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**Gender Discourses within Pesantren in Cirebon:
Understanding the Typologies of *Kyais*' Interpretations of the Concept
of *Qawwām***

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Abstract: The gender discourse within pesantren is a significant scientific subject due to its reliance on classical fiqh literature that often maintains patriarchal ideology. One such issue is the interpretation of the concept of “*qawwām*”, a fragment of the Qur’anic verse (An-Nisā’: 34), meaning supporter or protector, in which the kyai (the spiritual leaders of pesantren) predominantly associates the role with men and their responsibilities. This understanding is influenced by the traditional (*salaf*) paradigm and results in a patriarchal interpretation. This study applies descriptive qualitative analysis to answer how pesantren leaders interpret the concept of “*qawwām*” in relation to gender ideology. Data was conducted through interviews with kyais in Cirebon and observations of their family life. The article analyses their understanding of “*qawwām*” based on the trichotomy of gender understanding: extreme patriarchy, moderate patriarchy, and liberal. The article argues that differences in the *kyais*’ viewpoints regarding the distribution of roles within the family can be traced back to their textual, eclectic, and contextual comprehension of religious teachings. The study recommends that an intricate understanding of religious teachings, taking into account the evolving social context and the diverse range of interpretations, may pave the way for a more balanced and egalitarian allocation of responsibilities between spouses in the family.

Keywords: Kyai; *pesantren*, *qawwām*, gender ideology, Cirebon

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Abstrak: *Wacana gender di pesantren telah menjadi subjek keilmuan yang penting. Asumsi umum menyatakan bahwa wacana gender di pesantren didasarkan pada literatur Islam tradisional (kitab-kitab fikih klasik) yang sebagian besar cenderung memelihara ideologi patriarki. Salah satu isu gender yang mendasar terletak pada konsep “qawwām” dalam penggalan ayat al-Qur’an surah An-Nisā’ ayat 34, al-rijālu qawwāmūna ‘alā al-nisā’. Qawwām secara harfiah berarti penyokong atau pelindung. Pemahaman para kyai di pesantren tentang sokongan atau perlindungan ini melekatkannya pada laki-laki dalam bentuk tanggung jawab. Penfasiran dari para kyai tersebut dipengaruhi oleh paradigma salaf dan mengakibatkan sebuah pemahaman yang bernilai patriarkhis. Penelitian ini menganalisis bagaimana para pemimpin pesantren menafsirkan dan memahami konsep tersebut dan bagaimana pemahaman mereka sesuai dengan ideologi gender. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah deskriptif kualitatif dengan pendekatan analisis gender, sedangkan penggalan data dilakukan melalui wawancara dengan para kyai di Cirebon dan observasi terhadap kehidupan mereka. Dalam artikel ini, saya menganalisis pemahaman mereka berdasarkan trikotomi pemahaman gender. Akibatnya, pemahaman mereka merepresentasikan tiga kategori pemahaman gender, yaitu patriarki ekstrim, patriarki moderat, dan liberal. Pemahaman ajaran agama secara tekstual, eklektik dan kontekstual menyebabkan pandangan para kyai berbeda dalam membuat pola pembagian relasi kerja suami isteri dalam keluarga.*

Kata kunci: *qawwām, relasi gender, pembagian kerja, kyai, pesantren*

Introduction

Islam has established the concept of husband-wife relations, even though the concept contained in the discourses of interpretation and *fiqh* is debatable. The existence of rights and obligations of spouse in the household gives rise to the division of roles assigned to each member. This role arises because of the division of tasks in married life. Knowledge of religious teachings and cultural values adopted by the community is not only in the form of understanding but also in action. The understanding of religion that has been explored, studied and understood shall be guidance in observing social life.

Family is the first social basis of community, so Islam regulates the concept, behavior and goals in the formation of a family. These goals in the language of the Qur’an are called *sakinah* (tranquility), *mawaddah* (love) and *rahmah* (mercy). Every human being wants a happy and harmonious

household life that can be realized through harmonious and balanced relationships. This condition can be achieved if they are aware of their rights and obligations.

It goes without saying, the patriarchal culture that is widespread in Indonesian society influences the division of roles in the household. Local people consider the traditional division of roles in the household to be permanent. They consider men to have advantages over women, giving rise to the assumption that women are gender stereotyped as weak. This understanding leads to the marginalization of women in family life. This situation also influences the formation of laws and regulations that maintain patriarchal culture. As an example, Law 1 of 1974 concerning marriage, article 31 point (3), says “The husband is the head of the family and the wife is the housewife”.

Meanwhile, along with the development of modern human mindset as well as the doctrine of feminism, the perception of role of husband and wife in the household changes. Amina Wadud,¹ a Muslim feminist, stated that the advantages of men over women contained in the Q.S. Al-Nisā’ verse 34 must be used by men to support women. With this understanding, there will be a reciprocal relationship between the privileges they receive and the responsibilities they carry. These advantages cannot be unconditional, meaning that not all men have advantages over women in certain respects, and vice versa. Furthermore, presenting an equal partnership between men and women married life is crucial.

In addition, Mufidah² in her study on gender within *pesantren* (traditional Islamic boarding schools) concludes that the division of domestic and public roles can be categorized into three: Firstly, the division of public and domestic roles is relevant because the husband is the breadwinner and the wife is the manager of the household and their domestic roles. Secondly, the division of domestic public roles is no longer relevant, because the task of earning a living can be carried out by either men or women. Thirdly, women may work in the public sphere because of the need to earn a living for, but they must have permissions from their husbands.

