

Qawwāmūn and Qawām in the Qur'an: A Romantic Semantic Analysis as a Response to Patriarchy

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Abstract

The interpretation of the term *Qawwāmūn* in Q. *An-Nisā'* 4:34 has frequently been employed to justify patriarchal structures. The research gap addressed in this study lies in the predominance of normative-legalistic readings that insufficiently explore the semantic depth and literary nuance of the verse. This study aims to reconstruct the meaning of *Qawwāmūn* through the Romantic Semantic Tafsir (RST), an integrative exegetical model that combines Qur'anic semantic analysis with a romantic reading of divine discourse. Employing semantic analysis, this research traces all occurrences of *Qawwāmūn* (the *mubālaghah* form of *ism al-fā'il*) and *Qawām* (the *maṣdar* form) in the Qur'an, which appear three times for *Qawwāmūn* (Q. *An-Nisā'* 4:34; Q. *An-Nisā'* 4:135; Q. *Al-Mā'idah* 5:8) and once for *Qawām* (Q. *Al-Furqān* 25:67). The findings reveal two core semantic principles underlying these terms: delegation and moderation. From the perspective of RST, the romantic divine message is articulated through emotional elements as drivers of ethical action and through freedom as liberation from oppressive patriarchal constraints. This study contributes a relational-ethical reinterpretation of *Qawāmah*, positioning men as delegates of justice (*qiṣṭiyyah*) and agents of moderation in gender relations.

Penafsiran term *Qawwāmūn* dalam QS. *An-Nisā'*/4: 34 kerap digunakan sebagai dasar legitimasi sistem patriarki. Celaah penelitian ini terletak pada dominasi pembacaan normatif-legalistik yang belum sepenuhnya mengeksplorasi makna semantik dan nuansa sastra ayat secara integral. Penelitian ini bertujuan merekonstruksi makna *Qawwāmūn* melalui pendekatan Tafsir Semantik Romantik (TSR), sebuah model tafsir integratif yang menggabungkan analisis semantik Al-Qur'an dengan pembacaan romantik terhadap pesan Ilahi. Metode yang digunakan adalah analisis semantik dengan menelusuri seluruh kemunculan kata *Qawwāmūn* (bentuk *mubālaghah* bi *ism al-fā'il*) dan *Qawām* (bentuk *maṣdar*) dalam Al-Qur'an, yakni tiga kali untuk *Qawwāmūn* (QS. *An-Nisā'*/4: 34; QS. *An-Nisā'*/4: 135; QS. *Al-Mā'idah*/5: 8) dan satu kali untuk *Qawām* (QS. *Al-Furqān*/25: 67). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa makna inti term tersebut bertumpu pada dua prinsip utama, yaitu delegasi dan moderasi. Dari perspektif TSR, pesan romantik Ilahi termanifestasi melalui unsur emosi sebagai penggerak tindakan etis dan unsur kebebasan sebagai pembebasan dari struktur patriarki yang opresif. Kontribusi utama penelitian ini adalah perumusan pemaknaan *Qawāmah* yang bersifat relasional-ethis, yang menegaskan laki-laki sebagai delegasi keadilan (*qiṣṭiyyah*) dan subjek moderasi dalam relasi dengan perempuan.

A. INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an, as a sacred scripture, does not emerge within a historical vacuum; rather, it continuously interacts with evolving social dynamics, cultural configurations, and relations of power within society. In contemporary Qur'anic exegesis, the issue of gender relations ; particularly the position and lived experiences of women ; constitutes one of the most problematic yet strategically significant interpretive fields. This is largely due to the fact that several Qur'anic verses, when read literally and ahistorically, have often been employed to legitimize unequal social structures (Engineer, 2008). One of the most contested terms in this regard is *qawwāmūn* in Q.S. al-Nisā' /4:34, which, throughout the history of interpretation, has frequently been understood as an affirmation of male superiority over women. Such readings have contributed to the crystallization of gender bias within social practices and even within family law systems in many Muslim societies (Wadud, 1999).

In social theory, patriarchy is generally understood as a system of power relations that positions men as primary authority holders in both domestic and public spheres (Umar, 2010). Patriarchy is not a localized phenomenon; rather, it is a global reality with far-reaching consequences for women's access to justice, education, economic resources, and personal security. In the Indonesian context, patriarchal structures are often intertwined with cultural and religious legitimations, creating serious tensions with the foundational values of *Pancasila*, particularly the principles of social justice and the guarantee of human rights for all citizens without gender-based discrimination (Fakih, 2013).

The tangible consequences of patriarchal culture are empirically evident in the persistently high rates of gender-based violence. Data from the Indonesian Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (*Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak*, KemenPPPA) report more than 350,000 cases of gender-based violence recorded throughout 2023, with women and children constituting the majority of victims (KemenPPPA, 2024). On a global scale, UN Women reports that one in three women worldwide has experienced physical or sexual violence, predominantly perpetrated by intimate partners, indicating that domestic violence is a direct manifestation of patriarchal power relations (UN Women, 2023). These facts demonstrate that patriarchy cannot be detached from the theological dimension when religious interpretations themselves provide symbolic legitimations for domination.

Beyond violence, patriarchy also generates structural inequalities in education and economic participation. The *Global Gender Gap Report* estimates that, at the current pace of progress, global economic gender disparities will require approximately 169 years to be fully closed (World Economic Forum, 2024). Within family settings, girls in patriarchal environments are often positioned as subordinate, receiving lower priority in educational access and decision-making processes. This situation perpetuates cycles of economic dependency and significantly constrains women's contributions to broader social development (Sen, 1999).

Table 1. Patriarchal Vulnerabilities Affecting Women

Data Source	Key Findings	Forms of Patriarchal Vulnerability	Implications for Women
KemenPPPA RI (2024)	Throughout 2023, more than 350,000 cases of gender-based violence were recorded in Indonesia, with women and children constituting the majority of victims.	Physical, psychological, and sexual violence, as well as neglect, shaped by discriminatory gender norms.	Women are more vulnerable to trauma, social marginalization, and limited access to justice.
UN Women (2023)	Globally, one in three women has experienced physical or sexual violence at some point in her lifetime.	Normalization of violence within patriarchal power relations.	Restricts women's participation in the public sphere and perpetuates intergenerational inequality.

