
M. QURAISH SHIHAB'S INTERPRETATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN IN TAFSIR AL-MISHBAH AND ITS RELEVANCE TO CHARACTER EDUCATION

Sabila Azmi Syahira*, Abdul Ghofur², Muhammad Sholeh Hasan³
UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia
E-mail: sabila.azmi.syahira@gmail.com

Abstract. This study examines M. Quraish Shihab's interpretation of seven gender-related Qur'anic verses in *Tafsir al-Mishbah* (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 187, 223, 228; Ali-Imran [3]: 36, 195; An-Nisa [4]: 34; Al-Hujurat [49]: 13). Employing a contextual-humanist hermeneutical approach, it examines the concepts of *libas*, *harth*, *qawwamah*, *mubadalah*, and *atqakum* as principles of equality (*musawah*), reciprocity, functional justice, and recognition of human potential based on piety rather than gender or social hierarchy. The research adopts a qualitative design, combining library study and thematic content analysis of *Tafsir al-Mishbah*, supported by recent empirical data on gender-based violence. Findings reveals that Shihab's interpretation is progressive and moderate, rejecting literal-patriarchal readings that remain dominant in society. Nonetheless, a significant hermeneutical gap persists between the tafsir's ideal vision and social realities, as reflected in the rise of 376,529 cases of gender-based violence against women in 2025 (an increase of 14.07%) and the persistence of school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV). The study concludes that Shihab's perspective provides a strong foundation for a gender-responsive character education model integrating Thomas Lickona's three pillars with critical awareness of patriarchal bias. Effective implementation requires contextualized curricula, gender-sensitive teacher training, and a school culture committed to equity and zero tolerance. Islamic education, thus, holds transformative potential in advancing a gender-just society consistent with Islam's vision as *rahmatan lil 'alamin*.

Keywords: Quraish Shihab, tafsir al-mishbah, gender equality, gender-responsive, character education, Qur'anic hermeneutics

Abstrak. Artikel ini mengkaji penafsiran M. Quraish Shihab dalam *Tafsir al-Mishbah* terhadap tujuh ayat gender dalam Al-Qur'an, yaitu QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 187, 223, 228; Ali-Imran [3]: 36, 195; An-Nisa [4]: 34; dan Al-Hujurat [49]: 13. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan hermeneutis kontekstual-humanis, penelitian ini menganalisis konsep *libas*, *harth*, *qawwamah*, *mubadalah*, dan *atqakum* sebagai prinsip kesetaraan esensial (*musawah*), kesalingan, keadilan fungsional, serta penghargaan terhadap potensi manusia yang berbasis ketakwaan, bukan jenis kelamin atau status sosial. Penelitian bersifat kualitatif dengan metode studi pustaka dan analisis konten tematik terhadap *Tafsir al-Mishbah*, didukung data empiris terkini mengenai kekerasan berbasis gender. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa penafsiran Shihab bersifat progresif dan moderat, menolak pembacaan literal-patriarkal yang masih dominan di masyarakat. Namun, terdapat kesenjangan hermeneutis yang signifikan antara visi ideal tafsir dengan realitas sosial, sebagaimana tercermin dalam 376.529 kasus Kekerasan Berbasis Gender terhadap Perempuan (KBGtP) tahun 2025 (naik 14,07%) dan fenomena School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV) di lingkungan pendidikan. Artikel ini menyimpulkan bahwa penafsiran Shihab memiliki potensi besar sebagai landasan bagi model pendidikan karakter responsif gender yang mengintegrasikan tiga pilar Thomas Lickona dengan analisis kritis terhadap bias patriarkal. Implementasi yang efektif memerlukan kurikulum kontekstual, pelatihan guru yang sensitif gender, serta budaya sekolah berbasis zero-tolerance dan kesetaraan partisipasi. Dengan demikian, pendidikan Islam dapat berperan sebagai agen transformasi menuju masyarakat yang berkeadilan gender dan sesuai semangat Islam *rahmatan lil 'alamin*.

Kata kunci: Quraish Shihab, tafsir al-mishbah, kesetaraan gender, pendidikan, karakter responsif gender, hermeneutika al-Qur'an

* Corresponding author

Introduction

School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV) continues to pose a chronic challenge to the foundations of Indonesia's national education system. The National Commission on Violence Against Women's 2025 Annual Report (CATAHU) recorded 376,529 cases of gender-based violence against women, marking a 14.07% increase from the previous year. Sexual violence accounted for 37.51% of cases, followed by psychological (32.48%), physical (18.93%), and economic violence (11.07%) (Komnas Perempuan, 2026). These incidents are no longer confined to personal domains but increasingly infiltrate educational spaces, particularly high schools and universities, where gender-based bullying, sexual harassment, and cyber violence have become alarming trends (The World Bank, 2023).

