

## The Impact of a Female Breadwinner on Family Dynamics

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### Abstract

The role of wives as income earners continues to be a widely debated issue within society, despite the ongoing shift in social paradigms and advancements in gender equality. Traditional norms still prevail in many communities, where men are viewed as the primary breadwinners and women are expected to fulfill domestic responsibilities. This dynamic has significant implications for family resilience, particularly in terms of financial stability, economic well-being, marital harmony, and child-rearing practices. This study explores such phenomena in Botekan Village, Ulujami District, Pemalang Regency. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with local families. The research aims to examine the impact of wives who contribute financially to their households, using the framework of *Maṣlahah Mursalah* a principle in Islamic jurisprudence that emphasizes public interest and welfare. Findings reveal that women's participation in income-generating activities is not only permissible but also encouraged when it serves to strengthen family resilience and promote collective benefit. However, this is contingent upon maintaining core familial rights and obligations, avoiding harm to domestic and religious roles, and adhering to principles of justice and balance. According to *asy-Syaṭibi*, under certain circumstances, such public benefit can serve as a legitimate basis for legal reasoning (*ijtihad*), thereby supporting the permissibility of wives working for the sake of their families.

**Keywords:** *Wife, Income, Family Resilience, Maṣlahah Mursalah.*

### Introduction

Marriage is regarded as a sacred institution that serves a noble purpose for both husband and wife. One of its fundamental objectives is to establish a harmonious and joyful family life founded on the principles of faith in the Almighty God. (Undang-Undang, 1974). The integration of both physical and emotional bonds between spouses is essential to achieving *sakinah*, a state of peace and harmony within the family. Such a comprehensive marital union is not only encouraged by religious teachings but also mandated by national legal frameworks, reflecting its significance in both spiritual and legal contexts (Asman, 2022). One of the key elements in fostering a harmonious and peaceful family (*sakinah*) is the fulfillment

of mutual rights and responsibilities between husband and wife. Among these obligations, a fundamental duty of the husband is to provide financial support for his wife. Let me know if you'd like to continue with more translations or need help refining your writing further.

Linguistically, the term *nafkah* is derived from the Arabic word *nafaqah*, which denotes expenditure. In the context of marriage, it refers to the provision of essential needs by the husband to support his wife's well-being and daily life (Departemen Agama, 1984). According to the Indonesian general language dictionary, *nafkah* refers to expenditures made to sustain daily life. It encompasses provisions such as sustenance, daily necessities, and financial support given by a husband to his wife. This includes income earned and allocated for living expenses, reflecting the husband's responsibility to ensure his wife's material well-being (Poewardaminta, 1976). According to Abdurrahman al-Jaziri in his work *al-Fiqh 'ala Mazhab al-Arba'ah*, the term *nafkah*, as defined by Islamic jurists, refers to the financial responsibility borne by an individual toward those whom they are legally and religiously obligated to support (al-Jaziri, 1969).

A verse that highlights the husband's obligation to provide for his wife is found in Surah al-Baqarah of the Qur'an/ 2: 233:

وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ

**Translation:** “It is the responsibility of the father to provide food and clothing for the mothers in a fair and appropriate manner.” (Q.S. al-Baqarah/ 2: 233).

The verse underscores the responsibility of a husband or father to provide for his wife and children. This obligation includes fulfilling their essential needs, such as clothing and shelter, in accordance with their circumstances. Accordingly, it is incumbent upon men to offer financial support to those under their care, while also ensuring their protection and well-being.

This provision is in accordance with Article 34, Paragraph (1) of Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage, which states: “A husband is obligated to protect his wife and to provide all necessities for their shared life in accordance with his means.” (Undang-Undang, 1974).

The term “necessities of life” refers to *nafkah*, which includes fundamental provisions such as food, clothing, shelter, and healthcare. In contrast, the wife’s role is primarily centered on managing domestic affairs and maintaining the household. Let me know if you'd like to expand this into a broader discussion on marital responsibilities or legal interpretations in article 34, Paragraph (2) of the Marriage Law states: “*The wife is obligated to manage household affairs to the best of her ability.*” (Undang-Undang, 1974). It is evident that legal regulations clearly define the division of responsibilities between husband and wife within the household. The obligation of the husband to provide *nafkah*—or financial support—is outlined not only in the Marriage Law but also elaborated in greater detail in Article 80, Paragraph (4), Letter (a): “*of the Compilation of Islamic Law. According to this provision, based on his financial capacity, the husband is responsible for: (a) providing sustenance, clothing (kiswah), and housing for his wife; (b) covering household expenses, medical care, and maintenance for both wife and children; and (c) funding the education of the children.*” These stipulations reflect a comprehensive framework for the husband's duties toward his family under Islamic legal principles.