¹ Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Fajar Bakti Sdn Bhd, 1993). Amina Wadud, “Alternative Quranic Interpretation and the Status of Muslim Women,” in *Windows of Faith: Muslim Women Scholar-Activists in the United States*, ed. Gisela Webb (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 8–9.

² Mufidah Ch., *Paradigma Gender* (Malang: Bayu Media, 2003). Mufidah, *Gender Di Pesantren Salaf, Why Not? (Menelusuri Jejak Konstruksi Sosial Pengarusutamaan Gender Di Kalangan Elit Santri)* (Malang: UIN-Maliki Press, 2010).

Abduh and Rida'³ divides the roles of husband and wife in a dichotomous manner. According to him, the husband's obligation to provide for his wife is due to the physical and mental advantages of men over women. However, the advantages of man do not mean that he is free from his wife. Rida' then describes the function of men and women in life from the perspective of the function of human organs.⁴ With the position of men as breadwinners, it is easier for wives to carry out their reproductive functions. In some cases, it is possible that a wife has advantages over her husband in terms of knowledge and profession. To put it simply, the division of gender roles is dichotomous, where men work in the public sector and women in the domestic sector. However, according to Qian and Sayer,⁵ generally women's marital satisfaction was lower than men's in each society.

The division of roles in the household has been a discourse among Indonesian scholars.⁶ One of which is Quraish Shihab,⁷ a well-known expert in Quranic interpretation. According to him, women are basically not obliged to serve their husbands in the domestic task. Husbands, who are responsible for providing food and play a role in creating a peaceful family, are the first and foremost educators for children, supported by the mother. Ignoring the potential of the mother means ignoring the identity of women.⁸ The wife's main task is to carry out a reproductive role that cannot be replaced by others. However, the division of roles does not free each other's relationship, at least in terms of the moral obligation to help their partners.⁹

³ Muhammad Abduh and Muhammad Rasyid Rida', *Tafsir Al-Manar* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1999).

⁴ Muhammad Rasyid Rida', *Huqūq Al-Nisā' Fi Al-Islām* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1984).

⁵ Yue Qian and Liana C. Sayer, "Division of Labor, Gender Ideology, and Marital Satisfaction in East Asia," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 78, no. 2 (April 1, 2016): 383–400, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12274>.

⁶ Erwati Aziz, Irwan Abdullah, and Zaenuddin H. Prasojo, "Why Are Women Subordinated? The Misrepresentation of the Qur'an in Indonesian Discourse and Practice," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 21, no. 6 (2020): 238–51.

⁷ M. Quraish Shihab, *Membumikan Al-Quran: Fungsi Dan Peran Wahyu Dalam Kehidupan Masyarakat* (Bandung: Mizan Pustaka, 2007), 411.

⁸ Katie Newkirk, Maureen Perry-Jenkins, and Aline G Sayer, "Division of Household and Childcare Labor and Relationship Conflict Among Low-Income New Parents," *Sex Roles* 76, no. 5 (2017): 319–33, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-016-0604-3>.

⁹ Shihab, *Membumikan Al-Quran: Fungsi Dan Peran Wahyu Dalam Kehidupan Masyarakat*.

The reality of the people of Cirebon is that they are surrounded by many traditional Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) that are considered preserving gender-biased local cultures. *Kyai* is a title carried by someone who has expertise in the field of Islam. They have an essential role in society. The existence of *kyai* in society is a means of controlling culture that enters the community.¹⁰ The Cirebon *kyais* understanding of the concept of division of gender roles in family life is an applicative value from the Quran Surah al-Nisā' verse 34, so the author is interested in knowing about the interpretation of the verse "*al-rijālu qawwāmūna 'alā al-nisā'*", and its application to the formation of models of the division of roles between husband and wife according to *kyais*' thoughts in Cirebon. The objective of this study is to gain insights into the interpretation and comprehension of *kyais* (religious leaders) of traditional *pesantren* in Cirebon on the Qur'anic text of *al-rijālu qawwāmūna 'alā al-nisā'* and its implications for the formation of a husband and a wife role division model. Many assume that the *pesantren* tradition in Cirebon preserves a gender-biased culture and nurtures patriarchal understanding.¹¹

The method employs in this study involves a gender analysis approach. The author tries to understand the concept map of the Cirebon religious leaders (*kyais*), then analyzes it from a gender perspective. The type of research used is qualitative with the aim of understanding the world of meaning symbolized in the perspective of the individual. Sources of data in this study are called informants, namely the *kyais*. Sampling technique is used in order to build theoretical generalizations, so that it is more selective. Data sources are used not in order to represent the population, but rather represent the information. Because the sampling was based on various considerations, in this study the author used a purposive sampling technique, with the author's tendency to choose informants who are considered to know in-depth information and problems and he can be trusted to be a solid source of data. In the implementation of data collection, the choice of informants can develop according to the needs and stability of researchers in obtaining data, because it is the informants who have the authority and competence to provide information or data as expected by the author.

¹⁰ Ahmad Munjin Nasih, "Pemaknaan Masyarakat Santri Atas Fatwa- Fatwa Keagamaan Produk Pesantren," *Ijtihad: Jurnal Wacana Hukum Islam Dan Kemanusiaan* 14, no. 1 (2014): 119–38, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijtihad.v14i1.119-138>.

