

## THE TAUHĪD INTERPRETATION IN SURAH AL-IKHLAS AND ITS ROLE AS A HIERARCHICAL FRAMEWORK IN GENDER EQUALITY

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### Abstract

Gender discrimination in many Muslim societies is often sustained by patriarchal cultural norms and textualist interpretations of the Qur'an that overlook its broader ethical and egalitarian principles. This study explores how the concept of *tauḥīd* in surah Al-Ikhlās can function as both a theological and ethical foundation to challenge patriarchal structures and advance gender justice. Employing a qualitative methodology grounded in literature-based analysis, the research adopts the *Living Qur'an* framework in conjunction with Amina Wadud's gender hermeneutics. Primary and secondary sources—including classical exegetical works such as those of Ibn Kaṣīr, contemporary commentaries by scholars like Quraish Shihab and Wadud, as well as scholarly literature on gender equity—inform the analysis. The findings indicate that *tauḥīd*, beyond affirming the oneness of God, embodies anti-hierarchical and egalitarian values that reject all forms of human domination, including male supremacy. Through contextual and sociological interpretation, surah Al-Ikhlās reveals *tauḥīd* as a moral imperative to promote just and equal gender relations. This study contributes to contemporary Qur'anic scholarship by proposing a gender-responsive theological reading rooted in the lived realities and ethical aspirations of Muslim communities.

**Keywords:** *Tauḥīd*, Surah Al-Ikhlās, gender justice, Living Qur'an, feminist hermeneutics

## *Interpretasi Tauhid dalam Surah Al-Ikhlās dan Perannya sebagai Kerangka Nilai Utama dalam Mewujudkan Keadilan Gender*

### *Abstrak*

*Diskriminasi gender dalam banyak masyarakat Muslim kerap dipertahankan oleh norma budaya patriarkal dan pendekatan tekstualis terhadap Al-Qur'an yang mengabaikan prinsip-prinsip etis dan egaliter yang terkandung di dalamnya. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana konsep tauhid dalam surah Al-Ikhlās dapat berfungsi sebagai dasar teologis sekaligus etis untuk menantang struktur patriarki dan mendorong keadilan gender. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif berbasis studi pustaka, kajian ini mengadopsi pendekatan Living Qur'an dan hermeneutika gender Amina Wadud. Sumber primer dan sekunder—termasuk tafsir klasik seperti Ibn Kaṣīr, tafsir kontemporer seperti Quraish Shihab dan Amina Wadud, serta literatur ilmiah tentang keadilan gender—menjadi rujukan utama dalam analisis ini. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tauhid, selain menegaskan keesaan Tuhan, juga memuat nilai-nilai anti-hierarkis dan egaliter yang menolak segala bentuk dominasi manusia atas sesamanya, termasuk superioritas laki-laki atas perempuan. Melalui interpretasi kontekstual dan sosiologis, surah Al-Ikhlās menampilkan tauhid sebagai imperatif moral untuk membangun relasi gender yang adil dan setara. Studi ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap kajian tafsir kontemporer dengan menawarkan pembacaan teologis yang responsif gender dan berakar pada paradigma Living Qur'an.*

