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## Islamic literacy as a preventive effort against domestic violence: Analysis of the meaning of *wadhribuhunna* in An-Nisa' verse 34

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### ABSTRACT

Cases of Domestic Violence (KDRT) against women have increased significantly, both physically and psychologically. In this context, Surah An-Nisa' verse 34 provides gradual guidelines for dealing with *nusyuz*, including moral warnings that are often translated literally as "pukullah" (*wadhribuhunna*). This study aims to analyze the meaning of *wadhribuhunna* through a review of classical to contemporary scholars, sort out the meaning based on the rules of fiqh choosing a *lighter mudharat*, and apply it in modern household life with a theoretical approach of Symbolic Interaction. The results of the analysis show that the most strict mufasir groups, such as Al-Biq'a'i, Wahbah al-Zuhaili, Hamka, Rashid Riḍā, and M. Quraish Shihab, emphasize symbolic and educational understanding of the word "hit", so that the risk of physical and psychological harm can be minimized. The application of this symbolic meaning is in harmony with the principle of benefit, encourages healthy communication, and strengthens household harmony. The Symbolic Interactionism approach emphasizes that the meaning of the verse is formed through social interaction, individual reflection, and negotiation of moral values, so that symbolic interpretation becomes an effective preventive strategy against domestic violence.

**Keywords:** domestic violence; An-Nisa' verse 34; *wadhribuhunna*; fiqh rules; symbolic interaction

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Cases of violence against women increased by 2.4% throughout the year, and the highest form of violence reported was Domestic Violence (KDRT), with a total of 7,587 cases (Budi, 2025). According to the 2024 report of the National Commission on Women, out of a total of 2,699 samples of cases of Violence Against Wives (KTI), commonly known as domestic violence, the most common form of violence experienced by victims is psychological violence as many as 1,205 cases (44.48%). This was followed by physical violence with 1,098 cases (40.53%), economic violence with 381 cases (14.06%), and sexual violence with 25 cases (0.92%). These data show that although psychological and economic violence is often invisible, physical violence remains the most dangerous form because it has a direct impact on the victim's body and safety (Komnas Perempuan, 2025). Thus, the data confirms that domestic violence is a serious problem that requires more comprehensive attention and prevention efforts.

Departing from this reality, a reference is needed that is able to provide an ethical basis in resolving domestic problems, one of which is through the explanation of Surah An-Nisa' verse 34 as follows:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ ۚ فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَنَاطٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ ۚ وَالَّتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاصْرَبُوهُنَّ ۚ فَإِنْ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا كَبِيرًا

“The men are the leaders of the women, because Allah has given some of them (men) more than others (women), and because they (men) have provided for some of their wealth. Therefore, a righteous woman is one who is obedient to Allah and takes care of herself when her husband is not around, because Allah has taken care of (them). The women whose *nusyuz* you are worried about, then advise them and separate them in their beds, and beat them. Then if they obey you, then do not look for a way to trouble them. Indeed, Allah is Exalted and Exalted” (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2009).

Based on the instructions of this verse, it appears that the Qur'an provides a tiered settlement mechanism and emphasizes efforts to improve the relationship between husband and wife. The verse explains three steps taken in stages in dealing with household problems. The first stage emphasizes the need for dialogue and advice as a form of initial approach to restore harmony. If this method does not bring change, the next step is to maintain a distance in bed, which is understood as the attitude of staying away from the same space as a form of more assertive reprimand. If both attempts still do not yield results, then the last step is allowed, which is to give a blow that is light and does not cause injury. Ibn Kathir in his Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim explained that this action should not affect sensitive parts of the body, especially the face and head (Ibn Kathir, 1998).

However, Quraish Shihab emphasizes that if this verse is understood as a permission to strike a blow, then its understanding must be limited by the hadith of the Prophet PBUH which prohibits actions that hurt or degrade the dignity of the wife. In the context of today's society, this method is no longer considered relevant or appropriate (Shihab, 2002). Thus, the understanding of this verse should be directed to efforts to maintain a more prudent and respectful relationship between husband and wife.

