



Hadith and Women's Voices: A Critical Analysis of Amina Wadud's Methodology in Interpreting Gender Bias

Sahid Hadi Kusuma*

Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Mas Said Surakarta, Sukoharjo, Indonesia, 57168

Email: ksahidhadi@gmail.com

Khairuddin Akhyar

Universitas Islam Negeri Antasari Banjarmasin, Banjarbaru, Indonesia, 70235

Email: khairuddinakhyar91@gmail.com

Ahmad Multazam

Institut Agama Islam Negeri Parepare, Parepare, Indonesia, 91131

Email: amultazam697@gmail.com

Muh Imran

Institut Agama Islam Negeri Parepare, Parepare, Indonesia, 91131

Email: imuh44337@gmail.com

Sawaluddin Jamardi

Institut Agama Islam Negeri Pontianak, Pontianak, Indonesia, 78243

Email: sawaluddinjamardi@gmail.com

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Abstract

The study of hadith in the classical tradition often reflects interpretive patterns shaped by patriarchal constructions, thus marginalizing women's experiences and voices from religious authority. The lack of methodological studies on the application of Amina Wadud's feminist hermeneutics to a corpus of hadith considered gender-biased indicates a significant academic gap that needs to be addressed to achieve a more just and inclusive discourse on interpretation. This study aims to describe Wadud's methodological steps in reading hadith; evaluate her strengths and limitations in interpreting gender-problematic texts; and examine their theoretical and practical implications for the development of hadith studies from a gender-justice perspective. The research method employed is qualitative with a critical-hermeneutical analysis approach, through reading gender-problematic hadith. The results show that Wadud positions gender bias as a historical construct born of patriarchal culture during the period of hadith transmission. She emphasizes the distinction between universal normative texts and culturally contextual interpretations. Using the ethical hermeneutic strategy of the Quran, Wadud reinterprets hadiths on leadership and witnessing, emphasizing egalitarian principles that reject the subordination of women. This approach demonstrates the potential for a more participatory and responsive reinterpretation of the text in the pursuit of gender justice. However, its limitations lie in the potential for interpreter subjectivity and resistance from traditionalists. In conclusion,

Wadud's methodology makes a significant contribution to the development of more contextual, critical, and ethical gender-based interpretations of hadith.

Keywords: Hadith; Gender Bias; Feminist Hermeneutics; Amina Wadud; Inclusive Interpretation

Abstrak

Kajian hadis dalam tradisi klasik sering kali merefleksikan pola tafsir yang dibentuk oleh konstruksi patriarkis, sehingga pengalaman dan suara perempuan terpinggirkan dari otoritas keagamaan. Kekosongan kajian metodologis terhadap penerapan hermeneutika feminis Amina Wadud pada korpus hadis yang dianggap bias gender menunjukkan adanya celah akademik yang penting untuk diisi guna membangun wacana tafsir yang lebih adil dan inklusif. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan langkah-langkah metodologis Wadud dalam membaca hadis; mengevaluasi kekuatan dan keterbatasannya dalam menafsirkan teks yang problematis secara gender; dan menelaah implikasi teoretis dan praktisnya bagi pengembangan studi hadis berperspektif keadilan gender. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan pendekatan analisis kritis-hermeneutis, melalui pembacaan terhadap hadis-hadis yang problematis secara gender. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Wadud menempatkan bias gender sebagai konstruksi historis yang lahir dari budaya patriarkis pada masa transmisi hadis. Ia menegaskan perbedaan antara teks normatif universal dan tafsir kontekstual yang bersifat kultural. Melalui strategi hermeneutika etis Al-Quran, Wadud menafsirkan ulang hadis-hadis tentang kepemimpinan dan kesaksian, dengan menekankan prinsip egalitarian yang menolak subordinasi perempuan. Pendekatan ini menunjukkan potensi reinterpretasi yang lebih partisipatif dan responsif terhadap keadilan gender. Namun, keterbatasannya terletak pada potensi subjektivitas penafsir dan resistensi kalangan tradisional. Kesimpulannya, metodologi Wadud memberikan kontribusi signifikan bagi pengembangan tafsir hadis berperspektif gender yang lebih kontekstual, kritis, dan etis.

