



# A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF AMINA WADUD'S FEMINIST HERMENEUTICS IN QUR'ANIC INTERPRETATION



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**Abstract**

*This study examines Amina Wadud's feminist hermeneutics method in reading the Qur'an, focusing on her efforts to interpret the text with an awareness of the social context and experiences of women as subjects of interpretation. The research gap that this study aims to fill is the lack of studies in Indonesia that systematically analyze the methodological framework and ethical foundations of tawhid in Wadud's feminist hermeneutics, as most previous studies have been descriptive in nature and have not critically linked the methodological, ethical, and implicative dimensions of feminist readings of the Quran. This article positions itself to go beyond a general presentation of Wadud's thinking by offering a conceptual analysis that highlights how Wadud "stands at the edge of the text," integrates the principle of tawhid as the foundation of gender justice, and unravels the challenges and resistance faced by this approach in contemporary interpretive discourse. The research approach uses qualitative methods through library research with conceptual analysis of relevant literature. The results show that Wadud reconstructs inclusive and gender-just interpretation through dialogue between text and context, affirming tawhid as the basis for rejecting discrimination, while criticizing dominant patriarchal interpretations. In conclusion, these results are in line with the research objective of emphasizing the importance of tawhid-based feminist hermeneutics as an ethical-methodological foundation for gender-just interpretation of the Quran and opening up space for more empirical follow-up research.*

## INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of interpreting the Qur'an from a gender perspective has become a crucial issue in the contemporary social context<sup>1</sup>. In modern society, the discourse on gender equality and women's justice often intersects with religious texts that are interpreted in a patriarchal manner. The tension between textual interpretation and social contextual demands is what makes the theme of reading the Qur'an from a female hermeneutic perspective, as done by Amina Wadud, important to study. It not only touches on religious issues but also touches on the root of social issues regarding male-female relations in religious and social life<sup>2</sup>.

From a literary perspective, the issue of gender-based Qur'anic hermeneutics has been discussed by a number of contemporary Muslim scholars, such as Riffat Hassan, Asma Barlas, and Amina Wadud. However, most of these discussions are still descriptive in nature, focusing on the presentation of ideas or normative criticism of patriarchal interpretations, without elaborating in depth on the methodological framework underlying their approaches. , a gap in the literature that has not been widely discussed is a systematic analysis of Amina Wadud's feminist hermeneutical method,

<sup>1</sup> Moh Bakir and Abd Kahar, 'The Role of Contemporary Interpretation in Addressing Gender Issues in Madura', *REVELATIA Journal of Quranic Studies and Interpretation*, 6.1 (2025).

<sup>2</sup> M Aspandi, 'Amina Wadud's Hermeneutics: An Effort at Contextual Reading of Religious Texts', *Legitima: Journal of Islamic Family Law*, 1.1 (2018), 44 – 61.



specifically how the principles of "*standing on the edge of the text*" and tawhid are constructed as methodological foundations, not merely ideological ones. This article positions itself as an analytical study that conceptually and critically unpacks Wadud's method, thereby contributing to the scientific map by strengthening the methodological approach in feminist interpretation studies, not only at the level of ideas or values.

The focus of this article is specifically on Amina Wadud because of the consistency of her feminist hermeneutics in the metaphor of "*standing on the edge of the text*" that she developed. By focusing on Wadud, this study attempts to conduct a methodological deepening that has received little attention in Indonesian studies, while still opening up opportunities for theoretical dialogue with the thoughts of Hassan, Barlas, and other scholars in more comparative advanced studies. The deepening of Wadud's hermeneutic method has not received much critical attention. Most studies only review Wadud's thoughts descriptively without analyzing the hermeneutic methodology she uses to recontextualize gender verses. As a result, the understanding of the epistemological framework of Wadud's hermeneutics is still incomplete and tends to be fragmented<sup>3</sup>.

The main goal of this article is to systematically analyze Amina Wadud's feminist hermeneutic method in reading the Quran, especially how she developed the "*standing at the edge of the text*" approach, making women's experiences the subject of interpretation, and integrating the principle of tawhid as an ethical foundation for rejecting gender discrimination<sup>4</sup>. Meanwhile, the normative intention of this research is to encourage a more inclusive and gender-equitable practice of Quranic interpretation by critiquing the patriarchal bias of classical interpretations and offering a framework of feminist hermeneutics based on tawhid as a valid alternative in contemporary interpretive discourse. Thus, this research attempts to fill the void in contemporary interpretation studies, which have been dominated by traditional approaches.

The metaphor "*Standing at the Edge of the Text*" is central to Amina Wadud's hermeneutics, where "edge" is defined as a strategic liminal space. This position does not mean that she is outside the text and judges the Qur'an with foreign values, nor does it mean that she passively submits to established traditional patriarchal interpretations. Instead, standing on the edge of the text allows Wadud to remain committed as a Muslim woman to the text of the Qur'an while maintaining a critical distance in analyzing it. From this position, she is able to question, criticize, and offer new interpretations that empower women without losing religious legitimacy and the social context of the reader. This position on the edge provides a reflective and dialectical space to open up an inclusive and progressive discourse of interpretation, balancing fidelity to the text with an awareness of the dynamic social context.

