Women's Social Autonomy in QS. At-Taubah [9]:71: A Comparative Study of Classical and Contemporary Qur'anic Exegesis

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Abstract: This study examines the concept of women's social autonomy in QS. At-Taubah [9]:71 through a comparative analysis of classical and contemporary Qur'anic exegesis. The verse establishes a framework of mutual responsibility between believing men and women through the concept of *wilāyah* and the shared obligation of *amr ma'rūf wa nahy munkar*. This study employs a qualitative library-based approach grounded in thematic interpretation and comparative-interpretative analysis. The analysis focuses on selected classical exegetes, including al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, and al-Qurṭubī, alongside contemporary interpretations by M. Quraish Shihab and Nasaruddin Umar. The findings show that classical tafsir consistently affirms the equality of moral and spiritual responsibility between men and women, although it does not extensively elaborate the social implications of this principle. Contemporary interpretations build on this foundation by articulating *wilāyah* as a non-hierarchical relational concept that supports women's participation in social and religious life. The comparison indicates continuity in core ethical principles alongside a shift in interpretive emphasis toward social engagement. This study proposes a conceptual formulation of women's social autonomy derived from the internal structure of the verse, integrating theological, social, and ethical dimensions. The analysis demonstrates that women's social autonomy is grounded in Qur'anic ethics rather than external constructs, and provides a framework for understanding women's participation in contemporary Muslim societies, particularly in Indonesia. The study contributes to Qur'anic studies by offering a systematic conceptualization of social autonomy based on comparative tafsir and by highlighting the relevance of Qur'anic ethical principles for ongoing discussions of gender and social responsibility.

Keywords: *QS. At-Taubah [9]:71; Women's Social Autonomy; Wilāyah; Qur'anic Exegesis; Social Responsibility*

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Introduction

The issue of social relations between men and women in Islam remains a central theme in Qur'anic studies, particularly in efforts to understand the relationship between normative principles embedded in revelation and their realization in Muslim social life. The Qur'an presents both men and women as moral agents who share religious and social responsibilities, as reflected in classical and contemporary exegetical interpretations of socially oriented verses. Theologically, the Qur'an affirms the equality of moral and

spiritual responsibility between believing men and women as servants of God and as vicegerents on earth. Exegetes have generally understood this principle as a shared obligation in faith, righteous action, and socio-religious responsibility, while recognizing complementary roles within the broader structure of human life.[1] This framework positions women as ethical and religious subjects who carry both individual and collective responsibilities in religious and social domains. Yet, this normative equality is not always reflected in the lived realities of Muslim societies, where gender relations often remain hierarchical and tend to subordinate women.[2]

Such conditions are closely tied to the socio-historical dynamics that have shaped the interpretation of religious texts over time. Qur'anic exegesis has never been produced in a vacuum; it is always situated within specific intellectual and social contexts. Classical scholars emphasized that understanding the Qur'an requires attention to linguistic structures, circumstances of revelation, and the broader social conditions in which interpretation takes place.[3] As a result, exegetical traditions often reflect the historical realities of their authors. In certain contexts, the Qur'anic message of justice and social partnership has been interpreted in partial ways, leading to practices that do not fully align with the ethical balance emphasized in Islamic teachings.[4] Scholars have repeatedly warned that fragmented readings of scriptural texts may produce social interpretations that diverge from the foundational aims of justice and public welfare in Islamic law.[5] These concerns have encouraged renewed efforts to reinterpret the Qur'an through approaches that engage more directly with questions of social justice and relational ethics.[6]

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[1] Muhammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān ʿan Taʾwīl Āy al-Qurʾān*, vol. 14 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2001), 333–335; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, vol. 16 (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1999), 89–91; M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah: Pesan, Kesan, dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2002), 148–150.

[2] Nasaruddin Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Gender: Perspektif al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2008), 45–50.

[3] Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Bahādir al-Zarkashī, *Al-Burhān fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān* (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifah, 1957); Jalāl al-Dīn al- Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 2003); Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir Ibn ʿĀshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr* (Tunis: Dār al-Tūnisiyyah li al-Nashr, 1984).

[4] al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*; Al-Shāṭibī, *Al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Sharīʿah* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 2004); Wahbah al-Zuḥaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-ʿAqīdah wa al-Sharīʿah wa al-Manhaj* (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 2009).

[5] Ibn al-Qayyim, *Iʿlām al-Muwaqqiʿīn ʿan Rabb al-ʿĀlamīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1991); al-Shāṭibī i, *Al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Sharīʿah*; al-Zuḥaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr*.

[6] Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Gender*, 52–58.