Kata Kunci: Hadis; Bias Gender; Hermeneutika Feminis; Amina Wadud; Tafsir Inklusif

Introduction

The phenomenon of gender inequality in Islamic religious discourse remains a discursive issue that has generated considerable debate. One source frequently cited for controversy is the hadith, which in various contexts serves as the basis for legitimizing the practice of women's subordination (I. Siregar & Harahap, 2024). Biased understandings of the hadith often marginalize women, whether in politics, leadership, or domestic roles. This bias stems not entirely from the hadith text itself, but from the interpretation process constructed within a patriarchal social environment (Amirudin et al., 2022). Classical hadith commentators and scholars, living within a patriarchal cultural context, produced interpretations that often overlooked women's experiences, thereby leaving women's perspectives absent from the interpretation (Khair, 2021). This situation underscores the importance of reconstructing a gender-just methodology for hadith interpretation and opens up space for new approaches that are more sensitive to women's experiences, one of which is the feminist hermeneutics developed by Amina Wadud.

Contemporary social realities demonstrate persistent gender bias, often legitimized by religious interpretations. A (2024) report by UN Women indicates

that 90% of Muslim-majority countries face significant gender disparities in education, economics, and politics. Data from the National Commission on Violence Against Women (2024) confirms the rise of gender-based discrimination in Indonesia, often justified by religious grounds. This fact demonstrates that biased interpretation of the hadith has direct implications for social structures and reinforces a patriarchal system that limits women's opportunities for self-actualization. This problem is not merely a social phenomenon, but rather an epistemological one, stemming from textual interpretations that overlook the context and objectives of sharia. In this context, Amina Wadud's methodological reconstruction offers a relevant analytical tool.

The development of contemporary Islamic thought has seen the emergence of female Muslim scholars seeking to dismantle patriarchal bias in the interpretation of the hadith, including Amina Wadud. Through her work, *Qur'an and Woman* (1999) and subsequent writings, Wadud emphasized the importance of a hermeneutical approach grounded in the principles of monotheism, justice, and the experiences of women as interpreters of the Quran. Her ideas stem from the belief that normative Islamic texts are not gender-biased, but rather that the male-dominated historical interpretation process has given rise to inequalities in religious understanding (Ramadhan, 2024). Wadud's hermeneutical principles extend beyond Quranic interpretation to the study of hadith, allowing for a reexamination of the relationship between text, context, and interpreter. This approach provides space for readings of hadith that place women as an integral part of the construction of just and inclusive Islamic scholarship.

Various previous studies have examined the relationship between hadith and women's issues with multiple focuses. Fauziah (2024) highlighted hadiths on the creation of women, which are often used to justify women's inferiority, and emphasized the need for historical criticism of the texts. Afidah (2023) examined Quranic hermeneutics and also explored the implications of hadith for fostering equal gender relations. Salaudeen and Dukawa (2021) examined hadiths on female leadership and found a tendency for interpretive bias that ignores the universal Islamic principle of justice. Vikijunianto et al. (2025) emphasized the importance of a *maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* approach in understanding hadith to avoid being trapped in discriminatory literal meanings. Alfarisi and Arwani (2024) developed Wadud's idea of the need to reconstruct the epistemology of tafsir and hadith to be more responsive to the needs of Muslim women. Despite their significant contributions, most of these studies remain descriptive and focus on the content of hadith, rather than the methodological framework of their interpretation. This gap highlights the need for a study that explicitly examines Amina Wadud's methodology in critiquing gender bias in hadith, aiming to enrich the epistemological treasure of feminist interpretation in Islamic studies.

Based on these gaps, this study formulates two main questions: how can Amina Wadud's methodology be understood and applied to interpret hadith considered gender-biased, and to what extent is this methodology able to provide space for women's voices in Islamic discourse? The purpose of this study is to critically examine Wadud's methodology in hadith interpretation, identifying opportunities for reconstructing gender-just interpretations while also highlighting her epistemological contribution to contemporary hadith studies. The basic argument of this study rests on the assumption that gender bias in hadith stems from a patriarchal interpretation process, not from normative texts. This study is expected to contribute to strengthening inclusive hadith interpretation methodologies, expanding the space for women's intellectual participation, and opening a critical dialogue between classical hadith scholarly traditions and modern feminist hermeneutics.

