



A New Perspective on Gender: An Analysis of Surah Al-Ahzab Verse 35 with Muhammad Syahrur's Theory of Limits

Nur Hasanah^{1*}, Ida Kurnia Shofa², Khoirun Nidhom³

Institut Daarul Quran, Jakarta, Indonesia

*¹nrhsnhyemen26@gmail.com

²idakurnia@idaqu.ac.id

³abufahya.nidhom@gmail.com

Abstract. Gender is a concept that describes the socially and culturally constructed differences in roles and responsibilities between men and women. In Islam, Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35 affirms gender equality in spiritual and moral aspects, emphasizing that both men and women have equal opportunities to achieve virtue. Muhammad Syahrur's Limit Theory also provides a new perspective on the flexibility of Islamic law in adapting gender norms to evolving social contexts. This study highlights the importance of understanding gender in building a more just and inclusive society while encouraging a more progressive interpretation of religious texts. This study examines gender equality in Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35 through the perspective of Muhammad Syahrur using the Limit Theory approach. This verse is considered a significant foundation that affirms the equality of roles between men and women in Islam. Employing a qualitative method and thematic interpretation approach, this study analyzes the minimum and maximum limits in Limit Theory to understand the implications of the verse on the concept of gender equality. The findings reveal that Muhammad Syahrur's interpretation offers a contextual approach relevant to universal values, while also providing critique against patriarchal views in traditional interpretations. This study emphasizes the relevance of the Qur'an as a guide supporting gender equality in various aspects of life.

Keywords: Gender equality, Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35, Muhammad Syahrur, Limit Theory, contextual interpretation.

Abstrak. Gender merupakan konsep yang menggambarkan perbedaan peran dan tanggung jawab laki-laki dan perempuan yang dikonstruksi secara sosial dan budaya. Dalam Islam, Surah Al-Ahzab ayat 35 menegaskan kesetaraan gender dalam aspek spiritual dan moral, menunjukkan bahwa baik laki-laki maupun perempuan memiliki peluang yang sama dalam mencapai kebajikan. Pendekatan Muhammad Syahrur dengan Teori Limit juga memberikan pemahaman baru tentang fleksibilitas hukum Islam dalam menyesuaikan norma-norma gender dengan konteks sosial yang berkembang. Studi ini menyoroti pentingnya pemahaman gender dalam membangun masyarakat yang lebih adil dan inklusif, serta mendorong interpretasi yang lebih progresif terhadap

teks-teks keagamaan. Penelitian ini mengkaji kesetaraan gender dalam Surah Al-Ahzab ayat 35 melalui perspektif Muhammad Syahrur dengan pendekatan Teori Limit. Surah tersebut dianggap sebagai salah satu landasan penting yang menegaskan kesetaraan peran laki-laki dan perempuan dalam Islam. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif dan pendekatan tafsir tematik, penelitian ini menganalisis batas minimum dan maksimum dalam Teori Limit untuk memahami implikasi ayat tersebut terhadap konsep kesetaraan gender. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tafsir Muhammad Syahrur menawarkan pendekatan kontekstual yang relevan dengan nilai-nilai universal, sekaligus memberikan kritik terhadap pandangan patriarkal dalam tafsir tradisional. Kajian ini memperkuat relevansi Al-Qur'an sebagai pedoman yang mendukung kesetaraan gender dalam berbagai aspek kehidupan.

Kata kunci: Kesetaraan gender, Surah Al-Ahzab ayat 35, Muhammad Syahrur, Teori Limit, tafsir kontekstual.

INTRODUCTION

Gender equality in Islam is often a topic of discussion that attracts attention, both in academia and the general public. In many cases, this debate arises from differences in interpretations of Qur'an verses related to the roles and responsibilities of men and women. One of the verses that is often referred to in this discussion is Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35, which explicitly mentions men and women side by side in various aspects of religion, such as faith, obedience, and piety. This verse is considered one of the important proofs that the Qur'an recognizes the equal roles of men and women before Allah SWT (Adam et al., 2022).

However, the understanding of gender equality in Islam is not uniform. Traditional interpretations are often thought to be still influenced by patriarchal social and cultural contexts, which tend to limit women's roles in society. Ideologically, the restriction of movement space for women is also triggered by men's concern that women will allegedly compete with men if they are in power in the public space. This raises the question: have the values of gender equality contained in the Qur'an been understood to the fullest in accordance with the essence of the text? This is where the role of contextual interpretation becomes important, as it can provide a new perspective that is more relevant to the contemporary social situation (Nur Ikhlas, 2020).

