The Problems of Gender Equality: A Reconstruction of Islamic Doctrine

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Abstract

Women are born to be leaders, yet there still have been many disputations which grounding their arguments based on Al-Qur'an and Sunnah. However, the study on women's leadership needs to be reconstructed arguing that the traditional interpretations are no longer suitable in this changing times. Hence, this paper aims at advocating women position and their leadership in Islam. In addition, this paper also serves as a re-actualisation of the concept of Islam and also interpretation and re-understanding of the Qur'an and al-Hadith to provide opportunities for women associated with the concept of their equality with men. Furthermore, this paper attempts to reconstruct the Islamic doctrine of women's leadership seen from the perspectives of the Qur'an, al-Hadith, *fiqh*, *tasawwuf*, *siyasah*, and history. The consideration of hermeneutical aspect of normativity and historicity is a necessity in the contextual, comprehensive, and holistic interpretation of the text, since it can be stated that there is no compelling reason or argument that can reject women's leadership. Thus, it is found that principally there was no strict prohibition in Islam that could reject women's leadership in various fields.
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Key words: Reconstruction, Islamic Doctrine, Women's Leadership, Gender Equality.

Introduction

Claim: Women are Leaders

Women are natural-born leaders. Their position in family play indirect role on society evolution (Bakhtyar & Rezaei, 2012). Throughout the history, women have proven their leadership ability in Moslem society. The Prophet's wives, Khadijah and Aisha, his daughter Fatima, and granddaughter Zaynab are the earliest examples of Muslim women leaders (Abbott, 1942; Mernissi, 1996; Wadud, 1999, Ahmad, 2006; in Peshkova, (2009). Another success women leader is Queen Balqis. In An-Naml: 23-43, Al-Qur'an describes the story of Queen Balqis who successfully led a large kingdom in a country named Saba (now the capital of Yemen). She could

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lead the kingdom well and made the people prosper (Mernissi, 1997, pp. 218–228). Even the phrase in Saba: 15 states *baldatun thayyibatun wa rabbun ghafur* (meaning: "A good land [have you], and a forgiving Lord", is a form of congratulations on the success of Queen Balqis.

Indonesia, as one of the populous Moslem countries, had been led once by female president. Megawati Soekarnoputri served as the President of the Republic of Indonesia from 2001 to 2004 and previously served as Vice President from 1999 to 2001. However, many Indonesian people still think that sharia law does not allow women to be leaders (Rohman, 2013). Some religious doctrines still weaken women's position in various aspects of life. Therefore, the prohibition of women's leadership has hurt the spirit of Islamic teachings that uphold the values of justice and gender equality, and forgotten the mission of Islam carried by the Prophet Muhammad PBUH.

Islam has positioned women equals to men. Western historian, Will Durant, acknowledges Muhammad's merit in improving women's rights and highly recognises the position of women in Islam (Rahmat, 1999, p. 125). Islam carried by the Prophet Muhammad PBUH was a mission of liberation religion. It came to end discriminative practices towards women, hence, it sought to free women from any kinds of oppression, rights inequality, male arbitrariness due to nation's or society's culture.

The lack of understanding and interpretation of Islamic teaching sources cause gender inequality. Women are seen unable to lead. Meanwhile, al-Qur'an and hadiths justify that leadership is not only the domain of men. Instead, Islam recognises the equality of male and female dignity, since both have equal rights and obligations in various fields. The concept of parallels that reflects justice is normatively confirmed in al-Ahzab: 33 and 73, Ali Imran: 195 and al-Baqarah: 187. In the other word, gender in society requires an egalitarian social order and eliminates an unfair social order, which can be done by acknowledging women's leadership ability.

Evidence: Al-Qur'an and Sunnah on Women' Rights

Al-Quran and Sunnah, as the resources of Islamic learning, (Supriyadi & Julia, 2019; Supriyadi et al., In Press), have elaborated the noble position of women in Islam. Women has been portrayed tenderly by Allah SWT in al-Quran, as it discusses women's rights more than men's obligation. The word 'an-nisa' is mentioned 57 times in the Al-Qur'an, two times more than the word 'rijal'. It mostly discusses the rights of women as social responses toward women's condition

during Jahiliyyah, in which women's rights were often neglected. During Jahiliyyah, women did not have any rights on inheritance, but then al-Qur'an establishes women's inheritance rights. Interestingly, the name of Allah is never attached to any creature, but women. The name is *ar-Rahim* that is one of anatomies of women (Supriyadi, 2018)

Women's physical beauty is not an important aspect in Islam, hence, beautiful women never becomes a character in al-Quran. However, al-Qur'an describes physical issues on the sharia implementation of women and men using good words, such as "you have contacted women" (An-Nisa: 43); "…go to your wives" (Al-Baqoroh: 187); "come to your place of cultivation however you wish and put forth [righteousness] for yourselves" (Al-Baqoroh: 223) (Rakhmat, 2008, p. 339).