Method

This study employs a qualitative method with a critical-hermeneutical analysis approach, grounded in a feminist hermeneutic framework, to examine Amina Wadud's methodology for interpreting gender bias in hadith. Primary data sources include Amina Wadud's works, which outline her hermeneutical principles, such as *Qur'an and Woman* and *Inside the Gender Jihad*, as well as hadith containing gender bias issues from the hadith books included in the al-Sittah collection. Secondary data includes academic literature related to feminist hermeneutics, hadith interpretation, and gender studies in Islam. Data collection techniques were employed through a systematic literature study, which included an inventory of Wadud's works and relevant hadith, a thematic classification based on women's issues, an investigation of Wadud's interpretations of hadith, and a compilation of critical views from classical and contemporary scholars. Data analysis was conducted through four stages: linguistic analysis of potentially biased hadith terms, a historical-sociological analysis to understand the context in which the hadith emerged, a contextual hermeneutic analysis to read Wadud's interpretations from an equality perspective, and a critical-comparative analysis that compared classical and modern interpretations. The validity of the interpretation is maintained through the triangulation of literature and cross-reading between classical and contemporary sources.

Results and Discussion

Gender Bias in Hadith Tradition

Gender bias in the hadith tradition is an interpretive tendency that places women in a subordinate position due to an interpretation process that is detached from the historical, social, and linguistic context of the hadith. This bias does not originate from the hadith text itself, but rather from the construction of scholars' interpretations within a patriarchal social space (Harahap, Is, & Julaiha P, 2025). In

the classical scholarly paradigm, interpretation often begins with a literal reading without considering the historical context underlying the Prophet's sayings. When male dominance dominates scholarly discourse, hadith interpretation tends to reinforce established patriarchal structures (Nikmatullah, 2024). Islamic feminist perspectives, such as those presented by Fatima Mernissi, Leila Ahmed, and Asma Barlas, emphasize that interpretive bias arises from an epistemic imbalance, specifically masculine dominance in the process of transmitting and interpreting texts that shape religious authority (Hasan, 2023). Gender hermeneutics seeks to dismantle this bias by returning the text to its social context and the spirit of justice that underpins Islamic teachings (Al-Sharmani, 2023).

The pre-Islamic context played a significant role in shaping social mindsets that influenced the interpretation of hadith regarding women. The structure of Arab society during the Jahiliyah era was rooted in a patriarchal system, with men as the primary holders of social and political authority. At the same time, women were positioned as domestic complements (Dashti et al., 2023). Islam brought about radical change by recognizing women's rights in inheritance, social participation, and choice of spouse (Goudarzi, 2025). However, remnants of patriarchal values embedded in pre-Islamic Arab culture were not eliminated and influenced how some scholars interpreted hadith texts. This social legacy often led to interpretations of hadith concerning women that maintained a gender hierarchy inconsistent with the Islamic principle of spiritual equality (Yuliharti et al., 2025).

The social structure of classical Islamic scholarship demonstrates a close relationship between power relations and the production of meaning in hadith. Scholars live in a society that places men as the primary authority in the public sphere, including in the religious sphere. In such situations, hadith interpretations often affirm a hierarchical social structure (Masruhan & Hasyim, 2024). Interpretations of hadiths regarding female leadership or female testimony, for example, are usually conducted literally without considering the socio-political context in which they emerged (I. Siregar & Harahap, 2024). Within the framework of Bourdieu's (2020) social theory, it can be argued that patriarchal habitus has shaped symbolic dominance in religious discourse, making hadith interpretation an instrument of legitimacy for social inequality. Gender bias in hadith is therefore not merely a textual problem, but an epistemological one arising from the production of knowledge within a gender-neutral social structure.