The process of interpreting the Qur'an is the result of a long effort made by scholars to explore the values contained in this holy book. This interpretation not only includes aspects of aqidah, but also involves discussions about morals and laws taught by the Qur'an. The goal is to implement these teachings in daily life, thus providing relevant guidance for

Muslims in various aspects of life. However, the long journey of interpretation of the Qur'an is inseparable from the spotlight and criticism, both from scholars and readers. Every interpretation approach that is carried out often receives deep attention, be it in the form of praise or objections, which shows how complex and dynamic the process of interpretation of the Qur'an is among Muslims (Awwaliyah, 2019).

One of the modern Islamic thinkers who stands out in an effort to provide a contextual interpretation of the verses of the Qur'an is Muhammad Syahrur. Through his approach known as Limit Theory, Syahrur offers an interpretive method that combines textual and contextual aspects in a balanced manner. This theory aims to understand the message of the Qur'an based on the minimum limit (*al-badd al-adna*) and the maximum limit (*al-badd al-a'la*), which provides the space for flexibility to interpret the verses of the Qur'an according to the context of the times.

In Muhammad Syahrur's view, Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35 is one of the verses that explicitly shows the principle of gender equality. This verse not only affirms equality in spiritual obligations between men and women, but also hints that both have the same potential to achieve a high degree before Allah SWT. This interpretation is particularly relevant to confronting modern challenges, where the issue of gender equality is often confronted with a variety of cultural, religious, and political debates (Abdullah & Hamzah, 2024).

The Limit Theory approach also offers advantages in overcoming the limitations of literal interpretation that are often trapped in rigid understanding. By understanding the verses of the Qur'an within the framework of the boundaries set by the text, Syahrur provides space for a more inclusive and responsive interpretation of contemporary issues, including gender equality. This makes Syahrur's approach relevant to be applied in the analysis of Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35.

Gender equality in Islam is not only a matter of individual rights, but also touches on broader dimensions, such as spiritual, social, and political. In this context, understanding Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35 through the perspective of Muhammad Syahrur can provide a deeper insight into how Islam views the relationship between men and women. This perspective opens up space for a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding, where women's roles and rights are not underestimated, but are valued equally with men. The

interpretation proposed by Muhammad Syahrur can also serve as an important contribution to overcoming the misconceptions that often arise related to the role of women in Islam, which are often associated with conservative and patriarchal views (Az-Zahra & Nurrohim, 2024).

In addition, this research is also very relevant to answer the challenges faced by Muslims in the modern era, where gender equality issues are often used as a tool to question the relevance and suitability of Islamic teachings with evolving modern values. In analyzing Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35 from the perspective of Muhammad Syahrur, it is hoped that this research can show that the values of gender equality have been intrinsically contained in Islamic teachings since the beginning, and therefore, do not need to be contradicted by existing modern values. On the contrary, the two can go hand in hand, providing space for women to obtain equal rights without diminishing the essence of the teachings of Islam itself.

Thus, this study aims to answer two main questions: how Muhammad Syahrur understood Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35 through the Limit Theory, and how this interpretation can contribute to the understanding of gender equality in Islam. This research is not only expected to enrich scientific treasures in the field of Islamic studies, but also provide practical benefits for the community in understanding Islamic teachings that are relevant to the challenges of the times.

The research approach used in this study is a qualitative approach with a thematic interpretation method (*maudhu'i*). This approach was chosen to explore a deep understanding of the concept of gender equality in Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35 through the perspective of Muhammad Syahrur with the Limit Theory. This research focuses on the analysis of the text of the Qur'an by grouping relevant themes, namely gender equality and the concept of limits introduced by Syahrur. The main sources of data include the text of the Qur'an, especially Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35, as well as the works of Muhammad Syahrur such as *Al-Kitab wa Al-Qur'an: Qira'ah Mu'asirah*. Secondary data sources include books, journal articles, and previous research related to Qur'anic interpretation, gender equality, and Limit Theory.

The research procedure involves several systematic steps. First, an analysis was carried out on the text of Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35 by looking at the linguistic context, the structure of the verses, and its relationship with the theme of gender equality. Second, Muhammad Syahrur's work is studied to

understand the application of Limit Theory in interpreting the verse. Third, the findings of Syahrur's interpretation are compared with traditional interpretations to highlight the differences, especially in gender issues. The analysis is carried out with a descriptive-analytical approach, where the key concepts of the Limit Theory are combined with the theme of gender equality that emerges from Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35. This research aims to provide contextual understanding that is relevant to modern issues, especially in answering the challenges of gender interpretation in Islam.

