

The Construction of Guru Bakhiet's Gender Interpretation: Between Subordination and Women's Empowerment

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Abstract. *This study aims to examine the construction of Guru Bakhiet's gender interpretation in his interpretation of a number of verses of the Qur'an, focusing on the theme of subordination and women's empowerment. Guru Bakhiet interprets Qur'anic verses related to women, such as Surah al-Baqarah [2]: 228, Surah an-Nisa [4]: 1 and 34, Surah al-An'am [6]: 137, and Surah al-Isra [17]: 1, with an approach that prioritizes justice, equality, and protection of women's rights. This research uses critical analysis methods and hermeneutic approaches, this research reveals how Guru Bakhiet interprets verses related to women, including the obligation to wear the hijab, the position of husband and wife, women's rights, and women's relationships with men in the context of marriage. The results of the study show that Guru Bakhiet's interpretation is influenced by the dynamics in gender understanding in his interpretation, which not only reflects local traditions and culture, but also shows the potential to formulate a more inclusive view and empower women within the framework of Islamic teachings. Guru Bakhiet's interpretation shows that there is a tendency to put women in a subordinate position and at the same time try to empower women through fair religious learning, as well as the affirmation of women's rights in the family. Although she emphasizes the obligation of women to maintain honor and maintain manners, the interpretation also includes aspects that support the education and protection of women, such as in her views on the treatment of girls and efforts to prevent injustice in husband-wife relationships. So, this interpretation emphasizes the importance of women's empowerment through education and fair treatment, as well as criticizing practices that have the potential to suppress the role of women in society. Thus, it can be concluded that Guru Bakhiet's tafsir combines aspects of subordination and empowerment, by fighting for women's rights within the framework of humanist and contextual Islamic teachings.*

Keywords: *Gender Interpretation, Bakhiet Teachers, Subordination, Women's Empowerment*

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INTRODUCTION

In the study of Qur'an interpretation, gender issues are essential topics that continue to receive attention (Cholidi & Fadlulah, 2024; Qibtiyah, 2019; Resky, 2024). The role of women in Muslim societies is often a debate between traditional views that are subordinate and progressive approaches that empower them (Karimullah et al., 2023; Khader, 2016; Raja, 2014). The interpretation of religious texts, especially the Qur'an, has always been a complex dialectical space in understanding many things, including one related to gender relations (Grung, 2010; Mubarak, 2014; van den Brandt, 2019). Every interpreter understanding gender certainly brings social, cultural, and personal context to interpret the holy text or the Qur'an (Saeed, 2014). It has

even been suggested that they belong to a marginalized group. Marginalized groups are groups of people who experience limited access to certain rights and even equal recognition in the social, economic, or political structures of society (Graham & Padilla, 2014; Nurhidayati et al., 2024). They are often disadvantaged due to discrimination, stigma, or unfair policies.

Gender as a concept theoretically understood differently from gender was first introduced by British sociologist Ann Oakley in the 50s, along with the emergence of the second wave of feminism (Oakley, 2015). Gender as a social, cultural, historical and political category began to be considered necessary in the 70s (Wiesner-Hanks, 2011). In the social sciences, gender is used with a special meaning fundamentally different from biological sex (Sciences et al., 2016). Almost all theories about gender and their arguments are based on a conceptual defence between biological sex and social gender (Siri, 2014).

Historical facts prove that the Prophet's companions carried out the Qur'an's writing through several stages or certain developments (Uhammad & Usama, 2019). More than that, the Arabic language applies sectarianism not only to others but also to women in its group. Women are treated like a minority group whose interests are always suppressed so that they are under the protection and authority of men. Masculinity in Arabic is the main subject, while femininity is a branch that cannot be considered a subject (Muhammadun, 2016). In this framework, Arabic often uses the masculine plural form even though it is formally a group of women.

The basic principle of the Qur'an in viewing the relationship between men and women is very egalitarian. Several verses reveal this principle, for example, Surah al-Hujurat (49): 13, Surah al-Nahl (16): 97, Surah al-Ahzab (33): 35, the Prophet Muhammad in his saying, narrated by Imam Ahmad and at-Turmuzi, also mentions a very egalitarian relationship between women and men: "Indeed, women are the brothers of men, and they do not honour them except the noble and do not despise them unless they are despicable".