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<sup>3</sup> Reni Dian Anggraini et al., 'Women in the Framework of the Qur'an: Amina Wadud's Model of Interpretation', 8.2 (2022), 95 – 108 <<https://doi.org/10.15408/ushuluna.v8i2.25860>>.

<sup>4</sup> Kate Mroz, 'Chapter Fourteen Is It Necessary To Break The Rules? A Comparative Look At Amina Wadud And The Roman Catholic Womenpriests Movement', *Making Gender in the Intersection of the Human and the Divine*, 2019, 257.

Thus, this study aims to answer three main questions: how Amina Wadud developed a feminist hermeneutical approach that reconstructs the interpretation of the Qur'an from a female perspective, how the principle of tawhid becomes an ethical foundation in re-reading Qur'anic verses that reject gender discrimination, and what are the challenges and implications of Wadud's hermeneutical method in expanding contemporary interpretive studies that are inclusive and progressive. The scientific contribution of this research is to strengthen feminist interpretation studies with a systematic methodological approach, as well as to open a space for dialogue between moderate interpretation and feminist interpretation in the discourse of gender justice.

## METHOD

The research method used in this article is a qualitative method through *library research* on the idea of feminist hermeneutics found in the book *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (Wadud, 1999). This method aims to collect, analyze, and synthesize various sources of literature relevant to the research topic in order to obtain a deep and comprehensive understanding of the issues under review<sup>5</sup>. Literature review allows the author to identify theoretical developments, find research gaps, and construct arguments supported by valid and reliable academic references.

The researcher will analyze written sources relevant to the research theme, such as books, scientific journals, articles, and other documents discussing Amina Wadud's feminist hermeneutics and the study of Al-Qur'an interpretation. Data analysis techniques are carried out through the identification of key concepts in Amina Wadud's work, criticism of patriarchal classical interpretations, and the formulation of the principle of tawhid as an ethical foundation in feminist hermeneutics. The stages of analysis include literature synthesis, comparison of approaches, and reconstruction of conceptual arguments based on primary and secondary documents.

With this approach, researchers can identify, evaluate, and synthesize various previous thoughts and findings to obtain a comprehensive theoretical overview and build a solid argument in response to research questions. This research emphasizes the process of understanding and interpretation rather than the generalization of research results<sup>6</sup>.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Amina Wadud Muhsin

Amina Wadud Muhsin's original name before converting to Islam was Maria Teasley. She was born on September 25, 1952, in Bethesda, Maryland, United States, into a Protestant Christian family. Her father was a Methodist pastor and her mother was of Arab-African descent. In 1972, at the age of about 20, Maria Teasley decided to convert to Islam and changed her name to Amina Wadud as a sign of her new religious

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<sup>5</sup> Abdul Fattah Nasution, *Qualitative Research Methods*, First Edition (Medan: CV. Harfa Creative, 2023).

<sup>6</sup> Wahyudin Darmalaksana, 'Qualitative Research Methods: Literature Study and Field Study by Wahyudin', *Maybe a Swan Song*, 2025, 27 – 36 <[https://doi.org/10.1142/9789819814664\\_0002](https://doi.org/10.1142/9789819814664_0002)>.

affiliation. The multicultural environment and spiritual diversity that accompanied her childhood shaped Wadud's view of the importance of intellectual and spiritual diversity, which later became the basis for her inclusive and feminist thinking in her Islamic studies<sup>7</sup>.

Amina Wadud's academic journey is particularly notable in the field of Islamic studies and Qur'anic interpretation with a focus on gender. She pursued higher education at several renowned institutions such as the University of Pennsylvania (BS), the University of Michigan (MA and Ph.D. in Islamic Studies and Arabic), and continued her studies at Cairo University and Al-Azhar University. Wadud is known as one of the pioneers of feminist hermeneutics in Qur'anic studies, providing a new perspective on contemporary Islamic interpretation. In addition, she is also an active lecturer and professor at Virginia Commonwealth University, as well as actively giving seminars and lectures on Islam and gender justice in various parts of the world<sup>8</sup>.

Throughout her career, Amina Wadud has produced important works, including the monumental book *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (1999), which has become a key reference in feminist exegesis studies<sup>9</sup>. Her work has not only expanded the academic realm but also opened up space for Muslim women to play an active role in exegesis and religious practice. To this day, she remains an important figure in the feminist Islamic renewal movement and progressive Islamic studies, contributing powerful and far-reaching ideas to Muslim communities around the world.

### **Amina Wadud's Feminist Hermeneutics Approach in Qur'anic Interpretation**

Amina Wadud is a pioneer in feminist hermeneutics of the Qur'an, which aims to revise traditional interpretations that are often patriarchal and do not take women's experiences into account. In her book *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (Wadud, 1999), she emphasizes the importance of women's position as valid readers and interpreters of the Qur'anic text, rather than as marginalized parties. Her approach combines linguistic, contextual, and ethical analysis that seeks to transcend rigid, literal textual interpretations. Thus, Wadud's hermeneutics opens up an inclusive space for interpretation that confronts gender injustice in both religious texts and practices<sup>10</sup>.