Several previous studies have discussed the concept of gender equality in the Qur'an. For example, the research that criticizes Panji Gumilang's interpretation of Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35, which emphasizes that men and women have an equal position in the reward of the hereafter. In addition, the hermeneutic study of Muhammad Syahrur has also been carried out to understand the concept of the Limit Theory that he introduced, which provides space for a more flexible interpretation of the text of the Qur'an, including in terms of gender equality. Research by Saprudin et al. (2023) examines how Syahrur proposes the existence of minimum and maximum limits in the interpretation of the Qur'an that allow interpretation to develop according to changing times and social contexts (Latifah & Shobbaruddin, 2022) (Saprudin et al., 2023).

Another relevant study was conducted by one who examines the traditional interpretation of Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35 and highlights the gap between patriarchal understanding and the principles of equality in the Qur'an. Meanwhile, the study discusses how interpretations of women's roles are often limited to domestic spaces and how modern interpretations can offer a more inclusive understanding. Bryson emphasized that these restrictions often have an impact on the injustices that women receive in various aspects of life, both social, economic, and political. In her study, Bryson argues that a more contextual and open interpretation will allow women's roles to evolve according to the demands of the times (Resky & Hasibuan, 2024) (Bryson, 2024).

Several other studies have also highlighted the application of contextual interpretation in understanding gender equality. Research by examining gender equality in the Qur'an from the perspective of contextual interpretation, which shows that although the Qur'an acknowledges equality between men and women in spiritual aspects, many traditional interpretations

still do not give equal space to women's social roles. Ismail argues that the understanding of gender equality in the Qur'an is often limited by interpretations that do not consider the social and historical context surrounding the verses. On the other hand, the study highlights that an open and contextual interpretation provides opportunities for women's roles in public life, not just in the family. Awwaliyah suggested that a sensitive interpretation of the times would strengthen the acceptance of women's active role in important sectors, including politics and economic (Ismail et al., 2024a) (Ayu & Aryani, 2021).

In addition, research by investigating feminist interpretations of the Qur'an that criticize traditional interpretations that often reduce women to domestic roles. Ismail points out that feminist interpretations seek to deconstruct the patriarchal norms that dominate the interpretation of the Qur'anic text, by emphasizing more inclusive and progressive equality. In Ismail's view, gender equality in the Qur'an should be viewed from a broader perspective, which considers the contribution of women in various aspects of social, political, and economic life (Ismail et al., 2024b).

Apart from the research that has been discussed earlier, there is also research conducted by Fauziah on the Concept of Gender Equality in the Qur'an. This research, conducted by, focuses on a critical study of the understanding of gender in the Qur'an, which is based on the *ijtihad* of experts in this field. In this research, Fauzah explores various views and criticisms put forward by scholars, who often debate the interpretation of gender in the Qur'an based on certain methods and concepts. This research highlights the importance of a more flexible and contextual approach to understanding the concept of gender equality, taking into account the historical, social, and cultural backgrounds that influence the interpretation of these sacred texts (Fauziah, 2024a).

The Limit Theory introduced by Muhammad Syahrur offers a new approach to understanding religious texts. In the context of Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35, Syahrur uses the Limit Theory to interpret the limits set by Allah regarding gender roles and responsibilities. This approach is different from traditional interpretations that often define gender roles rigidly. With the Limit Theory, Syahrur emphasizes flexibility and dynamics in understanding gender roles, thus allowing adaptation to different social contexts. The results of this research are expected to provide a more comprehensive

understanding of gender equality in Islam and encourage a more inclusive discussion regarding the interpretation of religious texts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Gender Equality in Islam

Gender equality refers to a situation in which men and women have equal rights, obligations, and opportunities in various aspects of life, without discrimination based on sex. In many societies, gender equality is often fought for as part of human rights, where women and men are seen as having equal potential to participate in economic, educational, political, and social life without discriminatory restrictions. However, the implementation of gender equality is often hampered by cultural stereotypes, traditions, and normative interpretations that limit women's roles and contributions in many fields. Therefore, it is important to look at how different religions and cultures govern and provide space for gender equality, including in the teachings of Islam.

True Islam was born with a conception of human relations based on justice for the position of men and women. Islam views men and women as creatures created equal in terms of spirituality, moral responsibility, and appreciation before Allah. This is affirmed in the Qur'an, where Allah SWT says in Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13: "O people, We have created you from male and female, and made you into tribes and nations so that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble among you in the sight of Allah is the most pious among you. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Knowing." This verse shows that men and women are equal before God, and that virtue is determined only by piety, not gender. In Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35, it is explicitly mentioned that noble qualities such as obedience, piety, honesty, and patience, which apply equally to men and women. This verse shows that good deeds are not differentiated based on gender, but are judged based on their intention and quality. It reflects the concept of equality in spiritual rights and obligations that Islam has recognized since the beginning of its teachings (Sujati & Ilfa Harfiatul Haq, 2020) (Subki et al., 2021).