WEF – <i>Global Gender Gap Report</i> (2024)	Global economic gender inequality is projected to be closed only after approximately 169 years.	Inequality in employment opportunities, wages, and leadership positions resulting from structural patriarchal bias.	Limits women's economic autonomy, prolongs cycles of dependency, and reinforces subordination.
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In the classical exegetical tradition, *qawwāmūn* has generally been interpreted within a hierarchical framework. Ibn Kathīr, for instance, understands *qawwāmūn* as *sayyid*, or male leadership over women, grounded in perceived physical superiority and the obligation of financial maintenance (*nafaqah*) (Ibn Kathīr, 2000). Abū al-A'lā al-Maudūdī similarly interprets the term as a form of protection and guardianship derived from certain advantages bestowed by God upon men (Maududi, 1997). Such interpretations cannot be separated from the patriarchal social contexts in which they were produced. However, when read ahistorically in modern contexts, these interpretations easily transform into justifications for domination and contribute to the ossification of the Qur'an's ethical meaning.

A number of contemporary scholars have sought to critique these patriarchal readings. Amina Wadud emphasizes the importance of a holistic reading of the Qur'an that foregrounds justice and equality as the primary normative values of revelation (Wadud, 1999). Asma Barlas offers a critical challenge to authoritarian modes of interpretation that claim divine legitimacy for patriarchy, arguing instead for a liberative *tawhīdic* hermeneutic (Barlas, 2002). Meanwhile, Nasaruddin Umar highlights that gender bias emerges more from interpretive constructions than from the Qur'anic text itself (Umar, 2010).

Nevertheless, existing studies tend to gravitate toward two polarized approaches: semantic-linguistic readings that emphasize lexical analysis, or feminist readings that focus on ideological critiques of patriarchy. Relatively few studies explicitly integrate semantic analysis with a literary approach ; particularly Romanticism ; as a hermeneutical framework for engaging the Qur'an's ethical message. As a result, the aesthetic, emotional, and liberative dimensions of the Qur'an

remain underexplored in contemporary discourses on *qawwāmūn* and *qawām* (Arkoun, 2006).

It is precisely at this juncture that the present study identifies its research gap. Previous studies have rarely combined a semantic analysis of *qawwāmūn* and *qawām* with a Romantic reading that foregrounds emotion, imagination, and freedom as integral elements of the Divine message. Yet the Qur'an, as a linguistic miracle, possesses a literary dimension that does not merely convey legal injunctions but also shapes moral sensibilities and ethical human relations (Abu Zayd, 2006). This lacuna necessitates a more integrative interpretive approach.

The Romantic Semantic Tafsīr (RST) approach developed by Mufti Abqary offers a methodological breakthrough by integrating Qur'anic semantic analysis with elements of Romantic literary theory, such as *ṭabī'iyyah* (nature), *‘āṭifiyyah* (emotion), *khayāliyyah* (imagination), and *hurriyyah* (freedom). This approach is grounded in the assumption that the Divine message is not solely normative but also romantic, in the sense that it seeks to cultivate a living, ethical, and liberating relationship between God and humanity (Abqary, 2024).

From a semantic perspective, the term *qawwāmūn*, as a form of *mubālaghah* derived from *ism al-fā'il*, appears three times in the Qur'an ; Q.S. al-Nisā' /4:34, Q.S. al-Nisā' /4:135, and Q.S. al-Mā'idah /5:8 ; all of which are associated with the delegation of responsibility to uphold justice. Meanwhile, the term *qawām*, as a *maṣdar*, appears once in Q.S. al-Furqān /25:67 in the context of moderation in spending. Reading these four verses semantically and intertextually opens up the possibility of a broader, non-hierarchical understanding of *qawāmah* (Izutsu, 2002).

Based on this framework, the present study aims to reconstruct the meanings of *qawwāmūn* and *qawām* through the Romantic Semantic Tafsīr approach in order to liberate Qur'anic interpretation from patriarchal constraints. This research is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of contemporary Qur'anic exegesis, while also offering practical insights for fostering more just, dialogical, and ethical gender relations that are aligned with Qur'anic principles of justice as well as the values of *Pancasila* and human rights in the Indonesian context.

B. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a *library research* design, focusing on the analysis of authoritative exegetical texts and relevant academic literature. The research adopts a

qualitative, descriptive-analytical framework with comparative and integrative approaches. The comparative approach is used to examine differing interpretations of the term *qawwāmūn* and the concept of *qawāmah* across classical Qur'anic commentaries, while the integrative approach connects these classical exegetical findings with contemporary discourses on Qur'anic semantics, gender relations, and critiques of patriarchy. This study does not aim to test statistical hypotheses; rather, it seeks to construct a contextualized conceptual interpretation and an integrative exegetical synthesis. The primary data sources consist of authoritative classical Qur'anic commentaries that have exerted significant influence within the Islamic exegetical tradition, namely *Tafsīr al-Manār* by Muḥammad 'Abduh and Rashīd Ridā, *al-Jāmi' li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* by al-Qurṭubī, and *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr* by Ibn 'Āshūr. These works were selected because they represent a broad spectrum of exegetical orientations, including rational-modernist, jurisprudential-exegetical, and *maqāṣidī-linguistic* approaches. Secondary data sources include scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and contemporary academic works addressing Qur'anic semantics, hermeneutics, gender-oriented *tafsīr*, and critiques of patriarchal systems within contemporary Islamic thought.

The analytical model employed in this study is the Romantic Semantic *Tafsīr* (RST), which is explicitly positioned as a model of exegetical analysis rather than merely a general method or approach. RST functions as an analytical framework that integrates linguistic (semantic) analysis with Romantic literary sensibilities in order to uncover the Qur'an's ethical and humanistic messages. The implementation of RST in this research follows the analytical sequence outlined below:

- Term identification, involving a comprehensive examination of all occurrences of the lexeme *qawwāmūn* and the conceptual derivations of *qawāmah* in the Qur'an;
- Semantic analysis, focusing on the investigation of root meanings, morphological forms, and semantic relations based on intra-textual Qur'anic contexts as well as classical exegetical interpretations;
- Romantic literary analysis, which explores elements of emotion, nuance, freedom, and relational harmony embedded within the semantic structure of the verses;

- Exegetical synthesis, namely the formulation of an integrative meaning that emphasizes the delegation of responsibility and the principle of justice (*qiṣṭiyyah*) in gender relations.