Understanding this verse in its entirety can help prevent domestic violence, because the Qur'an has established three steps to solve domestic problems that are gradual and prioritize improvement. Especially in the part of *wadhibubunna* which is often interpreted as "hit", a deeper understanding is needed so that it is not used as a justification to commit violence, but is understood according to the ethical context at this time. Especially in the development of modern society, the emergence of the gender equality movement and the increasing awareness of the importance of women's protection affirm that all forms of violence must be avoided and cannot be justified.

This paper was compiled using the library *research* method by collecting various primary and secondary sources, such as classical and contemporary tafsir books, as well as other related literature. All of these data are analyzed in a descriptive analysis, which is to describe, analyze, and interpret the opinions of scholars and the contemporary social context in a systematic manner. This method was chosen to present a comprehensive and objective understanding of the meaning of the verse and its relevance in preventing domestic violence.

This paper formulates two main questions. First, how to understand the word *wadhibubunna/dharaba* in Surah An-Nisa' verse 34 correctly so that it is not understood as legitimacy for acts of domestic violence,

by considering the opinions of mufasir across the ages and sorting them out using relevant fiqh rules. Second, how to apply the content of Surah An-Nisa' verse 34 in the context of today's household so that this verse can be used as a guideline to solve problems and strengthen husband-wife relationships, as well as encourage the prevention of domestic violence. With this formulation, this paper is expected to provide additional insight and become a reference in understanding the verse in question in a more proportionate and contextual way, so that it is not abused and can help direct the community to a more harmonious family relationship and free from domestic violence.

## **2. METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative library research design, relying on documentary sources rather than fieldwork. The primary data consist of classical and contemporary tafsir works that interpret An-Nisā' 4:34—especially the term *wadhribuhunna/dharaba*—supported by fiqh references and relevant secondary literature on household ethics, domestic violence, and contextual interpretation. The sources are gathered through a focused literature review, then organized by extracting each scholar's key claims, limits, and ethical conditions attached to the verse's staged guidance for addressing *nushūz*, so the interpretive positions can be compared systematically.

The analysis is descriptive-analytical and comparative: the study first maps interpretations across time (classical → modern/Indonesian mufasir), then classifies them by the strictness of their constraints (from more literal allowances to more restrictive/symbolic readings). Next, this study applies a fiqh maxim of choosing the lighter harm (*akhaf al-dararain*) to evaluate which interpretive approach most minimizes physical and psychological harm, and uses Symbolic Interactionism (e.g., meaning formation through interaction, reflection, and negotiated moral norms) to translate the preferred reading into a contemporary, non-violent household framework. In practical terms, the verse is treated as a moral-communicative guide (advice, distancing, symbolic reprimand) whose implementation is assessed by its ability to prevent harm and sustain dignity and harmony within family relations.

## **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **3.1. The Meaning of *Wadhribuhunna* or *Dharaba* in Surah An-Nisa' Verse 34: The Views of Classical to Contemporary Scholars**

Along with the need for Muslims to understand the content of the Qur'an and the attention of scholars to the science of interpretation, the development of tafsir continues from the classical period to the present. In the course of history, various characteristics of interpretation emerged. Each mufasir uses one or more interpretation methods according to his tendencies, viewpoints, scientific background, and other factors (Al-Aridl, 1992; Saeed, 1999). Therefore, the meaning of the word *dharaba* in Surah An-Nisa verse 34 is greatly influenced by the development of the times and knowledge. Differences in social contexts and experiences of mufasir make their way of understanding this term not always the same. The word *dharaba*, which is often translated as hitting, appears in the verse as one of the stages of handling *nusyuz* with *the editorial of wadhribuhunna*. Therefore, scholars of interpretation from the classical, contemporary periods, and Indonesian mufasir provide various meanings, which I will explain briefly next.

Al-Thabari, whose full name is Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarir bin Yazid Ibn Kathir bin Ghalib al-Thabari, was born in Amol, Thabaristan around 224 AH or 225 AH and died in Baghdad in 310 AH. As a scholar of classical interpretation, he is of the opinion that the blow allowed in the verse is a blow that does not hurt, is not hard, and is not a blow that can break bones or cause deformity (Al-Thabari, 2001; Rippin, 1988; Stewart, 2021).