Gender equality in Islam is not only limited to the aspect of worship, but also extends to the social realm. The Qur'an gives women special rights, such as the right to inherit, work, education, and manage property. In the historical context, this teaching was revolutionary because it improved the

condition of women who had previously experienced oppression in pre-Islamic Arab society. However, traditional interpretations often give rise to interpretations that marginalize women, so that gender equality is often not fully realized in social practice.

Muhammad Syahrur, with the Limit Theory approach, asserts that the universal values in the Qur'an, including gender equality, are dynamic and relevant throughout time. She views that the text of the Qur'an is not intended to limit the role of women, but rather to provide a flexible framework according to the context of the times. In his commentary, Syahrur emphasized the importance of understanding the minimum limit (Fauziah, 2024b) *al-hadd al-adna*) and the maximum limit (*al-hadd al-a'la*) for each provision in the Qur'an, so that women have freedom of movement as long as they do not violate the limits set by the Shari'a (Yusuf, 2016).

The concept of gender equality in Islam based on Syahrur's approach provides space for women to actively participate in various areas of life, including politics, economics, and education. This interpretation removes gender stereotypes that often limit women to domestic roles only. Syahrur emphasized that gender equality does not mean eliminating biological differences between men and women, but emphasized that such differences should not be the basis for discrimination. In Islam, both are seen as equal partners in building a civilization based on the values of justice and compassion.

Contextual Interpretation vs. Literal

Contextual interpretation is an approach to understanding the Qur'an that pays great attention to the social, historical, and cultural context in which the verse is revealed. This approach assumes that the message of the Qur'an is universal and can be applied in different times and situations without ignoring the basic principles contained in the text. Contextual interpretation emphasizes the importance of understanding the background of the situation surrounding the revelation, as well as the development of the social and cultural conditions of the people at that time. In this approach, the interpretation not only focuses on the literal meaning, but also examines the historical context and social dynamics that occurred around the time the verse was revealed. Therefore, contextual interpretation opens up a more

flexible interpretation space for the Qur'anic text, allowing for interpretations that are more relevant to the changing conditions of the times.

One example of the application of contextual interpretation is in understanding Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35, which mentions words such as *muslimin* and *muslimat*, *mu'minin* and *mu'minat*. In contextual interpretation, this verse is not only considered as an affirmation of gender roles, but also as a declaration of equality between men and women in carrying out spiritual and social obligations. This approach sees the verse as recognition of the equal contribution of both in society, without any restrictions on roles based on gender. Contextual interpretation invites people to see the role of women more broadly, including in the public sphere, not just limited to domestic roles. The advantage of this approach is that it provides space for the relevance of Islamic teachings that are more in line with the times, so that gender equality can be applied in a more modern and inclusive social context.

On the other hand, literal interpretation tends to understand the text of the Qur'an according to the meaning of the words written, without much consideration of the background or historical context in which the verse was revealed. This approach focuses more on the text literally and is often narrowly translated, without leaving room for more flexible interpretation. Literal interpretation is often used by classical scholars who emphasize understanding the text as it is, regardless of the social and cultural dynamics surrounding the time of revelation. In the literal interpretation of Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35, for example, the main attention is paid to attributes such as Islam, faith, and piety that are explicitly addressed to men and women. However, in this approach, women's roles are often understood in a limited way, only within the domestic and family spheres. This literal approach tends to reinforce views that limit women's roles, without making room for their involvement in the public sphere or broader social activities.

The advantage of literal interpretation is that it provides a clear and firm understanding of the text of the Qur'an. However, the downside is that this approach can perpetuate interpretations that are irrelevant to modern social conditions, potentially exacerbating gender inequality in social practice. Thus, literal interpretation risks not providing space for the development of a more inclusive and progressive understanding of the role of women in society. Overall, contextual and literal interpretations have their own

strengths and weaknesses. Contextual interpretation is better suited to understanding the Qur'an in a broader time frame, while literal interpretation has the power to provide a clearer and more direct understanding. However, in the context of gender equality, contextual interpretations are better able to accommodate social dynamics and the progress of the times, while literal interpretations are often limited to interpretations that do not take into account the social changes that have already occurred.