The impact of SRGBV is multidimensional: it undermines students' sense of safety, erodes self-esteem, and disrupts mental health while simultaneously reproducing long-term social inequalities that contradict the goals of national education. Although the National Education System Law No. 20/2003 (UU No. 20, 2003) explicitly emphasizes the formation of noble character, democratic citizenship, and independence, implementation of character education in schools remains formalistic and gender-blind. This failure perpetuates patriarchal norms that lie at the root of SRGBV.

Character education, as articulated by Thomas Lickona through three pillars: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action, offers a strategic framework for holistic integrity (Lickona, 1991). Yet, when gender as a socio-cultural construct is neglected, such education risks becoming biased and unresponsive to unequal gender relations in Indonesian society. Recent studies confirm that character education often fails to prevent SRGBV due to the absence of gender-responsive perspectives, allowing violence to persist as a "hidden pandemic" in schools (Safitri & Tri Wijayanti, 2024).

From an Islamic perspective, M. Quraish Shihab's contextual-humanist interpretation in *Tafsir al-Mishbah* provides a progressive foundation for gender justice. Shihab emphasizes substantial equality (*nafs wahidah*) as expressed in QS. An-Nisa [4]: 1, framing men and women as equal in dignity before God (Shihab, 2005b). He interprets marital relations as partnerships (*zawj*) of mutual protection, symbolized as "garments" for one another (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 187) (Shihab, 2005a), with balanced rights and responsibilities (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 228) (Shihab, 2005a), and functional leadership (*qawwamah*) as trust and protection rather than domination (QS. An-Nisa [4]: 34) (Shihab, 2005b). His rejection of hierarchical readings, reinforced by interpretations of QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 223 (Shihab, 2005a), QS. Ali 'Imran [3]: 36, 195 (Shihab, 2005b), and QS. Al-Hujurat [49]: 13 (Shihab, 2005c), underscores that human worth is determined solely by piety.

Despite existing scholarship on Islamic character education and gender interpretation in contemporary tafsir, most studies remain fragmented, either normative analyses of Shihab's thought (Ichwan & Amin, 2022) or applications of Lickona's model without gender dimensions (Hafizallah, 2024). This research seeks to bridge that gap by examining Shihab's interpretation of gender

relations and its relevance for developing gender-responsive character education. Specifically, it aims to: (1) analyze gender relations in *Tafsir al-Mishbah* through a contextual-humanist lens; (2) identify their relevance to Lickona's three pillars; and (3) propose an applicable model for schools to prevent SRGBV through curriculum integration, teacher training, and school culture reform.

The study is expected to contribute theoretically to inclusive Islamic education discourse and practically to curriculum development, gender-sensitive teacher training, and gender mainstreaming in education policy. In this way, character education can move beyond normative rhetoric to become a transformative force aligned with Islam's vision as *rahmatan lil 'alamin* and the democratic, gender-just goals of national education.

Method

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, which seeks to understand phenomena in depth by presenting data in words rather than numbers (Sugiyono, 2013). Such an approach is well-suited to research that focuses on analyzing religious texts and literature on character education and gender. It allows the researcher to interpret data in a flexible and contextual manner, making it possible to explore meanings comprehensively.

The method used is library research. Instead of field observation or experimentation, the study draws on written sources such as books, scholarly articles, journals, tafsir works, and other relevant documents. This diversity of sources enriches perspectives, broadens the scope of analysis, and deepens understanding of the research problem. Given the topic (gender-responsive character education in the perspective of M. Quraish Shihab), library research provides the most effective means of investigation.

Data analysis follows a descriptive-analytical method, which not only describes findings but also interprets them critically. The researcher aims to move beyond mere presentation of textual material by synthesizing, contextualizing, and reinterpreting it to generate insights relevant to the study's objectives.

One analytical framework applied is *tafsir maudhu'i* (thematic exegesis). This involves: (1) identifying the main theme (gender-responsive character education), with emphasis on equality (*musawah*), justice (*'adl*), and human dignity; (2) collecting Qur'anic verses relevant to the theme; (3) analyzing each verse linguistically, contextually, and intertextually; and (4) synthesizing the findings into a coherent thematic conclusion. The verses are then examined through Shihab's interpretation in *Tafsir al-Mishbah* and connected to principles of character education that are humanist and gender-sensitive.