Data analysis techniques in this study combine ideographic and nomothetic approaches. The ideographic approach is employed to examine the historical, social, and epistemological particularities of each classical interpretation of the *qawwāmūn* verses, including the socio-cultural background and intellectual context of the exegetes. Meanwhile, the nomothetic approach is applied to identify general patterns, ethical principles, and universal structures of meaning that transcend specific historical contexts. The synthesis of these two approaches enables the study not only to map the diversity of exegetical interpretations but also to formulate normative Qur'anic principles concerning just and moderate gender relations within the conceptual framework of *qawāmah*. The research procedure is conducted through systematic stages of textual data collection, data classification and reduction, comparative analysis, and integrative synthesis using the RST model. Data validity is ensured through source triangulation ; by comparing classical exegetical works with contemporary scholarly literature ; and through analytical rigor to maintain semantic consistency. Within this methodological framework, the study is directed toward addressing the central research question: "How can a romantic-semantic interpretation of the concepts of *qawām* and *qawwāmūn* in the Qur'an be formulated?"

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Romantic Semantic Tafsīr (RST) approach to the terms *qawwāmūn* and *qawām* significantly reconstructs the interpretation of relational Qur'anic verses, shifting it from a paradigm of patriarchal legitimization toward an ethical-humanistic framework grounded in delegation (*tafiq*), justice (*qiṣṭiyyah*), and moderation (*i'tidāl*). In contrast to certain classical and modern normative interpretations that tend to conceptualize *qiwāmah* as a hierarchical leadership structure, these findings resonate with ; yet move beyond ; contemporary critical studies on Qur'anic gender discourse by introducing a Romantic dimension. This dimension encompasses ethical emotion, relational freedom, and an imaginative vision of justice as central driving forces of interpretation. The integration of a semantic analysis of the root *q-w-m* across multiple Qur'anic verses (Q.S. al-

Nisā' /4:34, 4:135; Q.S. al-Mā'idah/5:8; Q.S. al-Furqān/25:67) with elements of Romantic literary theory reveals that *qiwāmah* does not constitute an ontological, gender-based status. Rather, it represents a conditional trust (*amānah*) that demands the continual practice of justice and the cultivation of compassionate, partnership-based relationships. This reading reframes *qiwāmah* as a dynamic ethical responsibility rather than a fixed structure of authority. Nevertheless, this study has certain limitations. Its primary focus remains on textual and normative analysis, and it does not empirically assess the social impacts of applying Romantic Semantic Tafsīr within contemporary Muslim families and societies. Accordingly, future research is encouraged to extend the RST approach toward interdisciplinary studies by incorporating perspectives from sociology, gender psychology, and Islamic legal studies. Further research may also broaden the scope of inquiry to include other relational Qur'anic verses in order to more concretely and applicatively evaluate the transformative potential of this interpretive model in dismantling patriarchal vulnerabilities.

Discussion

1. The Concept of Romantic Semantic Tafsīr

A comparative analysis of Mufti Abqary's Romantic Semantic Tafsīr (RST) reveals both its distinctiveness and its unique methodological positioning when compared to other semantic models, such as Toshihiko Izutsu's *weltanschauung* model and the encyclopedic semantic model developed by Dadang Darmawan et al. (Abqary, 2024; Izutsu, 1995; Darmawan et al., 2020). Although all three models are grounded in the analysis of *basic meaning* and *relational meaning* of key Qur'anic terms, Abqary's RST is distinguished by its pronounced emphasis on literary (aesthetic) analysis as a central key to semantic interpretation (Ullmann, 1973; Abū Zayd, 2002). This emphasis enables RST to move beyond the mere pursuit of conceptual meaning toward uncovering the beauty of *uslūb* and the aesthetic values embedded within the Qur'anic *lafz*. In this framework, linguistic style does not merely convey phonetic and structural beauty but also embodies aesthetic meaning and emotional depth (Hude, 2006; Novalis, 1800; Byron, 1812; Gibran, 1923). This literary-aesthetic dimension does not constitute a primary concern within the two comparative semantic models.

The principal differentiation of RST lies in two crucial aspects that are relatively overlooked by both Izutsu's and Darmawan's models. First, RST explicitly incorporates

an analysis of *authorial intent* (Divine will) as well as practical values and social utility as integral components of the interpretive process. This orientation renders RST not merely descriptive-analytical, but also transformative, as it seeks to disclose a romantic Divine message that remains relevant to addressing contemporary humanitarian challenges ; such as gender injustice ; that continue to evolve within historical and social contexts (Abou-Bakr, 2015; KemenPPPA, 2024; Komnas Perempuan, 2024). Second ; and most decisively ; RST positions literary analysis as a foundational methodological pillar, encompassing the examination of stylistic devices, motifs, and nuances (*motif and nuance*) that enrich the semantic spectrum of the text. Within this framework, RST demonstrates a strong potential to address the need for more sensitive and contextualized fulfillment of gender representation rights (Khairanis, 2025; Halimah, 2018; Masulah, 2009). This stands in contrast to Izutsu's model, which tends to prioritize pre-Islamic historical-linguistic analysis (Peters, 1995), as well as Darmawan's model, which emphasizes extensive exploration of classical Islamic encyclopedic sources.

Accordingly, the differentiation of Mufti Abqary's RST does not lie in a rejection of the analytical components of previous semantic models, but rather in the expansion of the semantic horizon into the domains of literature and social praxis. It is precisely this synthesis ; combining rigorous semantic analysis, literary sensitivity, and concern for social relevance ; that renders the RST approach particularly suitable for interpreting sensitive terms such as *qawwāmūn* (قَوْمُون). RST is capable of simultaneously engaging emotional depth, linguistic beauty, and social significance, thereby producing interpretations that are not only academically rigorous but also liberating and ethically restorative.