Prophet Muhammad PBUH had shown his honour toward women. He sought to educate people to respect women to shift the paradigm of Jahiliyyah people who demeaning women (misogyny). He manifested the values through his words and behaviours towards women. Prophet Muhammad PBUH stated:

<div dir="rtl">

مَنْ كَانَتْ لَهُ أُنْثَى فَلَمْ يَئِدْهَا، وَلَمْ يُهِنْهَا، وَلَمْ يُؤْثِرْ وَلَدَهُ عَلَيْهَا، – قَالَ: يَعْنِي الذُّكُورَ – أَدْخَلَهُ اللَّهُ الْجَنَّةَ

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Meaning: "If anyone has a female child, and does not bury her alive, or slight her, or prefer his children (i.e. the male ones) to her, Allah will bring him into Paradise." (Dawud, 1994 No. 5146) Another hadith states:

<div dir="rtl">

مَنْ عَالَ ابْنَتَيْنِ أَوْ ثَلَاثَ بَنَاتٍ، أَوْ أُخْتَيْنِ أَوْ ثَلَاثَ أَخَوَاتٍ، حَتَّى يَبِنَّ أَوْ يَمُوتَ عَنْهُنَّ، كُنْتُ أَنَا وَهُوَ كَهَاتَيْنِ '' وَأَشَارَ بِأَصْبُعَيْهِ السَّبَّابَةِ وَالْوُسْطَى

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Meaning: "if a person provides for and looks after two or three daughters, or two or three sisters, until they separate from him (by getting married or by dying) or until they die and leaves them behind, then he and I will be like these two in Paradise. What he (ﷺ) meant by "these two", he (ﷺ) pointed to his index and middle finger" *(Hanbal, 2001 No. 12498).*

The other hadith reveals:

<div dir="rtl">

مَنِ ابْتُلِيَ مِنْ هَذِهِ الْبَنَاتِ بِشَيْءٍ كُنَّ لَهُ سِتْرًا مِنَ النَّارِ

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Meaning: Who is tested with the presence of a girl, then the child will be a shield for them in hell (Bukhori, 1992 No. 1418; Hanbal, 2001 No. 12498)

Three hadiths above expose that Islam elevates the rank of women. In other words, women and men should be treated equally, by not favouring male over female. In addition to these hadiths,

there are several stories of the Prophet showing his honour to women. At the other time, a woman came to the Prophet PBUH complaining about his father asking her to marry to a man he did not like. The Prophet forbade forced marriage by saying "Go, marry the person you want". However, after getting an answer from the Prophet the young woman said "In fact I have given up my father's deeds, I only want to teach women that their fathers are not entitled to them at all". From this hadith, the *fuqoha* (the guardians of the Islamic conscience) concludes that one of the pillars of marriage is the willingness of both parties (Rakhmat, 2004).

In another case, a woman complained to the Prophet because she could no longer live with her husband and was afraid that she would not serve her husband properly. The Prophet told her to return her dowry and divorce him. From this incident, it can be inferred that women also have the rights to divorce their husbands, in which this act is regulated in legal provisions named *khulu* (Afifi, 1988).

When Umar bin Khatab issued a legal on the limits of female dowry due too very high dowry set by women, someone protested and warned Umar about a verse in the Qur'an, Umar then revoked the regulation while saying "Woman is right and Umar is wrong" (As-Suyuthi, 2015, p. 237). This provides learning for Muslim women that they have the rights to carry out political actions, in scholarship about hadith, by quoting Ibn Asakir's opinion that there are at least eighty women who are hadith experts (Rakhmat, 2004).

Since women's position is still considered inferior than men, many contemporary scholars have conducted studies on women's leadership. Their studies show the importance of re-investigation of the interpretation of women's leadership in Islam, since the discussion was mostly the results of *ijtihad* that are considered gender-biased and biased patriarchal values (Ma'shumah, 2012).

