

Equality of Rights and Obligations: The Role and Position of Women in Politics (Study of the Interpretation of Surah An Naml verses 23-23)

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Abstract

The equality of women's rights and obligations in politics is an issue that has long been debated, especially in the context of Islam. Surah An-Naml verses 23-24 tells the leadership of Queen Saba', which is one of the evidences in the Qur'an regarding the role of women in politics. This study aims to examine the rights, obligations, roles, and positions of women in politics through the analysis of the interpretation of Surah An-Naml verses 23-24. The method used is a thematic interpretation approach by referring to various classical and contemporary interpretations, such as Tafsir Al-Misbah, Tafsir Al-Azhar, and Tafsir Al-Maraghi. The results of the study show that Islam does not absolutely prohibit women from participating in politics, even in leadership, as long as they have the capacity and are able to carry out their mandate well. The story of Ratu Saba' illustrates how a woman can be a wise, democratic, and strategically minded leader in making decisions. This research is expected to provide an overview that Islam recognizes the role of women in politics, while still paying attention to the principles of justice, benefit, and moral responsibility. Therefore, a broader and contextual understanding of the verses of the Qur'an is needed so that there is no gender bias in interpreting the role of women in political life.

Introduction

Women have a significant role in various aspects of life, including in the political realm. However, until now there is still a debate about the position, rights, and obligations of women in politics, especially from an Islamic perspective. Some people still think that politics is the domain of men, while women have limitations in actively participating in leadership and decision-making. In fact, Islamic history records various contributions of women in leadership, both directly and indirectly.

One of the verses in the Qur'an that is relevant to study in this context is Surah An-Naml verses 23-24, which tells of Queen Saba' (Queen Bilqis) as the leader of a strong and prosperous kingdom. This story shows that the Qur'an recognizes the existence of female leadership and describes a leader who is wise, democratic, and politically intelligent. Therefore, this study aims to examine the equality of rights and obligations, roles, and positions of women in politics based on the interpretation of the verse.

The urgency of this research lies in the need for a broader and contextual understanding of the verses of the Qur'an related to the role of women in politics. Many interpretations that have developed tend to be gender-biased, so a more comprehensive interpretation study is needed so that the understanding of women's political participation is not limited to conservative views. The author argues that Islam does not prohibit women from participating in politics, as long as they have competence and act within the corridor of the principles of justice, benefit, and moral responsibility. Thus, this research is expected to

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provide a new perspective in understanding women's involvement in politics based on inclusive and equitable Islamic teachings.

Review Literature

Research on *Women's Involvement and Role in Politics* has become relevant in a global context (Tasya et al., 2024), emphasized her opinion on women's participation in political participation by referring to the fatwa of Dr. Yusuf al-Qardhawi which gives freedom to women in their participation in the world of politics. He explained that. Politics is a freedom of every human being, it provides opportunities for women to participate in practical political practices such as being a member of the council, because in the view of Islam women have the same rights as men in politics.

The Role of Women in Islamic Politics,(Wibisono, 2022) Trying to provide an overview of women's participation in practical politics, especially in their participation in policy formulation and decision-making. This is a form of gender equality by seeing women's opportunities to promote their political interests, because so far women's representation in politics has only been considered as a series of procedures in democracy. The role and function of women is also not as a representative of women but only limited to representatives of political parties where their attitudes and statements must be in accordance with the needs and interests of political parties. Not to mention the quality of women who continue to be considered incapable of providing values that can place women as policy makers and determinants.

(*WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE QUR'AN Siti Fatimah I, 2015*) Emphasizing the principles and values that must be held when entering the world of politics, he mentioned several attitudes including Trust, fairness, deliberation and Amar Ma'ruf nahi munkar. She also mentioned the characteristics of women's leadership that are sourced from historical stories, including that they must be women with strong personalities, women who maintain their chastity, and not a woman who is an instigator, spreader of slander, a fan of gossip and very bad for her heart.

He began with a discussion of equality of rights and obligations between men and women, he gave reasons that supported women's participation in politics. She also gave an overview that women's leadership has emerged in Indonesia, she also emphasized that gender is not a barrier for women to participate in politics. Leadership success is not based on gender but on her ability to lead. The success of women's leadership in running the government will be able to abort the view of gender bias, Retno Mursisi is one of the many examples of women's success in political practice (Leadership et al., 2009).