Muhammad Syahrur's Limit Theory

Muhammad Syahrur's Limit Theory is an approach developed to interpret the text of the Qur'an contextually and rationally, emphasizing the flexibility of Islamic law in responding to the dynamics of the times. Syahrur proposes the concepts of *al-badd al-adna* (minimum limit) and *al-badd al-a'la* (maximum limit), in which the laws in the Qur'an have a non-rigid range of application. In this perspective, God gives man space to determine the practice of law according to the social, cultural, and societal needs, as long as it is within the corridor of the boundaries set forth in the text of revelation. This theory avoids extremism, both in the form of interpretations that are too literal and those that are completely free without foundation (Siagian & Zulheldi, 2024) (Mulyadi, 2020).

In this theory, *al-badd al-adna* represents the minimum limit or basic standard that must be met in a religious law or commandment. For example, in the case of marriage, the minimum limit is a binding that is valid and meets the requirements of the sharia. On the other hand, *al-badd al-a'la* is the maximum limit that should not be violated. For example, in the restriction of polygamy, the maximum limit is four wives, as mentioned in Surah An-Nisa verse 3. Between these two boundaries, there is a flexible space that allows for different forms of implementation, depending on the context and conditions of the community.

Muhammad Syahrur applied this theory in interpreting verses related to gender, including Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35. According to him, this verse shows spiritual equality between men and women in carrying out religious obligations, such as faith, almsgiving, and taking care of themselves. The theory of limitation is used to show that there are no special restrictions that prevent women from participating in social or spiritual roles as long as they remain within the corridors of the Shari'a. Thus, this theory refutes the

patriarchal understanding that limits the role of women based on literal interpretation.

Furthermore, Syahrur's limit theory offers solutions to bridge the conflict between Islamic values and the challenges of modernity, including the issue of gender equality. He emphasized that the laws of the Qur'an are dynamic, not static, so that they are able to accommodate the development of the times. This theory also opens up opportunities for the re-evaluation of Islamic law which is often considered discriminatory against women. By making the minimum and maximum limits as basic principles, the interpretation of the Qur'an can be more adaptive to the needs of modern society without losing its essence as a guideline derived from Divine revelation.

Muhammad Syahrur interprets Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35 with a contextual approach through the Theory of Limits (*Nazhariyyat al-Hudud*). This verse explicitly mentions groups of men and women who believe, pious, and do righteous deeds in an equal position. In his view, the mentions of pairs in this verse, such as *muslimin wa muslimat* and *mu'minin wa mu'minat*, are a firm statement of the principle of equal rights and responsibilities between men and women before Allah. Syahrur rejects traditional interpretations that tend to place women in subordinate positions. He emphasized that the Qur'an does not give any indication of the superiority of either sex, but recognizes the equal role of both in building an Islamic society (Juliansyahzen, 2022a) (Saidi, 2020).

In the perspective of the Qur'an, the gender equality conveyed in this verse is not limited to the aspect of spiritual obligation. This verse is also the basis for equal social rights between men and women. Syahrur understands that Islam, through this verse, has recognized and promoted gender equality from the beginning. However, its implementation is often influenced by the patriarchal cultural interpretations that develop in society. Therefore, this verse can be used as a basis for criticizing gender discrimination practices that are contrary to the universal values of Islam.

The Limit Theory introduced by Syahrur provides a new approach to understanding the limits of Islamic law and principles. In the context of gender equality, this theory proposes the existence of minimum (Juliansyahzen, 2022b) *al-hadd al-adna*) and maximum (*al-hadd al-'la*) limits determined by Allah. Syahrur explained that the rules that apply in the Qur'an

provide freedom as long as they are within the range of these limits. Thus, this theory rejects gender-based discrimination beyond the limits set by the sharia. Syahrur emphasized that Islam supports gender equality as part of the principle of justice, as long as the rules applied do not violate the basic values of Islam (Sani, 2021).

Syahrur also pays special attention to the linguistic structure of Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35, which places men and women on an equal footing without differences in level. Phrases such as *muslimin wa muslimat* and *mu'minin wa mu'minat* emphasize the equality of functions and responsibilities between the two. This interpretation is contrary to the traditional interpretation that often places men as the main actors in religious and social obligations. On the contrary, Syahrur sees this verse as a universal statement that affirms that the spiritual and social responsibilities of men and women are equal in the eyes of Allah.

In his commentary, Syahrur gave a sharp criticism of traditional interpretations that are often influenced by patriarchal culture. Traditional interpretations tend to prioritize men in various aspects of life, both in the scope of worship and social. Syahrur emphasized that gender equality taught by Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35 is not just symbolic, but is a principle that must be applied in daily life. Patriarchal culture, according to him, is often the main obstacle to understanding the universal message of the Qur'an.