A study of Mutalib et al. (2017) signifies the values of Islamic leadership behaviour that are practical to be applied by women managers across different level of age, management posts, and seniority. The findings revealed that women managers practise Islamic leadership behaviour. Bakhtyar & Rezaei (2012) investigated female leadership in Islam by evaluating women's participation rate in hierarchy of power in society.(Hamzah et al. (2016) conducted study on the impact of Islamic values on the leadership style of Muslim women academics in Malaysia. Peshkova's (2009) study was a two-year of ethnographic fieldwork on women leadership in Ferghana Valley, Uzbekistan. A case study on women and leadership in Islam in Indonesia was

conducted by Rohman (2013), which suggests that women should be allowed to leaders and have the same opportunities to interpret Islam. Other studies on women's leadership and gender issues in Islam were also done by as Elius (2012), Abraham (2017), Eidoo (2016), Golkowska (2014), Kottakkunnummal (2015), Mahallati (2010), Rezai-Rashti (2015), Thompson (2002); and a study in Islamic country (Bakhtyar & Rezaei, 2012).

The above research findings suggest the importance of allowing women to be leaders. This is to support the elaboration of women's position in Islam as presented in al-Quran and Muhamad's egalitarian spirit as presented in hadiths, which have significantly changed the treatment of women.

2. Counter-claim: Men's superiority

Ulemas' view on prohibition of women's leadership is not without arguments. They refer to An-Nisa: 34 stating that men are leaders of women. Thus, it became a justification that leadership issues are male domains. This justification is reinforced by the hadith about the prohibition of women's leadership, namely:

<div dir="rtl">لَنْ يُفْلِح قَوْمٌ وَلَّوْا أَمْرَهُمْ إِمْرَئَةٍ</div>

Meaning: "Such people as ruled by a lady will never be successful" (Bukhori, 1992 No. 4073
Those ulemas believe that the best place for women is house, since there would be harms outside of house. As the condition in Arab that the vivid image of a typical Arab woman seems to be a veiled lady cut from social life (Sidani, 2005).

The issue of gender theology in Islam lies on the issue of the origin of women's events that have an impact on women's functions and roles. Hadiths understanding and interpretation explain that Prophet Adam was the first man created by Allah SWT, while his wife, Eve, was created from his ribs. This refers to the literal understanding of an-Nisa: 1 that implies its social implications that women can be discriminated and subordinated. Women are not the main human being but only as a complement to men. Consequently, women may not be in the front or become leaders (Ma'shumah, 2012; Mulia, 2007).

That aforementioned insight shows that the position and role of women is lower than men. As a result, women experience gender inequality caused by patriarchal culture and gender-biased understanding of religious teachings. The issue of women's leadership is still within the disputed area (debatable: *khilafiyah*). The fact that the leader must be male is supported by the justification of the An-nisa: 34 stating:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِم...

Meaning: ""Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth…".

Interpreters state that *qawwam* means leader, protector, regulator, etc. The reason men must lead women, according to some interpreters, because of the advantages that God has given to men than women. The superiority of men, according to Al-Razi, is due to the superiority and physicality reasons (Al-Razi, 1990). In accordance, the superiority of men over women is because their reasoning, firmness, determination, strength, physical strength, literacy and courage (Al-Zamakhsyari, 1998). Furthermore, the superiority of men is because of their ability to create souls of courage, strength and ability to overcome difficulties, otherwise, women are more sensitive and emotional (al-Tabataba'i, 1973).

The issue on women's leadership, according to the hadith, has a nuance that is in line with women's leadership according to the interpretation of the Qur'an. The hadith that are usually used to justify the inability of women to be leader is:

عَنْ أَبِي بَكْرَةَ، قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَنْ يُفْلِح قَوْمٌ وَلَّوْا أَمْرَهُمْ امْرَئَةً

Meaning: From Abi Bakrah, The Prophet PBUH said "Such people as ruled by a lady will never be successful" (Al-Nasa'i, 1991 No 5293; Bukhori, 1992 No 4425, 7099; Hanbal, 2001 No 19507, 19547, 19556, 19573, 19603, 19612; Tirmidzi, 1994 No 2188).

The hadith is understood by several scholars as a sign that women are not allowed to be leaders in government or political affairs, since women are only given the responsibility to guard their husband's property (Ali, 2003). This kind of interpretations indicate that the hadith was understood textually and ignored its context, which indicated that the reader failed to capture the Islamic *weltanschauung*, especially on the Prophet Muhammad's mission to liberate women from the gender injustices. Whereas, the previous scholars have formulated a method in understanding and practicing hadith in three aspects; (1) the quality of the hadith, (2) the *matan* hadith, and (3) the historical review underlying the hadith (*asbabul wurud*). This is important considering that

hadith is basically a social response, thus, historical information is needed to help the readers capture the social settings that occur when the hadith is spoken by the Prophet Muhammad.

