

Deconstructing Qawwām: Derrida's Philosophical Hermeneutics and the Reconfiguration of the Role of Gender in Islamic Thought

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Abstract: *The issue of gender is a never-ending issue, especially related to the balance of gender roles in the reality of everyday life. The focus of this study is to analyze the balance of gender roles in the QS review. al-Nisā (4): 34 about Qawwām by involving a theory from a famous figure, namely Jacques Derrida's deconstruction theory. The data collection method used is qualitative, which typically requires analysis. Then the results of the discussion in this study are: First, that by using Derrida's deconstruction, it can provide color in a person's thinking style when understanding a text, the text will not be interpreted with only one meaning or even a final meaning, but will continue to produce new meanings that continue to be sustainable. Second, deconstruction does not justify or blame, but serves as a mediator by examining the meanings that emerge from reading the conditions of social reality. Third, Derrida's deconstruction can reveal that the term Qawwām does not immediately refer to male superiority, but rather to a situational division of roles. Thus, the relationship between husband and wife can be seen as a dynamic partnership that complements rather than hierarchizes.*

Keywords: *Deconstruction, Qawwām, Jacques Derrida.*

Abstrak: *Isu gender merupakan isu yang tak ada habisnya, terutama terkait dengan keseimbangan peran gender dalam realitas kehidupan sehari-hari. Fokus penelitian ini adalah mencoba menganalisis keseimbangan peran gender dalam review QS. al-Nisā (4): 34 tentang Qawwām dengan melibatkan teori dari tokoh terkenal, yaitu teori dekonstruksi Jacques Derrida. Metode pengumpulan data yang digunakan bersifat kualitatif yang cenderung menggunakan analisis. Maka hasil pembahasan dalam penelitian ini adalah; Pertama, bahwa dengan menggunakan dekonstruksi Derrida, mampu memberi warna pada gaya berpikir seseorang ketika memahami sebuah teks, teks tersebut tidak akan ditafsirkan dengan makna tunggal atau bahkan makna akhir tetapi*

akan terus melahirkan makna baru yang terus dipertahankan. Kedua, dekonstruksi bekerja bukan untuk membenarkan dan menyalahkan, tetapi untuk menengahi dengan melihat makna yang berangkat dari pembacaan kondisi realitas sosial dalam masyarakat. Ketiga, Dekonstruksi yang dibawa oleh Derrida, dapat mengungkapkan bahwa istilah Qawwām tidak selalu mengacu pada superioritas laki-laki, melainkan pada pembagian peran situasional. Dengan demikian, hubungan antara suami dan istri dapat dilihat sebagai kemitraan dinamis yang saling melengkapi, bukan hierarkis.

Kata kunci: *Dekonstruksi, Qawwām, Jacques Derrida.*

Introduction

Talking about gender is always a warm conversation.¹ The issue raised is always related to equal rights between men and women. It departs from several people's views that there is an inequality in freedom, especially regarding women. They are sometimes limited to a few things and are even considered the second *sex* in the social order. The problem continues to give rise to issues, such as protests by equality support groups.² So, in a reality that exists, and it still happens today, women are still positioned as second-class citizens (*the second people*). It can be seen in the rules, customs, culture, and interpretation of religion, which lead to the restraint and deprivation of women's rights. For example, in Islamic society, there is an assumption or understanding that a woman's voice is *awrah*. With this understanding, women's access to actualize themselves in the public sphere is limited and even hindered, even though the majority of scholars do not consider women's voices as *aurat* as long as they do not cause *fitnah*.³

As the author has explained before, women are still considered second-class after men, in the sense that women's degrees are below men's. The relationship built is one of power, in which men hold complete control over women.⁴ Consciously or unconsciously, Muslims still adhere to the patriarchal system. The factors why patriarchal culture is so strong in the social system include, at least, some of the following: First, this patriarchal culture has been rooted for so long (as mentioned above)—second, political factors which have not been entirely in favor of women. Third, economic factors, this is none other than the existence of a global capitalist system that sweeps the world, which often exploits

¹ Yuyun Fitriani, et al., "Increasing Women's Participation in Social, Political, Legal and Economic Fields," *Journal of Social Service* 1, no. 10 (2024): 1456-1461, 1459. <https://doi.org/10.59837/dqpgjw03>.

² Saibatul Hamdi and Ahmad Riyadh Maulidi, A Discursive Study of the Gap in Women's Leadership in the Qur'an, *Maghza Journal of Al-Quran Science and Tafsir* 8, no. 1 (2023): 100–118, 110, <https://doi.org/10.24090/maghza.v8i1.6175>.

³ Muhammad Romli, "Jurnal Al Wasith: Journal of Islamic Law Studies || Vol. 6 No. 2 (2021) □," *Al Wasith Journal: Journal of Islamic Law Studies* || 6, no. 2 (2021): 206–216, 210.