Sources of data are divided into two categories. Primary data consists of *Tafsir al-Mishbah* itself, while secondary data includes Shihab's other works, academic articles, research journals, and related literature. Together, these sources strengthen the analysis and provide a comprehensive foundation. Through this methodology, the study seeks to produce an in-depth and objective understanding of

Shihab's concept of gender-responsive character education and to demonstrate its relevance for contemporary Islamic education that is humanist, attentive to gender issues, and responsive to modern societal needs.

Results and Discussion

QS. Al-Baqarah [2] : 187

هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَهُنَّ

The metaphorical interpretation of *libas* in M. Quraish Shihab's *Tafsir al-Mishbah* frames the marital relationship as complementary and mutually supportive rather than hierarchical or dominating (Shihab, 2005a). The metaphor of "garment" carries layered meanings: just as clothing conceals flaws, protects from external harm, and enhances appearance, spouses are expected to safeguard, comfort, and complete one another within the household. Shihab, drawing on semiotic analysis, emphasizes that *libas* also signifies "covering shortcomings," underscoring the responsibility of spouses to preserve each other's dignity and honor in intimacy and confidentiality (Haji et al., 2022). This approach highlights essential equality (*musawah*) and gender partnership rooted in mutual protection, aligning with the principle of justice (*'adl*) in Islam.

In the context of gender education, the verse suggests that Islam envisions male–female relations not as competition or domination but as cooperation in building a harmonious family and society. Yet hermeneutically, Shihab's contextual-humanist reading faces tension with social realities. While he rejects biological hierarchy as a basis for male dominance and interprets QS. An-Nisa [4]:34 as functional responsibility grounded in justice, literal patriarchal readings remain widespread in Indonesia. This is reflected in the 376,529 cases of gender-based violence against women reported in 2025, a 14.07% increase from the previous year, with nearly 90% occurring in domestic settings (Komnas Perempuan, 2026).

The gap is further evident in the persistence of School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV). National Assessment data from 2022, still referenced in 2025, shows that 34.51% of students in primary and junior secondary schools are at risk of sexual violence in educational settings (KEMENDIKUDRISTEK, 2024). Shihab's progressive interpretation offers transformative potential, but without structural critique of literalist readings in Islamic schools, its impact risks remaining idealistic. The thematic coherence of *libas* remains strong, yet effectiveness depends on confronting entrenched patriarchal resistance in Islamic educational institutions (Nurhaeni & Putri, 2025).

From the perspective of character education, Shihab's interpretation resonates with Thomas Lickona's three pillars: knowing the good, loving the good, and acting the good (Lickona, 1991). However, empirical studies from 2024–2025 reveal that conventional character education programs only reduce bullying and gender-based violence when critically integrated with gender issues (Anisa et al., 2026). Preventing SRGBV thus requires a gender-responsive model: (1)

curricula that move beyond normative ideals to analyze real cases of domestic and school violence; (2) teacher training to detect patriarchal bias early; and (3) school cultures committed to zero tolerance, supported by safe and inclusive reporting mechanisms. Without such critical integration, education risks widening the gap between sacred texts and the reality of hundreds of thousands of annual GBV cases.

In conclusion, Shihab's interpretation of QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:187 can be implemented through teaching, social interaction, and cultural practices that instill principles of equality and complementarity between men and women. Teachers, parents, and communities serve as role models in fostering compassion, protection, and cooperation, which children then apply in daily life through respectful, non-discriminatory behavior (Sakban & Sundawa, 2023). Schools must also cultivate inclusive and equitable cultures, ensuring equal opportunities for boys and girls in leadership and extracurricular activities (Nikmatullah et al., 2024). Through consistent modeling and character guidance, the value of *libas* can be internalized as empathy, mutual support, confidentiality, and protection, forming a gender-just, virtuous, and harmonious social environment in line with Islamic teachings.

QS. Al-Baqarah [2] : 223

نِسَاؤُكُمْ حَرْثٌ لَّكُمْ فَاتُوا حَرْثَكُمْ أَنَّى شِئْتُمْ

In *Tafsir al-Mishbah*, M. Quraish Shihab interprets the metaphor of *harth* (field) not as a justification for objectifying or subordinating women, but as a symbol of reproductive relations grounded in ethics, mutual consent, and consideration of well-being (Shihab, 2005a). The phrase *fa'tu harthakum anna syi'tum* is thus understood not as unlimited freedom for husbands, but as a responsibility bounded by reciprocity (*mubadalah*), shared agreement, and protection of the wife's physical and emotional health. This reading resonates with the verse's *asbab al-nuzul*, which addressed questions in pre-Islamic Arab society about sexual relations, while integrating principles of gender justice (*'adl*) and marriage as a means of building harmony in both worldly and spiritual life (Ichwan & Amin, 2022).