One of the key verses that articulates this principle of social partnership is QS. At-Taubah [9]:71, which states that believing men and women are allies (awliyā') of one another and share responsibility in enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, establishing prayer, giving alms, and obeying God and His Messenger.[7] The concept of wilāyah in this verse indicates a relational model grounded in mutual responsibility and active participation rather than domination.[8] This formulation opens space for women's involvement in religious and social life. In this sense, QS. At-Taubah [9]:71 provides a normative foundation for understanding women's social autonomy within an Islamic ethical framework.

In classical exegetical literature, scholars such as al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, and al-Qurṭubī interpret this verse as affirming the shared ethical and spiritual responsibilities of believing men and women.[9] They emphasize that the obligation of enjoining good and forbidding wrongdoing is rooted in faith and applies to all believers regardless of gender. At the same time, classical discussions tend to focus on the normative religious dimensions of the verse, with less attention to its implications for women's participation in broader social spaces. This orientation reflects the social context in which these works were produced.[10]

Contemporary exegetical approaches place greater emphasis on the social dimensions of Qur'anic teachings. Modern scholars often interpret wilāyah as a form of collective social responsibility that includes both men and women as active participants in religious, educational, and social spheres. This development represents a shift in emphasis while maintaining continuity with the interpretive foundations of classical scholarship.[11] Contemporary interpretations seek to connect the ethical message of the Qur'an with the lived realities of Muslim societies, including the question of women's participation in public life.

Although QS. At-Taubah [9]:71 has been widely discussed, existing studies reveal several limitations. Some focus primarily on theological aspects, while others address

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[7] Al-Qur'an, QS. At-Taubah [9]:71.

[8] Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Gender*, 45–48; Nur Rofiah, *Nalar Kritis Muslimah* (Bandung: Mizan, 2020), 67–69.

[9] al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 10:201; Ismail ibn 'Umar Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-ʿAẓīm* (Riyadh: Dār Ṭayyibah, 2000), 4:180.

[10] al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-ʿAẓīm*; Ibn 'Āshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*.

[11] Ibn 'Āshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*; al-Zuḥaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr*; Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*.

gender equality in broader terms without articulating a specific concept of women's social autonomy as an analytical category. Comparative studies between classical and contemporary tafsir also tend to remain descriptive and have not fully developed a systematic conceptual framework to trace continuity and shifts in meaning. The gap in the literature therefore lies not in the absence of studies, but in the lack of a structured conceptual formulation that connects the internal meaning of the verse with a clear analytical construction of women's social autonomy.

Building on this gap, this article proposes a conceptual formulation of women's social autonomy derived from the internal structure of QS. At-Taubah [9]:71, particularly through the concepts of wilāyah, awliyā', and enjoining good and forbidding wrongdoing. This formulation is then examined through a comparative synthesis of classical and contemporary tafsir to identify patterns of continuity and shifts in interpretive emphasis. The Indonesian context is addressed at a conceptual level by positioning the findings within broader discussions on Islamic ethics, education, and women's social engagement, without relying on empirical field data.

Based on this framework, the central question of this study is how QS. At-Taubah [9]:71 constructs the concept of women's social autonomy through a comparative reading of classical and contemporary tafsir, and how this construction provides theological grounding for women's social participation in contemporary Islamic discourse in Indonesia. In line with this question, the study aims to analyze the conceptual formulation of women's social autonomy in QS. At-Taubah [9]:71 through a comparative interpretive approach and to contribute to Qur'anic studies that engage with questions of justice and social partnership.

This study employs a qualitative library-based approach grounded in thematic Qur'anic interpretation (tafsīr mawḍū'ī) and comparative analysis. The primary focus is QS. At-Taubah [9]:71, examined through selected classical exegetical works, including al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, and al-Qurṭubī, alongside contemporary interpretations such as those of M. Quraish Shihab and Nasaruddin Umar. The analysis proceeds by identifying key conceptual elements within the verse, particularly wilāyah, awliyā', and the obligation of enjoining good and forbidding wrongdoing, and then tracing how these concepts are interpreted across different exegetical traditions. A comparative-interpretative technique is used to examine patterns of continuity and shifts in emphasis,

allowing for the formulation of a conceptual framework of women's social autonomy derived from the internal structure of the verse. The study remains at a conceptual and textual level, without incorporating empirical field data, and situates its findings within broader discussions of Islamic ethics and contemporary Muslim social life.