The epistemology of classical Islamic scholarship also contributes to this bias. Women's access to public scholarly spaces is limited, while the process of hadith transmission is largely dominated by men (Friyadi et al., 2024). This situation creates an epistemic imbalance in which women's experiences are underrepresented in the sanad and commentary of hadith (Nikmatullah, 2024). Yet, history records many female narrators, such as 'Āisha bint Abī Bakr, who played a significant role in the transmission of hadith, particularly those concerning the

Prophet's domestic life (Al-Žahabī, 1985). However, the representation of women in hadith literature is unequally developed because scholarly authority is concentrated in male scholars (Yuliharti et al., 2025). The concept of epistemic injustice Fricker (2007) explains how this unequal representation produces bias in the authority of knowledge. When the interpretation of hadith is accepted without epistemological criticism, patriarchal bias in the *sanad* and interpretation is inherited as a normative truth that is difficult to challenge (Tasbih et al., 2024).

The hadith about women being called "lacking in reason and religion" is often cited as evidence of gender bias in religious discourse. This hadith appears in the context of the Prophet Muhammad explaining the differences in the legal standing of menstruating women for witnessing and worship (Al-ʿAsqalānī, 1970). A literal interpretation of the term *nāqishāt ʿaqlin wa al-Dīn* has given rise to the notion that women are intellectually and spiritually inferior. Linguistic analysis reveals that the term is contextual and descriptive, rather than an ontological assessment of women's capacities (Al-Qurṭubī, 1964). Fazlur Rahman (1980), within the framework of double movement hermeneutics, emphasizes the importance of understanding the meaning of a text in its historical context before drawing universal moral principles. When the context of the hadith assembly is ignored, the resulting interpretation becomes reductive and gives rise to gender stereotypes that are inconsistent with the spirit of Islamic justice (I. Siregar & Harahap, 2024).

The hadith on female leadership narrated by al-Bukhārī also exemplifies interpretive bias resulting from ignoring historical context. The hadith emerged when the Prophet Muhammad responded to the political situation in Persia following the death of Kisra and the accession of his daughter to power (Al-ʿAsqalānī, 1970). This narration is particular, but in the classical exegetical tradition, it is often generalized as a universal prohibition against female leadership (Mernissi, 1991). This understanding overlooks the principle of *maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah*, which prioritizes justice and welfare as the primary criteria for interpretation (Auda, 2010). Amina Wadud (1999) proposed a contextual hermeneutic approach that evaluates the text based on its moral purpose, not solely on its literal form. A rereading of the hadith reveals that the prohibition is not a universal provision, but rather a critique of specific political conditions that do not reflect justice and competent leadership (Mernissi, 1991).

The hadith regarding wives' obedience to their husbands is another theme that shows how patriarchal interpretations ignore the dimension of mutuality in family relations. The history of al-Bukhārī (1993), which emphasizes the wife's obligation to obey, is often understood one-sidedly without considering other hadiths which emphasize the husband's moral responsibility towards his wife. The Prophet was known to respect the views of his wives and involve them in the decision-making process, as seen in the Hudaibiyah incident when he followed Umm Salamah's advice (Al-Sijistānī, 1993). This partial reading of obedience hadiths

ignores the principle of mutual respect, which is at the core of Islamic teachings about the family (Siregar & Harahap, 2024). Intertextual studies of similar hadiths can confirm that equality in the household is an inherent value in the Prophet's sunnah.

An analysis of gender bias in the hadith confirms that the problem of injustice does not originate in the text, but rather in the interpretation process constructed within a gender-biased social and epistemological system. A just understanding requires a hermeneutic approach that takes into account the historical, social, and linguistic context. This approach does not diminish the authority of the hadith, but rather restores its moral message to the principles of justice and equality that are at the heart of Islamic teachings. Within this framework, Amina Wadud's methodology is relevant as an alternative paradigm that incorporates women's experiences and social context into the interpretive process. A just hermeneutic opens up space for a more proportionate and rational reading of the hadith, aligned with Islamic principles of humanity and justice.

