

Internalization of Gender-Aware Assertive Skills Based on Tafsir Al-Mishbah in Building Equitable Relationships

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Abstract

Gender-aware assertive skills are important for establishing equitable, respectful, and mutually supportive relationships. However, gender-based social constructs may influence communication patterns by positioning one party as dominant and the other as subordinate, thereby limiting individuals' ability to express their rights, needs, and perspectives. This study addresses the problem of how assertive communication can be understood from a gender perspective within the Qur'anic framework and how its values can contribute to more equitable relationships in domestic and public spheres. The study aims to analyze the concept of gender-aware assertive skills from the perspective of *Tafsir Al-Mishbah* and examine its relevance to strengthening equality, justice, and healthy communication. This research employs a qualitative approach using library research, with *Tafsir Al-Mishbah* as the primary source and relevant Qur'anic literature and scholarly studies as supporting sources. The findings indicate that Qur'anic assertiveness is not synonymous with dominance or aggression but involves honesty, firmness, gentleness, wisdom, deliberation, self-control, and respect for human dignity. QS. Al-Ahzab [33]:35 establishes the moral and spiritual equality of men and women, while QS. Ar-Rum [30]:21 provides a foundation for equitable domestic relationships through *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah*. These values demonstrate that gender-aware assertiveness can foster open communication, mutual respect, empathy, partnership, and justice in family and public life.

Keywords: Assertive Skills, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*, Gender Equality, Equitable Relationships, Qur'anic Communication

INTRODUCTION

Equitable relationships between men and women constitute one of the fundamental principles of social life (Wesiah 2025). In Islamic teachings, every human being is regarded as a creature endowed with equal dignity, rights, and responsibilities before Allah SWT (Hidayat 2024). The Qur'an emphasizes that a person's honor is not determined by gender, but by their piety. However, in social practice, gender relations are still frequently characterized by communication inequalities, domination, stereotypes, and individuals' inability to appropriately express their opinions, needs, and refusals (Afifah 2024). This condition indicates that issues of gender relations are not merely related to structural aspects but are also influenced by interpersonal skills, particularly assertive skills (Wulandari, Pithaloka, and Pasya 2025). From an Islamic perspective, assertive behavior is not synonymous with aggression; rather, it refers to the ability to convey truth in a respectful manner (*qaulan sadidan*), uphold justice, and respect the rights of others. Therefore, the internalization of assertive skills grounded in Qur'anic values constitutes an important foundation for building harmonious and equitable relationships.

The urgency of strengthening assertive skills becomes increasingly relevant when considered in relation to the various forms of gender-based violence that continue to occur in Indonesia. The 2024 National Women's Life Experience Survey (SPHPN) indicates that one in four women aged 15–64 has experienced physical and/or sexual violence. Meanwhile, the 2024 Annual Records (CATAHU) of the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) documented 330,097 cases of violence against women, representing an increase of approximately 14.17% compared with the previous year, with the majority of cases occurring in personal or domestic settings. These findings demonstrate that unequal relationships remain a serious challenge in both family life and society (Komnas Perempuan, 2025). Various studies have also shown that limited ability to express opinions, establish personal boundaries, and communicate refusal firmly yet respectfully can make individuals vulnerable to unhealthy relationships (Hayati 2026). Thus, strengthening assertive skills serves not only as a communication competency but also as a preventive effort to foster a culture of mutual respect and minimize various forms of gender-based violence.

In the field of psychology, assertive skills have been widely studied as an individual's ability to express thoughts, feelings, rights, and needs honestly without violating the rights of others. Various studies have demonstrated that assertive behavior is positively correlated with increased self-esteem, conflict-resolution abilities, mental health, interpersonal communication quality, and the development of healthier and more equitable relationships (Alifia, 2023). Nur Rahmawati and Abdul Muid Nawawi, in their study entitled "Gender Equality in Tafsir Al-Mishbah: Between Social Conflict Theory and Structural Functionalism Theory," examine M. Quraish Shihab's views on gender equality using a qualitative approach based on library research. The study focuses on mapping Quraish Shihab's thought within the frameworks of social conflict theory and structural functionalism theory. The findings indicate that in Tafsir Al-Mishbah, men and women are viewed as complementary in their functions and roles. Differences in roles do not automatically indicate injustice as long as they are not used to oppress, demean, marginalize, or deprive women of their rights. The study concludes that Quraish Shihab's thought is more closely aligned with structural functionalism, which views differences in roles as potentially complementary relationships (Rahmawati 2024). Furthermore, Luluk Masruroh, Abd. Qohar, Ali Abdul Wakhid, and Akbar Tanjung, in their study entitled "Natural Differences and Gender Equality in Rights from the Qur'anic Perspective: An Analytical Study of Tafsir Al-Mishbah," specifically examine how Quraish Shihab distinguishes between the natural or biological differences between men and women and their equality in rights. The study employs an analysis of Tafsir Al-Mishbah and addresses the tendency to confine women primarily to the domestic sphere while positioning men in the public sphere. The findings demonstrate that men and women have equal opportunities to exercise their rights in education, politics, and religion. Biological differences are regarded as part of human nature, but they do not constitute grounds for limiting an individual's potential, rights, or opportunities in life (Aprison 2021).