Discussion

The Spiritual Equality of Men and Women in the Qur'an

The Qur'an establishes the principle of equality between men and women primarily within the domain of spiritual and moral responsibility before extending it to social and structural dimensions of human life. This equality is not framed as a uniformity of biological roles or social functions, but as recognition of a shared human standing before God as believers, moral agents, and performers of righteous deeds. This principle serves as a theological foundation for understanding gender relations in Islam, particularly in discussions concerning women's participation in social life.[12] Contemporary Qur'anic scholarship also emphasizes that shared responsibility in faith constitutes the basis for broader social engagement among believers without differentiation based on gender.[13]

Various Qur'anic verses reinforce the idea that human dignity is determined not by gender, but by piety and ethical commitment. Surah al-Ḥujurāt [49]:13 and Surah an-Naḥl [16]:97 affirm that spiritual reward and moral accountability apply equally to men and women, establishing equality in faith as a normative principle within the theological structure of Islam.[14] Recent studies further indicate that the concept of awliyā' reflects a model of collective social partnership within the Muslim community, where men and women function as moral agents who support one another in religious and social life.[15]

QS. At-Taubah [9]:71 provides a key textual foundation that directly links spiritual equality with social responsibility. The verse places believing men and women in a relationship of mutual guardianship, where both participate in strengthening social

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[12] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-ʿAẓīm*; Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmiʿ li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 2006); Ibn ʿĀshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*.

[13] Imron Natsir, "Gender Perspective in the Qur'an: A Thematic and Analytical Study of Equality and Roles," *Takafu: Journal of Tafsir and Gender Perspective* 4, no. 1 (2024): 15–32; Eva F. Nisa, "Muslim Women and Religious Authority in Indonesia," *Asian Studies Review* 44, no. 2 (2020): 226–243.

[14] al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, tafsir QS. al-Ḥujurāt [49]:13; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-ʿAẓīm*.

[15] Ahmad Rafiq, "Women's Religious Authority and Qur'anic Interpretation in Contemporary Indonesia," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 58, no. 2 (2020): 345–368.

morality, performing religious duties, fulfilling economic obligations such as zakat, and maintaining commitment to divine guidance. This formulation not only affirms equality in religious standing but also connects it to collective social roles.[16] In this sense, equality in faith carries concrete implications for participation in the social sphere rather than remaining confined to individual devotion.

Classical exegetes generally interpret this verse as affirming shared religious obligations for both men and women. Al-Ṭabarī, for example, understands wilāyah as a form of faith-based solidarity that transcends gender distinctions.[17] Ibn Kathīr similarly emphasizes that the duty of enjoining good and forbidding wrongdoing applies to all believers.[18] These interpretations demonstrate that equality in moral responsibility has long been recognized within the exegetical tradition, even though its social implications were not always elaborated in detail.[19] Contemporary scholarship reads these interpretations as part of a broader effort to connect the ethical teachings of the Qur'an with changing social realities while maintaining continuity with classical foundations.

At the same time, the historical development of tafsir shows that the social dimension of spiritual equality has not always been fully explored. Some interpretations emphasize differentiated gender roles without situating them within a comprehensive ethical framework derived from the Qur'an. As a result, the principle of equality may appear abstract, while social practices often reflect more limited roles for women. This tension has encouraged contemporary Muslim scholars to revisit Qur'anic teachings by placing moral equality at the center of social relations within the believing community.[20]

Within Islamic ethical thought, equality in faith entails shared responsibility for maintaining social order. The concept of wilāyah in QS. At-Taubah [9]:71 reflects a form of mutual cooperation grounded in faith, where men and women collectively participate in enjoining good and preventing wrongdoing. Classical exegetes interpret this responsibility as rooted in belief rather than gender. Al-Ṭabarī, for instance, frames wilāyah as cooperation among believers in sustaining a moral social order, even though

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[16] Al-Qur'an, QS. At-Taubah [9]:71.

[17] al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 10:201–202.

[18] Nur Rohmah, "Social Roles of Muslim Women in Qur'anic Perspective," *Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies* 9, no. 1 (2021): 85–104.

[19] Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin, "Muslim Women, Agency and Social Change," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10, no. 1 (2020): 1–24.

[20] Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufassirūn*, jil. 1.

the broader social implications for women's public roles are not explicitly addressed within his historical context.[21]

From a methodological standpoint, contemporary tafsir seeks to relate the universal values of the Qur'an to evolving social conditions while remaining anchored in established interpretive traditions. This approach emphasizes justice, moral responsibility, and social partnership as principles that can be realized in diverse contexts. M. Quraish Shihab, for example, interprets wilāyah as an active form of cooperation between men and women in religious and social life, where both serve as moral partners in shaping a faithful community according to their respective capacities.[22] This comparative reading indicates that the principle of spiritual equality in QS. At-Taubah [9]:71 functions as an ethical foundation for women's social autonomy. Classical tafsir affirms equality in moral responsibility, while contemporary interpretations extend this principle into a more explicit recognition of women's participation in social life. The analysis remains grounded in textual interpretation and therefore produces a conceptual framework, leaving space for further research that engages with empirical contexts.

