

# Career Women Viewed from Qur'an Feminism

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## Abstract

Thinking about women is no longer just identified with household and kitchen matters, but thinking about women is directly related to the outside world, namely as a career woman. The focus of this research is more on the Qur'anic concept of feminism and how it should be a career woman in an understanding that is conveyed in the Qur'an. This study uses descriptive methods that are carried out through data collection in the field, which provides an overview of career women in the view of Islam. This research approach uses a qualitative approach. The research data is in the form of quotes, words, phrases, and story sentences. The source of data in this study is the observation of several career women in the Sidoarjo city area. The results of this study indicate that women are very respectable in Islam. A number of Qur'anic verses support this conclusion. Even Qur'anic respect for women transcends the concept of Western feminism.

**Keywords:** *Thinking, Qur'anic Feminism, Women, Career, Descriptive Qualitative.*

## A. INTRODUCTION

The dynamics of the interaction of the world community breeds cultural change. These changes not only touched technical and instrumental problems, but also overhauled substantial issues in the life of humanity. Indonesia, like a number of other countries, is characterized by an increasing number of women entering employment.

That reality is no longer disputed by the presence of women who are no longer just identified with housework and the kitchen, but have been actively involved in the world outside the home and as career women.

This phenomenon is inseparable from the feminist movement voiced by several female activists, both Western and

Arab thinkers. This movement received a positive response from the women so that consciousness arose and spread in the form of action.

In addition, the emergence of modernization in various fields accompanied by the development of science and technology has changed the movement patterns and activities of women and has influenced the ideology and thought and views of women towards the roles they used to play.

The times have also played a role in changing the lifestyle of women who used to only stay at home and take care of domestic work, now that many women have careers and are economically independent. The roles in the domestic

area (inside the house) should not be standardized.

The response to that reality also varies. There are a number of pro-ulama on the grounds that basically Islam does not prohibit women from working outside the home while being able to maintain their honor. Even a number of activists' women accuse Islam of being a woman's independence vendor with the fact that Islam does not think to give freedom to women.

Women are not valuable in Islam and Islam is a male religion. On the other hand, some scholars still position women as second class in society, and hold that the main task of women is to take care of the household and children. Working outside the home is a disaster for a woman and violates her nature. Moreover, this view is supported by a number of facts that many divorces are caused by the effects of women working outside the home (career women).

On this basis, this paper will answer two fundamental questions, namely 1) how the concept of the Qur'an in looking at feminism, 2) how should be a career woman in an understanding that is conveyed in the Qur'an.

To answer the two problems above, the author elaborates on the concept of Qur'anic feminism and interprets the story of women in the history of Moses, in particular. The author attempts to construct the Qur'anic concept of feminism and Islamic career women, and presents a number of historical facts about the prophet and friends about women's active involvement in politics, jihad, and business.

## **B. RESEARCH METHODS**

This research method uses descriptive methods that are carried out

through data collection in the field, which provides an overview of career women in the view of Islam.

Descriptive method according to Sugiyono (2013: 11) is a research method that aims to describe, explain the conditions that exist in the company based on facts, the characteristics of the population based on data that has been collected and then arranged systematically and then analysed for conclusions.

This research approach uses a qualitative approach. The qualitative approach is carried out by describing existing data and then followed by analysing career women in the Islamic view, especially in the perspective of the Qur'anic feminism.

The research data is in the form of quotes, words, phrases, and story sentences. The source of the data in this study is the observation of several career women in the Sidoarjo city area and conducting library studies in the library by reading and understanding several references to books, articles, and journals both online and offline.

## **C. DISCUSSION**

### **The Feminism Dilemma**

Career women are closely related to the issue of feminism that develops in the West. The issue is one of the children born to a career woman closely related to the issue of feminism that developed in the West. The issue is one of the children born from the post modernise womb.

Etymologically the word 'feminiseme' comes from the Latin word, namely 'femina' in English translated 'femine' which means to have female traits. The word gets the word 'ism', so that it becomes an understanding, namely a notion that carries gender issues related

to the fate of women who have not been treated fairly in various sectors of life, both domestic, political, social, economic and educational sectors. Movement the notion of feminism was first known in 1895.<sup>1</sup>

While in terms of terminology there are so many opinions about feminism. Among them is an awareness of oppression and extortion of women in society, in place work and in the family, and conscious actions by women and men to change the situation.

