



Contextualism vs. Mubādalah: Comparative Islamic Legal Methodologies for Gender Equality

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Article Info	Abstract
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Introduction

Gender equality has become a central concern in contemporary Qur’anic interpretation, particularly in response to persistent patriarchal power relations embedded within classical exegetical traditions.¹ Muslim scholars have increasingly developed alternative interpretive frameworks that seek to reconcile Islamic legal methodology with the ethical demands of justice, human dignity, and social equity. Within the Indonesian context, two influential figures who have significantly contributed to this intellectual transformation are Nasaruddin Umar and Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir.

Nasaruddin Umar, a prominent Qur’anic exegete and currently Minister of Religious Affairs of Indonesia, is widely recognized for his seminal work *Arguments for Gender Equality in the Qur’an*, in

¹ Armi Agustar, “Perbedaan Syariah Sebagai Wahyu Dan Syariah Sebagai Hasil Pemikiran Pada Masyarakat Era Modernisasi,” *El-Aqwāl: Journal of Sharia and Comparative Law* 1, no. 2 (November 25, 2022): 121–30, <https://doi.org/10.24090/el-aqwal.v1i2.7105>.

which he advances a contextualist approach to interpretation. His scholarship emphasizes the importance of historical context, linguistic analysis, and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (the higher objectives of Islamic law) in uncovering the egalitarian ethical vision of the Qur'an.² In contrast, Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, a leading Islamic scholar and gender justice activist, has introduced the methodological framework of *Qirā'ah Mubādalāh* (reciprocal reading), as articulated in his work *Qirā'ah Mubādalāh: A Progressive Interpretation for Gender Justice in Islam*. This approach advocates mutuality and reciprocity between men and women in interpreting normative religious texts, thereby challenging hierarchical gender constructions.³

Both scholars represent reformist currents in Islamic legal thought that extend beyond academic discourse to influence social practice, particularly in reshaping male-female relations within Muslim communities. Their contributions illustrate how methodological innovation in Qur'anic interpretation can serve as a catalyst for broader socio-legal transformation. Accordingly, this article aims to conduct a comparative analysis of Nasaruddin Umar's contextualist methodology and Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir's *mubādalāh* approach, focusing on their theoretical foundations, interpretive strategies, and practical implications for advancing gender equality within the framework of Islamic law.

Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive design with a comparative analytical approach. The research is grounded in library-based inquiry, drawing primarily on the seminal works of the two scholars under examination: *Arguments for Gender Equality in the Qur'an* by Nasaruddin Umar and *Qirā'ah Mubādalāh: A Progressive Interpretation for Gender Justice in Islam* by Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir. These texts are treated as authoritative sources for reconstructing each scholar's interpretive framework and methodological assumptions.

To ensure analytical depth and relevance, two Qur'anic verses frequently associated with debates on gender relations are selected as case studies, namely Q.S. al-Nisā' [4]:34 and Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]:228. These verses are chosen because they have historically served as normative references in discussions on leadership, marital authority, rights, and obligations between men and women. The comparative analysis focuses on three interrelated dimensions: first, the interpretive methodology employed by each scholar, including their use of contextual, linguistic, and normative-ethical considerations; second, the construction of meaning produced through their respective readings of the selected verses; and third, the socio-legal implications of these interpretations for contemporary Muslim understandings of gender equality.

Through this methodological framework, the study seeks to elucidate how different approaches to Islamic legal reasoning and Qur'anic hermeneutics can generate distinct yet complementary pathways toward gender-just interpretations. By systematically comparing contextualism and *mubādalāh* as methodological models, the research aims to contribute to broader scholarly debates

² Kamarusdiana Kamarusdiana and Ahmad Zaki M., "Posisi Al-Qur'an Dalam Epistemologi Hermeneutika," *Al Amin: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Dan Budaya Islam* 2, no. 1 (2019): 74-87, <https://doi.org/10.36670/alamin.v2i1.18>.

³ Abdul Mustaqim, *Epistemologi Tafsir Kontemporer* (Yogyakarta: Idea Press, 2020), 34.

on the reformulation of Islamic legal methodology in response to contemporary challenges of gender justice.

Islamic Legal Methodology of Nasaruddin Umar

Nasaruddin Umar is a prominent Indonesian Muslim scholar born in South Sulawesi on 23 June 1959, in Ujung, Bone Regency. His early education was shaped by both formal schooling and pesantren-based religious training. After completing his primary education, he pursued Islamic studies at Pesantren As'adiyah Sengkang, where he undertook successive levels of religious teacher training. This educational trajectory provided him with a strong foundation in classical Islamic sciences while simultaneously exposing him to modern academic traditions.

He continued his higher education at Islamic university or IAIN (now UIN) Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, where he obtained his Master's degree in 1992 and his doctoral degree in 1998. During his doctoral studies, he participated in international academic exchange programs at McGill University in Montreal (1993–1994) and Leiden University in the Netherlands (1994–1995). Following the completion of his doctorate, Nasaruddin Umar further strengthened his global scholarly engagement through visiting scholar appointments at several leading institutions, including Sophia University in Tokyo, the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London, and Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. These academic experiences contributed to the development of his comparative and interdisciplinary perspective in Islamic studies, particularly in the fields of Qur'anic interpretation and Islamic legal methodology.⁴

Nasaruddin Umar has produced an extensive body of scholarly work, including more than a dozen books that critically examine gender discourse in Islamic thought. Among his most influential publications is *Arguments for Gender Equality in the Qur'an* (1999),⁵ which systematically addresses gender bias in traditional exegetical literature and offers alternative readings grounded in textual analysis and ethical reasoning. His other major works, such as *The Nature of Women in Islam*,⁶ *Gender Bias in Scriptural Interpretation*,⁷ *Methodological Reconstruction of Gender Equality Discourse in Islam*,⁸ and *When Fiqh Defends Women*,⁹ further demonstrate his sustained intellectual commitment to dismantling patriarchal interpretations and reconstructing a more egalitarian understanding of Islamic teachings.