Basic Principles of Amina Wadud's Methodology

Amina Wadud's methodology is rooted in feminist hermeneutics, which she defines as an interpretive approach that places gender equity as an epistemological principle in understanding religious texts. In *Qur'an and Woman* and *Inside the Gender Jihad*, Wadud asserts that the primary problem in Islamic interpretation lies not in the revealed text, but rather in the history of its interpretation, which is dominated by male experience, interests, and authority (Wadud, 1999, 2006). This dominance gives rise to textual readings that tend to be literal, ignoring the historical context and ethical dimensions of revelation, and implicating the legitimacy of gender inequality in social and theological structures (Wadud, 1999, 2006). Wadud's feminist hermeneutics seeks to dismantle these assumptions through critical readings that reexamine the relationship between text, interpreter, and social reality.

Unlike the literalistic approach that views the meaning of a text as final and ahistorical, Wadud proposes a methodology that combines textual analysis, historical context, and women's lived experiences as legitimate sources of knowledge (Wadud, 1999). This integration is not intended to subjectify revelation, but to uncover the normative-ethical dimensions often obscured by partial readings. In the context of hadith interpretation, this approach necessitates an evaluation of the social circumstances surrounding the narration, the gender dynamics within the structure of early Islamic society, and the normative influence of hadith on relationships between men and women. Within this framework, women are no longer positioned as legal or moral objects, but as epistemic subjects with experiential authority in the interpretative process (Nikmatullah, 2024).

The principle of justice occupies a central position in Wadud's methodology, serving as a hermeneutical criterion for assessing the validity of interpretation. Justice is understood as a substantive, normative value in the Quran, rather than a

formalistic one (Wadud, 1999). For Wadud (2006), an interpretation is considered problematic if it results in structural inequality or undermines the human dignity of women, even if it is supported by traditional authorities. Within the framework of hadith interpretation, this principle requires the interpreter to examine whether the interpretation of a hadith aligns with the Quran's vision of justice or reproduces historical gender hierarchies (Arifinsyah, Dalimunthe, & Riza, 2025). Justice serves as an ethical filter that allows for criticism of hadith or interpretations of hadith that contradict universal Islamic values (Harahap et al., 2025).

Equality is the second ethical principle conceptually integrated with justice. Wadud views equality as a logical consequence of substantive justice, not as a mechanical equality of roles. Equality necessitates recognition of women's full spiritual, moral, and social capacities (Wadud, 1999). In the methodology of hadith interpretation, this principle is employed to evaluate whether an interpretation restricts women's roles based on biological or cultural assumptions that lack a robust ethical foundation (Yahya & Zainuddin, 2021). With this approach, hadith that appear to place women in a subordinate position are literally reread through an analysis of their context, normative objectives, and social implications (Yuliharti et al., 2025).

Wadud's critique of literal interpretation reflects an epistemological shift from authority based on patriarchal tradition to authority based on universal ethical values. Literal interpretation is considered reductionist because it separates the text from its moral purpose and ignores the social dynamics in which it functions. Wadud's methodology does not stop at deconstruction, but offers an operational interpretive framework through ethical assessment, contextual analysis, and the inclusion of women's experiences as part of the interpretive process. These principles form a methodological unity relevant to reading hadiths that contain gender bias, while also opening up space for more just, inclusive, and academically responsible interpretations.

Wadud's Strategy in Reading Gender-Biased Hadith

The strategy of recontextualization occupies a central position in Amina Wadud's methodology when reading hadiths that have been interpreted with gender bias. Recontextualization is not intended to relativize the authority of the hadith, but rather to place the text within the historical horizon that gave rise to it (Pulungan, 2023). Within Wadud's hermeneutical framework, the seventh-century social, political, and cultural context becomes an epistemological element that determines how a hadith functions as a response to concrete reality, not merely as a normative formulation detached from the circumstances in which it emerged (Wadud, 1999, 2006). This approach aligns with the hermeneutical principle that the meaning of a text never exists in isolation but always interacts with the underlying social context (Gupta, 2021).