Within the body of contemporary Qur'anic exegesis, Tafsir Al-Mishbah by M. Quraish Shihab offers a moderate and contextual interpretation oriented toward the values of justice, humanity, and public welfare (maslahah) (Habib and Amin 2025). Shihab's interpretation of verses concerning relations between men and women is not constructed upon the superiority of one party over another, but rather upon the principles of partnership, mutual complementarity (takāmul), deliberation (musyawarah), respect for human dignity, and shared responsibility. These values are closely related to the characteristics of assertive behavior, such as the ability to express opinions respectfully, acknowledge the rights of others, engage openly in dialogue, and resolve differences fairly (Nafsi 2016). Therefore, Tafsir Al-Mishbah provides a strong normative foundation for reconstructing the concept of gender-aware assertive skills from a Qur'anic perspective.

Based on a review of various scholarly publications, research on Tafsir Al-Mishbah has generally focused on issues of gender equality, women's leadership, women's rights, family education, or husband-wife relationships. Meanwhile, studies on assertive skills have primarily addressed the contexts of education, counseling, interpersonal communication, and character development. Few studies have specifically integrated these two fields through a thematic exegesis approach (*tafsir maudhu'i*) to develop a conceptual framework for the internalization of gender-aware assertive skills based on the interpretation of Qur'anic verses. This research gap provides an important basis for the present study, which is expected to offer a novel contribution to the fields of Qur'anic exegesis, Islamic education, Islamic communication, and gender studies.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study aims to analyze and internalize the concept of gender-aware assertive skills based on Tafsir Al-Mishbah through a thematic exegesis approach to Qur'anic verses related to communication, relations between men and women, justice, deliberation, and respect for human dignity. This study is expected to produce a conceptual framework of assertive skills rooted in Qur'anic values, which can serve as a foundation for building fair, harmonious, and mutually respectful relationships within families, educational settings, and society. In addition to providing a theoretical contribution to the development of Qur'anic exegesis and gender studies, the findings are also expected to serve as a practical reference for strengthening character education, family education, and the development of Islamic communication models oriented toward gender justice and the realization of an inclusive society in accordance with Qur'anic values.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using library research (John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth 2018). This approach was selected because the study aims to examine, analyze, and construct the concept of gender-aware assertive skills based on the interpretation of Qur'anic verses in Tafsir Al-Mishbah by M. Quraish Shihab. Library research enables the researcher to conduct an in-depth exploration of both primary and secondary sources in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the concept under investigation. This approach is also consistent with the characteristics of thematic exegesis (*tafsir maudhu'i*), which systematically collects and analyzes Qur'anic verses based on a particular theme.

The interpretive method employed in this study is *tafsir maudhu'i* (thematic exegesis), as formulated by Abdul Hayy al-Farmawi. The research stages include: (1) determining the research theme, namely gender-aware assertive skills; (2) identifying and inventorying Qur'anic verses related to communication, relations between men and women, justice, deliberation, respect for human dignity, and conflict resolution; (3) examining the context of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) when available; (4) analyzing the interconnectedness between verses (*munāsabah*); (5) examining the interpretation of the verses in *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*; and (6) developing a conceptual synthesis regarding the internalization of gender-aware assertive skills based on the Qur'anic perspective (Rosihan Anwar, 2002). The *tafsir maudhu'i* method is considered relevant because it enables a comprehensive understanding of the Qur'an concerning a particular theme while addressing contemporary issues in an integrated manner.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary sources. The primary source is *Tafsir Al-Mishbah: Pesan, Kesan, dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an* by M. Quraish Shihab. Secondary sources include the Qur'an and its translation, works on *'ulūm al-Qur'an*, books on the methodology of Qur'anic exegesis, literature on assertive communication, communication psychology, Islamic education, gender studies, and relevant national and international scholarly articles. These sources are used to strengthen the conceptual analysis while establishing a dialogue between the exegetical perspective and contemporary theories of assertive skills and gender relations.