¹¹ Florian Pohl, "Islamic Education and Civil Society: Reflections on the Pesantren Tradition in Contemporary Indonesia," *Comparative Education Review* 50, no. 3 (August 1, 2006): 389–409, <https://doi.org/10.1086/503882>.

The validity test was carried out using triangulation of data sources. The author tries to compare and double-check the degree of trustworthiness of information obtained through different times and tools. Sources of data include primary, secondary and tertiary data with data collection methods are observation, documents and interviews. Processing begins with editing, classifying and verifying to produce final data, then analyzing and describing it descriptively in the research report.

This article emphasizes that *al-rijālu qawwāmūna ‘alā al-nisā’* has produced the concept of leadership and provision of roles in family life, which is divided into three categories, namely extreme patriarchy, moderate patriarchy, and a liberal view. This article argues that the tradition of *pesantren* in Cirebon, which is commonly considered to preserve a gender-biased understanding of religion, is not entirely true. Based on the data we obtained, the thoughts of the *kyais* of *pesantren* in Cirebon regarding the pattern of the relationship between husband-and-wife division of roles vary. Indeed, *kyais* largely refer to the concept of moderate patriarchy in understanding the pattern of husband-and-wife relations. In its application, the position of men is absolutely to be the leader, while the wife is to complete the leadership of her husband. However, some *kyais* refer to other paradigms, namely liberal paradigm, which states that in terms of family leadership it is not a gender issue but a question of the capabilities of each husband and wife. This concept has implications for the division of functional gender roles to maintain balance, justice and equality of relations. This is in accordance with the view which states that family and professional dimensions are inextricably intertwined, these two types provide possibilities for comprehensively addressing equality issues.¹² Another paradigm is extreme patriarchy which perpetuates the domestication of women because women cannot be equal to men because they are based on their basic nature of having weaknesses. Gender analysis tools and women’s empowerment indicators based on externally imposed frameworks often have little local meaning and can mislead Muslim women's sociological conditions, which ultimately contributing to unsuccessful projects.¹³

¹² Sandra Contzen and Jérémie Forney, “Family Farming and Gendered Division of Labour on the Move: A Typology of Farming-Family Configurations,” *Agriculture and Human Values* 34, no. 1 (2017): 27–40, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-016-9687-2>.

¹³ Emily Van Houweling, “‘A Good Wife Brings Her Husband Bath Water’: Gender Roles and Water Practices in Nampula, Mozambique,” *Society & Natural Resources* 29, no. 9 (September 1, 2016): 1065–78, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920.2015.1095377>.

Equalities between men and women appear in the family resources on which they can count, and through which they can eventually access a certain form of material and economic autonomy.¹⁴ However, in Muslim society, and Asian community in general, women do the major share of housework and that having more children is associated with more housework for women but not for men.¹⁵ This is where the importance of discussing the role of men and women in the household, especially in Muslim families who base their family system through the teachings of Islam. This article consists of three sections. The first section explains the theoretical foundation on which this article stands. While, the second section presents the data on *kyais'* ideas of the husband-and-wife relationship in a household and how the job division of them should be made. The last section provides an analysis of these *kyais'* understanding and divided them into three groups of thoughts. This study ends with a concluding remark.

Trichotomy of gender understanding

An ethnographic analysis, as Khurshid¹⁶ states, reveals how gender equality is a complex process shaped by structural inequalities and cultural norms. However, according to Islamic teachings, gender equality is not always the same as the duties and roles of each husband and wife in the household. This can be seen in the Qur'an Surah al-Nisā' verse 34 *al-rijālu qawwāmūna 'alā al-nisā'* in Qur'an Surah al-Nisā' verse 34 was revealed in connection with the events of Sa'ad ibn al-Rabi' ibn Amru and his wife, Habibah ibn Zaid ibn Abi Zuhair. Sa'ad who was one of the leaders of the *ansar* (the local inhabitants of Medina who took the Islamic prophet Muhammad and his followers into their homes when they emigrated). It is narrated that Habibah committed disobedience (*nushuz*) towards her husband. Sa'ad then beat Habibah, then she complained about her husband's treatment of her father, Zaid ibn Zuhair. The father then complained to the Prophet that his daughter had been beaten by her husband for her disobedience. The Prophet encouraged Habibah to respond in kind (*qisas*).

¹⁴ Juliette Cleuziou, "A Second Wife Is Not Really a Wife': Polygyny, Gender Relations and Economic Realities in Tajikistan," *Central Asian Survey* 35, no. 1 (January 2, 2016): 76–90, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2015.1088228>.

¹⁵ Man-Yee Kan and Ekaterina Hertog, "Domestic Division of Labour and Fertility Preference in China, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan," *Demographic Research* S25, no. 18 (February 10, 2017): 557–88, <https://www.demographic-research.org/special/25/18/>.

¹⁶ A Khurshid, "Domesticated Gender (in) Equality: Women's Education & Gender Relations among Rural Communities in Pakistan," *International Journal of Educational Development*, 2016.

After that, the Prophet commented: “We want one way, but Allah wants another way, and Allah’s way is the best”. *Qisas* law against husband beating was canceled.

