

Wives as Breadwinners: A *Hifz al-'ird* and Gender Perspective on Contemporary Muslim Family Dynamics

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the evolving economic and social dynamics within contemporary Muslim families, particularly the growing phenomenon of wives serving as primary or co-breadwinners. Through an analysis of socio-economic changes, shifting gender roles, and emerging legal questions, the research highlights how women's increasing financial contributions reshape household responsibilities and decision-making structures. The findings demonstrate that these developments do not undermine family stability; instead, they often strengthen economic resilience when supported by mutual respect and effective communication. The study further examines the implications of these transformations for Islamic family law, emphasizing the need for legal and ethical frameworks that align with lived realities while upholding core Islamic principles. By integrating the concept of *hifz al-'ird* into gender discourse, the research offers a constructive pathway for reinterpreting family roles in a manner that preserves dignity, protects family cohesion, and reflects the complexities of modern Muslim life.

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INTRODUCTION

The dynamics of family structure within contemporary Muslim societies have undergone significant transformation, particularly concerning the economic roles of husbands and wives. Increasingly, women assume the role of primary earners or *breadwinners*, either due to economic necessity, personal career aspirations, or shifts in social and cultural expectations. This phenomenon invites scholarly attention, as it not only alters traditional assumptions about gender roles but also reshapes the moral and ethical foundations that guide Muslim family life. Within Islamic legal and ethical discourse, the role of the wife as a breadwinner raises critical questions about responsibility, dignity, authority, and the preservation of family harmony (Ichrom et al., 2024).

The Qur'an and the broader Islamic legal tradition provide rich frameworks for understanding gender relations and household responsibilities. However, these frameworks are often interpreted within the context of a patriarchal family structure in which the husband is traditionally responsible for financial provision (*nafāqah*), while the wife's primary domain is domestic management. When wives become the principal earners, these normative frameworks may require reinterpretation, particularly in relation to concepts such as *hifz al-'ird*, the protection of dignity, honor, and moral integrity. This principle encompasses not only the moral character of individuals but also the preservation of a balanced and respectful family structure (Munir, 2021).

Contemporary scholarship increasingly argues that Islamic legal principles are dynamic and responsive to social change. Therefore, the phenomenon of wives as breadwinners should be examined not as a deviation from Islamic norms, but as a transformation that can still align

with *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, especially when grounded in justice, mutual respect, and shared responsibility (Habibah, 2020). A re-evaluation of *ḥifẓ al-ʿird* within this context is essential to ensure that dignity is preserved for both spouses, regardless of who fulfills the financial role. This approach encourages the development of family models that remain rooted in Islamic ethics while adapting to modern socioeconomic realities (Sukataman et al., 2025).

At the same time, gender studies provide a complementary analytical lens through which the changing role of wives can be understood. Theories of gender equity, empowerment, and role negotiation explain how economic contributions reshape household power dynamics and influence perceptions of authority, decision-making, and emotional labor. These perspectives help reveal the complex interplay between economic roles and gendered expectations embedded within both cultural traditions and contemporary social structures. By integrating Islamic ethical principles with gender perspectives, a more holistic understanding of modern Muslim family dynamics can be achieved (Rajafi, 2015).

Moreover, the increased involvement of women in the labor market often results from structural factors such as: a) rising living costs, b) changing labor demands, and c) improved educational opportunities for women. In many contexts, the wife's contribution is not merely supplementary but essential for household survival and well-being (Widyasari & Suyanto, 2023). This economic shift challenges traditional legal assumptions that male financial authority inherently justifies male leadership in the household. Consequently, Muslim jurists and scholars are increasingly encouraged to explore alternative models of authority that prioritize cooperation, fairness, and emotional support over rigid gender hierarchies (Dagdeviren & Oosterbaan, 2022).

