

FEMINISM AND THEOLOGICAL ENCOUNTER: A STUDY OF MUBADALAH

A Thesis

**Submitted to Master's Study Program of Islamic Studies at the
Faculty of Islamic Studies in Partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of**

Master of Arts (M.A.)



**Universitas
Islam Internasional
Indonesia**

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ABSTRACT

This research examines to the development of Mubadalah as a new perspective in Indonesian society. It emerges based on the personal critical thought of Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir in viewing the dynamics of interpretation model toward scriptures. Starting to be written in a personal blog, Mubadalah then inaugurated as a method used in KUPI I and officially launched in a published book in 2019. As a perspective, Mubadalah's notion is placing men and women in the equal position before God by trying to make both of them as a subject in texts. Within the principle of reciprocity, Mubadalah also tries to lay down on gender relationship issues. So, whenever one gender is not mentioned on the text, Mubadalah with its methodology investigates to find a general message behind the text then considers it is applicable for all genders. Using the combined methodology between literature review, in-depth interview and online questionnaire, this research argue that Mubadalah is an expression of a new Islamic perspective on gender equality in Indonesia which is standing between the Islamist and feminist. In Indonesian context, the new order regime has been intervening the women's life matters even into their household relationship. In this case, the Indonesian women ulama start to initiate reinterpreting Islamic texts that inspired by those global scholar's notions since 1990 in some communities like P3M, Rahima, FK3 and many more. They recognize to the importance of getting contextual interpretation on the scriptures which is suiting to the contemporary life of women. Those Indonesian women ulama also address that any kind of Islamic texts, including Qur'an, Hadith or the classical books or *turath* are open for dialogue. Indeed, this research aims to imply the fragmentation of religious authority among women ulama in the current situation in Indonesia. This research findings are clustered into three types: mubadalah both as perspective and movement, the divergent between mubadalah and previous discourses, and the reception of Indonesian people. First, as perspective or method, mubadalah bring out a new notion that both men and women should be conceptualized as subjects in a text by considering their special experiences. Second, mubadalah is quite different from the previous discourses especially in terms of methodology and the premises of reinterpreting texts. Third, Indonesian people accepting mubadalah not only as the gender relation principles but also as a paradigm which is able to be applied on global contexts. Finally, this research contributes to the development of Islamic feminism discourses in Indonesia and worthwhile for feminists in advocating women's contemporary problems.

Keywords: Islamic feminism, Indonesia, reciprocity, gender relation, women ulama, Mubadalah

لقاء بين النسوية وعلم اللاهوت:

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ماجستير في الدراسات الإسلامية

ملخص

يبحث هذا البحث في تطوير المبادلة كمنظور جديد في المجتمع الإندونيسي. وقد ظهر ذلك بناءً على التفكير النقدي الشخصي لفقهاء الدين عبد القدير في النظر إلى ديناميكيات نماذج تفسير الكتاب المقدس. تم كتابتها في البداية على مدونة شخصية، وتم إضفاء الطابع الرسمي عليها لاحقاً باعتبارها الطريقة المستخدمة في مؤتمر العلماء الإندونيسيين 1 وتم إطلاقها رسمياً في شكل كتاب تم نشره في عام 2019. من منظور، فإن فكرة المبادلة هي وضع الرجال والنساء على قدم المساواة مكانة أمام الله بمحاولة جعل كلاهما موضوعاً في النص. في إطار مبدأ المعاملة بالمثل، تحاول مباح أيضاً وضع قضية العلاقات بين الجنسين. لذلك، عندما لا يتم ذكر أحد الجنسين في النص، فإن منهجية مبدلة تبحث للعثور على الرسالة العامة وراء النص ثم تفترض أنها تنطبق على جميع الأجناس. باستخدام منهجية مشتركة لمراجعة الأدبيات والمقابلات المتعمقة والاستبيانات عبر الإنترنت، تجادل هذه الدراسة في أن المبادلة هي تعبير عن منظور إسلامي جديد للمساواة بين الجنسين في إندونيسيا يقف بين الإسلاميين والنسويات. في السياق الإندونيسي، تدخل نظام النظام الجديد في شؤون حياة النساء، حتى في علاقتهن المنزلية. في هذه الحالة، بدأت رجال الدين الإندونيسيات في أخذ زمام المبادرة لإعادة تفسير النصوص الإسلامية المستوحاة من أفكار رجال الدين العالميين منذ عام 1990 في العديد من المجتمعات مثل مدرسة داخلية إسلامية وجمعية تنمية المجتمع (P3M) ورحيمة (Rahima) ومنتدى التواصل المجتمعي كفائعان (FK3) وغيرها الكثير. إنهم يدركون أهمية الحصول على تفسير سياقي للنصوص المقدسة يناسب حياة النساء المعاصرات. كما شددت داعية الإندونيسي على أن أي نصوص إسلامية، بما في ذلك القرآن أو الحديث أو الكتب الكلاسيكية أو التراث، مفتوحة للحوار. في الواقع، يهدف هذا البحث إلى تفسير تفتيت السلطة الدينية بين العالمات في الوضع الإندونيسي الحالي. تم تصنيف نتائج هذه الدراسة إلى ثلاثة أنواع: المبادلة كمنظور وحركة، والاختلافات بين المبادلة والخطابات السابقة، وقبول المجتمع الإندونيسي. أولاً، كمنظور أو طريقة، تولد المبادلة فكرة جديدة مفادها أنه يجب تصور الرجال والنساء كمواضيع في النص من خلال النظر في تجاربهم الخاصة. ثانياً، يختلف المبادلة كثيراً عن الخطابات السابقة، لا سيما من حيث المنهجية والمقدمات لإعادة تفسير النصوص. ثالثاً، يقبل المجتمع الإندونيسي المبادلة ليس فقط كمبدأ للعلاقات بين الجنسين ولكن أيضاً كنموذج يمكن تطبيقه في سياق عالمي. أخيراً، يساهم هذا البحث في تطوير الخطاب النسوي الإسلامي في إندونيسيا وهو مفيد للنسويات في الدفاع عن قضايا المرأة المعاصرة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النسوية الإسلامية، إندونيسيا، المعاملة بالمثل، العلاقات بين الجنسين، رجال الدين الإناث، المبادلة.

TRANSLITERATION GUIDE

Arabic	Roman	Arabic	Roman	Arabic	Roman
ا	a	س	s	ل	l
ب	b	ش	sh	م	m
ت	t	ص	ṣ	ن	n
ث	th	ض	ḍ	و	w
ج	j	ط	ṭ	ه	h
ح	ḥ	ظ	ẓ	ي	y
خ	kh	ع	'		
د	d	غ	gh		
ذ	dh	ف	f		
ر	r	ق	q		
ز	z	ك	k		

Short Vocal

Arab Alphabet	Roman Alphabet	Arabic Example	Transliteration
َ	a	جَلَسَ	<i>jalasa</i>
ِ	i	رَكِبَ	<i>rakiba</i>
ُ	u	كُتِبَ	<i>kutiba</i>

Long Vocal

Arab Alphabet	Roman Alphabet	Arabic Example	Transliteration
آ/أ	ā	جَرَى/سَافِر	<i>jarā/sāfar</i>
إ	ī	سَلِيم	<i>salīm</i>
و	ū	سَجُود	<i>sujūd</i>

Diphthong

Arab Alphabet	Roman Alphabet	Arabic Example	Transliteration
أو	aw	مَولَا	<i>mawlā</i>
أى	ay	غَيب	<i>ghayb</i>

Notes:

1. Consonant with shaddah (ّ) for instance, أُمَّة is written as *ummah* (double letters).
2. Arabic letter *hamzah* (ء) at the beginning of a word is transliterated into “a” not into “`a”. For instance, أحمد is written as *aḥmad* not *`aḥmad*.
3. Arabic script of *alif-lam qamariyah* (ال) is written as “al” at the beginning of words and *alif-lam shamsiyah* (ا) is written in accordance with the first letter at the beginning of words. For instance:
المائدة : al-māidah
الرحمان : ar-rahmān
4. Arabic letter *ta' marbutah* (ة) is written as “h” when it is located at the end of the words, such as البقرة is written as *al-baqarah*. When located in the middle of a sentence is written as “t”, such as أمة وسطا is written as *ummatan wasaṭan*.

PREFACE

It is said that the Prophet Muhammad delivered his last sermon on the Hajj pilgrimage in 632 AD or the 11th year of the Hijra. At this moment of *haji wada* (farewell pilgrimage), the Prophet conveyed such beautiful messages. After carrying out the *wuquf* process at Arafah, in front of more than 140 thousand people, He advised that all human beings are brothers, so they must respect each other and no longer commit bloodshed in any form. The Prophet also advised to respect and protect women, elevate women's status by eliminating the practice of slavery and stopping adultery practices. Historians even said this sermon was the first humanitarian declaration in the history of human civilization.

This research is addressed to be part of developing human's knowledge on how Islam respects human dignity regardless of gender. As Muhammad's prophetic mission was sent in the midst of a society of ignorance that does not respect women, the Prophet exemplified that both men and women are equal before God. He also set an example by deigning to do domestic jobs, which our culture often refers to as only women's duties. We also see the Prophet giving opportunities for women to advance in knowledge, play a role in the economy and even allow *jihad* in a war. Ideally, discriminatory practices and marginalization of fellow human beings, especially women, must be abolished. Especially if the form of discrimination carried out relies on the interpretation of religious texts.

In addition, this thesis will be an episode of a live drama that I will never forget. This thesis is made in Makkah. I did the process of compiling this thesis during the Hajj period. I spent a lot of time while in Makkah-Madinah to focus on completing this academic responsibility. I needed extra energy while dividing my concentration between the Hajj rituals within all its physical processes and compiling a scientific thesis. There are a number of sunnah worship services that I have to delay, pilgrimage schedules that I didn't follow, and various other missing activities. At one point, I felt discouraged when discussing the technicalities of implementing a thesis defense with the faculty, we could not find a point of agreement. But, on the other hand, I'm sure that all that fatigue will be a beautiful story in the future.

Furthermore, I would like to thank all those who have helped and encouraged me in the compilation of this thesis especially to all the lecturers of the Islamic Studies Faculty who has guided me to reach this path. I also want to deliver my gratitude to the thesis advisor, Dr. Phil. Syafiq Hasyim for giving me various and detail suggestions then I am able to

complete this academic final task and my thesis defense goes well. Further, my thank go to all family members, especially to my mom, Hj. Marwiyani with uninterrupted prayer strands, prayers that strengthen my spirit when I feel tired and hopeless. To my life partner, H. Didik Suyuthi, who continues to encourage me that completing my thesis is part of worship so that I don't have to feel disappointed with various worship rituals that should be postponed. For those breaking the stalemate, Alma Nilakandi and Nawwafa Tsaqif with their cheerfulness, thank you.

Finally, I dedicate this thesis to all Indonesian women who are struggling to obtain their full rights, whether in terms of education, economic independence or other public roles. To the fighters for justice and gender activists, please remain optimistic looking at a future for Indonesia that is just and upholds the dignity of fellow human beings with full respect.

GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS DIRECTORY

Glossary

Aisyiyah	Women's organization of Muhammadiyah
Asbab al-nuzul	Causation of revealed verse
Darb	To hit
Da'wah	Invitation to learn Islam
Dharma Wanita	Women's organization under New Order regime
Fahmina	An organization based in Cirebon
Fatayat	Women's autonomous body of Nahdlatul Ulama
Fatwa	Decision regarding Islamic law
Fiqh	Islamic law
Fiqhun Nisa	A program of P3M
Haram	Forbidden
Ijtihad	An effort to decide something
Kalyanamitra	An organization in New Order Regime
Khalifah	Leader
Kiai	Male Islamic preacher
Mashlahah	Goodness
Maqashid Shar'iah	Objectives of Islamic sources and teachings
Mufassir	Interpreters
Muhammadiyah	The second largest and modern Islamic organization in Indonesia
Musawah	Women's Community Based in Malaysia
Muslimat	Women's autonomous body of Nahdlatul Ulama
Nahdlatul ulama	The traditionalist and the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia
Nasyiatul Aisyiyah	Women's organization under Muhammadiyah
Nyai	Female Islamic preacher
Rahima	An Islamic organization focusing on human rights
Rahmatan lil alamin	Mercy for all (universal goal of Islam)
Sanad	Sequence of Hadith narrators
Sharia	Islamic teaching
Tawhid	Principle to believe in only one God
Ulama	Islamic clerics
Ushul fiqh	basic principles of fiqh

Abbreviations

FGM/C	: Female Genital Mutilation/Cut
FK3	: Forum Kajian Kitab Kuning
KGI	: Keadilan Gender Islam
KUPI	: Kongres Ulama Perempuan Indonesia
LP3ES	: Lembaga Penelitian dan Pendidikan Ekonomi dan Sosial
MPF	: Mubadalah Post-Graduate Forum
NGO	: Non-Government Organization
NU	: Nahdlatul Ulama
PKK	: Pemberdayaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga
PTIQ	: Perguruan Tinggi Ilmu al-Qur'an
PUP	: Pengkaderan Ulama Perempuan
P3M	: Perhimpunan Pengembangan Pesantren dan Masyarakat
TPKS	: Tindak Pidana Kekerasan Seksual
WCC	: Woman Crisis Center

TABLE OF CONTENT

TITLE PAGE	i
A STUDY OF MUBADALAH.....	i
STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICITY.....	ii
ANTI-PLAGIARISM STATEMENT	iii
ATTESTATION.....	iv
THESIS DEFENSE APPROVAL.....	v
ABSTRACT	vi
ABSTRACT (ARABIC)	vii
TRANSLITERATION GUIDE	viii
PREFACE.....	x
GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS DIRECTORY	xii
Chapter One	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. Background of Study	1
1.2. Literature Review	6
1.3. Research Questions	9
1.4. Limitations.....	9
1.5 Conceptual Framework.....	9
1.6. Methodology	11
Chapter Two.....	13
GENEALOGY OF ISLAMIC INTERPRETATION AND ISLAMIC FEMINISM MOVEMENT IN INDONESIA	13
1. Islamic Feminism in a Global Discourse.....	13
1.1. The Islamic Interpretation of Women.....	13
1.2. Islamic Feminism as A Global Movement	20
2. Islamic Feminism in Indonesia	24
2.1. The Debatable Discourse	24
2.2 Indonesia's Current Muslim Women's Movements.....	28
Chapter Three	48
FRAGMENTATION OF MUBADALAH	48
3.1. The Emergence of Mubadalah.....	48
3.2. Implementation of Mubadalah as Perspective and Methodology	51
3.3. Innovation to Transmit Ideas.....	57

3.4. Reception of Mubadalah	60
3.5 Findings.....	65
Chapter Four.....	70
CONCLUSION	70
BIBLIOGRAPHY	73
CURRICULUM VITAE.....	77

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of Study

Living in a religiously conservative society like Indonesia encounters interpretations of religious teachings and beliefs that place women as the object of any case. This is strengthened by the preservation of patriarchal culture which is labeled with religious references. To overcome this, one of the efforts that need to be made is re-reading religious texts and supporting the feminist movement. When talking about the Muslim women's movement and gender equality processes and practices, one should be aware of the historical, political, ideological, and cultural context¹. The affirmation of state involvement in the women's organization and movement is operated by the state and under the male domination authority with top-down management, they have attempted to improve women's lives, especially in the area of consciousness-raising, social welfare, public participation, marriage law, and education². In the new order era, the influence of restrictions on the movement of Muslim women by the state has even penetrated the domestic sphere³.

The Islamic feminism process is a long history that needs to be attempted by diverse sectors. Likewise, Islamic feminism in Indonesia can be implemented through both internal and external engagement⁴. The internal approach should be coming from the re-reading process to the intersection side of feminism and Islamic views while the external engagement should be derived from the policymakers or state involvement⁵. In the similar word, Sirri identifies that Islamic feminism is about both ideas and movements, these two factors are inseparable⁶. Meanwhile, in the Indonesian context, the discourse toward feminism stimulates a long debate even whenever it is connected to Islam. The Muslim women's movements in such community based-organizations initiates to renew their

¹ Alimatul Qibtiyah, "Indonesian Muslim Women and the Gender Equality Movement," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 3, no. 1 (2009): 168–96.

² Etin Anwar, "Directed' Women's Movements in Indonesia: Social and Political Agency from Within," *Hawwa* 2, no. 1 (2004): 89–112.

³ Kathryn Robinson, *Gender, Islam and Democracy in Indonesia*, vol. 6 (New York: Routledge, 2008), 10.

⁴ Magdalene. id, "Feminisme Islam Di Indonesia," n.d., <https://magdalene.co/story/perkembangan-feminisme-muslim-di-indonesia/>.

⁵ Qibtiyah, "Indonesian Muslim Women and the Gender Equality Movement."

⁶ Lana Sirri, *Islamic Feminism: Discourses on Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Islam* (Routledge, 2020), 5.

strategies in re-interpreting scriptures and some Indonesian Muslim scholars also promulgate their ideas on equality and justice.

Regarding this condition, Indonesia has proliferated some prominent scholars with their special notions. One of the most popular thoughts today is mubadalah initiated by Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir. Mubadalah is a new term in recent Indonesia. It is a method of interpreting texts that places an equal position between men and women as human beings. It helps to overcome the strict rules of gender in Arabic which balances Islamic texts that are so masculine. This way of reading has made it possible to produce Islamic narratives that integrate text and context. Mubadalah sees that both men and women have the same right to benefit and avoid harm and it is referred to as an analytical concept that consciously places women and men as equal human beings, supporting and complementing each other, not hegemony⁷. This is under the prophetic task of the Prophet Muhammad, who carried out a humanitarian mission in which the existence of women who were in a marginal position in the culture of Arab society at that time⁸.

As a product of contemporary *ijtihad* (an effort to decide something), mubadalah provides an alternative solution for reading wisely either as a theory, paradigm, or methodology to interpret justice for women and men in understanding the texts of the Quran and Hadith. Arguing for women's rights in Islam poses potential difficulties for Muslim women activists because some verses of the Qur'an and Hadiths are widely believed to condone male dominance⁹. While mubadalah is an objective expression to make women a subject in Islamic sources which can be used as a guide in the discourse of equality. All this time, we often find it as if religious texts are single and ignore other subjects. This happens because of the hegemonic perspective which considers that women's unique experience is not something scientific that is important to learn. Because definitively, the existence of women in Islamic texts is still under long debate as to whether the creation came from the part of men's bodies or not. This problem has been taken up for many centuries of debate because of various interpretations among scholars and religious experts, it is visible to the perception of male leadership and domination for example in interpreting al-Nisa: 34¹⁰.

⁷ Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, *Qira'ah Mubadalah* (IRCiSoD, 2021), 28.

⁸ Nur Rofiah, *Nalar Kritis Muslimah* (Bandung: Afkaruna, 2020), 12.

⁹ Rachel Rinaldo, *Mobilizing Piety: Islam and Feminism in Indonesia* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 15.

¹⁰ Syafiq Hasyim, *Understanding Women in Islam: An Indonesian Perspective* (United States: International Center for Islam and Pluralism, 2006), 26.

Another scholar, Nur Rofiah, states that mubadalah is a methodological map in the wilderness of religious texts that uses a reciprocal approach by analyzing and reconstructing authoritative texts that have been widely used by society in building understandings that blaming women¹¹. For example, in the issues of polygamy, divorce, violence, women's leadership, as well as various social and political issues in the family, society, and within the state, women do not have full authority to decide.

As a new school of thought, mubadalah is gaining good response among Indonesian people, especially those who are intense in gender equality discourse. It is accepted in an international forum like *Musawah* where scholars said that it can be an alternative paradigm in doing re-interpretation which considers both men's and women's self-experience for justice and goodness reason, it also represents a new movement¹². In addition, one of the ways of its development is the use of digital platforms as media for *da'wah* that aims to target youth communities and urban people as well as modern society who tend to use social media as a source of Islamic knowledge. This is in line with Nisa who says that there is a link between rising piety, youth, and the media¹³. Moreover, Slama states that social media can cluster the religious interest of the youth community from the online community to the offline one¹⁴. This religious interest is usually based on a certain ideology that they follow. Media is used by the youth community in studying Islam because it displays short messages, and simple theoretical illustrations but uses an interesting audio-visual display. The need of modern society is a reason why mubadalah maximizes its *da'wah* role in almost all social media platforms. Otherwise, the offline circles of the community and other networks also help Mubadalah to be well promoted among Indonesian people.

In addition, Mubadalah works in a wider landscape and network. One of the most popular movements is KUPI which stands for Indonesian Women Ulama Congress that has been already held twice since it was existing in 2017. Mubadalah is used as a methodological paradigm in demanding the fatwa produced by KUPI. This congress aims to discuss contemporary women's issues which are based on Islamic texts and being reinterpreted using the perspective of justice. This congress was attended by hundreds of women ulama and thousand participants from Indonesia and overseas. The issues discussed are so progressive, bringing into dynamics and recommendations on a national and international

¹¹ Kodir, *Qira'ah Mubadalah*, 11.