Beyond academic writing, Nasaruddin Umar has also been actively involved in institutional and social advocacy related to gender justice. His engagement with national and international organizations, academic programs on women's studies, and policy-oriented initiatives reflects his

⁴ Muhamad Al-Muizul Kahfi, "Deradikalisasi Quranik Sebuah Perspektif Nasaruddin Umar" (Tesis, Institut PTIQ Jakarta, 2021).

⁵ Nasaruddin Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Gender Perspektif Al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2001).

⁶ Nasaruddin Umar, *Kodrat Perempuan Dalam Islam* (Jakarta: The Asia Foundation, 1999).

⁷ Nasaruddin Umar and Sri Suhandjati Sukri, *Bias Jender Dalam Pemahaman Islam*, vol. 1 (Semarang: PSJ IAIN Walisongo dan Gama Media, 2002).

⁸ Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin, Budhy Munawar-Rachman, and Nasaruddin Umar, *Rekonstruksi Metodologis Wacana Kesetaraan Gender Dalam Islam* (Yogyakarta: PSW IAIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2002).

⁹ Nasaruddin Umar, *Ketika Fikih Membela Perempuan: Jalan Menuju Islam Berkeadilan Gender* (Jakarta: Elex Media Komputindo, 2025).

conviction that interpretive reform must be accompanied by practical social transformation.¹⁰ Within the context of Islamic legal methodology, his approach can be characterized as contextualist, emphasizing the importance of historical circumstances (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), socio-cultural realities, linguistic structures, and the higher objectives of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*). By integrating these elements, Nasaruddin Umar seeks to recover the ethical spirit of the Qur'an and align Islamic legal reasoning with contemporary principles of justice, equality, and human dignity.¹¹

Nasaruddin Umar adopts the *mawḍū'ī* (thematic) method as the primary framework for presenting his Qur'anic interpretation. The thematic approach examines Qur'anic verses based on specific topics or issues and analyzes them comprehensively rather than sequentially verse by verse. This method integrates multiple analytical dimensions, including grammar, historical context (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), lexical analysis, and legal reasoning. Instead of following the linear order of the Qur'anic text, the interpreter selects particular themes—such as social relations, worship, cosmology, or gender—and synthesizes relevant verses to construct a coherent conceptual understanding.¹² Within the context of Islamic legal methodology, this approach enables the extraction of normative principles that transcend isolated textual readings and allows for a more systematic articulation of ethical values, including gender justice.¹³

Building on the framework proposed by al-Farmawī, the thematic method can be classified into two major models. The first involves a comprehensive study of a single sūrah with the objective of identifying its overarching themes and internal coherence. The second focuses on collecting verses from different parts of the Qur'an that address similar issues, organizing them into a unified analytical structure.¹⁴ Nasaruddin Umar predominantly employs the second model, particularly when addressing gender-related themes, as it enables him to trace recurring ethical patterns and normative messages across the Qur'anic corpus.¹⁵

The implementation of the thematic method in Nasaruddin Umar's work follows several systematic stages. First, a specific theme or problem is identified, such as human creation, leadership, or gender relations. Second, relevant verses are gathered through textual mapping. Third, these verses are arranged chronologically according to their revelation period in order to capture the historical development of normative discourse. Fourth, intertextual coherence (*munāsabah*) between verses is examined to ensure interpretive consistency. Fifth, the thematic findings are structured into a coherent analytical framework. Finally, prophetic traditions (*ḥadīth*) are incorporated as complementary sources to strengthen the interpretive argument. This methodological structure reflects his commitment to combining textual rigor with contextual sensitivity.

Nasaruddin Umar's preference for the thematic approach is rooted in its relevance to his research objectives and its capacity to generate comprehensive interpretations of gender-related

¹⁰ Nasitotul Janah, "Telaah Buku Argumentasi Kesetaraan Gender Perspektif Al-Qur'an Karya Nasaruddin Umar," *Sawwa: Jurnal Studi Gender* 12, no. 2 (2017): 167–86.

¹¹ Hamka Hasan et al., "Polygamy: Uncovering the Effect of Patriarchal Ideology on Gender-Biased Interpretation," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 78, no. 4 (2022): 7970.

¹² Ahmad Izzan and Dindin Saepudin, *Tafsir Mawḍū'ī: Metoda Praktis Penafsiran Alquran* (Bandung: Humaniora, 2022), 4.

¹³ Nasaruddin Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Gender Perspektif Al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2001), 3.

¹⁴ Abd al-Hayy Al-Farmawī, *Metode Tafsir Mawḍū'iy Suatu Pengantar*, ed. Suryan A. Jamrah (Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada, 1996), 12.

¹⁵ Nasaruddin Umar, *Islam Nusantara: Jalan Panjang Moderasi Beragama Di Indonesia* (Elex Media Komputindo, 2021).

values embedded in the Qur'an. One of the central themes emphasized in his scholarship concerns the origin and nature of human creation. In this context, he explores biological origins, the creation of the first human beings, reproductive processes, and the fundamental characteristics of humanity. These discussions are not merely theological but serve as a foundation for articulating the ontological equality of men and women. Gender equality is further elaborated through analyses of shared spiritual status as servants of God (*'ibād*), joint responsibility as vicegerents (*khulafā'*) on earth, mutual participation in the primordial covenant, and other normative themes that underscore reciprocity and moral parity.¹⁶