The Concept of Wilāyah in QS. At-Taubah [9]:71: A Classical Exegetical Analysis

The concept of wilāyah in QS. At-Taubah [9]:71 occupies a central position in shaping the social relationship between believing men and women. The phrase *al-mu'minūna wa al-mu'minātu baʿḍuhum awliyā'u baʿḍ* indicates a form of mutual support and solidarity grounded in shared faith. Classical exegetes interpret the term *awliyā'* as encompassing assistance, cooperation, and mutual reinforcement in the fulfillment of *amr maʿrūf wa nahy munkar*. This relational framework is therefore built upon collective moral responsibility rather than gender-based hierarchy.[23]

Al-Ṭabarī interprets *awliyā'* as a relationship of mutual assistance and protection among believers in the effort to uphold religious and moral order. He emphasizes that the obligation to promote good and prevent wrongdoing applies to the entire believing community, including both men and women.[24] This interpretation highlights that social relations in the verse are not structured around dominance but around solidarity rooted in

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[21] al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 333–335.

[22] Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*, 640–642.

[23] al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 333–335; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-ʿAẓīm*, 191; Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, vol. 8 (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, 1964), 302.

[24] al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 10:201–202.

faith.[25] The emphasis placed by al-Ṭabarī on shared responsibility indicates that the foundation of social engagement lies in religious commitment rather than gender differentiation. [26]

Ibn Kathīr reinforces this interpretation by describing *amr maʿrūf wa nahy munkar* as a defining characteristic of the believing community as a whole. In his reading, women participate alongside men in maintaining the moral integrity of society, even though he does not elaborate extensively on the implications of this participation within broader public life.[27] This suggests that while the equality of ethical responsibility is acknowledged, its social dimensions remain shaped by the historical context in which the tafsir was produced.

Al-Qurṭubī approaches the verse from a legal and ethical perspective, framing *wilāyah* as a basis for collective obligation in maintaining social and moral order. His interpretation affirms that both men and women are subjects of moral responsibility within the community of believers. At the same time, his discussion of women's social roles reflects prevailing social norms of his period, which limits the extent to which these responsibilities are extended into public domains.[28]

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī contributes a rational-theological dimension by emphasizing that the shared command of *amr maʿrūf wa nahy munkar* indicates equality in moral capacity between men and women as legally responsible individuals. His interpretation strengthens the view that the Qur'an does not construct social relations on the basis of hierarchical gender distinctions, but rather on the basis of shared ethical accountability.[29] Thus, classical exegetical interpretations of QS. At-Taubah [9]:71 display a consistent pattern in affirming equality in spiritual and moral obligations while offering limited elaboration on their broader social implications. This limitation reflects the socio-historical context of the exegetes rather than the normative structure of the Qur'anic message itself. The theological foundation established in classical tafsir therefore provides a basis for further interpretive development through comparative engagement with contemporary perspectives.[30]

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[25] Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Gender*, 45–48.
[26] Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Gender*, 45–48.
[27] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-ʿAẓīm*, 4:180–181.
[28] al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, 8:276–277.
[29] al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, 16:89–91.
[30] Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Gender,* 45–48; Natsir, "Gender Perspective in the Qur'an,".

From a methodological standpoint, this study employs a comparative approach to examine how classical and contemporary interpretations engage with the concept of *wilāyah*. Through this approach, *wilāyah* is understood as a relational category grounded in collective moral responsibility, serving as a normative basis for the participation of both men and women in the practice of *amr ma'rūf wa nahy munkar*. This formulation highlights the continuity of core ethical principles while allowing space for interpretive expansion.[31] Within the Indonesian context, this reading offers a useful framework for reconsidering questions of religious authority, public engagement, and gender roles in Muslim society. Women's involvement in religious education, community outreach, and social activism can be understood as an expression of *wilāyah* as a participatory and collective ethical relation. This interpretation does not seek to replace classical exegesis, but to position it within an ongoing interpretive dialogue that connects foundational texts with contemporary social realities.[32]

Wilāyah as a Non-Hierarchical Social Relation: Contemporary Exegesis

QS. At-Taubah [9]:71 states:

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ ۚ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ

"And the believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong …"

From a linguistic standpoint, the term *awliyā'*, the plural of *walī*, carries meanings related to closeness, support, protection, and reciprocal responsibility. The construction *ba'ḍuhum awliyā'u ba'ḍ* indicates a reciprocal and collective relationship rather than a one-directional or hierarchical structure. This linguistic feature provides an important basis for contemporary exegetical readings that understand *wilāyah* as a relational category grounded in mutual responsibility rather than authority based on gender.[33]

Contemporary tafsir expands the meaning of *wilāyah* beyond expressions of loyalty in faith to include forms of collective social responsibility among believers.