Apart from linguistic arguments, a common thread can be drawn that although God in the basic teachings of Islam is gender-neutral, the symbolization of God becomes masculine and, to some extent, affects the theological construction of most Muslims about God and the superiority of men over women (Rohmaniyah, 2008, 2009). The symbols of masculinity are further emphasized by the understanding that the Prophets and Apostles of Allah are all men. From Prophet Ibrahim to Prophet Muhammad, the names of Prophets and Apostles known in the history of Islam are men. In this regard, some progressive Islamic thinkers have argued that some female figures, such as those recorded in the Quran, such as Maryam and Siti Hajar, can also be categorized as Prophets. However, this opinion has not generally been accepted and has not become mainstream in Islamic discourse (Rohmaniyah, 2013).

Guru Bakhiet, one of the charismatic scholars from South Kalimantan, a mufassir from a strong local culture, provides an interpretation that reflects the complexity of this gender issue. Teacher Bakhiet comes from a family background that pursues religious sciences. According to the genealogy of the nasab, his father, H. Ahmad Mughni, was the son of Tuan Guru H. Ismail, who was buried in Pasungkan Village, South Hulu Sungai State, who was the son of Tuan Guru Muhammad Thahir who died in Alabio, and the fate of Guru Bakhiet stopped in the name of Syihabuddin. In a Kalimantan Media newspaper note, when Tuan Guru Amat Nagara was pressed about who was after this figure of Syihabuddin, he stopped and replied, "Kaina agak urang nang alimnya". This Banjar phrase means that he does not want to explain further because he is afraid of being considered arrogant and proud of the piety of others even though he feels that he is not. The last name, Syihabuddin, is allegedly Syihabuddin, a Sheikh Arsyad Al Banjari descendant. Some parties believe so. Although it is alleged to have a family lineage from the descendants of Sheikh Arsyad (Bani Arsyadi), which in Banjar culture can be a guarantee to make a respected religious figure, Guru Bakhiet, like his father, usually refuses to talk about nasab, let alone highlight it. However, among his students, this nasab has become common knowledge. The Master's unwillingness to mention his genealogy raises his charisma even more because this proves his humble attitude (tawâdhu') (Mujiburrahman, 2021).

The phenomenon of gender interpretation in Indonesia is an essential topic of contemporary Islamic studies. The complexity of interpretation is not only a matter of methodology but also reflects the socio-cultural dynamics of Muslim society (Subhan, 2009). Guru Bakhiet, with the cultural base of the Banjar Islamic boarding school, offers a unique perspective in understanding verses related to women. This research aims to conduct a critical deconstruction of Guru Bakhiet's gender interpretation, which focuses on Identifying interpretive constructions that tend to be subordinate, Analyzing elements of women's empowerment in their interpretation, and Understanding the socio-cultural context that influences their thinking.

METHODS

This study uses an exploratory qualitative approach to understand the context and meaning of Guru Bakhiet's interpretation of gender issues in Islam. The main focus of this study is to explore the meaning behind the interpretation texts and how the interpretation reflects gender relations. The methods used include critical analysis and hermeneutic approaches. The hermeneutic approach is applied to analyze the texts of the interpretation by considering the historical, social, and cultural context in which the interpretation is made. This allows researchers to explore the relationship between the text and the resulting meaning within the framework of a particular interpretation. Meanwhile, critical analysis criticizes the power relations reflected in Guru Bakhiet's interpretation, including how this interpretation can support patriarchal structures or offer the potential for women's empowerment.