¹² Kodir, 35.

¹³ Eva F. Nisa, "Online Halal Dating, Ta'aruf, and the Shariatization of Matchmaking among Malaysian and Indonesian Muslims," *CyberOrient* 15, no. 1 (2021): 231–58.

¹⁴ Martin Slama, "Social Media and Islamic Practice: Indonesian Ways of Being Digitally Pious," *Digital Indonesia: Connectivity and Divergence*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2017, 146–62.

scale. Therefore, KUPI is viewed as an expression of the existence of both women and female clerics in a democratic country like Indonesia¹⁵. The role of female clerics is seen to be very significant in responding to contemporary women's issues which is evidenced by the consideration from the government by either attending the event officially or responding with positive responses. Another impact, KUPI widens its space by collaborating with various institutions by regenerating young female clerics with a specific recruitment and training process.

In this case, I would like to argue that mubadalah is an expression of the new Islamic feminism movement in Indonesia that stands between Islamist and feminist. The Islamists with a specialty in textual interpretation understand women as what is stated in the text, mostly places women as objects in religious messages, the position of men is one level higher than women. The textualists mean to have full authority over men as superior beings and women in inferior positions. On the contrary, progressive feminists tend to place women as the absolute center in the implementation of religious messages or popularly they may be called feminist centrists. Meanwhile, mubadalah is a balance between these two opinions. While in another side, I should prove that mubadalah derives to encounter the principles of feminism and Islamic theology. Indeed, epistemologically mubadalah is already having an ecosystem, so it deserves to be researched.

This research will focus on examining the development of Mubadalah in Indonesia as a new alternative to Islamic feminism as well as the reception and contribution to Indonesian society. In addition, this research also investigates what thing which is being promoted by Mubadalah, whether it is different from other Islamic feminisms or not. Besides, this will imply the fragmentation of religious authority among women ulama in the current situation in Indonesia.

This research will be divided into four chapters within specific discussions. I elaborate on the urgency of choosing mubadalah as my research object and it stands recently as a new paradigm of the Islamic movement in Indonesia. Mubadalah comes from the personal idea of its initiator which is written in a personal blog and based on his personal written opinion in responding to hadith related to human relationship in a monthly magazine of Rahima, one of the prominent NGOs that work for the advocacy of women rights in Indonesia. So,

¹⁵ Eva F. Nisa, "Muslim Women in Contemporary Indonesia: Online Conflicting Narratives behind the Women Ulama Congress," *Asian Studies Review* 43, no. 3 (2019): 434–54.

the idea of mubadalah proliferates in viral discussions then in 2017 it collaborated with the first KUPI that is used as a methodology in taking a *fatwa*.

The first chapter of this research elaborates on the background of the study and literature review to find my significant research, while methodology and some other technical issues regarding the process of drafting this research are also well explained. The second chapter will elucidate the genealogy of Islamic feminism and the Islamic interpretation of women in Indonesia I start from what is the principle of Islamic feminism in global views. It continues elaborating on the prominent Islamic feminist ideas on reinterpretation. It examines Islamic feminists like Asma Barlas and Amina Wadud which aims to prove that those notions on women in Islam are the seeds for the growth of Islamic feminist discourse in Indonesia. Meanwhile, the discussion is continued by the history of Islamic feminism in Indonesia I explore by describing the genealogy of Muslim women's movements and providing some Indonesian Muslim feminists like Husein Muhammad, Syafiq Hasyim, Lies Marcoes, Nasaruddin Umar, and Nur Rofiah. All of them are prominent figures in Mubadalah's contrivance.

The notion to have reinterpretation of the scriptures demand people to think more about the kind of Arabic structures, local cultures where the verse is revealed, or the socio-political conditions where the classic interpreters argue their thought. The inspiration for reviewing the Islamic texts to find the meaning behind them using a universal perspective and *the tawhidik* principle allows the later generations of Islamic scholars to create innovation, of it is Mubadalah. Then it arrives in the next discussion on how the movement of Islamic feminism in Indonesia, I will only focus on KUPI as the most relevant one to Mubadalah. It will lead to some figures behind this movement, the link between KUPI and mubadalah, and short profiles and recommendations from its twice international conference.

In chapter three, I will discuss the establishment of mubadalah from the personal history of Faqih and some parties engaged within. In describing this story, I use my data collection both from the book review and interviews. I did my in-depth interview with Faqih as the founder of mubadalah, Husein Muhammad as the important figure behind it, and Zahra Amin the chief of Mubadalah's social media platforms. Meanwhile, I invite the 45 online respondents who participate in filling out my questionnaire through Google Forms. They come from different backgrounds, gender, and age ranges though most of them are following mubadalah social media platforms. This online participatory work aims to find the respondent's perceptions toward mubadalah, their views on its da'wah methodology, and their reception of the principles. I also ask them to identify to what extent mubadalah

influenced them to build their gender equality awareness. In this case, I would like to show that mubadalah is still understood in different perception that is influenced by their involvement in the platforms or events managed by mubadalah. This case will also help me to identify whether mubadalah is well accepted or not in Indonesian society. While chapter four is used for a conclusion that aims to strengthen my arguments and provide general perspectives based on the data analysis.

1.2. Literature Review

These literature reviews are based on three classifications: Islamic Feminism in general, the Muslim women's movement in Indonesia, and Mubadalah itself. This classification helps me to find out both the gaps and relations between previous studies and this research.

Islamic feminism stands for an alternative ideology to interpret a new conception of feminism in a frame of Islamic reviews which is becoming a wide and diverse intellectual and activist movement around the world. This Islamic feminism represents their opposition to conservative ideas that normalize and naturalize differences between men and women that gains social legitimacy. Sirri states in her book *Islamic Feminism: Discourse on Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Islam* that Islamic feminism emphasizes women and other marginalized party's specificities to which they are subjected, first by the dominant position of the Muslim patriarchy and, second, by some white western feminist who strives to render Muslim women invisible. Islamic feminism moves based on the awareness that Islam comes with a mission of equality that places men and women fairly and equally¹⁶. Islamic teachings do not absolutely confine and imprison women in a social blockade that places men at a higher level than men. While Qur'an was revealed to carry a message of humanity that came in stages which were adapted to the conditions of life and humanity as well as the culture of the ignorant society at that time¹⁷. The Qur'an does not necessarily erase all the culture of society at that time with religious doctrines but through a process of shifting laws that humanize humans in various contexts. However, the Qur'an not only abolishes all arbitrary practices but also establishes certain norms and gives women a definite status, although not the same as that of men¹⁸. Even he said that

¹⁶ Sirri, *Islamic Feminism*, 14.

¹⁷ Nur Rofiah, *Nalar Kritis Muslimah*, 9.

¹⁸ Asghar Ali Engineer et al., *Tafsir Perempuan: Wacana Perjumpaan Qur'an, Perempuan, Dan Kebudayaan Kontemporer. Diterjemahkan Dari The Qur'an, Women and Modern Society* (Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, 2022), 31.

contextualization of the message of the Quran in social life is so revolutionary. So, the spirit of Islamic feminism is for emphasizing the voice of equality through the re-interpretation of religious text using alternative methods of contextualizing text and context.

In Indonesia, the works of Islamic feminism have become more popular after the collapse of the New Order regime, where Islamic discourses that talked about the equality of men and women began to receive special attention from society. Robinson identifies the Soeharto regime as the authoritarian regime in almost all aspects which used capital-induced development as a keyword¹⁹. It supplies economic pressure to all men as the head of marriage and promotes women's dominant role as wife or mother, taking her place in a family in which her husband wielded patriarchal authority²⁰. On the other hand, Rinaldo identifies that women agency people's choices to make decisions and act as the expression of social life where they have a right to choose, vote, work, and control the human body to empower themselves and challenge subordination²¹. This has been increasing after the fall of the New Order regime too where women's ideas and movements find a way to pronounce gender awareness to society. This awareness, then, generates various ideas and movements in the form of organizations, institutions, and communities to cultural motions that are oriented towards strengthening the role of women. Even it emerges to mobilize piety through political party patterns. One of the most recent popular ones is KUPI (Indonesian Women Ulama Congress) which Nisa states that it represents the acceleration of women's ulama voices which is campaigning new alternative interpretation of women in Islam as the expression of a democratic country²². Here, the role of women *ulama* or religious leaders in promoting the idea of equality based on Islamic messages is increasing. This is evidenced by the diverse thoughts of women *ulama* either through theoretical ideas or cultural movements.

While Mubadalah is one form of implementation of the concept of Islamic feminism which brings a new alternative in interpreting religious texts reciprocally. The concept of mubadalah is to place men and women in relationships that must mutually respect, appreciate, and not discriminate or marginalize. Faqih states that the fundamental interpretation of the texts of the Quran and Hadith has an open interpretation space so that it is possible to re-interpret according to the social context based on the principle of benefit

¹⁹ Robinson, *Gender, Islam, and Democracy in Indonesia*, 6:68.

²⁰ Robinson, 6:68.

²¹ Rinaldo, *Mobilizing Piety*, 64.

²² Nisa, "Muslim Women in Contemporary Indonesia."

for all human beings that more integral and comprehensive²³. This interpretation is based on the basic principle of *tawhid* that there is no absolute obedience other than to God, so both men and women appeal to the equal position in front of God²⁴. As a new school of thought in Indonesia, mubadalah offers a method of interpretation of religious texts which have so far been considered a source of gender injustice. Misogynistic texts are considered a source of discriminatory treatment of women, especially those based on Islamic teachings. Mubadalah sees this as a patriarchal phenomenon resulting from a social construction that can be reinterpreted. According to Kodir, there is no misogynistic text, but the misogynistic understanding and interpretation of the text. There have been so many works on mubadalah, it is used as a tool of analysis in diverse contexts. Mubadalah is used for the parenting style concept²⁵, *masalah* family concept²⁶, progressive interpretation of Hadith about women²⁷, initiating the equality of sexual relations in the text of the verse²⁸. Moreover, the newest research was done by Nailul Muna as his thesis research which has been published as a book. His research concerns the variety of Indonesian feminist interpretations. He tries to provide a critical analysis of *Qir'oah Mubadalah* as an alternative to reading texts which is currently widely discussed in academic circles²⁹.

While this research is dealing with the role of Mubadalah as the central line between Islamist feminists and progressive feminists which has a significant overview of women in Islam. It provides a reciprocal relationship among them by bringing the principle of respect, which does not make one party more dominant than the other. This research implies the innovation and development of Mubadalah as a new stream and thought among Indonesian Muslim activists in understanding the variety of contemporary women's problems in Islamic perspectives, how the acceptance of Indonesian society, and the extent to which Mubadalah can contribute to shaping an understanding of gender awareness is research

²³ Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, *Perempuan (Bukan) Sumber Fitnah* (Bandung: Afkaruna, 2021), 12.

²⁴ Nur Rofiah, *Nalar Kritis Muslimah*, 12.

²⁵ Wilis Werdiningsih, "Penerapan Konsep Mubadalah Dalam Pola Pengasuhan Anak," *IJouGS: Indonesian Journal of Gender Studies* 1, no. 1 (2020): 1–16.

²⁶ Ramdan Wagianto, "Konsep Keluarga MaŞlaĤah Dalam Perspektif Qira'ah Mubadalah Dan Relevansinya Dengan Ketahanan Keluarga Di Masa Pandemi Covid-19," *JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah)* 20, no. 1 (2021): 1–17.

²⁷ Yulmitra Handayani and Mukhammad Nur Hadi, "Interpretasi Progresif Hadis-Hadis Tema Perempuan: Studi Aplikasi Teori Qira'ah Mubadalah," *HUMANISMA: Journal of Gender Studies* 4, no. 2 (2020): 157–76.

²⁸ Kholila Mukaromah, "Wacana Kesetaraan Gender Dalam Meme Hadis: Studi Etnografi Virtual Pada Akun Instagram@ Mubadalah. Id," *Mutawatir: Jurnal Keilmuan Tafsir Hadith* 10, no. 2 (2020): 292–320.

²⁹ moh nailul muna, *Tafsir Feminis Nusantara* (dialektika, n.d.).

agenda that this thesis wants to contribute. The development of Mubadalah in adapting itself is important as a part of the Islamic feminism movement in Indonesia.

1.3. Research Questions

This thesis contributes to the literature of Indonesian Muslim women activists in examining their movement on Islamic feminism using the concept of mubadalah as a new shape from an Indonesian perspective. Using works of literature and interviews data derived from conversations with the significant key persons and from the online observation. The methodology tries to explore these questions: (1) amid controversy about the discourse of Islamic feminism, how does mubadalah develop in Indonesia? (2) what is being promoted by Mubadalah? Is it different from other Islamic perspectives? (3) how can mubadalah be able to adapt to the context of current issues? (4) and how can mubadalah influence build Indonesian society's perspectives on the concept of gender justice?

1.4. Limitations

This research is limited to inquiring about mubadalah as the middle path of the moderate concept between Islamist feminists and progressive feminists. Mubadalah creates a reciprocal relationship between men and women as an equal human being in front of God. Thus, there are no discriminative actions if we understand that God reveals the same position among them. This research tries to investigate mubadalah as the concept, theory, and movement as part of its innovation to adapt to these current situations. Besides, it is limited to discussion on how Indonesian society perceives mubadalah as a new stream of interpretation toward Islamic texts on gender issues. While, when it takes a middle position between feminist Islamist and progressive ones, it may provide different interpretations of certain problems which are distinguished from those other two parts. So, this research would not imply other functions like its special methodology in interpreting specific issues like what has been done by previous scholars. But, it is rather to talk about the development of Mubadalah that affects the reception of Indonesian people toward this new alternative of Islamic feminism in Indonesia.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

This research uses a theoretical approach to Islamic feminism which Badran calls a global thought and movement for the liberation of women's rights through Islamic sources³⁰.

³⁰ Margot Badran, "Understanding Islam, Islamism, and Islamic Feminism," *Journal of Women's History* 13, no. 1 (2001): 47–52.

Meanwhile, Sirri³¹ and Anwar³² categorize that Islamic feminism was originally just a fragment of an idea in the academic writings of Muslim women regarding their anxiety about reducing the role of women in the culture of interpreting religious texts. So, in the early decade of the 1990s, Islamic feminist activists began to produce scientific works in droves. These scientific works are in the form of their thinking to re-read religious texts that specifically discuss the positions of men and women and the building of relations between them within the framework of Islam. This re-reading later became popular among Muslim activists with the characteristic of their approach through the hermeneutical method, it is an interpretation that uses the reader's point of view.

The popularity of the gender-equitable thought movement in Islam was indeed dominated by female Islamic scholars at the beginning of its emergence, but over time, male Muslim scholars have also contributed a lot in producing academic works on this matter. Then, in its implementation, activists agree that Islamic feminism is a combination of thoughts and women's movements that aim to fight for justice for women's rights³³.

The quite popular Female Muslim scholars with the idea of re-reading religious texts in the context of women are Asma Barlas and Amina Wadud. Using a hermeneutic framework, Barlas stated that the Qur'an is a role model for human life where it is impossible to have texts that lead to the practices of injustice, especially for women³⁴. She also believes that the classical *mufasssir* (Qur'anic interpreter) included the customs and cultures of their time as legitimacy used for interpretation³⁵. Barlas's hermeneutic approach states that the Qur'an is a hierarchical text³⁶ that is, there is a pattern of interrelationships between one text and another. The text also has a relationship with the origin and cause of a verse being revealed. One of Barlas' goals in carrying out reinterpretation efforts is to prove the egalitarianism of the Qur'an which is friendly and just towards all creatures, especially women, so it can be said that readers are free to have their interpretation of texts³⁷.

³¹ Sirri, *Islamic Feminism*, 5.

³² Etin Anwar, *A Genealogy of Islamic Feminism: Pattern and Change in Indonesia* (Routledge, 2018), 11.

³³ Anitta Kynsilehto, "Islamic Feminism: Current Perspectives," *A. Kynsilehto* 96 (2008): 9–13.

³⁴ Asma Barlas, *Believing Women in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an* (University of Texas Press, 2019), 17.

³⁵ Barlas, 7.

³⁶ Asma Barlas, "Reading the Qur'an: Challenges and Possibilities for Muslim Women," in *Symposium on Gender, Race, Islam, and the "War on Terror"*, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC, Canada, May 2006, 11–13.

³⁷ Barlas, *Believing Women in Islam*, 19.

On the other hand, Wadud offers a feminist hermeneutic approach that places the Qur'an as its foundation and main object³⁸. Amina Wadud's thoughts and studies classify interpretations into three categories³⁹: traditional, reactive, and holistic types. Meanwhile, in analyzing the verses of the Qur'an, Wadud describes them in five methods⁴⁰: from the perspective of context, specific topics of discussion, using grammatical elements of language, from the point of view of other verses that reject/contradict, and from the pattern of the position of the Qur'an as *weltanschauung*. A detailed discussion of these two figures' thoughts will be described in chapter two.

So, those Muslim feminist scholars is assisting to develop this research in a frame of hermeneutics model of *mubadalah*. Even though those three scholars are intersected in some factors but the universal values are similar. To strengthen my argument, I use the theory of Islamic feminism in which the dynamics shown by *mubadalah* represent a combination of thought and movement. While to emphasize the people perception toward *mubadalah*, I will prove it with a literature review and data analysis through a questionnaire to 45 respondents. Furthermore, I also use the hermeneutic approach of several Muslim feminist figures. It is a starting point in understanding *mubadalah* as an alternative to contemporary interpretation methodologies that intersect in the Qur'an and Hadith. On the other hand, this previous scholar's hermeneutic reading and Islamic feminism approach can help me in constructing the history of *mubadalah* as a new idea and an organic movement in Indonesia.

1.6. Methodology

This research tries to investigate the emergence of *Mubadalah* as one of the Islamic feminism movements in Indonesia and explore what effects reveal among Indonesian people. To achieve this point, I use descriptive qualitative research which refers to the library sources that are supported by in-depth interviews with several related parties like the founder, editorial teams of its digital platforms, and other women ulama affiliated with similar movements. While I collect data through the posts of its official social media account on Instagram where I could be in touch with those followers and ask for their feedback. So, I need to do this with the virtual ethnography method by engaging in the

³⁸ rabiatul adawiyah, "Hermeneutika Amina Wadud," n.d., <https://mubadalah.id/menilik-konsep-hermeneutika-amina-wadud/>.

³⁹ Amina wadud and Abdullah Ali, *Qur'an Menurut Perempuan: Meluruskan Bias Gender Dalam Tradisi Tafsir. Judul Asli: Qur'an and Woman: Reading the Sacred Text From a Woman's Perspective* (Jakarta: serambi ilmu semesta, 2001).

⁴⁰ Amina wadud and Abdullah Ali, 35.

discussion, introducing myself as a researcher, and disseminating online forms to be filled. It deals with my intention to understand the reception of Indonesian people toward this new and fresh stream of gender thought or even whether this new method is acceptable and influences increasing gender awareness in building reciprocally beneficial relations between human beings. About this perception results, I do my online research which involves 45 respondents with various backgrounds, some following its social media and offline events of Mubadalah but some only active in the offline events not in its social media platforms. They also come from different gender and ages. At least, they are representative to be part of Indonesian Muslim people who understand and follow the dynamics of discourse in Mubadalah. Otherwise, I conduct the questions based on several classifications like knowing their understanding of mubadalah, to what extent mubadalah influences their constructed opinions, if it influences their perspective or community establishment, their opinions to a method of *da'wah* done by mubadalah as well as the problem they prompted, at the end I ask them for giving any ideas toward mubadalah next development. In this case, I try to accommodate the common opinion of the encounter between feminist notions to Islamic perspectives.

Chapter Two
GENEALOGY OF ISLAMIC INTERPRETATION AND ISLAMIC
FEMINISM MOVEMENT IN INDONESIA

1. Islamic Feminism in a Global Discourse

1.1. The Islamic Interpretation of Women

Amid a global confrontation on the issue of feminism, the study of Islamic feminists on the re-reading of religious texts has become a very popular academic discourse. This aims to display a narrative balance in the interpretation of texts, especially those related to women. The production of interpretations by classical interpreters shows a tendency towards masculinity which is influenced by the traditions and culture prevailing at that time. As Barlas states, classical interpretation cannot be separated from the background of the interpreter's life which is influenced by the environment and culture in which they live⁴¹. Meanwhile, Mernissi revealed that classical interpreters were unable to escape their identity from superiority as men so the reading of religious texts only relied on the interests of their group⁴². Thus, the production of classical interpretations tends to present textual and hegemonic interpretations.

