



Gender-Based Interpretation of Khalifah in Tafsir Nurul Huda: An Analysis of Mudhar Tamim's Thought

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Abstract

This article examines the construction of meaning attributed to the Qur'anic concept of khalifah (vicegerency) through a gender lens, with particular focus on Tafsir Nurul Huda—the vernacular Madurese-language exegetical work of KH. Mudhar Tamim (1969). Classical tafsir has predominantly associated the khalifah mandate with masculine leadership, producing an enduring gender bias in Islamic religious interpretation that restricts women's participation in public and political life. This study aims to uncover how Mudhar Tamim constructs the meaning of khalifah, to evaluate the degree to which gender equality is accommodated in his hermeneutical framework, and to assess the broader contribution of Tafsir Nurul Huda to Indonesian gender-progressive Islamic discourse. Employing a qualitative-descriptive approach grounded in library research (*studi kepustakaan*), this article applies thematic (*mawdū'i*) Qur'anic analysis alongside content analysis and comparative methodology. The findings reveal that Mudhar Tamim interprets khalifah as a universal human mandate—unrestricted by sex—rooted in moral capacity, spiritual responsibility, and social accountability. Tafsir Nurul Huda asserts that men and women hold equal standing as subjects of vicegerency, with complementary roles directed toward realizing the common good (*maṣlaḥah*). The discussion situates these findings within the broader landscape of Islamic feminist hermeneutics, classical exegetical tradition, and Indonesian Muslim public discourse, demonstrating that Tamim's work constitutes a significant local pesantren contribution to global debates on Islam and gender justice.

Keywords: Khalifah; gender; Tafsir Nurul Huda; Mudhar Tamim; Qur'anic exegesis; Islamic hermeneutics; gender equality; pesantren.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the foundational concepts in the Qur'an is the designation of humanity as khalifah—a term conventionally rendered as 'vicegerent,' 'steward,' or 'successor'—upon the earth. The concept appears paradigmatically in QS. al-Baqarah [2]:30, where God announces to the angels His intention to place a khalifah on earth, opening a sustained Qur'anic reflection on the nature, scope, and conditions of human authority. Across Islamic intellectual history, this verse has generated rich exegetical debate. Yet despite the Qur'an's ostensibly gender-neutral language in addressing humanity—as *al-insān*, *al-nās*, or *banī Ādam*—the dominant

thread of classical tafsir has narrowly associated the exercise of khilāfah with male leadership, effectively relegating women to the domestic sphere and structurally excluding them from the public arena of authority and decision-making.

This interpretive pattern was not incidental. It reflected the patriarchal social structures of the medieval Islamic world, within which the great exegetes—al-Ṭabarī, al-Qurṭubī, Ibn Kathīr, and others—produced their monumental works under Abbasid patronage and within male-dominated scholarly institutions. Al-Qurṭubī's *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* reads the concept of qawwāmūn in QS. al-Nisā':34 as an affirmation of male superiority over women in both family and public spheres. Al-Ṭabarī similarly identified the khalifah of QS. al-Baqarah:30 with prophets, kings, and male political leaders, making the exclusion of women structurally embedded in the text's interpretation rather than textually mandated (al-Ṭabarī, 1992). These exegetical choices were reinforced by legal-political treatises such as al-Māwardī's *Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah*, which listed maleness as a formal precondition for caliphal authority despite the absence of any explicit Qur'anic requirement to that effect.

The modern period has witnessed a sustained renegotiation of these interpretive conventions. Scholars such as Amina Wadud (1999), Asma Barlas (2002), Nasaruddin Umar (1999), and Fazlur Rahman (1982) have called for a critical hermeneutical re-engagement with Qur'anic texts on gender, insisting that patriarchal readings are historically contingent products of their social environments rather than inescapable textual conclusions. These contributions have collectively reframed gender equality not as an imposition on Islam from outside, but as integral to the Qur'an's own maqāṣid—its overarching objectives of justice ('adl), welfare (maṣlaḥah), and human dignity (karāmah insāniyyah).

Within this global debate, the work of KH. Mudhar Tamim stands out as a significantly under-studied local contribution. Tamim—a Madurese scholar who produced *Tafsir al-Qur'ān al-Karīm Nūr al-Hudā* in the Madurese language in 1969—offers a contextual, thematic reading of the Qur'an that challenges the patriarchal assumptions of classical exegesis while remaining embedded in the pesantren tradition of East Java and Madura. His work provides a rare example of gender-inclusive hermeneutics emerging from within a traditionalist Islamic educational institution, and it suggests that the binary between progressive and traditional Islamic interpretation is considerably more porous than commonly assumed.