⁴ Haikal Fadhil Anam, Tafsir of Islamic Feminism, *MAGHZA: Journal of Qur'an and Tafsir* 4, no. 2 (2019): 161–176, 162, <https://doi.org/10.24090/maghza.v4i2.3071>.

women. Fourth, the factor of interpretations of religious texts/scriptures, which is dominated by the ideology of the patriarchal system.⁵

The authors see that research on gender is not something new. Here are some of the studies the author found: First, a survey conducted by Saibatul Hamdi & Ahmad Riyadh Maulidi, titled "*A Discursive Study of the Women's Leadership Gap in the Qur'an*". The results of their research indicate that the Qur'an's portrayal of women's leadership is reflected in Ratu Balqis's success as Queen of Saba, the existence of women's rights in politics, and equal rights between men and women. So, between men and women, there is equality in their respective portions. *Second*, research conducted by Haikal Fadhil Anam on "*Tafsir Islamic Feminism: A Study of Riffat Hassan's Interpretation of Q.S Al-Nisa [4]: 34*". The results of his research show that Riffat Hassan criticized earlier scholars who interpreted the word *Qawwām* as meaning "leader". According to him, if the word is interpreted as a leader, it will have implications for the theology and psychology of male superiority over women. So he offered the result of his interpretation, which is better if the word is interpreted as a protector and a source of support.

Based on the literature presented, the author concludes that research on gender studies using one of the theories of philosophical figures is either limited or nonexistent. Most existing research discusses or traces gender issues only through the study of Islamic law, tafsir, or hadith. Therefore, the author initiated research on gender studies using one of Jacques Derrida's theories. Jacques Derrida is famous for his theory of deconstruction. This theory is not just a textual critique but also a tool for taming seemingly stable structures of meaning, including traditional gender constructs, by dismantling binary oppositions and opening space for more egalitarian and contextual interpretations.⁶ This research will reveal how the balance of gender roles is viewed through Jacques Derrida's deconstruction, especially in QS. Al-Nisā [4]: 34 about *Qawwāmūna*. This paper, from the perspective of Jacques Derrida's deconstruction, assumes that assumptions about the balance of gender roles, including those contained in QS. Al-Nisā [4]: 34 concerning *Qawwāmūna* can be analyzed as a construction of meaning that is not absolute. Derrida encourages us to dismantle the hierarchies, binarisms, and structures of authority inherent in texts, including scriptural passages, to uncover latent alternative meanings. By dismantling the hierarchies implied by the word *Qawwāmūna*, Derrida's deconstruction not only provides a new perspective on gender roles but also brings us closer to egalitarian values in our understanding of religious texts.

Method

⁵ Abdul Mustaqim, *The Paradigm of Feminist Tafsir Reading the Qur'an with a Women's Perspective: A Study of Riffat Hassan's Thoughts on Gender Issues in Islam*, (Logung Pustaka; 2008), 15.

⁶ Sonya Trikandi, Yusro Edy Nugroho, and Agus Nuryatin, "Stereotyping of Father Figures in Short Stories by Putu Wijaya: A Study of Derrida's Deconstruction," *Pen : Journal of Language and Literature Education* 13, no. 1 (2023): 49–54, 52, <https://doi.org/10.22437/pena.v13i1.28654>.

The data collection technique used in this study is qualitative.⁷ This type was chosen because the author wants to examine a symptom, phenomenon, or social reality for research purposes. The data search in this study uses library research; the data obtained will be narrated descriptively. In addition, data sources in this study were obtained from books, journals, and articles, and theories were used to identify continuity between the data and the author's theory. Then, as explained earlier, the theory used is a deconstruction of the work of the famous philosopher Jacques Derrida. This approach provides an opportunity to dismantle rigid hierarchical structures, such as the male-versus-female opposition, and to open the possibility of more egalitarian, context-specific gender roles. In its application, deconstruction is not just an analysis, but also a critical process that advances a social vision.⁸ The focus of this research is to examine the understanding of gender role balance, especially in QS—Al-Nisā [4]: 34 on *Qawwāmūna* from the lens of Jacques Derrida.

Results and Discussions

Definition of Gender

The word gender comes from the Latin (*genus*), meaning "type" or "type". Then, in line with the English dictionary, the word gender is given the meaning of sex (*sex*).⁹ So the term gender is often interpreted as sex, which is biologically defined in the categories of men and women. Gender can also be defined as the difference between the masculine and the feminine. In general, both can be translated as gender, but their connotations differ. Sex refers more to the biological sense, while gender refers more to the social meaning (socio-cultural construction).¹⁰ Confusion about the term gender is a phenomenon we find in many people's lives. It can be seen from most or the majority of the understanding that is rooted in society is to confuse the meaning of "*gender*" with "*nature*". For example, a woman doing a job considered a man's job is seen as going *against "nature"*. Such an understanding is a misunderstanding. What is meant by nature is more a form of ability, power, or innate trait that indicates the perpetrator's active involvement in what he can and cannot do himself, without depending on others (more on inner power). Such a trait is biological and comes from God.

Terminologically, gender is defined as the cultural expectations of both men and women.¹¹ According to H. T. Wilson, gender is defined as the basis for distinguishing the

⁷ Qualitative research method, which is a study that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from an object that can be observed and researched. *Lexy J & Meleong, Moleong Qualitative Research Methodology*, (Jakarta: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2014), 3.

⁸ Adawiyahovel, Muakibatul Hasanah and Robiatul. Sitti Nurbaya, Differentiation of the Concept of Women in Three Eras: A Study of Deconstruction by Jasque DeriddaBalik Kerling, and Saatirah Approach, "39036-107135-3-Pb," *Berth* 20 (2021): 1–28.

⁹ John M. Echols dan Hassan Sadhily, *Indonesian English Dictionary, Cet XII*, (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1983), 265.