Al-Qurthubi, who is attributed to his hometown of Cordoba, Spain, lived during the Muwahhidun Sultanate (580-595 H) and died on the night of Monday, 9 Shawwal 671 AH in Cairo, Egypt, precisely in the Mina district east of the Nile. In her commentary, she explained that Allah commanded her husband to start with advice, then to separate the beds, and if it did not work, the last resort was to give a blow. The blow in question is an educational blow, not one that is painful, bone-breaking, or causing injury, because the main purpose is to improve and encourage the wife to fulfill her husband's rights (Al-Qurthubi, 2006; Kamali, 2006; Saleh, 2021; Stewart, 2021).

Ibn Kathir, born in 703 AH in Bushra, east of Damascus, and died on Thursday, 26 Sha'ban 774 AH, was buried near his teacher, Ibn Taymiyah. In the *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim*, he explains that the blow mentioned in this verse is only a light blow that does not damage the body, especially the face and head. He emphasized that if the wife returns to obeying her husband in what Allah allows, the husband has no right to remain silent or beat her. This verse also warns that a husband who goes beyond his limits or acts unjustly toward his wife will be rewarded by God (Ibn Kathir, 1998).

Imam al-Shafi'i, as quoted by Ibrahim al-Biq'a'i, explained that blows should be avoided even though legally in the settlement of *nusyuz* the law is mubah. If it has to be done, the blow should not hurt, leave a scar, hit the face, or be done for a long time (Al-Biq'a'i, 1984). Ibrahim al-Biq'a'i, whose full name is Abu al-Hasan Ibrahim bin Umar al-Ribath al-Biq'a'i, was born in al-Baq'a, Syria in 809 AH and settled in Damascus. His studies focused heavily on the purpose of letters and interpersonal relations, and he died in Damascus in 885 AH after a long scientific career.

Al-Syaukani, one of the important figures in the Zaidiyah Shi'a School, was born in 1173 AH in the village of Syaukan near the city of Sana'a, Yemen. He spent his study and devotion in Sana'a until his death on the night of Wednesday, 27 Jumadil Akhir 1250 H at the age of 77. In his commentary, he explained that the Qur'an allows the husband to hit his wife with a light blow that does not hurt if it is feared that *nusyuz* will occur and the advice and separation of the beds is no longer effective. However, if the attitude of staying away is enough to make the wife stop *nusyuz*, the husband must restrain himself and is not allowed to hit (Al-Syaukani, 1994; Stewart, 2021).

Nawawi al-Bantani, a scholar from Banten who was known in the fields of tafsir, Sufism, and Shafi'i jurisprudence, migrated to Makkah and died there in 1316 H. In *Tafsir al-Munir*, he explained that the blow was only allowed when the wife's *nusyuz* could no longer be overcome by counseling or bed separation. However, hitting is not the main action and should be avoided. If the husband still chooses this method, then the blow must be done very lightly, do not cause scars, do not hit one point repeatedly, and only use soft objects such as a handkerchief (Al-Bantani, 1990; Pink, 2010).

Muhammad Rashid bin Ali Ridā al-Husaini, an Islamic reformer whose family came from Baghdad, was born in 1272 AH in Qalmun, Tripoli, then went to Egypt and studied with Muhammad Abduh. His interpretation is a development of the tafsir rubric in *al-Manar* magazine that he manages with his teacher. He died suddenly in 1354 AH on the way from Suez to Cairo and was buried on arrival in Cairo. In his view, the command to hit his wife is not something that is contrary to reason or nature. A blow is needed only when the domestic situation has deteriorated and the wife's morals are completely damaged, while counsel and seclusion from bed no longer have any effect. If these two steps are enough to make the wife conscious, then a blow is not necessary. He emphasized that every situation has the right form of handling, and Islam still commands to love women, not to mistreat them, and treat them well, including when they have to separate.

