

## Domination of Gender Relations in Qiraah Mubadalah

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### Abstract

*This paper examines the dominance of gender relations in the theory of Qira'ah Mubadalah, introduced by Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir as a hermeneutical method for interpreting religious texts based on the principle of reciprocity. In essence, Qira'ah Mubadalah is a universal approach, derived from Qur'anic verses that emphasize justice, equality, and partnership in social relations. However, in its practical application, the theory has been primarily focused on gender issues, particularly the relationship between men and women in both domestic and public spheres. This orientation is inseparable from the patriarchal culture and gendered nature of the Arabic language, as well as from Faqihuddin's feminist perspective as its initiator. Employing a literature study, this research explores the ideas, principles, and application of Qira'ah Mubadalah and situates it within the framework of contemporary Qur'anic hermeneutics and feminist exegesis. The study finds that while Qira'ah Mubadalah significantly contributes to promoting more gender-just interpretations, its dominance in gender-related discourse makes it appear partial. Therefore, Qira'ah Mubadalah should be extended to a broader range of social relations in order to fully embody the Qur'an's universal spirit.*

**Keywords:** *Qira'ah Mubadalah; gender; contemporary interpretation, Islamic feminism*

### INTRODUCTION

The discourse on Quranic interpretation is never-ending and continues to evolve in response to the needs of humanity (Rumba, 2019). To fulfill it, Muslim academics and intellectuals are competing to offer various new approaches to discover new meanings that are more relevant to current developments, one of which is the Qira'ah Mubadalah model. This concept has begun to be widely discussed in contemporary interpretation discourse.<sup>1</sup> Mubadalah as a method of Quranic interpretation was first coined by Faqihuddin Abdul

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<sup>1</sup>News headlines from various online media outlets have frequently raised discussions about mubadalah, including Kompas.id, Kompasiana.com, iNews.id, Suara Merdeka, and Nu Online. From 2019 to the present, for example: <https://pantura.inews.id/read/79630/upayakan-kesetaraan-gender-aktivis-muda-perempuan-kota-pekalongan-kenalkan-metode-tafsir-mubadalah>

Kodir in his magnum opus entitled "Qiraah Mubadalah." Mubadalah is a reciprocal interaction that arises within a relationship.<sup>2</sup>This concept is inspired by religious texts that discuss the mutual relations between men and women.(Lestari, 2020: 55) As a new method of interpretation, Qira'ah Mubadalah is touted as being able to present a new perspective on reading the Quranic text that is more just and reciprocal (Kodir, 2019).

Faqihuddin as the originator of the mubadalah theory also confirms this. In several of his writings published on [www.mubadalah.id](http://www.mubadalah.id) he emphasized that Qira'ah Mubadalah can be simply represented by the sentence: "*Treat others well, as you want them to treat you well.*" This principle is universal so it can be applied in various levels of relationships, starting from friendships between two people, small to large families, communities or organizations, even in the wider scope of society. The principle of mutuality in a relationship will view its members as equals and respected (Kodir, 2017).

From an epistemological perspective, Mubadalah theory was developed as a response to gender-biased interpretations that result from a less reciprocal reading of relational texts. This bias arises from a less reciprocal reading of relational texts. Gendered Arabic language often read only from a male perspective, resulting on understanding of the text that is not female-friendly. (Kodir, 2015). Therefore, it is not surprising that in first appeared, Qira'ah Mubadalah was only applied to gender studies. Several studies following Faqihuddin have shown this. For example, Faisal Haitomi's writings on two hadiths considered gender-biased. These hadiths discuss the existence of women as "*aurat*" (Haitomi & Najwah, 2020) and women as *fitnah* (Haitomi & Sari, 2021). Haitomi uses the mubadalah theory as a means to reread these two hadiths.

Ahmad and Rozihan also discussed the concept of nusyuz in marriage. Using the mubadalah theory, they demonstrated that husbands can also commit nusyuz, through actions such as neglecting their wives, suspecting them of their wives, abusing them, and so on. (Ahmad & Rozihan, 2021). These two studies at least demonstrate that the application of the concept of mubadalah remains trapped and segmented within gender-related issues. This is regrettable, as as an interpretive method, mubadalah theory should be applied more

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<sup>2</sup> According to Ibn Manzur, in his dictionary *Lisan al-Arab* , the term *mubadalah* is translated as something reciprocal. *Mubadalah* is a mashdar form of the root word *ba-da-la*, which is etymologically interpreted by the majority of scholars as replacing.

universally. Its limited application to gender relations only traps the study within the partiality of an interpretive theory that contradicts the universal spirit of the Quran itself.