The hadith on female leadership narrated by Abū Bakrah (Al-Bukhārī, 1993) sering dijadikan contoh utama dalam penerapan strategi ini. Wadud (1999) situates the hadith within the context of Persia's political defeat, then led by Būrān bint Shīrūyah. Thus, the hadith is understood as a commentary on a specific political event, rather than as a universal legal ruling regarding the unfitness of women to lead. This approach demonstrates that normative generalizations based on specific historical experiences have the potential to introduce gender biases that are not inherent in the text itself (Heilman, Caleo, & Manzi, 2024). It is important to note that this reading is not entirely unfamiliar to the Islamic tradition; scholars such as Ibn Ḥajar (1970) in *Fatḥ al-Bārī* also distinguish between contextual and universally applicable hadith. However, this recontextualization also presents methodological challenges that need to be critically acknowledged. The boundary between historical context and universal normative claims is not always clear, opening up debate about the potential relativization of hadith meaning (Muzakkir et al., 2023). This is where Wadud (1999) emphasizes that recontextualization must be guided by broader Islamic ethical principles, not by the interpreter's subjective preferences.

In addition to recontextualization, reinterpretation of meaning is an important strategy in reading hadith that marginalize women. The hadith about women's testimony that equates two women with one man (Al-Naysābūrī, 1955) is often understood as codifying women's inferiority. Wadud rejects this essentialist reading by examining the socio-economic context of early Arab society, which limited women's access to public space, particularly in legal and commercial matters. According to Wadud (1999), these limitations in experience and participation affect the quality of testimony, so the hadith is more appropriately understood as a reflection of social conditions, rather than an ontological assessment of women's capacities. This reinterpretation demonstrates a fundamental difference between Wadud's approach and a literal reading. The hadith is not presented as an ahistorical statement, but rather as a text that interacts with specific social structures. However, this approach requires methodological caution. Changing social conditions do not automatically alter the normative implications of the hadith without adequate ethical argumentation (I. Siregar & Harahap, 2024). At this point, dialogue with the views of other scholars, both those who maintain a literal reading and those who propose a contextual reinterpretation, becomes important to maintain academic balance and avoid simplification of the argument.

The normative framework that supports recontextualization and reinterpretation in Wadud's methodology is *maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*. Wadud places *maqāṣid* as an evaluative principle that directs the interpretation of hadith so that it is in harmony with the ethical goals of Islam, such as justice, benefit, and protection of human dignity. In this framework, *maqāṣid* does not function as a tool for rejecting hadith, but rather as a benchmark for assessing whether a particular reading is consistent with the objectives of the shariah. Hadiths regarding gender relations in

the household, particularly those that emphasize women's absolute obedience to their husbands, are reinterpreted to prioritize justice and reciprocity as fundamental principles (Wadud, 1999).

The use of *maqāṣid* in Wadud's methodology has both strengths and limitations. On the one hand, this approach provides strong normative legitimacy and prevents readings of the hadith that conflict with the values of justice. On the other hand, the use of *maqāṣid* also faces criticism, particularly regarding the risk of anachronism and the ethical subjectivity of the interpreter. Wadud responds to these challenges by emphasizing that *maqāṣid* are not modern constructs detached from tradition, but rather an integral part of the treasury of Islamic law developed by classical and contemporary scholars (Wadud, 1999). Thus, *maqāṣid* serve as a bridge between the text of the hadith and the ethical demands of the modern era.

Overall, Wadud's multi-layered strategy—recontextualization, reinterpretation, and evaluation based on the *maqāṣid*—demonstrates a serious effort to construct a fair reading of hadith without sacrificing the integrity of Islamic epistemology. This approach asserts that gender bias is not inherent in hadith but rather often arises from readings that ignore context, the objectives of sharia, and social dynamics. Nevertheless, Wadud's approach still leaves room for criticism, particularly regarding the limits of interpreter objectivity and the tension between historical context and universal normative claims. Awareness of these limitations actually strengthens Wadud's methodology's position as a scholarly project open to evaluation, rather than as a final claim on the meaning of hadith.

Evaluation and Critique of Amina Wadud's Methodology

The recognition of women's experiences as a source of interpretive knowledge demonstrates significant methodological courage while challenging the dominance of patriarchal perspectives that have long been considered neutral and objective. In this context, Wadud's methodology does not stand apart from the tradition of modern Islamic thought, but rather resonates with Fazlur Rahman's (1980) notion of the double movement, which emphasizes the importance of the dialectic between the historical context of revelation and contemporary social reality. This equivalence demonstrates that Wadud's effort is not a freewheeling deconstruction of the text, but rather an attempt to affirm the normative relevance of the Quran in addressing structural injustice.

