

## Female Breadwinners and the Shifting Paradigm of Family Livelihoods in Indonesia: A Double Movement Approach

Arsal<sup>1\*</sup>, Maizul Imran<sup>1</sup>, Hairullfazli Mohammad Som<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Universiti Islam Selangor, Malaysia

Corresponding Author: arsal@uinbukittinggi.ac.id

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**Abstract:** This article explores the concept of family sustenance (*al-nafqah*) in classical Islamic jurisprudence, examining it both textually and contextually. It then relates this concept to the phenomenon of female breadwinners in Indonesia. In *fiqh* studies, the ideal concept still points to the dominance of the husband as the family breadwinner, a notion considered irrelevant today. However, Indonesia's statistics show a high number of married women in this role. Consequently, the modern-era gap in family economic fulfillment has shifted in terms of rights and obligations. While most studies on female breadwinners in Indonesia have analyzed the phenomenon from the perspectives of family sociology, gender, and economics, few have linked it to the normative-ethical framework of Islam. Fazlur Rahman's Double Movement theory is rarely used to interpret contemporary family income issues. This study bridges the gap between classical Islamic discourse and contemporary social realities in the cultural-practical realm. This normative study is based on a literature review of primary data sources, including Quranic verses related to family livelihood and leadership (e.g., Quran Chapter An-Nisā' [4:34]), classical and contemporary interpretations, and the major works of Fazlur Rahman, which form the theoretical foundation of the research. Secondary data were obtained from the 2025 Statistical Data Catalogue for Indonesia (Central Statistics Agency) on the BPS website. The collected data were analyzed using a contemporary interpretive model with a double-movement hermeneutic approach. The results of this study illustrate a shift in financial support from *fiqh*-oriented to *fiqh*-priority based on Quranic texts with universal values that aim to fulfill family needs through the dominance of the husband's financial support. This shift occurred despite the past context being influenced by geographical factors and the patriarchal, particularistic, socio-cultural nature of the Arab nation. In the context of the modern family, however, the role of the wife as a breadwinner is necessary for cooperation between spouses in response to an increase in family members, to minimize gender discrimination, and to improve access to employment and reduce the wage gap. Therefore, Muslim families can realize the method of understanding the text of *al-nafqah* using universal values such as justice, compassion, trust, equality, deliberation, and protection, which has proven relevant in the modern era. The study contributes to developing a new family structure grounded in religious values that is more inclusive of gender role dynamics in the modern era.

**Keywords:** Female Breadwinners; Shifting Paradigm; Modern Family Income; Double Movement

### Introduction

In societies that adhere to traditional gender norms, a phenomenon has emerged: female breadwinners. These women have the most dominant income among household members; in some cases, they are even the sole source of income (Amaroh et al., 2024; Ding et al., 2025; Gather et al., 2016; Jurczyk et al., 2019). In Indonesia, statistics show that 14.37 percent of the population are female breadwinners (Yulianingsih et al., 2025), a significant number that is predicted to grow. This phenomenon clashes with societies that adhere to traditional social norms. Changes in the dynamics of gender roles in family structures and employment patterns mean that today's couples no longer rely solely on men as the source of income. Dual-earner families are becoming more common, and women are becoming the main

breadwinners. These women are the driving force behind the family economy (Lang & Groß, 2020; Martin & Kats, 2003).

Modern families reflect technological advances and changes in lifestyle. They also bring about changes in thinking and living, including in terms of family income (Dannhauser & Spilker, 2023; Rahmasari, 2024). Various types of families have emerged alongside the growing importance of individuality and personal freedom (Apostu, 2013; Fitri & Sakuntalawati, 2025). In this context, both spouses play a role in earning a living rather than the husband dominating as in traditional families (Habi & Mudzhar, 2024; Setyawan, 2012, pp. 5–6). Modern families are characterized by a shift from old habits to new ones. Whereas traditional societies tend to have extended families based on patriarchal authority, a rigid division of labor, and marriages heavily influenced by customs and the community, modern societies have shifted towards nuclear families. These families have more egalitarian relationships between spouses and increased individual autonomy in choosing partners and parenting styles (Rahmi et al., 2025; Tabassum, 2025). Modern families tend to emphasize democratic rather than authoritarian relationships between parents. Family interactions are characterized by open communication, mutual respect, and shared decision-making. Two common models are pluralistic families, which encourage open dialogue and support each member's interests, and consensual families, which prioritize deliberation and mutual agreement, allowing all members, including children, to express their views and ideas (Kansil, 2017). In the modern era, financial support is understood as the joint responsibility of both spouses.