Ahmad Mustafa al-Maraghi, the mufasir of Al-Azhar who was born in Maraghah in 1300 AH and died in Cairo in 1381 AH/1952 AD, explained that a husband can hit his wife as long as the blow does not hurt or injure herself, such as using a small hand or stick. According to him, the word 'pukullah' in this verse is understood as the last step to solve domestic problems due to *nusyuz*, which is when one of the parties violates norms and damages family harmony. He emphasized that problems like this will be much reduced if husband and wife fulfill each other's rights and obligations, and have a good understanding of religion so that they can control themselves, always get closer to Allah swt., and maintain behavior according to His commands (Al-Maraghi, 1946; Saeed & Akbar, 2021).

According to Sayyid Qutb, the modern mufasir born Musya, Asyuth in 1326 AH and died in Cairo on 23 Jumadil Ula 1386 AH, the 'hitting' mentioned in *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* should not be done in a rude, degrading, or hurtful manner. He emphasized that such actions are only justified as a compassionate educational step, such as the way a father educates a child or a teacher guides a student. A blow can only be taken when there is a deviation that really threatens the integrity of the household and cannot be resolved in any other way, so it must still be done with dignity without an element of insult (Qutb, 2003).

Haji Abdul Malik bin Abdul Karim Amrullah or more popularly known as Hamka, a mufasir from Tanjung Raya, West Sumatra who was born in 1908 AD and died in Jakarta in 1981 AD. He is known as a Sufism expert, philosopher, writer, and da'wah figure. Hamka quotes Ibn Abbas's interpretation which states, "hit him but do not make him suffer." For him, the act of beating is only allowed in very forced circumstances



and against women who have really gone beyond the limits. He criticized the husband who was light-handed because it showed an attitude of treating his wife as if he were a slave, even though the wife was a free human being and a life partner. According to Hamka, only very stubborn women are beaten, and only rough men do it easily. In essence, the sharia gives space under certain conditions, but a virtuous person will try hard not to hit (Hamka, 1981).

Wahbah bin Shaykh Mustafa al-Zuhaili was a great scholar from the Land of Sham. He was born in Dir Athiyah District, Damascus City, Syria in 1932 and died on August 8, 2015. As one of the most influential jurists in the contemporary Islamic world, Wahbah Zuhaili's views are widely referred to in the study of fiqh and tafsir. In interpreting the phrase *wadribuhunna*, Wahbah Zuhaili does not deviate from the pattern of understanding of classical mufasir. He argued that a husband is shari'a given space to hit his wife who is *nusyuz*, as long as it does not cause physical injury or suffering. According to him, the meaning of *wadribuhunna* is a light blow that does not hurt, for example with the hand towards the shoulder three times or using a miswak or a small twig. The purpose of such actions is not to hurt, but as a step of *işlah* or improvement. However, Wahbah Zuhaili emphasized that although it is allowed, leaving it is the preferred option (Zuhaili, 2005).

According to al-Shabuni, beating the wife is one of the last methods of dealing with *nusyuz*, which is when a wife shows disobedience that damages the harmony of the household and degrades the husband's honor. The Qur'an, according to him, provides stages of completion that are educational: patience, advice, then parting beds. If all this does not bring about a change, then the husband is allowed to strike with a blow that does not hurt, simply as a form of *ishlah* and to appease the wife's arrogance. This step is seen as less of a *madharat* than the greater impact, namely the fall of *talaq*, in line with the rule that when two harms meet, the mildest one is chosen (Al-Shabuni, 2001). Al-Shabuni's full name is Muhammad Ali bin Jamil al-Shabuni, a great scholar and professor of shari'a and Islamic studies in the city of Makkah. He was born in Aleppo, Syria, in 1928 AD (1347 H), and died on Friday, March 19, 2021 (6 Sha'ban 1442 H) in Yalova, Turkey at the age of 91. Among his monumental works in the field of Qur'an and tafsir are *Safwah al-Tafasir*, *Rawa'i al-Bayan fi Tafsir Ayat al-Ahkam*, and *al-Tibyan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an*.