Nevertheless, recognizing women's experiences as epistemological sources requires more rigorous methodological clarification. Social experiences are particular and contextual, requiring an explicit explanation of how they are positioned within the hierarchy of sources for Islamic interpretation (Coşkun, 2022). Without clear epistemic boundaries, experience has the potential to shift from a corrective and critical function to a primary determinant of textual meaning (Kukkonen, 2024). At this point, Wadud's methodology remains problematic, as it has not fully formulated a scientific validation mechanism that distinguishes

between experience as a hermeneutic lens and experience as a normative authority equal to Islamic texts and scholarly traditions.

One of the main strengths of Wadud's methodology lies in its positioning of justice as the highest normative principle in Quranic interpretation. This principle aligns with the ethical spirit of Islam as developed by modernist thinkers such as Muḥammad 'Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā (2008), who emphasize that Islamic law is dynamic and directed toward realizing human well-being. Wadud (1999) broadens the horizon of this thinking by demonstrating that justice cannot be achieved as long as religious interpretation continues to reproduce power relations that subordinate women. Through this approach, verses previously understood hierarchically—such as those concerning family leadership or women's testimony—are reread within the ethical framework of the Quran, which rejects discrimination and affirms equal human dignity.

However, the use of justice as a hermeneutic principle also raises critical questions regarding the normative origins of the concept of justice itself. Wadud's methodology fails to clearly distinguish between justice as an internal value of the Quran and justice as a modern moral concept shaped by developments in global thought. The risk of normative anachronism arises when contemporary values of justice are applied directly to pre-modern texts without adequate conceptual mapping. Therefore, Wadud's approach requires theoretical deepening so that the principle of justice does not function merely as an end in itself for interpretation, but rather as an interpretive lens that remains subject to the text's meaningful structure and Islamic scholarly tradition.

Another prominent innovation in Wadud's methodology is the development of participatory hermeneutics, which rejects the dominance of a single interpretive authority. By opening up space for women as interpretive subjects, Wadud (1999) broadens the epistemology of interpretation toward a more inclusive and dialogical one. This approach shares conceptual similarities with Paulo Freire's (1973) critical pedagogy, which emphasizes the importance of reflective awareness and active participation by marginalized groups. In the context of Quranic interpretation, participatory hermeneutics allows for a reading that is more sensitive to diverse and dynamic social realities (Ichwan, Ming, & Sya'roni, 2025).

However, the democratization of interpretive authority also presents serious epistemological challenges. Without a rigorous methodological framework, participatory hermeneutics has the potential to lead to interpretive relativism that undermines scientific standards (Iivari, 2018). Islamic tradition recognizes mechanisms for managing differences through the concepts of *ikhtilāf mu'tabar* (differences of opinion among scholars), *ijmā'* (consensus), and the collective authority of scholars (Mulia et al., 2024). Wadud's methodology does not fully explain how women's experiences can be integrated into these mechanisms without

sacrificing the continuity of scientific authority and the methodological discipline of interpretation.

The most frequent criticism of Wadud's methodology concerns its potential for subjectivity and ideological bias. Some scholars, such as Aysha A. Hidayatullah (2014), argue that feminist hermeneutics risks falling into an apologetic stance, a tendency to adapt texts to a particular normative agenda without fully acknowledging the Quran's internal complexities and tensions. This criticism is relevant because the inclusion of the interpreter's personal experiences, while valuable in its correction, can blur the line between critical analysis and ideological reading. In this context, Wadud's methodology requires more explicit self-reflective tools to control interpreter subjectivity and maintain academic integrity.

The influence of Western feminist paradigms on Wadud's thinking has also been a source of significant debate. While feminism provides effective analytical tools for uncovering power relations and structural injustice, it is not a single discourse (Yin, 2022). Wadud's unclear position on the spectrum of feminism—whether liberal, critical, or faith-based—often gives rise to generalizations that her approach is a direct adoption of secular Western discourse. This perception reinforces resistance from traditionalists who view Wadud's methodology as potentially stripping interpretations of their foundations in Islamic jurisprudence (*uṣūl fiqh*) and the authority of texts. Therefore, a clearer conceptual distinction regarding the type of feminism employed is an urgent methodological need.