Hermeneutically, Shihab's contextual-humanist approach is progressive, shifting interpretation away from literal readings that reinforce domination toward an emphasis on equality and shared responsibility. Yet tension remains when such interpretations confront the dominance of literal-patriarchal readings in society. Despite the ethical emphasis of the verse, empirical data reveal persistently high rates of domestic violence. In 2025, Komnas Perempuan reported 376,529 cases of gender-based violence against women, a 14.07% increase from the previous year, with sexual violence comprising 37.51% of cases, most occurring in domestic settings (Komnas Perempuan, 2026).

This gap between progressive tafsir and social reality is further reflected in Indonesia's position on the Global Gender Gap Index 2025, ranked 97 with a score of 0.692. Although slightly

improved, the score highlights structural inequalities in health, education, economy, and politics (World Economic Forum, 2025). The persistence of School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV) compounds the problem; National Assessment data from 2022, still referenced in 2025, show that around 34% of primary and junior secondary students face risks of sexual violence in schools (KEMENDIKUDRISTEK, 2024).

For SRGBV prevention and reproductive justice, Shihab's interpretation calls for a more radical gender-responsive character education model. This requires: (1) curricula that critically address sexual consent, reproductive rights, and ethical marital relations; (2) teacher training to detect and challenge patriarchal bias; and (3) school cultures committed to zero tolerance, supported by safe and inclusive reporting mechanisms. Without such critical integration, the verse risks being co-opted to legitimize reproductive injustice rather than liberate.

Implementation of Shihab's interpretation of QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:223 can be realized through holistic character education that instills reciprocity (*mubadalah*), respect, and gender justice. Within families, parents play a strategic role in teaching equality through fair division of household roles and early education on consent and bodily respect (Ghozali, 2020). At the societal level, religious institutions, leaders, and social organizations must collaborate to build collective awareness of ethical, non-violent relations, while media can disseminate educational messages aligned with Islamic values. In schools, *harth* can be internalized through cooperative learning between boys and girls, fostering empathy, courtesy, and rejection of all forms of violence. Inclusive school policies should ensure equal leadership opportunities and early protection mechanisms. Through consistent role modeling by teachers, parents, and community leaders, the principle of reciprocity can shape a generation that values human dignity, safeguards marital honor, and contributes to families and societies grounded in justice and compassion (Munawarsyah et al., 2024).

QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 228

وَأَلْهِنَّ مِثْلَ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ

In *Tafsir al-Mishbah*, M. Quraish Shihab interprets QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:228 as an affirmation of balance between rights and responsibilities (*musawah*) within marriage. The phrase *wa lahunna mislu alladzi 'alaihinna bil ma'ruf* highlights women's rights before their obligations, signaling that their protection is a priority. Meanwhile, *wa lil-rijali 'alaihinna darajah* is not understood as male superiority in moral or spiritual terms, but as an additional responsibility (*amanah*) entrusted to men as heads of households. This responsibility encompasses financial support, protection, and leadership, all of which must be exercised within the framework of *ma'ruf* (justice and goodness). Shihab stresses that this "degree" is functional and contextual, positioning marriage as a complementary partnership rather than a relationship of subordination (Shihab, 2005a).

Hermeneutically, Shihab's contextual-humanist approach is progressive. He contrasts the verse with pre-Islamic patriarchal norms and rejects interpretations that legitimize absolute male

dominance. His reading aligns with the principle of justice (*‘adl*) consistently emphasized in *Tafsir al-Mishbah* and echoes Tabari’s reference to Ibn Abbas, who described *darajah* as “greater responsibility.” Still, the term remains a locus of debate, vulnerable to misinterpretation as inherent hierarchy. While Shihab reframes it as functional responsibility, tension persists in societies where literal-patriarchal readings dominate (Fakhri Amal & Hadi Imawan, 2025).

Empirical data underscores the urgency of this critique. Komnas Perempuan reported 376,529 cases of gender-based violence against women in 2025, the highest in a decade and a 14.07% increase from the previous year. Sexual violence accounted for 37.51% of cases, followed by psychological (32.48%) and physical violence (18.93%), with most incidents occurring in domestic settings (Komnas Perempuan, 2026). In schools, SRGBV remains significant: National Assessment data from 2022, still referenced in 2025, shows that 34% of primary and junior secondary students face risks of sexual violence (KEMENDIKUDRISTEK, 2024). Indonesia’s Global Gender Gap Index ranking at 97 with a score of 0.692 further reflects persistent structural inequalities (World Economic Forum, 2025).

