage resources, referred to as qiwamat al-infaq. The economic power or leadership of individuals, families, and certain developed states is therefore not necessarily related to their level of civilization or capability.

According to Shahrur, al-qiwamah is not limited to the family or to the husband-wife relationship, as earlier exegetes and jurists often discussed. The concept can also be applied to agriculture, production, management, trade, and other forms of work. It may likewise apply to education and teaching, medicine, sports, law, and other positions of authority.

Women's Leadership in the Public Sphere

Shahrur draws on the account in al-Bayan concerning the mother of Maryam in Q.S. Al 'Imran [3]: 36: "So when she delivered her, she said, 'My Lord! I have given birth to a female.' And Allah knew best what she had delivered; and the male is not like the female." The verse is interpreted in the article as indicating that the female can be superior to the male. Shahrur employs the Arabic rhetorical principle of tashbih, according to which the musyabbah bih, or the entity used as the point of comparison, is more significant than the musyabbah, or the entity being compared.

Exegetes have debated whether the statement "the male is not like the female" was uttered by Maryam's mother or constituted a divine statement. For Shahrur, this distinction does not change the central issue. If the statement came from Imran's wife, it remains a strong statement made by a woman who serves as a model for Muslim women. If it came from Allah, its meaning would be even more significant. The central problem, according to Shahrur, arises when exegetes assume that men are inherently more honorable than women and use that assumption to interpret the verse.

Shahrur also draws on the story of the Queen of Saba in Q.S. An-Naml [27]: 23, 32–33. The Qur'an states: "Indeed, I found a woman ruling over them, and she has been given everything and possesses a great throne." Balqis later says: "O chiefs! Advise me in this matter. I would never make a decision until you are present with me in council." They respond: "We are a people of great strength and military might, but the decision is yours, so consider what you command."

From this account, Shahrur argues that Prophet Solomon objected to the people's worship of the sun, not to their being governed by a woman. Queen Balqis also practiced consultation in governing her kingdom, which Shahrur treats as evidence of women's intellectual capacity.

The story of Balqis can therefore be considered a basis for women's participation in politics. The same reasoning applies to professional leadership in agriculture, trade, sports, and other fields that may require physical strength. In the modern era, technological facilities can replace or reduce the need for physical strength.

In discussing women's leadership in the public sphere, Shahrur concludes by interpreting the phrase fa al-salihat qanitat hafizat li al-ghayb bima hafiza Allah. The word al-salihat is often associated with the narration of al-Bukhari no. 293, which describes women as deficient in reason and religion. The article explains that the reference to deficient religion concerns menstruation, which prevents Muslim women from performing prayer, fasting, and other acts of worship. Shahrur, however, argues that al-salihat should not be restricted to ritual matters. Referring to Q.S. Al-Anbiya' [21]: 89–90, he notes that aslaha can be associated with pregnancy in that context. In Q.S. An-Nisa' [4]: 34, he understands al-salihat as referring to women who are obedient and protect their husbands' privacy.

The discussion of Q.S. An-Nisa' [4]: 34 therefore concludes that the attributes that can justify leadership, including wealth, moral character, education, and leadership ability, are not granted exclusively to men. Certain qualities may also qualify women for leadership. Consequently, leadership responsibility need not cause concern when it is entrusted to a person who possesses the relevant capabilities, whether male or female.

Characteristics That May Undermine Leadership

The preceding discussion addresses the qualities required of women who are granted leadership rights. These qualities include obedience and the ability to protect the husband's privacy. The present discussion focuses on nushuz, understood as conduct that can undermine women's leadership rights.

Shahrur understands nushuz in this verse as arbitrary and authoritarian behavior. If such behavior begins to appear among women who possess leadership rights, he identifies three measures based on his interpretation of Q.S. An-Nisa' [4]: 34. First, advice and guidance should be offered through respectful speech. Second, in the specific case of a wife, temporary separation in sleeping arrangements may be applied. Third, the phrase often translated as "strike them" is interpreted not as physical beating but as the withdrawal of leadership authority in order to restrict the exercise of power. Shahrur notes that the Arabic word ad-darb has several meanings, including striking, giving an example, imposing firm order, and traveling or departing. He also refers to a hadith of Abu Dawud concerning the prohibition of striking the servants of Allah. Thus, the relevant phrase should not be understood as permitting physical violence.