Wadud's feminist ideas offer a new approach to Qur'anic interpretation that emphasizes gender justice and contemporary social relevance, rejecting patriarchal bias and calling for inclusive and contextual<sup>11</sup> interpretations. Using hermeneutics, Wadud not only reads the text literally but also connects it to women's experiences and social realities, so that her interpretations affirm the values of equality, justice, and respect for

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<sup>7</sup> Alfani Nurdiansyah, 'Biography of Amina Wadud, Muslim Feminist from America | Tebuireng Online', 2023.

<sup>8</sup> Uswatun Hasanah Harahap, 'Hermeneutics of Al – Qur': Methodological Study of Amina Wadud', *Alhamra: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 5.1 (2024), 85 – 96.

<sup>9</sup> Harahap.

<sup>10</sup> Amina Wadud, 'Qur'an and Woman PDF Qur'an and Woman'.

<sup>11</sup> Suparwany, 'WOMEN INTERPRETATIONS ON QUR'AN, ISLAMIC INSTITUTIONS AND COMMUNITIES', 2.2 (2017).

human dignity within the framework of tawhid. This approach is an important alternative in the world of modern interpretation, opening up space for a more democratic and equitable understanding of the Qur'an for all groups, especially women.

Wadud's hermeneutics carries a dialectical approach that places dialogue between text and social context at the core of interpretation. This approach targets a reinterpretation of the verses of the Qur'an with feminist and social sensitivity, emphasizing awareness of the bias of classical interpretations and the need for new interpretations that are adaptive to the changing times<sup>12</sup>.

Amina Wadud introduced a feminist hermeneutic paradigm in reading the Qur'an that challenges the dominance of traditional patriarchal interpretations. She views interpretation as a dialogical process between the text and the reader, in which women's experiences must be a major factor in the interpretation of verses related to gender<sup>13</sup>. In her book *Qur'an and Woman* (1999), Wadud illustrates how verses that have been used to assert the inferiority of women, such as QS. An-Nisa:34, which discusses the roles of husbands and wives, must be reinterpreted in a social context and moral meaning that emphasizes justice and equality. She asserts that this verse actually contains principles of protection and responsibility, not domination or oppression<sup>14</sup>.

Wadud's method uses a syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic approach with critical awareness of historical bias. She highlights how classical interpretations often dichotomize men and women with an uneven *frame* of meaning, resulting in unfair interpretations<sup>15</sup>. Therefore, this feminist hermeneutic approach provides space for women to actively participate in interpreting texts and voicing meanings that are equal and just, while also criticizing old interpretations that are discriminatory. This approach opens up opportunities for dialogue between tradition and contemporary reality.

The feminist hermeneutics approach developed by Amina Wadud places women's experiences and perspectives as key elements in understanding and interpreting verses of the Qur'an, especially those related to gender issues. She criticizes classical interpretations, which she considers to be patriarchal, and emphasizes the importance of contextual reading that takes into account the historical aspects, linguistic structure, and universal message of the Qur'an. Through this framework of feminist hermeneutics, Wadud asserts that the interpretation of the Qur'an should not stop at literal meaning, but rather must be oriented towards social reality, objectivity, and the values of justice and benefit for humanity<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Harahap.

<sup>13</sup> Aji Febriansyah, Aldi Armansah Prayoga, and Siti Maysaroh, 'GENDER EQUALITY ACCORDING TO AMINA WADUD: Contextual Interpretation in the Qur'an', *ALMUSTOFA: Journal of Islamic Studies and Research*, 2.01 (2025), 338 – 51.

<sup>14</sup> Wadud.

<sup>15</sup> Ahmad Baidowi, *Feminist Interpretation: A Study of Women in the Qur'an and Contemporary Exegetes* (Nuansa Cendekia, 2023).

<sup>16</sup> Abdul Gani, 'An Analysis of Amina Wadud's Istinbath Method from the Perspective of Turuq Al-Istinbath Min Al-Nushush', *Wasathiyyah*, 5.2 (2023), 70 – 89 <<https://doi.org/10.58470/wasathiyyah.v5i2.65>>.

Amina Wadud uses a critical hermeneutic method that places the subjective experience of the reader, especially women, as a vital aspect in interpreting the Qur'an<sup>17</sup>. Her feminist hermeneutics rejects the claim of absolute neutrality in traditional interpretations, which often fail to recognize patriarchal bias. This method combines linguistic analysis, historical-social context, and the values of justice and equality as a moral foundation. In this way, Wadud opens up a space for dialogue between the text and the reader's context, making interpretation not only an exploration of the meaning of the text, but also a reflection on the real-life experiences of female readers.