Table 2. Checklist of Analytical Factors in Semantic Tafsīr Models

Factor	Romantic Semantic Tafsīr (Mufti Abqary)	Semantic <i>Weltanschauung</i> (Toshihiko Izutsu)	Encyclopedic Semantic Model (Dadang Darmawan et al.)
Analysis of Basic and Relational Meaning	Present	Present	Present

Analysis of Diachronic Semantic Development	Not treated as a requirement or primary focus, particularly in discussions of pre-Qur'anic usage; emphasis is placed on meaning during the Qur'anic period of revelation.	Present	Present
Use of <i>Turāth</i> Encyclopedias (classical Islamic sources)	Present, but limited to lexical-semantic analysis for literary purposes; not a methodological requirement or priority.	Present, but considered insufficient due to limited utilization.	Present and constitutes a defining methodological feature.
Sentence-Level and Stylistic (Literary) Analysis	Present and constitutes a distinctive feature.	Absent	Absent
Analysis of <i>Authorial Intent</i> and Social Application	Present and constitutes a distinctive feature.	Absent	Absent

2. Verses of *Qawwāmūn* and *Qawām* in the Qur'an

a. *Qawwāmūn* in Q.S. al-Nisā' /4:34

A holistic understanding of Q.S. al-Nisā' /4:34, as articulated in the exegetical works of Ibn 'Āshūr and Muḥammad 'Abduh, reveals that the Qur'an constructs an ethical family system aimed at countering the excesses of patriarchy rather than reinforcing them ('Āshūr, 1984; Riḍā & 'Abduh, 1947; Abou-Bakr, 2015). Both exegetes concur that the concept of *qawwāmah* conferred upon men does not function as a legitimization of domination or tyranny, but rather as a form of responsibility (*mas'ūliyyah*) arising from specific socio-economic conditions (Umar & Arsyad, 2022; Ichsen, 2014). Ibn 'Āshūr emphasizes that *qawwāmūn* signifies "those who maintain and rectify affairs," a function that is conditional rather than an expression of essential superiority. He explains:

wa al-qawwām: alladhī yaqūmu 'alā sha'ni shay'in wa yalihī wa yusliḥuhū ("Qawwāmūn refers to one who undertakes, manages, and rectifies an affair.")

Similarly, Muḥammad ‘Abduh interprets *qawwāmah* as *ri‘āyah* (care) and *kifāyah* (provision), understood as logical consequences of the obligation of financial maintenance (*nafaqah*), while stressing that such leadership (*riyāsah*) continues to allow agency and autonomy to the party being led:

riyāsah yataṣṣarfu fīhā al-mar‘ūs bi-irādatihī wa ikhtiyārihī
(“a form of leadership in which the one being led continues to act according to his or her own will and choice.”)

Accordingly, the Qur'an situates the marital relationship as a reciprocal partnership (Rozaq, 2019), in which male leadership is strictly circumscribed by the objectives of justice and *maṣlahah*, rather than absolute authority (Rafsanjani et al., 2025; Putri et al., 2025).

This verse has frequently become a focal point of controversy due to the phrase *wa-ḍribūhunna* (“and strike them”). However, the interpretations offered by both scholars demonstrate how the Qur'an dismantles prevalent practices of domestic violence embedded within patriarchal systems by subjecting them to stringent conditions and limitations (Rofiah, 2017; Rahmah et al., 2021; Sawai, 2015). Ibn ‘Āshūr carefully explains that the measures preceding physical discipline are gradual and sequential (*tartīb*), and that the form of striking intended is:

darb iṣlāḥ li-qāṣd iqāmat al-mu‘āsharah baynahumā
(“a corrective strike aimed at restoring marital coexistence between the two”).

Rather than an act of humiliation or the discharge of anger (Al-Qarāfi, 1998; Yūsuf & Takdir, 2020). Muḥammad ‘Abduh advances an even more progressive stance by asserting that in educated societies, *yajibu al-istighnā’ an al-ḍarb* (“it becomes obligatory to abandon physical punishment altogether”), since the objective of the Sharī‘ah is peace rather than violence. This approach shifts the focus away from patriarchal prerogatives toward a civilized ethic of conflict resolution, in which violence is positioned as an extremely restricted last resort and, ideally, eliminated altogether (Sanggarwati, 2019).

Finally, the normative framework constructed by this verse culminates in the mechanism for resolving marital discord (*shiqāq*) through mediation involving two representatives of equal standing from the families of both husband and wife. This mechanism constitutes a powerful anti-patriarchal instrument, as it actively involves the woman in decision-making processes and acknowledges the authority of her family. Muḥammad ‘Abduh underscores that this step becomes obligatory when *qad*

yakūnu bi-żulmin min al-rajul ("it may well be that [the conflict] originates from the wrongdoing of the man"), an explicit recognition that the source of marital conflict does not necessarily lie with the woman ; a point often neglected in patriarchal interpretations. Ibn 'Āshūr likewise regards this mechanism as part of a comprehensive system of justice. Thus, the Qur'an does not allow *qawwāmah* to operate as a closed system susceptible to abuse, but rather equips it with checks and balances through the institution of the extended family. This ultimately affirms that justice ; emphatically declared in the verse's conclusion, *inna Allāha kāna 'aliyyan kabīrā* ("Indeed, God is Most High, Most Great") ; serves as the supreme overseer of all relations of power, including those within the household, thereby preventing them from degenerating into oppressive patriarchy.

b. *Qawwāmūn* in Q.S. al-Nisā' /4:135

The interpretations of al-Qurṭubī and Muḥammad 'Abduh concerning Q.S. al-Nisā' /4:135 affirm that the foundation of all forms of leadership (*qawwāmah*) in Islam is universal justice (*al-qiṣṭ*), which transcends social status and personal affiliation. Through its emphatic command, *kūnū qawwāmīna bi al-qiṣṭ* ("Be steadfast upholders of justice"), this verse functions as a regulatory principle that restrains the potential abuse of *qawwāmah* within the family, preventing it from degenerating into an unjust patriarchal system. Al-Qurṭubī underscores that this command represents the highest form of moral education, whereby a Muslim is required to bear witness to truth *wa law 'alā anfusikum aw al-wālidayn wa al-aqrabīn* ("even against yourselves, or against your parents and close relatives"). This implies that a husband or father, in his capacity as *qawwāmūn*, is bound by an obligation to uphold justice even when such justice operates to his own detriment or conflicts with tribal or familial loyalties ('aṣabiyah) that lie at the heart of patriarchal structures. Accordingly, authentic *qawwāmah* is a form of leadership that submits entirely to the principle of Divine justice, inherently rejecting group fanaticism and patriarchal authoritarianism (al-Qurṭubī, 2006; Ridā & 'Abduh, 1947; Ferdino et al., 2024).