Research conducted by the Al-Quran Laboratory, Faculty of Ushuludin IAIN Raden Intan Lampung tells that Ratu Balqis is a symbol of independent women in the Qur'an in the political field. Ratu Balqis is the leader of the Kingdom of Saba' Al-Quran tells that Ratu Balqis is a leader who has brilliance of thought, sharp views, wisdom in making decisions and is an accomplished politician. The Qur'an also describes that Queen Balqis is a queen who has power but does not prevent her from submitting and obeying the truth. In the research on "Queen Balqis of Saba Crmin Female Leader" by *Republica.co.id*, it is told that Queen Balqis is a female figure who has a great influence in the world of women's politics, recorded as the first woman in Islamic history to lead a Kingdom. Her territory stretched from Yemen to Ethopia when viewed today, illustrating how Queen Balqis was an accomplished and wise leader.

Discussion

Gender equality in Islam is often debated, especially in the context of women's political participation and leadership. One of the verses that is referenced in this study is Surah An-Naml verses 23-24, which tells about the leadership of Ratu Saba' (Balqis).

إِنِّي وَجَدْتُ امْرَأَةً تَمْلِكُهُمْ وَأُوتِيَتْ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهِيَ عَرْشٌ عَظِيمٌ وَجَدْتُهَا وَقَوْمَهَا يَسْجُدُونَ لِلشَّمْسِ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَانَهُمْ فَصَدَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ فَهُمْ لَا يَهْتَدُونَ

*"Truly, there was a woman who ruled over them, and she was blessed with everything and had a great throne."
"I (the bird of Hud) found him and his people worshipping the sun, not God; and Satan has made it beautiful to them their (bad) deeds, so that they hinder them from the way, so they have no guidance."*

In Tafsir Al-Azhar by Buya Hamka, this verse is interpreted with a more moderate and contextual approach, reflecting his progressive thinking in understanding Islam. This verse tells about the bird Hud-hud that reported to the Prophet Solomon that in the land of Saba' there was a queen who was powerful and had all the advantages, but her people worshipped the sun. Buya Hamka sees this story as proof that the Qur'an does not necessarily condemn women's leadership. In fact, this verse shows that women can be good leaders and are able to lead their people to better decisions. In his commentary, Buya Hamka highlighted that Ratu Balqis is a wise, intelligent, and not rash leader in making decisions.

Buya Hamka also refuted the notion that Islam prohibits women from becoming leaders or being involved in politics. He emphasized that Islam does not reject women's leadership absolutely, but emphasizes the quality of leadership itself. In this case, she criticizes classical interpretations that tend to limit the role of women in the public sphere. According to him, leadership is not only about gender, but about a person's ability and wisdom in carrying out their mandate (Prof.Dr.Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, 2022)

Tafsir Al-Maraghi provides a more descriptive perspective on the leadership of Queen Saba'. Al-Maraghi emphasized the intelligence and wisdom of Queen Balqis in leading her people. He not only had political and military power, but was also strategically minded, as evidenced by the way he dealt with the Prophet Solomon's letter with caution and diplomacy. Al-Maraghi does not explicitly prohibit female leadership, but rather highlights how a leader must have good and wise qualities, regardless of gender (Ahmad Musthafa AlMaraghi, 1987).

Meanwhile, Quraish Shihab's Tafsir Al-Misbah offers a more moderate and contextual approach to understanding this verse. Quraish Shihab highlighted that the Qur'an does not condemn women's leadership absolutely, even giving examples of successful women's leadership such as Balqis. In his commentary, he emphasized that Ratu Balqis was a just, intelligent leader, and was able to lead his people to a better decision, namely accepting Islam after meeting the Prophet Sulaiman. This view shows that Islam does not prohibit women's leadership as long as they have the capacity and are able to carry out their duties well. In the context of gender equality, this interpretation emphasizes that women have equal opportunities to contribute to various aspects of life, including politics (Dr Quraiish Shihab, 2002).