**Kata Kunci:** *Tauhid, Surah Al-Ikhlās, keadilan gender, Living Qur'an, hermeneutika feminis*

## **تفسير التوحيد في سورة الاخلاص ودور إطار سلسلته في تحقيق المساواة بين الجنسين**

### **الملخص**

تُساهم التقاليد الأبوية والتفسيرات النصّية للقرآن الكريم، التي تُغفل رسالته الأخلاقية والعدالية، في ترسيخ التمييز بين الجنسين في العديد من المجتمعات الإسلامية. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف كيف يمكن لمفهوم التوحيد في سورة الاخلاص أن يكون أساساً لاهوتياً وأخلاقياً لتحدي البنى الأبوية وتعزيز العدالة الجندرية. تعتمد هذه الدراسة على منهج نوعي قائم على التحليل المكتبي، وتوظف إطار "القرآن الحي" إلى جانب الهرمنيوطيقا الجندرية لأمانة ودود. وتستند الدراسة إلى مصادر تفسيرية تقليدية مثل تفسير ابن كثير، والتفاسير المعاصرة مثل تفسير محمد قريش شهاب وأعمال أمانة ودود. بالإضافة إلى الأدبيات الأكاديمية المتعلقة بالعدالة بين الجنسين. تكشف النتائج أن التوحيد لا يُعبّر فقط عن وحدانية الله، بل يتضمن أيضاً قيماً مناهضة للتراتبية وتؤكد المساواة. رافضة كل أشكال الهيمنة الانسانية. بما في ذلك تفوق الذكور على الإناث. من خلال قراءة سياقية وسوسيولوجية، تُبرز سورة الاخلاص التوحيد باعتباره أمراً أخلاقياً ضرورياً لبناء علاقات جندرية قائمة على العدل والمساواة. وتُساهم هذه الدراسة في تطوير الدراسات القرآنية المعاصرة من خلال تقديم قراءة لاهوتية مُراعية للنوع الاجتماعي. تستند إلى واقع الحياة وتوجهاته الإصلاحية ضمن إطار "القرآن الحي"

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** التوحيد، سورة الاخلاص، العدالة الجندرية، القرآن المعيشي، الهرمنيوطيقا النسوية

## Introduction

Although often perceived merely as a spiritual text, the Qur'an in fact possesses transformative power capable of reshaping the social fabric of a nation. Qur'anic studies, therefore, should not be limited to theological dimensions but must also encompass the text's profound impact on social life. Surah Al-Ḥujurāt (49): 10, for instance, has served as a foundational reference for fostering unity across ethnic, cultural, and religious boundaries (Mu'min et al. 2024). The Qur'anic value system remains particularly relevant in character education that emphasizes spirituality, empathy, tolerance, and respect for diversity—qualities essential for nurturing individuals with moral and cultural integrity (Nugraha et al. 2024). The absence of these values is glaringly reflected in the rise of identity-based bullying, such as a tragic case in Riau, where a non-Muslim elementary student died after being allegedly bullied by five older students due to religious differences (Forgupaki 2025). This incident sparked widespread public outrage, including condemnation from the SETARA Institute, which denounced the act as a violation of children's rights and religious freedom. The institute's director, Halil Hasan, cited a February 2023 survey indicating that 29.8% of Indonesian high school students displayed tendencies toward intolerance, with 0.6% showing signs of violent extremism (Kaur 2025). This incident, far from isolated, reflects a broader systemic failure to inculcate values of tolerance and respect—values that are integral to the Qur'an's moral framework.

The urgency of applying Qur'anic values in everyday life is further emphasized in several hadiths. 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-ʿĀṣ reported that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "The one who memorizes the Qur'an will be with the prophets—except that he does not receive revelation," (Al-Qaari 1987). This narration indicates that engaging with the Qur'an carries ethical and social responsibilities, not merely ritual significance (Obaray 2023). Similarly, a hadith narrated by Abū Mālik al-Asy'ariy notes that the Qur'an can either testify for or against a person, depending on the extent to which its teachings are embodied in daily conduct. Therefore, the Qur'an must be seen as a guiding ethical compass for building an inclusive society grounded in justice and human dignity (Q. Shihab 2005).

Historically, the application of Qur'anic teachings in the social domain has evolved into a socio-cultural phenomenon known as the living Qur'an (Engkizar et al. 2025). This concept transcends normative and historical exegesis by emphasizing how Muslims interpret and practice Qur'anic messages in their everyday social realities. One compelling example is the use of Qur'anic recitation as a form of spiritual therapy for Iranian nurses combating stress and anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic (Yeganeh

et al. 2025). Other studies have also underscored the living Qur'an's capacity to foster critical thinking, moral development, and social ethics (Khan 2002; Maisyanah et al. 2024). Ahimsa-Putra and Hasbillah identified three dimensions of this phenomenon: (1) the Prophet Muhammad as a living embodiment of the Qur'an; (2) the Qur'an as a moral compass for believers; and (3) the Qur'an as a dynamic text shaping cultural and societal values (Ahimsa-Putra 2012; Hasbillah 2019).