From the definition above, it seems clear that the feminism movement does not mean a movement of emancipation towards men, but rather a movement that fights for the transformation of an unfair system and structure towards a system that is fair to women and men.

In other words, the feminism movement is a response to the reality of society that has not placed women's position fairly, such as patriarchical culture still dominates at all levels of life, both in the political, patriarchical and socio-economic fields. So it can be concluded that the feminism movement is an awareness to change all forms of injustice, subordination, and marginalization towards women, towards a harmonious society between men and women in the shade of the principles of justice and equality (equation) in the system structure and structure of society.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the feminisme movement is not only identified with the women's movement, but all elements of society, including someone who realize the importance of equality between men and women in social strata. Awareness to eradicate all oppression, the injustices often occurs to women. Eliminating all the stereotypes, women associate with the kitchen only taking care of the house and

children. Women do not have the right of activity outside the home and others.

Historically, the feminist movement was born together with the birth of renaissance in Italy which brought a wind of change in consciousness in Europe, including humanists promoting individual freedom, both men and women, from the intellectual establishment of the church. The results of the movement gave birth to a scientific revolution in the seventeenth century and encouraged the birth of liberalism which led to the French revolution at the end of the eighteenth century. This revolution then gave birth to massive changes in social politics, including the people's mindset at that time. In the same time, awareness of women emerged to fight for their rights which had been felt marginalized, pioneered by Mary Wollstonecraft in England, through his work, one of it is *A Vindication of The Right of Women* in 1792.<sup>1</sup>

In its development, echoes of feminism arrived in America in the late 19th and early 21st centuries. The starting point of this movement was to fight for women's right to vote (the right to vote). But after the rights were reached, this movement became increasingly widespread and had experienced a shift in the direction of thinking when it was affected by the method of masculine thinking. It would be an aggressive and oppressive movement in men. They tend to be chauvinistic (excessive). This movement has exceeded the limits of the spirit of feminism, namely to uphold justice. With this phenomenon, the feminism movement sometimes lacks appreciation from the public, especially in

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<sup>1</sup> Fatima Mernissi, *Wanita di Dalam Islam*, Yaziar Radiant (perj.) (Bandung: Pustaka, 1991), h. vii

Indonesia. Even the counter-feminism group is concerned that this feminist movement will damage the social order and can be a big threat to families and the general public.

In Indonesia alone, the feminism movement only developed in the 1980s. A number of female activists began to emerge, such as Herawati, Wardah hafidz Marwah Daud Ibrahim, Yulia Surya Kusuma, and Ratna Megawangi.

Their movement is certainly an awareness born of treatment that is still unfair to women. The dominance of the good party in the political, socio-economic field was still very strong at that time. Evidently, for example, political rights that are still minimal, there is even a tendency for religious interpretations to favor women as a complementary group and not have the ability to lead.

But lately, the feminism movement has reaped a lot of excitement. The spirit of liberation and the struggle for equal rights which were heralded were marred by excessive thinking. There is a tendency for the freedom and gender equality championed by them is unlimited freedom, and equality of measure. As a result, women were forced to do all the activities that men could do. Religious principles related to women and men should be questioned and reconstruction. You can understand this too too much like what ever happened in the West.

Thus, for the Nusantara context this feminism movement needs adjustment. We should not a priori adopt all movements of Western feminism, because the culture and problems faced are different. We are also not wise if we reject the movement with the view that it will damage the masses of the people. The most appropriate attitude is to carry

out the movement of Quranic feminism, which is to explore the spirit of the liberation of the Koran towards women. Because basically the Qur'an has universal teachings such as the principles of justice (equality), equality (equality) and freedom (liberation). In the Qur'an a number of scattered verses contain a spirit of feminism long before Westerners realized this.