Based on the above background, this study attempts to uncover the dominant gender relations in Qiraah Mubadalah, initiated by Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir. To strengthen this argument, this paper will also map the position of Faqihuddin's thought within contemporary epistemological studies of interpretation and feminist thought. The final results of this study are expected to provide methodological critique in the future development of Qiraah Mubadalah.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Qiraah Mubadalah: Ideas, Principles and Implementation of the Method**

#### ***The Idea of Mubadalah***

Mubadalah, which in Arabic comes from the root word ba-da-la, means to replace, change, or exchange. This root word is mentioned 44 times in the Quran in various forms and related meanings. The word mubadalah itself can be interpreted as a form of mutual assistance (mufaalah) and cooperation between two parties (musyarakah). Therefore, its meaning can be interpreted as mutual replacement, mutual change, and mutual exchange.

Several dictionaries, both classical ones like Ibn Manzhur's *Lisan al-Arab* and modern ones like *Al-Mu'jam al-Wasith*, define the word mubadalah as an exchange or reciprocity between two parties. In both dictionaries, the term "badala-mubadalatan" is used in the expression when someone takes something from another person and then replaces it with something else. Therefore, the word mubadalah is often used in trade and business terms.

From these various origins, Faqihuddin developed the term mubadalah in his book as a perspective for viewing the relationship between two parties. The term was later developed into a method of interpreting religious texts that serve as sources of sharia principles. The concept of mubadalah embodies the principles of mutuality and participation, embodying the spirit of cooperation and partnership. In his book, Faqihuddin explains that the idea of mubadalah itself has existed in the Qur'an and hadith, and even the concept of mubadalah itself has been reflected in the traditions of classical to contemporary ulama thought.

According to Faqihuddin, the principle of reciprocity in the Qur'an can be seen from the understanding of the verses about the concept of the caliph on earth. That the mandate

of the caliphate given to humans includes both men and women, this mandate requires both to cooperate with each other, help each other and work together in bringing goodness and prosperity to the earth. This reciprocity requires that one gender is not allowed to commit injustice by dominating or hegemonizing the other. This principle of the caliphate is the most general basic principle because it covers relations between humans as a whole. Some verses that discuss this principle include QS. Al-Hujurat [49] verse 13 and QS. Al-Maidah [5] verse 2.

The verse that most specifically emphasizes the principle of mutuality is QS. At-Taubah [9] verse 71

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَيُطِيعُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ أُولَئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

*"The believers, men and women, some of them become helpers for others. They command (do) good deeds and prevent (do) wrong, enforce prayers, pay zakat, and obey Allah and His Messenger. They will be given mercy by Allah. Indeed, Allah is Mighty, Most Wise."*

This verse is supported by verses that explain the principle of equality, such as QS. Ali Imran [3] verse 195, as well as various other verses that explicitly mention the terms men and women in their wording. From the selection of these verses, we can see Faqihuddin's tendency to focus more on verses with the theme of relations between men and women.

Meanwhile, the concept of mubadalah in the hadith is shown by the hadiths that contain the values of mutuality in relationships, such as the command to love one another, help one another and cover up each other's faults. Some of these hadiths include the hadith narrated by the Companion Annas Ra (Sahih Bukhari no. 13), the Hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah (Sahih Muslim no. 7028) and the hadith narrated by Nu'man bin Bashir (Sahih Bukhari no. 6079). Some of these hadiths actually discuss the principle of mutuality in general in human relations, but this principle is used by Faqihuddin as the basis for his theory of mubadalah which specifically discusses gender issues. The principle of equality in gender relations is taken by Faqihuddin from the hadith narrated by Aisha Ra.

(HR Abu Dawud 236) إنما النساء شقائق الرجال

According to Faqihuddin, the hadith embodies the principles of partnership and equality. The word "syiqaq" in the text of the hadith is the plural of "syaqaiq," which means twin, similar, or identical.