¹⁰ Adam and Jessica Kuper Kuper, *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, Second Edition* (Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada, 2000), 391.

¹¹ Rokhmansyah Alfian, *Introduction to Gender and Feminism: An Early Understanding of Literary Criticism of Feminism* (Garudhawaca, 2016).

contributions of men and women to culture and collective life, and, as a result, men and women become distinct.¹² Gender refers to the distinctions and social relationships between girls and boys,¹³ as well as between adult males and females, that are studied, vary widely within and between cultures, and can change over time.¹⁴ For example, in many countries, women are the ones who cook (become chefs), but there has been a change: men are also becoming cooks and even taking care of household kitchen issues. Another meaning comes from Nasaruddin Umar, who explains that gender is a concept used to distinguish between men and women from a socio-cultural perspective. Gender, in this sense, defines men and women from a non-biological perspective. This concept is attached to men and women as a result of cultural constructions in human life, so it is not natural.¹⁵ There is an excellent difference between gender in the sense of "sex", which is put forward by Lisa Little, quoting Nella Lucky's argument, that gender in this sense is used to identify the anatomical and biological differences between men and women, and this is something that is carried from birth, therefore it is more natural and immutable. This narrative emphasizes that *the aspect of sex* is objective and stable, in contrast to gender, which is more dynamic and shaped by culture.¹⁶

Based on some of the explanations provided, the author concludes that gender is a role, attitude, and trait constructed by society, so that one culture may view women's roles, attitudes, and traits differently from another. It is also clear that gender is not the price of death or the nature of the divine, but it will always change according to the culture that surrounds it. So, in other words, gender is a socio-cultural product. The concept of gender emerged and developed through social interactions and cultural values that prevailed in society. For example, in the tradition of Islamic boarding schools, the difference in role patterns between male and female students is not solely due to biological differences, but to cultural constructions that establish exclusive zones and moral values that shape certain gender expectations.¹⁷ Similarly, in the domestic environment, the division of domestic work between husband and wife in the modern urban family is also greatly influenced by social norms, even as there are shifts; the old structure still dominates because of values embedded and repeated in daily culture.¹⁸ The verses in the

¹² Marzuki, *Study of gender equality in various aspects 1* (Yogyakarta: Center for Women's Studies, 2015), 90.

¹³ Diah Firdausya, *The Dual Role of Women Who Work as Teachers in Improving Family Welfare: A Case Study in Tampo Village, Cluring District, Banyuwangi Regency*, (Thesis: University of Jember, 2017), 97.

¹⁴ Nelien dan Busakorn Suriyasarn Haspels, *Improving Gender Equality in Action to Address Child Labour and Trafficking in Women and Children: A Practical Guide for Organizations* (ILO-IPEC, 2005), 89.

¹⁵ Nasaruddin Umar, *Argument for Gender Equality Perspective of the Qur'an* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1999), 35.

¹⁶ Muhammad Naufal Fairuzillah, Fahman Mumtazi, and Yongki Sutoyo, "Non-Binary Gender and Child Sexuality Fitrah Education," *Ta'dibuna: Journal of Islamic Education* 12, no. 2 (2023): 163–179, 169, <https://doi.org/10.32832/tadibuna.v12i2.8867>.

¹⁷ Luthfi Salim, "Gender Social Construction in Islamic Boarding Schools Study the Gap Between Men and Women," *Socio-Religious: Journal of Sociology of Religion* 01, no. 02 (2020): 1–17, 9, <http://ejournal.radenintan.ac.id/index.php/sr%0AKontruksi>.

¹⁸ Venny Pratiyaya, et al., "Changes in Social Construction in Domestic Labor Division: A Study of the Relationship Between Husband and Wife in Modern Families," *Yinyang: Journal of Islamic Studies of Gender and Children* 18, no. 2 (2023): 197–222, 200, <https://doi.org/10.24090/yinyang.v18i2.8573>.

Qur'an that address gender-related issues can be classified into several main themes, such as the creation of man, the relationship between men and women, gender roles and responsibilities, women's rights, and fair treatment in social life. The verse about the equality of the creation of men and women is QS. al-Hujurat (49): 13. The verse about the relationship between men and women is QS. Ar-Rum (30): 21. The verse about gender rights and obligations is QS. An-Nisa (4): 34 and QS. al-Baqarah (2): 228. The verse about the protection of women is QS. an-Nūr (24): 30-31 and QS. at-Tahrīm (66): 11-12. The verse about equality in the hereafter is QS. An-Nahl (16:97) and the verse on women's courage and contributions are in QS. al-Mumtahanah (60): 12.

An overview of Jacques Derrida

A philosopher whose thoughts were considered to be intriguing but strangely interesting to study. Who is Jacques Derrida? Jacques Derrida was born on July 15, 1930, in the city of Elbiar, near Algiers, Algeria, which was still under French colonial rule at the time. His parents are named Aime Derrida and Georgette Sultana Ester Safar. The two married in 1923 and moved to St. Augustine in Al-Jazair. His family was Jewish, with ancestors who came from Spain and settled in Algeria.¹⁹ At the age of 19, around 1949, Derrida moved to France to study and serve in the military. The following year, 1953, Derrida enrolled at the prestigious École Normale Supérieure, well known for producing notable alums who have since become professors. At this school, Derrida was acquainted with several prominent scholars, including Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault, and Pierre Bourdieu.²⁰