Muḥammad 'Abduh deepens this understanding by emphasizing that being *qawwāmīna bi al-qiṣṭ* is not a sporadic act but a sustained effort to internalize justice as an enduring moral disposition, *malakah rāsikhah fī nufūsikum* ("a firmly rooted character within the soul"). He views this verse as a corrective to pre-Islamic social practices characterized by nepotism and systemic injustice toward vulnerable groups (al-Jābirī, 1986; Kuntowijoyo, 2001). For 'Abduh, justice constitutes *mīzān Allāh fī al-*

ard, bihī yaruddu Allāh min al-shadīd 'alā al-qa'īf ("God's balance on earth, through which God restores rights from the strong to the weak"). From this perspective, *qawwāmah* within the family ought to function as an instrument of protection for vulnerable parties ; such as wives and children ; rather than as a means of domination. A just *qawwāmūn* will therefore cultivate a family structure that guarantees the voices and rights of all its members, particularly those traditionally marginalized within patriarchal arrangements, to be heard and safeguarded. In this way, the verse transforms *qawwāmah* from a male privilege into a trust (*amānah*) to uphold justice on behalf of the vulnerable (Amir & Rahman, 2025; Rameli & Amin, 2010).

A comparative reading of these two exegetes further reveals their complementary approaches. Al-Qurṭubī, through his detailed jurisprudential discussion of the conditions of testimony, provides a rigorous legal framework designed to prevent conflicts of interest ; an approach that remains relevant for shielding *qawwāmah* from patriarchal nepotism within the domestic sphere. Muḥammad 'Abduh, by contrast, places greater emphasis on cultivating ethical and social consciousness. His assertion that *al-'adl hifāz al-nizām wa qiwām amr al-ijtīmā'* ("justice is the guardian of order and the foundation of social life") elevates *qawwāmah* to a broader level of social responsibility. Together, these approaches converge to construct a holistic conception of *qawwāmūn*: a family leader who is not only required to understand and apply formal legal norms to avoid injustice (as stressed by al-Qurṭubī), but who must also possess moral integrity that actively compels the realization of substantive justice (as emphasized by 'Abduh). This constitutes the Qur'anic foundation for fostering egalitarian and just family relations, far removed from the vulnerabilities of oppressive patriarchal systems.

c. Qawwāmūn in Q.S. al-Mā'idah/5:8

The interpretations of al-Qurṭubī and Ibn 'Āshūr concerning Q.S. al-Mā'idah/5:8 position moral integrity as an indispensable prerequisite for a *qawwāmūn* (upholder or leader). Through the imperative *kūnū qawwāmīna li Allāh* ("Be steadfast upholders for God"), the verse affirms that the foundation of leadership (*qawwāmah*) must be submission to God rather than to personal desires, tribal affiliations, or particular group interests. Al-Qurṭubī emphasizes that the command to uphold justice remains binding under all circumstances, as stated in the divine injunction: *wa lā yajrimannakum shana'ānu qawmin 'alā allā ta'dilū* ("and let not the hatred of a people cause you to act unjustly"). This principle is especially vital in deconstructing

patriarchal mentalities, wherein a *qawwāmūn* (husband or father) often uses feelings of "love" or "resentment" as justificatory grounds for injustice or discrimination within the family sphere. A true *qawwāmūn* is therefore required to remain just toward his wife and children even amid emotional conflict or personal tension, for justice constitutes a divine command that transcends individual sentiment.

Ibn 'Āshūr adds contextual depth by comparing this verse with Q.S. al-Nisā' /4:135. He explains that the variation in syntactic structure between *qawwāmīna li Allāh shuhadā'a bi al-qīṣṭ* (Q.S. al-Mā'idah/5:8) and *qawwāmīna bi al-qīṣṭ shuhadā'a li Allāh* (Q.S. al-Nisā' /4:135) indicates a shift in semantic emphasis. According to Ibn 'Āshūr, in Q.S. al-Mā'idah/5:8, *fa kāna al-ahammu fīhā amr al-'adl thumma al-shahādah* ("what is foremost therein is the matter of justice, followed by testimony"). This suggests that leadership (*qawwāmah*) oriented *li Allāh* necessarily generates testimony and action grounded in justice (*bi al-qīṣṭ*). In the context of family life, this means that a husband's obedience to God as a *qawwāmūn* must serve as the primary source of every just policy and form of treatment toward his wife and children. Leadership, therefore, is not absolute power but a trust (*amānah*) rooted in personal piety and culminating in the realization of social justice within the family as the most fundamental unit of society.