If these three steps fail, Q.S. An-Nisa' [4]: 35 provides a further step through tahkim, or arbitration, by involving a third party as a mediating solution.

When a male leader commits nushuz, Shahrur interprets Q.S. An-Nisa' [4]: 128 as guidance for women who fear that their husbands may display nushuz and al-i'rad. The husband's nushuz is characterized by arrogance, pride, and authoritarian behavior, which can deprive the woman of even minor rights unless she first obtains explicit permission from her husband. Conflict between husband and wife can be addressed through reconciliation. The obstacle to reconciliation is not simply stinginess or greed, but the monopolization of goodness for oneself while denying goodness to another person. Al-i'rad refers to indifference that arises in the context of a second wife. Shahrur reinforces this interpretation through Q.S. An-Nisa'

[4]: 129. If a husband exercises family leadership while displaying these characteristics, the wife has two choices: accept the situation or reject it by seeking divorce or transferring leadership authority.

Discussion

Maqashidi Exegesis as an Analytical Framework

Maqashidi Exegesis consists of two words, tafsir and maqashidi, arranged as a descriptive construction. The word tafsir is the verbal noun of the root al-fasr, meaning to explain something. Etymologically, al-tafsir means to uncover a hidden meaning, explain, and clarify. Maqashid is the plural of maqsad and maqsid, derived from the past-tense verb qashada. Linguistically, maqashid carries several meanings, including purpose, direction, reliance, reaching something, and following a straight path.

Three Muslim scholars, Wasfi ‘Ar Abu Zaid, al-Atrash, and Abdo Khalid, define Maqashidi Exegesis using different formulations. Their views can nevertheless be summarized by stating that tafsir and maqashidi constitute an approach to interpreting Qur’anic verses by examining their implicit meanings in accordance with the Qur’an’s overarching vision, namely the realization of human welfare. Maqashidi Exegesis seeks to address contemporary problems by realizing benefit and preventing harm while remaining guided by the Qur’an and Hadith. Human problems continue to develop with changing circumstances, whereas the Qur’an and Hadith do not change or increase in number. Abdul Mustaqim formulates the principle as jalb al-masalih wa dar’ al-mafasid, meaning the realization of benefit and the prevention of harm.

The roots of Qur’anic interpretation through the maqashid al-shariah method existed long before the formal codification of Qur’anic exegesis. This can be seen in several legal opinions attributed to the Companion Umar in understanding Qur’anic texts, including cases involving the distribution of war booty, interfaith marriage, congregational tarawih prayer, and the suspension of punishment in theft cases. Nevertheless, the maqashid method has received less attention than linguistic approaches to Qur’anic interpretation.

Ontologically, Maqashidi Exegesis is an approach to Qur’anic interpretation that combines several elements: (1) the method must be consistent with maqashid al-shariah principles; (2) the interpreter should adopt a moderate approach when using transmitted evidence and rational evidence to identify Qur’anic objectives; and (3) the interpreter should adopt a moderate approach to text and context. Some researchers still misunderstand Maqashidi Exegesis by equating it with maqashid al-shariah, even though the two differ in formulation, terminology, and conceptual scope. They remain related, however.

Abdul Mustaqim divides the theory of Maqashidi Exegesis into three ontological levels. First, Maqashidi Exegesis as a philosophy of interpretation means that maqashid values serve as the philosophical basis and spirit of Qur’anic interpretation. These values are universal moral ideals aimed at realizing benefit and preventing harm, including humanity, equality, justice, moderation, and freedom and responsibility.

1. Humanity. According to Sada, humanity is a distinctive value possessed by human beings and is universal because it is not limited by group, tradition, race, or culture.
2. Equality. Equality refers to equal human status in obtaining human rights so that individuals can participate and play a role in life.