The concept of *qawwam* in An-Nisa: 34 is the concept of male leadership over female in the household sphere. This is reinforced by the continuation of the verse, ""Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth" (*Bima Fadhdhalallahu ba'dhuhum 'ala ba'di wa bima anfaqu*). This is also stated by Ibn Katsir (2000) and Al-Maraghi, (2001) who have similar perspectives related to the excellence of men over women who are able to make living for women (Novianti, 2008). Considering that fragment of the verse, there are at least two reasons why male leadership occurred: 1) because men make living, and 2) because men at that time had wider access to the public world than women

The above two reasons are very sociological and historical, not normative. In meaning that if the sociological and historical conditions change and cause women to have the capacity to provide income and also have wider access in the political field, then women are able to take positions as leaders, not only in the family domain but a more general domains like seen today (Faisal, 2002). Therefore, an-Nisa: 34 cannot be used to justify the prohibition of women's leadership in any field.

In line with that, Al-Razi narrated the origins of the creation of women as follows:

عن ابن عباس وابن مسعود وناس من الصحابة أن الله تعالى لما أخرج إبليس من الجنة وأسكن آدم الجنة فبقي فيها وحده وما كان معه من يستأنس به فألقى الله تعالى عليه النوم ثم أخذ ضلعاً من أضلاعه من شقه الأيسر ووضع مكانه لحماً وخلق حواء منه ، فلما استيقظ وجد عند رأسه امرأة قاعدة فسألها من أنت؟ قالت : امرأة . قال : ولم خلقت؟ قالت : لتسكن إليّ ، فقالت الملائكة : ما اسمها؟ قالوا : حواء ، ولم سميت حواء ، قال : لأنها خلقت من شيء حي

Meaning: "Iblis (Satan) was expelled from Paradise and Adam was made to dwell in it. He wandered through it alone as he had no partner in whom he could seek his comfort. However, once he slept and when he woke up, he found a woman sitting near his head, whom Allah had created from his rib. Adam asked her: "What are you?" She replied: "A woman." He asked her again: "What are you created for?" She answered: "So you could seek comfort in me." Angels who were well aware of the extent of the knowledge of Adam asked: "What is her name O Adam?" He said: "Eve" They asked him: "Why is it Eve?" Adam replied: "Because she was created from something living." (Fakhrurazi, 2001 Juz 2, p. 23)

An understanding of the origin of women creation has implications on women's functions. God created Eve (women) to complement one of Adam's desires, which theologically impressed the position of women, not only as a subordinate man, but also giving an inferior position in society. Therefore, according to Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid (2002), feeling sufficient with the results of the first generation's interpretation of the text and limiting the role of modern interpreter (*mufassir*) by narrating it from ancient scholars will lead to dangerous consequences in social life. This condition is considered as a phenomenon of Muslim decline, where Muslims only follow and reproduce the intellectual products of the older generation—which was certainly suitable for their time—without wanting to create products that are relevant to contemporary demands.

Regarding the origin of human creation, classic interpreters such as Ibn Katsir (2000) and Al-Zamakhsyari, (1998) interpret the word *nafs* in An-Nisa:1 as Adam. Then, Ibn Kathir interprets the word *zaujaha* (literally means partner) as Eve. Ibn Kathir reinforced his statement by quoting the hadith "in fact women were created from the top crooked ribs. If you want to straighten it, it will break it, and if you want to get benefits, and then do it while it is crooked (Katsir, 2000).

Findings

Upholding Women's Leadership

Until now, especially in the Indonesian community, which is predominantly Muslim, women's leadership in any levels has often become a problem since the tendency of Islamic normativity that is considered impeding women's movement in society; hence, women are not even allowed to become leaders such as presidents, ministers, prime ministers, and equals, opinions like this were raised by al-Bassam (1994), Ibn Qudamah (1963),Yusuf al-Qordhawi (1994), Musthafa Al-Sibaiy (1996), and Abdul Hakim bin Amir Abdat (2002)

The above opinion shows a bias spirit of partnership between men and women in Islam, hence, women's access to the public sphere in most Muslim societies is still considered an anomaly. Such an assumption is basically not separated from the theological issues of gender that are understood and believed to be religious doctrines because they are sourced from teaching sources. The implication of belief in the doctrine is manifested in a behaviour, since the way a person thinks, behaves, reacts and behaves is inseparable from his/her beliefs (Ramayulis, 2004, p. 1).