While the living Qur'an paradigm has successfully bridged textual teachings with contemporary realities, it has yet to adequately address specific challenges such as gender bias. Literalist interpretations—those that disregard context and historical nuance—often reinforce patriarchal norms. This is exemplified in Ibn Kathir's exegesis, which asserts that leadership is inherently a male prerogative in both private and public spheres (Kaṣīr, 1419). In contrast, verses such as surah Al-Lail (92): 1–4 and surah Āli 'Imrān (3): 195 affirm the complementary relationship between men and women, and stress that moral worth is determined by actions, not gender—a perspective also supported by Said Ramadan al-Būṭī (Al-Būṭī 1997). This issue is underscored by alarming data from Komisi Nasional Anti Kekerasan terhadap Perempuan (Komnas Perempuan) (Indonesia's National Commission on Violence Against Women), which reported a 44% increase in public-space violence and a 176% surge in cases within state institutions in 2023, followed by a 10% rise in 2024, totaling 445,502 reported cases (Faturahma 2024).

In this context, the living Qur'an approach must be re-envisioned to emphasize *tauḥīd* not only as a theological abstraction but as a universal ethical principle rooted in equality and shared humanity. Angelika Neuwirth interprets surah Al-Ikhlāṣ as a socio-communicative structure that, when practiced in real-life contexts, affirms the indivisible oneness of God as the basis for rejecting all forms of discrimination, including gender-based inequality (Neuwirth 2010).

Previous studies have shown that the living Qur'an approach has been implemented across various domains: (1) In the social context, the Qur'an serves as a medium to foster tolerance and solidarity, as demonstrated by Takdir and Sumbulah (2024), Purawati (2023), and Sugiarto, Nikmatullah, and Sa'i (2023); (2) In the digital sphere, Ali and Isnaini (2024) and Febriani et al. (2024) highlight the digitalization of *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*, which promotes inclusive and interactive Qur'anic learning through thematic features and accessibility, while maintaining scholarly authority; and (3) From an ecological perspective, studies by Chodijah and Ratnasari (2025), as well as Insyirah, Hakim, and Nur (2024), illustrate how Qur'anic values are implemented in sustainable agriculture and environmental conservation rooted in local wisdom. Nevertheless, research that specifically integrates the concept of *tauḥīd* as an ethical principle to

address social bias and gender inequality remains scarce. Therefore, this study seeks to fill that gap by examining a *tauḥīd*-based living Qur'an framework in surah Al-Ikhlāṣ as a theological foundation for promoting social justice and gender equity.

This study shares common ground with previous works that employ the living Qur'an approach such as those by Takdir and Sumbulah (2025), Ali and Isnaini (2024), and Chodijah and Ratnasari (2025) in emphasizing the importance of implementing Qur'anic values in the social life of Muslims. These studies highlight how Qur'anic verses are embodied in social practices, including the promotion of tolerance, the digitalization of tafsir, and the development of ecological awareness grounded in Islamic values. However, this research diverges significantly by specifically examining surah *Al-Ikhlāṣ* as a source of *tauḥīd* values, which are used as an ethical foundation to promote gender justice. Unlike previous studies that are more thematic and general in nature, this study aims to position *tauḥīd* as an ideological principle for critiquing gender bias in both Qur'anic interpretation and socio-religious practice through the lens of surah Al-Ikhlāṣ.

The study is thus premised on the assertion that the values of *tauḥīd* articulated in surah Al-Ikhlāṣ can serve as a foundational ethical framework to promote justice, equality, and the full realization of human dignity in Muslim societies.

## Methods

This study adopts a qualitative methodology grounded in library research (Bungin 2011), utilizing an interpretive approach to examine the actualization of Qur'anic values—particularly those found in surah Al-Ikhlāṣ—within contemporary social contexts related to gender justice. The research is situated within the living Qur'an framework, which focuses on how the Qur'anic text is interpreted, embodied, and practiced in everyday life. In this case, the study explores how surah Al-Ikhlāṣ, as a theological declaration of *tauḥīd*, is recontextualized to serve as an ethical and moral foundation for promoting gender equity. Data were collected from a range of primary and secondary sources, including classical tafsir texts such as *Tafsīr Ibn Kaṣīr*, contemporary commentaries by scholars such as Quraish Shihab and Amina Wadud, as well as peer-reviewed journal articles, academic monographs, and other scholarly literature relevant to the themes of *tauḥīd*, gender justice, and Qur'anic interpretation. The selection of these sources was guided by their relevance to the study's central concern: the ethical implications of *tauḥīd* in surah Al-Ikhlāṣ and its potential to inform gender relations within Muslim societies.