Despite these developments, the role of wives as breadwinners may also introduce challenges that require careful scholarly examination. Issues such as identity conflict, marital stress, social stigma, and the redefinition of spousal responsibilities can affect family stability. Without an ethical and jurisprudential framework that supports these changes, families may face tensions that undermine both individual dignity and marital cohesion. This underscores the importance of understanding *ḥifẓ al-ʿird* not merely as a protection of reputation, but as a principle that ensures mutual respect and emotional security within the family.

Several previous studies have examined the shifting economic roles of women in Muslim households, yet their scope and emphasis differ from the present research. One influential study by Antoni et al., (2022) focused primarily on the rise of dual-income Muslim families, concluding that women's financial participation often improves household welfare but may generate tension when traditional patriarchal expectations remain unchanged. Another study by Jumadi, (2023) analyzed the theological dimensions of women's employment, arguing that Islamic jurisprudence generally permits women to work but still frames their economic roles as secondary to men's. Their findings highlight doctrinal flexibility but do not fully address situations in which wives become the primary earners.

A more recent study by Khotimah et al., (2025) explored gender dynamics in rural Muslim communities, showing that economic pressures have pushed many wives into breadwinning roles, yet the research focused mainly on economic survival and paid little attention to the ethical or legal implications within Islamic family law. In contrast to these earlier works, the present study integrates socio-economic trends with the *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* framework (particularly *ḥifẓ al-ʿird*) to show that women's breadwinning roles can be understood not only as a practical adaptation to modern realities but also as an ethically sound development within Islamic thought. This broader, integrative approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of how contemporary Muslim families negotiate dignity, responsibility, and authority in the face of changing economic conditions (Fathoni, 2021).

This study seeks to analyze the role of wives as breadwinners through the dual lenses of *ḥifẓ al-ʿird* and contemporary gender perspectives. It explores how Islamic ethical concepts can

be harmonized with the evolving realities of Muslim families and how these shifts influence the construction of domestic roles and responsibilities. By engaging both classical Islamic scholarship and modern sociological theories, the study aims to develop a balanced analysis that is faithful to Islamic values while addressing the needs of contemporary society.

The research contributes to the ongoing discourse on family reform within Islamic studies and gender scholarship. It emphasizes that the transformation of economic roles within Muslim households does not necessarily undermine religious principles but can instead lead to more equitable, dignified, and resilient family structures. Through a deeper understanding of *ḥifẓ al-'ird*, this study offers a conceptual framework for navigating the complex realities faced by contemporary Muslim families, positioning dignity, partnership, and mutual support as core foundations of marital life.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research approach using a descriptive-analytical method to examine the phenomenon of wives as breadwinners within contemporary Muslim family structures (Hennink et al., 2020). Primary data are sourced from classical and contemporary Islamic legal texts, including Qur'anic commentaries, works of *fiqh*, and writings on *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, with particular emphasis on the principle of *ḥifẓ al-'ird* (Wanto et al., 2021). These sources are complemented by relevant academic literature in gender studies, sociology, and family psychology (Azwar, 2014). The qualitative approach allows for a nuanced interpretation of Islamic ethical concepts and their interaction with evolving social realities, while the descriptive analysis enables a systematic presentation of how these concepts apply to current family dynamics (Wu et al., 2019).

Secondary data are gathered from peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and empirical studies addressing gender roles, breadwinning wives, and contemporary Muslim family life (Rahim et al., 2023). Data were analyzed using content analysis, focusing on thematic patterns related to dignity, authority, and gendered responsibilities in the household. Through this integrative method, the study synthesizes Islamic normative principles with modern theoretical perspectives to produce a coherent and contextualized understanding of the shifting economic roles of wives (Connaway & Radford, 2021). This methodological design ensures that the analysis remains grounded in Islamic scholarship while engaging critically with contemporary social theories (Hayman & Smith, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Economic Shifts and the Emergence of Wives as Primary Breadwinners

Contemporary socio-economic transformations across many Muslim-majority societies have reshaped the structure of family roles, particularly in relation to income generation. Economic pressures such as inflation, rising costs of education, and increasing household expenses have created circumstances in which dual-income families are not merely optional but essential for maintaining a stable standard of living. This new economic terrain has opened greater opportunities and social acceptance for women to participate more actively in the workforce, gradually shifting the perception of breadwinning from an exclusively male responsibility to a shared familial obligation. Such shifts reflect broader societal changes influenced by globalization and modernization (Ulfa & Na'imah, 2020).