This article investigates two central questions: first, how does *Tafsir Nurul Huda* construct the meaning of khalifah in relation to gender? Second, to what extent does Mudhar Tamim's interpretive approach accommodate gender equality, and what are the theological and social implications of this accommodation? By addressing these questions, the article aims to demonstrate that gender-progressive Qur'anic interpretation has meaningful precedents within Indonesia's traditionalist pesantren culture, and contributes to broader discussions of the relationship between Islamic textual authority, gender equity, and social transformation in contemporary Muslim societies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Khalifah in Classical Qur'anic Exegesis

The concept of khalifah in Qur'anic discourse encompasses at least two dimensions: a theological dimension concerning the relationship between God and humanity as God's appointed stewards, and a sociopolitical dimension concerning the organization of human authority on earth. Classical scholarship tended to conflate these dimensions in ways that privileged masculine agency. Al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmi' al-Bayān* (completed ca. 310 AH/923 CE) identifies the khalifah primarily with Adam and, by extension, with the line of prophets and legitimate political rulers who succeed him, effectively linking Qur'anic vicegerency to institutions of power that were, in the historical context of early and medieval Islam, exclusively male.

Al-Māwardī's *Al-Aḥkām al-Sultāniyyah* further codified this association by specifying maleness as one of the seven formal conditions for the caliphate, alongside freedom, sound judgment, physical fitness, justice, knowledge, and capacity for warfare. This legal specification was subsequently read back into Qur'anic commentary, producing a circular reinforcement of patriarchal authority (Umar, 1999). Ibn Kathīr's commentary on QS. al-Nisā':34—treating qawwāmūn as evidence of ontological male superiority divinely inscribed into the natural order—further entrenched the connection between the khalifah concept and masculine prerogative. The result was an interpretive consensus that actively excluded women from the theological framework of vicegerency rather than being simply silent about them.

It is important to note that this classical consensus reflected specific historical and social conditions rather than universal Islamic doctrine. As Fakih (2002) documented, the patriarchal norms embedded in classical tafsir were shaped by the social structures of medieval Arab, Persian, and Turkish societies rather than derived from the Qur'anic text itself. The Qur'an never explicitly prohibits women from assuming the khalifah mandate—a point repeatedly emphasized by contemporary scholars—yet this absence was systematically overlooked in favor of readings that aligned with existing social hierarchies. This observation is foundational to any attempt to develop a gender-equitable reading of vicegerency.

Contemporary Islamic Feminist Hermeneutics

Contemporary scholarship has subjected classical interpretations of gender-related Qur'anic concepts to sustained critical scrutiny. Amina Wadud's (1999) *Qur'an and Woman* argued that the male-dominated tradition of tafsir represents a systematic distortion of the Qur'an's inclusive moral vision. Her reading of QS. al-Baqarah:30 emphasizes that khalifah is addressed to humanity as a collective—al-insān—without gender restriction, and that the moral qualifications for vicegerency (knowledge, accountability, justice) are equally incumbent upon all human beings regardless of sex. Asma Barlas (2002) extended this argument by showing that patriarchal readings of the Qur'an are epistemologically dependent on the assumption that God endorses human hierarchies of gender—an assumption she argued directly contradicts the Qur'an's own insistence on the absolute sovereignty and perfect justice of God.

Fazlur Rahman's (1982) 'double movement' hermeneutics—reading Qur'anic verses first in their historical context to identify the ethical objectives of specific rulings, then deriving universal principles applicable to contemporary conditions—provided an important methodological framework for Islamic feminist scholarship. Applied to gender, this method reveals that specific roles assigned to men and women in seventh-century Arabia were contextual applications of broader principles of justice and welfare, principles that require different social arrangements in contemporary conditions.