In 1953-1954, Derrida began to be critical and searched for and studied the archives of Husserl at one of the universities in Belgium, namely the University of Leuven, and in the same year, Derrida wrote a dissertation entitled "*Le probleme de la genese dans la philosophie de Husserl*" or interpreted (Problem of Origins in Husserl's Philosophy, 1954). Later, from 1960 to 1964, Derrida worked as a lecturer at the University of Paris I, Sorbonne-Pantheon. In addition to participating in teaching activities, Deleuze also served as Ricoeur's assistant.²¹ Given Derrida's activities, it is natural that he became a great philosopher. His journey in learning, seeking, and studying science is very critical and persistent. Apart from studying, he has had the opportunity to become a Ricoeur assistant on his journey, which not everyone can have. In 1974, Derrida was involved in the formation of the *Group de Recherche sur L'enseignement de la Philosophie* (GREPH), a movement of associations of philosophy lecturers who fought for a proper place for the teaching of philosophy in secondary schools in France. The association became active after the plan for teaching reform was carried out, and the teaching of philosophy began to be questioned. So on the way, Derrida made an

¹⁹ F. Budi Hardiman, *The Art of Understanding Hermeneutics from Schleiermacher Tot Derrida*, (Yogyakarta: PT Kanisius, 2015), 275.

²⁰ F. Budi Hardiman, 276.

²¹ A New Kind of Love, *Social Philosophy* (Malang: Aditya Media Publishing, 2013), 277.

interesting statement when he put forward "*Qui apeur de la philosophie*" (Who is afraid of philosophy?).²²

Derrida is therefore known as the French philosopher considered an essential figure of post-structuralism and postmodernism. Derrida's thought was heavily influenced by other philosophers such as Edmund Husserl and Ferdinand de Saussure. As a development, specifically in the context of visual semiotics, Derrida's thought, with Barthes, expands the critique of structuralism by deconstructing signs to reveal many layers of interpretation beyond a single structure.²³ In the post-colonial realm and Indonesian culture, Derrida is applied methodologically to dismantle the hegemony of knowledge and dominant discourse, especially in understanding post-colonial identity. It is reflected in studies that use deconstruction to critique the power-knowledge assumptions that shape the national narrative.²⁴ Jacques Derrida has written a large number of works, and almost all of them are commentaries on philosophers and scientists, such as Kant, Hegel, Freud, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Husserl. Of the works written by Derrida, the most famous are *La Voix et le Phénomène*, *L'Écriture et la Différance*, *De La Grammatologie*, *La Dissemination*, *Marges de la Philosophie*, "*L'écriture et la différence*", *dans Marges de la philosophie*. It can therefore be said that Jacques Derrida's contribution to philosophy is significant, as it gave rise to a theory still used today.²⁵ Deleuze breathed his last on October 9, 2004, leaving behind his phenomenal works and his famous thoughts. Derrida's position as the main character until his death strengthened his status as a deconstructionist icon.²⁶

Deconstruction of Jacques Derrida

Before explaining deconstruction, it is essential to trace the reasons why Derrida proposed deconstruction. In some existing literature, Derrida presents deconstruction as a form of rejection of the development of Western philosophy.²⁷ His rejection of Western philosophy was expressed through critiques of metaphysics and logocentrism. Derrida and his contemporaries generally refused to define deconstruction, arguing that definition was a limitation, whereas deconstruction aimed to break through boundaries. By rejecting the imposition of a fixed definition, Derrida asserts that deconstruction is not a standard method but rather a practice of opening up the space of meaning hidden in the text,

²² Akhyar Yusuf Lubis, *Is there still a place for knowledge*, (Bogor Akademia, 2003), 92.

²³ Irfan, "Deconstructive Semiotics and Post-Structuralist Thought of Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes," *Tanra Journal: Visual Communication Design* 9, no. 2 (2022): 97–104, 100, <https://doi.org/10.26858/tanra.v9i2.33302>.

²⁴ Magdalena Baga, "Deconstruction of Derrida and Gramsci Hegemony: An Beginning of the Search for Postcolonial Indonesian Cultural Identity", *Research Review of Multidisciplinary Scientific Journals1*, no. 1 (2022): 49–63, 57.

²⁵ Marietta Natalia Irene, In Jacques Derrida: Theory of Deconstruction, Religion and Science - IBTimes.ID, (Accessed on December 12, 2024 – 23:29).

²⁶ Muhammad Nur Hanif and Azizatur Rahma, "Deconstruction in the Short Story 'Arloji' by Tjak S. Parlan," *Transformatika: A Journal of Language, Literature, and Its Teaching* 7, no. 1 (2023): 127, <https://doi.org/10.31002/transformatika.v7i1.7694>.

²⁷ H Tedjoworo, *Imagination and imagination* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2009), 16.

thereby expanding interpretation and revealing the dominance of a single center of truth.²⁸ Deconstruction is not a tool for creating new definitions, but rather for disrupting and opening up the metaphysical foundations and central structures of the text, keeping interpretation always open and moving.²⁹ Deconstructionist hermeneutics is the practice of reading and understanding texts through the lens of equality and diversity. Even further, it can be said that deconstruction is antitheoretical or even antimethodical, because what is based on it is the game (*play*) and parody.³⁰

There are several definitions of deconstruction according to experts. Lexically, the prefix "*de*" means decrease, reduction, characterization, and rejection. Therefore, from this definition, deconstruction can be interpreted as a means of reducing construction, namely, ideas. Then, according to Al-Fayyad, deconstruction is an open testimony to those who lose, those who are marginalized by the stability of the regime named author. Thus, a deconstruction is the movement of the journey towards life itself.