For the analytical framework, this study applies Amina Wadud's hermeneutics of gender (1999) alongside Heddy Shri Ahimsa-Putra's theory of the living Qur'an (2012). The method of analysis involves a close textual reading of surah Al-Ikhlāṣ, followed by a contextual and thematic interpretation that seeks to elucidate the social-ethical dimensions of *tauḥīd*, especially in relation to structures of gender inequality. This interpretive process operates on the foundational premise that *tauḥīd* is not merely a doctrinal abstraction but a normative ethical principle that calls for justice, equality, and the recognition of shared human dignity. Consequently, this study moves beyond conventional theological exegesis by highlighting how Qur'anic values—rooted in *tauḥīd*—are not only understood but also lived and embodied within efforts to construct a more inclusive and gender-just social order among contemporary Muslim communities.

## Results and Discussion

### *The concept of tauḥīd in surah Al-Ikhlāṣ*

Al-Ikhlāṣ is one of the 112 surahs in the Qur'an. Surah Al-Ikhlāṣ which consists of four verses is one of the important surahs that emphasizes the oneness of Allah. The concept of Tawheed, as the essence of Islam, is very clear in this surah.

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ ۝ اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ ۝ لَمْ يَلِدْ ۝ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ ۝ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ ۝

Say, "He is Allah, (who is) One, Allah, the Eternal Refuge. He neither begets nor is born, Nor is there to Him any equivalent. (Al-Ikhlāṣ [112]: 1-4).

Surah Al-Ikhlāṣ, revealed during the early Meccan phase of the Prophet's mission, emerged within a society dominated by polytheism and animism, where Muslims constituted a marginalized minority subjected to oppression by the majority, including idol-worshipping elites such as the followers of al-Lāt, al-'Uzzā, and al-Manāt. The verses of this surah function not only as a theological declaration of God's oneness but also as a socio-political response to the prevailing religious hegemony and power structures of the time. This context demonstrates that the Qur'an was responsive from the outset to the realities of social inequality. Therefore, surah Al-Ikhlāṣ should not be interpreted solely through a normative-theological lens, but must also be examined through sociological and historical perspectives especially in light of contemporary concerns around social and gender justice (Hitti 2002). In the contemporary context, the values of *tauḥīd* in this surah which emphasize that Allah is One, neither begotten nor begets can be interpreted as a rejection of all forms of centralized power, including patriarchal authority that has often been legitimized by classical exegesis. Just as the unequal social structure of the pre-Islamic (*Jāhiliyyah*) era was corrected by divine revelation, today's

society is similarly called upon to reinterpret *tauḥīd* as a principle of equality that transcends gender, class, and ethnic divisions. Thus, a living Qur'an approach grounded in *tauḥīd* with regard to surah Al-Ikhlāṣ does not merely revive its theological messages, but also inspires socially just and inclusive praxis in modern society (Neuwirth 2010).

In addition to the concept of *tauḥīd* contained in surah Al-Ikhlāṣ, the Prophet also described other features of this surah in the sahih hadith of Bukhari:

عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ أَنَّ رَجُلًا سَمِعَ رَجُلًا يَقْرَأُ قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ يَرِدُّهَا فَلَمَّا أَصْبَحَ جَاءَ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَذَكَرَ ذَلِكَ لَهُ وَكَانَ الرَّجُلُ يَتَنَاهَا فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ إِنَّهَا لَتَعْدِلُ ثُلُثُ الْقُرْآنِ

*From Abi Sa'id al-Khudri, it is said that a person hears someone else reciting "qul huwallahu Ahad" repeatedly. The next day, he came to the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and reported it, as if he had taken it for granted. So the Messenger of Allah said: "For the sake of the One whose soul is in His hands, the surah has a value equivalent to one-third of the Qur'an" (Bukhari 2017, 5013)*

The hadith concerning surah Al-Ikhlāṣ underscores its unique theological and spiritual significance in Islam. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) affirmed that reciting this surah is equivalent to reciting one-third of the Qur'an—a declaration that reflects its comprehensive encapsulation of the doctrine of *tauḥīd*. Surah Al-Ikhlāṣ is not only of great merit for its reciters, but also for those who seek to internalize its meanings. It affirms the oneness of God (*tauḥīd*), the negation of any form of association with Him, and the affirmation of His absolute attributes of perfection (Qomariyah 2021). The hadith also implies the necessity of embedding the values of *tauḥīd* deeply within the consciousness of every believer (Zuhaili 2013).