Basically, the above interpretation is inseparable from the issues on gender theology that place women as inferior, and label them as the owners of negative traits, thus, impossible in

possessing intellectual abilities (Al-Bahi, 1988). In addition, in Said Agil Munawar's view, the interpretation of the al-Qur'an by the previous ulemas was influenced by the situation and climate of the patriarchal politics, hence, the produced interpretation contained gender bias (Novianti, 2008). Furthermore, in Wadud's view, the interpretation of traditional models does seem exclusive; it was written only by men, so that, it only accommodated the awareness and experience of men. Whereas, the experience, vision and perspective of women should also be included to avoid patriarchal bias that can trigger gender inequality. Whether it is realized or not, a person often uses 'religion' to validate his behaviour and actions (Muqoyyidin, 2013; Wadud et al., 1999).

To dispute the classical interpretation, Amina Wadud Muhsin, gave her views on the creation of women. She discussed an-Nisa: 1 by looking at the words composition and analysing it word-by-word. She stated that al-Qur'an does not explain that Allah created humans from men or shows that the origin of man is Adam. It is seen from the word *nafs* in the form of *muannas*. Conceptually, the word *nafs* has a neutral meaning, which can refer to men and can also refer to women (Muhsin, 1994, p. 25)

In line with Amina Wadud, Rif'at Hassan, (1995, p. 45) said that women (Eve) were not created from men (Adam). He explained that the word *nafs* did not refer to Adam because the word was neutral, and so the word *zauj* does not mean women, since the language of the word *zauj* means women were only known among the Hijaz people, while in other areas the word *zaujah* is used. In terms of the women creation, Riffat concluded that Adam and Eve were created from the same substance and method, there was no difference between the two. Moreover, he states that the hadiths stating Eve was created from Adam's ribs must be rejected because it contradicts the Qur'an (Ma'shumah, 2012; Rif'at Hassan, 1995).

This classical interpretation is based on three aspects. First, the abundance of classical Islamic literature compiled and produced in the culture perspective of androcentric society. Until now, the literature is still used as guidance and becomes a very strong dogma. Second, there is a public assumption that equates jurisprudence with sharia, even though these two things are different, they still have relevance. Jurisprudence is a product of scholars' *ijtihad* whose truth is relative and has its own mechanism to adapt to the existing environment, this is reflected in the rules of *fiqih la yunkaru taghayyirul ahkam bitaghayyir al-zaman* (Meaning: It is legal changes occur because of changing times) (Nadawi & Ahmed, 1991; Zahra, 1997). Meanwhile, sharia is the command of Allah that has absolute truth and is timeless (Syarifudin, 2014). Interpretations of

verse texts and hadith related to women are *ijtihadi* (fiqh) products, which can actually change based on conditions. Third, the times and thoughts and intellectuals of women have changed, so it is appropriate for re-interpretation and re-review. There is no religious interpretation and doctrine that is very authoritarian when it comes to *ijtihadi* problems. According to the Indonesian interpreter, Quraish Shihab, "forcing a generation to follow the overall results of past generations causes difficulties for them" (Shihab, 2007), in meaning that an egalitarian spirit echoed by Islam must always be campaigned throughout the ages as a prophetic mission partner.

From the perspective of *fiqh*, the issue of female leadership is also still on *khilafiyah* territory between which ones may and may not. The prohibition of women to become leaders in the perspective of *fiqh* was derived from the following verses of al-Qur'an and al-Hadith, and also about their permission not only to lead in the field of politics but also to lead a prayer of a man is described also in a hadith from Ummi Waraqah,

وَكَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ‐صلى الله عليه وسلم‐ يَزُورُهَا فِى بَيْتِهَا وَجَعَلَ لَهَا مُؤَذِّنًا يُؤَذِّنُ لَهَا وَأَمَرَهَا أَنْ تَؤُمَّ أَهْلَ دَارِهَا. قَالَ عَبْدُ الرَّحْمَنِ فَأَنَا رَأَيْتُ مُؤَذِّنَهَا شَيْخًا كَبِيرًا

Meaning: The Prophet had visited the residence of Ummi Waraqah, then appointed a person to recite the *adhan*, and ordered Ummi Waraqah to lead her family in the prayer. Then, Abdurrahman said, I saw an old man became the muezzin (Dawud, 1994 No. 502).