Besides being based on the principles of mutuality and equality in the Qur'an and Hadith, the concept of mubadalah is also inspired by the traditions of classical and contemporary Islamic scholars. In the classical tradition of thought, the mubadalah method is rooted in the classical interpretation method that seeks to find a harmony between the dualism of meaning: muhkam-mutasyabih, amm-khass, muthlaq-muqayyad, and qath'iy-zhanny. In this dualism of meaning, Islamic scholars strive to find a more integral interpretation, so that an interpretation does not lose one meaning when applied to its antithesis. In the same effort, qiraah mubadalah seeks to find a formulation so that texts that only touch on one gender can be applied to both.

Meanwhile, in the contemporary realm, Faqihuddin drew inspiration from Abu Syuqqah's thoughts in his seminal work, *Tahrir al-Mar'ah fi Ashr al-Risalah*. She was a feminist scholar who attempted to reinterpret hadith texts, which served as references for improving the social conditions of Muslims, particularly those concerning women's issues. Faqihuddin acknowledged that Abu Syuqqah's theories, concepts, and methods had made significant contributions to his method of interpreting mubadalah.

The application of mubadalah theory, which focuses solely on gender studies, is inseparable from the underlying factors. There are at least two primary factors: language and culture. The patriarchal culture that existed in the pre-Islamic era has contributed to misogynistic, gender-biased interpretations. As a result, society prioritizes men's perspectives over women's in religious understanding and practice. Meanwhile, the linguistic factor stems from Arabic, which differentiates gender in its rules and structure. This distinction further exacerbates the inequalities that exist in the social and religious life of Muslims. The Quran, which is in Arabic and was revealed in an Arab social context, is, whether acknowledged or not, influenced by both.

Based on these two issues, Faqihuddin proposes the concept of mubadalah to reread reference texts deemed to be rife with gender inequality. By upholding the principles of mutuality and equality, the mubadalah interpretation method is expected to create more just, reciprocal, and unequal relationships between men and women.

### ***Principles and Methodology of Qira'ah Mubadalah***

Through the principle of mutuality and equality that is the spirit of mubadalah, the term was then developed into a method of interpretation of religious texts that are the source of sharia rules. Faqihuddin named this interpretation method "*Qira'ah Mubadalah*".<sup>3</sup> Qira'ah Mubadalah makes men and women as equal subjects in the text, so that the text must also address both and include them in the discussion. Therefore, Qira'ah Mubadalah initiated by Faqihuddin focuses on discussing two things: the relationship of mutuality and partnership between men and women, and how the reading of the texts of the Qur'an and hadith can include both as equal subjects (Kodir, 2019: 60).

In his book, Faqihuddin formulated three ideas that serve as the basic premises of this theory. The *first* is that Islam is present for all groups, including men and women, so its texts must also be directed at both. *Second*, the principle of the relationship between the two is one of mutuality and cooperation, not hegemony or mutual control. *Third*, Islamic religious texts are open to reinterpretation or re-interpretation, thus opening up the opportunity for the previous two premises to be reflected in every interpretative work. (Kodir, 2019: 196)

Faqihuddin has formulated several systematic steps to apply his concept of mubadalah to text interpretation. The first step is to explore universal verses to discover basic Islamic principles. These principles will serve as the foundation for interpreting the entire series of mubadalah methods. Universal principles are derived from verses that explain the principles of Islamic teachings. For example, teachings about faith as the foundation of every good deed, that good deeds will be rewarded and evil punished, that justice must be upheld, that welfare and mercy must be spread, and so on. The content and main messages of these verses must serve as the foundation for interpreting partial texts (Kodir, 2019: 200-201).

The next step is to understand the main idea of the text to be interpreted. This second step applies to relational texts, or those that specifically discuss the roles of men and women. Most relational texts actually mention something partial, practical, and present as an example within a specific scope and time. Therefore, in this relational text, it is necessary to find a

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<sup>3</sup> This term stems from the understanding of mutuality or in Arabic it is called *mafhum mubadalah*. While the reading method with this perspective Faqihuddin calls it *qira'ah mubadalah*, or the reciprocal reading method. Before the term "Qira'ah mubadalah" was patented in his book, Faqihuddin also often used another term to refer to reciprocal reading of the text, namely *qira'ah tabaduliyah* or *hermeneutics of reciprocity*. (Kodir, "Mafhum Mubadalah: Efforts to Understand the Qur'an and Hadith to Strengthen Islamic Reciprocal Justice in Gender Issues.")

main idea that correlates and cohesives with the basic principles of the first stage. Simply put, this can be done by ignoring the subject and object in the text and then taking the predicate as something to be translated in the next stage (Kodir, 2019: 202).