The relevance of Muhammad Syahrur's interpretation is very important in answering issues of gender equality in the modern era. The contextual interpretation he offers allows Muslims to integrate the universal values of Islam with the needs of today's society. Syahrur sees that the Qur'an is flexible and applicable in every era, including in supporting women's rights. Using the Limit Theory approach, he shows that gender equality is not only a social issue but also a fundamental value in Islam (Widodo, 2017).

This interpretation has significant social and legal implications. Syahrur underlined that Islamic rules should not be used to restrict women beyond the minimum and maximum limits set by Allah. Gender equality taught in Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35 is an integral part of the principle of justice in Islam. This interpretation can be the basis for the formation of Islamic law that is more inclusive, fair, and relevant to the development of contemporary society. Tafsir Syahrur not only offers new understanding, but

also opens up opportunities for wider dialogue on gender equality within the framework of Islamic law.

إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْقَنَاتِينَ وَالْقَنَاتِ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ وَالْخَشِعِينَ وَالْخَشِيعَاتِ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقَاتِ وَالصَّائِمِينَ وَالصَّائِمَاتِ وَالْحَافِظِينَ فُرُوجَهُمْ وَالْحَافِظَاتِ وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

Indeed, Muslims and Muslims, believers and believers, obedient men and women, righteous men and women, men and women who are patient, men and women who are solemn, men and women who give alms, men and women who fast, men and women who keep their genitals, men and women who call on Allah a lot, for whom Allah has prepared forgiveness and great rewards (Al Quran & Translation, 2019).

Gender Equality Analysis in Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35

Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35 explicitly affirms the spiritual equality between men and women. This verse mentions various noble characteristics, such as faith, piety, honesty, patience, and righteous deeds, juxtaposing men and women in pairs. This emphasis shows that in the view of Allah SWT, both have the same position in obtaining His rewards, forgiveness, and rewards. There is no gender discrimination in the responsibility or opportunity to obtain the favor of Allah, thus making this verse an important basis in the discussion of gender equality in Islam (Nurhasanah, 2018, p. 98-112).

In addition to the spiritual aspect, this verse also has significant social implications. In the patriarchal society from which this verse is derived, the recognition of women as equal to men is a progressive step. Muhammad Syahrur views this verse as proof that Islam supports equality in spiritual and social responsibilities, as well as dismantling the traditional view that places women as subordinate men. According to him, Islam not only recognizes equality in worship, but also in daily life, including education and other social responsibilities.

Muhammad Syahrur used the theory of limits to explain the gender boundaries contained in the Qur'an. In his interpretation of Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35, the minimum limit (*al-badd al-adna*) is the recognition of the equality of spiritual responsibilities between men and women. Meanwhile, the maximum limit (*al-badd al-a'la*) provides flexibility in regulating social roles according to the times, as long as it does not violate the principle of justice. With this theory, Syahrur rejects the traditional interpretation that limits the role of women only to the domestic realm or subordinate to men.

However, this approach is different from traditional interpretations that are often influenced by patriarchal culture. Conventional interpretations tend to see this verse only in a spiritual context, without attributing it to equality in the public sphere. Syahrur criticized this view, asserting that this verse also supports the recognition of the role of women in education, politics, and the economy. For her, traditional interpretations that maintain gender inequality reflect more of the cultural context of the past than the universal values taught by Islam (Az-Zahra & Nurrohim, 2024) (Syaifuddin, 2020).

In the modern context, Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35 has a strong relevance in the struggle for gender equality. Syahrur views this verse as a theological basis for fighting for women's rights in various fields of life. Islam, according to her, not only supports the active role of women in social life, but also guarantees their equal rights with men. With this approach, Syahrur's interpretation bridges the text of the Qur'an with the need of the modern world to recognize gender equality as a universal value.

Muhammad Syahrur's approach to Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35 makes a significant contribution to the gender discourse in Islam. The limit theory he uses shows the flexibility of Islamic law in adapting to the development of the times without abandoning the basic principles of the Qur'an. This interpretation opens up space for reinterpretation of the verses of the Qur'an that support gender equality in various aspects of life. Thus, this interpretation is not only relevant to Muslims, but also provides a progressive view for the global world of Islam as a religion that upholds justice and respect for human beings regardless of gender.