The proliferation of feminist interpretations is in line with the development of modern interpretations at the end of the 19th century or the beginning of the 20th century, while the development of modern interpretations is related to the Islamic movement itself⁴³. This shows that the existence of movements carried out by modernists inspired feminist groups to do the same in the sphere of women. The discourse on re-reading religious texts using a women's perspective began when there was anxiety among Muslim feminists about reducing the existence of women who were not considered from an interpretive point of view. Amid the debate about feminism terminology which received a lot of opposition because it was considered adopted from Western values and not by Islamic principles, these Islamic scholars remained productive in producing new ideas and works that were progressive. Therefore, the presence of works that challenge the basis of the paradigm of Islamic thought on the absence of women in religious discussions is something interesting

⁴¹ Barlas, *Believing Women in Islam*, 19.

⁴² fatima mernissi, *Women and Islam; An Historical and Theological Inquiry* (UK: basil blackwell Ltd, 1991), 34.

⁴³ moh nailul muna, *Tafsir Feminis Nusantara*, 26.

and important⁴⁴. Among the figures who consistently study feminism through religious texts include: Asma Barlas, Riffat Hassan, Aminah Wadud, Maysa al-Faruqi, and Azizah al-Hibri. In the Indonesian context, they include Musdah Mulia, Husein Muhammad, Nur Rofiah, and Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir.

In general, scholars such as Asma Barlas, Riffat Hassan, Aminah Wadud, Maysa al-Faruqi, and Azizah al-Hibri agree more to blame interpretation traditions than Islamic teachings themselves⁴⁵. Even though there are important differences in their approach, they all agree to fight against patriarchal interpretations that are not in favor of women. Their form of disapproval or resistance is to generate new ideas through efforts to re-read religious texts that take women's aspects into account. For Qur'anic feminists, they assume that Islam has a *tawhid* perspective on men and women, but this cannot be manifested in past interpretations because of its patriarchal culture⁴⁶. This monotheistic perspective emphasizes that there is no practice of servitude in any form except only to Allah SWT⁴⁷. However, the application of the *tawhid* principle encounters at least three obstacles⁴⁸: first, the obstacle is that the Arabic language with all its structures which are a source of religious reference contains a gender bias. Second, the dominance of the textual approach in understanding religious texts even as a form of caution. Third, each patriarchal system is deeply rooted. Therefore, both the Qur'an and the Hadith seek to reflect this dynamic through a dialogic space between the ideal values of Islam and the cultural values of Arab society at that time.

Barlas was born in Pakistan and raised during the notoriously oppressive reign of Ziaul Haq (1978-1988). She observed the social conditions of the people under the leadership of the regime at that time which implemented the Sharia system (Islamization) where most of the population (98%) were Muslim. However, Barlas saw that the sharia system implemented by the government is increasingly widening the gaps between men and women in various legal products and social life, for example, by equating the testimony of two women with one witness man. This failure is getting sharpened by its no difference

⁴⁴ Amina Wadud, *Qur'an, and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), xi.

⁴⁵ moh nailul muna, *Tafsir Feminis Nusantara*, 1.

⁴⁶ Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, *Manual Mubadalah: Ringkasan Konsep Untuk Pelatihan Perpektif Kesalingan Dalam Isu Gender Dan Islam* (Yogyakarta: Umah Sinau Mubadalah, 2019), 15.

⁴⁷ Nur Rofiah, *Nalar Kritis Muslimah*, 6.

⁴⁸ Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, *Manual Mubadalah: Ringkasan Konsep Untuk Pelatihan Perpektif Kesalingan Dalam Isu Gender Dan Islam*, 16.

between rape and adultery, for which both were punished by stoning. Not only in Pakistan, she also felt the same when she was in America after her move. The assumptions circulate in Western society that Islam is a patriarchal religion that adheres to hierarchical models and sexual inequality, and it requires a woman to surrender to men. Islam is described as something strange and perverted. So, it is very difficult to get a good impression as a Muslim in America although she has some kind of legal rights and personal liberties which is more compared to his life in Pakistan. Her book entitled *Believing Women in Islam; Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an* (2002, 2019) is responding to the opinion of American society that views Islam as a hegemonic religion that privileges men more where women must submit themselves to them⁴⁹.

In this book, she wants to answer her two personal questions; (1) is it true that Islam is a hegemonic religion that is unfair to women? (2) does the Qur'an support liberation and patriarchal ideas for men with certain privileges?⁵⁰ This is her effort to prove and build an impression of Islam as an egalitarian and women-friendly religion. Barlas argued that Qur'an does not only define women and men in terms of binary opposition, but also does not describe women as inferior or disabled to men, or as two sexes that are incompatible, incommensurable, or unequal in the traditional patriarchal thought⁵¹. The Qur'an does not even associate sex with gender, with any particular division of labor, or with masculine and feminine attributes (e.g., men with mind and logic and women with instinct and emotion). Moreover, she wants to prove that the creation of man is from a single self, her definition of moral agency and subjectivity in terms of "ethical individualism" is tangible⁵². Because the emphasis on equality before God is determined by individual qualifications which are based on the recognition of morality, not sexuality. So, I also believe that the moral praxis of men and women confirms the only criterion of difference is in Islam which is divined on the scripture, but many people forsake it.

Barlas wants to prove that both the Qur'an and Hadith can't produce texts that corner women as God's creatures. She uses the method of liberation hermeneutics or divine ontology by looking at a text normatively (reading the text itself) and historically (thinking beyond the

⁴⁹ Barlas, *Believing Women in Islam*, 78.

⁵⁰ Barlas, 24.

⁵¹ Barlas, 33.

⁵² Asma Barlas, "The Qur'an and Hermeneutics: Reading the Qur'an's Opposition to Patriarchy1," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 3, no. 2 (2001): 15–38.

text/interpretation)⁵³. If there is an assumption that Islam is a religion that is not egalitarian and patriarchal then it is not a product of scriptures but the result of historicity or human interpretation. Barlas writes⁵⁴;

"A reinterpretation of the scripture is particularly important because the Qur'an's teachings provide Muslims with role models for both women and men. Since different readings of the Qur'an (and of other texts) can be crucial for them to reinvestigate the normative sacred texts and even to become specialists in the sacred text, as Fatima Mernissi."

With a hermeneutic method, she wants to show the egalitarian side of the Qur'an which views humans as equals. The historical and normative reading that she proposes is an expression of "resistance" against the classical interpretation tradition. Her personal experience of witnessing the oppression and injustice of state law and social norms for Muslim women, both when she lived in Pakistan and America, enacted her basis for re-reading religious texts. Barlas' ideas cannot be separated from the thoughts of previous figures such as Amina Wadud. In my opinion, she did this to strengthen his hermeneutic articulation by classifying text-reading techniques involving historical aspects. She also believes that there is always a dialogic space in a text, including in hierarchical texts.

While Amina Wadud brings a more specific method of hermeneutics. She emphasizes that her rejection of conventional interpretations of discriminating women has never changed⁵⁵. She uses the *tawḥīd* interpretation to emphasize how the unity of the Qur'an permeates all its parts. Wadud added that the purpose of *tawḥīd* interpretation is to explain the dynamics between universal and particular things according to Qur'an, most importantly, it seeks to establish universal moral guidelines⁵⁶. Of course, following the conditions of the Arabian Peninsula in the 7th century which background of the Qur'an's revelation and its universal guidance purpose. Wadud suggests to the modern generation of Muslims to remark on how this holy book is constrained by various things that were unique to that era⁵⁷. For example, the language used was not to make Arabic holy, but the revelation could be accepted and understood by the people. As a result, many texts in the Quran are gender biased and lead

⁵³ Asma Barlas, "Muslim Women and Sexual Oppression: Reading Liberation from the Quran," *Macalester International* 10, no. 1 (2001): 15.

⁵⁴ Barlas, 4.

⁵⁵ rabiatal adawiyah, "Hermeneutika Amina Wadud."

⁵⁶ Wadud, *Qur'an, and Woman*.

⁵⁷ Wadud.

the reader to an environment of reality that is not gendered which ultimately becomes difficult due to the language barrier.

The interpretation model, according to her, must refer to the following three things⁵⁸; (1) the context when the text was revealed (in Hadith, the conditions when it was written), (2) the composition of the text from a grammatical point of view (how the text says what it says), (3) looking at the text as a whole. The difference in opinion often lies in attention to one of these three aspects. In the context of women's position according to Qur'an, Wadud says, Qur'an acknowledges the existence of anatomical differences between men and women. Qur'an also recognizes that each gender has a function that reflects their different identities and has been defined and maintained by culture⁵⁹. It also acknowledges that men and women act as independent individuals in society. However, from a cultural point of view, there is no specific narrative as an indication of how it functions. Such specifications will degrade the Qur'an as sacred texts that are universal and long-lasting codes, not as specific cultural texts.

These two concepts of hermeneutics are related, one seems strengthened to another. For example, while Barlas emphasizes the moral concept as theological praxis as a divergent tool of quality of humans in front of God, Amina Wadud bridges this concept to the theory of *khālifāh* (leader) which is stated in the Qur'an as a mandate and obliged for human beings. She defines "moral" as fundamental to the meaning of *khālifāh* that reflects the uniquely human ethical capacity through their exclusive characteristic of free will. This free will is associated with the liberation of every human being to decide, to do something, to say, or to think because they have agency. It is like a conscious recognition of choices and exercising that choice as an agent, not a puppet, including women. They could choose to resist the command, accepting responsibility even for the potential harm and catastrophic consequences of its resistance. The term *khālifāh* is fundamental to the ethics of human dignity⁶⁰. It relates to the direct command from God to His creature even though it describes as representative of God on earth. But she prefers to use this term in the civil society context where she elucidates then the relation from this command to the context of human dignity and its relationship to women's dignity specifically.

⁵⁸ Amina wadud and Abdullah Ali, *Qur'an Menurut Perempuan: Meluruskan Bias Gender Dalam Tradisi Tafsir. Judul Asli: Qur'an and Woman: Reading the Sacred Text From a Woman's Perspective*, 21.

⁵⁹ Amina wadud and Abdullah Ali, 21.

⁶⁰ Amina wadud and Abdullah Ali, 23.

However, another group claims that feminist interpretations tend to force texts of women which seem rigid and subjective⁶¹. This resistance group interprets egalitarian texts more as flexible and dynamic towards the times. Aysha Hidayatullah is one of the representatives who refused. She argues that feminist interpreters need to be responsible for reading the Qur'an according to their wishes⁶². The Qur'an seems forced to fit their perspective by using a contemporary feminist perspective on equality and justice⁶³. Even though the results of the interpretation are more likely to lead to the wishes of the feminist interpreter than to the intent of the text itself, it even suggests text manipulation. Thus, Aysha is more amenable to relocating the intensity of our demands on the Qur'an by rethinking the intent and objectivity of our interpretation rather than overly imposing the meaning of the text itself⁶⁴. However, she does not deny that there is contextual compatibility between the results of the interpretation of feminist interpreters and the verses of the Qur'an. She clarifies that the point of error that was put forward was not in the inherent characteristics of feminism, whether in perceptions originating from the West, immorality, etc., but rather in placing feminism's demands on the Qur'an⁶⁵.

In an applicable context, Aysha divides verses into two types: hierarchical and mutual⁶⁶. "Hierarchical" verses are verses that show control over the role of men over women. For example, verse (2:223) instructs men to approach their wives sexually because they desire to refer to their wives as something to cultivate. Or in verse (2:228) which shows that men may in several ways such as divorce have a higher degree than women. Meanwhile, the verse "mutual" (equal) implies inclusiveness and reciprocity concerning kindness and respect for women. For example, verse (9:71) states that believing men and believing women are moral guardians for one another, or verse (33:35) states that men and women will be promised forgiveness and reward by God because of the quality of virtue. and human behavior⁶⁷. From this explanation, it appears that their negation is based on the

⁶¹ moh nailul muna, *Tafsir Feminis Nusantara*, 26.

⁶² Aysha A. Hidayatullah, *Feminist Edges of the Qur'an* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2014), 149.

⁶³ Hidayatullah, 149.

⁶⁴ Hidayatullah, 150.

⁶⁵ Hidayatullah, 150.

⁶⁶ Aysha A. Hidayatullah, "Feminist Interpretation of the Qur'an in a Comparative Feminist Setting," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 30, no. 2 (2014): 115–29.

⁶⁷ Hidayatullah.

existence of hierarchical verses which were indeed passed down like that without an egalitarian meaning.

Aysha's hermeneutic critique shows that the academic dialogue about women in Islam is an open discourse. One party may claim that there are no verses in the Qur'an or Hadith that misplace the position of women. In the concept of *tawhīdīk* that they use, the positions of both are equal. However, the opposing group criticized the impression of coercion of interpretation according to the wishes of the feminist interpreters. Even though these two camps have different views and approaches in interpreting texts, in principle, they have the same belief that Islam was revealed to bring grace and there should be no discriminatory practices in its implementation. Apart from that, they also share the same passion for women's independence for their rights, without relying on a single text which legitimizes the authority of an unfair law.

The different models of feminist interpretation can be influenced by the fundamental principles used when using the Qur'anic reminiscent approach. Some of these principles are: first, gender equality, namely Muslim feminist scholars believe that God is beyond gender, so His orders and teachings are also not bounded by any gender⁶⁸. With this kind of principle, feminists will quote verses that talk about the equality of men and women, as in (49:13). Muslim feminists also mention the creation of Adam and Eve, while criticizing perceptions of the classical interpretations of the Qur'an regarding the creation of Adam and Eve⁶⁹. Like Amina Wadud who believes that both of them were created from one soul⁷⁰.

Second, rejecting patriarchally oriented approaches in an exegesis of the Qur'an. Based on this principle, any prejudice aimed at the Quran will lead to misunderstandings⁷¹. Feminist scholars underline the statement that "men are superior to women, therefore women must be below men". This statement for them brings misunderstanding in every classical interpretation. They are increasingly convinced because the majority of classical interpreters are men. For example, the term "*darb*" (to hit) in the Quran is considered a sign of violence against women. On the other hand, feminists offer other meanings by

⁶⁸ Muhammad Hussein Sharifi, "An Examination of the Nature and Necessity of Feminist Interpretation of the Holy Quran," *Kom: Časopis Za Religijske Nauke* 9, no. 2 (2020): 65–85.

⁶⁹ Sharifi.

⁷⁰ Amina Wadud, "Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam," *Oneworld Publications*, no. 08 (2017): 249–62.

⁷¹ Sharifi, "An Examination of the Nature and Necessity of Feminist Interpretation of the Holy Quran."

describing the word in detail, for example, the word “*darb*” can mean “start a journey” or “set an example”⁷². In this context, they agree more with the results of their interpretation than with the meanings produced by classical interpreters. Thus, these feminist interpreters believe that there are no hadiths regarding the violence committed by the Prophet against his wives and families⁷³. Third, equality of rights. Feminists consider the position of men and women equally in every aspect of life while believing that discrimination against women is a consequence of the interpretation itself⁷⁴.

This distinguished type of opinion can be divided into two groups; the first group stands for their agreement toward doing a reinterpretation of whole verses of the Qur'an related to women's cases. This classical exegesis leads to bringing misunderstanding perspectives that resistance to the basic principle of Islam about justice and mercy. The second is contradictory groups who criticize the way of Islamic feminist scholars that seems to coerce the interpretation results suit to their expectations or desires. Feminist commentators do not intend to oppose or reject the Qur'an but provide an alternative to the principle of equality as the principle of the Islamic religion was revealed. Meanwhile the opposite tends to be careful in interpreting verses even though the two of them have the same anxiety. For me, this dialectic is a space for academic encounters where topics about women and Islam can infiltrate the realm of global discourse.

1.2. Islamic Feminism as A Global Movement

Islamic feminism is a wide and intellectual discourse that represents the activist movement that relies on factual cases of many Muslim women. It offers a specific tool for religious interpretation while it adds a special value to the Muslim's spiritual life. Meanwhile, the term feminism is defined by Badran⁷⁵ as a phenomenon engaging with issues of women's rights, women's liberation, and equality of all which was constructed and shaped by world activists during the heyday of colonialism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries⁷⁶. The term Islamic feminism became popular in the latter decades of the 20th century when many Islamic scholars advocating women's rights felt the urgent need for a strong, gender-sensitive Islamic discourse to counteract the patriarchal awakening imposed in the name of

⁷² Sharifi.

⁷³ Sharifi.

⁷⁴ Sharifi.

⁷⁵ Badran, “Understanding Islam, Islamism, and Islamic Feminism.”

⁷⁶ Anitta Kynsilehto, ed., *Islamic Feminism: Current Perspectives*, Tampere Peace Research Institute. Occasional Paper, no. 96 (Tampere: Tampere Peace Research Institute, 2008), 25.

religion. It was a moment when a plethora of Muslim women's writings discussing issues of women and gender began to appear. Sisters in Islam, founded in Malaysia in the mid-1980s, issued pamphlets discrediting to condoning wife-beating in the name of Islam. Fatima Mernissi published *Women in Islam: An Historical and Theological Inquiry* (1991) exposing the fraudulence of misogynist Hadith (sayings and deeds attributed to Prophet Muhammad). Amina Wadud published *Qur'an and Women: Reading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (1992, 1999) elucidating the message of gender equality and social justice found in the scriptures. On the other hand, writings by men scholars on women and Islam emerging in this century such as the most popular ones, Asghar Ali Engineer published *The Qur'an, Women, and Modern Society* (1999) that contextualize the concept of women in the Qur'an in co-current cultural sides⁷⁷.

The term Islamic feminism was firmly established at the turn of the 21st century when in 2002 Asma Barlas published *Believing Women in Islam: Un-reading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an*, outlining the patriarchal meanings projected into the Qur'an, which immediately heralded as another work of Islamic feminism. In addition, Amina Wadud 2006 published *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam* which further elucidated her hermeneutic work on women and gender and paid broad attention to the meaning of gender jihad which some argue better captures the project of Islamic feminism⁷⁸. The phenomenon of Islamic feminism departs from the same background, namely the idea of resistance to the tradition of Islamic conservative domination which considers the difference between men and women to be something natural and does not need to be debated⁷⁹. In addition, the social construction of patriarchal culture increasingly places women as male objects and marginalized. The idea of Islamic feminism carries a mission to provide an equal position between men and women as creatures created by God who have their specifications. With the recognition of this specification, it is hoped that women and other oppressed groups will be able to speak up and become historical actors who carry out their respective roles with the principle of justice. Furthermore, there is no process of discriminatory treatment and marginalization in the name of gender.

Further, she classified Islamic feminism into 2 definitions⁸⁰. First, as an idea and knowledge produced by scholars and feminists in Islamic cultural networks, including Islam in terms

⁷⁷ Kynsilehto, 30.

⁷⁸ Kynsilehto, 31.

⁷⁹ Anwar, *A Genealogy of Islamic Feminism*, 14.

⁸⁰ Anwar, 1.

of content and form. Considering that Islam is very homogeneous, the point of emphasis on this understanding lies in combining religious texts with women's unique experiences. This context provides an emphasis on addressing women's issues within the framework of Islamic teaching practices and identifying whether Islam has feminist ideas. So, what is highlighted is the deconstruction of the effects of masculine knowledge and authority and the production of new knowledge about Islam. Women's unique experience needs to be an important consideration in efforts to realize a religious perspective that is friendly to women, the existence of women's agency in the public sphere or at least giving birth to a form of power and authority that develops amid patriarchal politics. Thus, he redlines that women's agency is at the heart of the narrative and practice of Islamic feminism.

Second, Islamic feminism is seen as a movement carried out by feminists to fight for women's equality in the personal, social, and political spheres. These feminists use religion as a reference to strengthen their arguments about the concept of equality with a comprehensive approach and method of interpreting texts, namely considering the causation (*asbab al-nuzūl*) with a factual context in which a religious narrative can be implemented adaptively. Women have so far been seen as sexual beings rather than spiritual beings when associated with reading religious narratives. So, through a balanced and comprehensive approach and reading of religious narratives, it can be a strategy for feminists to find references to human equality before God.

Furthermore, Sirri specifies the character of Islamic feminism in three ways; (1) the oxymoron, namely the existence of a paradox between the recognition of the phenomenon of women's oppression and the same time there is the rejection of the idea and movement of Islamic feminism, (2) as a newly emerging idea, Islamic feminism is considered to be difficult to develop because it will be faced with ideas that conventional ideas related to gender, sexuality and the dominant position of men in the culture of a society that has been built for a long time, (3) limited engagement to its feminist exegesis, this is related to the existence of parties who create a dichotomy between the Qur'an and science and social reality, including, in this case, is the issue of gender and sexuality⁸¹. The Qur'an is considered an absolute revelation that is absolute and cannot be re-interpreted according to the context of the development of human life. Even though many verses show an encounter between the Qur'an and science and progressive and dynamic social reality. Thus, many

⁸¹ Sirri, *Islamic Feminism*, 1.

scholars state that the Qur'an is a representation of the complexity of the dimensions of human life that can be studied.