Data were collected through documentation, involving the identification, inventorying, critical reading, classification, and recording of information relevant to the research focus. The collected data were subsequently organized into several themes, including principles of Qur'anic communication (*qaulan sadīdan*, *qaulan ma'rūfān*, *qaulan karīman*, *qaulan layyīnan*, and *qaulan balighan*), the concept of justice (*al-'adl*), deliberation (*syūrā*), reciprocity (*mubādalah*), respect for human dignity (*karāmah al-insān*), and values concerning equitable relationships between men and women.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of Gender-Aware Assertive Skills from Linguistic and Terminological Perspectives

In Indonesian, the term *keterampilan* (skill) derives from the root word *terampil*, referring to the ability to perform something effectively and proficiently. Etymologically, the term is associated with practice, experience, and technical proficiency (Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia, 2024). In Malay and Indonesian, *keterampilan* is not limited to physical abilities but also encompasses intellectual and social skills related to various aspects of life, including work and social interaction. The term reflects a broad concept in which individual skills are regarded as the result of purposeful and continuous effort.

The term *skill* originates from Old Norse and refers to understanding, distinguishing, or possessing the ability to perform something. In English, *skill* is commonly used in professional and practical contexts and emphasizes outcomes that can be observed and measured through self-development and technical mastery (John Smith 2022). For example, skill development serves as an important indicator of an individual's success in education and vocational training, which is consistent with the meaning of *keterampilan* in Indonesian. In Arabic, the term *maharah* (مَهَارَة) is used to denote skill or proficiency. It refers to an individual's ability to perform something skillfully or professionally, whether in technical, intellectual, or spiritual domains (Munir Ba'albakii 1995).

The term *assertive* originates from the English verb to assert, meaning to state, affirm, or express something confidently. In psychological studies, assertive behavior is defined as an individual's ability to express opinions, feelings, needs, and rights honestly, openly, and confidently without violating or demeaning the rights of others (Alberti, R. E., & Emmons 2017). Assertive behavior differs from passive behavior, which tends to involve yielding and sacrificing one's own rights, as well as aggressive behavior, which tends to impose one's will while disregarding the rights of others. Therefore, assertiveness is regarded as a form of balanced communication because it enables individuals to protect their own interests while simultaneously respecting the dignity of others.

Alberti and Emmons define assertive behavior as an individual's ability to act in accordance with their own interests, express feelings honestly and comfortably, and maintain their rights without violating the rights of others (Buteau 2025). This view is reinforced by Galassi, who states that assertiveness is the ability to communicate needs, desires, thoughts, and emotions directly, openly, and appropriately according to the situation. Thus, assertive skills constitute interpersonal communication abilities that can be learned, practiced, and developed until they become part of an individual's character (Peggi et al. 2025).

Meanwhile, the term *gender* etymologically derives from the Latin genus, meaning type or group. In English, gender refers to differences in roles, functions, responsibilities, and social expectations constructed by society for men and women (Oxford English Dictionary, 2011). Unlike sex, which refers to biological differences considered innate, gender constitutes a social and cultural construct that can change according to historical developments, social environments, and the values upheld by a particular society (Widianingsih 2024).

According to Ann Oakley, gender refers to the social classification of masculinity and femininity constructed by society rather than determined by biological factors (Oakley 1972). Similarly, Mansour Fakih explains that gender encompasses characteristics attributed to men and women through social and cultural processes, making them changeable, interchangeable, and subject to development according to social contexts (Faqih, 2013). Therefore, gender inequalities, including marginalization, subordination, stereotyping, violence, and the double burden of labor, do not result from biological differences but rather from social constructions that develop within society.

From an Islamic perspective, the concept of gender is understood through the principles of justice (*al-'adl*), balance (*tawazun*), and partnership (*syirkah*) between men and women (Suryandari and Gilling 2026). The Qur'an affirms that men and women hold equal status as servants of Allah and as vicegerents (*khalifah*) on earth, and that both have equal opportunities to receive rewards based on their righteous deeds. The biological differences between them do not constitute a basis for the superiority of one party over the other, but rather form part of complementary functional roles in human life.