### Qur'anic Feminism

Qur'anic feminism is a very positive Qur'anic response to women. In the Qur'an, Allah named one of the special suras about women, namely the surah an-Niṣa. In QS. An-Niṣa: <sup>1</sup>

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي  
زَوَّجَهَا خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا  
وَبْتًا مِنْهُمَا رَجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً ۗ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ  
الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ  
عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا

Meaning:

"All men, fear your God who created you from one alone, and from him Allah created his wife; and from both of them God breeds many men and women. and fear Allah who by (uses) His name you ask each other, and (maintain) friendship relations. Surely Allah always safeguards and supervises you. "

QS. At Tahirim verse 11

وَضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا امْرَأَتَ  
فِرْعَوْنَ إِذْ قَالَتْ رَبِّ ابْنِ لِي عِنْدَكَ بَيْتًا فِي  
الْجَنَّةِ وَنَجِّنِي مِنْ فِرْعَوْنَ وَعَمَلِهِ وَنَجِّنِي  
مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ

Meaning: "And God made the wife of Pharaoh's parable to those who believed, when he said: " O my Lord, wake up for me a house beside You in paradise, and save me from Pharaoh and his actions ...

Likewise in QS. Al-Hujarat verse 13 which places women as men in matters

of worship, both are equal before God, the difference is faith, in this case is self quality, not sex differences (genitals: male or female)

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

Meaning: "O mankind, verily We created you from a man and a woman and made you nations and tribes so that you would know one another. Surely the noblest of you in the sight of Allah are the ones who most fear among you. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Knowing" (Surah al-Hujurat verse 13).

Al-Qardhawy views that women have rights as men in humanitarian matters. Because the two types of humans are like two branches originating from one tree trunk, two brothers were born by Adam and Eve. They are the same in terms of their growth, the same as in the problems of the specificities of humanity in general, the same as in the matter of carrying out orders and prohibitions in the Shari'at, the same in the problem of responsibility and the same in the matter of replies and place of return.<sup>2</sup>

The Qur'an defends the principles of equality of men and women. The Qur'an hates the traditions of society Arab who do not value the birth of a daughter, or even kill them alive Surah al-Takwir verse 9:<sup>3</sup>

بِأَيِّ ذَنْبٍ قُتِلَتْ

"Because of the sin whether he was killed"

The Qur'an speaks of "godly and faithful women", mu'mināt, Muslimāt,

<sup>2</sup> Yusuf al-Qardhawy, *Ruang Lingkup...*, hlm. 19-20.

<sup>3</sup> Abdul Mustaqim, *Epistemologi Tafsir...*, hlm. 70-71.

and even calls them in the same vein as godly and faithful men. Moreover, these women are expected to carry out the same religious obligations as men. The Qur'an encourages all believers, men and women, to follow their faith with action, and for this the Qur'an promises a great reward for them. So the Qur'an does not distinguish between men and women in the creation, purpose, or reward promised.

Based on the text of the Qur'an and hadith and the history of the Prophet's Muslim period, then it's time for Eve to appear achievers, compete with men in terms of goodness (fastabiquil khairat) of course in ways that are commendable, such as maintaining the dignity and dignity of her womanhood.<sup>4</sup>

Gustave Le Bon said, "Islam has elevated conditions and women dignity socially, not demeaning, different from persistent assumptions. And the Qur'an has granted inheritance rights to women better than most of our laws in Europe."<sup>5</sup>

Another right is the right to give testimony which is assessed as one in two offered by the Qur'an in Surah al-Baqarah verse 282:

وَاسْتَشْهِدُوا شَهِيدَيْنِ مِنْ رِجَالِكُمْ فَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُونَا رَجُلَيْنِ فَرَجُلٌ وَامْرَأَتَانِ مِمَّنْ تَرْضَوْنَ مِنَ الشُّهَدَاءِ أَنْ تَضِلَّ إِحْدَاهُمَا فَتُذَكَّرَ إِحْدَاهُمَا الْأُخْرَىٰ

Meaning: "...Watch with two witnesses from men (among you). if there are no two men, then (may) a man and two women from witnesses whom you are rid of, so that if one forgets then one reminds him ..."