Furthermore, Umar Junus views deconstruction as a new perspective in literary research.³¹ Based on the existing explanation, deconstruction can be defined as an effort to represent the desire and aspiration to dismantle an established building; an attempt to strip away standard construction; an anti-establishment 'movement'. This appreciation of diversity is supported by Derrida's thought of *différance* (France). *Différance* is a source of equivocal meaning. Why is it plural? Because each text has a *différance*, it has traces of differences. For example, a word only refers to another sign and never ends at a specific object as the final explanatory one. Traces in words refer to what is there as well as what is not.³²

It should be noted that Derrida's style of thinking is characterized by *mixing genres* (*in which any field is studied*) to explain his ideas. As previously described, Derrida has a style of thinking that evokes meaning (evocative), prompting readers to continue thinking in search of their own context. Method *mixes genres*. This is particularly evident in the study of cognitive linguistics, where Derrida uses the concept of language as a metaphorical and figurative realm to show that each sign structure holds layers of meaning that shift with each other, forcing the reader to actively reinterpret the written message even from movie dialogues or everyday song lyrics so that deconstruction serves as a never-ending exploration of meaning.³³ In the study of the sociology of film literature, Derrida's approach to audiovisual texts, such as the analysis of gender stereotypical icons, asserts that deconstruction is capable of creating spaces for dialogue between texts and reader-spectators to challenge standard social constructions, presenting the possibility of

²⁸ Mangihut Siregar, "Criticism of Derrida's Deconstruction Theory," *Journal of Urban Sociology* 2, no. 1 (2019): 65, <https://doi.org/10.30742/jus.v2i1.611>.

²⁹ Frenky Icksan Nugraha, Ekarini Saraswati, and Joko Widodo, "Deconstruction of Derrida's Jacques in the Novel *O* by Eka Kurniawan," *FONEMA Scientific Journal* 3, no. 1 (2020): 27–42, 35, <https://doi.org/10.25139/fn.v3i1.2394>.

³⁰ Muhammad Al-Fayyad, *Derrida* (Yogyakarta: Lkis, 2006), 8.

³¹ And summarily, *Hermeneutics: A Philosophical Method* (Yogyakarta: PT Kanisius, 1999), 120.

³² Frety Cassia Udang, *Hermeneutic with Derrida'*, *Tumou Tou VI* (2019), 121.

³³ Seradona Altiria, "Derrida's Deconstruction in the Study of Cognitive Linguistics," *Proceedings of the Atma Jaya Annual Linguistic Conference (KOLITA)* 21, no. 21 (2023): 270–280, 275. <https://doi.org/10.25170/kolita.21.4857>.

alternative meanings previously stored in visual or narrative structures.³⁴ Then what became Derrida's style of thinking was circular, meaning that when finding the meaning of a meaning was not considered final, but was still in the process of consideration. According to Derrida, when it comes to showing the character or meaning of a text, there will be no conclusion. Because from each text that is read, it not only gives birth to one meaning but also gives birth to infinite meanings.

Derrida's writings are primarily expressed as commentaries on books read by scientists, writers, and even philosophers. This method is not just a criticism, but marks the birth of new texts born from the dynamic interaction between the original text and the interpretation. By deconstructing the structure of old texts, Derrida opens up space for readers and interpreters to be actively involved, so that meaning becomes an ever-evolving process rather than a final narrative.³⁵ Derrida channeled his ideas through interpretation and the creation of new texts. According to him, in reading the text, Derrida tried to compose his own text by dismantling other texts. Derrida targeted this style of thinking and has now made it his own characteristic way of thinking. In his research, McQuillan explained that deconstruction is a form of textual interpretation, but that interpretation is not the same as what is currently understood. It can therefore be concluded that deconstruction is a radical interpretation of the text, which is why deconstruction is sometimes called "radical hermeneutics". Why is that? Because this deconstruction is indeed contrary to the usual understanding of his time, namely modernism. Compared to post-structuralist theories in general, deconstruction, as stated by Derrida (1976), rejects logocentrism and phonocentrism, which, together, give rise to binary opposition and other dichotomous, hierarchical ways of thinking.³⁶

Gender Role Balance Analysis Review of QS. Al-Nisā [4]: 34 Jacques Derrida

Gender role balance refers to the equal distribution of responsibilities, rights, and opportunities between men and women across various aspects of life, in both public and private spaces. This concept requires that domestic and public roles be carried out in proportion, so that there is no double burden on one party, and instead, the creation of synergy between genders for inclusive and fair development.³⁷ In society, this concept is essential to overcome structural inequalities that often disadvantage one party, especially women, in access to education, employment, health, and decision-making. As previously explained, in this study, the author will examine the role of gender in QS—al-Nisā (4): 34, especially the wording *Qawwāmūna*. Before looking at the application of Jacques

³⁴ Ayu Eka Prasetyawati, Laila Adisti Aulia, and Adibah Agustini, "Analysis of Jacques Derrida's Deconstruction Theory in the Short Film 'Aphrodite Stereotype': A Study of Literary Sociology," *Source: Journal of Education, Social and Humanities* 1, no. 3 (2025): 439–447, 445.