Legal Islamic thought then contributes to examining the gender rights discourse. Dealing with this, Mir Hosseini argues that Islamic legal thought contains three distinct discourses on gender rights. The first is traditionalists, who are textualists holding the classical *shari'ah* discourses. The second was developed in the early part of the twentieth century and reflected in the modern legal codes in Muslim countries, so it is called by Neo-Traditionalist. The third is reformist which emerged in the last two decades and is still in the process of formation⁸². These first two are premised on various forms of inequality between the sexes, while the third argues for equality. Because the legal Islamic thought relates to Islamic law, it makes Islamic law production mostly use the men-gender lens so it remains masculine. In this case, many parties said that Islam or Islamic law is prejudiced against women. On another side, Muslim women have begun to read the Qur'an and challenged the canonical Islamic scriptures and conventional histories that stigmatize women or they do not hold them in high consideration. Muslim women believe in the principle of *ijtihad* (a personal effort to learn Islam) because they saw Qur'an as available to produce new insights and set great importance on rationalism and the emphasis that each Muslim can grab the meaning behind it⁸³. These re-readings and new interpretations of the sacred texts, on the other hand, like opposing the "Western" values and lifestyles that Muslim states were adopting in the name of "secularization"⁸⁴

Another scholar, Lila Abu Lughod, an American anthropologist also highlights this phenomenon, when the spirit of Islamic feminism is claimed as an adoption from the West or just a continuation of feminist theory then it only narrows the scope of feminism itself. Because various efforts to fight for resistance to patriarchy and the struggle for gender equality are part of feminism that is carried out by many Muslim women in various countries, even predating what they (westerners) categorize as a liberation movement. In this context, Abu Lughod argues for the de-essentialization of feminism, where women should be given the freedom to develop themselves according to the culture and values of the society in which they live. Specifically, she highlights Western feminists who claim the mandatory use of the veil by the Taliban on all women in Afghanistan is a form of decline

⁸² Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "The Construction of Gender in Islamic Legal: Thought and Strategies for Reform," *Hawwa* 1, no. 1 (2003): 1–28.

⁸³ Sirri, *Islamic Feminism*, 21.

⁸⁴ Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "Why Do We Need 'Islamic Feminism?'" *Al-Raida Journal* 44, no. 2 (2020): 64–70.

in feminism. According to her, feminism must stand on the perspective of women themselves, not in the eyes of observers. the context of veiling for Afghan women relates to their local culture and security reasons. By veiling, they can get wider access and undertake public activities. Hence, she claims, "we need to develop, instead, a serious appreciation of differences among women in the world- as products of different histories, expressions of different circumstances and manifestations of differently desired structures"⁸⁵.

2. Islamic Feminism in Indonesia

2.1. The Debatable Discourse

Labeling of feminism term of women's movement was first raised by the New Order era government within the framework of empowering women to achieve national priority programs at that time. Because feminism cannot always be separated from the geopolitical conditions of a region or country, Robinson made notes on her observations of the phenomenon of the women's movement in Indonesia during the New Order era. She stated that women's movements and organizations during the new order era could not develop and even tended to be banned by the government because women were imaged as mothers who had domestic duties and obligations⁸⁶. The state limits access to women's development by making the family concept a pillar of nation-building. It was the central pillar of the state called the familial base of the state. The pillars of this country view that women have nature as domestic beings who will receive religious sanctions if they do things outside the rules, for example, women do not have sufficient space and public roles to develop themselves. The state legitimizes the position of women as housewives and a wife with obligations to educate children and serve their husbands. A familial principle in this context, for me, experiences a narrowing of meaning. The principle of kinship established by the state should be based on the principles of deliberation, cooperation, and equality which are the roots of the establishment of a family, not indicating an unequal role between men and women⁸⁷. The hegemonic role of men during the New Order era was a representation of the position of the powerful army at that time, so there was minimal bargaining value from the state for women's development matters.

⁸⁵ Lila Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others," *American Anthropologist* 104, no. 3 (2002): 783–90.

⁸⁶ Robinson, *Gender, Islam, and Democracy in Indonesia*, 6:23.

⁸⁷ Robinson, 6:12.

In addition, the state also places limitations and pressure on women-based organizations. The state also dichotomizes the women's movement in social clusters such as *Dharma Wanita*, a women's organization whose members are the wives of civil servants. In this organization, the concepts and activities carried out must be under state control. The dress model is also regulated with certain models that symbolize femininity and prohibit the use of head coverings/veils when activities take place. In addition to restrictions on women's movements and organizations emphasizes that gender power in the Suharto regime was implicated in every policy issued so it had an impact on gender orientation in the behavior of social life. Male authority is the keyword. When the concept of male authority is implemented in the life of the state, what happens is a mix-up between the principle of kinship as a way of life and political interests acting in the name of family. The resulting political product will be oriented to the authoritarian political style.

As a discourse, the combination of the words between Islamic and feminism creates contradictions among people who see feminism as a Western secular trend that cannot be compared with Islamic teachings. Specifically, Anwar states that Islamic feminism discourse includes many things and dimensions so it is necessary to redefine the terminology of Islamic feminism itself⁸⁸. The word Islamic refers to values, principles, teachings, and religious messages for human life which are contained in the holy book of the Qur'an or the Hadith of the Prophet. Meanwhile, the word feminism refers to movements, ideas, ideas, and the spirit of fighting for justice for all God's creatures to avoid acts of discrimination and marginalization in the name of a certain sex. In principle, the values contained in the idea of Islamic feminism apply not only to women but also to men and marginalized groups⁸⁹.

In line with the above, Husein Muhammad, a well-known Muslim scholar in Indonesia, states that we do not need to get stuck in certain terms that we do not own like the term feminism which still gets a lot of controversy because it is considered an adoption from the West⁹⁰. Feminism itself means the value of being gentle, compassionate, full of love, and carrying a mission of justice for humans. So, if then there is the term Islamic feminism it means an idea, struggle, or movement to achieve values of justice and equality so that no party is discriminated against. This movement is based on the teachings of Islam which

⁸⁸ Anwar, *A Genealogy of Islamic Feminism*, 13.

⁸⁹ Sirri, *Islamic Feminism*, 23.

⁹⁰ Husein Muhammad. Live interview, 13 May 2023

indeed carries a big mission as a religion of *rahmatan lil'alam* (mercy for all) where Islam does not distinguish who will receive Grace, but Islam comes to give Grace to all beings⁹¹.

While, another fact, Indonesian women got a wider space of freedom to voice their rights after the fall of the New Order government. Rinaldo emphasizes that there is courage possessed by feminist activists after the New Order regime as a representation that they have the same rights as men in the public sphere as legitimacy for social life in a democratic country⁹². The opportunity to develop oneself and provide advocacy for fellow women who are marginalized is illustrated by the massive number of religious-based women-based organizations⁹³. For example, Fatayat, Nasyyatul Aisyiyah, and Rahima are three women's organizations with Islamic religious backgrounds that have a vision and mission to empower women by advocating on women's issues. Besides, the former existing Islamic-based women's organizations are Muslimat NU and Aisyiyah. These two Islamic women's organizations are under the auspices of Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, the two largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia. In general, several of these women's organizations show similar foundations of thought and movement. The goal of these organizations is specifically to Islamize society through the inculcation of Islamic virtues infused with Javanese virtues, but it then well developed⁹⁴. Through the vision and mission of their organization, they provide opportunities and access for women to reinterpret the understanding of women's position in Islam as well as carry out empowerment programs in several ways such as the economy, education, health, legal advocacy, and so on.

Even though the movement of this organization is based on the values of Islam, these Islamic women's organizations find a social paradox where they are often confronted with certain political interests in the name of justice for women⁹⁵. This kind of challenge raises further questions about how the cultural background of the activists themselves is whether they are truly free from the shackles of patriarchy or whether the struggle for equality finds dead ends in the discourse alone. Another obstacle faced by this Islamic women's organization is the rejection from the grassroots of the discourse of Islamic feminism which according to most people, the term feminism does not deserve to be compared with Islam itself and even threatens the sovereignty of Islam as the only religion that they recognize as true. However, this social organization has specific legitimacy because it stands under

⁹¹ Nur Rofiah, *Nalar Kritis Muslimah*, 5.

⁹² Rinaldo, *Mobilizing Piety*, 65.

⁹³ Pieternella Van Doorn-Harder, *Women Shaping Islam: Reading the Qu'ran in Indonesia* (University of Illinois Press, 2006), 23.

⁹⁴ Van Doorn-Harder, 21.

⁹⁵ Rinaldo, *Mobilizing Piety*, 12.

the auspices of large organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah which have organizational structural lines from the national to the rural level and have a very large number of masses. This provides a contribution and opportunity for the organization to promote women's rights throughout the archipelago.

As a form of the passion of the women's movement, this organization develops activities that target local religious leaders to be involved in promoting their programs based on women's empowerment. Rahima, for example, recruited religious leaders, men, and women, in several areas to become facilitators and messengers on reproductive health issues (Rinaldo, 2013). They convey *da'wah* in a more comprehensive social context based on references to the texts of the Qur'an and Hadith as argumentation reinforcement. Women's organizations utilize the role of clerics or religious leaders as educators and referral sources for the community. The involvement of religious leaders adapts to the characteristics of Indonesian people who regard religious leaders as a source of accurate information. This kind of activity also aims to regenerate female religious experts who have a gender justice perspective so that they can respond to social phenomena through the lens of gender awareness⁹⁶. *Da'wah* delivered by female clerics is considered to have a better impact because they have unique experiences of women that are not experienced by male clerics.

Today, news of the new Islamic feminism and its compelling texts is spreading rapidly through cyberspace where it appears in electronic journals, social media platforms, listing services, or websites of Muslim women's organizations. The circulation and enthusiastic reception of these new works on women and gender under the banner of Islamic feminism is a testament to their relevance to Muslim women, and many men, indeed, to the urgent need to contextualize religious narratives with today's social facts. A spontaneous 'Islamic feminist' community appears to be forming new knowledge about gender awareness. Then, Islamic feminism continues to gain an increasingly high profile with this increasing public space for widening debate among scholars and activists. Finally, in the last decade, we have witnessed more transnational events and the proliferation of gender discourse through conferences, workshops, seminars, pieces of training, and others.

⁹⁶ Anwar, *A Genealogy of Islamic Feminism*, 14.

2.2 Indonesia's Current Muslim Women's Movements

Talking about the Muslim women's movement and gender equality, one should be aware of the historical, political, ideological, and cultural context⁹⁷. The affirmation of state involvement in the women's organization and movement is operated by the state and under the male domination authority with top-down management, they have attempted to improve women's lives, especially in the area of consciousness-raising, social welfare, public participation, marriage law, and education⁹⁸. In the new order era, the influence of restrictions on the movement of Muslim women by the state has even penetrated the domestic sphere⁹⁹.

The movement of Islamic feminism in Indonesia was initially identified as a movement against the construction of law designed by the New Order government with the application of the concept of domestication for women. The concept of domestication is summarized in various national activities initiated by the government, such as the PKK (Empowering Family Welfare) where several points of principle are composed that embody the role of women as a wife and mothers with various domestic roles as well as public roles¹⁰⁰. It looks egalitarian by giving multiple roles, but in principle leadership, a woman is still under the leadership and power of a man. Another thing is the formation of the Kowani (Indonesian Women's Congress) in 1928 which was formed by the New Order regime as a social response after the disbandment of Gerwani which they identified as part of the communists. The five main principles of Kowani or known as Kowani's five dharma are¹⁰¹; (1) women are husbands' loyal companions, (2) women are the creators of the nation's generation, (3) women are the main educators of children, (4) women are housekeepers, and (5) women are useful members of society. The main objective of establishing Kowani as a legal women's organizational structure is to accommodate all Indonesian women's organizations from various backgrounds, whether religious, economic, educational, etc. However, government intervention was too strong that Kowani lost its autonomy.

⁹⁷ Qibtiyah, "Indonesian Muslim Women and the Gender Equality Movement."

⁹⁸ Etin Anwar, "Directed Women's Movements in Indonesia: Social and Political Agency from Within," *Hawwa* 2, no. 1 (2004): 89–112.

⁹⁹ Robinson, *Gender, Islam and Democracy in Indonesia*, 6:10.

¹⁰⁰ Robinson, *Gender, Islam and Democracy in Indonesia*.

¹⁰¹ "Menilik Kembali Peran Organisasi Perempuan Di Indonesia," n.d., <https://www.jurnalperempuan.org/wacana-feminis/menilik-kembali-peran-organisasi-perempuan-di-masa-orde-baru>.

The reaction to defending women's rights began to be seen when several community-based women's organizations were born, such as Kalyana Mitra which was formed in 1985¹⁰². Various sources said that Kalyana Mitra was founded as a medium for women's voice aspirations. Its main vision is the empowerment of women by providing a space for communication on women's issues that occurred at that time. Kalyana Mitra conducts various social research, studies, and discussion forums whose results are documented in the form of tapes, videos, books, or sporadic writings¹⁰³. All Kalyana Mitra products are stored in a special library and become a reference for women's movements. Kalyanamitra's commitment to fighting for gender justice continued with the introduction of gender analysis training in Indonesia in 1990¹⁰⁴. This program was aimed at non-governmental organizations and academics who had more attention and interest in women's issues. All results of studies or research carried out are disseminated to the public through seminars, training, or public discussions. In addition, Kalyana Mitra's publications are also in the form of newsletters and journals. In 1994, the publication of Kalyana Mitra was banned by the government, but until now it has continued to play a role in assisting with gender awareness.

In addition, other movements to advocate for women's rights also emerged from religious groups. NU and Muhammadiyah as the first and second largest Muslim organizations have special women's organizational wings. Call it Muslimat NU, Fatayat, Aisyiyah and Nasyiatul Aisyiyah. The four Islamic women's organizations have also become the embryos for the birth of the Islamic feminist movement by building an ideology from a gender justice perspective¹⁰⁵. In addition, other Muslim communities also take part. P3M (Association of Pesantren and Community Development), founded in 1993 (it was originally a program at LP3ES) is a community of Islamic religious leaders with a pesantren background struggle for the empowerment of women through reviewing religious narratives¹⁰⁶. One of the focuses of their work is the *fiqh an-nisa* program. This program aims to review Islamic laws related to women's issues in the concept of social fiqh. It also actively promotes women's reproductive health and human rights discourse in the Muslim community. *Fiqh an-nisā'* focuses on discussing women's theology by developing issues

¹⁰² "Kalyana Mitra," n.d., <https://kalyanamitra.or.id/tentang/>.

¹⁰³ "Kalyana Mitra."

¹⁰⁴ "Kalyana Mitra."

¹⁰⁵ Rinaldo, *Mobilizing Piety*.

¹⁰⁶ "Rahima," n.d., <https://swararahima.com/tentang-rahima/#:~:text=Rahima%20lahir%20pada%20tahun%201999,Manusia%E2%80%9D%20dan%20merubah%20kelembagaan%20dari.>

of women's reproductive health and rights in Islam. Otherwise, the study of social fiqh itself has already been comprehensively studied by several Indonesian *fiqh* figures such as Sahal Mahfudh or Masdar Faried Mas'udi¹⁰⁷. The *fiqh an-nisā'* program by P3M which is initiated by Lies Marcoes also became the embryo of the Rahima organization which gave birth to mubadalah.

The Muslim women's movement in Indonesia as a form of expression of freedom of thought and a role in the public sphere found its bright path after the collapse of the New Order regime. In the notes of various scholars, the role of women in various scientific, political, and social fields gave birth to new ideas that deconstruct old ideas about women's position in the public space as the influence of the government was implemented in the country's development projects. In the context of the Islamic women's movement, these new ideas include the figuration of female religious leaders and the authority to issue *fatwas*. While the term women ulama itself has diverse meanings. Some scholars who treat the birth of KUPI redefined the definition of women ulama in a proper term. They argue for the word "women" can be used in both two terminologies, in biological or ideological use¹⁰⁸. The biological meaning of women refers to the original and common creature of the female with all their specialties like menstruation, pregnancy, breastfeeding, and birthing. While the word "women" in the ideological term refers to a perspective meaning which belongs to self-awareness and movement which takes sides and departs from women's unique experiences in efforts to realize justice in relations with men both in family and social life. Thus, the classification is then used to distinguish "women's ulama" and "women's ulama" or female ulama. Women's ulama just refers to whoever female has deep Islamic knowledge and is categorized as ulama whether they have a gender perspective or not. But, women ulama refers to whoever ulama, both men and women that have the deep capability and is categorized as ulama with a gender perspective¹⁰⁹.

Gender analysis received special attention among Indonesian social activists in the 1980s and became an important element in contemporary Islamic thought in the 1990s¹¹⁰. At the same time, Indonesian feminist thinkers began to examine the thoughts of outside Muslim scholars such as Fatima Mernissi, Riffat Hasan, and Asghar Ali Engineer. Indonesian writers began to quote and translate their works into Indonesian. For example, the LSPAA

¹⁰⁷ Kodir, *Qira'ah Mubadalah*, 159.

¹⁰⁸ KH Husein Muhammad, *Perempuan Ulama Di Atas Panggung Sejarah* (IRCiSoD, 2020), 4.

¹⁰⁹ Muhammad, 6.

¹¹⁰ moh nailul muna, *Tafsir Feminis Nusantara*, 34.

organization translated and published a compilation work entitled *Equal before Allah* by Riffat Hasan and Fatima Mernissi (1991)¹¹¹. As well as several other books that were also translated and published for the public. This passion was strengthened by Riffat Hasan's visit to Indonesia which sparked further interest in the attitude of religious interpretation to prove Islam as a source of gender equality¹¹².

The new ideas born by Islamic feminists include the use of a comprehensive text interpretation method by considering convergent aspects in one context. As a source of knowledge and sources of law, religious narrations, whether originating from the Qur'an or hadith, interpretation work must consider various aspects such as *asbab al-nuzūl*, the context in which a verse was revealed, consideration of narrative and grammatical aspects. Whereas in hadith there are at least two issues that are often discussed by scholars when carrying out interpretive work, the first is verification of the validity of hadith through its transmission path (*sanad*), and the second is the problem of the meaning of the text which is discussed through jurisprudence and hadith comments (*syurūh al-hadīth*)¹¹³. Mubadalah stands on this issue. It offers a new stream of interpreting scriptures by having a mutual view toward men and women. As a new perspective, it does not only provide a new term of argumentation on several debatable common women issues but also comes with a new methodology for taking Islamic law products. Somehow, it can be identified as an alternative Islamic feminism movement in Indonesia.

The idea of re-interpreting religious narratives aims to prove that there are no misogynistic religious narratives, where the word misogynist tends to be used by feminists which indicates an imbalance in the positions of men and women. It is as if Islam gives the impression of privileging men more as creatures whose position is one level higher than men. So, this results in the emergence of unequal interpretations in the process of building equal relations between men and women. This unequal interpretation of the text further strengthens the roots of patriarchal culture where the principle of who is stronger has power over those who are weaker. In the family domain, patriarchal beliefs and practices were highly regarded as implementing religious demands. In an interview, Faqih said that there are no religious texts that are misogynistic, but only the human mind and understanding

¹¹¹ moh nailul muna, 34.

¹¹² Kathryn Robinson, "Islamic Influences on Indonesian Feminism," *Social Analysis* 50, no. 1 (2006): 72.

¹¹³ Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, *Perempuan (Bukan) Makhluq Domestik: Mengaji Hadis Pernikahan Dan Pengasuhan Dengan Metode Mubadalah* (Bandung: Afkaruna, 2022), 7.

cannot see a text fairly and comprehensively. He added, when a text is considered misogynistic, two problems follow: first, the degradation of the position of the Qur'an and hadith as symbols of religious sacredness. Second, if it is considered misogynistic it should not be used as a reference source.

2.2.1 KUPI (Indonesian Woman Ulama Congress)

The history of world civilization has noted that women also have contributed to the development of sciences. In the context of the Islamic world, Aisha played a role of a hadith narrator because of her capabilities. Likewise, Khadijah has a public role as a woman entrepreneur. However, the history of Islamic scholarship that highlights the profile of female scholars from time to time remains lower. This is in line with what was expressed by Mernissi that the space for women's knowledge is limited by the culture of society which is legitimized by legal products¹¹⁴. That is why, classical interpretations which are textual and produced by male commentators are not indulgent to women because of the masculinity perspective applied in doing interpretation. Thus, apart from the small number of female clerics, their profile is barely even known in the world of Islamic knowledge. As heirs of the prophet, scholars have a role to carry out a prophetic role that carries a mission to educate and spread Islamic messages that are *rahmah*. However, the tradition of women's clergy both in the world globally and in Indonesia itself is not enough only with what was exemplified by the Prophet, geopolitical conditions, culture and the process of assimilation of Islam with local culture also had an impact on the birth of female thinkers or scholars.