Mudhar Tamim and the Context of Tafsir Nurul Huda

KH. Mudhar Tamim (c. 1910–1980s) was a respected Madurese Islamic scholar whose intellectual formation took place within the pesantren educational tradition of East Java and Madura, one of the most densely networked Islamic scholarly communities in the Indonesian archipelago. Educated in classical Islamic sciences (fiqh, hadith, tafsir, Arabic grammar), Tamim represented the type of kiai scholarship whose authority rested not on formal academic credentials but on depth of textual knowledge, personal piety, and social embeddedness in the local Muslim community (Dhofier, 1994; van Bruinessen, 1995). His scholarly output, while not widely distributed in print, circulated within local pesantren networks and exerted considerable influence on the religious formation of generations of Madurese Muslims.

Tafsir Nurul Huda, completed and published in 1969, represents Tamim's most sustained exegetical effort. Written in the Madurese language—a deliberate choice that signals the author's commitment to reaching a vernacular audience rather than the Arabic-literate scholarly elite—the tafsir combines classical tafsir methodology with contextual sensitivity to the social realities of Madurese Muslim life. The choice of a thematic-analytic approach (echoing the mawdū'ī tradition) alongside attention to social and ethical implications of Qur'anic teachings marks Tamim as a scholar engaged with the reformist currents within Indonesian Islam, even as his institutional location within the pesantren tradition gives his work a distinctive grounding. The vernacular character of Nurul Huda connects it to the broader tradition of local Indonesian tafsir documented by Federspiel (1994), in which accessibility and social relevance are valued alongside textual fidelity.

Gender-Progressive Tafsir in the Indonesian Context

Within the Indonesian context, Nasaruddin Umar's *Argumen Kesetaraan Gender Perspektif al-Qur'an* (1999) provided the most systematic academic argument for gender equality in Qur'anic interpretation, documenting how the text consistently employs gender-neutral language in describing humanity's fundamental relationship to God. Quraish Shihab's *Wawasan al-Qur'an* (1996) offered a contextually sensitive reading of gender-related verses, insisting that classical interpretations must be understood against their historical backdrop. Musdah Mulia's *Islam dan Inspirasi Kesetaraan Gender* (2006) explicitly invoked maqāṣid al-sharī'ah to argue that excluding women from public leadership violates the Qur'an's objectives of justice and welfare.

Despite this rich body of scholarship, studies of gender-inclusive tafsir from within Indonesia's pesantren tradition remain scarce. Zamakhshari Dhofier's landmark study of

pesantren culture (1994) documented the dominance of classical patriarchal texts in the kitab kuning curriculum without examining sites of gender-progressive resistance. Lies Marcos (2003) documented some evidence of progressive gender discourse within pesantren, but the textual dimensions remain understudied. Mudhar Tamim's Tafsir Nurul Huda has received virtually no academic treatment, despite its potential significance as a gender-progressive pesantren tafsir. This article addresses that gap by situating Tamim's work in comparative relation to both the classical tradition and contemporary feminist Islamic scholarship.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive research design grounded in library research (studi kepustakaan). The qualitative approach is appropriate because the object of analysis is a textual corpus whose meaning requires sustained interpretive engagement rather than quantitative measurement. Data were collected from two categories of sources. Primary sources consist of the text of Tafsir al-Qur'ān al-Karīm Nūr al-Hudā by Mudhar Tamim (1969), the Qur'anic text with particular attention to QS. al-Baqarah [2]:30, QS. Ṣad [38]:26, QS. al-Nisā' [4]:1, [4]:34, [4]:58, [4]:124, and QS. al-Naml [27]:23–44, and relevant canonical hadith collections. Secondary sources include classical tafsir works (al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, al-Qurṭubī, al-Bayḍāwī); contemporary Islamic feminist scholarship (Wadud, 1999; Barlas, 2002; Umar, 1999; Rahman, 1982); and Indonesian gender studies literature (Mulia, 2006; Shihab, 1996).

The primary analytical method is thematic Qur'anic analysis (tafsir mawdū'ī), which identifies and systematically examines all Qur'anic verses thematically related to the concept of khalifah and its implications for gender relations. This is complemented by content analysis (analisis isi), through which recurring themes, conceptual clusters, and interpretive strategies in Mudhar Tamim's commentary are systematically identified and categorized. A comparative analytical strategy contrasts Tamim's readings against classical tafsir scholarship and against contemporary Islamic feminist scholarship. An interpretive (hermeneutical) paradigm guides the analysis, enabling the researcher to situate Tamim's readings within their sociohistorical context while remaining attentive to their contemporary relevance. Validity is maintained through source triangulation, cross-referencing Tamim's interpretations against multiple classical and modern authorities.