In constructing his interpretations, Nasaruddin Umar draws upon both primary and secondary sources. The Qur'an and the Prophetic traditions constitute his primary textual foundations, while classical exegetical works and historical studies of the Middle East function as secondary references. He selectively engages a wide range of authoritative commentaries to ensure methodological balance.¹⁷ For example, *Tafsīr al-Manār* is consulted for its reformist perspective, while *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* is used to verify the authenticity and transmission of ḥadīth related to occasions of revelation. *Tafsīr al-Kabīr* by al-Rāzī provides comparative theological perspectives, enabling critical engagement with diverse scholarly opinions. Works such as *Jāmi' al-Bayān* by al-Ṭabarī and *Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* are utilized to examine variant readings (*qir'āt*), lexical meanings, and differing reports of historical contexts. *Tafsīr al-Marāghī* contributes to contextual interpretation, while *Tafsīr Āyāt al-Aḥkām* supports the analysis of legal dimensions embedded in gender-related verses.¹⁸

Additional references include *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* and *al-Munīr li Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl* for lexical clarification, and *al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* for exploring the spiritual and philosophical dimensions of Qur'anic discourse. Nasaruddin Umar also engages comparative sources such as *al-Kashshāf*, *Rūḥ al-Bayān*, and *Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, among others, in order to enrich his interpretive analysis and avoid methodological exclusivism. This plural engagement with classical sources reflects his commitment to intellectual openness while maintaining critical selectivity.

Methodologically, Nasaruddin Umar integrates historical analysis and hermeneutical interpretation as complementary tools. Historical analysis is employed to reconstruct the socio-cultural conditions of pre-Islamic Arabia and the early Islamic period, enabling a clearer understanding of how gender roles evolved in relation to revelation. He argues that awareness of historical transformation is essential for identifying the progressive ethical direction of the Qur'an. Hermeneutical analysis, on the other hand, is used to contextualize normative concepts and actualize their contemporary relevance. Through this approach, Qur'anic texts are understood not merely as static prescriptions but as dynamic moral discourses that require contextual interpretation in light of changing social realities.¹⁹

More specifically, Nasaruddin Umar applies feminist hermeneutics and historical-conceptual analysis, treating the Qur'an as a text expressed through linguistic and cultural frameworks that must be critically examined. His interpretive methodology is characterized by several key features. First,

¹⁶ Didik Saepudin, "Epistemologi Tafsir Nusantara: Studi Atas Tafsir Fayd Al-Rahman Karya KH Shaleh Darat," *Diya Al-Afkar: Jurnal Studi Al-Quran Dan Al-Hadis* 7, no. 01 (2019): 1–24, <https://doi.org/10.24235/diyaafkar.v7i01.4526>.

¹⁷ Nasaruddin Umar, *Moderasi Beragama Dan Tantangan Masa Depan Umat* (Jakarta: Nasaruddin Umar Office, 2023), 32.

¹⁸ Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Gender Perspektif Al-Qur'an*.

¹⁹ Umar.

he emphasizes linguistic analysis by examining Qur'anic vocabulary within both classical and modern Arabic usage. Second, he acknowledges the polysemic nature of Qur'anic language, allowing for multiple layers of meaning. Third, he critically interrogates patriarchal biases embedded in traditional exegetical narratives. Fourth, he seeks to deconstruct normative interpretations that marginalize women and reconstruct alternative readings oriented toward emancipation, justice, and reciprocal gender relations. Through this methodological orientation, Nasaruddin Umar positions Islamic legal interpretation as an ethical project aimed at aligning textual understanding with the Qur'an's broader vision of social justice and human equality.²⁰

Islamic Legal Methodology of Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir (*Qirā'ah Mubādalah*)

Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, widely known as Kang Faqih, was born in Cirebon on 31 December 1971. He is the son of H. Abdul Kodir and Hj. Kuriyah and is married to Albi Mimin Mu'minah, who has been both a personal and intellectual partner in the practical application of the *mubādalah* concept. His close engagement with family life has informed his emphasis on reciprocity and mutual responsibility in gender relations, principles that later became central to his interpretive framework of *Qirā'ah Mubādalah*.²¹

His early education was completed at Kedongdong Public Elementary School, followed by secondary studies at MTsN Arjawinangun, Cirebon, where he simultaneously pursued traditional Islamic learning at Pesantren Dar al-Tauhid under the guidance of K.H. Ibnu Ubaidillah Syathori and KH. Husein Muhammad. This formative period exposed him to classical Islamic scholarship while nurturing a critical awareness of social justice issues, particularly those related to gender.

Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir continued his higher education in Damascus, Syria, where he pursued dual undergraduate degrees in Da'wah at Abu Nur Faculty and in Sharia at the University of Damascus. During this period, he studied under prominent scholars such as Shaykh Ramadhan al-Buthi, Shaykh Wahbah al-Zuhayli, and Muhammad Zuhayli, and actively participated in spiritual gatherings led by Shaykh Ahmad Kaftaro of the Naqshbandi order. He also undertook graduate-level studies in Islamic legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) at the University of Khartoum (Damascus branch), although he did not complete his thesis before continuing his academic journey in Southeast Asia.²²

His formal master's degree was later obtained from the International Islamic University Malaysia, Faculty of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, with a specialization in zakat jurisprudence. During his time in Malaysia, he was actively involved in Indonesian Muslim student organizations and played a significant role in establishing the first overseas branch of Nahdlatul Ulama (PCI-NU), which later participated in the NU Congress in Kediri in 1999. These transnational

²⁰ Nasaruddin Umar, "Menstrual Taboo," in *Islam Dan Konstruksi Seksualitas*, ed. Irwan Abdullah (Yogyakarta: PSW IAIN Suka dan Pustaka Pelajar, 2002), 54.

²¹ Lukman Hakim, "Corak Feminisme Post-Modernis Dalam Penafsiran Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 21, no. 1 (2020): 237–59, <https://doi.org/10.14421/gh.2020.2101-12>.