In her book *Quran and Woman*, Amina Wadud asserts, "*the Qur'an does not support any discrimination against women; it insists on the fundamental equality of all human beings*"<sup>18</sup>. She also explains the importance of the principle of tawhid as the main hermeneutical paradigm: "*The tawhidic paradigm provides the Qur'an's central concept of the relationship between God, creation, and humanity. It insists on the equality and complementary nature of men and women as part of creation*"<sup>19</sup>. Through this approach, Wadud paves the way for the creation of a complementary and equal nature of men and women as part of creation. She emphasizes the complementary nature and equality of men and women as part of creation") . Through this approach, Wadud paves the way for an inclusive and fair interpretation of women in Islam.

As an example of its application, Wadud interprets the controversial verse 34 of Surah An-Nisa regarding the roles of husband and wife and the husband's right to 'beat' his wife<sup>20</sup>. Traditional interpretations usually consider this verse to legitimize domestic violence. However, through her feminist hermeneutics approach, Wadud dissects the Arabic language of this verse, paying attention to the words and social context when the verse was revealed, as well as the overall principle of Qur'anic justice. She concludes that the verse does not justify violence, but rather demands responsibility and protection from the husband towards his wife<sup>21</sup>. Thus, Wadud reconstructs the meaning of the verse to be in line with the principles of equality and non-violence.

Furthermore, Wadud emphasizes the importance of social context in interpreting the Qur'an, meaning that interpretation cannot be separated from the social reality of the reader. In many studies, Wadud uses narratives of the lives of contemporary Muslim

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<sup>17</sup> Amina Wadud Al – Quran, 'HERMENEUTICS OF THE QURAN BY AMINA WADUD MUHSIN'.

<sup>18</sup> Dwi Fidhayanti et al., 'Rethinking Islamic Feminist Thought on Reinterpreting the Qur'an: An Analysis of the Thoughts of Aminah Wadud, Fatima Mernissi, Asma Barlas, and Riffat Hassan Introduction In the Modern Context, the Debate on Women'', 35 (2024), 37 – 56.

<sup>19</sup> UIN Maulana and Malik Ibrahim, 'The Sharing of Childcare Roles in Contemporary Muslim Families: A Critical Analysis of Amina Wadud' 's Thought', 1 (2023), 505 – 17.

<sup>20</sup> Naili Rosa Urbah Rusydiana and Hadiana Trendi Azami, 'Interpretation of QS. an – Nisa': 34 Perspectives of Amina Wadud Muhsin and the Implications of Her Thinking in Indonesia', *Journal of Ushuluddin*, 29.1 (2021), 87 <<https://doi.org/10.24014/jush.v29i1.11931>>.

<sup>21</sup> MUHAMMAD ADNAN ASSYAHIBI, 'POLYGAMY AS A FORM OF GENDER INJUSTICE AGAINST WOMEN: A Comparative Analysis of the Thoughts of Yusuf Al – Qaradawi and Amina Wadud' (SULTAN SYARIF KASIM RIAU STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY, 2025).

women to test interpretations of Qur'anic verses, suggesting corrections if existing interpretations have led to gender inequality<sup>22</sup>.

This approach also utilizes in-depth linguistic studies to interpret key words and phrases more accurately and to open up possibilities of meanings that have been overlooked in classical interpretations. For example, Wadud examines the word "*qawwamun*" in QS. An-Nisa:34, which is often translated as "leader" or "ruler" in the family. She interprets this word as "the one who is responsible" or "the one who supports," so that its meaning emphasizes moral responsibility rather than authoritarian power<sup>23</sup>. In addition, Wadud integrates the values of justice and equality into her interpretation process. Her feminist hermeneutics are based on the principle that Islamic teachings must uphold social justice and respect human dignity without gender-based discrimination<sup>24</sup>. Therefore, interpretations that contradict this principle must be reviewed and revised in accordance with the modern context that respects women's rights.

In her book *Qur'an and Woman* (1999), Wadud also shows how feminist interpretation can open up new insights into verses related to women's rights in Islam, such as inheritance, testimony, and social roles<sup>25</sup>. She highlights that this more inclusive interpretation allows women to feel directly involved in religious teachings and encourages them to actively contribute to religious and social life.

Wadud criticizes the classical tradition of interpretation, which was written by men, for men, and from a male perspective, often positioning women as objects rather than subjects: "*the classical tradition of Qur'anic exegesis was written by men, for men, and from the perspective of men*"<sup>26</sup>. She proposes a holistic reading that integrates women's experiences as a legitimate part of the interpretive process. Another study emphasizes that Wadud's project aims to accommodate "women's voices" and dismantle patriarchal models of interpretation: "*Wadud's hermeneutics is intended to dismantle and reconstruct classical interpretive models shaped by patriarchal structures*"<sup>27</sup>. By placing women as subjects of interpretation, this approach challenges the power structures that have crystallized in religious interpretation and provides space for women's voices to be heard legitimately. Overall, Amina Wadud's feminist hermeneutics approach to interpreting the Qur'an is a form of re-reading that prioritizes critical dialogue between sacred texts and contemporary social contexts, with the aim of producing interpretations that are fair and give equal respect to women as dignified beings in Islam.

Based on the data presented by the researcher above, Amina Wadud's feminist hermeneutics is a revolutionary approach to interpreting the Qur'an, as it successfully

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<sup>22</sup> Baidowi.