‘Ulama’ generally associate the concept of *al-rijālu qawwāmūna ‘alā al-nisā’* with family leadership that develops in the study of sociological family. Several conditions that must be fulfilled in political leadership, such as having extensive knowledge, being able to be fair, and having the ability to carry out their obligations as indicated by their physical and spiritual health, are also requirements for family leadership. However, family leadership is different from political leadership. In terms of family, leadership does not mean power, but a mandate to uphold goodness, direct and educate family members.¹⁷

Gender injustice in the life of Muslims often stems from gender-biased interpretations of Islamic teachings.¹⁸ Therefore, gender analysis of Muslim thinking is at least divided into three groups according to the dynamics of Muslim intellectual thought in Indonesia, namely conservative, moderate and liberal.¹⁹ The first is the extreme patriarchy attached to the Muslim typology of thought here is intended to be a Muslim group that emphasizes the ideal aspects of the literalist meaning of the Qur’an and hadith with a very high portion, so that this conservative group views the literal meanings of the text of the Qur’anic verse or of hadith. The texts are final and there must be no interpretation that contradicts the literal meaning of the two sources.²⁰ The second is a moderate thought, which is often used in various writings by a group that stands between the two extreme right and the extreme left. Moderate groups are those who accept the ideas of feminism and gender as far as being within the corridors of Islam. They argue that not all ideas of feminism of Western origin should be accepted, especially those that are contrary to the teachings of Islam. For the moderate group, Islam comes to overcome gender injustices, it is believed to be an ideal concept. The moderate group have a more advanced view than

¹⁷ M.F. Zenrif, *Di Bawah Cahaya Al Qur’an: Cetak Biru Ekonomi Keluarga Sakinah* (Malang: UIN-Malang Press, 2006).

¹⁸ Nina Nurmila, “The Spread of Muslim Feminist Ideas in Indonesia: Before and After the Digital Era,” *Al-Jami’ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 59, no. 1 (June 11, 2021): 97–126, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2021.591.97-126>.

¹⁹ M. Noor Harisuddin, “Pemikiran Feminis Muslim Di Indonesia Tentang Fiqh Perempuan,” *Al-Tahrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 15, no. 2 (2015): 237–62.

²⁰ Bani Syarif Maula, “Indonesian Muslim Women in Contemporary Political Contestations: Challenges to Gender Mainstreaming Policy in the 2019 Elections,” *Al-Tahrir: Journal of Islamic Thought* 19, no. 2 (2019): 195–217.

conservative groups. Their interpretation of the Quran or hadith is contextual and, therefore, more acceptable and in line with the modern times.

The third is liberal group, which can also be referred to as a progressive, inclusive, and transformative group. This group is usually joined by academics and social activists to fight for the upholding of universal humanist values, such as the development of civil society, democracy, social justice, and gender equality.²¹ The liberal group seek to address the problems left by the moderate group. For the liberal, the solutions offered by moderates, in terms of gender relations, are incomplete because they do not touch the core of the problems. Therefore, liberals reconstruct gender relations through several approaches. The first approach is through theories of social and hermeneutic. This approach is believed to dismantle the gender-biased doctrinal establishment as imprinted in religious texts. The main cause of the gender-biased doctrines come from the textual meaning of the Quran and hadiths, according to the situation and conditions when they came.²²

The Views of the Cirebon Kyais on the Pattern of Role Division of Husband-and-Wife Relations in Regards to the Concept *Qawwām*

In Cirebon, the *kyais*' thoughts in understanding the concept of husband-and-wife relations can at least be grouped into three patterns of views: extreme patriarchy, moderate patriarchy and a liberal paradigm. I conducted by posing several questions that were mapped into two groups of questions. The first is about the concept of *qawwām* in sura an-Nisā' (4) verse 34, and the second is a question that leads to the division of husband-and-wife relations. Regarding the verse "*al-Rijālu Qawwāmuuna 'alā al-Nisā'*" in the context of who has the right to be the leader of the family, *kyais* in Cirebon cling to the opinion that says men are the leaders of family life for various reasons, is an absolute and indisputable thing. Furthermore, the milestone of leadership in family life should lie with the man, while the wife is only as a complement in navigating the ark of home life.²³ The opinion indicates the existence of a hierarchical relationship. This is in line with the

²¹ Saiful Mujani and R. William Liddle, "Muslim Indonesia's Secular Democracy", *Asian Survey*, 49 (4), 2009.

²² Andrea Wolfram, "Excellence as a Gender-Biased Concept and Effects of the Linking of Excellence with Gender Equality," *International Journal of Gender, Science and Technology* 10, no. 1 (2018): 88–107.

²³ Bani Syarif Maula, "Indonesian Muslim Women: Between Culture, Religion, and Politics," *Ijtima'iyah: Journal of Muslim Society Research* 1, no. 1 (2016): 113–31.

interpretation expressed by *mufassir* who viewed the verse using the extreme patriarchy paradigm, al-Zamakhsyari²⁴ and al-Alusi.²⁵ The Qur'an states that it is clear that a man has more values than a woman and male have superiority over female. That one advantage carries over in family life and it has become a doctrine that it is the price of death. The principle that is placed in the relationship of husband and wife in regulating the system of life is a principle that is *fitriah* and natural. An interview with one of the *kyai* from the pesantren of Benda Kerep in Cirebon about the concept of '*qawwām*' stated that "men are believed to have become natural leaders of women, the advantages given by God to men make them responsible for the lives of children and their wives both physically and mentally, on the basis of men's responsibility towards their family; Therefore, the position of men is above women".²⁶