The final step is to translate the idea so that it can be applied to subjects (genders) not mentioned in the text. This final step is where the principle of mubadalah comes into play, namely, in texts that specifically mention only one subject, either male or female. Texts specifically aimed only at men are mubadalahized so that they can also apply to women. And vice versa (Kodir, 2019: 202-203).

### **Qiraah Mubadalah and the Shift in the Epistemology of Contemporary Interpretation**

The treasury of interpretation has a long history in the Islamic world. This is in line with the dialectic of the Qur'an and its history, which has continued to develop since its early revelation until today. As we know, various works of interpretation have been produced from the classical to the modern era, with various methods, styles, and characteristics. (Amalia, 2018 ) This fact has encouraged Muslim scholars to map the periodization of Qur'anic interpretation. One figure who has succeeded in mapping the periodization of interpretation comprehensively is Abdul Mustaqim. Departing from the theory of *the history of ideas* by Ignaz Goldziher, Jürgen Habermas, and Kuntowijoyo, Mustaqim successfully discovered a shift in the epistemology of interpretation, where the process is continuous. Mustaqim maps the periodization of interpretation as having gone through three stages: the formative stage, the affirmative stage, and the reformative stage (Mustaqim, 2010).

The formative era lasted from the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) until around the second century of the Hijriah. During this era, interpretation was part of the practice of the people of that time. The Qur'an practiced by the Companions was exactly the same as the Qur'an taught by the Prophet. During this period, interpretation of the Qur'an was still limited to explaining verses that were difficult for the Prophet to understand, these explanations were conveyed to the Companions through the method of *riwayah*. According to Abdul Mustaqim, interpretation of the formative era is based on quasi-critical reasoning, namely a model of thinking that does not emphasize reason (*ra'yi*) too much and a culture of criticism is not yet widespread. (Mustaqim, 2010) Quasi-critical reasoning is demonstrated by the ease of accepting interpretations without much criticism. This is because during the formative period, the Qur'an occupied the position of subject,

while reality and its interpreters were objects. Therefore, the position of the text became very dominant. (Amalia, 2018). In the author's opinion, this tendency towards quasi-critical reasoning is caused by several factors. First, the formative era was the period closest to the revelation of the Qur'an, so the gap between the text and the context had not yet occurred much. Second, because the authority of interpretation in that era was still very clear: the Prophet Muhammad, his companions, and his successors. This is evidenced by the more dominant use of the *riwayah* method.

The Affirmative Era of Interpretation is a continuation of the formative phase. This era occurred in the Middle Ages when the tradition of Quranic interpretation had more specific and increasingly diverse characteristics (Mustaqim, 2003). Interpretation during the affirmative era was dominated by sectarian-based ideological reasoning. Therefore, Quranic interpretation was often used as a tool to legitimize political interests, schools of thought, and certain ideological schools of thought (Mustaqim, 2010). The development of interpretation emerged significantly during this period. Advances in technology and science have inspired the emergence of various tafsir books by great scholars with diverse styles, ranging from Shi'i and Sufi to philosophical. One of the most prominent characteristics of the affirmative era is the excessive fanaticism of schools of thought and sectarianism. Both of these led to an attitude of blind imitation of the great imam of each school of thought and an intolerance of other schools of thought. This led to the validity of interpretation during this period being determined by its conformity to a particular ideology, school of thought, or political interest (Mustaqim, 2010).