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[31] 'Abd al-Ḥayy al-Farmāwī, *al-Bidāyah fī al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī* (Cairo: Dār al-Ṭibā'ah wa al-Nashr al-Islāmiyyah, 1977), 52–55; Mannā' Khalīl al-Qaṭṭān, *Mabāḥith fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1998), 335–338.

[32] Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Gender*, 109–115; Nisa, "Muslim Women and Religious Authority in Indonesia," 226–243; Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin dan Rofiah, *Nalar Kritis Muslimah: Refleksi atas Keperempuanan, Kemanusiaan, dan Keislaman* (Yogyakarta: PSW UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2020), 33–41.

[33] Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1990), s.v. "w-l-y."; Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Gender*, 109–115.

Modern exegetes emphasize that the relationship described in the verse reflects active cooperation between men and women in maintaining moral values and building a socially responsible community through the practice of *amr ma'rūf wa nahy munkar*.[34] This interpretation situates both men and women as moral agents who share responsibility for sustaining the ethical life of the community.[35] Recent scholarship highlights that the pairing of men and women in QS. At-Taubah [9]:71 reflects explicit recognition of shared social responsibility within the Qur'anic text. The relationship between believers is therefore understood not only in symbolic terms but as having direct implications for social participation.[36] In this reading, *wilāyah* becomes a framework for understanding cooperation in religious, educational, and social domains as part of a collective moral commitment.

A number of contemporary Muslim scholars argue that variations in interpreting gender relations within the history of tafsir are often shaped by the social context of the interpreters rather than by the normative structure of the Qur'anic text itself.[37] This insight has encouraged renewed attention to the ethical dimensions of Qur'anic teachings, particularly in relation to justice and social responsibility. Contemporary readings therefore seek to recover these ethical foundations while engaging with present-day social conditions. M. Quraish Shihab, for example, interprets *wilāyah* as a relationship of mutual support and cooperation in acts of goodness. He emphasizes that the Qur'an provides space for women's participation in public life within an ethical framework rooted in religious values.[38] This interpretation aligns with the realities of Muslim societies such as Indonesia, where women actively contribute to religious education, community engagement, and social initiatives.[39]

In contemporary Islamic ethical thought, social responsibility is understood as a direct consequence of faith. Yusuf al-Qaraḍāwī explains that *amr ma'rūf wa nahy munkar* constitutes a collective obligation that involves all members of the Muslim community according to their capacity, without distinction based on gender.[40] This perspective

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[34] Nisa, "Muslim Women and Religious Authority in Indonesia," 226–243.
[35] Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*, 642–645.
[36] Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*, 641–643; Dzuhayatin dan Rofiah, *Nalar Kritis Muslimah*, 33–41.
[37] Ibn 'Āshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*; Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Gender*, 247–249.
[38] Shihab, *Tafsir al-Mishbah*, 327–329.
[39] Nisa, "Muslim Women and Religious Authority in Indonesia," 226–243.
[40] Yūsuf Qaraḍāwī, *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyāt*. (Kairo: Maktabah Wahbah, 1995), hlm. 112.

reinforces the view that moral responsibility is shared across the community and not restricted to specific groups. Contemporary approaches to tafsir therefore attempt to relate the universal values of the Qur'an to changing social realities while maintaining continuity with established interpretive traditions. Within this framework, *wilāyah* is understood as a form of moral cooperation that remains adaptable to different social contexts. [41]

This analysis indicates that *wilāyah* in QS. At-Taubah [9]:71 functions as a non-hierarchical relational concept that affirms equality in moral capacity between men and women. The interpretation remains grounded in the principle of collective ethical responsibility that has been consistently recognized within both classical and contemporary exegetical traditions. Its relevance for contemporary Muslim societies lies in providing a theological foundation for women's participation in public life, including religious, educational, and social engagement as expressions of shared moral responsibility.

The Construction of Women's Social Autonomy in QS. At-Taubah [9]:71

QS. At-Taubah [9]:71 affirms both spiritual equality and a relational model of partnership between believing men and women, while also providing a normative basis for the construction of women's social autonomy in Islam.[42] The verse positions women as active participants within the socio-religious structure through the practice of *amr ma'rūf wa nahy munkar*, a collective responsibility with clear public implications.[43] Women's social autonomy, in this sense, is grounded in Qur'anic ethical principles rather than emerging as an external or modern construct.[44]

Within the Qur'anic framework, women's social autonomy is rooted in the recognition of women's moral and spiritual capacity as believing individuals who bear direct responsibility before God. This principle affirms that men and women share equal status as ethical agents accountable for their actions in both personal and social life.[45] Equality in spiritual responsibility opens space for meaningful social participation, even