Among the people in Ummi Waraqah's residence were *syaikhun kabîr wa ghulâmuhâ wajâriyatahâ* or an elderly man and male and female slaves. The interesting point here is the command of the Prophet to a woman to lead men in a prayer. In this gender issue, the practice of a woman who led a male in a prayer was performed by Amina Wadud who became the preacher and imam of Friday prayer on 18 March 2005.

Based on the above hadith, there are some *fiqh* ulemas who allow women to be imams of prayer Among the *fiqh* experts who allow women to become imams of prayers, according to Muhammad (1999), Ilyas (2005), Khairin (2002), and Fauziyah (2010) are Imam Ibn Jarîr al-Thabarî Abu Tsaur, Imam Mazni Qâdhi Abu Tayyib, and al-'Abdar

Women are not only allowed to become leaders in the political field but also in prayer. In addition, as mentioned earlier, it is clear that the verses and hadiths used as tools for the

justification of the prohibition of women to be leaders, either explicitly or implicitly, do not in any way indicate the prohibition of female leadership.

In *fiqh*, women's leadership—especially in politics—is permissible. The proof is there are *fiqh* experts such as al-Tabari, al-Muzani and Ibnu Tsaur, who allow women to become leaders in both public and domestic affairs. As an Islamic discipline, *fiqh* has always been known to be very patriarchal. However, the *fiqh* is the result of human's *ijtihad*, which is not free from deficiency. Therefore, the view of *fiqh* that tends not to support women's leadership is very open to be reinterpreted.

Unlike *fiqh*, *tasawuf* has another view of women's leadership. The level of *tasawuf* shows that women actually have a very respectable position because what seen in *tasawuf* is not the masculine and feminine aspect, but rather the sanctity of the heart. It is very possible that a woman's heart is sometimes more sacred than a man's heart. Thus, in the world of *tasawuf,* there is a possibility of a woman to reach the highest position. It has been proved by many female Shaykhah and Mursyidah of Sufi. Sururin, (2010) mentions several Sufi names of women who are very famous in the world including Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah Sya'wanah, Nafisyah, Fatima of Nishapur.

Al-Sulâmî's works express the awareness of women identity of women as Sufis who play a role in many ways, learn together, support financially, and even exceed men in knowledge. In addition, al-Sulâmî also shows that during the time of *tasawuf* formation, women were not often excluded from the public aspects of spiritual life. Women are described as equal to men in terms of religion and intelligence, and in their knowledge of Sufi teachings and practices (As-Sulami, 2004).

Van Bruinessen, as cited by Sururin, (2010), mentions one female figure who became a *murshid* (a spiritual guide who initiates into a mystical order a postulant wishing to follow the Sufi path to God) in the Naqsabandiyah Mazhariyah Madura congregation in Indonesia. Some of the female *murshids* not only acted as assistants to their dominant husbands, but they were truly independent. Among the female *murshidah* was Nyai Thobibah who received a full diploma from Kyai Ali Wafa and Syarifah Fathimah in Sumenep. The female *murshidah* had many followers, according to Van Bruinessen, even not only in the Madura region, but even in the areas of West Kalimantan and South Malang. Syarifah Fathimah was the daughter of Habib Muhammad. She was entrusted to enter the congregation by Kyai Sirajuddin and received a diploma from Kyai

Syamsuddin Umbul. Another popular female *Mursyidah*, named Syarifah Nor in Gondanglegi was known as Pah Nong. It shows that female leaders were not only found in Naqsabandiyah, but also in the Tijaniyah congregation in Madura, in which there was a *muqaddam* (a term leading the Tijaniyah congregation (Van Bruinessen, 1992).

In a political-religious perspective (*siyasah*), women's position also seems to be a little constrained. However, in political practice, actually, not a few women who have held important positions even become heads of government in countries of Muslim majority. For example, in Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto ruled between 1988-1990 and 1993-1996; former Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller ruled from 1993 to 1995; former Prime Minister of Senegal, named Mame Madior Boye, led the Republic of Senegal from 2001 to 2002; Cissé Mariam Kaïdama Sidibé, who was elected President of the Republic of Mali from 2011 to 2012; then Atifete Jahjaga who was the former President of Kosovo in 2011 to 2016; then two former Prime Ministers of Bangladesh were Muslim women named Begum Khaleda Zia who led Bangladesh from 1991- 1996 and 2001-2006 and Sheikh Hasina Wajed who served between 1996 and 2001 and in 2009 until now; and then former Iranian Vice President Masoumeh Ebtekar who led in 1997 to 2005.