²² M. Afiquil Adib and Natacia Mujahidah, "Konsep Mubadalah Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir Dan Formulasinya Dalam Pola Pengasuhan Anak," *Fokus: Jurnal Kajian Keislaman Dan Kemasyarakatan* 6, no. 2 (2021): 171–92, <https://doi.org/10.29240/jf.v6i2.3412>.

academic and organizational experiences contributed to his broader socio-religious perspective and strengthened his commitment to contextual Islamic scholarship.²³

Upon returning to Indonesia, Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir became actively engaged in teaching and community-based Islamic education. He lectured at IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon at both undergraduate and graduate levels and served as Vice Director of Ma'had Aly Kebon Jambu al-Islami, specializing in fiqh and *uṣūl al-fiqh* with a focus on gender-just interpretations. In parallel, he was involved in several civil society organizations concerned with Islamic education and women's empowerment, including Rahima Jakarta, the Forum Kajian Kitab Kuning (FK3), and the Fahmina Institute, which he co-founded and led during its formative decade. He also remains active in national networks such as the Family Welfare Institution of Nahdlatul Ulama (LKK NU) and ALIMAT, a national movement advocating for family justice from an Islamic perspective.²⁴

After more than a decade of intensive socio-religious activism, Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir pursued doctoral studies at the Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies (ICRS), Universitas Gadjah Mada, where he completed his PhD between 2009 and 2015. His doctoral research focused on Abu Shuqqah's interpretation of prophetic traditions and their implications for strengthening women's rights in Islam. This academic trajectory further consolidated his methodological orientation toward critical engagement with Islamic sources and reinforced his commitment to developing interpretive frameworks that integrate classical scholarship with contemporary ethical concerns.

Within the broader discourse of Islamic legal methodology, Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir's *Qirā'ah Mubādalah* represents a normative-ethical approach grounded in the principle of reciprocity. This method emphasizes mutuality between men and women in understanding religious texts, arguing that normative commands and ethical ideals articulated in the Qur'an and Hadith should be applied symmetrically unless there is clear textual or contextual evidence to justify differentiation. By prioritizing relational justice and ethical balance, the *mubādalah* framework seeks to transform hierarchical gender interpretations into reciprocal models of partnership. Consequently, Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir's interpretive methodology contributes significantly to contemporary efforts to align Islamic legal reasoning with the broader objectives of justice, equality, and human dignity.²⁵

1. The Methodology of *Mubādalah* Interpretation

The term *mubādalah* (مبادلة) is derived from the Arabic root *ba-da-la* (ب-د-ل), which conveys meanings such as replacing, changing, and exchanging. This root appears in the Qur'an in various morphological forms, carrying connotations related to substitution and transformation. Linguistically, *mubādalah* belongs to the *mufā'alah* pattern, which denotes reciprocity and mutual interaction between two parties. Classical lexicons, such as *Lisān al-'Arab* by Ibn Manẓūr, as well as modern dictionaries like *al-Mu'jam al-Wasīṭ*, define *mubādalah* as a reciprocal exchange involving mutual action. In Arabic-English lexicography, such as *al-Mawrid* by Rohi Baalbaki, the term is

²³ Dede Al Mustaqim, "Dualisme Perempuan Dalam Kesejahteraan Rumah Tangga Perspektif Qirā'ah Mubadalah Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir Dan Maqashid Syariah," *Equalita: Jurnal Studi Gender Dan Anak* 4, no. 2 (2022): 191–203, <https://doi.org/10.24235/equalita.v4i2.12904>.

²⁴ Rachma Vina Tsurayya, "Poligami Dalam Perspektif Fakh Al-Din Al-Razi Dan Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 20, no. 2 (2019): 203–22, <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.2019.2002-05>.

²⁵ Adib and Mujahidah, "Konsep Mubadalah Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir Dan Formulasinya Dalam Pola Pengasuhan Anak."

translated as *muqābalaḥ bi al-mithl*, meaning to confront or match something with its equivalent. In English, this concept is associated with notions of reciprocity, reciprocation, mutual exchange, and returning in kind. Similarly, in Indonesian usage, the term “*kesalingan*” (reciprocity) refers to relationships characterized by mutual and two-way interaction.²⁶

In terminological usage, *mubādalāh* refers to a normative-ethical perspective that seeks to promote partnership, cooperation, and reciprocal relations *through* an egalitarian lens. Although this concept can be applied to a wide range of social relationships—such as between the state and citizens, employers and workers, parents and children, teachers and students, or majority and minority groups—its primary focus in Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir’s framework is the relationship between men and women. Within the *mubādalāh* discourse, both genders are positioned as equal moral subjects. Consequently, religious texts should not be interpreted exclusively from the standpoint of one gender, as both men and women are equally addressed by divine revelation and must be equally represented in its normative meanings.²⁷

As a contemporary interpretive method, *mubādalāh* places human experience and social problems at the center of Qur’anic interpretation. Issues such as injustice, discrimination, gender inequality, human rights, and structural marginalization constitute the primary concerns that guide this interpretive approach. In this sense, *mubādalāh* aligns Islamic legal interpretation with lived realities and ethical challenges faced by modern Muslim societies. It seeks to ensure that Qur’anic interpretation remains responsive to social transformation while remaining rooted in the moral objectives of the scripture.²⁸

The methodological foundations of *mubādalāh* are also influenced by contemporary Qur’anic hermeneutics, particularly approaches that emphasize the universality of Qur’anic ethical principles across time and space. Feminist exegetical scholarship has been especially influential in shaping this framework, as it promotes gender-just interpretations of Qur’anic verses concerning male–female relations. These approaches affirm that the Qur’an serves as a moral instrument for elevating the dignity of women and establishing their equal status alongside men. Within this paradigm, gender equality is not understood as an external imposition but as an intrinsic ethical vision embedded in the Qur’anic message itself.²⁹

Mubādalāh interpretation is characterized by several distinctive features. First, it adopts a hermeneutical posture that critically interrogates interpretive traditions by asking what ideological interests or power relations may underlie particular readings. Second, it is inherently contextual, emphasizing the importance of socio-historical conditions and contemporary realities in shaping interpretive meaning. Third, it is oriented toward the ethical spirit of the Qur’an rather than a strictly literalist reading of individual texts. This orientation allows *mubādalāh* to revise, reinterpret, or even replace earlier interpretive paradigms, especially those that marginalize women or fail to recognize them as equal moral agents. Furthermore, the method maintains a scientific and critical character,

²⁶ Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, *Qira’ah Mubadalāh: Tafsir Progresif Untuk Keadilan Gender Dalam Islam* (Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, 2019), 5.