Next is M. Quraish Shihab who is the son of the great scholar of South Sulawesi, Abdurrahman Shihab. He was born in Rappang in 1944 AD and studied all levels of higher education at Al-Azhar University, Cairo, until he earned a doctorate in 1982 in the field of interpretation and Qur'anic science. Until now he remains active as a professor at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, writes many works, and attends various scientific and religious forums. Quraish Shihab interprets *wadribuhunna* by emphasizing that if this verse is understood as a permission to beat a wife, then its provisions must be read together with the hadiths of the Prophet (peace be upon him) which prohibit acts that injure or degrade the dignity of women. In the context of an educated family and modern life, he thinks punching is no longer the right way (Shihab, 2002). He quoted the view of Imam Atha' who stated that a husband should not hit his wife, even the highest limit is only to scold her. Ibn Arabi supports this view by asserting that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) condemned the man who beat his wife, and many other scholars who are in line with this view, even metaphorically interpreting the hadiths that seem to allow the act of beating (Shihab, 2002).

Drawing on the scholars' overall readings, their views can be summarized in a unified way: Al-Thabari held that any striking must be non-violent and should not cause pain. Al-Qurthubi understood it as a measure meant purely for education and correction. Ibn Kathir stressed that it must not cause injury and should never be directed at the head. Al-Biqai considered it best to abandon this option altogether and preferred not to practice it. Al-Syaukani maintained that it is intended to bring an end to *nusyuz* and must not result in injury (Al-Biqai, 1947; Mir, 2013; Miller & Soleimani, 2019). Nawawi al-Bantani likewise regarded it as better avoided; if done, it must leave no mark, not be repeated, not focus on one spot, and be carried out gently. Rashid Ridā limited any justification to extreme circumstances where the situation has severely deteriorated and the wife's conduct is profoundly corrupted. Al-Maraghi emphasized that it should not be painful and should aim at resolving household discord, while underscoring that spouses should first understand their rights and duties and build the marriage on obedience to Allah SWT. Sayyid Qutb framed it as an educational step, carried out with compassion, and only when no other remedy can resolve the problem. Hamka also placed it as a last resort in genuinely forced and very severe conditions. Wahbah al-Zuhaili stated that it must not be harmful and, as a principle, is better abandoned. Al-Shabuni argued that it should not cause pain and

is intended to avert greater harm, such as divorce. M. Quraish Shihab similarly viewed it as non-injurious and largely avoidable, noting that admonition is sufficient and that a literal reading is inappropriate.

The development of interpretation from classical to contemporary times shows that the meaning of the word *waḍribūhunna* in Surah an-Nisā' verse 34 is greatly influenced by the context of the times, scientific background, and social experience of the mufasir. Although their interpretive styles vary, there is a general pattern that the act of spanking, when understood as a physical act, is always placed as a last resort after counsel and bed separation no longer yields results, and should be done lightly, harmlessly, not degrading, and intended for the improvement of family relationships. Many mufasir such as al-Biqā'i, Nawawī al-Bantani, Hamka, Wahbah Zuhaili, al-Shabuni, and Quraish Shihab emphasize that such actions are essentially better abandoned, especially in the context of today's life that demands respect for human values and rejection of all forms of violence. Through these various explanations, it can be understood that this verse is not an encouragement to commit domestic violence, but a gradual guideline to maintain family integrity by prioritizing education, protection of women, and efforts to avoid greater harm.

### **3.2. Sorting the Meaning of *Waḍribūhunna* or *Dharaba* Based on the Rule of "Choosing a Lighter Mudharat"**

In complex human life, difficult situations often arise when two evils (*mafsadat*) are present simultaneously and cannot be completely avoided. In conditions like this, guidelines are needed that help Muslims choose the option that is least harmful. Islamic Sharia as a comprehensive and adaptive legal system not only provides guidance in ideal conditions, but also provides a solution when an emergency or dilemma occurs, while maintaining the principle of benefit.