In understanding that verse above, Mahmūd Syaltút quotes Muhammad

<sup>4</sup> Hasbi Indra, *Potret Wanita...*, hlm. 261.

<sup>5</sup> Fada Abdur Razak al-Qashir, *Wanita muslimah...*, hlm. 105.

Muhammad Abduh as saying, that this witness problem must be related to the context, when at that time women did not have much involvement in your affairs.

No wonder the testimony of women is not comparable to men. On the other hand, in household problems women are more professional than men, because indeed women are more involved with household problems at that time.

Thus the value of a woman's testimony, which is only half the testimony of a man mentioned in this verse, is not because of the memory of a weak woman compared to men.<sup>6</sup> When the world has changed and is far more advanced, so that women's involvement in social and economic life has become common place, it is important to have contextualization and reintroduction of the verse.<sup>7</sup>

The rights of women to take part in the field of politics are stated in QS. at-Taubah verse 71:

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ  
بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ  
الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ  
وَيُطِيعُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ أُولَئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ  
اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

Meaning: "And those who believe, men and women, some of them (are) become helpers for others. they sent (to do) the *ma'ruf*, prevented from the evil, established prayer, performed zakat and obeyed Allah and His Messenger. they will be given mercy by God; Allah is Mighty, Wise. "

Quraish Shihab stated that this verse contains an illustration of the obligation to cooperate between men and women in various fields of life which are described by the sentence telling them to do the *ma'ruf* and prevent the evil. Thus, every Muslim man and Muslim woman should be able to follow the development of society so that each of them is able to see and give advice (advice) in various fields of life.<sup>8</sup>

That sentence contained in the verse shows, there is an understanding of authority holders, of course not in the domestic sphere such as the household, but also in the public domain, as the context of this verse mentions.<sup>9</sup> Based on this verse, there are opportunities for women to become leaders in various fields, including becoming leaders of the country.

Women in Islam have no limited space to move only to the domestic sector in the household, but are welcome to be active in the public sphere, including the fields of science and technology, economics, social work, human rights, and politics. However, it should be underlined that its activity does not make it forget or deny its nature as a woman so that it has the right to carry out its reproductive functions fairly, such as pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding its child. Even more important, that activity does not lead to plunging itself beyond the moral boundaries outlined by

<sup>6</sup> Mahmúd Syaltút, *Al-Islam: 'Aqidah wa al-Syari'ah* (Beirút, Kairo: Dár al-Surúq, 1983), hlm. 240.

<sup>7</sup> Zaitunah Subhan, *Tafsir Kebencian: Studi Bias Gender dalam Tafsir Qur'an* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 1999), hlm. 180.

<sup>8</sup> Quraish Shihab, *Membumikan Al-Qur'an...*, hlm. 273.

<sup>9</sup> Nasaruddin Umar, Amany Lubis, "Hawa sebagai Simbol Ketergantungan: Relasi Gender dalam Kitab Tafsir", dalam Ali Muhanif (ed), *Mutiara Terpendam: Perempuan dalam Literatur Islam Klasik* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2002), hlm. 13.

religion.<sup>10</sup> So Islam has given freedom to women but that freedom is controlled freedom by noble moral values.

Therefore, it is expected that in the future Indonesian women will be more forward thinking, inclusive, modern, active, dynamic, educated, and independent and have the right faith, courtesy, shame, and noble character. So that later these women can contribute to building a nation with men in a better direction.

### **Women and Careers**

The sentence of a career woman can be interpreted as: women who are involved in professional activities (businesses, offices, etc.). In addition, a career can be interpreted as "a series of choices and work activities that show what is done by someone to be able to live.

According to A. Hafiz Anshary A.Z., career women are "women who pursue their profession or occupation and carry out various activities to improve their results and achievements". This kind of woman is not like the women in the "Siti Nurbaya era" who only stay in the house contemplating fate, confined by walls, traditional fences and traditions. And career women are busy women, working women, who have more time outside the house than in the house.