The *kiyai*'s statement above is in accordance with the opinion of Zamakhsyari,²⁷ that there are two reasons why men are the head of family: The first is that men have advantages over women, and the second is that men pay a dowry and support the family. In addition, al-Alusi²⁸ views men as defined as family leaders because of the men's advantages over women, *wahbiy* (obtained from God without efforts) and *kasbiy* (obtained by efforts). Although the Qur'an does not explain the advantages of men over women, this does not show its shortcomings and indicates that the advantages of men over women are clear so it does not require a detailed explanation. The reason expressed by the abovementioned *kyai* with the classical *mufassir* is not much different. Both emphasize the advantages men have, which cause them to be leaders for women in the family. The legal basis used is doctrinal and inherent with a hadith narrated by al-Bukhari,²⁹ which mentions that "treat women nicely, for a woman is created from a rib, and the most curved portion of the rib is its upper portion, so, if you should try to straighten it, it

²⁴ Mahmūd bin 'Umar Al-Zamakhsyārī, *Al-Kasysyāf 'an Haqā'iq Al-Tanzīl Wa 'Uyūn Al-Aqāwīl Fī Wujūh Al-Ta'Wīl*, Jilid 2 (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turās al-'Arabī, n.d.).

²⁵ Abu Sana' Syihab ad-Din al-Sayyid Mahmud Al-Alusi, *Ruh Al-Ma'ani Fi Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-'Adzim Wa as-Sab'i Al-Masani* (Beirut: Idarah Tiba'ah Munirah, 1971).

²⁶ Isma'il bin Muhtadi, "Interview" (Cirebon: The Pesantren of Benda Kerep, 2021).

²⁷ Al-Zamakhsyārī, *Al-Kasysyāf 'an Haqā'iq Al-Tanzīl Wa 'Uyūn Al-Aqāwīl Fī Wujūh Al-Ta'Wīl*.

²⁸ Al-Alusi, *Ruh Al-Ma'ani Fi Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-'Adzim Wa as-Sab'i Al-Masani*.

²⁹ Imam Muhammad Al-Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, Vol. 4 (Cairo: Dār Ibn al-Jauzi lin-Nasyr wat-Tauzi', 2001), book 55, hadith number 548.

will break, but if you leave it as it is, it will remain crooked; so, treat women nicely”.

If a man cannot perform his functions properly in leadership, then the leader is absolutely male and does not pass to his wife, except in case of mental retardation. In the sense that as a man, he should not put more pressure on women, especially if he cannot fulfill what is expected, then he should and should give his wife the opportunity to play an active role. By saying so, every human being must know and be aware of the limits of their own personal abilities. If the physical condition of the man is normal, but does not carry out his duties and functions as a leader properly (always relaxed and does not carry out his obligations as a husband), then the man is included in the *zhalim* criterion, putting something out of place.

A *kyai* of Cirebon considered leadership in the family to be absolute for men, but by emphasizing the situation and conditions of the family, the leadership is still held by the husband with various provisions. The relationship that occurs between the husband and wife and other family members is complementary with a fixed control center on the husband on the condition that he is able to carry out his duties and obligations. According to Kyai Hasbullah,³⁰ women do not deserve to play the role of leaders of the household; the wife occupies a lower position than the husband, so it is natural that the authority to make decisions is in the hands of the husband. The wife's job, according to him, is only to take care of the household and the husband's task is only to make a living for the family, because the involvement of the wife in the public sectors will leave the household chores abandoned.³¹

Kyai Hasbullah asserts that a wife does not have to work because there is no obligation to earn a living for her, while her active role lies in working on domestic affairs, although in essence it is the duty and obligation of the husband. In educating children, as well as protecting and protecting the family from all threats and disturbances is a common duty and obligation between husband and wife. The key to success in dividing the roles of husband and wife in forming a peaceful family is sincerity, namely doing household chores sincerely, not as a burden. Deeds that are done sincerely feel comfortable and there is no burden in carrying them out, all done because of God and belief in getting the right rewards.³²

³⁰ Mustahdi Hasbullah, “Interview” (Cirebon: Pesantren Tahsinul Akhlaq, 2021).

³¹ Hasbullah.

³² Hasbullah.

Another interview with an Islamic figure from the Pesantren of Buntet in Cirebon found that earning a living is considered the husband's obligation and not of the wife, as the *fuqaha* have agreed upon that among the wife's rights over her husband is livelihood. Islam requires the husband to fulfill the needs of his wife, because with a legal marriage bond the wife becomes dependent solely to her husband and is under his responsibility. With these conditions, the husband has the right to consummate her continuously as long as the husband-and-wife bond is still running and the wife is not disobedient or there are other things that hinder the right to subsistence. Household affairs are the responsibility of the husband. This opinion refers to the four schools of jurisprudence that a husband should not force his wife to do household matters, because the marriage contract is not for enjoyment nor for employment. According to Kyai Rofi'uddin,³³ the Hanafi, Shafi'i and Maliki schools do not require wives to serve their husbands, because the marriage contract only gives the right to sexual relations, not devotion for various purposes. Likewise, Rofi'uddin states, regarding the issue of breastfeeding, the jurists of the four schools differ on the obligation to breastfeed for the wife, and if the wife asks for payment for doing household chores, then the husband must pay it.³⁴ He also states that the wife is also allowed to work if the husband feels unable to provide for his wife's needs, so that his wife is allowed to earn a living on her own.³⁵

In interpreting the verse of *qawwām*, a *kyai* uses a moderate patriarchy paradigm, as Quraish Shihab states that the verse speaks of the leadership of the man (husband) towards his entire family in domestic life.³⁶ This leadership does not deprive the wife of the rights in various aspects, including in the right of ownership of personal property and the right of its management even without the consent of the husband. The male leadership in the family is not to show his superiority, with which he can act arbitrarily towards his wife. For men who behave in such a manner will form an atmosphere that is not conducive and will only produce a generation of uncreative slaves. So, even though men are the heads of households, men and women are complementary (inter-complementary), not mutually dominating.