Application of Limit Theory in Tafsir of Surah Al-Ahzab Verse 35: An Analysis

The Limit Theory put forward by Muhammad Syahrur is an interpretation approach that looks at the text of the Qur'an from a contextual and rational perspective. Syahrur uses this theory to interpret various verses that are normative, especially those related to law and social values. In the context of Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35, which contains the principle of gender equality, the theory of limits serves to identify the minimum limits (*Parwanto, 2023) al-hadd al-adna*) and the maximum limits (*al-hadd al-a'la*) in the context of the roles of men and women in society. The application of this theory makes it possible to dissect the potential for equality in the role without getting stuck in a literal interpretation that can seem rigid and patriarchal (Hidayat, 2016).

Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35 states that women and men who believe have the same position in terms of righteous deeds and rewards. This verse emphasizes the importance of the quality of faith and charity, regardless of gender. According to Syahrur, this reflects the basic principle of equality that can be interpreted more broadly, not only in the spiritual realm, but also in the social and political realm. In conventional interpretation, often the understanding of the role of women in this verse is more limited, while Syahrur with his limit theory proposes a more inclusive view.

The theory of limits, put forward by Muhammad Syahrur, distinguishes between norms that are fixed and inviolable (*al-hadd al-adna*) and norms that are flexible and can change according to the development of the times and social context (*al-hadd al-a'la*). In the context of gender, minimum limits (*al-hadd al-adna*) refer to the equal basic rights and obligations of men and women in terms of achieving the pleasure of Allah, carrying out worship, and doing righteous deeds (Mulyadi, 2020). This equality is not affected by gender differences, but rather reflects the basic principle of Islam that affirms that every individual, regardless of gender, has an equal opportunity to attain spiritual and moral goodness before Allah. Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35, by mentioning words such as *muslimin* and *muslimat*, *mu'minin* and *mu'minat*, affirms that every man and woman, in their capacity as religious people, has an equal role in obtaining rewards and closeness to Allah. This is a form of fundamental equality that is *al-hadd al-adna*, where

rights and obligations in achieving spiritual goals are equal, without any discrimination based on gender.

However, within the maximum limits (*al-badd al-a'la*), Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35 opens up a wider space for interpretation in terms of the social, economic, and political roles of women and men. In contextual interpretation, this maximum limit gives women the freedom to participate actively outside of traditional domestic roles, such as in the public sphere, education, employment, and even politics, as long as they do not violate the boundaries set by the sharia. In this context, *al-badd al-a'la* reflects the flexibility of Islamic teachings in response to the times, where the roles of women and men in society can change, but still refer to the basic principles of Islam that emphasize justice and equality.

This maximum limitation also shows that Islam provides room for a wider interpretation and application of teachings, depending on social conditions and the development of the times. In this case, Syahrur argues that even though there are biological differences between men and women, this should not be used as an excuse to limit women's social or political roles. This approach emphasizes that *al-badd al-a'la* is flexible and allows women's roles to develop according to the needs of the times, as long as they remain within the moral framework and established principles of sharia.

Syahrur argues that in modern society, the application of this principle of equality must be further studied by considering social and cultural developments. She sees that in many ways, traditional interpretations prioritize stricter boundaries and limit the role of women in domestic and public spaces. The limit theory, according to Syahrur, opens up the possibility of expanding the understanding of women's roles, by acknowledging that the changing times affect the acceptance of a more egalitarian social role between men and women.

The application of the theory of limitation in the interpretation of Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35 also shows that not all rules in the Qur'an must be understood statically or according to the time when the verse was revealed. Syahrur argues that verses related to gender must be understood dynamically, by adjusting to the context of today. Therefore, the theory of limits makes room for more progressive interpretations without ignoring the fundamental meaning contained in the verse (Sumarni & Susilawati, 2020).

For example, in the context of law and social policy, the application of limit theory can be seen in efforts to ensure equality between men and women in various sectors of life, such as education, employment, and civil rights. Syahrur, within the framework of limit theory, considers that this equality is not only a right that must be given, but also a need that must be met by society in order to create broader social justice. Therefore, the application of maximum limits in this context paves the way for more inclusive and equitable policies for both genders.

On the other hand, the theory of limits also requires caution in interpreting texts related to the law or the status of women in society. Syahrur emphasized that the interpretation that considers women as inferior or subordinate parties is not an interpretation that is in accordance with the basic principle of equality in the Qur'an. On the contrary, with a limit theory approach, this verse invites Muslims to understand that equality is not only a spiritual right, but also the foundation for forming a just and equal society, where the roles of men and women complement each other.

Thus, the application of the theory of limitation in the interpretation of Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35 by Muhammad Syahrur has made a significant contribution to the renewal of the understanding of gender equality in Islam. This theory not only focuses on the role of both in the spiritual dimension, but also proposes an openness in understanding the potential and opportunities that women can obtain in social and political life, along with the development of the times.