³⁵ Yosep Belay, "The Encounter of Derrida's Deconstruction and Dogmatic Theology:," *RAI Theological Journal* 1, no. 2 (2025): 156–171, <https://doi.org/10.63276/jurnalrai.v1i2.46>.

³⁶ F. Budi Hardiman, 291-296.

³⁷ Nofriadi Nofriadi, et al., "Gender Analysis in MSME Management: Its Influence on Innovation and Competitive Advantage in Padang City," *Tower of Knowledge* 18, no. 1 (2024): 80–87, <https://doi.org/10.31869/mi.v18i1.4871>.

Derrida's theory to gender in this sentence, the author will first display the interpretations that already exist in this sentence—the Word of Allah in QS. al-Nisā (4): 34:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ ۚ فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَنَاطٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ ۗ وَالَّتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاضْرِبُوهُنَّ ۚ فَإِنْ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا كَبِيرًا

Translation:

Men (husbands) are in charge of women (wives) because Allah has given some of them (men) more than others (women) and because they (men) have provided for some of their wealth. Righteous women are those who are obedient (to Allah) and take care of themselves when (their husbands) are not there because Allah has taken care of (them). Women whom you are worried about, give them advice, leave them on the bed, and (if necessary,) beat them (in a painless manner). However, if they obey you, do not seek to trouble them. Indeed, Allah is exalted and exalted.³⁸

QS. al-Nisā' (4): 34 needs to be understood from the specific situation (asbāb nuzūl) that is the background of its presence in the reality of the earth, namely in the area of Medina. According to some of our interpretations, such as As-Sais, An-Nawawi, Al-jāwi, and Al-Baidhawi, the verse was born or present in the family of Sa'ad bin Rabi', a ruler of Anshor. Sa'ad's wife, Habibah bint Zayd, performed nusyuz on him and was beaten by Sa'ad. Then Habibah went to his father, and his father went to report the incident to the Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet encouraged Habibah to retaliate. However, before he had time to repay him, the companions of Medina strongly challenged the Prophet's decision, and the Angel Gabriel also came to deliver God's message to the Prophet Muhammad about the problems he faced. Then after that, the Prophet again called Habibah and said, "Jibril has come to me with a message of revelation, while reciting QS. al-Nisā' (4): 34.³⁹ This explanation does not mean that what the Prophet Muhammad conveyed was rejected by Allah. Still, the Qur'an respects the social conditions of the time, in which men were indeed more dominant than women in the household. The appreciation of the Qur'an is not for blame and justification, but for the purpose of seeing socio-history.

As is well known, the scholars of interpretation differ in responding to or interpreting this verse. The debate in this verse highlights a lot about the role of gender in the word *Qawwām*. Word *Qawwām*. *Most interpretations are interpreted as leaders because there are advantages: physical advantages and the responsibility to provide for themselves.* As explained by Tafsir al-Furqān, translating the word *Qawwām* in the verse of QS. al-Nisā' (4): 34 as a regulator, the reason for the leadership of men over women in this commentary is that men have advantages and are obliged to provide for their wives.

³⁸ Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, *Al-Qur'an and Translation*, (Surabaya: Halim, 2019), p. 84.

³⁹ Aksin Wijaya, *Suing the Authenticity of God's Revelation: Criticism of Gender Interpretation* (Yogyakarta: Safiria Insania Press, 2004), 186-187.

The benefits in question are strength, courage, determination, and accuracy. Furthermore, this interpretation also sees QS. al-Nisā' (4:11) about the advantage lies in the difference in the inheritance of boys and girls. Meanwhile, Tafsir al-Muntakhab explained that men's leadership over women stems from the ability to bear the burden of leadership and the requirement to provide for their families.⁴⁰ Al-Thabari and al-Razi also, in their commentary, explain that *Qawwāmūna* on QS. al-Nisā' (4:34) is the man as the leader of the wife in the household. Then a similar view can also be seen in the tafsir *al-Jalālain, Muqātil, Rūh al-Bayān, al-Baghawī, al-Alūsi, Fath al-Qādīr, Zad al-Misīr, al-Biqāi, and Samarqandī*, who interpret the sentences *and because they (men) have provided for some of their wealth*, as an obligation to pay dowry, alimony, and kifayah, which causes the priority of men over women.⁴¹

Differences of opinion arose among Muslim feminists, namely Asghar Ali Engineer and Amina Wadud Muhsin, regarding whether the Qur'an's statements are normative as absolute rules or contextual, so that interpretation must be adjusted to changing times and culture. They reconstruct the method of interpretation through a feminist hermeneutic approach, namely, reading gender verses from a woman's perspective, so that patriarchal classical interpretations can be revised toward inclusive interpretations and gender equality.⁴² If it is normative, then male leadership in the household is permanent, certainly a norm that cannot be negotiated anymore. On the other hand, if it is contextual, leadership in the household is adjusted to a specific social context. If the social context changes, then the doctrine will automatically change. What does it mean that it is not absolute that men are the leaders in the household?⁴³ Muhammad Abduh also supports this in his Tafsir al-Manār, which states that in QS. al-Nisā' (4:34) does not absolutize the leadership of men over women, because the verse does not use the phrase "because Allah has given advantages to men", but uses the phrase "because Allah has given advantage among them over others".⁴⁴

So, what is the meaning of *Qawwām in QS?* al-Nisā' (4): 34 using the theory of deconstruction brought by Jacques Derrida? The application of Derrida's deconstruction to the case of gender role balance is not very clearly open overall. The point is that if *Qawwām* in QS. al-Nisā' (4:34) is understood through the theory of deconstruction, so it will not yield a solution. Why is that? Because deconstruction will not justify or blame two groups that are still in dispute, *Qawwām*, in QS. al-Nisā' (4): 34, but looking for another meaning by looking at the two arguments or opinions that exist. In addition, the application of deconstruction will not find a single, final meaning but will remain

⁴⁰ Hamka Hasan, *Gender Interpretation: A Comparative Study Between Indonesian and Egyptian Figures*, (Ciputat, 2008), 104.