Both exegetes further agree that the justice upheld by a *qawwāmūn* entails far-reaching ethical and spiritual consequences. Al-Qurṭubī (2006) notes that the outcome of establishing justice is *lahum maghfirah wa ajrun 'azīm* ("for them there is forgiveness and a great reward"). Ibn 'Āshūr, meanwhile, interprets the phrase *huwa aqrabu li al-taqwā* ("that is closer to piety") by explaining that *al-'adl huwa milāk kabh al-nafs 'an al-shahwah wa dhālika milāk al-taqwā* ("justice is the key to restraining the self from desire, and that is the essence of piety"). From this perspective, just *qawwāmah* not only functions as a mechanism of protection for family members against patriarchal vulnerability, but also serves as a means of spiritual purification for the *qawwāmūn* himself. By restraining arbitrariness ; which constitutes the core of patriarchy ; a husband or father draws closer to *taqwā*. Thus, the Qur'an frames *qawwāmah* as a spiritual path toward moral integrity, one that gradually erodes the roots of patriarchy from within the subject who exercises authority.

d. Qawām in QS al-Furqān/25:67

The interpretations of Ibn ‘Āshūr and Muḥammad ‘Abduh concerning QS *al-Furqān*/25:68 affirm that the fundamental character of a true *Qawwāmūn* (leader/maintainer) lies in moral integrity that consciously distances itself from major forms of injustice. The verse characterizes ‘ibād al-Rāḥmān through the declaration: *wa alladhīna lā yad‘ūna ma‘a Allāhi ilāhan ākhara wa lā yaqtulūna al-nafsa allatī ḥarrama Allāhu illā bi al-ḥaqqa wa lā yaznūna* (“and those who do not associate with Allah another deity, nor do they kill the soul which Allah has made sacred except by right, nor do they commit adultery”). Ibn ‘Āshūr explains that these three grave sins ; *shirk*, murder, and adultery ; constitute *qabā’ih kānat ghālibatan ‘alā al-mushrikīn* (“heinous acts that historically predominated among the polytheists”). Within the framework of *qawwāmah*, these prohibitions function as an ethical foundation preventing a family leader (*qawwām*) from elevating personal desire, ambition, or authority into a concealed “deity”; from degrading human dignity and life (including through domestic violence); or from betraying the moral trust of marriage. A *Qawwāmūn* who is safeguarded from these transgressions is, in essence, constructing a familial system grounded in security and dignity, while simultaneously dismantling the pillars of patriarchy that often rely on violence, absolute domination, and betrayal.

This principle of moral integrity is further elaborated by Muḥammad ‘Abduh through his interpretation of the subsequent verse, QS *al-Furqān*/25:67, which addresses the ethics of wealth management. The attributes of ‘ibād al-Rāḥmān are described by the divine statement: *wa alladhīna idhā anfaqū lam yusrifū wa lam yaqturū wa kāna bayna dhālika Qawāman* (“and those who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor miserly, but maintain a balance between the two”). Muḥammad ‘Abduh, drawing upon various scholarly opinions, asserts that the meaning of *Qawām* in this verse is *al-‘adl wa al-qiwām fī kulli wāḥidin bi-ḥasabi ‘iyālihi wa ḥālihi* (“justice and equilibrium, calibrated according to one’s familial responsibilities and individual circumstances”). In the context of familial *qawwāmah*, this principle constitutes a crucial anti-patriarchal foundation. A husband, as a *Qawwāmūn* in matters of financial provision, is not justified in adopting an authoritarian stance ; whether through extravagance (*isrāf*) that harms the family or through miserliness (*taqtīr*) that neglects the rights of wife and children. Rather, he is obligated to embody justice and balance (*Qawām*), reflecting a form of leadership that is responsible and respectful of the economic rights of all family members.

By synthesizing the analyses of these two exegetes, the Qur'an's construction of a comprehensive profile of the *Qawwāmūn* becomes evident. Ibn 'Āshūr emphasizes spiritual and corporeal integrity ; avoiding *shirk*, murder, and adultery ; as safeguards against fundamental injustice within the family. Muḥammad 'Abduh, meanwhile, highlights economic and social integrity ; avoiding extravagance and miserliness ; as the foundation for justice and domestic well-being. Together, they portray the *Qawwāmūn* not as a patriarchal tyrant, but as a God-conscious servant ('abd Allāh) whose leadership (*qawwāmah*) is rooted in reverence for Allah. Such a *Qawwāmūn* faces grave consequences ; *yalqa athāman* ("receiving multiplied punishment") ; if he acts unjustly, and conversely attains *Qawāman* ("balance") when he upholds justice. Thus, the Qur'anic concept of *qawwāmah* emerges as an ethical system of leadership aimed at protecting familial relations from patriarchal vulnerability by grounding every action in *taqwā* and justice.

Table 3. Verses on Qawwām and Qawām in the Perspectives of Qur'anic Exegetes

Verse	Exegete	Core Quotation	Meaning of <i>Qawwāmah</i>	Anti-Patriarchal Implications
QS <i>al-Nisā'</i> /4:34	Ibn 'Āshūr	" <i>wa al-qawwām: alladhī yaqūmu 'alā sha'ni shay'in wa yaliyyihi wa yuṣliḥuhu</i> " → <i>al-Qawwām</i> is the one who assumes responsibility for a matter, oversees it, and rectifies it.	A functional role of care and rectification, conditional rather than a claim to superiority.	Husband–wife relations are conceived as partnership; physical discipline is restricted to <i>darb iṣlāḥ</i> (corrective and symbolic) and is severely limited.
	Muhammad 'Abduh	" <i>riyāsah yataṣarrafu fīhā al-mar'ūs bi-irādatihi wa ikhtiyārihi</i> " → A form of leadership in which the one being led retains agency and free choice.	<i>Qawwāmah</i> as <i>ri'āyah</i> (care) and <i>kifāyah</i> (provision of needs).	Violence must be abolished (" <i>yajibu al-istighnā' 'an al-darb</i> "); family mediation becomes a just mechanism that includes women as active agents.