Overall, these three interpretations have similarities in terms of recognizing that women can become leaders if they have competence and wisdom. Tafsir Buya Hamka emphasizes on contextual aspects and relevance of the times, Tafsir Al-Maraghi highlights the quality of leadership in general. and

Tafsir Al-Misbah provides a more contextual view and is in line with the development of the times. In a broader perspective, the issue of women's political participation in Islam must be understood proportionately, taking into account the values of justice, ability, and the needs of society. Women can play a role in politics and leadership as long as they meet the necessary criteria, as exemplified by Queen Balqis in the Qur'an.

1.1. Gender Equality

Gender equality is a topic that is often a concern, especially in the context of law and religious interpretation. Gender equality is a basic principle that affirms that every individual, regardless of gender, has the same rights, opportunities, and treatment in various aspects of life. This equality includes the fields of education, employment, politics, health, and social participation. Gender equality is an important foundation to reduce gender discrimination which often hinders the potential of individuals, especially women. Although many principles promise equality between men and women, the interpretation and reality that occurs are often biased and even discriminatory against women.

According to Quraysh Shihab, the difference between men and women is fixed, this difference is in the form of biological differences that will create character for each individual. This difference is not a difference in the potential that God has given to man. (Rahmawati, 2024). Men and women differ on the basis of the functions of the duties they carry, but they also obtain the same rights, for what they strive for or in accordance with what is their obligation.

Islam recognizes the principle of equal rights and obligations of men and women in political participation. This equality is recognized through the principle that men and women have equal rights and duties in the eyes of Allah, as mentioned in the QS. Ali Imran verse 195, "*Verily, I do not waste the deeds of those who do good among you, both men and women.*" This principle also includes women's participation in politics, which is one of the important areas of community life. Islam provides a foundation for women to play an active role in politics and decision-making. An example can be seen from the history of Islam, where women like Aisyah r.a. played an important role as intellectual figures and resource persons of Islamic law. In addition, women during the time of the Prophet also participated in political agreements, such as Bai'at Aqabah and Bai'at Ridwan, which affirmed their involvement in the affairs of society and the state. Not to mention the legendary story of Queen Bilqis in the Qur'an about her wisdom as the head of state in her time.

Women's position in politics is recognized on the condition that their participation is in line with Islamic values, such as upholding justice, responsibility, and the benefit of the ummah. Women have the right to occupy leadership positions, become council members, or be involved in other political activities as long as they are able to carry out their duties well and provide benefits to society (Fadli, 2017).

1.2. Women and Politics

Men have dominated the order of human life and have become a long history, where women are placed as *the second human being*, the existence of women is under the priority of men which has broad

implications in social life in society. Women are always considered not important creatures but just complements created for the benefit of men.

Campaigns on gender equality arise from social life problems that always make men a priority over women. Women began to demand the right to justice to be treated the same as men. Political participation is a political system that is used as an indicator to measure the progress of a political sustainability process. The large number of political participation is one of the characteristics that a country has achieved political modernization, where its citizens are beginning to be aware and participate in the ongoing democratic system. Modern society will always think and actively move to find a mechanism so that individuals and groups can give a role and pressure to the government in every policy that will be decided (Subono & Arivia, 2003)

The process of giving this role is then referred to as a form of political participation. Women see the "political stage" not as a women's world, but it does not have to be shunned by women, the fact that more men are involved in political activities. Not a few women have assessed politics as a dirty world such as the dynamics of conflicts, conflicts, power struggles and positions and plays, because of which many women have given poor assessments of political actors. Women's political participation is a vital component in the development of an inclusive and equitable democracy (P.Purwoko, 2013).

Although women make up half of the global population, their representation in politics is still inadequate in many countries. Women's political participation includes the right to vote, run for office, and occupy decision-making positions. Increased women's political participation is not only important for gender equality but also for the quality of democracy and more representative and responsive policy-making for the whole society.

1.3. Women's Political Participation

Political participation is one example of the manifestation of a democratic state where the community plays an active role directly in the process of electing state officials in the implementation of government activities (National, 2020). Women's political participation is an important issue in efforts to achieve gender equality in various areas of life. Women often face a variety of structural, social, and cultural barriers that prevent them from taking an active role in politics, including gender stereotypes, discrimination, and a lack of institutional support (Susanti, 2015). The presence of women in the political sphere not only enriches representation, but also brings different perspectives, especially in issues that have a direct impact on women's lives, such as health, education, and social welfare.