One key guideline is the fiqh maxim:

إِذَا تَعَارَضَتْ مَفْسَدَتَانِ رُعِيَ أَكْثَرُهُمَا ضَرَرًا بِأَرْكَابِ أَخْفَاهُمَا

Meaning, "When two harms arise at the same time, the greater harm should be prevented by accepting the lesser harm" (Qutb, 2003). This principle emphasizes that if a Muslim is confronted with two harmful options, the correct approach is to avoid the more serious one by choosing (or bearing) the lighter harm.

The choice of lesser evil is not because it is absolutely permissible, but because of an emergency and as a form of *tadarruj* (tiered) in maintaining the wider benefit (Mustafa, 2015). In other words, bad actions can be justified in the Shari'ah if they are the only way to prevent more fatal damage, so that the principle of benefit is maintained.

In line with the principle of this rule, the author assesses the importance of sorting out the meaning of the word *dharaba* in Surah An-Nisa verse 34, because the word "pukullah" appears in the Qur'an even though it is the last step in a gradual settlement (*tadarruj*). This sorting of meanings is expected to provide the right understanding while helping to prevent the occurrence of Domestic Violence (KDRT). In this context, the author will describe the understanding of the scholars of the word *dharaba* as discussed in the previous section, based on the principle of taking *the lightest* mudharat.

The step taken is to divide the interpretation of the word "hit" in Surah An-Nisa verse 34 according to the scholars, as discussed in the previous sub-chapter, into several categories. Furthermore, these categories are grouped based on the degree of strictness or loosening of restrictions in the interpretation of the word *dharaba*. From this grouping, it will be seen which category causes the lightest harm, which can then be further analyzed to determine which one is most in accordance with the rules of fiqh in choosing the lightest harm.

Mufasir can be grouped into three categories, based on how loose or strict the restrictions they give. The first group is the mufasir with the most loose limitations, namely those who understand more textually. They still impose ethical limits, but still leave room for physical punching to a certain extent. Figures in this group include Al-Thabari, Ibn Kathir, and Al-Syaukani, who both emphasized that punching is permissible as long as it does not hurt, is not hard, and only aims to stop *nusyuz*. Al-Qurthubi and Ali al-Shabuni also still make room for blows as long as they are done for the purpose of educating or preventing greater damage, provided they do not cause injury. Overall, this group can be called the group with the loosest restrictions, as it still allows physical forms of punching even with certain restrictions.

The second group contains mufasir with an intermediate limit approach. They still leave open the possibility of allowing punches, but emphasize the principles of education, compassion, and very strict

control. This group included Sayyid Quthb and Nawawi al-Bantani, who were of the view that blows could only be done in a very light form, not repeated, not directed at dangerous parts of the body, and should not leave marks. Al-Maraghi also belongs to this group with the explanation that punching should not hurt, and is only done after all efforts at dialogue, understanding, and relationship improvement are made first. Thus, this group still departs from a textual understanding, but provides moral, psychological, and methodological limitations that make space for physical violence very limited.

The third group is the mufasir with the strictest restrictions, even close to the attitude of prohibition. They were of the view that the blow should be abandoned, and even if it was allowed, only in a very emergency situation. Among the figures were Al-Biqā'i, Wahbah al-Zuhaili, and Hamka, both of whom emphasized that abandoning such actions was far more important. Rashid Riḍā is also in this group with the view that a blow is only justified if the wife's morals have been severely damaged and there is no other way to improve the situation. Contemporary scholars such as M. Quraish Shihab further reinforce this strict tendency by stating that the "blow" in the verse is harmless, more precisely understood symbolically, and in practice better avoided, because it is not in accordance with the principle of domestic harmony.

Of the three groups, it can be seen that the third group which includes Al-Biqā'i, Wahbah al-Zuhaili, Hamka, Rashid Riḍā, and M. Quraish Shihab is the group with the lightest harm. This group takes the most rigorous approach, tending to reject *the practice of waḍribūhunna* textually. They narrowed the interpretation of the word "hit" by providing an understanding that the term is more appropriate to be understood symbolically, so that it does not cause physical or psychological harm and minimizes the risk of domestic violence. This approach is in line with the rules of jurisprudence in choosing the lightest harm, where actions that have the potential to cause greater damage can be avoided by applying a wiser and proportionate understanding.

Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that the classification of the meaning of *waḍribūhunna* or *dharaba* in Surah An-Nisa verse 34, if referring to the rules of fiqh choosing a *lighter mudharat*, must prioritize the strictest interpretation. The interpretation of the mufasir shows a diverse spectrum, ranging from a more textual to a symbolic understanding, with the main goal of minimizing damage and preventing the occurrence of domestic violence. The most strict mufasir groups, such as Al-Biqā'i, Wahbah al-Zuhaili, Hamka, Rashid Riḍā, and M. Quraish Shihab, are a reference because they emphasize the symbolic and educational understanding of the word "hit", so that the risk of *physical and psychological mudharat* can be minimized. Thus, this separation of meanings shows that the application of the rule of choosing a lighter *mudharat* leads to the strictest approach, so that the understanding of the verse becomes proportional, safe, and in accordance with the principle of benefit in the context of the household.

### **3.3. Application of the Meaning of Surah An-Nisa' Verse 34 in Contemporary Household Life through a Theoretical Approach to Symbolic Interaction**

Surah An-Nisa' verse 34 is one of the verses that is often the focus of study in the discussion of the relationship between husband and wife, especially related to the use of the word *waḍribūhunna* which is often translated as "hit them". In the context of today's domestic life, the literal understanding of the word has the potential to clash with the principles of benefit, justice, and prevention of domestic violence. Therefore, a theoretical framework is needed that is able to explain how the meaning of the verse can be constructed, understood, and implemented in a more proportional manner. One such framework is the theory of Symbolic Interaction, which outlines how meaning is formed through social interaction and human interpretive processes.

The theory of Symbolic Interactionism, as explained by Derung in his study, asserts that humans do not act based on stimuli received directly, but based on the meanings they build through the processes of thinking, reflection, and communication (Derung, 2014). Mead views that the mind arises in social processes and allows humans to consider various alternative actions before responding to something (Mead, 1934). Thus, human actions are not mechanical reactions, but the result of the process of assessing the meaning of the symbols encountered. Symbols can be language, gestures, or expressions, all of which have a meaning negotiated through human interaction.

In the context of the interpretation of *waḍribūhunna*, this theory provides the understanding that the word is a symbol whose meaning is not fixed or rigid. It is formed through the interaction of the mufasir, the social conditions of the people, moral values, and the purpose of benefit. The meaning of "hit" is not an



automatic meaning attached to the word, but the meaning of the result of social interpretation that takes place in the history of the development of Muslims. Contemporary mufasir such as Al-Biqā'i, Wahbah al-Zuhaili, Hamka, Rashid Riḍā, and M. Quraish Shihab tend to understand the word symbolically, namely as a form of moral rebuke that is not physical violence. This interpretation was born from considering the modern social context where violence is understood as an act that brings *great harm*, especially in the domestic environment.

Mead explained that a person's self is formed through social interaction and the ability to put oneself in the position of others (*role-taking*) (Derung, 2014). In husband and wife relationship, this ability is very important to prevent the birth of destructive actions. When the husband reads *the word waḍribūhunna*, he does not necessarily act on the literal meaning, but should go through a process of internal reflection as Mead explains. He assessed how the action would be understood by the wife, how it affected the harmony of the family, and how the action reflected her identity as the leader of the household. This is where the symbolic meaning of "hit" as a moral warning becomes more in tune with the psychological dynamics of family relationships.

Cooley added that the family is a primary group whose interaction is very strong in shaping a person's emotions, personality, and stability (Cooley, 1902). In this kind of primary group, communication symbols have a huge impact. Physical acts as a form of literal interpretation of the verse will provide negative symbols that damage the dignity and security of family members. Conversely, when the verse is understood symbolically as a moral affirmation, the husband's actions become closer to the values of maturity, wisdom, and the strengthening of emotional relationships. Thus, the symbolic interpretation of the verse is more in accordance with the character of the interaction in the primary group as Cooley explained.