²⁷ Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir and Ummu Azizah Mukarnawati, *Referensi Bagi Hakim Peradilan Agama Tentang Kekerasan Dalam Rumah Tangga* (Jakarta: Komnas Perempuan, 2008), 12.

²⁸ Hakim, “Corak Feminisme Post-Modernis Dalam Penafsiran Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir.”

²⁹ Kodir and Mukarnawati, *Referensi Bagi Hakim Peradilan Agama Tentang Kekerasan Dalam Rumah Tangga*.

as its interpretive outcomes are open to academic scrutiny and debate. It is also non-sectarian, as it does not confine itself to rigid adherence to any particular legal school or doctrinal tradition.³⁰

In practice, Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir's application of *mubādalah* focuses on the principle of reciprocity as the core interpretive lens for reading Qur'anic texts related to gender. Simply stated, *mubādalah* interpretation can be defined as a reciprocal reading of religious texts that treats both men and women as active subjects of divine خطاب (address). Neither gender is positioned as inherently superior or inferior. The primary objective is to transform hierarchical gender relations into egalitarian and emancipatory partnerships free from structural bias. Through this approach, gender relations are reconstructed as cooperative and mutually reinforcing rather than asymmetrical and dominating.³¹

The emergence of *mubādalah* interpretation also responds to the longstanding gap between textual discourse and social reality in Islamic interpretive traditions, where women have often been excluded as full interpretive subjects. By integrating women's lived experiences into the interpretive process, *mubādalah* seeks to produce constructive meanings that were previously marginalized or overlooked in classical jurisprudential and exegetical works. This shift is expected to reshape the normative foundations of male-female relations and align them more closely with contemporary Muslim social realities.³²

From a socio-legal perspective, the *mubādalah* method enables the development of Islamic narratives that affirm men and women as equal human beings. This is particularly significant given that unequal gender relations often result in social stigmatization, marginalization, subordination, and various forms of violence against women. *Mubādalah* offers an alternative interpretive framework that reconfigures gender discourse at both the textual and practical levels. When situated within the historical context of early Arab society and compared with ongoing global patterns of gender inequality, the relevance of this method becomes even more evident. It provides a pathway for generating religious interpretations that are both contextually grounded and ethically committed to gender justice.³³

A central implication of *mubādalah* interpretation is that Qur'anic passages formulated in masculine linguistic forms must be read with full awareness that women are equally included as intended subjects. Consequently, women must be recognized as full participants in religious discourse concerning salvation, worship, moral responsibility, family life, and public social engagement. Within this framework, women are not perceived as secondary or complementary figures whose roles are marginal or subordinate. Rather, men and women are understood as mutually completing one another's humanity.³⁴ Human wholeness, in this view, is realized through reciprocal

³⁰ Soleh Hasan Wahid, "Kontekstualisasi Konsep Nafkah Ramah Gender Perspektif Murtaḍhā Muṭṭahhari Dan Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir," *Al-Syakhsyiyah: Journal of Law & Family Studies* 1, no. 2 (2019): 255–79.

³¹ Hakim, "Corak Feminisme Post-Modernis Dalam Penafsiran Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir."

³² Adib and Mujahidah, "Konsep Mubadalah Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir Dan Formulasinya Dalam Pola Pengasuhan Anak."

³³ Ayu Hafidhoh Ihsaniyah, "Epistemologi Qira'ah Mubadalah (Studi Buku Qira'ah Mubadalah Karya Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir)" (Skripsi, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2020), 34.

³⁴ Akhmad Supriadi, Moch Nur Ichwan, and Syihabuddin Qalyubi, "Menuju Kesetaraan Ontologis Dan Eskatologis? Problematika Gender Dalam Perubahan Terjemahan Ayat-Ayat Penciptaan Perempuan Dan Pasangan Surgawi Dalam Al-Qur'an Dan Terjemahnya," *Suhuf: Jurnal Pengkajian Al-Qur'an Dan Budaya* 12, no. 1 (2019): 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.22548/shf.v12i1.395>.

partnership and shared moral responsibility. This principle constitutes the core substance of *Qirā'ah Mubādalah* and serves as its operational foundation for interpreting Islamic texts, particularly those addressing gender relations and social ethics.

2. Methodological Steps of Mubādalah Interpretation

The operationalization of the *mubādalah* interpretive method begins with the formulation of several foundational premises. These premises function as normative benchmarks for identifying universal, gender-just principles within the Qur'anic text. First, Islam addresses both men and women equally; therefore, religious texts must be interpreted as speaking to both genders. Second, the ideal relationship between men and women is based on cooperation and reciprocity rather than domination and hierarchical power. Third, Islamic texts remain open to reinterpretation in order to ensure that these two foundational premises are consistently reflected in contemporary interpretive practices.³⁵

Based on these premises, Islamic texts are conceptually classified into three broad categories. The first category consists of foundational teachings (*mabādi'*), such as faith and the primacy of piety, which establish the ethical and theological foundations of Islam. The second category comprises thematic principles (*al-qawā'id*), including normative frameworks related to marriage, economic relations, and social responsibility. The third category includes operational and practical norms (*juz'iyāt*), such as injunctions on mutual kindness and the maintenance of marital commitments. This typology enables interpreters to differentiate between universal principles and context-specific applications while maintaining coherence within the broader ethical structure of Islamic law.³⁶