³³ Adib Rofi'uddin, "Interview" (Cirebon: The Pesantren of Buntet, 2021).

³⁴ Rofi'uddin.

³⁵ Rofi'uddin.

³⁶ M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah: Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an* (Tangerang: Lentera Hati, 2008).

An interview with a leader of the ash-Shighar Pesantren in Gedongan Cirebon emphasized that ideally the husband should ensure all the needs of his wife, but this condition can develop and even change according to the situation and conditions. With regard to the phenomenon of “working wife” that is emerging nowadays, the wife is allowed to provide for her husband, children and other family members from her income as long as the woman is willing to do this, even though providing for the family is an absolute obligation for the husband. In fact, Islam tolerates women as breadwinners because of the times that affect the order of life, which causes people to be pushed by new needs and have an impact on primary needs. Maybe the husband is not able to bear the burden of his obligations alone, because there are many dependents that must be supported. So with this situation, the wife helps her husband to maintain the sustainability of the family, as well as the welfare of the children in the future. The woman’s obligation in the family is to please her husband, obey her husband, protect her husband’s property rights, protect herself and her family from things that can damage the harmony of the household. This is based on the teachings of fiqh that the wife’s duty in married life is to obey her husband, take care of herself and her husband’s property, stay away from interfering with anything that can trouble her husband, not show conditions that are not liked by her husband, and so on. It seems very clear that the tasks related to the household are not the wife’s duty, but the husband’s duty. The husband’s duty is to finance, protect, and provide clothing, food and shelter. In essence, household affairs are the task of men, but because of communication and mutual understanding, there is a division of roles that leads to a good and proportional division of tasks according to the situation and conditions.³⁷

Another interview with an Islamic figure from the Nurul Huda Pesantren in Munjul Cirebon revealed that Islam frees a wife from the obligation to work to cover her living needs, especially for her family. All the needs of the wife and household members in the form of basic needs are the husband’s obligations. So that if the husband does not give it, the wife has the right to demand it or take it even without the husband’s permission, because it is the husband who has the obligation to provide a living as the head of the household.³⁸ Meanwhile, Kyai Husein Muhammad, a *kyai* in

³⁷ Imam Bisri, “Interview” (Cirebon: The Pesantren of Gedongan, 2021).

³⁸ Zainal Muttaqin, “Interview” (Cirebon: The Pesantren of Nurul Huda, Munjul, 2021).

Cirebon that represents a minority view of a liberal paradigm,³⁹ explains that a black-and-white view of the law can imply tensions in a marriage between husbands and wives, although it may also be the best way of settlement for them; tensions can arise when between the two sides use each other's authority without compromise; on the contrary, problems can be avoided if all issues in the family concerning rights and obligations are approached through moralistic views and charitable morals.⁴⁰ This approach focuses more on democratic, humanitarian, and common good attitudes and views. Kyai Husein Muhammad posits a holistic understanding of Islam giving way in this direction. He is of the opinion about the division of husband-and-wife relations in the family, that husband and wife have a balanced position as equal partners who help each other; whoever can and has free time, then he or she is the one who does the housework; while the duties and obligations of husband and wife are not absolute, but they can be done together, because everything is based on mutual understanding and communication with each other.⁴¹ Mutual understanding between the two makes these tasks flexible and conditional. Mutual cooperation and respect for one another must be upheld in domestic life. What is actually the husband's duty may shift to the wife's because the situation and conditions at that time demanded that the wife help her husband's duties, and vice versa, carrying it out with pleasure and sincerity. Thus, the division of household tasks is essentially flexible without denying the position of men and women in family life as regulated by Islam.⁴²

Gender Analysis of the Concept of Kyais' Thoughts in Cirebon about the Division of Husband and Wife's Roles

Based on data obtained from several pesantren in Cirebon, the concept of leadership and providing a living for family life as stated in al-Nisā' verse 34 is divided into three types of thoughts: conservative, moderate

³⁹ Yusuf Rahman, "Feminist Kyai, K.H. Husein Muhammad: The Feminist Interpretation on Gendered Verses and the Qur'an-Based Activism," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 55, no. 2 (December 15, 2017): 293–326, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2017.552.293-326>.

⁴⁰ Husein Muhammad, *Fiqh Perempuan : Refleksi Kiai Atas Wacana Agama Dan Gender*, ed. Faqihuddin Abdul Qodir (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2021).

⁴¹ Muhammad.