The steady rise in women's educational attainment has also played a significant role in this transition. As more women pursue higher education and professional training, they become increasingly qualified for skilled occupations that offer competitive salaries. This growth in female human capital directly contributes to the increased presence of women in high-demand sectors such as education, healthcare, administration, finance, and digital industries. Educated

women often enter the workforce with strong motivation and professional aspirations, making it more likely for them to achieve stable employment and, in some cases, out-earn their husbands. These developments challenge traditional assumptions about gendered economic roles without diminishing the value of men's contributions to family life (Siagian, 2019).

Wider access to employment opportunities has further facilitated women's capacity to assume breadwinning roles. Government initiatives, corporate diversity policies, and advancements in digital technology have increased job flexibility and work-from-home arrangements, creating conditions more conducive to women's participation in paid labor. Moreover, the shifts in economic infrastructure have led industries to actively seek female employees to diversify their workforce and improve organizational performance. As labor markets become more inclusive, women are positioned to contribute meaningfully to household income, thereby redefining family economics from within (Rahmatullah, 2021).

The emergence of wives as primary breadwinners marks a significant transformation in household economic dynamics. In numerous cases, the wife's income becomes a stabilizing anchor that supports essential family needs such as children's education, healthcare, housing, and long-term financial planning. When families rely on dual sources of income, they often experience greater economic resilience, particularly during times of financial hardship or market uncertainty. This demonstrates that the shift does not undermine traditional family values but instead contributes to overall family welfare by ensuring that essential needs can be met consistently (Siagian, 2019).

Contrary to the perception that shifting breadwinning roles may disrupt family harmony, many studies show that such changes often strengthen domestic relationships when supported by open communication and shared understanding. Couples who adapt to new economic realities commonly report improved partnership quality, as financial burdens are shared and mutual dependence deepens. The emotional and practical support that spouses provide to one another can foster a more collaborative and empathetic relationship. This collaborative adaptation enables families to navigate economic uncertainties with greater unity and resilience (Jumadi, 2023).

However, the transition is not without its challenges. In some contexts, the shift may confront deeply rooted cultural norms that regard men as the primary providers and guardians of family authority. These traditional expectations can create emotional and social tensions when wives earn more or assume full responsibility for household income. Men may feel pressure or inadequacy due to societal narratives that equate masculinity with financial dominance. Women, on the other hand, may face additional burdens as they negotiate work responsibilities alongside caregiving roles, especially in households where domestic duties remain gendered (Rohalina & Kholis, 2023).

Despite these challenges, the shift often opens avenues for renegotiating household responsibilities in more balanced ways. Many families adopt new arrangements in which husbands take on greater involvement in domestic work, childrearing, and emotional support, thereby promoting more egalitarian forms of partnership. Such reconfigurations can contribute to healthier family dynamics by reducing the burden on wives and promoting shared accountability. This adjustment process requires flexibility and mutual respect, highlighting the evolving nature of marital roles in contemporary Muslim families (Fathoni, 2021).

The shift in economic roles also has broader implications for social identity and self-perception among women. Becoming a primary breadwinner can enhance a woman's sense of agency, autonomy, and confidence, particularly when her financial contributions are acknowledged and appreciated within the family. Economic independence can empower women to participate more actively in family decision-making and long-term planning. In many cases, this empowerment aligns with Islamic ethical principles that emphasize justice, mutual assistance, and shared responsibility within marriage (Lazuardi & Viktorahadi, 2024).