According to Qatadah, the *asbāb an-nuzūl* (circumstantial context of revelation) of surah Al-Ikhlāṣ is linked to a question posed by a group of Jews who asked the Prophet to describe the nature of God as delineated in the Torah. In response, this surah was revealed (Zuhaili 2013). The term "Al-Ikhlāṣ" derives from the root word *khalṣa*, meaning purity—suggesting the removal of impurities, ambiguity, and doubt. As such, the surah functions as a theological clarification that purifies the human heart from misconceptions about God, leading to firm conviction in His oneness and transcendence. This semantic richness is further emphasized by the alternative names of the surah—*al-Ma'rifah* and *al-Asās*—which highlight its foundational role in articulating Islamic theology (M. Q. Shihab 2002). Wahbah az-Zuhailiy, in his exegesis, elaborates on the theological coherence of the surah's four verses, each of which sequentially reinforces core concepts of *tauḥīd*. Unlike other surahs that often

encompass a diversity of legal or ethical instructions, surah Al-Ikhlās focuses exclusively on affirming divine singularity, self-sufficiency, and incomparability. It also implicitly conveys a moral directive: all beings are dependent upon God alone, and therefore must abandon arrogance and refrain from undermining the dignity of others.

Musdah Mulia articulates several core values embedded in surah Al-Ikhlās: (1) the affirmation of absolute monotheism, prohibiting all forms of idolatry and associationism; (2) recognition that only God is self-sufficient (*ṣamad*), thereby encouraging mutual support among humans rather than dependency; (3) denial of divine offspring, which symbolically rejects all claims of superiority or privilege among human beings; and (4) the assertion that God is incomparable, rendering any human claim to supremacy—whether based on power, gender, or status—baseless. The surah thus reaffirms that human worth is determined by faith and piety, not by biological or social hierarchies (Mulia 2014a).

Islamic ethics are grounded in two interconnected principles: *ḥablun min Allāh* (relationship with God) and *ḥablun min an-nās* (relationship with fellow human beings). These twin concepts regulate both the divine-human relationship and the ethical-social responsibilities among human beings, including interactions with the natural world (Mulia 2019). When both are enacted in balance, the transformative aim of Islam—to humanize humanity and establish justice, including gender justice—can be fully realized. *Tauḥīd*, both as belief and praxis, aligns intrinsically with these goals, offering a theological foundation for a just and harmonious life both in this world and the hereafter.

Amina Wadud (Saffari 2023) expands the meaning of *tauḥīd* beyond metaphysical doctrine into a principle of cosmic and social harmony. She interprets *tauḥīd* as a unifying worldview that recognizes all creation as equal under the sovereignty of a single Creator. This theological assertion carries an ethical imperative: the rejection of all forms of injustice, exclusion, and discrimination. In this light, *tauḥīd* functions as the foundational principle in the struggle against patriarchy and structural inequality. Wadud's perspective affirms that any claim to superiority—based on gender, race, class, or nationality—contradicts the essence of monotheism. Thus, surah Al-Ikhlās is not merely a declaration of divine oneness; it is a radical ethical text that affirms equality and calls for social justice as intrinsic to Islamic faith.

### *Gender equality in Islam*

Human welfare constitutes a fundamental component in realizing prosperity and advancing global civilization. Although human civilization has experienced significant

transformations throughout history, the concern for welfare—particularly that of vulnerable and marginalized groups—has frequently been overlooked. Historical records indicate that in ancient societies, the notion of human welfare was minimally acknowledged, as evidenced by widespread cases of oppression and violence perpetrated by dominant groups against the weak, including the majority over minority populations (Burnette and Figley 2017).