QS <i>al-Nisā'</i> /4:135	al-Qurtubī	" <i>wa law 'alā anfusikum aw al-wālidayn wa al-aqrabīn</i> " → Upholding justice even against oneself, one's parents, or close relatives.	<i>Qawwāmah</i> as an obligation to establish universal justice.	Prevents nepotism and binds the <i>Qawwām</i> to divine law rather than patriarchal fanaticism.
	Muhammad 'Abduh	" <i>mīzān Allāh fī al-ard, bihi yaruddu Allāh min al-shadīd 'alā al-ḍa'īf</i> " → God's balance on earth, through which rights are restored from the strong to the weak.	<i>Qawwāmah</i> as an ingrained moral disposition (<i>malakah</i>), making justice a habitual ethos (Ridha & 'Abduh, 1947; Saeed, 2016).	Leadership functions to protect vulnerable groups (wives, children), not to dominate or oppress them.
QS <i>al-Mā'idah</i> /5:8	al-Qurtubī	" <i>wa lā yajrimannakum shana'ānu qawmin 'alā allā ta'dilū</i> " → Let not hatred of a people lead you to injustice.	<i>Qawwāmah</i> exercised <i>lillāh</i> (for God), not driven by personal desire.	The <i>Qawwām</i> must remain just even amid emotions of love or hatred within the family.
	Ibn 'Āshūr	Structural distinction between: " <i>qawwāmīna lillāhi shuhadā'a bi al-qist</i> " and " <i>qawwāmīna bi al-qist shuhadā'a lillāh</i> ".	QS <i>al-Mā'idah</i> emphasizes justice leading to <i>taqwā</i> ; QS <i>al-Nisā'</i> emphasizes testimony as the path to justice.	Leadership grounded in <i>taqwā</i> , restraining ego and rejecting emotionally driven patriarchy.
QS <i>al-Furqān</i> /25:67 –68	Ibn 'Āshūr	Major sins ; <i>shirk</i> , murder, and adultery ; are " <i>qabā'iḥ kānat</i>	A true <i>Qawwām</i> is free from lust, violence, and betrayal.	Rejects domestic violence and male absolutism.

		<i>ghālibatan 'alā al-mushrikīn'</i> .		
	Muhammad 'Abduh	" <i>al-'adl wa al-qiwām fī kulli wāhidin bi-ḥasabi 'iyālihi wa hālihi</i> " → Justice and balance according to each family's condition.	<i>Qawwāmah</i> in financial provision requires moderation ; neither <i>isrāf</i> (extravagance) nor <i>taqtīr</i> (miserliness).	Just provision forbids economic authoritarianism; the family's rights and welfare are safeguarded.

3. Romantic Semantic Exegesis of *Qawwāmūn* and *Qawām* as an Emancipatory Response to Patriarchal Vulnerability

a. Analysis of Romantic Elements

From a semantic perspective, the term *Qawwāmūn* in QS *al-Nisā'*/4:135 and QS *al-Mā'idah*/5:8 appears within the framework of justice (*al-qiṣṭ*), encompassing both social and spiritual relations. By contrast, *Qawwāmūn* in QS *al-Nisā'*/4:34 emerges in the context of familial relations, while *Qawām* in QS *al-Furqān*/25:67 is employed to emphasize moderation in the management of financial provision. When these four verses are read through a romantic approach, they collectively form a coherent semantic trajectory: men are not positioned as sovereign rulers, but rather as divine delegates entrusted with the realization of justice and moderation. The emotional dimension intrinsic to the romantic approach becomes evident here, as the mandate of *Qawwāmūn* requires emotional sensitivity and ethical consciousness rather than the mere reinforcement of rigid social structures. Through gentleness of feeling and compassionate awareness, harsh patriarchal domination is softened and replaced by harmonious familial relationships.

The element of freedom central to romantic literature also resonates strongly with the semantic horizon of *Qawwāmūn*. The freedom in question does not signify the abdication of male responsibility, but rather the liberation of women from oppressive patriarchal constraints. QS *al-Mā'idah*/5:8 asserts that justice must not be

subordinated to hatred or partiality ; a principle that implicitly emancipates women from socially biased and discriminatory judgments. Likewise, QS *al-Furqān*/25:67, with its emphasis on balance (*Qawām*) in expenditure, may be read symbolically as a liberation from extremes of power relations: neither extravagant dominance nor miserly neglect in fulfilling responsibilities. The freedom articulated by the Qur'an is thus relational in nature ; a freedom that safeguards dignity and rights within the familial nexus.

Meanwhile, the element of imagination, as viewed through the romantic lens of the Qur'an, opens interpretive space for re-envisioning male–female relations beyond rigid patriarchal patterns. This Qur'anic imagination invites readers to perceive *Qawwāmūn* not as a hierarchical structure, but as a form of functional harmony, analogous to the universe itself, which is created in a state of balanced interdependence. By cultivating an imagination of justice and freedom, romantic semantic exegesis affirms that the Qur'an is not a source of patriarchal legitimization, but rather an inspiration for emancipation. Consequently, verses concerning *Qawwāmūn* and *Qawām* function as both spiritual and aesthetic foundations for responding to the vulnerabilities produced by patriarchal culture, shifting the relational paradigm from domination toward delegated responsibility grounded in compassion and ethical accountability.

Table 4. Romantic–Semantic Reading of *Qawwām* and *Qawām* in the Qur'an

Qur'anic Verse	Key Term	Semantic Meaning	Romantic Literary Element	Core Message against Patriarchy
QS <i>al-Nisā'</i> /4:135	<i>Qawwāmūn bi al-qiṣṭ</i>	Divine delegation to uphold social justice	Emotion – affective sensitivity and ethical vigilance in safeguarding justice	Men are prohibited from using positional authority to dominate; their mandate is to protect women with compassion and moral responsibility.

QS <i>al-Mā'idah</i> /5:8	<i>Qawwāmūn lillāh</i>	Divine delegation to uphold justice for the sake of God	Freedom – liberation from bias, hatred, and partiality	Women's freedom is secured through the principle of divine justice, not through patriarchal subordination.
QS <i>al-Nisā'</i> /4:34	<i>Qawwāmūn 'alā al-nisā'</i>	Delegated responsibility within the family	Imagination – envisioning relations as functional harmony rather than hierarchy	Male-female relations are reimagined as egalitarian synergy, not as unilateral domination.
QS <i>al-Furqān</i> /25: 67	<i>Qawām in expenditure (infāq)</i>	Moderation (neither extravagance nor miserliness)	Nature – cosmic balance as an ethical paradigm	Gender relations demand balance: men are neither superior nor inferior, but ethically moderate and accountable.

b. Men as Delegates Embodying *Qiṣṭiyyah* Values for Women

The concept of *Qawwāmūn* in QS *al-Nisā'*/4:34 has long been reduced to a theological legitimization of male dominance. Tafsir Semantik Romantik (TSR), however, undertakes a fundamental repositioning of this meaning by restoring it to its primary sense of *delegation* (*tafwīd*). A semantic examination of the root *q-w-m* throughout the Qur'an ; particularly in QS *al-Nisā'*/4:135 and QS *al-Mā'idah*/5:8 ; demonstrates that *qawwāmah* is consistently associated with the mission of upholding *al-qiṣṭ* (proportional and balanced justice), rather than with claims of ontological superiority. Men are therefore positioned as recipients of a divine trust to ensure the realization of justice for women: a moral-spiritual mandate grounded in ethical responsibility, not in structural privilege or the legitimization of patriarchal power.