3. Justice. Justice guarantees peace and security and binds human beings through principles of harmonious balance and brotherhood. It is upheld to protect human rights and human dignity.
4. Moderation. Moderation means avoiding harsh and extreme approaches to religious texts and considering both textual and contextual dimensions.
5. Freedom and responsibility. Freedom means the absence of unnecessary barriers, restrictions, coercion, burdens, or obligations, while actions remain accompanied by responsibility.

Therefore, Qur'anic interpretation must understand and consider the maqashid that lie behind its linguistic structure. Second, Maqashidi Exegesis as methodology means using maqashid theories as procedures for analyzing and understanding the Qur'an while maintaining its linguistic features. Maqashidi Exegesis therefore occupies a position between literalist-scripturalist models and substantialist-liberal approaches.

Third, Maqashidi Exegesis as a product refers to an exegetical product that focuses on maqashid in each interpreted verse. Many scholars apply maqashid theory only to legal verses. The theory, however, can also be applied to theological verses, parables, socio-political verses, and narrative verses.

Using Maqashidi Exegesis to interpret the Qur'an requires attention to the maqashid al-shariah dimensions that seek to realize human welfare, known as al-usul al-khamsah: preservation of religion (hifz al-din), life (hifz al-nafs), intellect (hifz al-'aql), lineage (hifz al-nasl), and wealth (hifz al-mal). Two additional principles are also identified: preservation of the state or homeland (hifz al-dawlah) and preservation of the environment (hifz al-bi'ah).

The hierarchy of maqashid values is divided into three levels. Al-dharuriyyat, or primary needs, are essential necessities of life and include the five fundamental protections of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and wealth. If these five are not fulfilled, human existence is threatened. Al-hajiyyat, or secondary needs, are needs that are not essential to existence. Their absence does not threaten the five fundamental protections, but fulfilling them prevents hardship. Al-tahsiniyyat, or tertiary needs, are aesthetic and complementary needs associated with a person's dignity in society and before God.

Maqashid al-Shariah Dimensions in Shahrur's Interpretation

Islam does not restrict leadership on the basis of gender, as reflected in Q.S. Al-An'am [6]: 165. Nevertheless, many people have been influenced by generalized interpretations and traditions considered misogynistic. Shahrur attempts to revive the substantive meaning of leadership in a way that is more gender-equitable. The authors associate this effort with the maqashid of preserving religion (hifz al-din) from erroneous interpretations.

The connection with hifz al-nafs can be seen in the equality that Shahrur proposes in understanding the leadership verse. Treating human beings as equal protects human dignity and reduces oppression, thereby protecting individuals from violence and arbitrary treatment based on assumptions of unequal status.

According to Shahrur, the factor that can invalidate a husband's leadership is nushuz, namely arrogance, pride, and authoritarianism. Such conduct allows desire to dominate and can impair rational judgment. Removing leadership authority when such conduct emerges is associated with the protection of intellect (hifz al-'aql), because leadership should not cause a person to lose rationality or become dominated by greed.

In identifying the qualities that Allah grants to a leader, Shahrur emphasizes effective management. One example is sound financial management. If a leader possesses this quality, the leader can help protect state assets, prevent financial mismanagement, and avoid corruption. This corresponds to the maqashid value of protecting wealth (hifz al-mal). In relation to protecting the state, Shahrur explains that leadership should be based on ability, including the ability to formulate strategies. A person who can take responsibility for leadership can protect the state by maintaining peace and harmony among its citizens.

Maqashidi Values in the Interpretation of Women's Leadership

In examining women's leadership in politics and family life, Shahrur discusses five verses in Q.S. An-Nisa': verses 34, 35, 128, 129, and 130. The article considers Shahrur's treatment of leadership to be contemporary and relevant to changing circumstances. The authors therefore examine his interpretation in relation to maqashidi values and objectives, which seek to realize benefit and prevent harm while remaining guided by the Qur'an and Hadith across different historical periods.

Maqashidi analysis can serve as a framework for examining the problems in Shahrur's thought as a contemporary and relatively liberal Muslim thinker. This section analyzes the maqashidi dimensions underlying Muhammad Shahrur's concept of women's leadership. The approach employed is maqashidi philosophy. Several maqashidi values are identified in Shahrur's interpretation of women's leadership.