The Concept of Gender-Aware Assertive Skills from the Perspective of Tafsir Al-Mishbah

The analysis of Tafsir Al-Mishbah indicates that although the term "assertive skills" is not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an, the values underlying assertive behavior are reflected in various verses addressing communication, respect for human dignity, justice, deliberation, and moral responsibility. In M. Quraish Shihab's interpretation, ideal communication is neither dominating nor passive; rather, it prioritizes truth, wisdom, respect for others, and accountability before Allah SWT (Putra 2025).

One of the fundamental principles of communication is found in QS. An-Nahl [16]:125, which emphasizes the importance of inviting others to the path of God through wisdom, good instruction, and respectful dialogue:

أَدْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ
"Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a manner that is best. Indeed, your Lord knows best who has strayed from His way, and He knows best who is rightly guided."

In *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*, this verse is understood as a universal guideline for establishing communication that respects the interlocutor. This interpretation indicates that opinions should be expressed through reasoned arguments without intimidation or verbal violence. This characteristic corresponds with the concept of assertive communication, which emphasizes the ability to express thoughts, needs, and feelings clearly without violating the rights of others (M. Quraish Shihab 2002).

This principle becomes increasingly significant when viewed from a gender perspective, as communication patterns in relationships between men and women are often influenced by social constructs that position one party as dominant while placing the other in a subordinate position or limiting their opportunity to express their views. In this context, gender-aware assertive communication is not understood as the courage to dominate or impose one's will, but rather as the ability of every individual, both men and women, to express opinions, needs, objections, and feelings openly, firmly, respectfully, and responsibly.

The Qur'anic communication principle that emphasizes argumentation, respect for the interlocutor, and avoidance of verbal violence provides an ethical foundation in which firmness must go hand in hand with respect for human dignity (Putra 2025). Thus, assertive skills from a Qur'anic perspective extend beyond interpersonal communication techniques, as they encompass the values of justice, equality, respect, self-control, and moral responsibility. This is consistent with Mansour Fakih's view that equitable gender relations require changes to social constructions that produce subordination, stereotyping, marginalization, and various forms of injustice toward both men and women (Fakih 1996).

Therefore, the communication values identified in *Tafsir Al-Mishbah* can be developed into principles of gender-aware assertive skills, namely the ability to firmly express one's rights and interests without demeaning others, establish equal dialogue, provide space for differences of opinion, and resolve disagreements through peaceful and dignified communication.

Furthermore, QS. Ali 'Imran [3]:159 demonstrates that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) exercised leadership through gentleness, deliberation, and respect for the opinions of others. The verse states:

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ ۖ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْتَضَوْا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ ۚ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ ۚ فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ

"It is by Allah's mercy that you were gentle with them. Had you been harsh and hard-hearted, they would have certainly deserted you. So pardon them, ask Allah's forgiveness for them, and consult with them in matters. Then, once you have made a decision, put your trust in Allah. Surely Allah loves those who put their trust in Him."

According to M. Quraish Shihab in *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*, this verse illustrates several important principles for establishing effective relationships and communication. Allah states that the gentleness of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) toward his companions was a manifestation of Allah's mercy. Conversely, harshness and hardness of heart would cause people to distance themselves from such a communication environment. Therefore, after mistakes occurred, the Prophet was instructed to forgive them, seek Allah's forgiveness for them, and continue to involve them in deliberation.

In the context of communication, this interpretation demonstrates that firmness does not have to be expressed through harshness, pressure, or domination. Gentleness instead becomes one of the prerequisites for constructive communication. Once deliberation has reached a decision, an individual is expected to make and implement the decision responsibly while placing trust in Allah. Thus, this verse presents a sequence of communication ethics: gentleness, forgiveness, openness to dialogue, deliberation, decision-making, and responsibility.

This principle has a strong connection with the concept of assertive communication. Assertive communication does not mean speaking harshly or imposing one's will; rather, it refers to the ability to express opinions, needs, and rights clearly and firmly while continuing to respect the rights of others ([Brillianti 2026](#)). This principle is consistent with the communication model illustrated in QS. Āli 'Imrān [3]:159, namely the courage to express and discuss issues while employing a gentle, dialogical approach that respects others.

Quraish Shihab further explains that this verse teaches that the strength of a leader does not lie in domination but in the ability to create a space for equal dialogue. Thus, assertive skills from a Qur'anic perspective involve more than the ability to speak; they also encompass the ability to listen, respect differences, and make decisions participatively. These findings demonstrate that assertive communication in Islam is built upon three primary dimensions: the courage to convey truth (al-haqq), gentleness in its delivery (rifq), and respect for human dignity (karāmah al-insān). These three dimensions constitute the foundation for developing healthy, harmonious, and equitable social relationships ([Q. Shihab 2002](#)).