<sup>23</sup> Indah Ayu Nurkumala, 'Amina Wadud's Thoughts on Women's Leadership from the Hermeneutical Perspective of Jorge JE Gracia: A Study of the Interpretation of Surah An – Nisa Verse 34' (Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University, 2022).

<sup>24</sup> Eko Prasetyo Budi and Rosyida Amalia, 'Amina Wadud's Feminist Hermeneutics Paradigm', *Hamalatul Qur'an: Journal of Qur'anic Sciences*, 6.1 (2025), 88 – 95.

<sup>25</sup> Master's Degree in Islamic Studies and Concentration in Quranic Studies and Hadith, 'THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE QURAN'.

<sup>26</sup> Wadud.

<sup>27</sup> Suparwany.

integrates the values of gender justice, social contextualization, and the ethics of tawhid in the interpretation process. This approach not only opens up space for a more inclusive and democratic understanding, but also emphasizes that the Qur'an must be interpreted critically and in a manner relevant to the realities of modern human life, especially in the context of social equality and justice. Thus, Amina Wadud's feminist hermeneutics has made a significant contribution to the development of tawhid-based Qur'anic interpretation that favors women, who are often marginalized in traditional interpretations.

### **Wadud's Ethical Foundation of Tawhid in Reading the Qur'an**

The ethical foundation of Amina Wadud's hermeneutics in reading the Qur'an is the ethics of tawhid, which emphasizes that every human being, regardless of gender, has equal rights and dignity before God<sup>28</sup>. With this approach, Wadud rejects discriminatory interpretations and calls for an understanding of the Qur'an that favors justice, equality, and respect for the universal values contained in Islamic teachings. The ethics of tawhid serve as Wadud's main compass in interpreting religious texts, so that her interpretations are not only textual, but also contextual and relevant to contemporary social realities.

Wadud bases her interpretation on the principle of tawhid as the main ethical and epistemological foundation<sup>29</sup>. In her feminist interpretation, the principle of tawhid is not only understood as the oneness of God theologically, but also as a principle of justice and unity of meaning that rejects discrimination, especially against women<sup>30</sup>. This is reflected in her holistic approach, which invites readers to view the Qur'an comprehensively, rather than partially or fragmentarily. Adhering to tawhid, Wadud reevaluates verses that have been understood in a discriminatory manner and affirms gender equality as an integral part of the message of God's oneness.

This method also draws attention to how the principle of tawhid in Wadud's hermeneutics leads to a reading that prioritizes social justice and respect for human rights. This approach is a normative critique of interpretations oriented towards gender hierarchy, emphasizing the importance of hermeneutics that focuses not only on the literal meaning of words, but also on the spirit of tawhid, which is just and inclusive. For her, the understanding of tawhid is not only narrowly theological, but must also have strong social implications, namely the realization of justice, inclusiveness, and equality in human interactions. This hermeneutics of tawhid seeks to read the Qur'an holistically, creating an interpretation that prioritizes not only the ritual dimension but also social justice, including women's rights, which have often been neglected in traditional interpretations<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> Deffa Cahyana Harits, 'Amina Wadud Muhsin's Hermeneutical Thought: Religion of Justice Amidst Injustice', *Fathir: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 1.1 (2024), 29 – 37 <<https://doi.org/10.71153/fathir.v1i1.37>>.

<sup>29</sup> Mohammad Fauzan Ni'ami and Moh Irfan, 'Hermeneutics of Tawhid: Amina Wadud's Interpretation of Gender', *Humanistika: Journal of Islam*, 9.2 (2023), 128 – 43.

<sup>30</sup> Febriansyah, Prayoga, and Maysaroh.

<sup>31</sup> Harahap.

Amina Wadud's hermeneutics is based on the ethics of tawhid, namely the principle that all humans have essential equality before God and that the universal values in the Qur'an must be the basis for interpreting religious texts. In her approach, Wadud emphasizes that tawhid is not only a matter of belief in the oneness of God, but also an ethical foundation that demands justice, equality, and respect for human dignity regardless of gender. Thus, the hermeneutics of tawhid developed by Wadud aims to overcome social injustice, especially that experienced by women, and to restore the spirit of universality in the Qur'an, which is often distorted by gender-biased interpretations<sup>32</sup>.

In the context of interpretation, Wadud uses the principle of tawhid to criticize gender-biased interpretations, showing that the oneness of God requires humans to live in harmony and justice, not in domination and discrimination<sup>33</sup>. For example, this approach invites readers to view the verses of the Qur'an holistically, integrating universal values of egalitarian social justice. Tawhid here becomes the binding foundation that every interpretation of sacred texts must uphold the values of togetherness and respect for the dignity of all human beings without exception.

Wadud also emphasizes the importance of contextualizing the text of the Qur'an so that it is relevant to the challenges of the times, without neglecting the basic principles of tawhid which are the foundation of Islam. She rejects a textualist approach that tends to limit the meaning of verses to their historical context, and prefers a holistic approach that considers modern social, moral, economic, and political aspects<sup>34</sup>. In practice, Wadud offers an interpretive model that integrates the universal values of tawhid with the actual needs of society, so that the interpretation of the Qur'an is not only a theological doctrine, but also a living moral guide that is relevant to everyday life.