From a societal perspective, the increasing visibility of women as breadwinner's challenges outdated stereotypes about gender capabilities and reinforces the idea that family prosperity is a collective effort. As communities observe the positive outcomes of women's participation in the workforce, social attitudes gradually shift toward greater acceptance of diversified family roles. Educational institutions, workplaces, and religious organizations begin to adapt their discourses to reflect these changing realities, acknowledging that economic contribution is not a measure of gender but of opportunity (Adi La, 2022).

In the broader context of Islamic thought, the emergence of wives as primary breadwinners does not inherently conflict with religious principles regarding family structure. Islamic teachings emphasize cooperation, compassion, and the fulfilment of mutual rights and responsibilities, rather than rigid gender divisions. As long as the family's dignity, moral integrity, and welfare are preserved, Islam provides ample flexibility for spouses to determine the most effective arrangement for their household (Rahmatullah, 2021). Thus, the rise of female breadwinners can be understood not as a deviation from tradition but as an adaptive response to contemporary economic conditions.

The phenomenon of wives as primary breadwinners reflects an ongoing transformation in modern Muslim society, driven by economic necessity, educational progress, and evolving social expectations. While the shift raises important questions about gender roles and family dynamics, it also presents opportunities for more resilient, cooperative, and economically secure households. The findings suggest that such transitions, when managed through empathy and communication, can enrich family life and support the development of more equitable and adaptive family structures.

***Hifz al-'ird* as a Normative Framework for Assessing Women's Breadwinning Roles**

The concept of *hifz al-'ird*, which refers to the preservation of dignity, moral integrity, and personal honor, occupies a central place within the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (Habibah, 2020). It emphasizes the protection of an individual's moral worth and social respectability, underscoring that human dignity is a foundational value in Islamic legal and ethical discourse. When applied to the context of women's economic participation, *hifz al-'ird* provides an interpretive lens through which the evolving roles of wives as breadwinners can be ethically assessed. Rather than framing gender roles in rigid terms, this principle encourages an understanding of family responsibilities rooted in dignity, justice, and mutual respect (Hamim & Supriadi, 2020).

The study reveals that women's engagement in income-generating activities does not inherently conflict with Islamic teachings as long as their dignity remains intact and moral boundaries are upheld. Islamic jurisprudence has historically acknowledged women's right to own property, engage in trade, and participate in economic life, provided that such involvement does not lead to exploitation, moral harm, or neglect of essential familial duties. This flexibility demonstrates that Islamic law prioritizes the preservation of moral values over imposing strict gender-based divisions of labor (Dagdeviren & Oosterbaan, 2022). Thus, the role of wives as breadwinners can be viewed as compatible with Islamic principles when carried out within ethical and dignified parameters.

The Qur'anic worldview supports the notion that human responsibility is shared and cooperative, not restricted by gendered stereotypes (Saleh, 2007). Several Qur'anic verses highlight mutual support, compassion, and partnership as foundations of family life. Within this framework, economic contribution is considered a form of fulfilling responsibility and ensuring family welfare, not a determinant of gender superiority (Rifqi & Thahir, 2019). This perspective aligns with the principle of *hifz al-'ird*, which emphasizes that honor is upheld

when individuals responsibly fulfil their commitments and act in ways that protect the integrity of the household (Saiin, 2015).

The findings also show that *hifz al-'ird* plays a vital role in shaping positive perceptions of women's breadwinning roles in contemporary Muslim families. When wives contribute financially, they often do so to safeguard the stability and dignity of the household. Economic security is closely tied to social respect, and the ability to provide for family needs enhances the overall well-being of the household. In this sense, women's financial contributions can be understood as an extension of moral responsibility, reinforcing rather than diminishing family honor (Hamim & Supriadi, 2020).