Women's political participation is one of the important indicators in assessing the quality of a country's democracy. The presence of women in politics is not only about the aspect of representation, but also contributes to more inclusive and fair decision-making. Substantive representation, i.e. meaningful involvement of women in decision-making processes, is considered a strategic step to integrate gender perspectives in public policy. This is in line with the theory expressed by Hanna Pitkin, an American political theorist who distinguishes symbolic representation from substantive representation in a political context (Kurebwa, 2015). Furthermore, he also underlined the importance of substantive representation, where women are not only symbolically present, but also have the ability to influence political decisions. In many cases, although women have been present in politics, they are often trapped in symbolic positions

without having any real influence in policy. Structural barriers, such as patriarchal culture, gender stereotypes, and institutional discrimination, are major challenges that need to be addressed.

Women's political participation in the past five years has become an important concern in efforts to strengthen democracy and realize gender equality. Research shows that despite the increased representation of women in various political institutions, structural, cultural, and social barriers still limit the role of women in strategic decision-making. Patriarchal culture, gender stereotypes and lack of support Political education are the main obstacles that hinder women from active participation in politics (Inhibitors & Boosters, 2024). Affirmative policies such as gender quotas are an important step to encourage women's representation in parliament. However, this policy needs to be accompanied by strengthening women's capacity so that they are not only symbolically present, but also have a substantive influence in policy-making.

Islam provides a wide space for women to play a role in social life, including in the political field. In Islamic history, women have made significant contributions to the decision-making process, the dissemination of knowledge, and leadership. For example, Aisha, the wife of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), played an important role in informing the public about the teachings of Islam and contributed to political affairs, such as during the Jamal War. In addition, Khadijah, the Prophet's first wife, is a successful businessman who supports Islamic da'wah financially and strategically, reflecting the ability of women in strategic positions.

Similarly in Islamic law, normatively Islam does not prohibit women from participating in politics. The verses of the Qur'an and the Hadith of the Prophet PBUH emphasize the value of human equality before Allah and the importance of the principle of deliberation (shura) in decision-making. In the Qur'an Surah At-Taubah verse 71, it is stated that men and women have the obligation to support each other in amar ma'ruf nahi munkar, which can be interpreted as involvement in political activities for the benefit of the ummah (Maloko, 2013).

In the modern context, many Muslim-majority countries have given more space for women to get involved in politics. For example, countries such as Indonesia, Tunisia, and Pakistan have produced women leaders who hold strategic positions. Affirmative policies such as gender quotas are also one of the steps to encourage women's representation in politics in accordance with the spirit of justice in Islam. Thus, women's political participation in Islam has a strong foundation, both in history and religious texts, but its application often depends on the social and political context that surrounds it. Encouraging contextual interpretations and supporting gender equality can be an important step to strengthen the role of women in politics in accordance with Islamic values (Islam & Sunan, 2016).

1.4. Women's Leadership

Leadership is an ability within a person to be able to influence others or guide others to achieve goals. While the definition in KKBI, leadership is a person who leads or guides a person or group. Islam as a religion that rahmatan lil 'alamin provides guidance for its people to live a balanced life, including in terms of leadership. In Islam, leadership values are not specifically reserved for men. Women also have the potential to become leaders as long as they meet criteria relevant to responsibilities such as trustworthiness, fairness, and competence. In the Qur'an and hadith, there are various examples and

principles that can be used as a basis for understanding the role of women's leadership, such as in Surah An-Naml verses 24-24 which tells the story of the leadership of Queen Bilqis and her wisdom (Ahmad Shadiq, 2016)

One of the arguments that is often used to limit the role of women in leadership is a verse in Surah An-Nisa (4:34), which states that men are "qawwam" (leaders) for women. This verse is often understood textually as a prohibition for women to hold leadership positions. However, many contemporary Muslim scholars and scholars interpret the verse in the context of family responsibilities and roles, not as an absolute prohibition on women's leadership in the public sphere. They argue that the concept of qawwamah does not mean superiority, but rather the responsibility to protect and meet the needs of the family (Fitryansyah, 2024).