The reformative era was marked by the emergence of several reformist figures such as Sayyid Ahmad Khan with his work *Tafhim al-Qur'an* and Muhammad Abduh and Rasyid Ridha with *al-Manar*, who were called to critique previous works of interpretation that were considered no longer relevant. The efforts of these pioneering figures were then continued by several contemporary thinkers such as Fazlur Rahman, Muhammad Syahrur, Mohammed Arkoun, and Hassan Hanafi. These contemporary thinkers generally took a critical stance towards previous interpretation products that had been widely consumed by Muslims. They sought to break away from old models of thinking that were thick with sectarianism. They also attempted to formulate a new epistemology of interpretation that was seen as able to respond to changing times and scientific developments (Amalia, 2018). In this reformative era, the positions of the Qur'an (text) and reality (context), as well as the interpreter (reader)

operated in a circular, traditional, and dynamic manner. The hermeneutic approach became a distinct trend for these reformative figures (Mustaqim, 2010).

As an academic who emerged in the contemporary era, or what Abdul Mustaqim calls the reformative era, Faqihuddin has been influenced to some extent by the characteristics and tendencies of interpretation in that era. This can be seen from the goals, principles, and paradigms of interpretation formulated in the "Qira'ah Mubadalah" method. As previously explained, Qira'ah Mubadalah, promoted by Faqihuddin, emerged as a response to the imbalance in the reading of reference texts (the Qur'an and hadith), which have been read more from a male perspective. Faqihuddin's efforts represent a form of reform from the interpretation of the previous era, which tended to read the Qur'an only from a male perspective, resulting in gender-biased interpretations and discrediting women.

In this regard, Faqihuddin shares similar assumptions and paradigms with most other contemporary thinkers. This assumption holds that the interpretation of the Quran is relative and tentative. Each interpretation of a text is heavily influenced by the cultural background and underlying assumptions of the interpreter (Mustaqim, 2010). This is what Amina Wadud calls the "prior text" that each interpreter possesses. This prior text prevents a truly objective interpretation, as each interpretation tends to reflect subjective and relative choices (Wadud, 2014). Consequently, a text read from a male perspective will be oriented toward male interests and potentially discredit women (Kodir, 2017).

At the methodological level, Qira'ah Mubadalah also shares the same characteristics as contemporary interpretations in general. Namely, it is oriented towards the spirit or universal principles of the Qur'an. As previously explained, the first step that must be taken in the systematic work of Qira'ah mubadalah is to explore universal verses to discover basic Islamic principles. This principle will become the foundation for interpreting the entire series of mubadalah methods (Kodir, 2019: 200). This shows that Faqihuddin shares the same principle as several other contemporary thinkers, where the interpretation of the verses of the Qur'an must reflect the universal values that are the spirit of the Qur'an. This has been done by Fazlur Rahman with his "double movement" method to understand the moral ideas of the Qur'an (Sumantri, 2013). The same thing is also done by several feminist exegetes such as Amina Wadud and Asghar Ali Engineer who are guided by the principles of justice and equality in the Qur'an (Arbain. Et all, 2017).

Up to this point, the author observes that the characteristics and tendencies of interpretation offered by Faqihuddin in Qiroah Mubadalah are not much different from the various interpretive models of other contemporary thinkers. One thing that distinguishes Faqihuddin's Mubadalah Theory from most other contemporary thinkers is the scientific approach used. In the epistemology of contemporary interpretation, academics often use an interdisciplinary approach that combines classical and modern scholarship. They use modern sciences such as hermeneutics, sociology, anthropology, psychology, etc., to construct their thoughts. The hermeneutic approach has become a trend in the contemporary interpretation tradition. Hermeneutics is a solution offered to overcome the gap between text and context in understanding the verses of the Qur'an. There are various types of hermeneutic approaches used by contemporary thinkers, including Abu Zayd's hermeneutic method, which uses extensive linguistic and humanistic theories. Arkoun with his deconstruction method, Hasan Hanafi with his phenomenological approach, Syahrur with his Islamic legal approach, renowned for his theory of the limits of *hudud*, and Abdullah Saeed, renowned for his contextual hermeneutics approach (Nurkholish, 2021). In this case, Faqihuddin chose to use the hermeneutics of reciprocity, a method of reading texts based on the principle of reciprocity between subjects (Kodir, 2015).