Gender-Equitable Values in Tafsir Al-Mishbah

An analysis of several Qur'anic verses concerning relationships between men and women indicates that *Tafsir Al-Mishbah* positions men and women as partners who hold equal status before Allah in terms of humanity and spirituality. Biological differences are understood as part of sunnatullah (the divine order of creation), but they are not used as a basis for legitimizing discrimination or subordination. Various Qur'anic verses concerning relations between men and women provide motivation and a foundation for cooperation and collaboration across different fields. One of the Qur'anic verses underlying the affirmation of the equal existence and dignity of men and women is QS. Al-Hujurat [49]:13:

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

“O humanity! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Surely Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware.”

The interpretation of QS. Al-Hujurat [49]:13 emphasizes that human dignity is not determined by gender, but by piety. According to Quraish Shihab, this verse eliminates all forms of superiority based on biological or social identity. In his view, differences in gender, ethnicity, nationality, and social background cannot be used as a basis for determining a person’s dignity before Allah. Human dignity is instead determined by the quality of piety and moral values manifested in life. This perspective demonstrates that the Qur’an positions human beings equally as creatures who possess dignity, rights, and moral responsibilities. Therefore, human relationships should be built upon respect, justice, and recognition of each individual’s potential, rather than on constructions of superiority or subordination.

This view is consistent with Amina Wadud’s thought, which emphasizes that the Qur’an regards men and women as moral subjects who hold equal status before Allah. According to Wadud, biological differences between men and women cannot be used as a basis for establishing a hierarchy of humanity or justifying the domination of one party over another. Equality from a Qur’anic perspective concerns equal moral responsibility, opportunities to perform righteous deeds, and respect for human dignity (Wadud 1999). Thus, relationships between men and women should ideally be built upon the principles of justice, partnership, mutual respect, and empowerment, enabling each individual to develop their potential without being constrained by discriminatory social constructions.

Internalization of Gender-Aware Assertive Skills from the Perspective of Quraish Shihab’s Tafsir in Building Equitable Relationships

Equitable Relationships in the Domestic Sphere

Within the domestic sphere, assertive skills play an important role in creating harmony and equality in gender relations. Assertiveness, according to Alberti and Emmons, is the ability to express thoughts, feelings, and needs directly and honestly without compromising the rights of others (Alberti, Robert E. 2008). In the context of household relationships, this skill serves as a fundamental basis for establishing healthy communication and respecting differences in gender roles. A gender perspective provides an understanding that relationships among family members should be based on equality and justice. Gender discrimination often occurs as a result of non-assertive communication patterns, in which one party dominates or disregards the needs of the other. Assertive skills enable family members to express their opinions without fear, develop mutual respect, and avoid destructive conflicts resulting from ineffective communication. Gender-aware assertive skills have a significant impact on realizing equality within the domestic sphere (Faqih 1996). Effective communication patterns not only improve interpersonal relationships but also erode deeply rooted gender stereotypes. Households that practice such patterns can serve as inspiring models of equality.

QS. Ar-Rum [30]:21 is understood as a foundation for establishing a family based on tranquility (*sakinah*), affection (*mawaddah*), and compassionate love (*rahmah*).

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ
يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

“And among His signs is that He created for you spouses from among yourselves so that you may find tranquility in them. And He placed between you affection and mercy. Surely in this are signs for those who reflect.”

In Islam, marriage is an institution that not only regulates the physical relationship between men and women but also provides a profound spiritual foundation. The word *taskunū* in the Qur'an, derived from the root *sakana*, means to become calm and tranquil after experiencing anxiety or turmoil. This illustrates that the primary purpose of marriage is to create tranquility (*sakinah*), love (*mawaddah*), and compassion (*rahmah*). These three elements constitute the fundamental foundation of a harmonious household. According to Quraish Shihab, *sakinah* is not merely a passive state of tranquility but a dynamic condition that requires active effort to achieve. To attain *sakinah*, a bond consisting of *mawaddah*, *rahmah*, and *amānah* is required to strengthen the relationship between husband and wife after the sacred marriage bond (M. Q. Shihab 2002).

However, *sakinah* does not arise automatically. Quraish Shihab explains that this tranquility is bestowed by Allah SWT into the heart, and the heart must be prepared through patience, piety, and active efforts to create harmony. This demonstrates that *sakinah* is the result of a healthy relationship in which both partners remain faithful, fulfill their promises to one another, protect each other's good reputation, possess deep understanding, and adhere firmly to religious values. In addition, several factors serve as prerequisites for the realization of *sakinah*, including equality in humanity and deliberation in decision-making (M. Q. Shihab 2002). Equality here includes a fair distribution of roles in both domestic and social aspects without diminishing the uniqueness of each role.