The classical interpreters of the textualist style give strict limitations as they read from reading sources or the local context of the Arab world in the past. While scholars who were born in the Islamic world outside the Arab world such as in Spain, Turkey, Iran, India, and Central Asian countries, or who traveled to cities where the citizens were more diverse and enlightened, they result in views that were contextual and therefore more open to the role of women in the public sphere. This situation culturally provides a more conducive space for producing female clerics. This condition is different from the Islamic culture of the Archipelago which gives freedom of public space to women. Since ancient times, Indonesian women have been accustomed to taking part in the public sphere as farmers,

¹¹⁴ fatima mernissi, *Women and Islam; An Historical and Theological Inquiry*, 42.

traders, teachers, and so on. Thus, in the Indonesian context, the presence of female clerics is the most unique and different from most female clerics in other parts of the world¹¹⁵

Their presence also has a significant role in the two largest Islamic religious institutions in Indonesia, NU, and Muhammadiyah, which aim to strengthen the assimilation of Islam into local Indonesian culture into a value that can be compromised properly. Both in theological and historical terms, female clerics, like male clerics, carried out the mission of the Prophets to side with and defend the *ḍu'afā* and *mustaḍ'afīn* (weak and weakened). The existence and presence of the scholars who are often dubbed as the inheritors of the Prophets (*warāṣat al-anbiyā*) is to spread goodness and become a mercy to the whole world (*raḥmatan lil-'alamīn*) to create a peaceful, just and equal life. However, in carrying out this prophetic mission, female clerics often experience various challenges, such as ignorance, rejection, and even violence. To figure out, it is necessary to have various efforts to strengthen knowledge and expertise, network among female clerics, affirm and appreciate their work, as well as sanction cultural existence.

Indonesia has succeeded in creating a meeting place for women clerics from various countries through a conference called the KUPI (Indonesian Women Ulama Congress) as a form of the movement of women clerics in responding to women's issues by using a humanist and gender-just approach. KUPI aims for recognizing and reinforcing the existence and important role of women clerics in building knowledge of the Islamic world, providing discursive space for women clerics in building shared knowledge and produce religious ideas based on justice. Apart from that, KUPI is a meeting space for women clerics, both from Indonesia and from other parts of the world, in providing perspectives and discourse on contemporary women's issues. Its main objective is to provide fatwa recommendations on various women's issues that refer to sources of Islamic law using empirical interpretations based on equality and humanity.

Nisa articulates that KUPI is an expression of the Indonesian woman ulama in prompting their voices through various ideas on gender just and equality perspective¹¹⁶. She attributes KUPI as a scientific conference that provides the widest possible space for women clerics in responding to women's issues based on their background of studies and lives¹¹⁷. Its first

¹¹⁵ Nor Ismah, "Destabilising Male Domination: Building Community-Based Authority among Indonesian Female Ulama," *Asian Studies Review* 40, no. 4 (2016): 491–509.

¹¹⁶ Nisa, "Muslim Women in Contemporary Indonesia."

¹¹⁷ Nisa.

congress was held on 25-27 April 2017 in Cirebon participated by more than 1500 people from various backgrounds, either from *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) circles, NU affiliates, Muslim scholars, and many more. This congress is in every five years. While its second congress was held on November 2022 in Jepar, West Java, and is followed by more than 3000 participants, either man or woman, from all over the world. It produces several relevant recommendations through fatwa that they made based on discursive processes through the congress and agreed upon by female clerics based on religious arguments refer to either from the Qur'an, Hadith, or classical books using the interpretive method of *mubadalah* (reciprocity). Despite opposition, KUPI has succeeded in contributing to the process of building equality discourse in Indonesia as a democratic country with the largest Muslim population in the world. Besides, it contributes to bearing public negotiation through the agency of women *Ulama*¹¹⁸. The agency of woman ulama through the experience of biological nature that shapes personal ethics, becomes the capital term in formulating gender-based Islamic legal norms. Through the public arena, gender and Islamic discourses form the basis for knowledge creation and the dissemination of public ethics discourses in society. The digital public space after the reformation period has become a means of activism in the flow of democracy so it forms Islamic discipline and gender in Indonesia.

Moreover, it paradoxically appears when the Islamic world is busy campaigning for the spirit of returning to the Qur'an and Hadith to become a *kāffah* (plenary) Muslim, where many indicators of the *hijrah* movement show indicators of religious attributes, especially for women. The paradigm built based on the texts of the Qur'an and Hadith relates mostly to the domestication of women, fashion style, the issue of *aurat* (private body parts that could not be seen by others) in the use of the *hijab* (veil) or *niqab* (a veil covering women's face), questioning of women's leadership, the issue of circumcision, campaigns for child marriage as a form of self-protection from adultery, the issue of polygamy and so on.

KUPI (Indonesian Women Ulama Congress) has a vision and mission to build a just civilization. To strengthen its vision and mission and paradigm, KUPI has issued several recommendations that are relevant to the current dynamics of women's problems. KUPI's recommendations were born from a process of deliberation, discussions that deepened

¹¹⁸ Amrin Ma'ruf, Wilodati Wilodati, and Tutin Aryanti, "Kongres Ulama Perempuan Indonesia Dalam Wacana Merebut Tafsir Gender Pasca Reformasi: Sebuah Tinjauan Genealogi," *Musawa Jurnal Studi Gender Dan Islam* 20, no. 2 (2021): 127–46.

references by female Ulama and other KUPI participants. *Istinbāth* (law-taking method) uses religious references with a viewpoint of justice. Debates in forums are inevitable, the differences of opinion that arise are the dynamics that color the discussion process according to the educational background of participants. Badriyah Fayumi, chairman of KUPI, said that this recommendation could be called a *fatwa* because it refers to the use of legal *istinbāth* method following references to *turāth* (Islamic classical books) which are contextualized with contemporary issues. KUPI I held on April 25-27, 2017, in Cirebon gave birth to the following recommendations¹¹⁹: (1) all forms of sexual violence, whether committed outside or in marriage, are condemned (*ḥarām*). The government must formulate appropriate regulations on the issue of sexual violence, (2) child marriage is also condemned, because the level of harm is more than the benefits obtained, (3) the obligation to protect nature from damage, since nature should not be considered as an object that can be exploited. KUPI I carries the mission of strengthening the perspective of essential justice for women, the principle of exclusion (*mubadalah*) in gender relations, and the importance of women's experience as a basis for understanding religious texts and social reality. the conference was a kind of "religious deliberation" that came from various representatives of Islamic boarding schools, various Islamic organizations, academics, education, and da'wah practitioners as well as women's empowerment activists. Resulting of the three recommendations above, this KUPI is considered to be quite different from other forums. The religious views and attitudes decided in this deliberation are based on the Qur'an, Hadith, the *aqwal* of the Ulama, the constitution, and the reality of women's real lives¹²⁰.

While, KUPI II was held on 26-28 November 2022 in Jepara, Central Java which produce the following eight recommendations¹²¹: (1) recognition of KUPI as a women cleric movement that is accepted by the wider community. Thus, the state must involve KUPI in strategic works and make KUPI a government partner. Communities must also synergize with KUPI so that they can contribute to the development of civilization both at the local and regional levels. (2) the state must give priority to protection for victims of sexual violence because those who often receive discriminatory treatment, are marginalized, and even ostracized by unfair treatment in Indonesia. Thus, the KUPI encourages maximizing the function and application of the TPKS Law (Sexual Violence Crime Act) by converting the old-fashioned mindset with a victim-centered perspective. On the other hand, society is

¹¹⁹ "3 Rekomendasi KUPI," n.d., https://kupipedia.id/index.php/KUPI_Hasilkan_Tiga_Fatwa.

¹²⁰ Kodir, *Qira'ah Mubadalah*, 184.

¹²¹ "8 Rekomendasi KUPI II," n.d., <https://kupi.or.id/8-rekomendasi-hasil-kupi-ii-mewujudkan-peradaban-yang-berkeadilan/>.

demanding to be actively involved in ensuring that no more victims of sexual violence are discriminated against. In this case, the KUPI involved itself by increasing the number of studies on texts related to violence and rape with the perspective of women's experiences, because in many cases, the crime of sexual violence received legitimacy from religious texts, (3) waste and environmental crises are not only a problem only women but has become a global problem, even though the parties who suffer the most from environmental damage are women. Communities are encouraged to begin to realize the dangers of waste and educate the surrounding community. KUPI and its network must produce a lot of religious views related to waste and other environmental issues, (4) movements of extremism and radicalism put women as victims, so the government must be able to protect its citizens from the dangers and effects of radicalism with a moderation approach to religion, civil society must also show a way of religion that is peaceful, friendly and tolerant. While the KUPI network must strengthen peace actors both at the local and global levels, (5) forced child marriage is a form of tyranny for women, and the state must ensure that there are regulations that protect its citizens from the practice of child marriage. In addition, the community must be actively involved in monitoring and ensuring that female children around them are prevented from the practice of child marriage.

On the other hand, KUPI and its network must actively reinforce religious narratives that reject the practice of child marriage based on women's unique experiences, (6) the practice of female circumcision without medical consideration contains harm (danger) for women, the state must formulate strict regulations by prohibiting the practice of FGM/C (the practice of cutting and female genital ulcers) without medical consideration. In addition, the community is also actively involved in campaigning for the dangers of FGM/C practices and changing the understanding of FGM/C myths and culture by asking health experts or religious leaders with a gender perspective. Meanwhile, the KUPI must actively provide religious views regarding the prohibition of FGM/C without medical considerations by using the unique experience of women, (7) the occurrence of humanitarian crises in conflict countries such as Iran, Myanmar, Afghanistan, and others is part of their humanitarian responsibility, so the state must be involved. active in creating world peace. The KUPI network must also be actively involved in voicing religious narratives about peace to realize the benefit (good) of society to achieve the great mission of Islam as a religion that is *rahmatan lil alamin* (mercy for all), (8) KUPI does not only work in elitist areas but also strengthens local community movements. The involvement of all elements of society is urgently needed to encourage the birth of female clerics in the

regions by using a knowledge approach and taking into consideration to women's experiences.

We could find the divergences between those two recommendations. At first KUPI, regards the local scope of Indonesian women's problems otherwise the issue of the environment is included. The first conference of KUPI in 2017 was only producing three recommendations: to stop child marriage, to condemn gender-based violence, and to protect nature. In this case, I argue that KUPI is still in the process to find out their position and privileges to deliver fatwa. Even, the existence of female ulama in giving fatwa was not well authorized by the Indonesian landscape. Likewise, this women's ulama conference was the first conference in Indonesia or perhaps in the world that started to be considered by many parties including the Indonesian government.

But, looking at the big contribution of KUPI I in building the global discourse toward multi-problems of women, it then continued in 2022 within a wider scope. For five years, KUPI stands on its position to voice gender justice and equality by educating people in understanding scriptures in many ways. The KUPI figures consistently disseminate their notions on certain problems either through social media, offline events like seminars, preaching, or training, or through collaboration with different institutions. These proliferation efforts show that they are trying to figure out the impasse of people intellection who understand the meaning of a text dogmatically. The KUPI networks also work hard on this case. For example, Rahima doing the particular female ulama regeneration through special training, then the selected participants would be responsible to preach on several women's issues in gender equality perspectives. On a personal based, we know the online activity of *Ngaji KGI* (preaching on Islamic Gender Justice) owned by Nur Rofiah, one of the KUPI's leaders. Here, she utilizes the pandemic era to go through Zoom meetings in discussing the principles of gender justice in Islam which it accordance with KUPI recommendations. Likewise, Mubadalah is one of the trending streams in Indonesia which now becomes not only a perspective or methodology but it develops the organic community. Mubadalah stands on its representation of KUPI by voicing out KUPI's voices and recommendations through its social media platforms.

That is why, those five years of development between the first and second KUPI then reveal the national positioning of both KUPI and women ulama in Indonesia even on an international scale. Then, the KUPI II produces a very huge amplified recommendation in

eight notable points. Those points are varied, from the local scope to the worldly scope. This situation, for me, is an expression of confidence from KUPI either as an institution or from its women ulama and networks to prove the people's reliance on producing fatwa. Besides, the problem selection taken as main discussions is progressive. Those themes are what people need most today which is proven by their interest in social media search. Those problems are also popular in the midst of life. Other than it, KUPI is still in a debatable position within its conflicting narratives and rejection from several parties¹²².

Despite flattening the KUPI and all of its recommendations, here I would like to expose some prominent figures of the Indonesian Muslim Feminists who were embroiled in this movement as well as influential for the emergence of Mubadalah. It aims to identify their notions toward Islamic perspectives on women based on the Indonesian context within its special cultures and traditions that may be divergent from the previous world Muslim scholars. This part will either be promoting their short biography and their opinions on some specific issues, like what I have done before, as well as their argumentations against the *tawhid* concept of men and women, reinterpretation of scriptures and methodology the prompted.

Husein Muhammad is an Indonesian scholar who is also known as a male feminist¹²³. This label is related to the role and principles in defending women's rights by using the approach of *fiqh* science and contemporary interpretation. Being born and growing up in a pesantren environment made him know Islamic boarding school culture very deeply and his ability to understand *turāth* began when he was studying at a pesantren in Lirboyo. Then he continued his education at the College of Al-Qur'an Science (PTIQ) Jakarta¹²⁴. Husein Muhammad was active in documenting his ideas and knowledge in books or journal articles. Apart from actively participating in seminars and other academic activities, he is also active in writing his perspectives on social media accounts such as Instagram.

The effort he makes to defend women's rights is to review *fiqh* legal products which are assumed to be unfair to women. He also reviews the sources of religious texts on classic book references¹²⁵. *Turāth* or yellow books are classical books used by Islamic boarding

¹²² Nisa, "Muslim Women in Contemporary Indonesia."

¹²³ Eni Zulaiha, "Analisa Gender Dan Prinsip Prinsip Penafsiran Husein Muhammad Pada Ayat-Ayat Relasi Gender," *Al-Bayan: Jurnal Studi Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 3, no. 1 (2018).

¹²⁴ Zulaiha.

¹²⁵ KH Husein Muhammad, *Islam Agama Ramah Perempuan; Pembelaan Kiai Pesantren* (Lkis Pelangi Aksara, 2004), 53.

schools in Indonesia. Bruinessen notes that there is no specific reason why it is called a yellow book. He considers it only because of the use of yellow paper, which most of the books were produced in the Middle East. Apart from that, the use of yellow papers is also contrasted between indigenous Muslims who study in Islamic boarding schools and the reformist schools (white papers)¹²⁶.

A perceptivity of a problem which is the basis for law production is inseparable from when and where the law was made, by whom and for whom the law was produced, and how the understanding of the people who receive the law is¹²⁷. So, Husein said that legal products in the science of *fiqh* are also the result of human interpretation, not of the text itself. One law cannot stand alone without a background in tradition, as well as with the basis of the clergy which brings different interpretations¹²⁸. Just like the context of women's position in Islam, which was under the culture of Arab society in general, women are secondary beings who live in a marginal position and are believed to be sources of slander and then domesticated¹²⁹. But nowadays, the culture of society is more open with an understanding of the public role for women and the right to equality with men. Thus, this is where the function of reinterpretation must be carried out to become the legal basis of modern society.

Moreover, he represents the *pesantren* community in responding to the issue of gender equality in Indonesia. As a public figure who was born and grew up in a *pesantren*, he offers a perspective on reading texts using the perspective of the *pesantren* culture. In his book *Islam Agama Ramah Perempuan: Pembelaan Kiai Pesantren*, he expresses her joy at the increase in equality literacy among Islamic boarding schools in the last few decades. Critical views from Islamic boarding schools began to mushroom in Indonesia while voicing enthusiasm for re-reading religious texts, especially classical texts which had been widely studied by Islamic boarding schools. He called it an astonishing phenomenon where the courage of the conservative *pesantren* emerged to launch a fairly basic and sharp critical analysis of several conservative religious discourses that had existed so far¹³⁰. This critical discourse was born from a group of young thinkers who seemed to harbor anxiety when they saw the long stagnation in Muslim civilization. The stagnation and conservatism have

¹²⁶ Martin Van Bruinessen, "KITAB KUNING: BOOKS IN ARABIC SCRIPT USED IN THE PESANTREN MILIEU: Comments on a New Collection in the KITLV Library," *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde* 146, no. 2/3 (1990): 226–69.

¹²⁷ Muhammad, *Islam Agama Ramah Perempuan; Pembelaan Kiai Pesantren*, 69.

¹²⁸ Muhammad, 29.

¹²⁹ Nur Rofiah, *Nalar Kritis Muslimah*, 4.

¹³⁰ Muhammad, *Islam Agama Ramah Perempuan; Pembelaan Kiai Pesantren*, 121.

marginalized, alienated, and even created oppression of Muslims in the processes of life that are constantly developing, namely the process of dynamic modern and global life¹³¹. One of the critical discourses that they echo is the position of women, in which for a very long-time women have lived as objects over men who make religion a source of legitimacy. The criticism made by these Islamic figures is not to degrade classical narratives or references but to adapt to the dynamics of societal development and apply the main principles of Islam. Because the treatment of women has not changed much. Women are still placed in a secondary position under men which is increasingly strengthened by the patriarchal culture that is still massively enforced. As a result, women are not subordinated but also marginalized in the process of social, cultural, economic, and political life. Violence against women which is now rife is not only carried out in the private sphere (inside the home) but has reached the public sphere. This is another result of the patriarchal cultural system.

From the point of view of the *pesantren* community, Husein observes that there is a culture of learning about the importance of making reviews of the *kitab kuning*. The most popular example is the use of '*uqud al lujjayn*' by Shaikh Nawawi al-Bantani. This book describes the relationship between husband and wife based on hadith information. In this book there are more than 90 hadiths and various articles or specific issues are explained where women or wives fulfill more of their obligations while men or husbands get more of their rights. The husband-wife relationship that is built in the concept of this book is a hierarchical relationship where the man is the absolute head of the marriage whose orders must be obeyed by the wife in any context. This book is still popular and studied in almost all Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, so, inevitably, the formation of the paradigm of the superiority of the husband's role over his wife is still very strong among Islamic boarding schools. Husein emphasized that the selection of hadiths in this book is not a hadith that is typically taken by Shaikh Nawawi. He took many sources of hadith references from the books of great scholars, the majority of whom followed the Shafi'i school of Iraq, which tended to be textual¹³². Classical references that have high authority among *pesantren* are *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* by Imam Al-Ghazali, *az-Zawajir* by Shaykh Ibn Hajar al-Haitsami, '*Uqubat Ahl-Kabair*' by Shaykh Abu Laits as-Samarqandi, *At-Tarqib wa at -Tarhib* by al-Mundziri and *al-Kabair* by Shaykh az-Zahabi¹³³.

¹³¹ Muhammad, 121.

¹³² Muhammad, 127.

¹³³ Muhammad, 126.

These five books are the main sources in the work of Shaikh Nawawi Al-Bantani, in which almost all of his books are studied in Islamic boarding schools. The culture of the pesantren community is to accept explanations from the *turath* book almost without criticism, it is more dogmatic. They seem to take it for granted and give explanations textually. So, when reviewing '*uqud al lujjayn*, Husein believes that the purpose of compiling the book was not because Shaikh Nawawi hated women or deliberately placed them in an inferior position but because Husein sees this book as the condition of society at that time which he described as a mere reflection of the patriarchal system. Apart from this context, he successfully built an Islamic foundation of Fahmina which contributes to the birth of either KUPI or Mubadalah. The explanation of this relationship will be more elaborated in chapter three.

Another prominent Indonesian Muslim scholar on this issue is **Syafiq Hasyim**, in his book entitled, *Understanding Women in Islam; An Indonesian Perspective* (2006), he presents the debates of scholars about women both in the context of their position on religious texts (Qur'an and Hadith) or the production of Islamic law or *fiqh*. According to him, differences of opinion and debates among scholars about women originate from the understanding of verses or hadiths of the prophet which are influenced by various factors, namely the socio-cultural context in which the text was revealed, the condition of Arab society which was in a transitional period from the pre-Islamic period to the introduction of Islam and difference perceptions of grammatical use of language. Hasyim underlines that the debate about the position of men who are superior to women originates from sura al-Nisa' verse 1 concerning the concept of human creation and surah al-Nisa' verse 34 concerning the concept of *qawwām* or leadership. The interpretation of these two verses is also influential to the legal products issued by *fiqh* scholars.

First, al-Nisa' is a *madāniyya* chapter with 176 verses that explains more on caring for various general topics related to male and female relations as human beings, spouses in the home, as well as in social, cultural, and political life. Referring to the substance of its meaning, in this chapter, there are more explorations about women than in other letters in the Qur'an. Hasyim states, according to Tabataba'i, a leading scholar from Iran, who also confirmed that almost the entire contents of the verses in al-Nisa' contain issues related to women, starting with marriage regulations, people who are forbidden to marry her and

inheritance laws¹³⁴. Although women are the focus of discussion in this chapter, issues regarding discrimination, segregation, marginalization of women, or subordination of women are believed to originate, and are justified, by this chapter¹³⁵.