In addition to the above examples related to the role of women who are no less important than men, there are still many examples in the tradition of the prophet and female friends who have a career outside the home. During the time

of the Prophet Muhammad, every time there was a war the Prophet prepared a special place for women (Rafidah al-Anshariyah),<sup>11</sup> who have expertise in helping and treating injured friends. In addition, in the history of Umar ibn al-Khattab, a number of women who had very strategic careers including Hindun binti abah Atabah, she was the first woman to get a loan from the APBN to conduct and develop a business.

Hindun is a historical portrait that women in economic development are no less important than men. Even the most interesting, a woman named as-Syifa binti Abdullah won the trust of the caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab to be in charge of the state institution at that time known as *al-hisbah*.<sup>12</sup>

*Al-Hisbah* is a control institution that oversees all fraud and injustice that occurs in the market and society. For now, the institution can be called the DPR chairman.

How big is the role of women in Islam. The above facts then answer all unfounded allegations that women confined to Islamic women are not free to move in Islam. On the contrary, through the tradition of the prophet and his friends, women are very respectable and have a very strategic space in society. They can have a career in the public sphere, both as political experts, economists, medical, and as teachers (teachers and lecturers).

Islam does not prohibit women from becoming career women (working

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<sup>10</sup> Badriyah Fayumi dkk, *Keadilan dan Kesetaraan Gender Perspektif Islam*(Tim Pemberdayaan Perempuan Bidang Agama Departemen Agama RI, 2001), hlm. 43.

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<sup>11</sup>Ali Jum'ah Muh}ammad, Al-Mar'ah FiH{adarah al-Islamiyyah,h.113.

<sup>12</sup>Amru Khalid, Mekanatu al-Mar'ah Fi al-Islam, h. 58-59. Bandingkan 'Ali Jum'ah Muhammad, Al-Mar'ah FiH{adarah al-Islamiyyah, h.131.

outside the home) as long as they have skills with the profession they are engaged in. Even sometimes in certain conditions (emergencies), women are obliged to become career women when there are no people who are experts in the field except him. Thus looks like a medical expert who can save someone's life.

However, as such, Islam still gives some rules of the game or values that must be considered by a woman if she has to work outside the home. Among them is to continue to get permission from the husband and maintain honor as a woman and the suitability between the profession and the skills and nature as a woman.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

Women are very respectable in Islam. A number of Qur'anic verses support this conclusion. Even Qur'anic respect for women transcends the concept of Western feminism. The Qur'an is not only succeeded in laying out and removing injustice against women, but it was even more advanced with the will that men should do good to them. The concept is not only theoretical, but is supported by historical facts, both in the traditions of the prophet and friends.

With that fact, career women in Islam are legitimate, sometimes even the law is obligatory if indeed no one can carry out the task. Islam has never prohibited a wife from helping her husband in earning a living, even encouraged. Islam also does not prohibit women from becoming career women (working outside the home) as long as they have skills with the profession they are engaged in.

However, career women still need to be able to balance household tasks and tasks outside the home. In addition, the

ability to maintaining self-respect from sagala religious and social slander is no less important than everything. Finally, women will be independent because of Islam, not freedom (freedom) from Islam.

Men and women have differences and privileges and limitations of each, both in terms of physical, psychological and emotional. So this affects the fields and sectors of each work. And what is demanded is to maximize their respective duties and responsibilities according to nature and always be in the corridor of religion. Thus, creating synchronization and harmony are between of the two. Because, behind these shortcomings and strengths there is a deep wisdom, which is to complement and complement each other's emptiness and shortcomings.

As an undeniable resource, women can be equated with men as evidenced by the number of women who can play a role in accordance with their potential. And the increasing number of women working (career) outside the home and participating in earning a living according to their abilities and skills means that they have realized their independence.

If it is studied more deeply, what actually causes the negative impact of a career woman comes from how he can divide his time as wife and mother.

The problem of this career woman is whether the work of women, especially the wives, will prevent the fulfillment of the rights of husbands and children, and cause women (wives) to forget their obligations.

This is what is feared to occur and has a negative impact on the sustainability of the household and the development of children left behind to work. But if all these concerns can be overcome and the existence of a career woman can actually help strengthen the family economy, then



the women should be given the breadth and flexibility to work. The risks that will arise will be faced and resolved together with the husbands who are life partners and work partners in a family team.

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