The Relevance of Muhammad Syahrur's Tafsir in the Modern Context

Muhammad Syahrur offers an approach to the interpretation of the Qur'an that is relevant to the dynamics of modern society, especially related to issues of gender equality. In his work, he uses the Limit Theory (*Nazhariyat al-Hudud*) which explains that the verses of the Qur'an have a space of flexibility between the minimum (*hadd adna*) and the maximum (*hadd a'la*). This approach allows for contextual and adaptive interpretations of social change, without abandoning the basic principles of religion. In the context of Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35, Syahrur highlights the equality of men and women in spiritual, moral, and social obligations, which provides a solid basis for affirming gender justice in modern life (Siagian & Zulheldi, 2024) (Mujani & Rahmawati, 2018).

This approach is particularly relevant in the midst of modern challenges that often question the position of women in Islam. Traditional interpretations, which are heavily influenced by patriarchal cultures, often limit women's roles in domestic spaces and emphasize their duties within the household. For example, in classical interpretations, women are often only considered mothers or wives, with limited public contributions. However, through his contextual analysis, Syahrur emphasizes that verses such as Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35 are designed to balance the roles between men and women, both in the scope of worship and social contribution. She argues that Islam gives women the freedom to play an active role in social, economic, and political life, as long as it does not violate the basic principles established by the sharia.

Syahrur also argues that this contextual interpretation helps Muslims to overcome the tension between religious teachings and the development of the times. In modern society, the need for interpretations that are able to answer contemporary problems is becoming increasingly important. By applying the Limit Theory, Syahrur avoids the extreme views that exist in the interpretation, both those that are too strict (literal) and those that are too loose (liberal). This interpretation allows Muslims to develop just policies and practices based on the principles of the Qur'an, such as in the fields of education, economics, and politics, without giving rise to contradictions with modern values. In this case, Syahrur tries to find a balance that allows Islamic teachings to remain relevant in an ever-changing social context (Fauziah, 2024a) (Rasyid, 2019).

Furthermore, this interpretation also strengthens the position of women in fighting for their rights in the era of globalization. By emphasizing equal responsibility and appreciation for the deeds of male and female worship, Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35 in the Syahrur tafsir becomes an important argument for rejecting gender-based discrimination. This is in line with the universal values promoted by the human rights movement, where gender equality is considered a fundamental right of every individual, regardless of gender. This interpretation allows Islam to be presented as an inclusive and just religion, which respects and involves women in all aspects of life.

In addition, it is important to note that the interpretation of Syahrur also invites Muslims to consider the social and cultural context in interpreting

the Qur'an, which allows Muslim societies to be more responsive to contemporary challenges. For example, in the field of education, this contextual interpretation supports women's participation in higher education and professions that were previously considered dominant for men. Syahrur not only provides space for women to participate in social and political life, but also emphasizes that women have equal rights in the pursuit of science and contribute to the progress of civilization. In the end, Muhammad Syahrur's interpretation shows that the Qur'an is not a rigid and irrelevant text, but has a flexibility that allows Muslims to continue to adapt to the times. Her perspective paves the way for the creation of gender equality that is not only based on modern social norms, but also on a deep understanding of the teachings of the Qur'an. This strengthens the role of Islam as a dynamic and universal guide in facing the challenges of the modern world.

CONCLUSION

This research has analyzed Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35 through the perspective of Muhammad Syahrur using the Limit Theory to understand the concept of gender equality in Islam. The results of the study show that the interpretation of Syahrur emphasizes equality between men and women not only in the spiritual aspect, but also in the social realm. Syahrur provides room for a more flexible and dynamic interpretation, which can be adapted to the times, without neglecting the basic principles of Islamic teachings. Comparison with traditional interpretations shows that the contextual approach used by Syahrur is more inclusive and responsive to modern social challenges, while literal interpretations tend to maintain gender hierarchies influenced by patriarchal culture. By applying the concepts of minimum limits (*Al-hadd al-adna*) and maximum limits (*al-badd al-'la*), the Limit Theory allows for a reinterpretation of Islamic law that is more adaptive to the needs and dynamics of the times, without violating the basic principles of sharia. Overall, this research confirms that gender equality has been embedded in Islamic teachings since the beginning and can be contextualized to build a more equitable and relevant understanding of the development of contemporary society. This contextual interpretive approach offers a more progressive and inclusive perspective, which can serve as a basis for efforts to realize more real gender equality in the social and cultural life of Muslims in the modern era.

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