Traditionalist resistance is also related to concerns about disrupting the historically established consensus of scholars. The classical exegetical tradition emphasizes the continuity of authority through scientific chains of transmission and proven methodology (Suswita, 2025), while Wadud's approach is seen as overemphasizing the contemporary social context. This debate demonstrates an epistemological tension between traditional authority and modern experience. Wadud's methodology, while successfully opening up space for critical dialogue, does not yet fully offer a model of epistemological reconciliation that can systematically bridge these two poles.

The potential for developing Wadud's methodology lies in its integration with classical Islamic jurisprudence (*uṣūl fiqh*) and the *maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* (the principles of Islamic law). The *maqāṣid* approach, as formulated by ash-Shāṭibī (1997) and developed by Jasser Auda (2010), provides a normative framework that positions justice, welfare, and human dignity as the goals of Islamic law. This integration allows Wadud's methodology to gain stronger epistemological legitimacy, as gender-based reading is no longer perceived as an adoption of external discourse, but rather as an internal development of Islamic tradition. Methodologically, this integration can be achieved by making *maqāṣid* an evaluative parameter for the results of interpretation, rather than a normative justification that stands outside the text.

Overall, the evaluation of Amina Wadud's methodology reveals a balance between significant contributions and methodological limitations that necessitate ongoing critique. The strengths of this approach lie in its courage to deconstruct patriarchal bias, empower women's voices, and uphold justice as an ethical principle of interpretation. Its weaknesses arise from the risk of subjectivity, tensions with classical authoritative traditions, and the influence of modern feminist paradigms that have not yet been fully conceptually mediated. Prospects for its development depend on the ability to establish a methodological synthesis between critical hermeneutics, *uṣūl fiqh*, and *maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*. With this synthesis, Wadud's methodology has the potential to develop into an interpretation paradigm that is not only relevant to gender issues but also makes significant theoretical contributions to the development of Quranic interpretation in a pluralistic and dynamic global context.

Conclusion

Amina Wadud's methodology in reading gender-nuanced hadiths represents a critical hermeneutic approach that systematically challenges patriarchal constructions in the interpretive tradition through the principles of justice, inclusivity, and *maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* orientation. The main findings demonstrate that Wadud's deconstructive-reconstructive strategy effectively reveals gender biases inherent in literal readings and specific socio-historical contexts, while offering an alternative, fairer interpretative framework that respects the authority of the text. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of contemporary hadith studies by expanding the methodological horizon to integrate critical hermeneutics and gender analysis, beyond the dominant sanad-centric approach. Practically, these findings are relevant for Islamic education, the discourse of women scholars, and the formulation of religious discourse that is responsive to issues of gender justice in Muslim societies. The limitations of this study lie in the textual-normative focus of the analysis of Wadud's work and the limited data from the analyzed hadith, which do not fully capture the dynamics of social praxis and reception within the Muslim community. Therefore, further research is recommended to bridge the research gap through an interdisciplinary approach, comparative studies with other Muslim thinkers, and empirical research on the implementation and acceptance of gender-based hadith interpretation in diverse socio-religious contexts.

Acknowledgments

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Author Contribution Statement

SK contributed to the formulation of the main idea, research design, data analysis, and writing and correspondence of the manuscript. KA contributed to data collection, literature review, and the development of the theoretical framework. AM contributed to the conceptual analysis, sharpening of arguments, and discussion of

the results. MI played a role in data verification, methodological review, and editing the substance of the manuscript. SJ contributed to the interpretation of the findings, alignment of conclusions, and final review of the manuscript. All authors were involved in the critical reading, provided input, and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

This manuscript was prepared without any conflict of interest, either financial or non-financial, that could potentially influence the research process, data analysis, or the preparation and interpretation of research results.

AI Usage Statement

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) in this manuscript was limited to language enhancement, grammar correction, and formatting assistance. All research results, findings, concepts, analyses, ideas, interpretations, and conclusions are solely the work and responsibility of the author and were not generated by AI.

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