From the perspective of Thomas Lickona’s character education, Shihab’s interpretation resonates with the three pillars: knowing the good (understanding gender balance), loving the good (cultivating empathy and respect for shared responsibility), and acting the good (practicing fair division of roles and rejecting authoritarianism) (Lickona, 1991). Yet empirical studies show that conventional character education remains insufficient unless critically integrated with gender perspectives and grounded in evidence.

For SRGBV and domestic violence prevention, Shihab’s interpretation calls for a radical gender-responsive character education model. This involves: (1) curricula embedding critical modules on gender rights and responsibilities, case studies of domestic and school violence, and Shihab’s contextual-humanist hermeneutics; (2) teacher training to detect patriarchal bias, model equitable partnerships, and apply progressive hermeneutics; and (3) school cultures committed to zero tolerance, safe reporting mechanisms, and inclusive practices of shared responsibility. Without such interventions, the verse risks being misused to legitimize inequality rather than promote justice.

Implementation of Shihab’s reading of QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:228 can be realized through holistic character education across schools, families, and communities. In schools, values of balance and responsibility should be instilled through cooperative learning, dialogue, and rejection of domination. Teachers must serve as role models of fairness and accountability. In families, parents should teach equality early through fair division of household roles and respect for children’s voices. At the societal level, religious leaders, institutions, and media must collaborate to promote *ma’ruf* and functional responsibility through education and public campaigns. Government policies should reinforce these efforts, ensuring a culture that respects rights and responsibilities without gender discrimination, thereby fostering families and communities that embody justice in line with Islamic teachings (Munawarsyah et al., 2024).

QS. Ali- Imran [3]: 36

قَلَمًا وَضَعْتُهَا قَالَتْ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَضَعْتُهَا أُنثَىٰ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا وَضَعْتَ وَلَئِنَّ الذَّكَرَ كَأَلْأُنثَىٰ وَإِنِّي سَمَّيْتُهَا مَرْيَمَ وَإِنِّي أُعِيذُهَا بِكَ وَذُرِّيَّتَهَا مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

In *Tafsir al-Mishbah*, M. Quraish Shihab interprets QS. Ali-Imran [3]:36 as part of the narrative of the family of ‘Imran, emphasizing the value and potential of daughters in Islam. The wife of ‘Imran, who had hoped for a son to dedicate to the sanctuary, nevertheless entrusted Maryam to God with sincerity and prayer for protection. Shihab rejects readings that treat the phrase *wa laysa al-dzakaru ka al-untsa* as proof of female inferiority. Instead, he views it as a reminder of human limitation before divine decree, affirming that true human dignity lies in servitude (*‘ubudiyah*) to God rather than gender. All humans share the same origin, leaving no ontological basis for superiority or subordination. Maryam’s birth itself demonstrates that women’s spiritual potential can reach the highest levels, as she became a model of devotion, purity, and spiritual education (Shihab, 2005b).

Hermeneutically, Shihab’s contextual-humanist approach is progressive, linking the verse to principles of equality (*musawah*) and equal access to education for both genders. His interpretation diverges from traditional readings that restrict women’s roles on biological grounds. For Shihab, the phrase underscores the gap between human expectation and divine will, not a hierarchy of worth. Yet tension persists, as the phrase is often misread as male superiority. Despite Shihab’s empowering perspective, social realities still reflect entrenched stereotypes and educational discrimination against women (Anwar et al., 2024).

Empirical data highlights this gap. Komnas Perempuan reported 376,529 cases of gender-based violence against women in 2025, a 14.07% increase from the previous year, with 89.76% occurring in domestic settings and sexual violence comprising 37.51% (Komnas Perempuan, 2026). In education, SRGBV remains pressing: National Assessment data from 2022, still referenced in 2025, shows that 34% of primary and junior secondary students face risks of sexual violence (KEMENDIKUDRISTEK, 2024). Indonesia’s Global Gender Gap Index ranking of 97 with a score of 0.692 further reflects structural inequalities, particularly in women’s participation in education and the economy (World Economic Forum, 2025).