Leadership is a fundamental aspect of human existence. Referring to Q.S. Al-An'am [6]: 165, Allah has made human beings khalifah on earth, which means that every person carries responsibility associated with this role. A hadith narrated by Imam Ahmad also explains that every individual is a leader. Shahrur's interpretation of leadership in Q.S. An-Nisa' [4]: 34 attempts to show that leadership is a shared responsibility that must be carried by every human being, whether male or female.

In interpreting the leadership verse, Shahrur emphasizes humanity, particularly in his understanding of al-qiwamah. He argues that al-qiwamah does not apply exclusively to men but also includes women, who can therefore become leaders. The article connects this position with criticism of a hadith understood as diminishing women, namely the report stating that a people who entrust their affairs to a woman will not prosper (Musnad Ahmad no. 19603). According to Shahrur, an ideal leader should possess good management ability, wisdom, and cultural maturity, none of which is intrinsically connected to gender. These criteria are presented as an effort to safeguard human values. A leader who lacks these qualities may face greater difficulty in ensuring the welfare and prosperity of the people. The authors therefore regard Shahrur's approach as emphasizing human dignity in discussions of leadership.

In interpreting the leadership verse, Shahrur presents a principle of equality between women and men. This can be seen in his response to interpretations that understand Allah's favoring of some people in terms of physical creation. Such interpretations can appear to privilege men over women. Shahrur instead understands the verse as referring to differences in quality and leadership capability, as illustrated by the story of the Queen of Saba in Q.S. An-Naml [27]: 23. Her leadership is associated with quality and capability, including consultation in governance. Physical superiority should therefore not be treated as a condition for leadership. Management ability, wisdom, and leadership capacity constitute the relevant criteria, and these can be possessed by both women and men. The article contrasts this view with classical

interpretations and argues that Shahrur emphasizes human dignity by recognizing that all human beings may possess leadership rights.

If Shahrur's interpretation is related to the value of freedom in Q.S. An-Nisa' [4]: 128, it can be seen in his argument that when a male family leader commits nushuz and al-i'rad, characterized by authoritarianism and indifference, the woman has a choice. She may accept the situation, seek divorce, or assume leadership authority. Women are therefore not always placed in the position of being chosen; they may also be given the opportunity and freedom to choose. This freedom remains accompanied by responsibility and acceptance of the consequences of the decision.

In explaining Q.S. An-Nisa' [4]: 34, Shahrur argues that women are in fact superior to men. He bases this statement on the Arabic rhetorical principle of tashbih. His interpretation clearly attempts to promote equality by emphasizing women's rights, opportunities, and qualifications. However, when the concept of tashbih, namely the idea that the entity used as the point of comparison is more significant than the entity being compared, is applied to the relative positions of women and men on the basis of Q.S. Al 'Imran [3]: 36, the resulting comparison can undermine the very principle of equality that the interpretation seeks to promote.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research is to identify and analyze the maqashid al-Qur'an dimensions explained by Muhammad Shahrur in his interpretation of women's leadership. Based on his interpretation of women's leadership, which recognizes women's rights to lead in public and family spheres and gives them opportunities to choose rather than merely be chosen, the article concludes that Shahrur's approach can be characterized as gender-equitable rather than patriarchal.

Based on the preceding discussion and analysis, the authors find that Shahrur's interpretation of Q.S. An-Nisa' [4]: 34, 35, 128, 129, and 130 concerning women's leadership addresses maqashid principles by considering both text and context. The maqashid values identified in Shahrur's interpretation are equality and justice, humanity, responsibility, and freedom.

No work is perfect. Regarding Shahrur's thought, his use of the tashbih analogy, namely that the entity being compared is more significant than the entity used as the comparison, to compare women and men on the basis of Q.S. Al 'Imran [3]: 36 can undermine the principle of equality itself.

The authors acknowledge that this research is not perfect. One limitation is that the study has not yet connected Shahrur's limit theory with his interpretation of the relevant verses. Nevertheless, the study's contribution lies in bringing Shahrur's interpretation into dialogue with maqashid. Future researchers are encouraged to connect Shahrur's limit theory with his interpretation of Q.S. An-Nisa' concerning leadership.

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