In addition, *mubādalah* interpretation employs two key analytical approaches: explicit (*taṣrīḥ*) and implicit (*taghlīb*). The *taṣrīḥ* approach refers to Qur'anic passages that explicitly mention both men and women as subjects of legal or ethical instruction. The *taghlīb* approach, by contrast, refers to texts that linguistically address men but implicitly include women as intended subjects. This distinction allows the interpreter to expand the scope of textual meaning beyond grammatical gender and to recover the inclusive moral intent of revelation.³⁷

Methodologically, the application of *mubādalah* proceeds through three sequential stages, although experienced interpreters may begin from later stages depending on analytical needs. The first stage involves identifying universal ethical values embedded in Islamic teachings, such as justice, public welfare (*maṣlaḥah*), compassion, and social harmony. At this stage, texts classified as *mabādi'* and *al-qawā'id* are reexamined to reaffirm these universal principles as the normative foundation for interpreting more specific and contextualized rulings. This step is crucial for demonstrating that the Qur'an fundamentally promotes balance, reciprocity, and fairness in gender relations.³⁸

³⁵ Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, *Bergerak Menuju Keadilan; Pembelaan Nabi Terhadap Perempuan* (Jakarta: Rahima Foundation, 2006), 23.

³⁶ Husein Muhammad, *Fiqh Perempuan: Refleksi Kiai Atas Wacana Agama Dan Gender*, ed. Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir (Yogyakarta: LKIS, 2021), ix.

³⁷ Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, *Manba' Al-Sa'āda Fī Usus Ḥusn Al-Mu'āshara Fī Ḥayāt Al-Zawjīyah* (Cirebon: Fahmina Institute, 2012), 11.

³⁸ Kodir, *Qirā'ah Mubādalah: Tafsir Progresif Untuk Keadilan Gender Dalam Islam*.

The second stage focuses on extracting the central moral idea or normative objective of the specific text under examination. One practical technique employed at this stage is temporarily removing explicit subject-object references from the verse in order to isolate its core ethical message, which can then be reformulated as a reciprocal principle applicable to both genders. This process is supported by methodological tools drawn from Islamic legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), including analogical reasoning (*qiyās*), juristic preference (*istiḥsān*), public interest consideration (*istiṣlāḥ*), semantic analysis (*dalālat al-alfāz*), and the objectives of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*). These instruments enable a deeper exploration of the normative intent underlying the textual formulation.³⁹

The third and final stage involves extending the identified moral principle to the gender that is not explicitly mentioned in the text. Through this step, no Qurʾanic instruction is confined exclusively to one gender unless there is clear textual or contextual evidence to justify such restriction. Consequently, passages addressing men may also apply to women, and vice versa, provided that the underlying ethical rationale supports reciprocal application. An example of a text that cannot be fully generalized through *mubādalah* is Q.S. al-Nisāʾ [4]:3, which permits polygyny under specific conditions and within a particular historical and legal framework. This limitation illustrates that *mubādalah* does not impose uniform reciprocity mechanically but remains attentive to contextual and normative boundaries.⁴⁰

The ultimate objective of this methodological process is to reaffirm that Qurʾanic texts formulated in gender-specific language should be interpreted inclusively, reflecting the Qurʾan's broader ethical commitment to justice and balance. The *mubādalah* framework is grounded in the principle of reciprocity, whereby legal norms and ethical teachings apply equally to men and women unless explicitly restricted by authoritative evidence.⁴¹

The defining characteristics of *Qirāʾah Mubādalah* can be summarized in four interrelated features. First, it emphasizes reciprocal relationships within textual interpretation. Second, it integrates social contextualization and critical analysis of power relations. Third, it is grounded in the objectives of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*), particularly the values of justice and compassion. Fourth, it positions women as full legal and moral subjects within Islamic ethics and jurisprudence. Through these methodological principles, *mubādalah* interpretation contributes to the reformulation of Islamic legal methodology in a manner that is both normatively grounded and responsive to contemporary demands for gender equality.⁴²

Comparative Interpretations of Gender-Related Verses by Nasaruddin Umar and Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir

This section presents two case studies that illustrate how Nasaruddin Umar's contextualist methodology and Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir's *mubādalah* approach operate in practice. The selected verses—Q.S. al-Nisāʾ [4]:34 and Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]:228—have long been central to debates on gender relations and authority in Islamic family law. By comparing their respective interpretations, this

³⁹ Kodir and Mukarnawati, *Referensi Bagi Hakim Peradilan Agama Tentang Kekerasan Dalam Rumah Tangga*.

⁴⁰ Kodir, *Qirāʾah Mubādalah: Tafsir Progresif Untuk Keadilan Gender Dalam Islam*.

⁴¹ Adib and Mujahidah, "Konsep Mubādalah Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir Dan Formulasinya Dalam Pola Pengasuhan Anak."

⁴² Adib and Mujahidah.

analysis highlights the methodological and normative implications of each approach for advancing gender equality within Islamic legal discourse.

1. Case Study: Q.S. al-Nisā' [4]:34

"Ar-rijālu qawwāmūna 'alā an-nisā'..."