Queen Bilqis was praised for her skill in leading her people and her ability to engage in dialogue with the Prophet Solomon. This example shows that Islam recognizes the ability of women to lead fairly and wisely. In addition, women during the time of the Prophet PBUH, such as Aisyah bint Abu Bakar, also played an important role in education, politics, and the dissemination of knowledge. Aisha, as one of the wives of the Prophet, is known as the main source of hadith

The view that supports women's leadership is also strengthened by the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH which reads: "Indeed, women are brothers" (HR. Abu Dawud). This hadith affirms the principle of equality in rights and responsibilities between men and women. In the context of leadership, women who have the ability, integrity, and capacity to lead should not be hindered just because of their gender. It is important to note that Islam does not absolutely prohibit women from becoming leaders, in various aspects of life women have the same rights and potential to contribute to society. Although there are still many differences of opinion among scholars regarding certain types of leadership, such as being the head of state or judge, which is considered by some to be the domain of men. However, it is important to note that these differences are influenced more by the social and cultural context of the past than by the provisions of a universal religion

Gender equality, women, and politics are closely linked, especially in an effort to create equitable justice in various aspects of life. Gender equality emphasizes that men and women have equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities in all fields, including political participation. In this context, women often face structural, cultural, and social barriers that limit their role in the political arena. In fact, women's political participation is very important to ensure that women's needs, aspirations, and perspectives can be fairly represented in decision-making.

Women's political participation not only contributes to strengthening democracy, but also improves the quality of policies that are more responsive to issues such as health, education, and family welfare. Women's leadership is also the key to creating positive change in society. Women leaders often bring a more collaborative and empathetic approach to leading, which can provide innovative solutions to social challenges.

However, challenges such as gender stereotypes, lack of access to political education, and lack of institutional support remain major obstacles. Therefore, it is important to encourage more women to be active in politics, both through education, empowerment, and affirmation policies such as quotas for

women in parliament. With this step, gender equality in politics is not only an ideal, but also a reality that has a positive impact on society as a whole.

Conclusion

The discussion of equal rights, obligations, roles, and positions of women in politics based on the interpretation of Surah An-Naml verses 23-24 shows that Islam does not limit the role of women in social life, including in the political realm. The verse tells the story of Ratu Balqis' leadership as a woman leader who is wise, intelligent, and able to manage the government well. This is proof that Islam recognizes the ability of women to lead and play an active role in strategic decision-making.

The interpretation of this verse also strengthens the view that women have the same rights as men in contributing to the public sphere, including politics. However, women's participation must still pay attention to moral values and responsibilities in accordance with Islamic sharia principles. Obstacles such as gender stereotypes and social barriers are often obstacles, so efforts to empower women through education, affirmative policy support, and strengthening public awareness are needed.

By understanding that Islam does not discriminate against women's roles, this research emphasizes the importance of creating a more inclusive space for women to participate in politics. This is not only an effort to realize gender justice, but also to enrich the quality of leadership and policy-making that is more inclusive and diverse for the benefit of the people.

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- Wibisono, R. B. (2022). *Achievement of Women's Political Identity in Indonesia Introduction The achievement of women's political identity in Indonesia to this day has not reached its maximum point, even in fact, it is still very hampered and experiencing many obstacles in various Gender Gap Index) in 2013 through the Human Development Report published by UNDP Indonesia which is ranked 106th, far behind Vietnam in this fact. It is needed to ensure that Indonesian women can reach their potential. Women's struggle is a very long time. Women's political history This situation has gradually improved in its development, especially after what radical feminists have done in dismantling the political veil that has been created by men. personal is political (Oxford Reading in Feminism, Feminism, The Public and The Private) here the issue of politics is no longer to discuss the right to vote but a more radical issue in the existence of politics that is always hidden, namely the issue of oppression of women playing a role in the public sphere (Budoyo and Hardiyanti 2021, 240). Women should have the right and obligation to participate in the public sphere (Purnamasari 2015, 54), especially and gender justice. Until today, there are very few*. 1(1), 67–80.