⁴² Muhammad.

and liberal.⁴³ In regard to gender studies, these thoughts form a pattern of following thoughts:

Table 1:
Kyais' Views in Cirebon on the Pattern of Role Division between Husband and Wife

Extreme Patriarchy	Moderate Patriarchy	Liberal View
Emphasizing a woman to stick to her nature	Affirming women's nature	Rejecting the nature of women's tasks
Women in the domestic sphere	Women can go into the public or domestic sphere, not absolutely	Women (preferably) can go into the public sphere
Strengthening marriage institutions	Strengthen marriage institutions with modifications	Reconstruction of the institution of marriage
Strengthen the family	Strengthen the family	Auto-criticizing family
Rejecting women's leadership	Supporting women's leadership	Supporting women's leadership
Domestication of Women	Double burden	Balanced relationships

1. Extreme patriarchy

This mindset was developed by using the *salaf* paradigm. It considers that only men have the right to become family leaders. Zamakhsyari, for example, interprets *al-rijālu qawwāmūna 'alā al-nisā'* as: "men function as those who rule and forbid women as leaders work for their people." With a different wording, al-Alusi⁴⁴ has the same interpretation, i.e., "the task of men is to lead women, as leaders lead their people, with orders, prohibitions and the like". According to Zamakhsyari,⁴⁵ there are two reasons why a man becomes a leader in the household: the advantages of men over women and men pay the dowry and spend on the family. Furthermore, al-Alusi⁴⁶ views that men are determined as family leaders because of the advantages of men over women, both *wahbiy* (advantages obtained from God without efforts)

⁴³ Harisuddin, "Pemikiran Feminis Muslim Di Indonesia Tentang Fiqh Perempuan."

⁴⁴ Al-Alusi, *Ruh Al-Ma'ani Fi Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-'Adzim Wa as-Sab'i Al-Masani*.

⁴⁵ Al-Zamakhsyārī, *Al-Kasyshāf 'an Haqā'iq Al-Tanzil Wa 'Uyūn Al-Aqāwīl Fī Wujūh Al-Ta'Wīl*.

⁴⁶ Al-Alusi, *Ruh Al-Ma'ani Fi Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-'Adzim Wa as-Sab'i Al-Masani*.

and *kasbiy* (advantages obtained from God with efforts). Even though the Qur'an does not explain the advantages of men over women, it does not show men's weaknesses.⁴⁷

2. Moderate patriarchy

This concept views that men are determined as household heads with various provisions.⁴⁸ Abduh,⁴⁹ for example, sees men's leadership in the family not to show their superiority, which can act arbitrarily against his wife. Even though the man is the head of the household, between men and women are dependent one another, not dominating each other.⁵⁰ According to Quraish Shihab,⁵¹ *al-rijālu qawwāmūna 'alā al-nisā'* talks about leadership of a husband over his entire family. This leadership does not revoke the wife's rights in various aspects, including the right to own personal property and the right to manage it even without the husband's consent.

3. Liberal view

This concept views that family leadership is not determined according to gender differences, but is based on the ability to carry out the family mandate. This concept understands the word *al-rijāl* (men) in *al-rijālu qawwāmūna 'alā al-nisā'* associated with *al-nisā'* (women). *Al-nisā'* connotes feminine, domestic, mild, a lot of forgetting, while *al-rijāl* means people who walk. Sociologically, *al-rijāl* move and work in public spaces, while *al-nisā'* stay at home. The logical consequence of this understanding is that if *al-nisā'* are more active, they become *al-rijāl* in a sociological meaning. Meanwhile, if men are at home, they become *al-nisā'* sociologically. Hence, such men are biologically male (*al-dhakar*), but are sociologically *al-nisā'*.⁵²

Asghar Ali Engineer stated that QS. Al-Nisā' 34 should not be understood apart from the social context of the verse revealed.⁵³ The social structure of the time of the Prophet did not really recognize the equality of

⁴⁷ Al-Zamakhsyārī, *Al-Kasysyāf 'an Haqā'Iq Al-Tanzīl Wa 'Uyūn Al-Aqāwīl Fī Wujūh Al-Ta'Wīl*.

⁴⁸ Al-Alusi, *Ruh Al-Ma'ani Fi Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-'Adzim Wa as-Sab'i Al-Masani*.

⁴⁹ Muhammad 'Abduh, *Al-Usrah Wa Al-Mar'ah*, ed. Muhammad 'Ammarah (Beirut: Al-Muassassah al-Islamiyyah li al-Dirasah wa al-Nasyr, 1981).

⁵⁰ Zenrif, *Di Bawah Cahaya Al Qur'an: Cetak Biru Ekonomi Keluarga Sakinah*.

⁵¹ M. Quraish Shihab, *Membumikan Al-Qur'an: Fungsi Dan Peran Wahyu Dalam Kehidupan Masyarakat* (Bandung: Mizan, 2003).

⁵² Zenrif, *Di Bawah Cahaya Al Qur'an: Cetak Biru Ekonomi Keluarga Sakinah*.

⁵³ Asghar Ali Engineer, *Hak-Hak Perempuan Dalam Islam*, trans. Farid Wajidi and Farkha Cici (Yogyakarta: Yayasan Bentang Budaya, 1994).

men and women. One cannot take a purely theological view, but must use a socio-theological view. The Qur'an consists of contextual and normative teachings. No scripture can be effective if it ignores its context altogether.⁵⁴ When giving certain advantages to men over women, the Qur'an explains it is not because of weakness in women, but because of the social context, because men earn a living and spend their wealth on women are facts and functional advantages at that time.⁵⁵