From the perspective of Thomas Lickona’s character education, Shihab’s interpretation aligns with the three pillars: knowing the good (recognizing that dignity is rooted in knowledge and piety, not gender), loving the good (cultivating respect for women’s worth and protection through compassion), and acting the good (ensuring equal educational access, dismantling stereotypes, and fostering supportive environments) (Lickona, 1991). Yet conventional character education remains insufficient unless critically integrated with gender perspectives.

For SRGBV prevention, Shihab’s reading calls for a transformative gender-responsive model. This includes: (1) curricula incorporating Maryam’s story as a paradigm for female education, alongside case studies of gender stereotypes and equal rights; (2) teacher training to identify bias,

model equality, and apply Shihab's contextual-humanist approach to empower female students; and (3) school cultures committed to zero tolerance of harassment, equal leadership opportunities, and inclusive spiritual development. Without such critical integration, the verse risks being misused to reinforce stereotypes rather than empower.

Implementation of Shihab's interpretation of QS. Ali-Imran [3]:36 can be realized through holistic education that guarantees equal learning rights for boys and girls. In schools, this means fostering individual potential without gender discrimination, promoting equal leadership, and cultivating respect for women's contributions. Families should instill sincerity, compassion, and fairness from an early age, avoiding stereotypes in household roles. At the societal level, religious leaders, institutions, and media must collaborate to promote women's participation in education, work, and social life. Government policies should reinforce equal access to education and empowerment, ensuring that discrimination is dismantled. In this way, Shihab's tafsir can inspire a generation that is just, inclusive, and Qur'anic in character, measuring human dignity by knowledge and piety rather than gender (Satria & Wardhana, 2026).

QS. Ali- Imran [3]: 195

فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ أَنِّي لَا أُضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ مِّنْكُمْ مِّمَّنْ ذَكَرَ آؤُنثَىٰ بَعْضُكُم مِّنْ بَعْضٍ

In *Tafsir al-Mishbah*, M. Quraish Shihab interprets QS. Ali-Imran [3]:195 as a clear affirmation of gender equality rooted in the principle of *tawhid*. The verse was revealed in response to Ummu Salamah's question about whether women would receive equal reward for their deeds and sacrifices in the path of God. Shihab emphasizes that there is no distinction in reward or status between men and women before Allah; human dignity is determined solely by faith, sincerity, and righteous action. The phrase *ba'dukum min ba'd* ("you are of one another") underscores the shared origin of humanity from the same soul, correcting pre-Islamic patriarchal structures that subordinated women. This interpretation places moral and spiritual responsibility equally upon both genders (Shihab, 2005b).

Hermeneutically, Shihab's contextual-humanist approach is progressive, linking the verse to egalitarian *tawhid* and rejecting patriarchal readings. His interpretation coheres with other passages in *Tafsir al-Mishbah* that oppose gender discrimination (Ichwan & Amin, 2022). Yet tension persists: while the verse declares *la udi'u 'amala 'amil* ("I do not waste the work of any worker"), social practice often undervalues women's contributions in both domestic and public spheres. Thus, Shihab's empowering tafsir confronts a reality where equality in the hereafter is not mirrored by recognition in this world (Anwar et al., 2024).

Empirical data illustrates this gap. Komnas Perempuan reported 376,529 cases of gender-based violence against women in 2025, the highest in a decade and a 14.07% increase from the previous year. Of these, 89.76% occurred in domestic settings, with sexual violence comprising 37.51% (Komnas Perempuan, 2026). In education, SRGBV remains pervasive, particularly in high schools

and universities, limiting women's ability to contribute and excel equally (KEMENDIKUDRISTEK, 2024). Indonesia's Global Gender Gap Index ranking of 97 with a score of 0.692 reflects slow progress, with persistent inequalities in economic and political participation despite relatively better access to education (World Economic Forum, 2025).

From the perspective of Thomas Lickona's character education, Shihab's interpretation resonates with the three pillars: knowing the good (recognizing that dignity is based on deeds, not gender), loving the good (cultivating empathy and respect for women's contributions), and acting on the good (practicing cooperation, mutual support, and rejecting domination) (Lickona, 1991). Yet conventional character education often fails without critical integration of gender perspectives.

For SRGBV prevention, Shihab's tafsir calls for a transformative gender-responsive model. This includes: (1) curricula embedding critical analysis of this verse alongside case studies of discrimination and SRGBV; (2) teacher training to detect gender bias, model equality, and apply Shihab's *tawhid*-humanist approach to empower female students; and (3) school cultures committed to zero tolerance of gender-based violence, equal opportunities for leadership, and collaborative programs that embody *ba'dukum min ba'd* as human unity. Without such interventions, the verse risks being misused to sustain structural injustice.