⁴¹ Hamka Hasan, *Gender Interpretation of a Comparative Study between Indonesian and Egyptian Figures* (Jakarta: Research and Development Agency and Training of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2009), 198.

⁴² Reni Dian Anggraini, "Women in the Frame of the Qur'an: Amina Wadud's Interpretation Model," *Ushuluna: Journal of Ushuluddin Science* 8, no. 2 (2022): 95–109, 102, <https://doi.org/10.15408/ushuluna.v8i2.25860>.

⁴³ Waryono Muh, *Isnanto, Gender and Islam: Text and Context* (Yogyakarta: PSW UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2009), 68.

⁴⁴ Siti Ruhaini et al Dzuhayanti, *Methodological Reconstruction of the Discourse on Gender Equality in Islam*, (Yogyakarta, PSW UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2002), 124.

sustainable. Because, in fact, humans are constantly seeking the truth and will never feel satisfied. To see the answer, humans test a problem using a specific method to determine whether the result is correct.⁴⁵

From a deconstructive perspective, *Qawwām* can be explained through analytical steps that dismantle the traditional binary understanding of men as "leaders" and women as "leaders". Here is how to understand the concept *Qawwām* through a deconstruction approach:

- 1) Understand traditional and binary texts in the context of *Qawwām*. Verse QS. An-Nisa (4:34) states that "*arrijalu qawwāmūna 'ala an-nisā'*," which is often translated as "man is the leader over woman." This traditional understanding holds that men are the leaders of the family because they are given advantages (fadl). The benefits in question are those previously explained, as well as the responsibility of providing for the family. From these advantages and responsibilities, a binary is formed: Male → Leader → Superior → Active. Meanwhile, women are → led by an inferior → passive →. Derrida's deconstruction challenges this hierarchy and seeks to explore alternative meanings of the word *Qawwām* by attending to the context and dynamics of meaning.
- 2) Dismantling the Hierarchy of the Meaning of *Qawwām*. In deconstruction, Derrida emphasizes that meaning is never fixed or absolute, but always depends on context and reinterpretation. This narrative is reinforced by the study by Amril & Ridho (2024), which explains that deconstruction is not just a method but a reading event that continues to challenge the structure of binary opposition, highlighting the margins and opening new interpretive spaces without holding on to final meaning.⁴⁶ In Arabic, the word *Qawwām* comes from the root qama, which means to stand, support, or take care of. This term emphasizes that the role of *qawwām* is not merely an authority but a sustaining and nurturing function in gender relations, especially in the family.⁴⁷ *Qawwām* indicates the role of a person who is responsible for maintaining balance, not as a ruler or absolute authority. Deconstruction highlights that this responsibility is not a matter of superiority, but a specific function that can shift according to conditions. Viewing *Qawwām* is based on functional meaning, not essential. Men are called *Qawwām* because they spend part of their wealth (according to the context of the verse). The hierarchy between men and women in this verse is dismantled as a conditional division of roles rather than a division of nature. Therefore, it is essential to examine the current situation and conditions, as women's roles in various areas are evident today.

⁴⁵ Zanzabil Adwa Fitriani, Ahmad Nasrulloh, and Sigit Nugroho, Islamic Perspectives On the Significance Between Philosophy and Science, *Aqlania: Journal of Islamic Philosophy and Theology* 13, no. 2 (2022), 248.

⁴⁶ Amril M and Muhamad Ridho, "Jacques Derrida's Deconstruction Theory," *Tambusai Education Journal* 8, no. 3 (2024): 49764-49769.

⁴⁷ Deswanti Nabilah Putri, Wildan Taufiq, and Ahmad Izzan, "Women's Leadership in Tafsir At-Tabari and Tafsir Al-Mishbāh," *Mashadiruna Journal of Qur'an Science and Tafsir* 3, no. 1 (2024): 61–74, 68, <https://doi.org/10.15575/mjiat.v3i1.33962>.