This approach was chosen to examine the construction of Guru Bakhiet's gender interpretation, which reflects the dynamics between subordination and empowerment of women in the understanding of Qur'anic verses. This research is based on a literature study focusing on the works of Guru Bakhiet, with limitations on the scope of the interpretation analyzed. These namely texts are directly related to gender issues. The data sources in this study include tafsir texts written or developed by Guru Bakhiet, especially those related to gender issues in the interpretation of Qur'anic verses such as Surah Al-Baqarah [2]: 228, Surah An-Nisa [4]: 34, Surah Al-Ahzab [33]: 59, and other relevant verses. The data collection technique uses literature study, where data is collected through literature review, both in the form of interpretation texts by Guru Bakhiet and other supporting literature, and document analysis to identify patterns, themes, and arguments used by teachers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research reveals the construction of Guru Bakhiet's gender interpretation, which reflects the dynamics of subordination and empowerment of women in the understanding of Qur'anic verses. Based on hermeneutic analysis and social criticism, the study results show a duality in Guru Bakhiet's interpretation, which shows the traditional elements of patriarchy on the one hand and women's empowerment efforts on the other.

Subordination in the Tafsir of Guru Bakhiet

Guru Bakhiet shows a tendency to maintain traditional social structures that place women in subordinate positions, especially in the context of family and gender roles. This view is reflected in her various interpretations of Qur'anic verses related to gender roles, which often emphasize the importance of women's traditional roles in society.

One of the prime examples of this view is Guru Bakhiet's interpretation of the concept of male leadership (*qawwamah*) in Surah An-Nisa [4]: 34. According to her, men have responsibilities as family leaders. At the same time, women are obliged to obey their husbands. This view aligns with structural-functional theory, which sees the division of gender roles as a mechanism to maintain family and community stability (Husna, 2019; Turama, 2018). However, this perspective also reinforces gender-based power relations, which, from the perspective of social conflict theory, can be considered to perpetuate male dominance over women in the context of the family (Adhikari & Sigdel, 2024).

Guru Bakhiet's interpretation of the female nusyuz also shows an element of subordination. In his interpretation, the stages of handling nusyuz—advice, bed separation, light blow—describe the existence of male control over women. Although Guru Bakhiet emphasizes the importance of painless treatment, this interpretation still reflects a patriarchal structure that places women as the party to be corrected. In addition, Guru Bakhiet's view of women's clothing in Surah Al-Ahzab [33]: 59 also emphasizes women's role in maintaining society's morality. She interpreted the hijab as an obligation to cover the awrah, which can be understood as a form of social control over women. This view often burdens women with the responsibility of maintaining collective honour, which can limit their freedom (Meinzen-Dick et al., 2014).

In this context, Guru Bakhiet's interpretations can be seen as an attempt to maintain traditional norms that place women in a more passive and subordinate role. This raises questions about how these interpretations can affect the perception and role of women in modern societies that increasingly demand gender equality (Gupta et al., 2019). However, it is essential to note that these interpretations can also reflect the social and cultural context in which Guru Bakhiet lived and worked. In many societies, traditional norms are still powerful, and such interpretations can be considered a way to navigate rapid social change while maintaining social stability (Varnum & Grossmann, 2017).

Table 1. Aspects, Views, and Social Implications of Guru Bakhiet's Thought

Aspects	Guru Bakhiet's Views	Social Implications
Male Leadership (Qawwamah)	Men are family leaders; Women must obey their husbands.	Strengthening the patriarchal structure in the family, reducing the potential for gender equality in the household.
Nusyuz Handling	Stages: advice, bed separation, to light blows. Emphasizes treatment that is not painful but still reflects male control.	Normalize male control over women in the context of domestic conflicts.
Women's Clothing (Hijab)	The hijab is an obligation to maintain the morality of society.	Restricting women's freedom increases the moral burden on women compared to men.
Social Context of Tafsir	Emphasizing traditional norms for social stability.	Interpretation is considered relevant in traditional societies but falls short of the demands of modern gender equality.
Modern Relevance	Tafsir can strengthen patriarchal structures while providing insight into existing social norms.	Raising awareness about the need for reinterpretation to support gender equality in modern society.

Overall, Guru Bakhiet's interpretation of gender issues in Islam shows the complexity of the relationship between religious texts, interpretations, and social contexts. While these interpretations can reinforce patriarchal structures, they also offer insights into how religious texts can support or challenge existing social norms (Krämer & Schmidtke, 2006).