Mawaddah refers to sincere love without ill intentions that develops after the marriage contract. This love reflects genuine acceptance of a partner's shortcomings. Meanwhile, *rahmah* refers to compassion arising from sympathy and empathy toward one's partner, particularly when facing each other's shortcomings or weaknesses. This compassion not only strengthens the relationship but also nurtures respect, appreciation, and the commitment to treat one's partner with kindness. *Amānah*, meanwhile, refers to a sense of responsibility involving mutual trust between husband and wife, whereby anything entrusted by one partner to the other is properly protected and maintained (M. Quraish Shihab 2002). Thus, *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, *rahmah*, and *amānah* constitute an integrated foundation for marital relationships in Islam.

Islam provides comprehensive guidance for building harmonious household relationships. The concept of marriage in Islam is based not only on love but also on tolerance, empathy, and appreciation of differences. Marriage is a journey that combines both joy and hardship within a household framework that brings peace to the heart. This is consistent with Abdullah's view, which defines *mawaddah* as “to love each other,” *rahmah* as “relief from suffering through sympathy,” and *sakinah* as “God-inspired peace of mind” (Abdullah 2002). Marriage in Islam is a relationship built upon love, respect, appreciation, and encouragement, inspiring partners to continuously pursue goodness both in this world and in the hereafter.

Furthermore, Islam emphasizes that *mawaddah* is not merely physical love between two individuals of opposite sexes, but love grounded in sincerity, patience, and the ability to accept a partner's shortcomings (Qurthubi 2009). This love develops through adaptation, negotiation, and mutual understanding in navigating various household dynamics. *Rahmah*, on the other hand, reflects feelings of sympathy, respect, and pride toward one's partner. This compassion is manifested through concrete actions, such as treating one's partner with kindness and care. Meanwhile, *sakinah* serves as a key concept indicating the fundamental need of

husbands and wives to achieve peace, harmony, and tranquility based on justice, openness, honesty, solidarity, and devotion to Allah SWT (Mufidah Ch 2008).

Through the concepts of *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah*, marriage in Islam is expected to create a shared vision for building a household filled with peace, tranquility, and happiness for husbands, wives, and children. Achieving this requires openness, cooperation, and mutual acceptance of each partner's shortcomings. Gender-aware assertive skills are essential in this relationship, enabling husbands and wives to communicate honestly and support one another without demeaning or disregarding each other's rights and responsibilities. Thus, marriage is not merely a physical and emotional bond but also a spiritual relationship that provides benefits for couples, families, and society as a whole (Hermawati 2013).

Gender-aware assertive skills are essential for implementing these principles. In the relationship between husband and wife, these skills enable both partners to express their respective needs, views, and desires honestly and constructively without sacrificing their rights or demeaning the other party. Such assertiveness encourages couples not only to cooperate in developing a shared family vision but also to resolve differences in healthy ways. Through gender-aware assertiveness, the family can become a space that supports equality and justice while establishing a strong foundation for future generations. Thus, the concept of the *sakinah* family, as explained in *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*, reflects not only a harmonious relationship between husband and wife but also an effort to integrate the rights and responsibilities of every family member fairly. This serves as a foundation for building a household that not only brings happiness to its members but also contributes positively to society at large.

Equitable Relationships in the Public Sphere

The public sphere refers to areas related to various aspects of life, including economics, education, health, politics, culture, religion, and others. The roles and functions of men and women in the public sphere have received considerable attention, as differences in roles, functions, and opportunities between men and women still exist. For example, the illiteracy rate among men is higher than among women, women's representation in the legislative and judicial branches remains limited, opportunities for women to hold strategic positions still require considerable effort, and although women's leadership has gradually become more widely accepted, it continues to face various obstacles due to their gender.

Women are the backbone of societal civilization (Sirin 2007). According to Sayyid Quthub, as cited by Sirin, the progress of a nation depends on the contribution of its women, who constitute a foundation of civilization (Alkaff 2004). Sayyid Quthub's statement highlights the importance of collaboration between genders, as men and women both play essential roles in every aspect of life.