One enduring manifestation of this systemic injustice is gender inequality, a form of discrimination that continues to affect vulnerable groups. Gender, as a socio-cultural construct, refers not to mere biological differences between men and women, but to the roles, responsibilities, and rights assigned to them across various domains such as culture, politics, education, and society at large (Janah 2017). In practice, women are often situated as both the subjects and objects of gender-based power structures, facing persistent discrimination and marginalization. As a vulnerable group, women have historically endured oppression rooted in entrenched patriarchal systems that exert control through various institutional frameworks—economic, political, social, and even religious. Within religious contexts, patriarchal interpretations often restrict women's roles and diminish their rights (Kumari 2013).

Nasaruddin Umar emphasizes that gender is not biologically determined but socially constructed, and thus susceptible to change. Traditional Islamic thought, however, has frequently delineated unjust divisions of roles between men and women, relegating women to the domestic sphere and restricting their participation in public life. Men, conversely, are seen as naturally belonging to the public domain, with limited expectation to engage in domestic responsibilities (Umar 1999). In the view of traditional Islamic groups, the roles of men and women are often unfairly divided. The public sphere is considered the domain of men, while women are often confined to the domestic sphere, which is often referred to as *the term wingking*. Women are considered inappropriate to be active in the public sphere, while men are not considered to have obligations in the domestic sphere. Musdah Mulia emphasized that the concept of gender equality refers to the roles and responsibilities of men and women that are determined by social constructions and can change with the times (Mulia 2014a).

The persistence of patriarchal culture is fueled in part by gender bias in interpretive and linguistic frameworks. Gender-biased interpretations are particularly prevalent in classical Islamic scholarship, shaped by historical and social contexts wherein women's public involvement was severely constrained and normalized as the societal norm. Umar (Umar 1999) further identifies gender bias in linguistic structures—particularly in Arabic, the language of the Qur'an—through the

predominance of masculine pronouns (*damir*). Although Arabic grammar permits the use of masculine plural forms to refer to mixed groups, this convention may contribute to the erasure of female presence in interpretive discourse.

Islam, in its essence, came to eradicate all forms of injustice and oppression. Thus, any form of discrimination justified in the name of Islam represents a grave misrepresentation of its core teachings. The Qur'an, in surah al-Naḥl (16):97, explicitly affirms the equality of men and women in the sight of God and their equal entitlement to divine reward:

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيَاةً طَيِّبَةً وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

"Whoever does righteous deeds, both men and women, in a state of faith, then We will definitely give them a good life and We will reward them with a better reward than something they have done."

Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani, in his tafsir, elucidates this verse by emphasizing that a *ḥayāt ṭayyibah* (good life) is a divine reward granted equally to men and women who perform righteous deeds in faith. This "good life" may manifest as inner contentment, gratitude for God's blessings, and spiritual tranquility rooted in certainty of divine recompense. According to al-Bantani (2017), such individuals will have hearts illuminated by *ma'rifah* (spiritual knowledge), liberating them from worldly anxieties. The verse unambiguously reflects that Allah does not discriminate based on gender in bestowing His grace; both men and women are equally deserving of divine goodness and bounty (Al-Bantani 2017).

#### *Implementation of tauḥīd in realizing gender equality*

As previously discussed, *tauḥīd* encompasses not only theological affirmations of divine unity but also embodies core human and social values. It establishes both the vertical relationship between humans and the Creator, and the horizontal relationship among all created beings. Justice in human relations—manifested as the rejection of discrimination, oppression, and inequality—is a natural outgrowth of *tauḥīd* (Kounsar 2016). The recognition of God as the sole and ultimate authority reminds humanity of its inherent humility and dependence, eliminating pride and supremacy. According to Husein Muhammad, *tauḥīd* serves as a comprehensive worldview that lies at the heart of Muslim tradition, offering a vision of liberation from systemic discrimination and the erasure of individualistic, self-serving tendencies (Muhammad 2004).