In assessing the compatibility of breadwinning roles with Islamic teachings, the study highlights that *hifz al-'ird* focuses on the ethical nature of actions rather than their outward form. What matters is not whether the husband or wife earns more, but whether the family's dignity, harmony, and moral integrity are maintained. If a woman's participation in the workforce helps prevent financial hardship, supports education, or ensures a stable living environment, her actions align with the broader goals of protecting and uplifting the family's dignity. This interpretation reflects the adaptive capacity of Islamic law to respond to changing social realities (MZ, 2019).

The data also indicate that Islamic law's emphasis on preserving dignity extends to ensuring that women do not experience undue pressure, exploitation, or double burdens as a result of their economic roles. *Hifz al-'ird* encourages a balanced understanding of responsibilities within the household, recognizing that dignity is compromised when one family member is overburdened or treated unjustly. Therefore, when wives take on breadwinning roles, it is essential that domestic responsibilities be adjusted fairly so that their physical and emotional well-being is preserved. This reflects the *maqāṣid* principle that justice and compassion must guide all aspects of family life.

The study further shows that *hifz al-'ird* provides space for contextual *ijtihad* in responding to contemporary economic challenges. As social conditions evolve, the application of Islamic principles must consider the real circumstances facing families. In contexts where women's income is necessary for survival or long-term welfare, restricting their economic participation would contradict the objective of preserving dignity and preventing harm. By allowing for contextual adaptation, *hifz al-'ird* serves as a dynamic framework that aligns timeless ethical values with the realities of modern life (Warman et al., 2023).

Additionally, the application of *hifz al-'ird* encourages a shift away from narrow cultural assumptions that equate honor with the seclusion or economic dependence of women. Instead, it reasserts a Qur'anic understanding of dignity as rooted in moral conduct, responsibility, and mutual contribution to family welfare. This reframing helps counter social stigmas that may arise when wives become primary earners, showing that such roles do not diminish their honor but can reflect strength, dedication, and moral integrity (MZ, 2019).

The integration of *hifz al-'ird* as a normative framework underscores that women's breadwinning roles are not only permissible but can be ethically commendable when carried out in a manner that upholds dignity, family cohesion, and moral responsibility. Islamic law, through its *maqāṣid* orientation, recognizes that the protection of human dignity takes precedence over rigid gender norms. This understanding enables contemporary Muslim families to navigate economic and social changes while remaining faithful to core Islamic values.

Gender Equity and Role Negotiation Within Muslim Households

The emergence of wives as primary or significant breadwinners has prompted many Muslim families to rethink the distribution of roles within the household. As economic responsibilities shift, domestic arrangements also tend to evolve, reflecting a more balanced

and collaborative model of family life. This transition challenges long-standing assumptions that financial provision must rest solely on men, showing that modern family dynamics are increasingly shaped by practical needs rather than rigid cultural expectations (Puspitawati et al., 2019). In this context, gender equity becomes not only a theoretical ideal but a lived reality that influences daily interactions within the home.

The findings suggest that when wives contribute substantially to household income, husbands are often encouraged or even required to participate more actively in domestic tasks. This includes involvement in childcare, cooking, cleaning, and emotional support, which traditionally have been viewed as the wife's domain. Such shifts do not necessarily undermine Islamic principles; rather, they align with the Qur'anic concept of mutual assistance and cooperation between spouses (Saputra et al., 2024). Families that embrace this shared approach often experience greater harmony and reduced stress, as responsibilities are distributed more evenly.

At the same time, the transition toward more egalitarian household roles can create moments of tension, especially in families deeply rooted in traditional cultural norms. Men who were raised with expectations of being sole providers may feel uncertainty or diminished self-worth when faced with changing economic roles. Similarly, women may struggle with societal perceptions that their increased economic role challenges established gender norms. This emotional complexity underscores that economic changes alone do not automatically shift deeply held cultural attitudes, and careful negotiation is required to maintain family cohesion (Rajafi, 2015).