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[41] al-Zuḥaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr*, 72.
[42] Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah,* 582–584.
[43] al-Zuḥaylī, *Tafsir al-Munir*, 344; Nisa, "Muslim Women and Religious Authority in Indonesia," 226–243.
[44] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azhim*, 171; Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Gender*, 109–115.
[45] Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*, 334–336; Dzuhayatin dan Rofiah, *Nalar Kritis Muslimah*, 33–41.

though the forms of participation may vary across cultural and social contexts.[46] Restrictions on women's social roles that lack clear theological and ethical justification may therefore be seen as inconsistent with the moral orientation of the verse.

a. The Theological Dimension of Social Autonomy

The theological foundation of women's social autonomy in QS. At-Taubah [9]:71 lies in the concept of *wilāyah* as a relationship grounded in faith.[47] Women are positioned as integral members of the believing community, with rights and responsibilities that are shared with men.[48] Islamic scholarship emphasizes that the principle of divine unity places each individual in direct relation to God, with moral responsibility that does not depend on mediation by others.[49] Social relations within the believing community are therefore structured through individual accountability in faith rather than hierarchical dependence.[50] From this perspective, women's social autonomy reflects an expression of theological awareness rather than a departure from religious norms.[51] Scholars consistently affirm that justice and moral responsibility form the basis of social relations in Islam.[52] The relationship between men and women is understood as cooperation in righteousness and piety, rather than as a structure of dominance.[53] Women's social autonomy, in this context, represents the realization of ethical principles embedded within Islamic teachings.

b. The Social Dimension: Women as Collective Agents

The social dimension of women's autonomy is clearly reflected in their participation in *amr maʿrūf wa nahy munkar*.[54] This role is inherently collective and requires active engagement in the social life of the believing community.[55] Exegetes emphasize that this obligation applies to all believers on the basis of faith, making both

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[46] Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Gender,* 247–249; Nisa, "Muslim Women and Religious Authority in Indonesia," 226–243.

[47] Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Gender*, 109–115.

[48] Ismāʿīl ibn ʿUmar Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1998), tafsir QS. At-Taubah [9]:71; al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmiʿ li Aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, 8:276–277; Ibn ʿĀshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 152; Rohmah, "Social Roles of Muslim Women," 85–104.

[49] al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, 89–91.

[50] Nisa, "Muslim Women and Religious Authority in Indonesia," 226–243.

[51] al-Zuḥaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr*, 344.

[52] Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*, 16:89–91.

[53] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾan al-ʿAẓīm*, tafsir QS. At-Taubah [9]:71; Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*, 148–150.

[54] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾan al-ʿAẓīm*, 180–181; Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*, 148–150.

[55] al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-Bayān, 333–335.

men and women responsible for maintaining moral order in society.[56] Contemporary interpretations also highlight that the distribution of social roles within Muslim societies is shaped by historical and cultural contexts.[57] Limitations placed on women's participation often reflect these contexts rather than direct prescriptions from the Qur'anic text. Women's social autonomy can therefore be understood as the capacity to engage actively in social life as part of their religious responsibility, while maintaining their ethical and religious identity.[58]

In addition to theological and social dimensions, women's social autonomy also carries a strong ethical dimension. QS. At-Taubah [9]:71 connects *wilāyah* with moral practices such as *amr maʿrūf wa nahy munkar* and obedience to God and His Messenger.[59] These principles define a collective ethical framework that applies to the entire believing community. Islamic scholars affirm that this moral responsibility is shared by all members of society according to their capacity, reinforcing the inclusion of women in ethical and social engagement.[60] In contemporary Muslim societies, this ethical dimension supports the recognition of women as agents of social change.[61] Women's involvement in education, religious outreach, and community development reflects their role in promoting justice and social welfare.[62] Social autonomy, in this context, is understood not only as a right but also as a moral responsibility that must be exercised with accountability.

c. A Conceptual Synthesis of Social Autonomy

Drawing from these dimensions, women's social autonomy in QS. At-Taubah [9]:71 can be understood as a Qur'anic construct that integrates theological, social, and ethical elements. Women are positioned as active contributors to socio-religious life, with the capacity to participate meaningfully in shaping the moral order of the community.

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[56] al-Zuḥaylī, *al-Tafsīr al-Munīr* 168–172; al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, 89–91.

[57] Ibn ʿĀshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 152.

[58] Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah,* 148–150; Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Gender*, 247–249.

[59] Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*, 16:89–91.

[60] al-Qaraḍāwī, *Min Fiqh al-Dawlah fī al-Islam*, 157–160.

[61] Natsir, "Gender Perspective in the Qur'an," 15–32; al-Shāṭibī, *al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Sharīʿah*, 8–12.

[62] Rofiah, *Nalar Kritis Muslimah*, 72–75; Nisa, "Muslim Women and Religious Authority in Indonesia," 226–243.