Implementation of Shihab's interpretation of QS. Ali-Imran [3]:195 can be realized through holistic education that instills equality, justice, and respect for all learners. Schools must foster inclusive environments where boys and girls participate and lead equally. Teachers should model fairness and cooperation through collaborative activities. Families can reinforce equality by sharing roles and respecting each child's potential. At the societal level, religious leaders, institutions, and media should promote egalitarian *tawhid* and collective responsibility. Government policies must support the elimination of gender discrimination. In this way, Shihab's tafsir can inspire a society that is just, compassionate, and faithful to Islam's vision of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, where every individual is valued for their deeds and contributions (Fakhri Amal & Hadi Imawan, 2025).

QS. An-Nisa [4]: 34

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

QS. An-Nisa [4]:34 has long been debated in gender studies due to the phrase *al-rijalu qawwamuna 'ala an-nisa*, often read as legitimizing male authority over women. In *Tafsir al-Mishbah*, M. Quraish Shihab interprets *qawwamun* as a functional and responsible role of the husband: providing protection, financial support, and leadership within the family, carried out with trust and justice. This leadership rests on two foundations: God's favor (*fadhil*) and financial responsibility (*anfaqu min amwalihim*). Shihab stresses that it is not arbitrary domination but a

moral duty exercised within the framework of *ma'ruf* (justice and goodness). Wives retain full rights, and marital relations should be built on consultation and cooperation (Shihab, 2005b).

Shihab rejects interpretations that tie male advantage to ontological or intellectual superiority. Biological differences do not negate women's equal potential for intelligence, knowledge, and achievement. He insists the verse addresses household responsibilities and should not be extended to justify discrimination in public or social life (Ichwan & Amin, 2022). His hermeneutical approach is moderate and contextual, limiting *qawwamah* to a trust based on justice and explicitly rejecting its use to legitimize domestic violence. Yet literal-patriarchal readings remain dominant, often turning the verse into a justification for unequal relations. This tension reflects the gap between Shihab's progressive vision and social realities still shaped by gender bias.

Empirical evidence underscores the urgency of critical interpretation. Komnas Perempuan recorded 376,529 cases of gender-based violence against women in 2025, a 14.07% increase from the previous year (the highest in a decade). Of these, 89.76% occurred in domestic settings, with sexual violence the most reported form (Komnas Perempuan, 2026). SRGBV also remains a serious issue in schools, where gender stereotypes and unequal power relations often trigger harassment and violence. Indonesia's Global Gender Gap Index ranking of 97 with a score of 0.692 highlights slow progress, especially in women's economic and political participation (World Economic Forum, 2025). These realities show that Shihab's vision of functional leadership has yet to be realized without cultural and educational transformation.

From the perspective of Thomas Lickona's character education, the verse can support the idea that leadership is a moral responsibility, not a privilege. The three pillars: knowing the good, loving the good, and acting the good, can be internalized through values of justice, empathy, and cooperation across genders. Yet conventional character education is insufficient unless critically integrated with gender perspectives, otherwise it risks reinforcing patriarchal bias (Munawarsyah et al., 2024).

For preventing SRGBV and domestic violence, a more practical model is needed: contextual analysis of the verse in Islamic Education and civics curricula; teacher training to detect bias and model equitable relations; and school cultures that emphasize consultation, zero tolerance for violence, and equal leadership opportunities for boys and girls. Implementation of Shihab's interpretation requires a holistic approach. In schools, students should be encouraged to practice inclusive leadership through collaborative activities. In families, parents must normalize fair division of roles and consultation. In society, religious leaders and social institutions should promote leadership as service, not domination. Government policies can reinforce these efforts by strengthening gender equality in education and protection. In this way, the verse becomes not a source of tension but a foundation for harmonious, just relationships in line with Islam's vision of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*.

QS. Al-Hujurat [49]: 13

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

QS. Al-Hujurat [49]:13 is often regarded as one of the Qur'an's foundational verses for egalitarianism, rejecting superiority based on gender, ethnicity, or social status. In *Tafsir al-Mishbah*, M. Quraish Shihab interprets the verse as affirming the shared origin of humanity from a man and a woman (Adam and Hawa), leaving no legitimate basis for hierarchy or discrimination. The differences God created between nations and tribes are meant for mutual recognition (*lita'arafu*), cooperation, and collective welfare. Human dignity is ultimately determined by piety (*atqakum*), not biological, ethnic, or social factors (Shihab, 2005c).