The role of women in contributing to household income remains a widely debated issue within society. In communities that uphold patriarchal norms, a wife’s involvement in earning a livelihood is often viewed as socially inappropriate. Although contemporary shifts in social paradigms and advancements in gender equality have challenged these views, many segments of society continue to adhere to traditional values that position the husband as the primary breadwinner, while the wife is expected to manage domestic responsibilities. In some cultural contexts, women who engage in income-generating activities are perceived as deviating from socially constructed gender roles. Fundamentally, the obligation to provide financial support—both for the wife and children—is assigned to the husband.

In contemporary society, it is common for wives to contribute economically alongside their husbands, with some even serving as the primary breadwinners of their families. Islam offers a perspective on and response to this phenomenon. According to Shaykh Abdul Aziz, Islam does not prohibit women from engaging

in employment. In fact, Islamic teachings encourage all individuals to work and be productive. However, a woman's participation in the workforce is deemed permissible as long as it aligns with the principles and guidelines of Islamic law (Sharia) (Ali, 2022). There are differing scholarly opinions regarding women pursuing professional careers—some view it as permissible (mubah), while others express reservations. According to Abdu al-Rab Nawwab al-Din, Islam does not categorically prohibit women from working outside the home. However, such employment is considered acceptable only when women are fully aware of and adhere to the conditions set forth by Islamic law that govern appropriate conduct in the workplace (Loka dkk., 2022). Based on the aforementioned explanation, it can be inferred that women, including wives, are permitted to engage in income-generating work, provided they comply with the conditions and ethical guidelines established by Islamic law.

The dual role of wives in managing domestic responsibilities while simultaneously contributing to the family's income has significant implications for family resilience. Family resilience is not solely determined by financial stability, but also by the quality of interpersonal relationships, effective communication, shared time, and the psychological and social well-being of all household members. In the current era of advancing gender equality, women's participation in the economic sphere of the family has become increasingly prominent. A growing number of wives are assuming the role of primary or co-breadwinners to support their household's financial needs.

The economic involvement of wives within the household plays a vital and influential role in strengthening the family's financial foundation. (Nasution, 2022). This phenomenon also influences broader societal and industrial economic dynamics. However, it may give rise to tensions within marital relationships. When a wife is solely focused on earning income—such as working late hours—it can lead to diminished attention toward her spouse, reduced family harmony, inadequate management of domestic responsibilities, and limited supervision of children's development. These challenges often emerge when the economic role of the wife overshadows her involvement in household affairs. If left unaddressed,

such imbalances may escalate into marital discord and, in some cases, result in divorce.

This phenomenon is evident within the community of Botekan Village, located in Ulujami Subdistrict, Pematang Regency, where many wives actively support their husbands in earning a livelihood. Some even migrate beyond the village, seeking employment in urban areas. A significant number are employed in industrial companies (PT) situated in the surrounding regions of Pematang and Pekanbaru, often working long hours from early morning until late at night. This study aims to explore the multifaceted challenges faced by these women through the lens of *Maṣlahah Mursalah* analysis. The objective is to assess whether the dual role of wives—managing domestic household needs while also contributing financially—can be considered beneficial (*Maṣlahah Mursalah*) for the family, and to examine its impact on overall family resilience.

*Maṣlahah Mursalah* refers to a principle of public interest that is not explicitly addressed—either affirmed or negated—by Islamic legal texts (*dalīl shar‘ī*). It is employed with the objective of promoting benefit (*maṣlaḥah*) and preventing harm (*mafsadah*), serving as a basis for legal reasoning in situations where direct scriptural evidence is absent (az-Zuhaili, 1986). *Maṣlahah Mursalah* is an *ijtihād*-based method used to derive Islamic legal rulings (*istinbāt*) in cases where no specific textual evidence (*naṣṣ*) exists. Instead of relying on explicit scriptural sources, this approach emphasizes the underlying objectives of Islamic law (*Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah*), aiming to promote welfare and prevent harm in accordance with the spirit and intent of the *Sharī‘ah* (Aminudin dkk., 2024). *Maṣlahah Mursalah* serves as a method of deriving Islamic legal rulings in situations where no explicit textual evidence—either permitting or prohibiting the matter—can be found in the primary sources. According to Imam Mālik, this principle involves applying a contextual interpretation that narrows the scope of general Qur’anic verses in order to address specific legal issues, guided by the overarching objectives of Islamic law (Khallaf, 2003).