This synthesis demonstrates that women's social autonomy is grounded in a coherent ethical framework that remains relevant to contemporary Muslim societies.[63]

The verse thus provides a comprehensive normative basis for understanding women's role in social life. Women's social autonomy is not introduced as an external concept imposed upon the text, but emerges through contextual interpretation that remains consistent with the core values of the Qur'an. This framework bridges classical exegetical foundations with contemporary applications, particularly in relation to women's engagement in public life and collective moral responsibility.

Women, *Amr Ma'rūf wa Nahy Munkar*, and the Public Sphere

QS. At-Taubah [9]:71 explicitly connects the relationship of *wilāyah* between believing men and women with the practice of *amr ma'rūf wa nahy munkar*. This connection indicates that moral responsibility in Islam is not determined by gender, but by the commitment of each believer to uphold ethical principles. As a collective obligation, *amr ma'rūf wa nahy munkar* requires the active participation of all members of the community, including women, since the promotion of good and the prevention of wrongdoing are essential to maintaining a just social order.[64]

In classical exegetical literature, *amr ma'rūf wa nahy munkar* is generally understood as a collective duty of the Muslim community, although discussions often reflect the social context of their time, where male participation is more visible. Despite this emphasis, there is no textual basis in the verse that excludes women from this responsibility. Contemporary exegetes build on this foundation by emphasizing that the obligation applies to all believers, thereby supporting women's involvement in religious education, community engagement, and social initiatives.[65]

Modern interpretations also stress that the distribution of social roles in Muslim societies cannot be separated from historical and cultural contexts. Limitations placed on women's participation often emerge from these contexts rather than from the Qur'anic text itself. A contextual reading of QS. At-Taubah [9]:71 therefore highlights the principle of shared moral responsibility as a basis for broader social participation.[66] Within Islamic

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[63] Irma Durrotun Niswah, "Women Empowerment in Qur'anic Perspective," *Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies* 9, no. 1 (2021): 48–51.

[64] al-Zuḥaylī, *al-Tafsīr al-Munīr*, 170–173.

[65] al-Zuḥaylī, *al-Tafsīr al-Munīr*, 170–175; Yusuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyāt* (Kairo: Maktabah Wahbah, 1995), 112; Dzuhayatin, "Muslim Women, Agency and Social Change," 1–24.

[66] Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah,* 143–145.

ethical thought, *amr maʿrūf wa nahy munkar* represents a collective responsibility for preserving moral order in society.[67] Women's participation in the public sphere can thus be understood as part of fulfilling this ethical obligation rather than as a response to external social pressures.[68] This interpretation reinforces the idea that engagement in public life is consistent with Islamic values when it is guided by ethical principles.

In the Indonesian context, women's participation in public life has become an integral part of Muslim social dynamics. Women contribute actively to Islamic education, community-based religious activities, social organizations, and philanthropic initiatives. These forms of engagement reflect the practical realization of Qur'anic values in everyday life.[69] Contemporary scholarship also shows that women's empowerment contributes to the quality of social and religious life by strengthening both individual capacity and collective well-being. Within this framework, *amr maʿrūf wa nahy munkar* serves as a moral foundation that encourages women to act as agents of social transformation. Their involvement in public life is therefore not in tension with Islamic teachings, but arises from the ethical principles embedded in the Qur'an. QS. At-Taubah [9]:71 thus provides a theological basis for understanding the public sphere as a shared space of moral responsibility, where both men and women participate in promoting justice and social welfare.

A Synthesis of Classical and Contemporary Tafsir and Its Relevance to the Indonesian Context

The analysis of QS. At-Taubah [9]:71 through both classical and contemporary exegetical approaches reveals continuity in core ethical principles alongside differences in interpretive emphasis. Classical tafsir situates the verse within the framework of shared moral and religious obligations among believers, while contemporary interpretations extend its implications into more explicit discussions of social participation in response to changing conditions within Muslim societies.[70] This relationship reflects an ongoing interpretive process that remains rooted in established traditions while engaging with evolving social realities.[71]

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[67] Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah,* 143–145.
[68] al-Qaraḍāwī, *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyāt.*
[69] Rofiah, *Nalar Kritis Muslimah*, 85–88.
[70] Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Gender*, 45–48.
[71] Shihab, *Membumikan Al-Qur'an: Fungsi dan Peran Wahyu dalam Kehidupan Masyarakat* (Bandung: Mizan, 2013), 75–79; al-Zuḥaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr*, 72–75.