The Prophet embodied the principle of universal access to the public sphere, which is central to the Qur'anic teachings on welfare and equality. Women during the Prophet's time, including his wife Khadijah, possessed remarkable knowledge and skills, and the Prophet himself never restricted their freedom of movement or public space. As a role model for wives, Khadijah supported her husband in fulfilling his role as the Messenger of Allah. Throughout his prophetic mission, the Prophet Muhammad faced numerous challenges; Khadijah's knowledge and patience helped him overcome them. Beyond this, Khadijah's extraordinary commitment to supporting the Prophet's leadership is particularly noteworthy. Although she lived in a society that did not believe in Muhammad's prophethood, Khadijah believed wholeheartedly that he was a Messenger of Allah. What truly distinguished Khadijah, however, was her exceptional economic intelligence and success as a businesswoman. With unwavering devotion and faith, she devoted all her wealth to supporting her husband, the Prophet Muhammad, in his struggle for Islam.

In addition to Khadijah, Aisyah was another highly intelligent woman. Her intelligence and extensive knowledge encompassed not only religious knowledge but also other fields, such as poetry, literature,

history, and medicine. After the death of the Prophet, Aisyah became an important source of knowledge. She exemplified a woman whose intellectual capacity surpassed that of many men. The Prophet's male companions frequently praised Aisyah's intelligence, stating, "Kānat 'Aisyah a'lam an-nās wa afqah wa ahsan an-nās ra'yan fi al-'āmmah," meaning "Aisyah was the most knowledgeable and intelligent, and her opinions were the most insightful" (Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an Balitbang dan Diklat Kemenag RI 2022).

In the economic sphere, women throughout social history have played a highly significant role, both for their families and their communities. During the Prophet's time, there was an instance in which a woman was prohibited from working in her own date-palm garden. The Prophet defended the woman and gave her the opportunity to continue working: "Harvest your dates so that you may give charity and do good to others" (Shahih Muslim 1996). Al-Hawla al-Attharah was a woman who sold perfume in Medina. The Prophet enjoyed visiting her shop and stopping by her home to see her perfumes. Rithah binti Abd Allah al-Tsaqafiyah was a female entrepreneur who owned and managed a factory. She once approached the Prophet and said, "O Prophet, I am a fairly successful businesswoman. My husband is poor, and my children do not work. May I provide for them?" The Prophet replied, "Laki fi Dzalika Ajru Ma Anfaqtī 'alaihim," meaning, "You will receive a reward for what you spend on them" (Al-Atsir 1229).

Zainab bint Jahsy was another successful businesswoman. She conducted her business with her own hands and allocated part of her profits to the struggle for Islam (Al-Atsir 1229). After the Prophet's time, Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second caliph, appointed an intelligent and trustworthy woman named As-Syifa as a market manager in Medina.

In the political sphere, Aisyah, the Prophet's wife, Fathimah, his daughter, and Zainab, his granddaughter, were prominent and intelligent women. They frequently participated in discussions and debates concerning socio-political issues and even criticized patriarchal domestic and public policies. Women's participation was also evident in several bai'at (pledges or agreements) as a manifestation of loyalty to the government.

Several female companions of the Prophet, including Nusaibah binti Ka'ab, Ummu Athiyyah al-Anshariyyah, Ummu Sulaim binti Malhan, Umm Haram binti Malhan, Umm al-Harits al-Anshariyyah, Rabi' binti al-Mu'awwadz, Rufaidah al-Anshariyyah, and others, accompanied the Prophet and his male companions in armed struggles against the oppression and injustice of the disbelievers. Tsumal al-Qahramanah was a highly renowned female judge during the reign of Caliph al-Muqtadir. She adjudicated not only civil cases but also criminal cases. Judges (*qudhat*), jurists (*fuqaha*), and prominent community figures (*al-a'yan*) attended her court proceedings (Katsir 1999). Likewise, Turkan Hatun al-Sulthan was a successful female judge who adjudicated not only civil but also criminal cases.

Umm Ammarah was a woman who lived during the time of the Prophet and participated in battles alongside him. She was among the earliest female warriors, driven by her love and devotion to making Islam a way of life and Muhammad a living example. She participated in several significant events, including the Pledge of Aqabah, the Battle of Uhud, the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah, the Battle of Khaybar, Umrah al-Qadhiyyah, the Conquest of Mecca, and the Battle of Hunayn. Umm Ammarah, a female warrior, protected the Prophet during the attack at Uhud (Mahmud Al-Mishri 2011).

Throughout their lives and in matters of leadership, women had opportunities to directly raise various issues concerning women. One question was, "Why are men mentioned in the Qur'an while women are not?" This question was once posed to the Prophet by a woman named Ummu Salamah. The Prophet's answer was based on revelation, citing QS. Al-Ahzab [33]:35, which explains the roles of men and women in society.

لِّلْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْقَانِتَاتِ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ وَالْخَاشِعِينَ وَالْخَاشِعَاتِ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقَاتِ وَالصَّائِمِينَ وَالصَّائِمَاتِ وَالْحَافِظِينَ فُرُوجَهُمْ وَالْحَافِظَاتِ وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

“Surely Muslim men and Muslim women, believing men and believing women, obedient men and obedient women, truthful men and truthful women, patient men and patient women, humble men and humble women, charitable men and charitable women, fasting men and fasting women, men who guard their chastity and women who guard their chastity, and men who remember Allah often and women who remember Allah often for them Allah has prepared forgiveness and a great reward.”

According to M. Quraish Shihab in Tafsir Al-Mishbah, QS. Al-Ahzab [33]:35 emphasizes the Qur'an's affirmation of the equality of men and women in their opportunities to attain spiritual excellence and dignity before Allah. This is evident in the paired mention of *al-muslimin wa al-muslimat* (Muslim men and women), *al-mu'minin wa al-mu'minat* (believing men and women), *al-qanitin wa al-qanitat* (obedient men and women), *al-shadiqin wa al-shadiqat* (truthful men and women), *al-shabirin wa al-shabirat* (patient men and women), *al-khashi'in wa al-khashi'at* (humble men and women), *al-mutasaddiqin wa al-mutasaddiqat* (charitable men and women), *al-sha'imin wa al-sha'imat* (fasting men and women), *al-hafizhin furujahum wa al-hafizhat* (men and women who guard their chastity), and *al-dhakirin Allaha katsiran wa al-dhakirat* (men and women who remember Allah often) (M. Q. Shihab 2022). According to the message of the verse, human dignity is measured not by gender but by the quality of faith, obedience, honesty, patience, self-control, social concern, preservation of dignity, and closeness to Allah. Therefore, men and women are equally positioned as moral and spiritual subjects who are responsible for their choices and deeds.

In the context of gender-aware assertive skills, QS. Al-Ahzab [33]:35 provides a foundation that men and women possess equal rights and capacities to become assertive, honest, independent individuals who are capable of maintaining personal boundaries and acting responsibly in social relationships. The value of *al-shidq* can be associated with the courage to express thoughts and feelings honestly, *al-shabr* with the ability to regulate emotions when facing differences, *al-qunut* with steadfastness in upholding principles, and *hifz al-furuj* with the ability to preserve dignity and personal boundaries. Thus, assertiveness from a Qur'anic perspective is not an aggressive attitude or an attempt to dominate others, but rather the ability to express rights, opinions, and needs firmly while continuing to respect the dignity of others. The verse concludes with the same promise for men and women, namely *maghfirah* and *ajr 'azhim*, making it a theological foundation that equitable relationships should be built upon recognition of the equal dignity, responsibility, and moral capacity of men and women.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion of gender-aware assertive skills from the perspective of *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*, it can be concluded that assertive skills have a strong foundation in Qur'anic values, although the term “assertive communication” is not explicitly mentioned. Assertiveness from a Qur'anic perspective is reflected in the courage to convey truth, honesty, gentleness, deliberation, respect for human dignity, self-control, and the ability to uphold both one's own rights and the rights of others. QS. An-Nahl [16]:125 and QS. Ali 'Imran [3]:159 demonstrate that ideal communication is built upon wisdom, good instruction, gentleness, dialogue, and deliberation, rather than domination, intimidation, or verbal violence. From a gender perspective, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah* emphasizes that men and women hold equal status as moral and spiritual subjects. QS. Al-Hujurat [49]:13 establishes piety as the measure of human dignity, while QS. Al-Ahzab [33]:35 explicitly places men

and women alongside one another in various religious qualities and promises them equal forgiveness and reward. Therefore, gender-aware assertive skills can be defined as the ability of men and women to express thoughts, feelings, needs, rights, and objections firmly, honestly, respectfully, and responsibly while continuing to respect the dignity and rights of others. The internalization of these skills is important for building equitable relationships, both in the domestic sphere through communication, deliberation, equality, and cooperation between husbands and wives, and in the public sphere through participation, empowerment, and recognition of the capacities of both men and women. Thus, gender-aware assertiveness is not merely a communication technique but an ethical and spiritual value for building relationships that are just, equal, mutually respectful, and dignified in accordance with Qur'anic principles.

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