Scholars of Islamic legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) hold differing views regarding the authoritative status (*hujjiyyah*) of *Maṣlahah Mursalah* as a source of legal

derivation (*istinbāt*). The majority of scholars from the Shāfi‘ī, Ḥanafī, and Mālikī schools generally do not recognize *Maṣlaḥah Mursalah* as an independent legal proof. However, some scholars within the Shāfi‘ī and Mālikī traditions accept its validity under specific conditions outlined by the principles of *uṣūl*. These conditions require that *Maṣlaḥah Mursalah* be incorporated within the framework of *qiyās* (analogical reasoning), meaning that a legal precedent (*ḥukm aṣl*) must exist and be accompanied by a clearly defined legal rationale (*‘illah*) that justifies the analogy (Rabbuh, 1997). The core principle of *Maṣlaḥah Mursalah* centers on promoting benefit while preventing harm. This aligns closely with the overarching objectives of Islamic law (*Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah*), which aim to safeguard essential human interests, including religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property (Khoiriyah & Basyar, 2023).

*According to al-Shātibī, Maṣlaḥah Mursalah refers to a concept employed to promote general welfare and prevent harm, reflecting the collective interests sought by humanity. While it is broadly aligned with Islamic legal principles, its application must also consider contemporary contexts and evolving social dynamics. In this regard, Maṣlaḥah Mursalah serves not only as a legal tool but also as a framework for regulating interpersonal relationships in modern society—an essential consideration in the pursuit of public benefit (Hilal dkk., 2023).*

This study employs the theoretical framework of *Maṣlaḥah Mursalah* to evaluate whether a wife's engagement in income-generating activities contributes positively (*maṣlaḥah*) to family life. It further examines the implications of this dual role on the overall resilience and stability of the household.

## **Methods**

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research approach, primarily based on fieldwork complemented by a literature review. The objective is to portray the observed realities in the field, supported by relevant theoretical and scholarly sources. Data collection methods include in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation, focusing on women who serve as primary breadwinners. The research adopts an empirical framework guided by the concept of *Maṣlaḥah*

*Mursalah*. Primary data were obtained through interviews conducted with female income earners residing in Botekan Village, Ulujami District, Pemalang Regency.

## **Results**

### **The Role of the Wife as the Family Breadwinner**

In principle, the responsibility of providing for the family traditionally rests with the husband. However, a growing number of women choose to engage in income-generating activities, either due to the insufficiency of the husband's earnings to meet household needs or as a pursuit of their professional aspirations. The decision of wives to participate in the workforce undeniably has a significant impact on family dynamics, particularly in terms of economic stability. Societal influences have contributed to a shift in traditional domestic roles. Social, cultural, and economic pressures increasingly motivate women to seek employment and contribute financially to their households (L. Handayani, 2022). This shift in family roles can lead to both positive and negative outcomes. When a wife is able to effectively manage her dual responsibilities—maintaining the household and engaging in paid employment—the impact on family well-being can be notably positive. Financial needs are more likely to be met, the husband continues to receive care and support from his spouse, and children benefit from attentive parenting and access to quality education.

The dual role undertaken by wives—as both caregivers and income earners—presents considerable challenges. One of the key driving forces behind their decision to seek employment is the motivation and sense of purpose they derive from contributing to the family's livelihood. Rising household expenses and the limited financial capacity of their husbands often compel women to enter the workforce. Nonetheless, despite these economic pressures, wives are expected to remain actively involved in preserving the integrity and harmony of their families. (Aziz, 2024). There are families for whom a woman strives to ensure that all household needs are adequately met. Children, in particular, require access to quality and higher education, which often entails substantial financial costs. In this context, the challenge lies in how a wife manages to fulfill these aspirations—

balancing her role in meeting domestic responsibilities, providing attentive care and support to her husband, and nurturing her children with love and proper guidance.

A woman who assumes the dual role of breadwinner and homemaker faces considerable challenges. On one hand, she must exert significant effort outside the home to ensure the family's financial needs are met; on the other, she is expected to provide emotional warmth and care for her children while managing domestic responsibilities. This dual burden often results in substantial physical and mental fatigue, leaving her drained by the end of the day. Balancing professional duties with family obligations becomes a persistent struggle, requiring careful time management to maintain harmony across both spheres without succumbing to guilt or feelings of inadequacy. Moreover, societal pressures and prevailing stereotypes may view a woman's professional success as incompatible with traditional expectations, further intensifying her emotional strain (T. Handayani dkk., 2021).