Faqihuddin, methodologically, uses both *bi ra'yi* and *bi ma'tsur* sources. This is because in addition to using the Qur'an and hadith as the basis for monotheism and interpretation, Faqihuddin also conducts critical analysis based on the principles of *ushul fiqh* and presents the opinions of feminist figures to strengthen his arguments (Ihsaniyah, 2020). Specifically, *mubadalah* tends to be a method inspired by the principles of *ushul fiqh*. This is clearly evident from several frequently used terms, for example, in discussing the principles and workings of *mubadalah*, Faqihuddin frequently uses the terms *dalalatul lafadz*, *taglib*, *mafhum*, and *maqasid al-syariah*. These terms are familiar terms in the study of *fiqh* and *ushul fiqh* (Kodir, 2019: 195-202). This tendency is certainly inseparable from Faqihuddin's own background as an academic in the fields of *sharia* and *hadith* (Ihsaniyah, 2020).

Based on the above tendencies and characteristics, Faqihuddin's Qiraah Mubadalah can be categorized as a contemporary interpretation, which, according to Abdul Mustaqim, falls within the reformative era. However, Faqihuddin differs fundamentally from other contemporary thinkers in his hermeneutical approach. Faqihuddin makes a breakthrough in creating gender justice without disrupting the textual-contextual meaning and historical

aspects of the text. Instead, he focuses on the principle of interrelationship between the subjects within it. Furthermore, Faqihuddin utilizes a set of classical sciences such as nahwu-shorof and ushul fiqh in constructing his theory, a practice rarely employed by other contemporary thinkers. Faqihuddin also draws inspiration from the Qur'an and hadith as the basis for his understanding and theoretical foundation.

### **Faqihuddin's Position of Thought in Feminist Interpretation**

The feminist movement and discussions about gender equality have become a widely discussed global issue in the contemporary era. Although the idea of women's liberation has emerged since the Middle Ages, even in the early days of Islam itself<sup>4</sup>, the feminist movement actually found its momentum in the 18th century with the development of various feminist movements in the West. In the study of Rosemarie Putnam Tong, the Western feminist movement began in the 18th century with the emergence of the liberal feminist movement (Tong, 2010). The main demand fought for by this movement was equal human rights. Then the next feminist movement to develop was Radical Feminism. This movement emerged from the social change movements that developed in the West in the 1950s and 1960s. They believe that women are more valuable than men, so they deserve to occupy positions above men (Ghazali, 2020).

The feminist movement that emerged in the West tends to be chauvinistic (overly patriotic), which can potentially turn the ideal of women's liberation into resistance or even oppression of men. Therefore, according to Eni Zulaikha, a liberation effort is needed that will lead to a just societal structure. This is not a traditional-conservative anti-feminist movement or a modern, progressive-chauvinistic pro-feminist movement, but rather an integrative, Islamic post-feminist movement that positions women as partners to men. In this case, women are positioned not as rivals of men nor as subordinates of men, but are positioned as equals to become partners of men (Zulaikha, 2017).

Zulaikha's statement seems to align with the feminist thinking offered by Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir. As an Islamic feminist, Faqihuddin, through his *Qiraah Mubadalah*, proposes a relationship between men and women based on the principle of mutuality between the two.

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<sup>4</sup> Christine de Pizan wrote *The Book of the City of Ladies* in the 15th century, Theology of women's liberation in the Qur'an (the prohibition of female infanticide, property rights, and inheritance rights).

In Faqihuddin's view, the relationship between men and women should be based on the principles of partnership and cooperation, not a structural-hegemonic relationship (Kodir, 2017). According to Faqihuddin, Qira'ah Mubadalah aims to balance the existing relationship between men and women, shifting from the hierarchical relationship that tends to be seen today to an egalitarian one (Kodir, 2019: 59).

Feminist interpretation emerged as a response to interpretations of Quranic verses that were deemed gender-biased. Gender-based Arabic language rules, the dominance of male interpreters, and the deeply rooted patriarchal culture in society are suspected to be the causes of the emergence of gender-biased interpretations (Zulaikha, 2016). Feminist interpretation also emerged as a form of awareness of the gap between the normative-idealist teachings of the Quran and its interpretation at the normative-historical level. The normative teachings of the Quran, which firmly convey the principles of justice, equality, cooperation, and even efforts to liberate women, often differ from the interpretations that emerge in the normative-historical realm. This is evidenced by the existence of interpretations that often demean women in tafsir books (Zulaikha, 2016). For example, the verse *al-rijal qawwamuna 'ala al-nisa'* (QS al-Nisa' [4]:34) was understood by classical interpreters as an affirmation of the superiority of men over women. In fact, all gender injustice can be justified in Islam according to the views of the classical commentators, precisely because of this verse (Zamakhsyari, 1977).