Amina Wadud's tauhid hermeneutics method also emphasizes the importance of context and the reader's life experience in reading the Qur'an. Tawhid as a single principle demands an interpretation that is responsive to social realities and current dynamics, so that it is not rigid and dogmatic<sup>35</sup>. Thus, interpretation does not become a tool for maintaining the patriarchal status quo, but rather a means of social transformation that prioritizes justice and equality based on the principle of the oneness of God.

Furthermore, Wadud's approach to tawhid hermeneutics requires continuous and critical reinterpretation of texts with historical and cultural biases, especially those that hinder gender equality. She questions old interpretations that associate patriarchal social norms with absolute divine teachings. With tawhid hermeneutics, she offers a new, more inclusive paradigm that acknowledges the complexity of the Qur'an's meanings and

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<sup>32</sup> Laila Sari Masyhur Eksal Ramadhan, Naila Amani, Almazni, 'THE HERMENEUTIC PARADIGM OF TAWHID AND GENDER ACCORDING TO AMINA WADUD', 14.5 (2021), 167 – 86.

<sup>33</sup> Himmah Aliyah, 'Gender Justice in the Framework of Pancasila and the Qur'an: A Study of the Thoughts of Musdah Mulia and Husein Muhammad' (PTIQ University Jakarta, 2025).

<sup>34</sup> Aniqoh Zuhri, 'Amina Wadud Muhsin's Hermeneutics of the Qur'an', *REVELATIA: Journal of Qur'anic Studies and Tafsir*, 2.2 (2021), 124 – 39 <<https://doi.org/10.19105/revelatia.v2i2.5305>>.

<sup>35</sup> Ni'ami and Irfan.

encourages Muslim readers to open up a space for dialogue between text, context, and hermeneutics oriented towards social justice<sup>36</sup>.

The principle of tawhid is the main foundation of Wadud's feminist hermeneutics, which affirms the oneness of God and the unity of truth as the basis for rejecting all forms of injustice, including gender discrimination. In Wadud's interpretation, tawhid is not only a theological doctrine but also an ethical value that requires justice and equality for all human beings<sup>37</sup>. In practice, she reads gender verses holistically, tracing the context of *asbab al-nuzul* (the reasons for the revelation of verses) and incorporating tawhid values into an inclusive interpretation that is responsive to women's needs.

For example, regarding the issue of inheritance distribution, which is often considered discriminatory, Wadud emphasizes that the principle of justice derived from tawhid demands a contextual interpretation that takes into account the social and economic situation and equality of rights as the main objective of inheritance law<sup>38</sup>. Thus, an interpretation that is sensitive to the principles of tawhid can revive the values of social justice and strengthen the position of women in society without negating the spirit of revelation.

Furthermore, tawhid in Wadud's hermeneutics also functions as an epistemological foundation that critiques narrow and partial interpretations. She invites readers to understand religion as a comprehensive system that focuses on justice and balance, revealing an inclusive dimension in the interpretation of verses that appear to be normatively gender-biased when taken literally.

Thus, the hermeneutics of tawhid developed by Amina Wadud offers a new paradigm in the interpretation of the Qur'an that not only pays attention to theological aspects, but also moral and social aspects. This approach invites Muslims to return to the spirit of tawhid, which emphasizes justice, equality, and respect for human dignity, so that the Qur'an can become an inclusive and just guide for all.

### Criticism, Obstacles, and Implications in Contemporary Tafsir Studies

Despite its significant contribution to feminist tafsir studies, Amina Wadud's hermeneutic method still faces criticism, particularly regarding its acceptance among conservatives and the practical challenges of its implementation. Some critics consider this method too subjective and insensitive to traditional norms that are still strong in Muslim communities<sup>39</sup>. In addition, the adaptation of Wadud's feminist hermeneutical approach faces difficulties when it has to enter a realm that is closely tied to tradition and classical religious authority.

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<sup>36</sup> Baidowi.

<sup>37</sup> Nuzul Fitriansyah and Rachma Vina Tsurayya, 'The Tauhidic Paradigm as the Basis for Realizing a Tolerant and Moderate Religious Community', *Al-Mada: Journal of Religion, Society, and Culture*, 3.1 (2020), 50 – 63.

<sup>38</sup> Nurul Padilah et al., '2:1 Inheritance Distribution for Male and Female Heirs in Qs. Al – Nisā [4]: 11: (A Study of Amina Wadud's Thoughts in "Qur'an and Woman")', *Arus Journal of Social and Humanities*, 5.1 (2025), 700 – 708.

<sup>39</sup> Lina Nur Anisa, 'Criticism of the Construction of Gender Relations in Islamic Families: An Analysis of the Thoughts of Asma Barlas and Amina Wadud Muhsin', *YUDHISTIRA: Journal of Jurisprudence, Law and Justice*, 2.4 (2024), 41 – 52.