In Indonesia, the Law No. 2 of 2008, one of the articles requires that management in each political party must cover 30% of women, which became the first step in the openness of thinking of Indonesian people to make more room for women in political life. The facts show that the thinking of Muslim societies and social settings has changed so that efforts to continue to perpetuate the hegemony of men over women based on *ijtihad* products of ulema living in androcentric cultures is a mistake. It is apart from the reason that the results of *ijtihad* can change due to changes in time, place and situation as in the rules of *la yunkaru tagayyirul fatwa bi taghayiirul azminah wal amkinah wal ahwal* (Meaning: Change in law occurs because of change in time, space and social situation) (Nadawi & Ahmed, 1991; Zahra, 1997), and because al-Qur'an and hadith do not specifically prohibit women's leadership.

The aforementioned elaboration has presented the supporting the notion of women's leadership. Even though the tendency of Islamic normativity in the society seems impeding women's movement, however, Islam says the contrary. Islam does not only as women as noble creature, but also elevates their position. Furthermore, the traditional interpretation on women leadership of previous ulemas should also be re-constructed since it is considered conservative, which may result in harmful consequences in the struggle for democracy in Islamic worlds and the

struggle of women's rights (Moghissi 1999, in Rohman 2013). This reconstruction is intended to justify the spirit of parallelism between men and women as a mission of Islamic teaching. It is believed that careful examination will result in some evidences that demonstrate Islam's recognition of women's leadership in various perspectives.

Men and Women Equality

The relationship between men and women is not superior and inferior, but rather as an equal partner. Hence, the concept of parallel partnership that reflects justice is normatively affirmed in the Qur'an. Al-Qur'an often adds genetic pronouns to the words *nisa*, such as *nisa akum*, *nisa ahum*, *nisa ahunna* to assert women as members of a wider community. The word 'male' (*mudzakkar*) and the word 'women' (*muannas*) are mentioned together in the Qur'an, this shows no treatment difference in men or women in Islam. For example, it can be seen in An-nisa: 124, al-Mu'min: 40, An-Nahl: 97, Ali Imran: 195, Al-Ahzab: 36, At-Taubah: 71, and Al-Ahzab: 35. The repetition of the words male and female in these verses show that there are no discrimination between men and women in relation to work, charity and actions. However, the most important thing is that there is no characteristic difference between men and women. What distinguishes the two is not sex but charity.

Nasution (2002) classifies the verses of the Qur'an, which talk about the relations between women and men. These verses explain that male and female gave equal relationship in various ways (Novianti, 2008).

1. General statement on equality of women and men (2:187, 2:228)

2. Equality of origin (4:1, 49:13)

3. Equality of aural rewards (3:195, 4:32, 9:72)

4. Equality to care and love one another (17:24, 30:21, 46:15)

5. Justice and equality (2:228, 16:97)

6. Alignment in social security (2:177)

7. Mutual help (9:71)

8. Opportunities for education (8:11, 39: 9)

However, ideal Islamic teachings on gender relations have not been implemented properly. The practices of the Islamic community on gender are still very distorted and biased due to literal

understanding of religious texts. Lots of religious texts on gender relations contain bias (Ma'shumah, 2012; Mulia, 2007). For example, an understanding of the creation of women and men is inseparable from the interpretation of the ulemas that tend to be biased on men. The scholars consider Eve (Adam's wife) created from Adam's ribs as an understanding of the An-Nisa: 1 based on the Muslim hadith stating that women (Eve) are created from male (M. Hajjaj, 1972 No. 1468) below:

إن المرأة خلقت من ضلع لن تستقيم لك على طريقة فإن استمتعت بها استمتعت بها وبها عوج وإن ذهبت تقيمها كسرتها وكسرها طلاقها.

In terms of quality, according to hadith experts, that hadith is included in the *ahad* category since it is sourced from only one narrator, Abi Bakrah. Therefore, the hadith category does not have a definite meaning (*qath'iy*) to become a basis in determining a legal decision. This hadith is still a presumption (*zhanny*), then as stated by Shihab (2000), it is very possible to be reinterpreted, even to reject its applicability. Fatimah, a Moroccan feminist figure, tends to reject the application of the hadith, since her research shows that the figure of the narrator of the hadith, Abi Bakrah, had personal weaknesses. Mernissi saw two weaknesses in Abi Bakrah: First, Abi Bakrah had been convicted and whipped by Umar for giving false testimony in the case of allegations of adultery against a prominent friend and politician, named Mughirah ibn Syu'bah; Second, Abi Bakrah was seen coming from a less-respected family and the family tree is not clearly known (Mernissi, 2001, p. 170).