Up to this point we can understand that, despite being an extraordinary source of scientific knowledge, in certain dimensions traditional interpretations are also a source of unequal gender bias constructions. It is at this moment that an Islamic feminist approach emerges to deconstruct this bias. Islamic feminism believes that there is no fundamental conflict between Islamic teachings and the principles of gender justice. What needs to be criticized is not the sacred text itself, but rather how it has been interpreted narrowly and disproportionately by some commentators. Several Muslim feminists have emerged with deconstructive ideas to break down this bias. Fatima Mernissi, in *“The Veil and the Male Elite”* examines how hadiths and interpretations are structured in a spirit of maintaining male power and excluding women from the historical stage (Mernisi, 1991). Through a socio-historical approach, she seeks to reveal that male dominance in interpretation is not divine will, but rather the result of a historical construction that can be scientifically and critically reviewed.

Furthermore, several feminists have emerged with their hermeneutics of justice to deconstruct the meaning of verses interpreted as gender-biased. Amina Wadud offers a monotheism-based approach that reflects essential justice in the relationship between humans and God and between humans. With this principle, verses such as Surah An-Nisa': 34 are not understood as justification for absolute male leadership over women, but rather as contextual, not natural, social responsibilities. Meanwhile, Asma Barlas uses an intertextual approach to demonstrate that the verses of the Quran cannot be separated from the general spirit of justice (Sholikhah, 2025)

Following the deconstruction of meaning, Faqihuddin emerged as an agent of reconstruction. He offered a new paradigm based on reciprocity, positioning women as partners to men. Faqihuddin aimed the idea of reciprocity in every verse discussing the relationship between men and women to create an equal position between the two. Faqihuddin's first analysis focused on reconstructing the meaning of the text. This had tended to be interpreted unilaterally by one of its subjects. This was evident in his interpretation of the verses in the context of the household. Faqihuddin agreed that the meaning of *azwaj* should be understood as a partner, meaning it can refer to both sexes, including both wife and husband. Thus, both men and women play equal roles as subjects under certain conditions (Hakim, 2020).

Lukman Hakim in his writing explains that the construction of feminist thought built by Faqihuddin does not intend to equate women with men physiologically or biologically, where such efforts have been carried out by several feminist groups who believe that the differences between men and women are caused by social constructs. Men are always claimed to have masculine traits while women are always identified with their feminist attitudes. Therefore, to create equality in gender, it is necessary to restructure roles in the social context. In this regard, Faqihuddin differs from several other feminists.

Faqihuddin places women and men in different spheres. Although Faqihuddin acknowledges that both originate from the same substance in creation, this does not make the physiological and biological aspects of women and men the same. To create equality for women, Faqihuddin applies *Qira'ah Mubadalah*, which places women on an equal footing with men. This view seems to explain that women desire the same freedom and roles as men, despite their feminine nature (Hakim, 2020). According to Lukman Hakim, Faqihuddin's efforts to reproduce the meaning of the order of linguistic symbols in religious texts are

identical to the equality arguments adopted by postmodern feminists, represented by figures such as Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, and Elizabeth Grosz. Therefore, Lukman categorizes Faqihuddin's feminist thinking as postmodernist feminist thinking (Hakim, 2020).

### **Dominance of Gender Relations in Qiraah Mubadalah**

The tendency of mubadah theory to focus solely on gender issues can be seen in the book "Qira'ah Mubadah," which is a mandatory reference for discussions of mubadah theory. The book consists of several chapters that focus on issues related to the relationship between men and women. Chapters one through three discuss the background, principles, and methodology of mubadah. Subsequent chapters focus more on the paradigm of gender interpretation in classical interpretations and the various contemporary issues surrounding it (Kodir, 2019). Faqihuddin reread the discourse on gender verses by applying the principle of mutuality.