Empowerment in the Tafsir of Guru Bakhiet

On the other hand, Guru Bakhiet also shows the elements of women's empowerment through his interpretation that supports women's rights in education, family protection, and human dignity. These interpretations highlight the importance of balance and justice in gender relations and emphasize women's active role in society. One example of this view is Guru Bakhiet's interpretation of Surah Al-Baqarah [2]:228, where he stresses that the relationship between husband and wife should be based on a balance of rights and obligations. Although men are given a higher position as the head of the family, this position is balanced by significant responsibilities, including providing for the wife's maintenance, protection, and education. This

approach reflects the spirit of liberal feminism that emphasizes the importance of justice in the division of gender roles (Failing, 2019).

In addition, Guru Bakhiet also emphasized the importance of equitable education for girls, as reflected in his interpretation of Surah Al-An'am [6]: 137. He criticized the practice of an ignorant society that degraded women and quoted the Prophet's view of the glory of girls. This interpretation shows efforts to empower women through education, which is in line with the principles of liberal feminism to create equality through access to resources (Nussbaum, 2000).

In the context of women's rights in marriage, Guru Bakhiet interprets Surah Al-Mumtahanah [60]: 10-12 by advocating restrictions on Muslim women's relationships with non-Muslim men to protect their faith. However, she also emphasized the importance of women's rights in marriage, including protection from disharmonious relationships. His emphasis on the importance of women's baiat to the Prophet also reflects the awareness of women's contribution to Muslim society (Ismail, 2016).

These interpretations show that although Guru Bakhiet retains some traditional elements in his interpretation, he also opens up space for women's empowerment. By emphasizing the importance of education and rights in marriage, Guru Bakhiet contributed to a discussion on the role of women in a more inclusive and progressive Islam (Faizah & Alkhalimi, 2023).

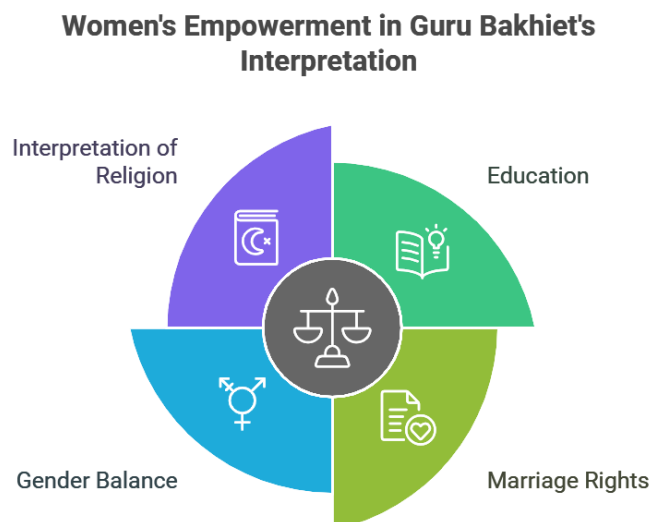


Figure 1. Women's Empowerment in the Tafsir of Guru Bakhiet

Guru Bakhiet's approach to gender issues in Islam shows that religious texts can be interpreted in a way that supports women's empowerment. This highlights the potential of religious interpretation to serve as a tool for positive social change, especially in the context of a society that is still struggling with issues of gender equality. Overall, Guru Bakhiet's tafsir maintains traditional values and encourages women's empowerment. This suggests that religious interpretation can bridge the past and the future, integrating conventional values with modern needs for equality and justice.

Dialectic of Subordination and Empowerment

This study shows that Guru Bakhiet's gender interpretation construction is in the dialectic between subordination and empowerment. In this context, the two main factors that influence its interpretation are socio-cultural influence and the flexibility of the text and its interpretation. First, the impact of local culture is evident in Guru Bakhiet's interpretation, where he seeks to balance traditional norms with demands for gender equality. In many of her interpretations, she accommodates women's education, which shows that Guru Bakhiet is aware of the importance of women's role in modern society. This reflects efforts to adapt Islamic values to evolving social

realities, where women are increasingly recognized as an integral part of community development (Khaidir, 2010).