RESULTS

The analysis of Tafsir Nurul Huda reveals a coherent and systematically developed gender-inclusive interpretation of the concept of khalifah across the Qur'anic corpus. Four principal findings emerge from the content and thematic analysis.

Khalifah as Universal Human Mandate without Gender Restriction

Mudhar Tamim's commentary on QS. al-Baqarah [2]:30 interprets khalifah not as a designation for a specific class of rulers, prophets, or male political leaders—the dominant reading in classical tafsir—but as a universal mandate conferred upon humanity as a whole. The term khalifah functions as a generic designation for al-insān (the human being) in its

collective capacity as God's steward, whose responsibility encompasses maintaining justice, order, and the flourishing of creation on behalf of the Creator. The moral and spiritual qualifications for vicegerency—piety (taqwā), knowledge ('ilm), and social responsibility (amānah)—are presented as equally incumbent upon men and women alike (Tamim, 1969, p. 18).

Tamim substantiates this reading by cross-referencing QS. al-An'ām [6]:165, which designates all human beings (khalā'if) as successive stewards of the earth, and QS. al-Naml [27]:62, which addresses God's making humanity as successors (khulafā') without gender qualification. This intertextual reading supports a view of vicegerency as a broadly distributed human responsibility rather than a restricted masculine prerogative. Tamim explicitly notes that al-Ṭabarī's identification of the first khalifah with Adam as patriarch reflects cultural conditioning rather than textual necessity, and argues that the Qur'an's use of al-insān in such contexts invariably intends humanity in its full, gender-inclusive sense.

Critical Contextualization of Gender Hierarchy in Classical Exegesis

In engaging with QS. al-Nisā' [4]:34, Tamim does not reproduce the classical reading of qawwāmūn as ontological male dominance. Instead, he contextualizes the verse within the specific economic and social conditions of seventh-century Arabia, where male financial responsibility for the household created a practical context for male household leadership that is not generalizable as an eternal theological norm. Tamim argues that the broader ethical framework of the Qur'an demands relational mutuality (tawāzun) and justice between the sexes, and that reading qawwāmūn as a universal principle of male dominance violates the Qur'an's emphasis on equity and complementarity (Tamim, 1969, pp. 73–74).

His reading of QS. al-Nisā' [4]:124—'Whoever does righteous deeds, whether male or female, while being a believer—those will enter Paradise'—insists that divine moral valuation is strictly gender-neutral. If God's assessment of human worth is entirely based on faith and righteous action regardless of sex, Tamim argues, then there is no theological ground for assigning women a lesser capacity for religious or civic leadership. His commentary on QS. al-Nisā' [4]:58—requiring the fulfillment of trusts (amānāt) and just judgment—presents the obligation of just leadership as a collective human duty applicable to all who bear the khalifah mandate, regardless of gender (Tamim, 1969, pp. 87–92).

The Narrative of Bilqis as Paradigm of Female Leadership Capacity

A distinctive and theologically significant feature of Tamim's gender hermeneutics is his sustained engagement with the Qur'anic figure of Bilqis, Queen of Sheba (QS. al-Naml [27]:23–44). Where classical exegetes acknowledged Bilqis's political acumen while ultimately subordinating her example to a normative preference for male leadership, Tamim foregrounds the Bilqis narrative as direct Qur'anic evidence that women are fully capable of exercising responsible, consultative, and effective leadership (Tamim, 1969, pp. 89–92). The Qur'an describes Bilqis as governing through deliberation (shūrā): before responding to Solomon's letter, she convenes her advisors and solicits their counsel, demonstrating a leadership style

characterized by wisdom and humility. Tamim presents this as a model of sound political judgment, not as an exception requiring apologetic explanation.

Tamim uses this narrative to counter the oft-cited hadith regarding female leadership (HR. Bukhārī: 'A people will not prosper who entrust their affairs to a woman'), arguing that contextual reading of that tradition—understood in relation to the specific crisis of Persian dynastic succession at the time of its utterance—renders it a historically specific observation rather than a universal prohibition. This reading aligns with Quraish Shihab's (1996) contextual analysis of the same hadith and reinforces the principle that leadership legitimacy is determined by capacity, integrity, and justice—functional criteria that apply without gender restriction.

Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah as Hermeneutical Framework

Underlying Tamim's specific exegetical conclusions is a methodological commitment to reading the Qur'an through the lens of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah—the overarching objectives of Islamic law: the protection of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property, which contemporary scholarship has expanded to include the protection of human dignity and justice (Auda, 2008). Tamim consistently measures specific Qur'anic interpretations against whether they serve or undermine these objectives, finding that interpretations which marginalize women from public life fail the maqāṣid test. If Islamic law exists to promote human flourishing and justice, Tamim argues, then interpretations that restrict qualified women from contributing to the social good through leadership contradict the law's own purposes. This commitment to maqāṣid as a hermeneutical criterion places Tamim's approach within the rationalist wing of Islamic jurisprudence even as it emerges from a traditionalist institutional setting.

DISCUSSION

Tamim's Hermeneutics in Comparative Perspective

The findings presented above position Tafsir Nurul Huda as a significant, if underrecognized, contribution to the field of gender-progressive Qur'anic exegesis. Tamim's reading of the khalifah concept exhibits strong structural parallels with the Islamic feminist hermeneutics of Amina Wadud and Nasaruddin Umar, though his method is rooted in the pesantren tradition rather than Western academic institutions. Like Wadud (1999), Tamim emphasizes that the Qur'an's vision of humanity as vicegerent is addressed to al-insān without gender restriction. Like Umar (1999), Tamim invokes maqāṣid al-sharī'ah as the hermeneutical key for evaluating gender-related interpretations. And like Rahman's (1982) 'double movement' approach, Tamim moves between the historical context of Qur'anic revelation and the contemporary needs of his community, reading universal moral principles out of historically situated texts.

What distinguishes Tamim's contribution is precisely his institutional location within the Madurese pesantren world. Classical patriarchal tafsir was not merely an intellectual error; it was a culturally embedded practice that shaped entire educational institutions, legal systems, and social norms. Tamim's critique of this tradition from within the pesantren—rather than

from cosmopolitan or secular academic institutions—carries a different kind of social authority and suggests a different kind of transformative potential. His approach demonstrates that the pesantren tradition is not monolithically conservative on gender questions and that progressive interpretations can emerge organically from within traditional Islamic educational settings. This finding aligns with Howard Federspiel's (1994) observation that local Indonesian tafsir tends to engage more directly with concrete social realities than globally circulated canonical works, and with Lies Marcoes's (2003) documentation of gender-progressive strands within pesantren culture that have often been obscured by scholarly focus on dominant conservative voices.

The Hadith on Female Leadership: Contextual vs. Textual Reading

The debate over the hadith attributed to the Prophet regarding female leadership—'A people will not prosper who entrust their affairs to a woman' (HR. Bukhārī)—illustrates the broader methodological stakes of Tamim's hermeneutic approach. Conservative interpreters have cited this tradition as a near-absolute prohibition on female political authority across all contexts and times. Progressive scholars insist on contextualizing it within the specific historical circumstances of its utterance: the political crisis following the death of the Sasanian Emperor Kisra and the accession of his daughter. Quraish Shihab (1996) made this contextual argument explicitly in *Wawasan al-Qur'an*, and Tamim's *Tafsir Nurul Huda* independently reaches a parallel conclusion—both insisting that leadership legitimacy is determined by capacity, integrity, and justice rather than biological sex.

The convergence between a metropolitan scholar such as Shihab and a pesantren-based figure such as Tamim on this methodologically sensitive point suggests that contextual reading of Islamic sources is not a peripheral intellectual fashion imported from the West but a methodologically sound hermeneutical principle with deep roots in the Islamic scholarly tradition itself. The principle that prophetic statements are always situated within specific circumstances, and that the work of jurisprudence is to determine which rulings are universal and which contextually bounded, is itself a classical Islamic methodological principle, not a modern innovation.

Social and Political Implications in the Indonesian Context

The social and political implications of Tamim's interpretive framework are substantial for the Indonesian context, where debates over women's religious and political authority remain both academically active and practically consequential. Indonesia has seen significant increases in female political participation since the democratic transition of the late 1990s. Progressive Muslim organizations—most notably Aisiyah, the women's wing of Muhammadiyah, and the Kongres Ulama Perempuan Indonesia (KUPI), whose 2017 congress produced formal fatwas affirming women's religious authority—have actively argued for the theological legitimacy of female civic and religious leadership. Tamim's *Tafsir Nurul Huda*, as a pesantren-based textual resource that reaches similar conclusions through traditional exegetical methods, provides normative Islamic support for these movements from within the traditionalist mainstream.