This verse is frequently interpreted as establishing male authority or leadership over women. However, both scholars offer alternative readings that challenge hierarchical understandings.⁴³

a. Nasaruddin Umar's Interpretation:

In *Arguments for Gender Equality in the Qur'an*, Nasaruddin Umar interprets the term *qawwāmūn* not as denoting absolute or inherent male leadership, but rather as referring to functional responsibility within a specific socio-economic context. He argues that the phrase *bimā faḍḍala Allāhu ba'dahum 'alā ba'din* does not imply ontological superiority of men over women, but instead reflects situational differences related to economic roles and social structures at the time of revelation. According to this contextualist reading, the Qur'an addresses a historical reality in which men were predominantly responsible for financial provision. As contemporary social conditions have changed, including women's increased participation in economic and public life, leadership and responsibility within the family can no longer be understood as the exclusive domain of men. Instead, they should be reconfigured in more egalitarian and partnership-based terms.⁴⁴

b. Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir's Interpretation:

Using the *mubādalāh* framework, Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir approaches this verse through the principle of reciprocity. He argues that if *qiwāmah* (responsibility or guardianship) is attributed to men in certain contexts, it can also be attributed to women when they possess the relevant capacity and social responsibility. The concept of *qawwāmūn*, therefore, is not fixed or biologically determined, but contingent upon competence, contribution, and mutual agreement. He strongly rejects the use of this verse as a religious justification for domestic domination or violence, emphasizing that such interpretations contradict the Qur'an's ethical commitment to justice, compassion, and mutual respect. Within the *mubādalāh* paradigm, *qiwāmah* is reframed as shared responsibility rather than hierarchical authority.⁴⁵

2. Case Study: Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]:228

"...wa li al-rijāli 'alayhinna darajah..."

This phrase has often been cited to support claims of male superiority in marital relations. Both scholars reinterpret this expression within broader ethical and legal contexts.⁴⁶

a. Nasaruddin Umar's Interpretation:

Nasaruddin Umar critiques the widespread interpretation of *darajah* as a marker of inherent male superiority. He situates the verse within its specific legal context, namely issues of divorce

⁴³ Mila Aulia, "Realitas Domestikasi Perempuan (Studi Penafsiran QS Al-Ahzab: 33 Perspektif Muhammad Sayyid Thanthawi)" (Skripsi, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, 2021).

⁴⁴ Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Gender Perspektif Al-Qur'an*.

⁴⁵ Kodir, *Qira'ah Mubadalāh: Tafsir Progresif Untuk Keadilan Gender Dalam Islam*.

⁴⁶ Hendar Riyadi, *Tafsir Emansipatoris: Arah Baru Studi Tafsir Al-Quran* (Bandung: CV Pustaka Setia, 2005), 54.

(*talāq*) and reconciliation (*rujū'*) in early Islamic society. According to his analysis, the reference to *darajah* reflects an additional procedural responsibility assigned to men within the prevailing legal framework of the time, rather than a permanent elevation of male status. Thus, *darajah* is understood as an added burden of responsibility rather than a normative claim of moral or ontological superiority. This contextual reading reinforces the principle that Qur'anic legal discourse often responds to particular historical circumstances and should not be universalized in ways that perpetuate gender hierarchy.⁴⁷

b. Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir's Interpretation:

From the *mubādalah* perspective, Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir interprets *darajah* as indicating a situational priority or procedural advantage in specific legal matters, such as the opportunity to initiate reconciliation after divorce. This advantage, however, is neither absolute nor permanent. It does not establish a structural hierarchy between men and women, nor does it justify unequal rights or authority within the household. Instead, the verse is read as addressing a particular legal mechanism rather than defining the overall ethical framework of marital relations. In line with the principle of reciprocity, Faqihuddin emphasizes that marital rights and responsibilities should be balanced and mutually negotiated, rather than imposed through gender-based privilege.⁴⁸

Taken together, these case studies demonstrate that both Nasaruddin Umar's contextualism and Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir's *mubādalah* offer methodological tools for reinterpreting gender-related verses in ways that align Islamic legal reasoning with contemporary ideals of equality and justice. While Nasaruddin emphasizes historical context and functional differentiation, Faqihuddin foregrounds reciprocity and mutuality. Despite these methodological differences, both approaches converge in rejecting patriarchal readings and affirming the ethical imperative of gender equality within Islamic law.⁴⁹

Comparative Analysis

Within contemporary Qur'anic interpretation oriented toward gender justice, Prof. Dr. Nasaruddin Umar and KH. Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir occupy significant intellectual positions through distinct methodological approaches that nevertheless converge in normative orientation. Although they employ different interpretive frameworks and analytical instruments, the central objective of their scholarship remains consistent: to dismantle patriarchal biases embedded in religious interpretation and to reaffirm the principle of equality between men and women within Islamic thought and legal reasoning.⁵⁰

Nasaruddin Umar primarily advances a feminist hermeneutical approach integrated with historical and sociological analysis. Through this framework, he seeks to expose the patriarchal

⁴⁷ Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Gender Perspektif Al-Qur'an*.

⁴⁸ Kodir, *Qira'ah Mubadalah: Tafsir Progresif Untuk Keadilan Gender Dalam Islam*.

⁴⁹ Akhmad Arif Junaidi, "Kongres Ulama Perempuan Indonesia (KUPI) and Mubādalah Approach in Interpreting the Gender Biased-Qur'anic Verses," *Sawwa: Jurnal Studi Gender* 18, no. 1 (2023): 1–24.