The essence of *tauḥīd* underlines that rights and obligations must be given equally to women and men. As a central teaching in Islam, Tawheed places women as equal partners with men in the context of family life. In this case, the wife has the right to be respected by her husband, in line with the deep-rooted tradition that emphasizes the need for a wife to bow down to her husband (Mulia 2014b). The two have a balanced and fair relationship. Husbands and wives are required to help and complement each other. There should be no arrogance with each other. Amina Wadud gave the formulation of Islamic ethics with a reciprocal model, in which Allah as an absolute single entity is the highest metaphysical reality, while men and women are imagined as two symmetrical points on a horizontal reciprocal line (Wadud 1999). According to him, this Formulation allows the faithful to operate in such a way that the divine reality of the One is expressed in every human relationship only by reciprocity and equality" (Al-Būṭī 1997).

*Tauḥīd*, therefore, is not a static doctrinal claim but a dynamic ethical force that guides human behavior and social organization. When actualized, it fosters a social order characterized by respect, mutuality, and the eradication of injustice in all forms. surah Al-Ikhlās, which affirms the absolute unity and sovereignty of God, can thus be interpreted as a theological foundation for egalitarian human relations. Its emphasis on divine singularity implicitly rejects any claim to superiority among human beings (Al-Būṭī 1997). Amina Wadud reinforces this view, stating that if God alone holds absolute authority, then no individual has the right to assert dominance over others based on gender, race, class, or nationality (Wadud 1999).

The commonly accepted dichotomy between public and domestic roles is not a divine prescription but a product of social and theological constructions. According to Sulaiman Ibrahim, the main factor sustaining this dichotomy is religious interpretation, rather than biological differences or immutable doctrines. Interpretations of theological texts have long contributed to the confinement of women to the domestic sphere, while legitimizing male dominance in the public realm (Wadud 2008).

The grouping of public or domestic roles is a non-absolute stipulation. This is due to changes and socio-religious factors that exist in society. The existence of the grouping concept is due to many factors, namely the difference in the biological structure of women and men, the interpretation of religious texts or theological doctrines, and the ongoing reconstruction efforts by various disciplines. However, the main cause of the dichotomy of the role of the human domestic public, according to Sulaiman Ibrahim, is theological doctrine, namely the interpretation of religious postulates.

In the struggle for gender equality in the family sphere, the concept of *tauħīd* can be used as a medium to form a harmonious family. As in Islam, a harmonious family must be based on the teachings of the concept of Tawheed, namely by respecting each other's rights and supporting the obligations of other family members (Amri and Tulab 2018). Each family member certainly has their own role. There should be no pressure and intimidation of each other. So with the effort to implement *tauħīd* in the family, it can gradually change the stigma about domestic duties which is understood as the scope and territory of a woman only. Because all family members, both men and women, have duties in the domestic sphere. As Asgar Ali Engginer denies all things in the name of Islamic norms in the stigma of women's domestica (Intan 2014).

In the public sphere, as the Qur'an firmly rejects the ownership of public space by men only. Amina Wadud gave her view on her anxiety about the arrogance of men who demand a level of dignity and respect for them to other human beings, namely women. He rejected and firmly challenged the false justification that always comes in the name of the Qur'an through a narrow interpretation, that is, an interpretation that is understood only textually. An interpretation that ignores the principles of social, justice, equality and humanity. In fact, the Qur'an clearly prohibits all forms of discrimination and slavery. The Qur'an has principles about social justice, women's equality, respect and moral responsibility (Webb and Wadud 2000).

Looking at historical records, according to Leila Ahmed, women's civilization began to find its way in the early 19th century. Where at that time women's intellectual and social life began a period of great vitality. It is proven by the publication of many writings or women's journals such as Anis Al-Jalis in 1898-1908. There was also the Women's Organization *Society for the Advancement of Women* which was founded in 1908 and *The Intellectual Association of Egyptian Women* in 1914 (Ahmed 1992).

The view that women have weak intellectual power seems irrelevant anymore. Many women around the world demonstrate high intellectual abilities and are active in the public sector. Sarah Al-Suhaimi is a clear example of women's achievements in the professional world. Currently, Sarah leads the Saudi Tadawul Group, the largest investment firm in the Middle East, and has been named one of the 100 most influential women entrepreneurs in the world, ranking seventh according to the 2023 Forbes survey (2023). Although Sarah faced many rejections and severe challenges due to the stigma of women's intellectual weakness that has long existed in Middle Eastern culture, she managed to prove her ability.