Shihab's interpretation provides a strong foundation for gender-responsive character education that is both humanist and inclusive. The verse teaches that equality of human essence must guide social interaction and education, where every individual's potential is valued without gender stereotypes. Differences should serve as opportunities for collaboration rather than grounds for subordination. In education, this principle encourages empathy, fairness, respect for diversity, and the elimination of bias that often hinders the development of both boys and girls (Fadhilah et al., 2024).

Yet social realities in Indonesia reveal persistent gaps. Komnas Perempuan reported 376,529 cases of gender-based violence against women in 2025, a 14.07% increase from the previous year, with most cases occurring in domestic settings and sexual violence dominating (Komnas Perempuan, 2026). SRGBV remains a serious challenge in schools, reflecting entrenched stereotypes and unequal power relations. Indonesia's Global Gender Gap Index ranking of 97 with a score of 0.692 further highlights slow progress in economic and political participation, despite relatively better access to education (World Economic Forum, 2025).

From the perspective of Thomas Lickona's character education, the verse aligns with efforts to build morality centered on piety as the universal measure of dignity. It calls for internalizing values of justice, empathy, and respect for difference as integral to character formation. However, effective character education requires critical integration of gender perspectives to move beyond normative rhetoric and challenge patriarchal culture (Ichwan & Amin, 2022).

Developing a gender-responsive model of education is therefore urgent. Curricula should incorporate contextual analysis of this verse to build awareness of human equality and the primacy of piety. Teacher training must equip educators to detect gender bias and facilitate collaborative, equitable learning. School culture should foster inclusivity, zero tolerance for discrimination and violence, and equal opportunities for leadership and participation.

Implementation of these values requires a multi-layered approach involving schools, families, and society. In schools, teaching and student organizations should encourage cross-gender cooperation without domination. Families must instill respect for difference early through daily

practices of fairness. At the societal level, religious leaders, institutions, and media can reinforce the narrative that human dignity lies in piety and positive contribution, not biological or social background. Through collective effort, dialogue, and inclusive empowerment programs, the values of *lita'arafu* and *atqakum* can serve as bonds of unity and social justice. Thus, the verse becomes not only a sacred text but also a living guide for nurturing generations that are just, empathetic, and noble in character, in line with Islam's vision of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*.

Conclusions

M. Quraish Shihab's interpretation of gender-related verses in the Qur'an (including QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:187, 223, 228; Ali-Imran [3]:36, 195; An-Nisa [4]:34; and Al-Hujurat [49]:13) offers a progressive and humanist hermeneutical framework. He consistently emphasizes essential equality (*musawah*), reciprocity (*mubadalah*), functional justice (*'adl*), and recognition of human potential based on piety rather than gender, social status, or biological origin. Metaphors such as *libas* (garment), *harth* (field), *qawwamun* (responsible guardian), and phrases like *ba'dukum min ba'd* and *atqakum* are read as calls for complementary, protective, and collaborative relationships rather than domination or subordination.

This contextual-humanist approach aligns with the egalitarian spirit of *tawhid* and serves as a corrective to pre-Islamic patriarchal culture. It provides a strong theological foundation for gender-responsive character education that integrates Thomas Lickona's three pillars: knowing the good, loving the good, and acting on the good, while critically addressing patriarchal bias. Yet the gap between Shihab's ideal vision and social reality remains wide. Komnas Perempuan reported 376,529 cases of gender-based violence against women in 2025, a 14.07% increase from the previous year, with nearly 90% occurring in domestic settings. SRGBV also persists, with National Assessment data showing that around 34% of primary and junior secondary students face risks of sexual violence in schools. Indonesia's Global Gender Gap Index ranking of 97 with a score of 0.692 further highlights slow progress, particularly in economic and political participation.

This gap underscores that Shihab's progressive tafsir cannot be transformative if it remains only an ideal discourse. A radical model of gender-responsive character education is needed: curricula that analyze gender verses contextually alongside case studies of violence; teacher training to detect and challenge patriarchal bias; and school cultures committed to zero tolerance, cross-gender consultation, and equal leadership opportunities.

Overall, implementing Shihab's interpretations can catalyze the formation of harmonious families, inclusive schools, and gender-just communities. Through the role modeling of teachers and parents, collaboration between religious institutions and educational bodies, and supportive government policies, the values of *libas*, *harth*, functional *qawwamah*, and *atqakum* can be realized in daily practice. In this way, contemporary Islamic education becomes not merely a transmitter of sacred texts but an agent of social transformation, nurturing generations of integrity, empathy, and commitment to justice in line with Islam's vision of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*.

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