In reading the aforementioned hadith prohibiting women's leadership, Hussein Muhammad considered that the hadith was expressed as a notification framework, in meaning as that it is information conveyed only by the Prophet and not within the framework of legal legitimacy. Strictly speaking, the hadith has no legal relevance (Husein Muhammad, 1999, p. 150).

Seen from its historicity (*asbab al-Wurd*) aspect, the hadith began with the story of Abdullah Ibn Hudzaifah, the Messenger of Allah who delivered a letter of invitation to convert to Islam to Kisra Anusyirwan, the Persian leader of the Majus religion. However, the invitation was considered cynical, so he tore up the letter. Not for a long time, Kisra and his son were killed and finally the daughter of Kisra, Buwaran bint Syairawaih replaced Kisra's position as a leader in Persia. Knowing the weak of the Persian state's leadership that led by a woman, and since at that time the degree of women was under men, so that, women were not trusted to take care of public interests, Moreover, the state's problems and this view did not only occur in Persia, but throughout

the Arabian Peninsula, hence, with such social settings it was common that the Prophet who possessed high wisdom stated the hadith above (Al-Asqalani, 2008). The Prophet's statement was not based on being a woman, but rather based on the incompetence of the woman in taking control of the government. It was possible that if the leader was not the daughter of the Persian Kisra, the Prophet would not say that hadith, which demeaning women's leadership rights. Strictly speaking, the hadith is casuistic and conditional (Ma'shumah, 2012), so that it cannot be generalized to all women. Besides, the content is only news or information only, and the hadith also has no legal impact as expressed by Hussein Muhammad (1999, p. 150). Therefore, the prohibition of women's leadership by justifying that hadith is considered as a mistake. In the other words, the women's leadership are not prohibited in any hadith.

In a historical perspective, female leadership does not appear because of our writing style tends to be is androcentric. Whereas, the role of women in various fields, especially science, is significant. The role in the science field is not only as a student but as a professor. Imam Syafi'i once studied about the science of hadith to female ulema named Sayyidah Nafisyah (Borhany, 2014) Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani and many others were great religious leaders who derived some of their knowledge from female teachers. Therefore, to see women's leadership in the science field, it is necessary to change the writing of history from the androcentric style to the equal style. Whatever the gender is, if they have an achievement, then they are worth to get a respectable place in human history.

Conclusion

There is no reason in any perspective that can reject the women's leadership in various fields. If the interpretation of An-Nisa: 34 is used as a justification that the leader must be from men, then this interpretation has ignored historical facts and scientific evidence about women's leadership in Islamic teachings (al-Qur'an, Hadith, or scientific disciplines in Islam such as jurisprudence or Sufism). In addition, this form of interpretation has neglected the contextual aspects, because basically the male leadership in An-Nisa: 43, is not about public leadership, but domestic leadership in domestic affairs where the men's role should also be done properly, hence, if it is not done well, then the leadership position can be transferred to women.

The hadith stating people will be unfortunate to have female leader is casuistic in nature and does not have an impact on the law, which tends to be rejected due to the flaw of hadith narrators. Even if the hadith is accepted, the affirmation of the hadith should not connect leadership with

gender, but to question one's abilities in leadership. Thus, gender is not a determinant of leadership. Leadership is closely related to expertise and ability. This can be interpreted if a woman has the ability and loyalty and high intelligence, so there should be no prohibition for women to advance on the political stage by acting as leaders to provide valuable contributions to the interests of religion, nation and state.

The results of this research simultaneously deconstructed the theological understanding of women, which had been rooted and entrenched in the practice of Muslim communities that always position women as inferior. The causative factor is a misunderstanding in comprehending texts relating to origin of the women creation. This mistake has led to the birth of gender injustice in social life. This research produced findings from contemporary Muslim thinkers such as Rif'at Hasan and Amina Wadudthat men and women were created from the same substance and method, thus, the hadiths stating that women were created from men's ribs as a justification of An-Nisa: 1 must be rejected as it contradicts the meaning and spirit of the Qur'an itself that recognizes equality between men and women. In the other word, it can be interpreted that women have positions, functions and roles that are equal to men in their work in the public space. Therefore, any forms of interpretation of the sources of Islamic teachings that are contrary to the principles of justice and ignores the spirit of Islamic teachings that uphold the equality between men and women need to be reconstructed

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