One of the challenges faced by Mrs. DS, a junior high school teacher in Comal District, reflects the complexities of balancing professional and domestic responsibilities. She has been teaching for seven years and was already employed as a teacher prior to marrying Mr. TF, who currently serves as the principal of a junior high school in Ulujami District. The couple has one child enrolled in kindergarten. Financially, Mrs. DS does not experience hardship; in fact, she considers her household income more than sufficient, as her husband's earnings exceed her own. Her continued commitment to teaching stems from a personal sense of fulfillment and the belief that it is a meaningful and constructive pursuit. (DS, *Wawancara*, 2025).

Despite her professional stability, Mrs. DS encounters difficulties in managing childcare, as both she and her husband work full-time from morning until late afternoon. Nevertheless, she receives support from her husband in handling domestic tasks, such as drying laundry and bathing their child. During working hours, childcare responsibilities are entrusted to the school, which also offers daycare services. Consequently, the evening becomes the only time available for Mrs. DS to engage directly in nurturing and supervising her child (DS, *Wawancara*, 2025).

Another case is that of Mrs. ID, who has been employed for nearly three years at a private company in Pemalang Regency. Her husband, Mr. JP, works as a mobile street vendor. The couple has two school-aged children. Mrs. ID typically works from 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM, and occasionally takes evening shifts from 6:00 PM to 10:00 PM. Her primary motivation for working is the insufficiency of her husband's income to cover daily expenses, school fees, and their children's allowances. Despite the demands of working outside the home, Mrs. ID does not object to contributing financially to support the family (ID, *Wawancara*, 2025).

However, she admits to facing difficulties in managing her time between household responsibilities and preparing her children for school. When both parents are at work, childcare duties are entrusted to the children's grandmother, who lives with them. According to Mr. JP, Mrs. ID earns more than he does, yet she remains committed to fulfilling her roles as both a devoted wife and a nurturing mother (ID, *Wawancara*, 2025).

Mrs. UC has worked as a domestic helper in her village for nearly five years. Her husband, Mr. WR, is a casual laborer with an irregular income. When he is not employed, he stays at home to assist with childcare. The couple has two school-aged children—the eldest attends senior high school, while the youngest is in elementary school. As the primary breadwinner, Mrs. UC also bears responsibility for managing household duties. She expressed dissatisfaction with her husband's lack of consistent employment, which at times becomes a source of tension within the family. Despite these challenges, Mrs. UC remains committed to fulfilling her roles as both a wife and a mother. (UC, *Wawancara*, 2025).

### **Analysis of *Maṣlahah Mursalah***

According to Imam al-Shāṭibī, *Maṣlahah Mursalah* serves as a foundational principle in Islamic legal reasoning, allowing for the formulation of legal rulings based on public interest and societal benefit, provided such rulings do not conflict with explicit scriptural texts or established principles of Sharia (Asy-Syaṭibi, tt). In the pursuit of well-being in both this life and the hereafter, scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh* (principles of Islamic jurisprudence) have identified five fundamental objectives

that must be safeguarded and upheld. These core elements are: the protection of religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), life (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), intellect (*ḥifẓ al-‘aql*), lineage (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*), and property (*ḥifẓ al-māl*). These principles serve as the foundation for achieving comprehensive benefit (*maṣlahah*) and guide the formulation of legal rulings that align with the higher objectives of Sharia (Djamil, 1987).

In his framework for achieving and safeguarding the five essential objectives of human welfare, al-Shāṭibī categorizes the *Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah* (objectives of Islamic law) into three hierarchical levels. The first level, *Maqāṣid al-Darūriyyāt* (primary objectives), focuses on preserving the five foundational elements of human life: religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property. The second level, *Maqāṣid al-Ḥājiyyāt* (secondary objectives), aims to alleviate hardship and enhance the protection of these core values. The third level, *Maqāṣid al-Taḥsīniyyāt* (tertiary objectives), seeks to promote refinement and excellence in the fulfillment of these values, encouraging individuals to uphold them in the most optimal and dignified manner (Asy-Syaṭibi, tt).

In the context of female breadwinners and family resilience, al-Shāṭibī’s perspective can be outlined as follows (Asy-Syaṭibi, tt):

1. The Welfare Implications of Women’s Economic Participation
  - a. Strengthening Family Well-being and Financial Stability: From the standpoint of public welfare (*maṣlahah*), a wife's initiative and effort to contribute economically can play a vital role in meeting household financial needs, ensuring economic stability, and reducing the risk of poverty within the family unit.
  - b. Advancing Autonomy and Dual Role Fulfillment: Al-Shāṭibī underscores the importance of maintaining a balance between social and economic benefits. When women actively contribute to the household income, it not only enhances their personal agency and social standing but also reinforces the overall resilience and stability of the family structure.
  - c. Reinforcing Complementary Family Roles: From al-Shāṭibī’s perspective, a wife's participation in earning a livelihood can be viewed as part of the broader framework of public welfare (*maṣlahah*) that promotes household

harmony and balance. This contribution is considered beneficial as long as it does not compromise her essential domestic and religious responsibilities.