In line with the aforementioned typology, the views of *kyais* in Cirebon regarding the meaning of *qawwām*, and thus also about the division of the roles of men and women, maps out as follows: firstly, *kyais*' views referring to the patriarchy extreme paradigm on the pattern of the division of husband-and-wife roles seems to be in line with conservative thinking. Departing from an understanding of women's nature in a societal structure, conservative Muslims argue that the public roles that a woman wants to do needs to be carefully considered in terms of her nature as a woman. Conservatives emphasize women to stay in their nature and cannot be regarded as something inferior. An example of the conservative Muslim thought is dividing human's duties in this world into universal duties and specific ones. Universal tasks according to conservatives lean towards some activities that can naturally be carried out by men or women, while specific tasks are jobs or activities that are more likely to consider the existence of nature in each individual figures. From this, modern conservatives actually also understand that there is a public space that a woman can work on without leaving her domestic role. However, the role that women take must not conflict with their nature, so that there is no coercion of roles that are not in accordance with women's nature. Conservative Muslims regard the status of women as an important point in determining the role that women will take in their lives. If she is single, then the option of taking on multiple roles may be considered and even permissible. This is a conclusion for modern conservatives, which is different from the views of classical ones, who tend to leave women alone in the domestic sphere while waiting for her fate. However, if a woman already has a husband, then the tendency of modern conservative Muslim thought is the same as the classical one, making domestic space the only choice in her life, because this is related to the nature of women who are more likely to be responsible for their family

⁵⁴ Husni Mubarrak, "In Search of Islamic View of Justice on Women Testimony," *Ijtihad: Jurnal Wacana Hukum Islam Dan Kemanusiaan* 16, no. 1 (2016): 281–96, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijtihad.v16i2.281-296>.

⁵⁵ Engineer, *Hak-Hak Perempuan Dalam Islam*.

institutions, rather than pursue their careers with sacrificing the institution of the family. The conservative view emphasizes that domestic space in the family is something noble that women have because of their nature.⁵⁶

Secondly, the *kyais'* moderate paradigm of thoughts is in line with moderate feminism in viewing the nature between men and women, which are not only the same but also similar. The point is that Islam sees men and women in terms of dignity and honor equally. However, in various aspects of life, men are not the same as women, because there are jobs that are suitable for men and not suitable for women. The *kyai* from moderate group believe that the notion of women's dignity lies not in women's work outside the home by leaving their domestic role towards the public role, but by providing a positive space for women based on universal Islamic values.⁵⁷

Thirdly, the liberal paradigm of the *kyais'* thoughts in Cirebon. This group's thinking emphasizes that women have equal rights in taking on roles in the public sphere. This equal opportunity indicates that the liberal Muslim group agrees with the dual role taken by a woman, but with a note of considering the burden that will be received. If dual roles mean double burdens, then, according to feminists,⁵⁸ it is the oppression of women. According to feminists, men should be able to carry the domestic sphere in order to avoid the double burden of women when carrying out public roles. If there are nuances of oppression that women will receive because of their multiple roles, then feminists will oppose it. The public role that is approved by the *kyais'* with a liberal paradigm is based on their understanding of religious arguments through the lens of gender equality. The liberal views of the Cirebon *kyais'* are in accordance with the opinion of liberal Muslims in general, that all interpretations of sacred texts in religion apply contextually according to the conditions of the era.⁵⁹

It is recognized theologically, sociologically, and historically that differences of opinion among Muslim thinkers is an undeniable fact. In Islam, differences of opinion are normal.⁶⁰ When explored further, the

⁵⁶ Jajat Burhanudin and Oman Fathurahman, *Tentang Perempuan Islam : Wacana Dan Gerakan* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2004).

⁵⁷ Rofi'uddin, "Interview."

⁵⁸ Burhanudin and Fathurahman, *Tentang Perempuan Islam : Wacana Dan Gerakan*.

⁵⁹ Burhanudin and Fathurahman.

⁶⁰ Tri Wahyu Hidayati, Ulfah Susilawati, and Endang Sriani, "Dynamics of Family Fiqh: The Multiple Roles of Women in Realizing Family Resilience," *Ijtihad : Jurnal Wacana Hukum Islam Dan Kemanusiaan* 22, no. 2 (2022): 219–38, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijtihad.v22i2.219-238>.

causes of differences of opinion among the *kyais* in the Cirebon pesantrens can be concluded that this arose due to at least two factors: firstly, external factors in the form of the cultural and social environment; secondly, internal factors in the form of the *kyais* paradigms in understanding Islamic texts. The Qur'an contains various possible meanings. The difference in paradigms is caused by differences in interpreting the Qur'an, for example textual interpretation will lead to a different interpretation from contextual interpretation.

Conclusion

Pesantren is a place for studying and spreading Islam, so that pesantren are considered to maintain religious interpretations of gender bias and foster patriarchal understanding. The interpretation of the Qur'an Sura an-Nisa' verse 34 has influenced religious beliefs regarding the division of roles in the household between husband and wife. Traditional beliefs assume that the division of roles between husband and wife is based on gender differences, which are permanent. This study has proven that pesantren in Cirebon have various views in assessing the roles of men and women (husband and wife). There are three groups of thought in the views of the *kyai* in the Cirebon pesantren regarding the gender roles of husband and wife: the first is the view of the *kyai* with an extreme patriarchal paradigm, which tends to keep women (wives) only in the domestic space; second is the moderate view of the *kyai*, namely the belief that a wife is allowed to take a public role without having to abandon her nature as a woman; and third is the view of the *kyai* who believe that women (wives) have the same rights as husbands in taking on roles in the public sphere. For the second and third views, there is discussion about the dual role (and also the double burden) for the wife who has a public role. In this regard, the moderate view tends to place a double burden on the wife, both domestic and public affairs; while the liberal view believes that household affairs must be handled equally by both husband and wife in a balanced way, and the husband, like the wife, also has a domestic role.

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