The partiality of mubadalah theory in gender studies is further reinforced by various post-Faqihuddin discourses that focus solely on issues of men and women. This is evident in several relevant studies that address mubadalah exclusively in gender issues. For example, research conducted by Faisal Haitomi attempted to apply mubadalah theory as a means of rereading hadith texts deemed gender-biased. He attempted to apply mubadalah theory to two hadith simultaneously: A hadith that considers women as *aurat* (Najwah & Haitomi, 2020) and a hadith that explains the temptation of women (Haitomi & Sari, 2021). Ahmad and Rozihan then used mubadalah theory to discuss the issue of *musyuz* in marriage (Ahmad & Rozihan, 2021). This fact proves that the study of mubadalah has been trapped in a partial theory in gender studies.

The mubadalah relationship actually applies to humans in general. So the mubadalah principle can be applied in various forms of relationships such as the relationship between the state and the people, children and parents, teachers and students, the majority and minority, and men and women. This relationship can even be applied at various levels, such as between individuals and individuals, individuals and groups, or between groups, both in the local and global scope. However, the discussion of mubadalah conducted by Faqihuddin is more focused on gender relations between men and women both in the domestic and

public scope. This is done because according to him, the relationship between men and women is the key to various existing relationships (Kodir, 2019: 59-60).

Faqihuddin's contribution in developing an interpretation methodology based on mutuality and equality in gender relations actually provides a very revolutionary breakthrough in the world of interpretation. In the author's opinion, the concept of mubadalah proposed by Faqihuddin can be a new alternative to reduce the inequality in text interpretation without worrying about the distortion of the substance of meaning through more frontal contemporary interpretation methods such as the *"Double Movement"* theory offered by Fazlur Rahman or the *"Hudud"* theory offered by Muhammad Syahrur. The simplicity of mubadalah theory in the work of text interpretation is able to present a more just, progressive and reciprocal interpretation without risking the context and substance of its meaning.

Nur Rofiah also emphasized that Faqihuddin's "Qiraah Mubadalah" (religious interpretation) is an important contribution not only for understanding religious texts but also as a way of viewing the world. Qiraah Mubadalah can be used as a new way of viewing social diversity to prevent inequality in relationships. This is because any inequality in relationships will lead to injustice as a consequence of negative views between the parties involved.<sup>5</sup>

The universality of the mubadah theory can be clearly seen from the steps of this theory, explained in the previous section. The first step formulated by Faqihuddin is to explore universal verses to discover basic Islamic principles. This principle will serve as the foundation for interpreting the entire series of mubadah methods. Basic Islamic principles are universal and can be applied to various types of relationships, including gender relations. In the subsequent steps, Faqihuddin applies these principles to verses that specifically discuss the relationship between men and women, then conducts mubadah on these subjects.

In the author's opinion, the principle of mubadalah can be simply applied to other relationships. All that needs to be done is to look for relational verses outside of gender discussions, for example, the relationship between parents and children or the relationship between teachers and students, then continue by mubadalah the subjects. If in gender

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<sup>5</sup> Delivered by Nur Rofiah as a prologue in the book "Qira'ah Mubadalah" by Faqihuddin Abdul Qodir.

relations the subjects that are mubadalah are men and women, then in the child-parent relationship, for example, the subjects that need to be mubadalah are children and parents.

By applying the mubadalah theory in a broader scope, it is hoped that this theory will no longer be known as gender theory and its discussion will be more comprehensive regarding the various forms of relationships that exist in religious texts. In the results and discussion, the writer needs to present the data, explain the arguments, and compare the theory or the previous studies to strengthen the arguments are written in the article.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the study conducted, it can be concluded that the dominance of gender relations in Qiraah Mubadalah emerged because Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir's main focus was responding to patriarchal interpretive bias against women. Faqihuddin's position as an Islamic feminist makes Qiraah Mubadalah very strong in criticizing the unequal relations between men and women, so this theory is better known as a feminist interpretive approach. In fact, methodologically, the principle of mutuality offered by Qiraah Mubadalah is universal and can be applied in various relationships, both in the family, education, society, and broader socio-political relations. Therefore, the development of Qiraah Mubadalah in the future needs to be directed at efforts to expand its application so as not to be trapped only in the partiality of gender issues. Thus, Qiraah Mubadalah can become a comprehensive and relevant interpretive method in responding to the challenges of social justice universally.

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