<sup>40</sup>However, these obstacles do not diminish the methodological value of Wadud as a pioneer of critical and progressive discourse in Qur'anic interpretation. The concept of "standing at the edge of the text" provides a reflective framework that allows readers to capture the dynamic interaction between text and context, while recognizing existing inequalities<sup>41</sup>. The academic implications of this method open up space for inclusive interpretation, support social justice, and encourage interpreters to be more responsive to gender issues and contemporary contexts.

Although Wadud's method opens new horizons in feminist interpretation, the main criticism of it is its acceptance in conservative Muslim communities that still adhere to classical interpretations. This criticism argues that Wadud's method is subjective and difficult to accept within a tradition that is considered established and sacred<sup>42</sup>. For example, the reinterpretation of QS. An-Nisa:34 has sparked controversy in religious and social contexts where society is still bound by patriarchal culture.

Amina Wadud's feminist hermeneutical approach has faced criticism, especially from conservative and traditionalist Muslims. The main criticism is that Wadud's method is too subjective because it places feminist experiences and perspectives at the center of interpretation, which is considered to ignore more authoritative classical texts and traditions of interpretation. Furthermore, this approach is considered to overload sacred texts with modern values that may not fully correspond to the historical context and original revelation, thus raising doubts about the objectivity of the interpretation<sup>43</sup>.

Another obstacle faced by Wadud's hermeneutical method is social and cultural resistance in many Muslim communities that still prioritize patriarchal and normative textual interpretations<sup>44</sup>. Feminist hermeneutics are often seen as contrary to deep-rooted religious and cultural norms, thus facing rejection at both the general community and religious institutional levels. This limits the acceptance and application of feminist interpretations, including the limited access of women as mufassir in many traditional Islamic cultures.

In addition to social acceptance issues, methodologically Wadud's approach also faces challenges in accommodating the diversity of local contexts without losing the universal essence of the Qur'an. How to balance the of feminist reinterpretation and the integrity of the text, which is considered sacred, is a serious issue that must be addressed. This approach also has the potential to cause widespread fragmentation of interpretation if it is not accompanied by a framework of healthy dialogue and recognition of pluralism in the study of interpretation.

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<sup>40</sup> Azriel Muhammad, 'Amina Wadud's Hermeneutical Concept of Gender Equality' (UIN Ar – Raniry Banda Aceh, 2023).

<sup>41</sup> Muhammad Firdaus, 'The Development of Maqasidi Interpretation in Tunisia and Modern Indonesia: A Case Study of the Thoughts of Ibn 'Ashur and M. Quraish Shihab', 2024, 23 – 52.

<sup>42</sup> Syukri Abubakar, 'Amina Wadud's Views on Women Becoming Imams for Men', *Schemata: Postgraduate Journal of UIN Mataram*, 9.1 (2020), 15 – 32.

<sup>43</sup> Anisa.

<sup>44</sup> Dian Astria Puspa Ningrum, Bymmas Subangga, and Fikri Mahzumi, 'Patriarchy in Text and Context: A Synthesis of Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutics and Mansour Fakihi's Structural Analysis', *Journal of Islamic Thought and Philosophy*, 4.1 (2025), 1 – 22.

<sup>45</sup>Nevertheless, Amina Wadud's feminist hermeneutics has significant positive implications in opening up a more inclusive and progressive horizon for tafsir studies. Her approach drives the discourse on gender justice in the religious sphere and positions women as valuable and authoritative subjects of interpretation. She encourages Islamic scholars and practitioners to rethink rigid and discriminatory interpretations, opening opportunities for theological reform oriented toward inclusivity and human rights.

Furthermore, the implications of Wadud's hermeneutics invite the global Muslim community to engage in cross-cultural and intergenerational dialogue on interpretations of the Qur'an that are responsive to the modern social context. This is important in order to create a religious understanding that is not only rigid and outdated, but also socially and politically relevant<sup>46</sup>. This approach opens up opportunities for the implementation of religious and social policies that support gender equality, as well as encouraging a paradigm shift in Islamic education that focuses on universal social justice.

In addition, the difficulty of implementing Wadud's feminist hermeneutics also lies in contextualization, which must involve local and cultural values while maintaining the universal values of the text. This obstacle is a major challenge for exegetes and academics who want to integrate feminist perspectives into Qur'anic interpretation more broadly. Research proves that Wadud's method greatly contributes to expanding the discourse of Qur'anic interpretation by critically incorporating social, gender, and ethical factors<sup>47</sup>. Her approach invites readers to stand at the "edge of the text," that is, to build critical awareness of the social context without abandoning the textual meaning as the basis for interpretation.

Based on the author's analysis of Amina Wadud's hermeneutics, the following conclusions can be drawn:

**Table 1.** Analysis of Amina Wadud's hermeneutics

Aspect	Thought	Ethical Foundation	Implications
Methodology	Feminist hermeneutics and female subjectivity in interpretation	Tawhid as an ethical foundation for justice and equality	Conservative criticism and socio-cultural constraints in implementation
Approach	Dialogue between texts and socio-cultural contexts	A holistic and contextual approach based on the value of the oneness of God	Implications for inclusive and progressive exegesis studies

<sup>45</sup> M Afiquil Adib, 'Amina Wadud's Thoughts on Power Relations in the Household', *Living Islam: Journal of Islamic Discourses*, 7.2 (2024), 359 – 76.