⁵⁰ Lukman Budi Santoso, "Eksistensi Peran Perempuan Sebagai Kepala Keluarga (Telaah Terhadap Counter Legal Draft-Kompilasi Hukum Islam Dan Qira'ah Mubadalah)," *Marwah: Jurnal Perempuan, Agama Dan Jender* 18, no. 2 (2019): 107–20, <https://doi.org/10.24014/marwah.v18i2.8703>.

structures that have been sedimented within classical exegetical traditions.⁵¹ His method is both critical and deconstructive, as it not only reinterprets Qur’anic texts but also interrogates the epistemological and cultural assumptions that have shaped dominant interpretations.⁵² The core focus of his scholarship lies in deconstructing patriarchal narratives that, in his view, have systematically distorted Islamic understandings of gender relations. Within this paradigm, women are positioned as equal in value, rights, and human dignity, in accordance with Islam’s universal ethical principles of justice and moral accountability.⁵³

By contrast, Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir emphasizes the *mubādalah* approach, which foregrounds reciprocity and mutual responsibility in male–female relations, while simultaneously grounding interpretation in the objectives of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-sharīḥ*), particularly ethical values and public welfare. His approach is more selective and transformative in its engagement with classical exegetical heritage.⁵⁴ Rather than fully dismantling earlier interpretations, he reworks and recontextualizes them to generate new, more egalitarian meanings. The primary focus of his interpretive project is the reconstruction of reciprocal relationships, not only at the normative-textual level but also through ethical reflection and attention to women’s lived experiences. In this framework, women are positioned as equal legal and social partners rather than passive recipients of religious norms.⁵⁵

Despite their methodological differences—Nasaruddin Umar’s feminist historical hermeneutics and Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir’s *mubādalah*-based and *maqāṣid*-oriented approach—both scholars share a firm commitment to rejecting religious interpretations that legitimize violence, subordination, or discrimination against women. Each argues that Islamic teachings, understood through contextual, ethical, and reciprocal interpretive frameworks, affirm justice as a foundational principle governing gender relations. Consequently, they promote readings of scripture that support equality within family life, social interaction, and public institutions, while encouraging Muslim communities to reinterpret inherited norms in ways that strengthen dignity, partnership, and mutual responsibility between women and men across diverse contemporary social contexts.⁵⁶

This comparative analysis demonstrates that the pursuit of gender-just Qur’anic interpretation does not require methodological uniformity. Instead, it requires a shared ethical commitment to liberating religious texts from patriarchal distortions and restoring the egalitarian values that constitute the moral core of Islamic teachings.⁵⁷ Through different yet complementary methodological pathways, both Nasaruddin Umar and Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir contribute to the

⁵¹ Khoirul Amru Harahap, Najhan Parluhutan Harahap, and Mohamad Toha Umar, “The Dilemma of Gender and Marital Validity in Khuntha Cases: A Comparative Legal Study of the Four Sunni Schools,” *El-Aqwal: Journal of Sharia and Comparative Law* 4, no. 2 (October 21, 2025): 81–102, <https://doi.org/10.24090/el-aqwal.v4i2.15026>.

⁵² Janah, “Telaah Buku Argumentasi Kesetaraan Gender Perspektif Al-Qur’an Karya Nasaruddin Umar.”

⁵³ Kahfi, “Deradikalisasi Quranik Sebuah Perspektif Nasaruddin Umar.”

⁵⁴ Hakim, “Corak Feminisme Post-Modernis Dalam Penafsiran Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir.”

⁵⁵ Adib and Mujahidah, “Konsep Mubadalah Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir Dan Formulasinya Dalam Pola Pengasuhan Anak.”

⁵⁶ Wardah Nuroniyah and Bani Syarif Maula, “Muslim Women Adhering to Minangkabau’s Bajapuik Tradition in Cirebon, West Java: Compromizing a Gendered Culture in Islamic Law,” *Ijtihad: Jurnal Wacana Hukum Islam Dan Kemanusiaan* 22, no. 2 (2022): 135–154, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijtihad.v22i2.135-154>.

⁵⁷ Tsurayya, “Poligami Dalam Perspektif Fakh Al-Din Al-Razi Dan Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir.”

ongoing reformulation of Islamic legal methodology in response to contemporary challenges of gender equality.

Table: Comparative Overview of Interpretive Methodologies

Aspect	Nasaruddin Umar	Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir
Interpretive Approach	Feminist hermeneutics, historical analysis	<i>Mubādalāh</i> , <i>maqāṣid</i> -oriented framework
Interpretive Basis	Historical and sociological context	Reciprocity and relational ethics
Engagement with Classical Tafsir	Highly critical and deconstructive	Selective and transformative
Primary Focus	Deconstruction of patriarchal structures	Reconstruction of egalitarian relations
Position of Women	Equal in value and moral status	Equal partners in legal and social relations

Although their methodologies differ in orientation and technique, both scholars consistently affirm the importance of equitable gender relations and firmly reject interpretive frameworks that legitimize violence or structural subordination against women. Their respective approaches demonstrate that Islamic legal interpretation is neither static nor monolithic, but open to ethical renewal through contextual and principled reasoning. Collectively, their contributions highlight the plurality of methodological pathways available within the Islamic intellectual tradition for aligning legal interpretation with the normative commitments of justice, reciprocity, and human dignity, while encouraging contemporary Muslim societies to engage critically with inherited interpretations in order to strengthen equality and mutual respect.⁵⁸

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Prof. Dr. Nasaruddin Umar and KH. Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir represent two influential contemporary approaches to interpreting gender-related Qur'anic verses: a deconstructive-contextual framework advanced by Nasaruddin Umar and a participatory, reciprocity-based *mubādalāh* approach developed by Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir. Although their methodological orientations differ, both scholars make substantial contributions to the reformulation of Islamic legal interpretation by challenging patriarchal assumptions and re-centering ethical principles of justice, mutuality, and human dignity.

Taken together, their interpretive projects contribute to the construction of a gender-just exegetical paradigm that reflects the Qur'an's universal mission as *rahmatan li al-'ālamīn* (a mercy for all creation). By integrating critical hermeneutics, contextual analysis, and normative ethical reasoning, these approaches offer complementary pathways for advancing gender equality within

⁵⁸ Ahmad Zaiyadi, "Lokalitas Tafsir Nusantara: Dinamika Studi Al-Qur'an Di Indonesia," *Al-Bayan: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadist* 1, no. 1 (2018): 1–26, <https://doi.org/10.35132/albayan.v1i1.1>.

Islamic legal methodology while remaining rooted in the moral and theological foundations of the Islamic tradition.

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