- 3) Unlocking a new meaning of *Qawwām*. By dismantling traditional hierarchies, the definition of *Qawwām* can be expanded to encompass collective responsibility, enabling men and women to serve equally as *Qawwām* in the modern family. This concept views the *Qawwām*'s function not as a single authority but as a joint role involving both parties, tailored to each other's strengths and abilities.⁴⁸ This role depends on ability, not gender alone. For example, in a family where women are the primary breadwinners, women can perform *the function of Qawwām*. Then *Qawwām* is also a dynamic principle, meaning it is not a rigid role but one that changes according to social and cultural needs. Deconstruction, therefore, views that this responsibility is interchangeable between men and women.
- 4) Deconstruction of *Fadl* values (excesses). In QS. al-Nisā' (4:34), it is said to "*put some of them above others.*" In deconstruction, *Fadl* (excess) does not mean the absolute superiority of men over women. These advantages can be interpreted as specific advantages (such as physical strength or economic responsibility) that are not always relevant in today's context. Deconstruction shows that excess can change depending on context. In different contexts, women can have certain advantages that make them *Qawwām*. The *position of the Qawwām* is relative; just as physical superiority or ratio is not absolute, it is the social context and the function imposed that determines a person's suitability as a ruler, regardless of gender.⁴⁹
- 5) The implication of *Qawwām*'s engagement with the deconstruction approach is that *Qawwām* is no longer interpreted in a binary, *hierarchical manner, but rather* in terms of equality in roles. Men and women alike can become *Qawwām* based on their responsibilities and abilities. *Qawwām* is a situation-dependent relational responsibility. It is not a fixed position attached to a particular gender. In modern society, the division of responsibilities between men and women need not follow a traditional pattern. Modern family institutions demand a redistribution of duties. If women have a significant role in the maintenance or management of the household, then, logically, they can also become *Qawwām* within the framework of Islamic principles of justice.⁵⁰ Therefore, the author's research-based verses serve as a moral guide for carrying out the role with justice, not for establishing a fixed hierarchy.

If regular readings are related to *Qawwām* (leadership in the household), it always seeks the true meaning or the most correct. Therefore, deconstruction criticizes such a point of view, because in every text there is some invisible or hidden meaning behind it. Hence, through this theory, we will find that the text on *Qawwām* (leadership in the

⁴⁸ Wardah Nuroniya, The Concept of *Qiwamah* and the Phenomenon of Women as the Head of the Family, *Equality* 4, no. 1 (2022): 113–135.

⁴⁹ Laelati Dwina Apriani, Muhammad Iqbal Mustofa, and Eni Zulaiha, "Reinterpretation of Abortion: A Feminist Interpretation Study of Women's Reproductive Health Rights," *Ta'wiluna: Journal of Qur'anic Knowledge, Tafsir and Islamic Thought* 5, no. 3 (2024): 595–606, 600, <https://doi.org/10.58401/takwiluna.v5i3.1783>.

⁵⁰ Fauzan Azizan, "Gender and the Polemic of Family Institutions: A Critical Study of the Islamic Worldview," *Qawwam: Journal for Gender Mainstreaming* 16, no. 1 (2022): 28, 32, <https://doi.org/10.20414/qawwam.v16i1.5282>.

household) is no longer a complete order but a space of struggle that has been opened. In deconstruction, meaning is neither one nor final; it will always increase and change according to the reader's reading, informed by the existing situation and conditions. If the meaning *Qawwām* interpreted as singular or final, as a male leader for women, then deconstruction will dismantle that meaning. *Qawwām* does not mean only a leader; it has many meanings and will continue to change in response to the realities of the current conditions.

Therefore, the study, using the theory of deconstruction introduced by Jacques Derrida, sees that the balance of gender roles has meaning for *Qawwām*. Not only does it mean being a leader, but it can also be a helper, protector, role model, and so on. Derrida's deconstruction opens up space for interpreting the word *Qawwām* dynamically, flexibly, and contextually. Meaning *Qawwām*, it is no longer a matter of who is superior or inferior, but a matter of responsibility that anyone can bear based on their ability and condition. It allows for the reinterpretation of gender verses in the Qur'an to answer the challenges of a more just and inclusive modern society. As an ever-evolving framework of thought, deconstruction drives a redefinition of meaning for *Qawwām*, who are not stuck in a rigid hierarchy. Support for contemporary Islamic studies affirms that the meaning of *Qawwām* should be considered in its social, economic, and cultural context, not just through a literal interpretation. Studies such as "Deconstruction of Meaning *Qawwāmūna* in the Context of Modern Gender Relations" affirm that *Qawwāmūna* can be interpreted as a competency-based responsibility manager rather than merely as domination.⁵¹ Other semantic and historical approaches assert that the word *Qawwām* does not automatically mean a superior leader, but rather an enforcer of justice, a role that anyone can carry out within the framework of shared responsibility. Thus, interpreting *Qawwām* through the lens of deconstruction enables a more equitable, inclusive, and responsive reading of the Qur'an to the challenges of the times.

⁵¹ Adrika Fithrotul Aini, "Contextual Interpretation of Qur'an Verses on the Relationship between Men and Women," *Al-Mada: Religious, Social, and Cultural Journal* 4, no. 1 (2021): 92–109, 97, <https://doi.org/10.31538/almada.v4i1.1125>.

Conclusion

The meaning of *Qawwām*, as theorized through Derrida's deconstruction, can be described as a concept with a binary opposition (male as leader and female as lead). Derrida's deconstruction seeks to show that this meaning is not fixed, but rather depends on the social, cultural, and linguistic context that frames it, or on the words that surround it. For example, when the husband fails to fulfill his *Qawwām* function (such as failing to provide for himself), women often take on similar roles, demonstrating the flexibility of this concept in practice. Derrida's deconstruction can reveal that the term *Qawwām* does not necessarily refer to male superiority but instead to a situational division of roles. Thus, the relationship between husband and wife can be seen as a dynamic partnership that complements each other rather than a hierarchical one. This perspective opens up space for a more inclusive reinterpretation of the verse in the context of gender equality.

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