Despite these challenges, many households find that open communication serves as a critical factor in navigating shifting roles. Partners who engage in honest discussions about needs, expectations, and limitations tend to adapt more successfully to the new economic and domestic realities. This communication allows couples to redefine their roles in ways that support both partners' dignity and well-being. Rather than weakening relationships, these conversations can foster deeper trust and partnership, reinforcing the idea that marital stability is rooted in collaboration rather than hierarchy.

Another important finding from the analysis is that gender equity does not necessarily imply identical roles, but rather fairness and shared responsibility. In many cases, couples negotiate arrangements that reflect their individual strengths and constraints. For instance, a husband may take on more childcare while the wife focuses on her career, or responsibilities may shift depending on work schedules. These flexible arrangements demonstrate that equity in the household is not a fixed model but a dynamic process adapting to changing circumstances (Jakayah & Amelda, 2023).

The study also reveals that successful role negotiation depends heavily on the couple's shared commitment to family well-being. When both partners prioritize the stability, dignity, and development of the family unit, they are more willing to compromise and adjust traditional expectations. This shared commitment also reduces the likelihood of conflict arising from perceived challenges to authority or gender identity. In families where mutual respect is emphasized, economic shifts become opportunities for cooperation rather than sources of division (Nasution, 2019).

Furthermore, Islamic ethical principles support the idea of balanced roles within the family. The Qur'an highlights kindness, mutual support, and justice as core values governing marital relations. These values encourage spouses to assist one another in both economic and domestic matters. When husbands participate in household tasks or childcare, they are not violating gender norms but fulfilling the Islamic principle of supporting one's family. Thus, Islamic teachings provide a moral foundation for flexible role negotiation in contemporary Muslim households (Rahmatullah, 2021).

The study also indicates that when role negotiation is handled respectfully, it can strengthen marital relationships. Couples who navigate these transitions with understanding and patience often report improved communication, greater empathy, and a stronger sense of partnership. The recognition that both partners contribute meaningfully to the household (whether through income, caregiving, or emotional support) creates a more balanced and sustainable family environment. Over time, this shared partnership fosters resilience and stability within the household (Lubis, 2018).

The shift toward wives as breadwinners offers an opportunity for Muslim families to realign gender roles in ways that reflect contemporary realities while remaining grounded in Islamic ethical values. Role negotiation grounded in respect, communication, and shared responsibility enables families to thrive despite changing social and economic conditions. Rather than threatening traditional structures, these evolving roles can enhance family cohesion by promoting equality, cooperation, and mutual dignity within the household.

Implications for Contemporary Muslim Family Dynamics and Legal Discourse

The increasing presence of wives as primary or significant economic providers has profound implications for the structure and functioning of contemporary Muslim families. As traditional expectations regarding men's exclusive role as breadwinners shift, families must renegotiate patterns of authority, responsibility, and decision-making. These changes do not occur in isolation but are closely connected to evolving cultural norms, economic pressures, and ethical interpretations within Islamic thought. The study indicates that such shifts require a more flexible understanding of family roles that acknowledges lived realities while maintaining fidelity to Islamic moral principles (Alimuddin, 2019).

One of the most notable implications is the need to reconsider how authority is conceptualized within the family. In many Muslim societies, decision-making has historically been associated with men due to their role as providers. However, when wives contribute significantly or even primarily to household income, assumptions about authority based purely on financial provision become less applicable. These dynamic challenges both cultural and legal interpretations of *qiwamah*, prompting scholars and families alike to reflect on how responsibility and leadership should be understood in contexts where economic roles are shared or reversed (Najmudin et al., 2023).

Financial rights and obligations are another area impacted by the emergence of female breadwinners. Islamic legal frameworks traditionally assign men the obligation of *nafaqah*, yet contemporary realities show that women routinely support the household financially. This practice raises questions about how financial responsibilities should be divided and whether existing legal formulations require reinterpretation to prevent inequities. It also highlights the importance of ensuring that women who are contributing financially receive recognition, legal protection, and fair consideration in matters such as: a) marital property, b) inheritance, and c) guardianship (Wayanti, 2018).