This delegation is ethical and functional rather than hierarchical or authoritarian, thereby reconstructing gender relations from a vertical model into a trust-based partnership. The *qistiyyah* values required are comprehensive, encompassing material justice ; such as the provision of moderate and proportionate maintenance in accordance with the principle of *Qawām* in QS *al-Furqān*/25:67 ; as well as non-material justice in the form of recognizing women's dignity, voice, participation, and space for self-actualization (Rozaq, 2019). Within the TSR framework, the use of the intensive morphological form (*mubālaghah*) *qawwām* signifies both intensity and continuity of this role: justice is not conceived as an incidental act, but as an ongoing ethical praxis. Furthermore, claims of *fadl* (advantage) attributed to men are read as conditional and contextual, bound to socio-economic realities rather than as essential virtues rooted in biological sex. In this way, the principle of delegation remains open and adaptive to the dynamics of contemporary society (Abou-Bakr, 2015).

The romantic dimension of TSR introduces a crucial affective layer, emphasizing that the delegation of *Qawwāmūn* is animated by ethical emotions grounded in *mawaddah wa rahmah* (love and compassion), rather than by control or coercion. The leadership envisaged is thus protective and humanistic: a form of caring guardianship that generates security and well-being (Hude, 2006). In contemporary social contexts, this reading carries significant practical implications (Komnas Perempuan, 2024), particularly in efforts to prevent gender-based violence. Any form of domination or violence against women constitutes, within this framework, a betrayal of the *qawwāmah* trust itself. Accordingly, the TSR synthesis affirms that men as *Qawwāmūn* are not rulers over women, but delegated agents of justice who actively dismantle patriarchal structures, while laying the foundation for gender relations that are just, egalitarian, and fully aligned with the Qur'anic mission of *rahmatan li al-ālamīn* (mercy to all creation).

c. Adopting a Middle Path (Moderation) toward Women

The principle of taking a middle course (*i'tidāl*), articulated through the concept of *Qawām* in QS *al-Furqān*/25:67, constitutes a central ethical foundation of the Qur'an for constructing just and balanced gender relations. Semantically, *Qawām* ; denoting uprightness, proportionality, and the avoidance of deviation ; does not merely regulate the ethics of spending, but also functions as a relational paradigm governing interactions between men and women (Ibn 'Āshūr, 1984). This principle rejects two

equally destructive extremes: patriarchal superiority that gives rise to domination and violence, and passive inferiority that relinquishes moral responsibility and functional leadership. Men are therefore positioned neither above women nor dissolved into role abdication; rather, they are envisaged as ethical subjects tasked with safeguarding balance, harmony, and mutual complementarity (Saeed, 2016).

Within this framework, gender relations in Islam are not conceived as an arena of power contestation, but as a synergy of reciprocity grounded in the equality of human dignity (*nafs wāhidah*) and a just distribution of roles (Abū Zayd, 2002). Moderation serves as an ethical buffer that balances rights and obligations, giving and claiming, while simultaneously opening space for deliberative partnership (*shūrā*) in which women's voices are recognized without negating men's entrusted responsibilities. From the perspective of Tafsir Semantik Romantik (TSR), this middle stance is animated by the value of freedom (*hurriyyah*): a freedom that emancipates women from stereotypes of absolute obedience and, at the same time, liberates men from constructions of toxic masculinity that demand domination. The resulting relationship is one between two free subjects bound by *mawaddah wa rāhmah* (love and compassion), rather than a hierarchical and oppressive order (Ichsen, 2014).

Moreover, the principle of *Qawām* reflects emotional maturity and proportional self-regulation: it resists destructive outbursts of anger while equally rejecting emotional detachment that neglects responsibility. In contemporary contexts, this reading carries significant practical implications, particularly for preventing gender-based injustice and violence that often stem from extreme attitudes (UN Women, 2023; World Economic Forum, 2024). TSR affirms that an authentic *Qawwāmūn* must necessarily be moderate, for moderation is the concrete expression of justice (*al-'adl*) within intimate relations. By simultaneously rejecting patriarchal superiority and passive inferiority, this principle reconstructs gender relations toward genuine partnership that is just, free, and compassionate, thereby restoring the Qur'anic message to its universal mission as guidance toward a balanced and humane life (*rāhmatan li al-'ālamīn*).

D. CONCLUSION

This study finds that interpreting the terms *Qawwāmūn* and *Qawām* in QS *An-Nisā'*/4:34 and 4:135; QS *Al-Mā'idah*/5:8; and QS *Al-Furqān*/25:67 through Mufti Abqary's Tafsir Semantik Romantik (TSR) reconstructs their meanings from

patriarchal legitimization into two core notions: delegation (*tafwīd*) and moderation (*i'tidāl*). These findings affirm that *qawwāmah* constitutes a conditional and limited ethical trust (*amānah*) aimed at upholding *qiṣṭiyah* (justice), rather than a form of gender-based superiority. Theoretically, this study contributes by positioning TSR as a development within semantic exegesis that integrates meaning analysis with romantic elements ; particularly emotion as an ethical driving force and freedom as a principle of liberation ; thereby uncovering a Qur'anic message that is humanistic and anti-patriarchal. Practically, this reconstruction provides a theological foundation for shaping gender relations that are just, moderate, and partnership-oriented, while also serving as a normative reference for preventing gender-based violence and correcting patriarchal practices carried out in the name of religion. Nevertheless, this research remains limited to textual-normative analysis; therefore, further studies are required to examine the relevance and implementation of romantic semantic exegesis in socio-empirical contexts and across other relational verses of the Qur'an.

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