The two terminologies being a source of debate are the word *nafs waḥida* which refers to the source of human creation. This relates to the existence of Adam and Eve. Most scholars believe that Eve was created from Adam's rib, although no text explicitly explains this. However, criticism of the terminology of *nafs waḥida* is still being debated to this day, even though most commentators rely on Adam¹³⁶. Second, the terminology of *qawwāmūna* refers to the leadership of men (husbands) over women (wives). The definition of leadership that many scholars mention is not very comprehensive. The term leadership refers more to men's physical and material abilities to legitimize men's positions which are higher than women's and there is no opposition under any circumstances. This superiority interpretation then spreads to various aspects of life and is applied in formulating a product of Islamic law (*fiqh*) by scholars. If we take a deeper look at classical books, books on *fiqh* or Hadith, the practical implications of male leadership are visible. This shows the character of *fiqh* itself which is very normative and literal.

The interpretation methodology (*manhaj*) is the most important thing that must be used in interpreting a text. In the context of human creation which originates from the concept of *nafs waḥida*, Hasyim explores five famous commentators with various interpretations that I short it here. They are Imam Zamakhsyari (467-536 H), Jalaluddin Al-Suyuthi (849-911 H), and Muhammad Al-Razi (864-930 H) who have a similar assumption on what is meant by *nafs waḥida* is Adam. They believe that the creation of Eve came from Adam's rib which was strengthened by several verses in other letters, al-Rum (30), al-Nahl (16), al-Shura (42), al-Dzariat (51). They believe that all human creation must have come from men and women, but there are other functional contexts such as *zawjan* (pairs) where this implies an indication that one party is superior to another¹³⁷. Meanwhile, Hasyim is inclined to the opinions of Muhammad Abdu and Rashid Ridha which he considers to be more liberal and scientific. So, he notices that in carrying out the interpretation methodology, we must notice these three important factors that he borrowed from Riffat Hassan's method¹³⁸: (1) *linguistic*

¹³⁴ Syafiq Hasyim, *Understanding Women in Islam: An Indonesian Perspective*, 26.

¹³⁵ Syafiq Hasyim, 41.

¹³⁶ Syafiq Hasyim, 27.

¹³⁷ Syafiq Hasyim, 40.

¹³⁸ Syafiq Hasyim, 42.

accuracy, the language structure or grammatical system that represents the original meanings that are appropriate to the context of the discussion, culture, politics, and conditions theological. When the verse was revealed or written, (2) *philosophical consistency*, it is consistency to see one verse with other related, different or mutually supporting verses that stand in one context, (3) *ethical criteria*, referring to the ethics of scholars in interpreting and whether the results of the interpretation contain ethical values or not. In the context of *nafs wahida* interpretation, what needs to be considered is the arrangement of language and grammar in one verse, then consideration of verses in other chapters that are still related, having similar context, and drawing attention to the ethics of interpretation. So, it can be concluded that if justice and benefit are the moral values taught by the Qur'an, the meaning of the creation of Eve that is from Adam's rib, which is yielding to the interpretation of other verses and products of the Islamic law that discriminate against women, then this does not meet the criteria as a credible and legitimate methodology¹³⁹.

Another Indonesian Muslim feminist figure who conducts studies on text reinterpretation is **Nasaruddin Umar**. In his book entitled, "*Argumen Kesetaraan Gender Perspektif Al-Qur'an*" mentions that there are several things that cause misogynistic traditions of classical interpretation¹⁴⁰. Among them is the myth factor about the creation of Eve from Adam's rib, Eve played a role to fulfill Adam's desire, and Eve became the cause of Adam's expulsion from heaven and the placement of Adam as the first creature to inhabit heaven. Apart from this factor, Umar also criticized the literal and structural factors of Arabic, for example; one word has several meanings, the use of pronouns, the bias of the Arabic language structure, the standardization of punctuation, the marking of letters to the uniformity of the *qirāat* of the Qur'an. He also criticizes the bias in the interpretation method by using the *tahlīlī* method which has the rule "*what is used as a guideline is the generality of lafadz, not the specificity of the cause*"¹⁴¹. Thus, Umar uses the historical hermeneutic method by examining the reasons for the revelation of one verse following the socio-cultural context at that time. So, he underlines that the interpretation of the Qur'an is heavily influenced by the culture of the community and the background of the life of the interpreters so the interpretation of the Koran is more of a descriptive interpretation.

¹³⁹ Syafiq Hasyim, 43.

¹⁴⁰ H. Nasaruddin Umar, *Argumen kesetaraan jender: perspektif al Quran*, Cet. 1 (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2001).

¹⁴¹ Umar.

Meanwhile, another prominent figure in Indonesia who focuses on feminist interpretation is **Lies Marcoes**. This Islamic feminist activist says that Indonesian women are different from the conditions of women in other parts of the world, for example in the countries of the Arabian Peninsula. Indonesian women were born and grew up in a heterogeneous society with an agrarian background, traders, and fishermen so that their opportunities to work in the public sphere are more open. According to her, the implications of all interpretation results cannot be separated from the situation in which the woman lives¹⁴². Because interpretation is multidimensional, interpretation products should be more open and accommodate local needs¹⁴³. Lies believes that religion and women cannot be separated. Her book entitled "Merebut Tafsir" identifies the need for Indonesian women for contextual interpretation, which can accommodate Indonesian culture, traditions, and local wisdom. To reconstruct this contextual interpretation, one important thing is the community perspective and the interpreters themselves. How they view the position of women in Islam, whether as equal partners or as subordinate parties, will determine the product of their interpretation. Lies Marcoes' thoughts on gender equality began to be known by the public since her initiative in the *fiqh an-Anisa* program as a patron of the P3M work area in the 1990s. Both of them are referencing Mernissi and Hasan's views¹⁴⁴.

Meanwhile, **Nur Rofiah** has a concept of women's essential justice that makes women's unique experiences, whether biological experiences or social experiences as a perspective not just a topic. Women's biological condition is very different from men's as well as the social experience received by women. Because the female reproductive system is different from that of men, women encounter menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, postpartum, and breastfeeding. Meanwhile, the patriarchal system can go through injustice for women simply because she is a woman such as stigmatization, marginalization, subordination, violence, and double burden, this is what is called the social experience of women¹⁴⁵. She mentioned, the way we view and respond to women's experiences, both biologically and socially will determine what kind of justice is given to women. If we focus on equality between men and women by ignoring women's unique experiences, either biologically or socially, then the justice that arises is legal, formal, and textual justice. The concept of women's essential justice promoted by Rofiah has a point of view for seeking the justice

¹⁴² Lies M. Marcoes-Natsir, *Merebut Tafsir*, Cetakan pertama (Pasar Minggu, Jakarta: Yayasan Rumah Kita Bersama, 2021).

¹⁴³ Marcoes-Natsir.

¹⁴⁴ moh nailul muna, *Tafsir Feminis Nusantara*, 35.

¹⁴⁵ Nur Rofiah, *Nalar Kritis Muslimah*, 3.

that facilitates women's biological experiences and erases women's social experiences. Besides that, the way we respond to these two unique experiences of women will be a way for us to humanize women.

She said, from the beginning the Qur'an was revealed to have provided instructions to strive for justice for women, including about women's biological experiences which are also written in the Qur'an such as menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding, and childbirth¹⁴⁶. All contain instructions for non-women not to burden but support them by doing something alleviating. However, most of the verses that talk about women's unique experiences are only used as topics in interpreting texts, not as perspectives. However, if it is more examined, Qur'an does not only make women's biological experience a topic but also a perspective. Therefore, Islam provides special rules for women who are menstruating, pregnant, giving birth, breastfeeding, and postpartum in carrying out worship such as prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage¹⁴⁷. During the 23 years of the prophet Muhammad's apostolate, Islam has been in the process of seeking justice for women and freeing them from various forms of injustice. For example, by ensuring the distribution of inheritance, the value of witnesses to their position in marriage. but unfortunately, in the future, this type of women's experience is only commonly discussed as a topic, not a perspective so that the human spirit of women is reduced.

In developing the context of women's essential justice, Islam recorded all the things developed since the period before and after the revelation of the Qur'an with the dynamics of the civilizational tug between Arabic culture and Islamic teachings. According to the big mission to humanize women, Qur'anic verses are divided into three categories based on the purpose for which the verse was revealed. She mentions it as the starting point, the intermediate point, and the final point. But in general, there are two strategies used by Islam in building a fully humane life system for women, it can be directly to the final target and through immediate targets¹⁴⁸. The starting point is the descriptive verses that explain socio-cultural conditions when the Qur'an was revealed, namely during the Jahiliya period when women were considered as a source of slander and bad luck, so they were allowed to be treated according to the wishes of men. Then, Islam continues to proceed in fighting for women's justice through an intermediate point, namely verses that give rights to women

¹⁴⁶ Nur Rofiah, 5.

¹⁴⁷ Nur Rofiah, 5.

¹⁴⁸ Kodir, *Qira'ah Mubadalah*, 33.

which did not occur before the Qur'an was revealed. At this point, women are given a certain position even though they are not completely equal to men, for example in inheritance or testimony. The final point is the final process where both men and women become full subjects of themselves in building gender relations both biologically because they are men and women or social relations between men and between women. For example, strict prohibition on the burial of baby girls alive, inbreeding, the practice of polygamy with an unlimited number of wives, and the freedom to divorce them at any time. Strategy through targets intermediate towards the final, among others, with the rules of marriage. Originally a man was free to have the number of wives according to their pleasure in an unlimited number and with no requisites, anyone could be married. Then the Qur'an revealed down including the rules for marrying people who are not blood-related, the number of wives is limited to a maximum of four people with fair conditions while steadily reminding that these conditions are not may be fulfilled, then encourage monogamy and emphasize that monogamy protects marriage from arbitrary actions.

The point to take is gender awareness is cognition to differentiate men and women socially, not biologically. The Qur'an and Hadith record a long struggle between the values of monotheism and the humanity of women. Therefore, these two texts contain texts that reflect the ideal teachings of monotheism and the full humanity of women but also contain texts that reflect the patriarchal traditions of Arab society which are being transformed towards full equality of men and women in monotheism¹⁴⁹. Islamic interpretation and tradition until now are a continuous struggle between *tawḥid* and patriarchal values.

To strengthen this argument, she makes an online community called *Lingkar Ngaji KGI (Keadilan Gender Islam)* it sounds like a short seminar in her Instagram account which is well organized using a professional service. This *Ngaji KGI*, as it is usually called, being more popular since the pandemic period. This online forum is mostly held on the weekend followed by hundreds of participants, either men or women, from diverse backgrounds and across cities. Every new member has to register to get the Zoom link and all registered participants will be automatically engaged by those admins in every season. Rofiah explores the idea of gender equality through understanding the concept of the revelation of verses in the Qur'an which she specifically divided into the three categories above. In the PowerPoint that she uses as a medium of explanation, it is stated that we must depart from the same point, namely building awareness that all creatures created by Allah have an equal

¹⁴⁹ Nur Rofiah, *Nalar Kritis Muslimah*, 50.

position before Allah following the *tawḥīd* concept. So, the position between men and women is similar no one party is higher than the others. Then, to interpret a text, we must know what category the text falls into starting, intermediate or final point.

To deepen the participants' understanding of this concept, Rofiah opened an intensive class which was divided into three sessions. Each session is intertwined with different levels of discussion. level one is about basic principles which discuss in depth the concept of *tawḥīd*, placing the perspective of *tawḥīd* in building relationships between men and women. At a basic level, this is a starting point where if a gender perspective has not been developed it will be more difficult to follow the discussion at the upper level. The second session is an explaining the level of verse categorization as it was revealed. Understanding various texts according to context, learning to think openly by applying the principle of benefit for all parties, and interpreting texts based on women's unique experiences. At the third level, we will be invited to practice analyzing one verse within the framework of today's contemporary problems. So, this is an effort to transform the perspective and way of reading assimilation toward text and context.

Despite of those some Islamic feminist figures, there are other Indonesian scholars with their perception of the scripture's interpretation. It shows that Indonesia leads to an open society that supports equality and justice between men and women. In this case, the opportunity for other Indonesian Muslim scholars to develop their ideas on Islamic feminism is possible. The works of literature and discourses built are on the same goals to accommodate women's public acceptance and to minimize the practice of discrimination toward women in the name of religion.

Chapter Three

FRAGMENTATION OF MUBADALAH

3.1. The Emergence of Mubadalah

The establishment of Mubadalah, either as a perspective, methodology, or approach, is inseparable from these existing Islamic organizations in Indonesia. One of them is Rahima. Judging from its official website¹⁵⁰, Rahima was officially founded in 1999/2000, namely at the beginning of the 1998 reformation, although its embryo existed since the 1990s. Rahima's origins began in 1990, through one of the programs developed by the Association for Islamic Boarding Schools and Community Development (P3M), which was *fiqhun nisa*. Most of the programs developed by Rahima are elaborations of ideas while at P3M. However, along the way, there was an internal conflict within P3M, where the director of P3M at that time was considered to have violated one of the principles they were fighting for. Several *fiqhun nisa* figures then decided to leave the auspices of P3M, become an independent non-governmental organization, and changed their name to Rahima. Rahima's establishment was not free from any challenges, both from internal and external factors, both from pesantren circles or other institutions. However, Rahima officially received an organizational license in 2000¹⁵¹. Some of the prominent figures are Shinta Nuriyah Wahid, Saparinah Sadli, Farha Ciciek, Husein Muhammad, Muhyidin Abdus Somad, Syafiq Hasyim, and others.

The word Rahima comes from the word *rahīm* which is one of the attributes of Allah and means Most Compassionate. Rahim also refers to the female reproductive organs where God sows the love of human creation in them. Rahima has aspirations to uphold human dignity to be respected, as the creation in the Womb of a woman who is full of love. Rahima's basic principle is based on Islamic teachings that are just. So, what Rahima does is deconstruct religious discourse which is gender biased, or classical *fiqh* which is patriarchal, and developing *fiqh* discourse which is more egalitarian and has a justice perspective¹⁵². In this way, Rahima provides a critique of the political and cultural system that shackles women and provides alternative ideas resulting from re-reading the religious texts. Rahima offers more egalitarian interpretations of religion based on the authoritative methodology of classical religious scholarship¹⁵³.

¹⁵⁰ "Rahima."

¹⁵¹ "Rahima."

¹⁵² "Rahima."

¹⁵³ "Rahima."

In implementing the program, Rahima works with institutions or public figures that have a scientific basis for Islamic boarding schools. Not only official institutions such as Islamic boarding schools but community communities or religious leaders with all professions who have a scientific basis for Islamic boarding schools can become partners of Rahima, which is called the Rahima knot. Now, Rahima has spread across many regions in Indonesia with one of its main programs being the Regeneration of Female Ulama (PUP). This program aims to strengthen the discourse on gender justice and the cadre of female scholars. Right on her 20th birthday, namely in 2020, Rahima reaffirmed the direction of her movement with the theme, "female scholars for the benefit of humans and saving nature". This theme is in line with the 2017 KUPI recommendations which are concerned with the issue of saving the environment. In addition, one of the institutions that has a high contribution to the birth of Mubadalah is Fahmina. Fahmina was founded in 2000 to focus on studying Indonesian issues of social justice, democracy, and pluralism based on gender justice. Fahmina was initiated by Husein Muhammad, Marzuki Wahid, Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, and Affandi Mochtar. They believe that the main task of humans being created on this earth is as *khalifah fil ard*, whose main mission is to spread universal Islamic values that are fair, dignified, compassionate, respect each other, and glorify each other. So, as God's messengers, humans should convey religious, national, and humanitarian messages aimed at upholding justice and creating a peaceful and sustainable life. Religious sources should be used as empowering authoritative sources. So, transformative efforts must continue to be made to achieve the vision and mission of Islam as a religion that is *rahmah* (mercy) to all. It was this inspiration that gave birth to Fahmina as an alternative movement for justice.

The word Fahmina comes from *fahmun* in Arabic which means understanding/perspective. The affix "*na*" (*nahnu*) which means "we", makes Fahmina mean "our reason/understanding" of something. The initial goal of Fahmina's establishment was for *santri* (students of *pesantren*) who had graduated from Islamic boarding schools, to form a *pesantren*-based forum for Islamic studies in Cirebon. Fahmina brings the ideology of struggle as the basis of movement in society, which has an apolitical character, far from practical political power. As an NGO, Fahmina is open to engaging in collaboration with multi-ethnic, cultural, religious, and gender

communities¹⁵⁴. There are three perspectives on Fahmina's approach to implementing and disseminating the vision and mission to the membership network. This perspective forms the basis for perspectives on issues of gender equality and justice, namely Islam-democracy, Islam-community autonomy, and Islam-gender. This program is carried out through various social practices such as tackling trafficking, assisting victims of domestic violence, and migrant workers through the Women Crisis Center (WCC) advocacy organization and other multilevel relevance institutions¹⁵⁵.

Personally, Faqihuddin is actively involved in these two institutions. Faqih has been an active contributor to the Swara Rahima tabloid since 2012 as a contributor for the hadith study column. Most of the writings that he produces are discussing the study of hadith about women or husband and wife relations. Until now, Faqih is one of the resource persons at Rahima's PUP training. Likewise, in Fahmina, Faqihuddin is one of the founders and actively contributes to the development of the foundation. The forerunner to the birth of mubadalah is from his various writings which are scattered both in Swara Rahima column and on his personal blog. Several colleagues, one of which is Husein Muhammad who is also his teacher, inspired him to compile mubadalah within an academic framework of the study. Before being published in a book, mubadalah was already used as a method and perspective at the KUPI Cirebon in 2017. After that, the initiative emerged to record the idea of mubadalah either in a book or on social media platforms. So, the book "Qira'ah Mubadalah", which was published in 2019, is the baboon book for all mubadalah discourses.

Apart from the influence of Rahima and Fahmina, one of the initiatives for the birth of mubadalah is the FK3 (Yellow Book Study Forum) which was initiated by Nyai Shinta Nuriyah Wahid in Ciganjur around 1999-2004. FK3 is a monthly routine study by Islamic boarding schools that are concerned with issues of democracy and women's rights in Islam. This routine recitation activity had been started in 1997 and was taught by Husein Muhammad by reading the book '*uqūd al-lujjāyn* by Shaikh Nawawi al-Bantani (d. 1314/1897), then commented and analyzed especially by Nyai Shinta Nuriyah and Masdar Farid Mas'udi¹⁵⁶. Faqihuddin said that his intensity and active

¹⁵⁴ Ismah, "Destabilising Male Domination."

¹⁵⁵ fahmina, "Fahmina," n.d., <https://fahmina.or.id/>.

¹⁵⁶ Kodir, *Qira'ah Mubadalah*, 188.

interaction in the FK3 forum eventually became the basis for the concept of mubadalah¹⁵⁷.

FK3 begins its analysis that the treasures of religious traditions, such as the book *'Uqūd al-Lujjāyn* are inseparable from the social structure of power relations which are rooted in a society where men are superior and more powerful than women. This structure has influenced many paradigms and socio-historical societies, including in the interpretation of religious texts. So, in 2000, FK3 published a book entitled *"Syarḥ wa Ta'liq 'ala Syarḥ 'Uqūd al-Lujjāyn fī Bayani Huqūq al-Zawjāyn"*. The book is an Arabic commentary commenting on the book *'Uqūd al-Lujjāyn* by Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani. This book has also been translated into Indonesian in 2001 with the title *"New Faces of Husband and Wife Realization: Study of the Book of 'Uqūd al-Lujjāyn"* (Wajah Baru Relasi Suami Istri: Telaah Kitab *'Uqūd al-Lujjāyn*). Then in 2005, this book was republished with a more academic title by including FK3's distinctive methodology, entitled, *"Kembang Setaman Marriage: Critical Analysis of the Book of 'Uqūd al-Lujjāyn"* "Kembang Setaman Perkawinan: Analisis Kritis Kitab *'Uqūd al-Lujjāyn"*¹⁵⁸.

Moreover, the most equally important, one of the strong inspirations in the birth of mubadalah is the approach and method of interpretation of an Egyptian scholar and thinker, Muhammad Abu Syuqqoh (1925-1995) on hadith texts on the issue of gender relations. In the mid-1990s, Faqih read Abu Syuqqoh's *Tahrīr al-Mar'ah fī 'Ashr al-Risālah* when he was studying at the Syar'ia faculty of the University of Damascus. In his book, Abu Syuqqoh uses the term *musawa* (equality) which is inspired by the social conditions in Egypt at that time. This book was born as a criticism of the conservative tendencies of most Muslims, especially Arab society, which forces women to live in the house, prohibits them from working and being active in the public sphere, keeps them away from politics and idealizes a separate society between men and women¹⁵⁹.