In addition, Blumer emphasized that the meaning of an action is not only produced by individuals, but also by society. These meanings continue to undergo renewal through social processes (Blumer, 1969). Modern Muslim society lives in a context of positive laws prohibiting violence, the development of gender equality discourses, and increasing awareness of the psychological impact of violence. This interaction between religious teachings and social reality produces a new meaning for *waḍribūhunna*, which is a more symbolic and non-physical meaning. This process shows that the interpretation of verse is not a static process, but a negotiation of meaning as described in the theory of Symbolic Interactionism.

In relation to the principle of choosing *the lightest mudharat*, the theory of Symbolic Interactionism helps to explain that the selection of symbolic meaning is the social action that is most in line with the goals of sharia. Humans, according to Mead, not only respond to stimuli, but consider the various intentions and consequences of their actions. Considering that violence brings *great harm*, symbolic meaning is the most rational and most beneficial interpretation choice.

In today's household life, the application of the symbolic meaning of this verse encourages the formation of healthier communication. Language, attitudes, and expressions of husband and wife become symbols that can affirm moral messages without hurting. The husband can warn, reprimand, or provide temporary distancing without involving physical violence. All these actions are part of a symbolic process that strengthens domestic harmony, in accordance with the principle that Mead explained that social actions are the result of interpretation of meaning and rational consideration.

Thus, the approach of Symbolic Interactionism provides a solid basis for understanding that the meaning of *waḍribūhunna* should be understood in a symbolic, not literal, framework. The meaning of the verse is not only seen as a text, but as a symbol that undergoes continuous interpretation. In a modern society that rejects domestic violence and upholds the privilege, symbolic interpretation is the most appropriate choice and is in harmony with the structure of human interaction as described by Dewey, Cooley, Mead, and Blumer. The application of this symbolic meaning ultimately realizes the purpose of the verse: maintaining household stability, improving behavior, and minimizing *harm* in the husband-wife relationship.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Based on the discussion that has been carried out, it can be concluded that the sorting of the meaning of *waḍribūhunna* or *dharaba* in Surah An-Nisa' verse 34, if referred to the rules of fiqh choosing *a lighter mudharat*, should prioritize the strictest interpretation. The spectrum of interpretation of the mufasir shows

a wide variation, ranging from a more textual to a symbolic understanding, with the main goal of minimizing damage and preventing the occurrence of Domestic Violence (KDRT). The mufasir groups with the strictest approach, such as Al-Biqā'i, Wahbah al-Zuhaili, Hamka, Rashid Riḍā, and M. Quraish Shihab, are important references because they emphasize the symbolic and educational understanding of the word "hit", so that the risk of *mudharat* both physically and psychologically can be minimized. This shows that the application of the rule of choosing a *lighter mudharat* leads to a proportional, safe, and harmonious understanding of the verse in accordance with the principle of benefit in the context of the household.

The Symbolic Interactionism approach provides a strong theoretical basis for understanding that the meaning of waḍribūhunna should be interpreted symbolically rather than literally. The meaning of the verse is not just a rigid text, but a symbol that continues to undergo interpretation and negotiation through social interaction. In a modern society that rejects domestic violence and upholds the principle of benefit, symbolic interpretation is the most appropriate choice, because it is in harmony with the dynamics of human interaction as described by Dewey, Cooley, Mead, and Blumer. The application of this symbolic meaning ultimately realizes the purpose of the verse, which is to maintain household stability, improve behavior, and minimize *mudharat* in the husband-wife relationship.

### **Ethical Approval**

Not applicable.

### **Informed Consent Statement**

Not applicable.

### **Confidentiality Statement**

Not applicable.

### **Authors' Contributions**

T conceptualized the study, conducted textual and theoretical analysis, and drafted the manuscript. HI contributed to literature review, interpretation of findings, and manuscript revision. Both authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

### **Disclosure Statement**

The authors declare no conflict of interest related to this research.

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All data supporting the findings of this study are derived from publicly available sources, including academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and institutional and international reports. No new datasets were generated or analyzed.

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