<sup>46</sup> Najmy Hanifah and Anita Puji Astutik, 'Amina Wadud's Thoughts on Da'wah in the Modern World', *Journal of Islamic Communication Studies*, 2.2 (2024), 22 – 31 <<https://doi.org/10.15642/jicos.2024.2.2.22> – 31>.

<sup>47</sup> Ahmad Zabidi, 'Amina Wadud's Method of Interpreting the Quran', *Jurnal Alwatzikhoebillah: Islamic Studies, Education, Economics, Humanities*, 6.2 (2022), 1 – 9 <<https://doi.org/10.37567/alwatzikhoebillah.v6i2.224>>.

Aspect	Thought	Ethical Foundation	Implications
Contribution	Opening up space for gender-fair interpretation	Strengthening the value of social justice in interpretation	Developing critical and reformative interpretive dialogue
Disadvantages	The method is considered subjective and tends to ignore the principle of <i>wasathiyyah</i> . Limited acceptance, especially among conservatives. The use of this method sometimes imposes ideal moral values that are difficult to accept widely.	Difficulty in interpreting texts contextually in a way that accommodates traditional norms and local culture in a balanced manner. Limited space for participation in interpretations that are accepted by the majority	Some critics argue that there is a lack of exploration of arguments and that certain feminist perspectives are sometimes overly emphasized, resulting in an interpretation that is considered insufficiently comprehensive in textual and normative terms

The results of the analysis show that Amina Wadud's feminist hermeneutics places women's experiences as the subject of interpretation, integrates the principle of tawhid as an ethical foundation, and offers an inclusive and contextual re-reading of gender verses. Methodologically, this approach rejects discriminatory patriarchal interpretations and emphasizes dialogue between the text and the social context, thereby opening up a more democratic and gender-equitable space for interpretation. For example, Wadud's approach can be compared to moderate interpretations such as those of Quraish Shihab and Ibn 'Ashur. Quraish Shihab adheres to the principle of *wasathiyyah* by emphasizing contextualization without rejecting the authority of classical interpretations, while Ibn 'Ashur emphasizes an inclusive *maqasid sharia* approach but still maintains gender hierarchy in certain verses. Wadud's feminist hermeneutics are more radical because they explicitly challenge the structure of interpretive authority and place women as the main subjects of interpretation, not merely objects. Criticism of Wadud's approach needs to consider the extent to which it is compatible with the principle of *wasathiyyah*, which emphasizes a balance between tradition and reform.

## CONCLUSION

The researcher argues that, overall, Amina Wadud's feminist hermeneutics offers a more inclusive and radical approach to reading the Qur'an, placing women as the main subjects of interpretation and affirming the principle of tawhid as the ethical basis for rejecting gender discrimination. This approach differs from moderate interpretations such as those of Quraish Shihab, who adheres to *wasathiyyah* and classical interpretive authority, and Ibn 'Ashur, who emphasizes *maqasid sharia* but has not fully integrated a gender perspective. Although Wadud's hermeneutics are often considered too subjective and face resistance in non-Western Muslim societies, her approach opens up

space for critical dialogue and broadens the horizons of inclusive interpretation relevant to the contemporary context. The synthesis between Wadud's feminist hermeneutics and moderate interpretation shows that an approach that integrates the values of *wasathiyah* (moderation), *maqasid syariah* (the objectives of religious law), and gender justice can be a more inclusive and relevant middle ground for the future development of Qur'anic interpretation.

This study systematically analyzes Amina Wadud's feminist hermeneutics method, reveals her position in contemporary interpretation discourse, and demonstrates the relevance of this approach in expanding inclusive and progressive interpretation studies. The results of this study prove that Wadud's hermeneutics successfully reconstructs gender-just Qur'anic interpretation through critical dialogue between text and social context, affirming the principle of tawhid as the ethical basis for rejecting discrimination, and criticizing the dominant patriarchal interpretation.

The scientific contribution of this research lies in strengthening the understanding of feminist hermeneutics as a valid method in contemporary Qur'anic interpretation studies. This research confirms the results of previous studies that emphasize the importance of social context and subjective roles in interpretation, while also criticizing classical interpretation methods that tend to be textual, literal, and patriarchal. Furthermore, this study contributes a systematic understanding of how the principle of tawhid can serve as an ethical foundation for gender-just interpretation, while also outlining the real challenges and obstacles in applying feminist hermeneutics in Muslim societies that tend to be conservative.

However, this study has limitations, including relatively limited case coverage and sample size, as well as a more in-depth qualitative approach to hermeneutics without extensive empirical field data. Therefore, it is recommended that further research be conducted involving a larger and more diverse sample, including cross-cultural and cross-regional comparative studies, as well as the direct participation of Muslim communities with different perspectives. This further research is very important to provide a more comprehensive understanding and serve as a basis for policies that support inclusive interpretation practices based on gender justice in the context of Islam.

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