Second, the interpretation of Qur'anic verses by Guru Bakhiet shows the flexibility of the holy text in responding to gender issues. His hermeneutic approach indicates that gender interpretation is greatly influenced by the perspective of mufassir and its social context. In this case, Guru Bakhiet integrates traditional and modern elements, although his interpretation is not entirely free of patriarchal biases. This shows that despite advances in gender thinking, challenges must be faced in changing views that have been internalized for a long time (Suciptaningsih, 2010).

Thus, Guru Bakhiet's gender interpretation construction reflects the complex dynamic between maintaining traditional values and encouraging women's empowerment. Its interpretation provides insight into how religious texts can be interpreted in favour of gender equality while also suggesting that social change requires sustained time and effort (Edström et al., 2015). Overall, this study highlights the importance of understanding the socio-cultural context and the flexibility of texts in gender interpretation, as well as how these factors contribute to the dialectic between subordination and empowerment in Guru Bakhiet's interpretation.

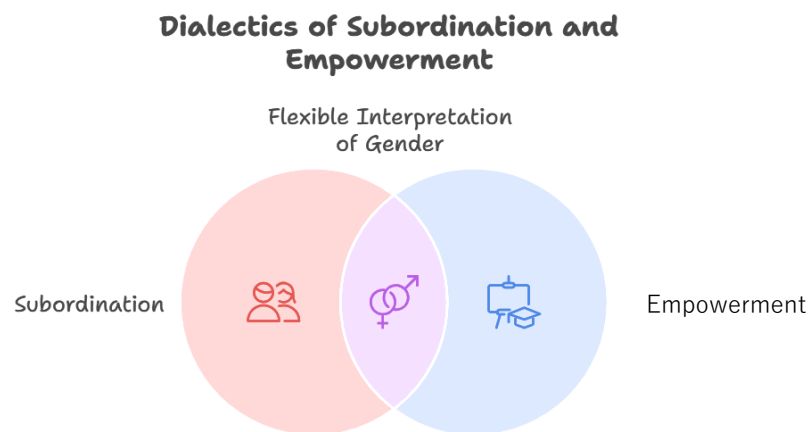


Figure 2. Dialectics of Subordination and Empowerment

Guru Bakhiet's construction of gender interpretation reflects the complex dynamics between subordination and empowerment of women. On the one hand, his interpretation maintains the traditional social structure that puts women in a subordinate position. However, on the other hand, the interpretation also offers an element of empowerment through education, the protection of women's rights, and recognition of the role of women in society. This dialectic shows that gender interpretation in Islam is not static but is always in the negotiation process with social and cultural contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the construction of gender interpretation by Guru Bakhiet lies in the tension between subordination and women's empowerment. Through a hermeneutic approach and critical analysis, it was found that her interpretation reflects a duality of views rooted in patriarchal traditions, where women are often placed in subordinate positions, especially in aspects of male leadership, nusyuz handling, and dress codes. These traditional elements show the influence of the patriarchal social structure that dominates gender relations. However, Guru Bakhiet also displays aspects of women's empowerment, emphasising the importance of education, respect for women's rights in the family, and protection of women's dignity. His interpretation of education for girls and women's rights in marriage reflects efforts to create gender equality within the framework of Islamic values.

Furthermore, Guru Bakhiet's interpretation shows a dialectic between traditional values and modernity, where he seeks to maintain traditional norms while accommodating the needs of women in contemporary society. This dialectic reflects the flexibility of the Qur'anic text that is open to interpretation according to social and cultural contexts. The relevance of theories, such as Structural-Functional Theory and Social Conflict Theory, helps explain how Guru Bakhiet's interpretation strengthens the stability of traditional social structures by dividing gender roles despite elements of female resistance. Meanwhile, Liberal Feminism Theory highlights the empowerment aspect in its interpretation, focusing on women's rights in education and family. Thus, this study emphasizes the need for a critical approach to interpretation that considers gender justice in the context of Islam and opens up space for a more inclusive and contextual interpretation to meet the needs of women in the modern era.

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