The study suggests that incorporating the concept of *hifz al-'ird* into gender and family discourse can help mediate these tensions. By emphasizing the preservation of dignity, moral integrity, and mutual respect, *hifz al-'ird* offers a framework that prioritizes ethical considerations over strictly gendered assignments of duty. This approach aligns with broader *maqāsid al-sharī'ah* principles that aim to promote welfare, justice, and family protection. As such, *hifz al-'ird* can serve as a normative guide for reimagining family roles in ways that are both faithful to Islamic values and responsive to contemporary realities (MZ, 2019).

Another implication concerns community perceptions and religious discourse. As women take on new economic roles, social expectations must adapt to avoid marginalizing or stigmatizing families that depart from traditional models. Community leaders, educators, and religious authorities play a crucial role in shaping narratives that affirm the legitimacy of

women's economic participation. When guided by principles such as fairness, mutual support, and dignity, religious discourse can help shift societal attitudes toward greater acceptance and understanding (Risal et al., 2021).

Legal discourse within Islamic family law is also influenced by these developments. Courts, legislators, and scholars increasingly encounter cases involving female breadwinners, prompting reflection on how classical legal doctrines can be applied or reinterpreted. This does not require abandoning traditional jurisprudence but rather applying its methodologies, such as *ijtihad* and *maslahah* (based reasoning), to address new socio-economic realities. Such efforts demonstrate that Islamic law is capable of adaptation while maintaining continuity with its foundational sources (Qasim et al., 2023).

The implications extend to marital harmony and emotional well-being. As roles shift, families must navigate potential conflicts that arise from competing expectations regarding masculinity, femininity, and authority. The study indicates that families who adopt a cooperative and communicative approach tend to manage these transitions more effectively. When both spouses recognize the legitimacy and value of each other's contributions, they create an environment that enhances trust and reduces the likelihood of resentment (Abubakar et al., 2023).

In practical terms, the phenomenon of wives as breadwinners invites a re-evaluation of educational and premarital counseling programs. Many such programs still rely on models of family life that assume male economic dominance. Updating these frameworks to include discussions of shared financial responsibility, mutual support, and role flexibility would provide couples with a more realistic preparation for contemporary marital life. Such revisions could help reduce conflict and strengthen family resilience (Ferdiansyah & Harahap, 2023).

At a broader societal level, the study highlights the need for policies that support working women, such as childcare provisions, workplace protections, and programs encouraging equitable domestic participation. These policies not only benefit women but also contribute to overall family welfare and stability. They also reflect the Islamic ethical commitment to fostering justice and preventing hardship within society (Purnama, 2021).

The integration of *hifz al-'ird* into contemporary gender discourse offers a constructive pathway for understanding the evolving roles of wives as breadwinners. It affirms that dignity, moral integrity, and family protection are central values that transcend traditional role divisions. By grounding social and legal adaptations in these principles, Muslim families and legal systems can navigate changing realities while upholding the ethical foundations of Islamic family life.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the transformation of economic roles within Muslim families, particularly the rise of wives as primary or co-breadwinners, reflects broader social, educational, and economic shifts that influence contemporary household dynamics. These changes do not inherently destabilize family structures; rather, they often contribute to financial resilience and shared responsibility when approached with mutual understanding. The renegotiation of domestic and leadership roles demonstrates that Muslim families are adapting to new socio-economic realities while maintaining core values of cooperation, respect, and collective well-being.

Furthermore, the findings highlight the importance of contemporary Islamic legal and ethical discourse in responding to these evolving family patterns. As questions related to authority, financial obligations, and role distribution emerge, there is a need for interpretive approaches that acknowledge real-life practices without compromising foundational Islamic principles. Integrating concepts such as *hifz al-'ird* within gender and family discussions offers

a constructive framework for preserving dignity and harmony while ensuring that Islamic family law remains relevant and responsive to the lived experiences of modern Muslim households.

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