Beyond its immediate political relevance, Tamim's work has implications for Islamic education. As Musdah Mulia (2014) and Aksin Wijaya (2011) have argued, the empowerment of Muslim women requires not only political and legal reform but also the reconstruction of religious interpretation at the level of educational curricula, especially in pesantren and madrasah settings where millions of Indonesian Muslims receive their religious formation. A tafsir such as Nurul Huda—accessible in vernacular Madurese, grounded in traditional Islamic scholarship, and committed to gender-equitable interpretation—could serve as a pedagogical resource for reforming the teaching of Qur'anic interpretation in these institutional contexts.

Contributions to the Historiography of Indonesian Islamic Thought

This study also has implications for how Indonesian Islamic thought is mapped and narrated. The dominant scholarly narrative centers on a small number of cosmopolitan scholars whose work circulates in national and international academic networks. Mudhar Tamim's Tafsir Nurul Huda—written in Madurese, published without institutional affiliation, and largely unknown outside Madura—suggests that the intellectual geography of Indonesian Islamic gender discourse is considerably more complex and diverse than this dominant narrative allows. The recovery and analysis of local, vernacular works is essential for a fuller and more accurate understanding of how Indonesian Muslims have negotiated the relationship between Qur'anic authority and social change across different cultural and institutional contexts. It also points toward the need for broader archival and ethnographic research on gender interpretation in pesantren communities across the Indonesian archipelago, which might reveal further examples of gender-progressive exegesis emerging from within traditionalist institutional settings and would greatly enrich our understanding of the diversity within Indonesian Islamic thought.

CONCLUSION

This article has examined the gender-based interpretation of the Qur'anic concept of khalifah in Tafsir Nurul Huda by KH. Mudhar Tamim, situating this work in comparative relation to classical tafsir, contemporary Islamic feminist scholarship, and Indonesian Islamic gender discourse. Several conclusions emerge from the analysis.

Tafsir Nurul Huda offers a coherent, methodologically grounded, and theologically sophisticated alternative to the patriarchal mainstream of classical Qur'anic exegesis. By interpreting khalifah as a universal human mandate addressed to all of humanity without gender restriction; by contextualizing the qawwāmūn verse within specific historical conditions rather than treating it as an expression of ontological hierarchy; by reading the narrative of Bilqis as affirmative evidence of female leadership capacity; and by consistently orienting his hermeneutics toward the maqāṣid al-sharī'ah objectives of justice and human welfare, Mudhar Tamim constructs a gender-inclusive exegetical framework deeply consistent with the Qur'an's own ethical vision.

The methodology of Tafsir Nurul Huda demonstrates significant convergence with internationally recognized Islamic feminist hermeneutics while retaining its roots in the pesantren tradition. This convergence challenges the assumption that gender-progressive

Islamic interpretation is a product of Western or secular influence, demonstrating instead that it can emerge from within the Islamic traditionalist intellectual heritage itself. Tamim's work is evidence that the binary between progressive and traditional Islamic interpretation is considerably more porous than commonly assumed, and that the pesantren tradition contains under-recognized resources for the development of gender-equitable Islamic thought.

The theological implications of Tamim's interpretation are significant: by affirming the equal standing of men and women as subjects of the vicegerency mandate, Tafsir Nurul Huda reconstructs the doctrine of human dignity before God on explicitly egalitarian terms, challenging hierarchical theological frameworks that have long marginalized women from religious authority and public leadership. The social implications are equally important: the work provides normative Islamic support—grounded in traditional exegetical method—for female participation in all sectors of public life, at a moment when such support remains practically and symbolically important in Indonesian Muslim society.

Future research should pursue two complementary directions. Empirical studies are needed to investigate how gender-inclusive interpretations such as those found in Tafsir Nurul Huda actually influence the attitudes and practices of communities that encounter them. Comparative studies should systematically examine other local and vernacular tafsir traditions across Indonesia and the broader Muslim world to assess whether gender-progressive strands are more widespread within traditionalist pesantren scholarship than existing research has recognized. Both directions would contribute to a more complete and accurate understanding of the diversity of Islamic thought on gender equity and of the multiple pathways through which Islamic communities negotiate the relationship between religious tradition and social change.

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