3.2. Implementation of Mubadalah as Perspective and Methodology

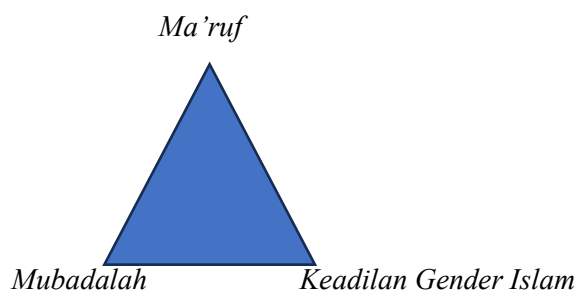
Mubadalah reflects a new paradigm in the form of an organic community or social media platform. It has succeeded in building a good affiliation with other Islamic feminist communities and movements in Indonesia. There is a kind of interrelated

¹⁵⁷ Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, Live Interview, Cirebon 12 May 2023

¹⁵⁸ Kodir, *Qira'ah Mubadalah*, 189.

¹⁵⁹ Kodir, 168.

integrative relationship between Mubadalah, KUPI, and KGI. Faqih emphasizes that the integration built is based on the goals and vision and mission of the formation of these three components where all of them are towards the same big mission¹⁶⁰. KUPI, which was initiated by women ulama, has a mission to create a *ma'rūf* (good) life for all people, men, and women. To achieve *ma'rūf*, two strong foundations are needed, namely *mubadalah* (principle of reciprocity and interdependence) and Islamic Gender Justice (placing justice based on the unique experience of each party). These three components are depicted in a triangular shape as follows:



In addition to this integration, these three components support each other in amplifying ideas, thoughts, and movements on social media. As a digital platform with more than 40K Instagram followers, the *@mubadalah.id* account provides information about the implementation of the KUPI along with the resulting fatwas and recommendations. The presentation is in the form of an attractive infographic, very modern, rich in perspective, and invites high visibility.

Mubadalah comes from the Arabic root word *ba-da-la* which means to change, replace, and exchange. This root word is used in the Qur'an 44 times in various tenses with meanings around it. Meanwhile, the word *mubāḍalah* itself is a form of mutuality (*mufā'alah*) and collaboration between two parties (*musyārahah*) for this meaning, which means replacing, changing, or exchanging one another¹⁶¹. Faqih develops the concept of mubadalah within the framework of building male and female relations specifically in the context of husband and wife in marriage, although he claims that the principle of mubadalah can also be applied to all aspects of life. This specification on the term of the relationship between men and women is part of the work of driving Islamic feminism in Indonesia, where when mubadalah is used as an approach, it will adapt to the local cultural context of Indonesia. Mubadalah is present as a theological

¹⁶⁰ Kodir, Live Interview, 12 May 2023

¹⁶¹ Kodir, *Qira'ah Mubadalah*, 59.

and social foundation regarding anxiety about various questions of inequality in the relationship between men and women and how to concretely answer them by using the lens of the principle of equality which refers to the two main sources of Islam, namely the Qur'an, and hadith. *Qiraah Mubadalah* (reading to reciprocity) is not only used as a tool to understand religious texts but also as a methodological point of view¹⁶². This method is intended to respond to primary texts in Islam that use language with a certain gender awareness, but the same method can also be used as a new way to respond to social issues so that there is no relational inequality. Because inequality in relations, whatever its form, can give birth to injustice because it starts from a negative perspective on differences.

The work of the mubadalah method is how to reveal the main message in a text, whether in a general form, applicable to men and women but biased, or in a specific form targeting one of them. Mubadalah then tries to find the meaning behind the text so that both parties are addressed and can become the subject of discussion in it. There are at least three basic premises that are applied in mubadalah¹⁶³:

1. Islam exists for both men and women so its texts must also target both
2. The principle of the relationship between the two is mutuality and cooperation, not hegemony and power
3. That the texts are open to re-interpretation to allow the two previous premises to be reflected in every work of interpretation.

Moreover, one of the mubadalah objectives is to unite all Islamic texts into the broad framework of the Islamic paradigm which is *rahmatan lil alamīn*, graceful for all people. Thus, departing from the three basic premises above, mubadalah tries to find hidden meanings behind texts that can accommodate the interests of both parties, men and women. Texts that specifically discuss or address one of the parties are considered to be partial and contextual texts, whose substance meaning must be explored with universal Islamic principles. While the great estuary of mubadalah is the achievement of the five basic Islamic rights included in *maqāshid shari'ah*; guarding the mind, guarding oneself, guarding wealth, guarding religion, and protecting offspring¹⁶⁴.

¹⁶²Kodir, 196. Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, Live Interview, Cirebon 12 May 2023

¹⁶³ Kodir, *Qira'ah Mubadalah*, 196.

¹⁶⁴ Hussein Muhammad, Live Interview, Cirebon, 13 may 2023

Faqih also uses the term Mubadalah as a name for an interpretation method of Islamic texts which requires men and women to be equal subjects. The meaning of equality here is that both men and women are the subject of discussion in religious texts. Furthermore, Faqih emphasizes that mubadalah is not a completely new perspective because it is the embodiment of fundamental Islamic teachings. However, Faqih claims that there are at least three novelties in mubadalah; terminology naming, affirmation of sources, and applications of their use which are more adaptable to social conditions in the modern era.

In terms of terminology, the meaning of mubadalah is not really new. The use of the word reciprocity or Faqih calls it reciprocal can be found in Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im's book entitled: *Toward an Islamic Reformation: Civil Liberties, Human Rights and International Law*. In his book, An-Na'im offers a reading similar to that of Faqih, namely that there are equal reciprocal efforts between men and women, especially concerning human rights implemented in Islamic laws¹⁶⁵.

In simple terms, *Qira'ah Mubadalah* (reciprocal reading) can be understood as a perspective that bases relational texts – it is texts that mention men and women or only one of the parties that gets a message in the text- in the Qur'an and Hadith on the principle of universality. So, the meaning produced by the text is in accordance with the concept of reciprocity offered by mubadalah, that the text applies to all types of gender. Mubadalah is working on a text which; mentioning one of the parties as the recipient of the message in one text, or explores the meaning of the mubadalah that is hidden behind the text. Even though the meaning of reciprocity is not explicitly stated in the text, the meaning of "reciprocity" has been assumed in the text studied¹⁶⁶.

In terms of text reading, mubadalah is distinguished from other reading methods, because it is initiated with a focus on the relationship between men and women in the domestic and public spheres. The Mubadala principle does not only apply to those who are already married, but to anyone while in the corridor of having a relationship between the opposite sex, whether in family relations; like parents and children, husband and wife, or in other forms of relations, such as at work or ties as citizens. In short, the

¹⁶⁵ moh nailul muna, *Tafsir Feminis Nusantara*, 72.

¹⁶⁶ Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, *Manual Mubadalah: Ringkasan Konsep Untuk Pelatihan Perpektif Kesalingan Dalam Isu Gender Dan Islam*.

mubadalah principle initiated by Faqih rests on two things; first, mutual partnership relations between men and women. Second, how does an Islamic text include women and men as subjects of the same meaning.

Another difference is, in terms of reading the text as part of the Islamic feminist movement. The reading of texts by Muslim feminist figures such as Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas relies on historic aspects, the use of language and a world perspective. However, in Indonesia, especially the theory developed by Faqih in mubadalah involves references to classical books besides the primary sources, the Qur'an and Hadith. This *turath* approach is not practiced by Muslim feminists in other parts of the world. The study of the classical book as a support for arguments is important because it is certain that contexts of verses that require an explanation from classical scholars will be found, such as in the field of *fiqh*¹⁶⁷. *Fiqh* studies conducted by contemporary scholars mostly discuss social *fiqh*. This social *fiqh* is the development of classical *fiqh* principles and adapted to the current context. Sahal Mahfudh and Masdar Farid Masudi are figures who initiated social *fiqh* in Indonesia while the issue of gender justice is an important part of the discussion of social *fiqh*¹⁶⁸.

Apart from differences in the use of references, another factor that differentiates mubadalah is what has been done by Amina Wadud or Asma Barlas. Amina Wadud is an early generation of Muslim feminist figures who initiated the idea of reinterpretation. She classifies the types of Qur'anic exegesis into three types¹⁶⁹; first, traditional interpretation, which is atomistic, is the explanation of traditional interpretation which is detailed but does not involve many dimensions. In the classical interpretation tradition, only the male perspective is used, while the female experience is not. Second, reactive interpretation, is a type of interpretation that is reactive to women's issues and uses women's weaknesses as legitimacy. Third, a holistic interpretation, namely an interpretation that seeks to consider a variety of interpretive approaches related to global issues such as moral, economic, political, social, etc. Wadud's interpretation falls into the category of holistic interpretation.

¹⁶⁷ Husein Muhammad, Live Interview, Cirebon 12 May 2023 Kodir, *Qira'ah Mubadalah*, 189.

¹⁶⁸ Kodir, 189.

¹⁶⁹ Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman*, 5.

In addition, to classify the types of interpretation, Wadud has the following interpretation methodology¹⁷⁰; (1) analysis of the context of the verses of the Qur'an, (2) analysis of similar topics in the Qur'an, (3) analysis of the syntactic structure and similarity of the language of the Qur'an, (4) point of view Another contradictory verse, (5) worldview, uses a global viewpoint or *Weltanschauung*. This worldview relies on an intellectual reading of the Qur'an. Meanwhile, the trend of thematic reading of the Qur'an only began to emerge in the early-mid 20th century, so Wadud differentiates her reading by only focusing entirely on themes concerning women¹⁷¹.

Meanwhile, Asma Barlas takes a more thorough approach. In principle, she develops a hermeneutic based on the ontology of revelation¹⁷². She opposes the necessity of conformity between God and His Word. More specifically, she reveals three principles of God; The Oneness, Justice, and Incomparability of Allah, especially in *mutashābihāt* verses. So, according to her, a Muslim should create "a room for interpretation that can read anti-patriarchal epistemology". Barlas develops three methods of interpretation; intertextual, contextual, and holistic¹⁷³. Intertextual is looking at the historical side and analyzing the linear relationship of one verse with other similar verses. Contextual is by looking at the context in which the verse was revealed and in what conditions the verse was used. Meanwhile, the holistic method is to consider a global perspective¹⁷⁴.

Divining these three figures, I investigate there are several similarities in the methods they have developed, either Faqih, Wadud or Barlas. All of them have the passions to decipher one text with a global perspective (worldview). This means they agree that the scriptures must be able to be interpreted flexibly and possible to keep up with modern times. Second, these three feminist interpreters are based on the universal principles of religion regarding the principle of justice, that both men and women have an equal position before God, so there should be no servitude in any form to anyone, according to the concept of tawhid. Third, they agree that God is not the same as what was revealed in the Qur'an, especially in *mutashābihāt* verses, so humans have interpretive space. Fourth, the three figures both apply a holistic type of interpretation.

¹⁷⁰ Wadud, 5.

¹⁷¹ moh nailul muna, *Tafsir Feminis Nusantara*, 129.

¹⁷² Barlas, *Believing Women in Islam*, 12.

¹⁷³ Barlas, "The Qur'an and Hermeneutics."

¹⁷⁴ Barlas.

Apart from the three similarities above, I observe that there are differences in interpretation models between them; first, Mubadalah can not only be amplified in the context of interpretation of the Qur'an and Hadith, but can be a perspective for commenting on classical books. Second, mubadalah is using the *fiqh* and *ushul fiqh* approaches and considering them in carrying out legal *istinbath* (Islamic law conclusion). Third, the way mubadalah works is based on discovering the ideas behind the text which are mutually exclusive, not highlighting one party to another. Fourth, the way of reading mubadalah is not only applicable to the context of verses on gender relations but can be used in a wider social context. Fifth, Mubadalah is applying the perspective of Indonesian Islam which is closely related to the original culture of its people.

Specifically, Faqih describes his conversation with Aminah Wadud about the difference between mubadalah and Wadud's method of interpretation. According to him, Wadud concentrates more on the meaning of the Qur'anic text, while Faqih concentrates on reciting hadiths, as the embryo of mubadalah itself is born. On the other hand, Wadud expressed his appreciation for what Faqih had done, according to him, with an in-depth study of gender relations supported by the involvement of turath sources, it became a very distinctive Indonesian tradition that other Islamic countries do not have.

3.3. Innovation to Transmit Ideas

In terms of digital platforms, the naming of Mubadalah itself does not escape its long history. There are even differences of opinion and debate there. Some of his colleagues said that the idea of digitizing Mubadalah must be based on a website with a unique name for Mubadalah. Unfortunately, when registering the account name, Mubadalah was used by an oil company in Arabia. Then they proposed to add one letter "a" to become *Mubadalah*. Next is a discussion to determine the types of writing that can be accommodated. They differentiate according to the type of writing classification. For authoritative writings such as the writings of Husein Muhammad or Nur Rofiah, canalized in "*Mubadalah.com*". Gradually, this classification model came to be perceived as confusing. They proposed to combine the two website accounts in just one channel to become *Mubadalahnews.com*. In short, when the world was hit by the covid pandemic, the *die-hard* team made it easy to name the account *Mubadalah.id* which

exists to this day and is used on all Mubadalah digital platforms with the tagline "relational justice inspiration"¹⁷⁵.

In 2017, Mubadalah contributed greatly to the success of holding the first KUPI (Congress of Indonesian Women Ulama) which was held on 25-27 April 2017 at the *pesantren* Kebon Jambu, Cirebon. Faqih thinks that his writings on the blog will be more useful if they can be read by other communities. Then, after the implementation of KUPI, he and several of his colleagues initiated to create a digital platform that could accommodate his long writings in a form relevant to the needs of modern society. Digitally, Mubadalah has succeeded in becoming the leading social media platform sector in Indonesia that consistently moderately voices women's rights by bringing discursive nuances from an Islamic perspective. In an interview, Faqih states that Mubadalah is not just a perspective and concept of relational justice, or it is only a method of interpreting authoritative texts that are in line with the vision of justice, but it has become part of the media movement, as part of the *da'wah bil hal* (the action-based *da'wah*) activities of the Indonesian Women's Ulama Congress (KUPI). He adds that *Mubadalah.id* is the only online media that was launched during the Congress at the Kebon Jambu Babakan Ciwaringin Islamic Boarding School, Cirebon, in April 2017.

In developing digital platforms, mubadalah has its special team. Zahra Amin, the chief of Mubadalah's social media account¹⁷⁶ says that now mubadalah stands on almost all digital platforms both in social media like Instagram, Fanspage, Tiktok, Twitter, and Youtube. It is also amplified on Spotify. She adds, the digital ecosystem demand for the need of modern people to find religious authority. So, as a new perspective, it needs time to be well-known among Indonesian people. It starts to promote the idea of equality between men and women, and now it proliferates to any issues. Its Instagram account is the most popular social media account followed by more than 41K with more than 1500 posts. These social media platforms portray to show that Indonesian women ulama is now existing in giving authority. The convergent is to mitigate discursive inequality which is not balanced in building equality narratives. To meet the needs of modern society and keep pace with the speed of digital information, mubadalah must compete

¹⁷⁵ Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, Live Interview, Cirebon 12 May 2023

¹⁷⁶ Zahra Amin, Live interview, Cirebon 12 May 2023

in producing innovative and interactive content. It aims to reach and invite engagement from followers.

In its implementation, mubadalah is having internal management, starting from the editorial structure, the content creator team, job descriptions, determining themes and references to arguments as well as having a timeline to monitor team consistency. Zahra stated that initially, mubadalah was an internal and personal network of several people who had ideas of gender justice. Then they frame it in a very basic digital connection. The idea for the emergence of mubadalah on a digital platform started with a personal blog post from Faqih which reviewed the interpretation of hadith that raised women's issues. In its development, the modernization of *da'wah* carried out by mubadalah has a paradigm that digital media is a tool that they use as an extension for the proliferation of their ideas as well as to maintain the function of *da'wah* itself¹⁷⁷. Digital track records can still be accessed at any time and by anyone, so the authority of the *da'wah* of women clerics who have a mubadalah perspective can be used as a reference flexibly.

Indeed, what they are doing is not only delivering a perspective but they provide an alternative opinion as a form of counter-narratives¹⁷⁸. The counter-narratives aim to deliberate ideas that one case can be addressed from different points of view. So, one of its special content characteristics is giving nuances. This means, one problem may be investigated through several points of view including the Islamic point of view. As its egalitarian principle, mubadalah tries to provide a wide space for readers to decide based on their assumption that led by given sources¹⁷⁹.

Globally, Zahra admits that digital work has not been maximized on women's issues, especially those based on Islam. The perspective of Muslim women shown by conservative accounts shows the tightness of interpretation which is then modified in the style of contemporary *da'wah*. Their movement is so massive, the issues raised are the essence of the position and role of women from a men's perspective. They tend not to accommodate much of the unique needs of women and mark their proselytizing authority textually. In many cases, claims on references used are a sign of the strong

¹⁷⁷ Izza Annafisatud Daniah and Yanwar Pribadi, "Digital Feminism in Indonesia: The Counter-Narratives to Gender Inequality on Instagram Account of Mubadalah.id," n.d., <https://doi.org/10.28918/jupe.v13i1.709>.

¹⁷⁸ Izza Annafisatud Daniah and Yanwar Pribadi.

¹⁷⁹ Izza Annafisatud Daniah and Yanwar Pribadi.

influence of social media to optimize *da'wah* leading to acts of weakening women in the name of religious claims. On the other hand, digital media is also flooded with extreme feminist movements that have plundered almost all lines of life intending to place women as the center. In fact, the existence of a narrative structure about religion is a source of inequality and injustice which is often echoed. In this context, mubadalah sees the need for a society's understanding of equal relations between men and women that are balanced, equal, and based on collaboration and cooperation. Not weakening either party.

Indonesia is one of the leading sectors in the issue of empowering women in the digital world. Public acknowledgment of the role of women has received quite a different warm welcome since the reform era. This is evidenced by the fact that news portals at various types and levels are aggressively providing expressive and reporting space for women's empowerment. Although many corrective rooms must be evaluated on deconstructive narratives on women's issues. The media has become a force in itself for the implementation of a gender-just system of state government and society. Because the media can be a source of mitigation as well as progressive media to make people understand the meaning of justice for all mankind.

3.4. Reception of Mubadalah

Based on my interview and digital observation, the following is the result of my analysis. In substance, my questions are divided into several clusters; regarding the respondents' understanding of mubadalah, the influence of mubadalah in shaping perspectives, and their opinion of the *da'wah* method of mubadalah.

The understanding of mubadalah

The majority of respondents describe it with various answers. I classify it in two ways. First, respondents understand mubadalah as the principle of equality in building gender relations as part of religious teachings. Even mubadalah can be applied in a broader social context. In this case, they see Mubadalah's principles of mutual respect, cooperation, and mutual help are religious orders. Therefore, there should be no marginalization of any kind towards fellow human beings, especially women.

Some of the respondents' answers related to gender relations, for example:

*“The mubadalah perspective on the relationship between women and men, in turn, will become a source of inspiration in interpreting texts and reality, with the premise that men and women are equal subjects whose basis for their relations is cooperation, mutuality, and mutual assistance.”*¹⁸⁰

The answer regarding the implementation of mubadalah is related to Islamic teachings, for example:

*“The principle of Mubadalah is to look at humans from a religious perspective with the point of view that “Every human being is considered equal before God. This then becomes the basis for thinking not to deviate from consuming information. Especially the facts about women. The principle of Mub is simply to look at everything objectively by using religious values, namely Islam”*¹⁸¹”.

Meanwhile, the answers in a wider social context, such as:

*“The principle of interdependence in life: living in a household, living in a community, the relationships that are built are mutual relations so that women and men can live side by side, complement each other, develop potential together for the common good”*¹⁸²”

Divining the answers of some of the respondents above, it shows that their understanding of the concept of mubadalah is more comprehensive. They see mubadalah as a mutual principle based on the value of mutual respect, which they believe to be Islamic teachings. Besides, in their perception, mubadalah is a concept of building justice in gender relations. Relations that are built between men and women, both in the context of the family or the social realm, must be based on the value of justice. That is, there is no form of marginalization, discrimination, or marginalization because all of these actions are not following the principles of humanity. The position of equality between men and women must be applied in everyday life without reducing the existence of one another. In accordance with the principle of mubadalah is that upholds human values, both in the reading of the text or in the context of the movement. If the concept of mubadalah can be practiced properly, it can be a solution to the gender-based humanitarian crisis that has been rife lately.

¹⁸⁰ Nuraini, Online Respondent, 2 June 2023

¹⁸¹ Muhammad Azam Kharuzman, Online Respondent, 6 June 2023

¹⁸² Kiki Qibtiah, Online Respondent, 4 June 2023

This in-depth understanding is generally provided by respondents who have known mubadalah for quite a long time. Some of the respondents had known mubadalah since 2016 or 2018, even before the book *Qira'ah Mubadalah* is published. This means that they know mubadalah from discussion forums, articles, or after participating in KUPI in 2017. In addition, these respondents were noted to have actively participated in several events organized by mubadalah and actively participated in mubadalah's social media accounts which began to be managed professionally in 2018.