Although surah Al-Ikhlāṣ is generally understood as a theological declaration of the oneness of God, a purely normative approach is insufficient to address the issue of social inequality, particularly gender justice. It is therefore crucial to critically examine classical tafsir traditions that tend to preserve patriarchal structures and neglect the egalitarian values embedded in *tauḥīd*. In this regard, the living Qur'an as a sociological approach can serve as an alternative framework for understanding how Qur'anic verses including surah Al-Ikhlāṣ are lived and practiced in communities striving for justice. The concept of *tauḥīd* taught in this surah not only negates associating partners with God but also implicitly rejects all forms of human domination over others, including male domination over women. In the context of Meccan society during the early period of Islam, this surah responds to a polytheistic and hierarchical religious social structure. As Angelika Neuwirth explains, the structure and linguistic style of Makkiyah surahs, including Al-Ikhlāṣ, reflect the rhetorical form of pre-Islamic poetry that targeted the lived realities of marginalized communities. Thus, employing surah Al-Ikhlāṣ as a basis for ethical social discourse necessitates an interpretive approach that is not only textual but also contextual and praxis-oriented. Several Muslim communities that uphold *tauḥīd* as a guiding principle in both domestic and public relations have demonstrated that this surah can be actualized as a transformative energy for fostering a lifestyle based on equality, justice, and freedom from gender subordination. Therefore, the living Qur'an paradigm must be operationalized through contextual data such as community practices, ethnographic observation, and critical reflection on exegetical traditions so that the values of *tauḥīd* may truly become the foundation of social justice in contemporary Muslim societies.

Islam, particularly through the texts of the Qur'an, has never explicitly prohibited women from participating in the public sphere. In fact, several verses such as surah Al-Qasas (28): 23 and Al-Ahzab (33): 35 encourage women's involvement in various social, economic, political, and religious activities. However, a purely normative approach is insufficient to address systemic gender-based injustices. Therefore, the concept of *tauḥīd* in surah Al-Ikhlāṣ should be understood not merely as a theological principle but as a hermeneutical framework capable of challenging patriarchal power structures within the history of Qur'anic interpretation. From this perspective, *tauḥīd* does not only proclaim the oneness of God, but also negates all forms of domination of one creature over another including the perceived superiority of men over women (Intan 2014).

By positioning *tauḥīd* as an ethical foundation in feminist readings of the Qur'an, this study contributes to a paradigm shift in Qur'anic hermeneutics, one that demands

substantive justice rather than merely symbolic equality. This approach also critiques the limitations of classical exegetical traditions that tend to perpetuate unequal power relations. In this context, the concept of the living Qur'an is not only descriptive but also transformative—presenting interpretations rooted in lived social experiences and resistance to gender inequality. Thus, the awareness of *tauḥīd* conveyed in surah Al-Ikhlāṣ does not only nurture spiritual piety but also promotes gender equality as an integral part of Muslims' theological and social responsibilities.

### Conclusion

This study affirms that the concept of *tauḥīd* articulated in surah Al-Ikhlāṣ is not limited to a theological assertion of divine oneness, but also functions as an ethical paradigm for advancing social justice—particularly in addressing issues of gender inequality. Within this framework, the acknowledgment that only God possesses absolute sovereignty challenges the legitimacy of patriarchal power structures that have been perpetuated through gender-biased interpretations of sacred texts. By reinterpreting *tauḥīd* through contextual and sociological lenses, this study proposes a hermeneutical approach that foregrounds the principle of human equality before God and rejects all forms of hierarchy based on gender, class, or ethnicity.

However, this research is not without limitations. The absence of empirical field data, direct observations of living Qur'an practices, and an in-depth critique of classical tafsīr traditions highlights areas requiring further exploration. Future studies are therefore encouraged to engage in intertextual analyses between surah Al-Ikhlāṣ and other Qur'anic passages that pertain to gender relations, while also conducting ethnographic research within Muslim communities that actively actualize *tauḥīd*-based ethics in their pursuit of social transformation. It is hoped that this study contributes to the foundational development of a *tafsīr* framework rooted in *tauḥīd*, one that is both methodologically robust and responsive to the urgent demands of contemporary gender justice discourse.

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