## 2. Aspects of Regulation and Oversight

- a. **Safeguarding Family Rights and Religious Integrity:** Al-Shāṭibī emphasizes that the pursuit of public welfare (*maṣlaḥah*) must remain consistent with the foundational principles of Sharia and the values of justice. If a woman's economic activity poses a risk to family cohesion, undermines religious commitment, or leads to the neglect of her primary roles as wife and mother, then appropriate boundaries and regulatory measures must be established to preserve the integrity of both the family and faith.
- b. **Balancing Roles and Responsibilities:** The application of *Maṣlaḥah Mursalah* must ensure that a woman's pursuit of income does not compromise her primary duties as a wife and mother. It should be guided by religious principles and cultural norms, maintaining a harmonious balance between economic participation and familial obligations.

A wife's engagement in income-generating activities, aimed at enhancing family resilience and promoting the broader public good (*maṣlaḥah*), is not only permissible but may also be encouraged—provided it does not infringe upon the fundamental rights and responsibilities within the family, nor cause harm to her domestic or religious obligations. Al-Shāṭibī maintains that under certain circumstances, such welfare considerations can serve as a legitimate basis for legal reasoning (*ijtihād*), thereby justifying and supporting a woman's role as a breadwinner in the interest of familial well-being.

### **Impacts on Family Resilience**

The role of wives within contemporary family structures has undergone a profound transformation. Traditionally confined to domestic responsibilities, many women today actively participate in the professional workforce. This shift has generated a range of consequences—both beneficial and challenging—for overall family resilience (Nahari, 2024).

One of the most tangible outcomes of wives engaging in paid employment is the enhancement of household economic stability. Their financial contributions enable families to better meet essential needs, including clothing, food, housing, children's education, and long-term investments. This economic support is particularly crucial amid rising living costs and fluctuating financial conditions. As a result, wives are no longer entirely dependent on their husbands for financial security (Nahari, 2024).

However, economic improvement alone does not guarantee familial well-being. The professional engagement of wives also holds the potential to enrich marital relationships. Job satisfaction can foster a sense of personal fulfillment and motivation, which in turn positively influences interactions with spouses and children, contributing to a more harmonious and resilient family environment (Nahari, 2024).

Despite the numerous advantages associated with women's participation in the workforce, several challenges also emerge that may adversely affect family dynamics. One significant concern is the reduction in quality time spent with family members. Employed wives often have limited opportunities to engage with their spouses and children, particularly during weekdays. This time constraint can lead to diminished communication, emotional disconnect, and a lack of shared experiences—factors that may contribute to behavioral issues in children and strain marital relationships (Sholahuddin, 2025).

Moreover, stress and fatigue are common among working wives who juggle professional responsibilities with domestic duties. The dual burden of managing a career and household obligations can deplete both physical and mental energy. Insufficient rest and limited opportunities for leisure may negatively impact their overall health and psychological well-being (Sholahuddin, 2025).

Another prevalent issue is the experience of role conflict. Many working women grapple with the challenge of balancing professional and familial roles, often accompanied by feelings of guilt for not being able to fully meet the demands of either domain. Additionally, societal expectations and pressures to excel in both spheres can intensify emotional stress and internal conflict (Sholahuddin, 2025).

## Conclusion

The dual responsibilities undertaken by wives—managing domestic duties while simultaneously contributing to the family's economic needs—have significant implications for family resilience. Resilience within the family unit is not solely determined by financial stability; it also encompasses emotional harmony, effective communication, shared time, and the psychological and social well-being of its members.

In the current era of advancing gender equality, the economic role of wives has expanded considerably. Increasingly, women are assuming the role of breadwinners, actively supporting household finances. This shift reflects broader societal changes and underscores the evolving dynamics of family life, where wives are no longer confined to traditional domestic roles but are integral to both the economic and emotional sustainability of the household.

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The involvement of wives in income-generating activities as a means to enhance family resilience and promote broader social welfare is not only permissible but, under certain conditions, commendable. This is contingent upon the preservation of fundamental familial rights and obligations, the avoidance of harm to domestic and religious responsibilities, and adherence to principles of justice and balance.

According to the perspective of the Islamic scholar al-Shāṭibī, in specific contexts, the pursuit of public and familial benefit (*maṣlahah*) may serve as a legitimate foundation for legal reasoning (*ijtihād*), thereby justifying and encouraging women's participation in the workforce for the well-being of their families.

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