In addition, to referring to the respondents' answers regarding the views above, I also classify their answers that understanding mubadalah as a basic principle in building specific household relationships. Some of the answers recorded include:

“Mutualism in the household between husband and wife so that a household that is sakinah, mawaddah warahmah is formed. mutuality will make the feelings between the two of them mutually awake in a marriage that is the longest worship¹⁸³”

“Mutual understanding & respect between husband and wife¹⁸⁴”

Some of the answers above indicate a specific understanding of mubadalah. The concept of mubadalah is seen only as a tool to build husband and wife relationships by getting to know each other. I see this view as an assumption that there is an absurd tendency to domestic issues. This view is true if, at the beginning of its appearance, mubadalah was indeed focused on discussions around the building of gender relations in the household context. This was also confirmed by the faqih. At the beginning of the construction of the idea of mubadalah, the emphasis was on the study of hadith on husband-and-wife relations.

Therefore, the first substantive question about their understanding of mubadalah is showing little difference. The answers in the first cluster show a deeper understanding of the concept of mubadalah which can be implemented on a wider scale of life. This is related to the progress experienced by mubadalah at this time. Meanwhile, respondents' answers in the second cluster indicate that there were specifications on domestic relations issues with the initial idea of the mubadalah in the formulation.

¹⁸³ Ahmad Qasim, Online Respondent, 8 June 2023

¹⁸⁴ Puteri Resmi, Online Respondent, 6 June 2023

The influence of mubadalah

To what extent mubadalah can influence the respondent's point of view, I divide their answers into two clusters, namely internal and external. The internal factor is that mubadalah has succeeded in reconstructing their point of view on the principle of equality. Among the answers are:

"Particularly from a woman's point of view, I am personally bound to the female gender, not because of taboo/doctrine assumptions, such as "Women are weak, they are always a compliment." And now it is much different. Rather, it can be considered the opposite. However, the point is the mutual living of humans with the encouragement of knowledge and conscience¹⁸⁵"

The second cluster of answers leads to the implementation of the internal factors in point one. The majority of mubadalah implementation is applying it in household relations and social life. In addition, internally they are aware of their obligation to treat others fairly, not look down on, respect and value what other people do, have the enthusiasm to develop themselves, have a comprehensive internal paradigm to build reciprocal relationships both in the context of themselves, their families and society at large.

Meanwhile, several answers that represent the external context are more focused on how they implement the principles of mubadalah which have reconstructed their thinking into a new paradigm, including:

"It's very influential. Understanding the concept of Mubadalah is my guide in living a married life for 27 years. Thank God, many conflicts can be resolved using this principle. We support each other and give couples opportunities to grow"¹⁸⁶.

Here, I see mubadalah as the premise for a progressive discourse that puts forward the principles of solidarity and mutuality in the context of gender relations. However, over time, the understanding of mubadalah is now not only limited to the context of household relations but extends to a universal context. With a flexible premise, mubadalah can be applied flexibly, not demeaning one party. This indirectly generates a new understanding of feminism which tends to be extreme in applying its principles. I also see that each individual has his authority to argue, and everyone's argument clearly cannot be forced. However, mubadalah is to provide discursive space to find common

¹⁸⁵ Winda Ayu, 10 June 2023

¹⁸⁶ Umami Kulsum, Online Respondent, 8 June 2023

threads between these arguments. In addition, the implementation of the mubadalah principle must always look at the most fundamental, not in partial things.

The method of da'wah

In general, respondents answer that its da'wah method, either through social media or any forums, is very useful. Especially in building a mindset on relationships between men and women with the principles of mutual respect, cooperation, and empowerment. However, some of them say that there are still many who interpret mubadalah as a purely feminist movement and understanding, in the sense that women must have more rights than men, women should not be oppressed, even though mubadalah is about relationships, both women and men should not be oppressed or discriminated against. Covers all aspects that need to be studied from an Islamic perspective and reaches young people as well as religious authorities.

The method used by mubadalah in preaching is a modern method. Mubadalah uses almost all social media platforms with a high degree of consistency. They have management that runs effectively with an editorial structure that is divided into several studies. Most of the respondents acknowledge the accuracy of this da'wah method to answer the needs of urban communities and millennials who often seek religious authority through social media.

Several respondents from millennials say that this model of preaching mubadalah is lightening, flexible, and easy to digest. With modern visibility, attractive concept and design and interactive language selection, Mubadalah's social media accounts are a magnet for social media users. Although, of course, there are parties who feel they do not agree with the thoughts and ideas of the hypocrites, so they strike back either with constructive arguments or drop them with unbalanced narratives. This digital da'wah is so adaptive and acceptable to all groups. Da'wah in digital media also aims to build the resilience of the da'wah itself.

However, some of the respondents' answers criticized the outreach of mubadalah's da'wah, for example:

"It's good but so far, it's still at the academic level. The grassroots has not reached wide. It is better to cooperate with community leaders from Islamic boarding schools or majlis taklim so that they can reach the general public"¹⁸⁷

The method of its da'wah is still considered to be centered on social media so that it cannot touch the local community massively. Discussions and studies are still limited to academic circles or Islamic boarding schools and have not become familiar to studies in society. The term mubadalah also still feels alien. As a result, local religious leaders, both men, and women, do not know or understand the concept of mubadalah very well. Besides access to information that is not yet massive, these religious leaders are still wrapped up in the understanding of classical interpretation. So that the model of contemporary interpretation as a renewal movement is assumed to be different from what has been understood so far, resulting in resistance.

I argue this condition is caused by several things; mubadalah is born and raised by academics and a pesantren milieu with in-depth studies that may not be easily absorbed by ordinary people. The proliferation of the idea of mubadalah is still moving a lot in social media da'wah to target modern society and social media users. In my opinion, this is because dialectic about equality is more popular in urban and modern society. They are more exposed to new information that may be different from what is understood so far. In addition, if it is easier for local people to get sources of religious authority by simply visiting and asking for fatwas from the closest *kiai* or religious figure, then for urban and modern people, social media is the right tool to get fatwas from religious authorities¹⁸⁸.

3.5 Findings

This part aims to elaborate on the research findings. I divide it into three clusters. First, mubadalah is both a perspective and method and mubadalah is a movement. Second, the things that distinguish mubadalah are from previous discourses. Third, I measure people's perceptions from their understanding of mubadalah, personal perceptions of their da'wah methods, and the extent to which mubadalah influences their paradigm construction of the principle of equality.

¹⁸⁷ Siti Aisyah, Online Respondent, 15 Juni 2023

¹⁸⁸ Nadirsyah Hosen, "Online Fatwa in Indonesia: From Fatwa Shopping to Googling a Kiai," 2008.

First, mubadalah is laying down basic principles under the great mission of Islam, which is justice. The direction of motion or the methodology used by mubadalah is in re-reading a text consisting of; determining the universal principles of religion as the basis of all Islamic teachings, finding the core ideas or messages behind the text, then applying these ideas to gender not mentioned in the text. Three methodologies can be used to re-interpret the Qur'an, Hadith, or *turath* (classical books). One argument is also strengthened by the social context by using a world point of view or *weltanschauung*. Mubadalah does not use the historical side so much in interpreting the text, although this remains a consideration, regarding the *asbab al-nuzūl* (because one verse/text was revealed). The aspect of language is not so dominantly used in the mubadalah method. However, mubadalah is highly concerned about looking at a text from the point of view of the type of verse seen from the point of view of *ushul fiqh*, whether it is *muḥkamāt* – *mutasyābihāt*, *qath'i - zhanny*, *muthlaq - muqayyad*, *mujmal - mubayyan* etc. The involvement of both *fiqh* and *ushul fiqh* is what distinguishes mubadalah from other theories of reading.

Meanwhile, from a movement standpoint, currently, mubadalah has transformed into an organic movement which independently initiated by the community. Such as the weekly activity called *tadarus subuh* which was purely initiated by Faqih and the *pesantren* network since the pandemic and has continued to the present. Then, various national and international forums such as the MPF (Mubadalah Post-Graduate Forum) as a forum for academics, scientists, and researchers who are involved in or have written works on mubadalah. In addition, mubadalah also expanded his network with KUPI, Rahima, and Fahmina, who were indeed the embryos of his birth. Likewise with other institutions such as Islamic boarding schools, universities, community organizations or non-governmental organizations. The mubadalah method is also used by the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia in formulating modules for the bride and groom program. So, if we refer to the theory of Islamic feminism, which emphasizes the existence of religious discourse with a perspective of gender equality and the implications for the movement, mubadalah is categorized as an Islamic feminism movement in Indonesia.

Second, several intersections between mubadalah and the methods of interpretation developed by previous feminist interpreters like Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas are

showing differences. Divining these three figures, I investigate there are several similarities in the methods they have developed, either Faqih, Wadud or Barlas. First, all of them have the passions to decipher one text with a global perspective (worldview). This means they agree that the scriptures must be able to be interpreted flexibly and possible to keep up with modern times. Second, these three feminist interpreters are based on the universal principles of religion regarding the principle of justice, that both men and women have an equal position before God, so there should be no servitude in any form to anyone, according to the concept of tawhid. Third, they agree that God is not the same as what was revealed in the Qur'an, especially in *mutashābihāt* verses, so humans have interpretive space. Fourth, the three figures both apply a holistic type of interpretation.

Apart from the three similarities above, I observe that there are differences in interpretation models between them; first, Mubadalah can not only be amplified in the context of interpretation of the Qur'an and Hadith, but can be a perspective for commenting on classical books. Second, mubadalah is using the *fiqh* and *ushul fiqh* approaches and considering them in carrying out legal *istinbath* (Islamic law conclusion). Third, the way mubadalah works is based on discovering the ideas behind the text which are mutually exclusive, not highlighting one party to another. Fourth, the way of reading mubadalah is not only applicable to the context of verses on gender relations but can be used in a wider social context. Fifth, Mubadalah is applying the perspective of Indonesian Islam which is closely related to the original culture of its people.

The use of a reciprocal perspective that treats the principles of reciprocity, partnership, and cooperation between men and women without eliminating the existence of one of them. More, mubadalah is using classical books as a source of reference and this is not done by other feminist interpreters. This is done because the use of the yellow book has become a tradition in the Indonesian Millennium Islamic Boarding School, while mubadalah is itself born from an embryo among Islamic boarding schools. In addition, the majority of *pesantren* still use the tradition of textual meaning including religious teachings about gender relations. In my opinion, this is an effective strategy from mubadalah to present legitimacy that Islamic boarding schools are open to contemporary methods of meaning. In addition, the *pesantren* community can be a

motivating inspiration for building gender awareness in Indonesia, which is still being challenged to this day.

For example, in reinterpreting an-Nisa:34, they have rather different opinions. There are at least three interpretations made by Wadud and Barlas toward the sentence “*al-rijālū qowwāmūna ala al-nisā*”¹⁸⁹. First, it is a descriptive story of the socio-cultural context at the time the verse was revealed. The sentence historically expressed that the position of women in the Jahiliya period was under the man's authority. Second, the sentence is not an "imperative sentence" which commands human beings or a man as a leader toward women. Third, the meaning of the word “*qowwam*” has multiple definitions from interpreters. So, they argue that this sentence is open for interpretation.

Meanwhile, Faqih argues that an-Nisa:34 has not an absolute meaning because the word *arrijālū* and *annisa* do not refer to biological meaning as like male and female¹⁹⁰. But it mostly refers to the social context of men and women. In interpreting that verse, Faqih strengthens the substantive meaning behind the text. Such as the word “*qowwam*” which has multiple meanings that close to be responsible, leading, enduring, liable, or committing should be understood by whoever, between husband and wife, who is more powerful, capable, has more chance, healthier, and any other excess, for being a *qowwam* in a marital relationship¹⁹¹. It also can be expressed that both of them, either husband or wife, can be together as *qowwam*. Thus, the spirit of collaboration promoted by mubadalah is like on this example.

Third, in terms of the Indonesian people's acceptance of mubadalah, I measure how they understand mubadalah, how mubadalah influences their perspective and what are their opinions toward its *da'wah* method. I use these three main indicators because understanding and constructing perspective are connected while da'wah method is demand. The 45 respondents who filled out the questionnaire, all agreed with the concept of mubadalah. When the construction of understanding has been well developed, they convey it to their community members, students, friends, family, and other related parties. Of course, this is interesting. Especially if they understand that mubadalah cannot only be used in domestic concepts but on bigger issues such as our

¹⁸⁹ Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman*, 36.

¹⁹⁰ Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, *Perempuan (Bukan) Sumber Fitnah*, 15.

¹⁹¹ Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, 16.

status as citizens etc. This acceptance then contributes to the development of the Indonesian gender awareness especially for those who mostly refers to Qur'an, Hadith and *turath*. That is why mubadalah assumed as the notable proliferation for the Islamic feminists in developing the ideas of gender equality throughout Indonesian society.

Chapter Four

CONCLUSION

The movement of Islamic feminism in Indonesia started from the commitment of women feminists to fight against the injustice policies produced by the state. It indicates that government has a big intervention towards women's problems but in the unempowered contexts. In the new order regime, women are dictated to be good people which was simplified as being good wives and mothers. Their main task, at the time, was performing loyalty to their husband, and staying at home as a good educator for kids otherwise their educational access was limited. Even if the state had been forming a women's organization yet it could not be representative to be called as empowering.

On another side, Indonesian Muslim feminists and scholars are also influenced by the notions of reinterpretation of the scriptures like what has been done by several Muslim feminists from any countries. I take two popular Muslim feminists as the source of elaboration on this research. Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas's notions are coloring the mushrooming ideas of Indonesian Muslim feminists. Their thought of involving historical context, considering the structure of language, finding the main message behind the text and using a global context in viewing one verse, is contributing to the development of Indonesian Muslim feminist ideas. Faqih talks to me in an interview that Mubadalah was also inspired by his several discussions with Amina Wadud despite any other experiences he has. The distinction among those three figures is based on the methodology used while the perspectives are quite similar.

Mubadalah is originally Indonesian product which based on the local wisdom and culture of Indonesia that amplified in some novelties. Faqih emphasizes that mubadalah is not a completely new perspective because it is the embodiment of fundamental Islamic teachings. However, Faqih claims that there are at least three novelties in mubadalah; terminology naming, affirmation of sources, and applications of their use which are more adaptable to social conditions in the modern era. The result of this research indicates that mubadalah is existing to develop in the amidst of this contemporary gender equality discourses. It endures into any technicalities like inserting the ideas to the academic milieu through university, pesantren, women-based organization, and any other communities which is voicing on the same issues. While in addressing its position in the international scale, mubadalah has been being a notable perspective in KUPI events.

In the term of divergent points between Mubadalah and other feminism discourses is the methodology implied. While previous Muslim feminist scholars tend to use historical and language approach, Mubadalah investigation is through addressing the gender lost on one text. It means, Mubadalah tries to find the message behind the text then consider it to the unmentioned gender on the text. While, in the term of movement, Mubadalah is more flexible and applicable. Building a justice for gender relation context is the first ide of Mubadalah initiative and factually it is acceptable in the Indonesian society. The reinterpretation of mubadalah is not claiming women should be more prioritized than man in any context. But it is more on emphasizing collaboration between men and women as the equal human beings before God. Likewise, that both men and women are having rights to get advantages and avoid harms. So, this proves that mubadalah is quite different from its previous similar discourses. While, another indication of its divergent is using of social media platforms which is supporting to disseminate the notions. It is actively managed in almost all social media platforms within the daily working management. The main objective of taking these all strategies is for renewing da'wah method on the women's problems.

The *da'wah* method used by mubadalah is appropriate for responding to global challenges by modernizing the digital *da'wah* model. Women ulama occupy the global *da'wah* space and are required to be able to adapt to urban problems and be adaptive to the speed of information and technology flows. The role of women ulama has a significant impact on preaching women's issues as perspectives are built to involve women's unique experiences as considerations in the formulation of laws. In the last few decades, women ulama have occupied the stage of fatwa authority on an equal footing with men. It means a lot for the special characteristics of women's experiences that need to be considered in taking a *fatwa*. So, this digitized da'wah represents their way to adapt in the modernization of people thoughts.

Meanwhile, the indication that mubadalah is well accepted by Indonesian people are coming from what I get on the online questionnaire. They mostly percept mubadalah as a new alternative idea to understand text that is becoming a source of their life practices. Indeed, mubadalah then used not only in the term of building gender relationship between male and female, but also it is also applicable for the global contexts. The global terms is like what we observe its Instagram account. The post of mubadalah perspective is also

discussing about preserving nature, maintaining environment, building the spirit of nationalism, parenting and many more. This global context then utilized to invite wider engagements from internet users. They see that mubadalah is a moderate Islamic account which is able to speak up on universal context. Meanwhile, in affirming one problematic issue, it usually uses a giving nuance technicality. It is by providing different opinions among scholars in addressing one problem. In this case, Mubadadalah seems try to open room for discussion by inviting people's arguments even though it sometimes trapped on strike debate. Meanwhile, the last decision whenever we want to take or leave the fatwa is based on our personal belief.

Finally, this research contributes to the development of Islamic feminism in Indonesia while the notable notions of Mubadalah can be parts of references amplified by Muslim activists in advocating women's problems in Islamic perspectives. Nevertheless, the distribution of its ideas needs to be more creative in reaching women in grass root levels. So, I think, having deep discussion on the way how mubadalah engages in the contemporary issues of women in global term and its impactful contribution to the social life of Indonesian people, is important for the future research.

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Home Address : Lio, RT 01 RW 08 Bojong Pondok Terong, Cipayung, Depok
Current Job : Senior Assistant GESI (Gender Equity and Social Inclusion)
TEKAD Program, Ministry of Villages, Restricted Area
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B. Educational Background

Formal Education

1. TK Muslimat NU 22, Kandang Tepus, Senduro, Lumajang
2. MI. Nurul Islam 01 Kandang Tepus, Senduro, Lumajang
3. MTs Negeri Lumajang
4. MAK Nurul Jadid, Paiton, Probolinggo
5. Bachelor of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Humanity and Culture, UIN Malang
6. Master of Arts, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia

Informal Education

1. Madrasah Diniyyah Takmiliyah Assunniyyah, kembang Tepus, Senduro, Lumajang
2. Pondok Pesantren Raudlatur Rahmahiyah, Lumajang
3. Pondok Pesantren Nurul Jadid, Paiton, Probolinggo
4. Pembelajaran Khusus Pendidikan Bahasa Arab (PKPBA) UIN Malang

5. Short Course Interfaith Senior Women Leaders, Deakin University, Australia

C. Professional Background

1. Senior Assistant of GESI (Gender Equity and Social Inclusion) TEKAD Program, KPDTT, 2023
2. Program Manager of Community Engagement on Sexual Reproductive Health and Gender Based Violence, UNFPA-Fatayat NU, 2021-2022
3. Program Officer of Health Promotion Program, cooperated with The Ministry of Health 2018-2020
4. Official Expert in Ministry of youth and sport, Republic of Indonesia 2017-2019
5. National Secretary of Stunting Prevention Through the Religious Leaders Participation cooperated with Bappenas RI, 2017-2018
6. Program Coordinator of Health Development of Pesantren, collaborated with The Center of Health Promotion Department of Ministry of Health, 2013-2015
7. The Lecturer of English Language and Literature Department of Bina Sarana Informatika Collage, 2009-2014
8. M&E officer of Healthy Life Campaign Program, working with SESRIC (Statistics, Economics and Social Research of Islamic Countries) Turkey, 2013-2014

D. Achievements and Awards

1. UIII Scholarship of Master Degree Program
2. Presenter at the First International Colloquium of Islamic Studies, UIII
3. Short Term Awards of Multifaith Senior Woman Leaders Program, Deakin University Australia
4. ASEAN Conference of HIV/AIDS, Myanmar
5. Moslem Youth Camp, Taiwan

6. Australia-Indonesia Muslim Exchange Program, Australia
7. Bank Indonesia Scholarship
8. International Conference of Human Rights, Jakarta

E. Organizational Background

1. Indonesian Muslim Student Movement (PMII)
2. International Conference of Islamic Scholars (ICIS)
3. Interfaith Network on HIV/AIDS (Interna)
4. Health Department of Nahdlatul Ulama (LK-PBNU)
5. Central Board of Fatayat NU
6. Australia Awards Alumni

F. Books, Modules and Journals

Books

1. Hidup Damai di Negeri Multikultur, anthology, published 2017
2. Ah, Tuhan Begitu Romantis, anthology, published 2022
3. Bertemu Ulama Perempuan, anthology, published 2023

Modules

1. Panduan Pesantren Sehat
2. Modul Pelatihan Poskestren
3. Pocket Book Kesehatan Reproduksi Remaja
4. Modul Pencegahan Stunting dalam Perspektif Islam

Journals

1. Book Review, "Handbook of Islamic Sects and Movements", Islamic Studies Review Vol 1 no 2, 2022
2. Article, "Digital Feminism in Indonesia: The Counter-Narratives to Gender Inequality on Instagram Account of Mubadalah", Jurnal Penelitian Vol 20 no 1 2023