In classical exegetical literature, the concept of *wilāyah* is understood as an expression of faith-based solidarity and collective responsibility grounded in shared belief. Scholars such as al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, and al-Qurṭubī consistently affirm that *amr ma'rūf wa nahy munkar* constitutes an obligation for the entire believing community, without distinction between men and women.[72] While classical exegetes do not explicitly formulate the concept of women's social autonomy, their recognition of shared moral responsibility provides a theological foundation that supports later conceptual developments. Contemporary tafsir develops this foundation by articulating the social implications of Qur'anic ethics in a more direct and context-sensitive manner. Modern scholars emphasize that spiritual equality entails ethical and social consequences, particularly in shaping just relations within the community.[73] These interpretations do not replace classical exegesis but engage with it critically, allowing the ethical message of the Qur'an to be expressed in ways that respond to contemporary challenges.

This study approaches the synthesis of classical and contemporary tafsir through the lens of Qur'anic ethical principles that prioritize justice, moral responsibility, and collective well-being. Within this framework, *wilāyah* is understood as a non-hierarchical relational concept grounded in the equal moral capacity of men and women as ethical subjects. This formulation does not represent a departure from classical tradition, but rather an interpretive development that connects foundational insights with present-day social contexts.

The contribution of this analysis lies in repositioning *wilāyah* as an ethical and relational category that extends beyond theological loyalty to encompass social engagement and moral accountability. By integrating classical and contemporary perspectives, this study offers a conceptual framework for understanding gender relations in Islam that remains faithful to the Qur'anic text while responsive to social change.

In the Indonesian context, this synthesis provides a meaningful lens for examining the role of women in religious and social life. Women's active involvement in Islamic education, community-based religious activities, and social organizations reflects a form of engagement that aligns with the ethical principles derived from QS. At-Taubah [9]:71. The verse can therefore be understood as offering a theological foundation for women's

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[72] al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 10:201–202; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, 4:180–181.

[73] Natsir, "Gender Perspective in the Qur'an.".

participation in public life, particularly in relation to moral responsibility and social contribution.[74]

This approach also moves beyond simplified distinctions between classical and contemporary thought by recognizing their relationship as part of a continuous intellectual tradition.[75] The dialogue between these interpretive modes enriches Qur'anic studies by demonstrating how enduring ethical principles can be articulated across different historical contexts.[76] In this sense, the relevance of Qur'anic teachings lies in their capacity to guide social life while remaining open to contextual interpretation.[77] QS. At-Taubah [9]:71 thus provides a normative framework for understanding social relations between men and women as participatory and ethically grounded. The comparative reading developed in this study demonstrates that women's social autonomy is supported by a coherent theological foundation rooted in the Qur'anic conception of *wilāyah* and collective moral responsibility. Within the Indonesian context, this framework offers a basis for interpreting women's roles in public religious and social life in ways that remain consistent with Islamic ethical values while addressing contemporary social realities.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that QS. At-Taubah [9]:71 establishes a foundational principle of shared moral and social responsibility for believing men and women. Through a comparative analysis of classical and contemporary tafsir, the study shows that the concept of *wilāyah* does not reflect a hierarchical gender relationship, but rather a form of social partnership grounded in faith, collective responsibility, and Qur'anic ethics. Women's social autonomy, in this framework, is supported by a theological foundation that emerges directly from the normative structure of the Qur'an and its exegetical tradition.

The analysis of classical tafsir indicates that early exegetes, including al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, and al-Qurṭubī, recognized the equality of spiritual and moral responsibility among believers. At the same time, the broader social implications of this principle were not extensively developed, reflecting the historical context in which these interpretations

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[74] Rofiah, *Nalar Kritis Muslimah*, 90–93.
[75] Natsir, "Gender Perspective in the Qur'an," 45–48.
[76] Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Kayfa Nataʿāmal maʿa al-Qur'ān al-ʿAẓīm* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1999), 45–52.
[77] Shihab, *Membumikan Al-Qur'an*, 92–96.

were produced. Contemporary tafsir builds upon this foundation by articulating the social dimensions of *wilāyah* more explicitly, particularly in relation to women's participation in public life and collective moral responsibility.

The findings contribute to Qur'anic studies by showing that women's social roles form part of an ethical framework rooted in principles of justice, shared responsibility, and social welfare. The interpretation of QS. At-Taubah [9]:71 developed in this study highlights that social relations between men and women are based on cooperation in promoting good and preventing wrongdoing, rather than on patterns of subordination. This perspective aligns with both classical and contemporary exegetical traditions while offering a conceptual framework that is responsive to current social conditions.

This study also suggests that future research in Qur'anic exegesis would benefit from further engagement with comparative approaches that bring classical and contemporary perspectives into dialogue while remaining attentive to social context. In addition, there is a need for empirical studies that examine how Qur'anic ethical principles related to women's social roles are practiced in contemporary Muslim societies, particularly in Indonesia. Such work would extend the conceptual insights of this study and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between Qur'anic interpretation and social reality.

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