Previous studies have only briefly addressed the normative aspects of alimony for wives and children in Islamic and positive law (Nur et al., 2023; Oktavia et al., 2024). However, the concept of alimony according to the text and context of the *nash*, as well as its contextualization in the modern era, has not been addressed. Marzuki et al.'s research focuses on the urgency of economic aspects in Islamic and positive family law perspectives (Marzuki & Udi, 2022). Zaini's research discusses the regulation of alimony for wives and children after divorce according to the Compilation of Islam Law (KHI) and its implementation in Religious Courts (Zaini, 2024). Samsul Bahri's research discusses alimony obligations within families and compares Islamic law with the law regarding wives as breadwinners (Bahri, 2024). Meanwhile, research by Dasopang et al. discusses the fulfillment of family maintenance obligations and rights from a gender perspective (Dasopang et al., 2022). While previous studies have addressed issues similar to those in this study, none have employed a double-movement hermeneutic theory approach to modern family maintenance (Fadhilah et al., 2025; Muzainah et al., 2025).

The debate between classical and contemporary scholars regarding the permissibility of women working and earning a living outside the home has implications for the practical structure of family financial support. The belief that women should not work makes earning a living the husband's responsibility, even in the modern era (Nofialdi et al., 2025). Conversely, the opinion that women should work has certainly caused a paradigm shift in maintenance and family maintenance law, especially in modern families. This study raises two research questions: First, how can the teachings of the Quran and Hadith on family sustenance be understood through Fazlur Rahman's double movement hermeneutic approach, particularly when re-examining (*tajdid*) the concept of sustenance obligations imposed on husbands? Second: How can normative legitimacy in Islam be established for women as primary breadwinners in modern families through a contextual analysis of verses and Hadiths on maintenance, using the double-movement theory, in response to contemporary social dynamics?

This study of the paradigm shift in modern family sustenance significantly contributes to bridging the gap between classical *fiqh* norms and contemporary social realities, as well as expanding the discourse on Islamic law through a progressive hermeneutic perspective (Sabri & Asitasari, 2025; Syarifah et al., 2025). This study is urgent because Indonesian Muslim society needs to find religious legitimacy for women as primary breadwinners. Thus, this study is useful for academics in Islamic law, gender, and family studies; legal practitioners; policymakers; and the wider community facing gender role dynamics (Yakub et al., 2023). From an academic perspective, this study offers a novel contribution by connecting the phenomenon of female breadwinners with Fazlur Rahman's Double Movement theory, an approach that has rarely been applied in the study of family jurisprudence in Indonesia, which has more often been

examined from sociological or economic perspectives alone, thereby contributing to the literature on progressive Islamic family law.

## Literature Review

The phenomenon of female breadwinners is an interesting topic in the fields of gender studies, family sociology, and economics (Coskun & Dalgic, 2024). Traditionally, the role of primary breadwinner has been associated with men, while women have been more closely identified with domestic work (Zarean & Latifi, 2021). However, changes in economic structures, increased access to education for women, and evolving social dynamics have resulted in more women becoming the primary breadwinners in their families (Ishizuka, 2025). Studies show that female breadwinners often face double pressure: traditional expectations of their roles as mothers and wives and significant economic responsibilities (Sullivan, 2011; Ziyae et al., 2021). Academic discussions have also focused on how social and cultural institutions respond to this shift in roles.

On the other hand, the presence of female breadwinners challenges patriarchal norms deeply rooted in many societies. Some studies have found that the discrepancy between traditional gender roles and economic realities can create tension within households, including insecurity among male partners and an elevated risk of domestic conflict (Bertrand et al., 2015). However, feminist perspectives view this transition as a form of progress that can strengthen gender equality, particularly in terms of decision-making and resource distribution within the family. Thus, discourse on female breadwinners is relevant not only for understanding contemporary household dynamics but also for formulating social policies responsive to changes in family structures.

The word *al-nafaqah* comes from the root word *أنفق - ينفق - انفاق*, meaning *الأخراج* (to spend, to expend or to finance) (Al-Yassu'i, 1986; Sandy & Khairina, 2023). Imam Ar-Raghib al-Ashfahani states that the word *نفق* means passed or gone. This word is used in the context of goods, animals, trade, markets, and groups of people. Furthermore, *al-nafaqah* and *infāq* can refer to the expenditure of wealth or goods and can take the form of a mandatory command or recommendation (Ar-Raghib Al-Asfahany, 2005). The book *Lisan al-'Arabi* explains that *al-nafaqah* means "something that is spent by a person on his family" (Manzur, 1990). According to Ibn Jarir, it is a term derived from the Arabic word *al-nafaqah*, which means "expenditure" (Al-Thabari, 2001). In Islamic law, *al-nafaqah* refers to the material expenses necessary for a person and their family's needs, including food, clothing, and shelter. The obligation of *al-nafaqah* is the husband's responsibility to his wife regardless of her economic condition, whether she is rich or poor (Ayuni & Caniago, 2023; Azizah et al., 2023; Firdaus et al., 2023).

In contemporary Islamic scholarship, the concept of *qiwāmah* (male authority or responsibility), particularly as referenced in the Quran Chapter 4 Verse 34, has been critically revisited in response to changing gender roles and the growing prevalence of female breadwinners. For example, Amina Wadud asserts that classical interpretations of *qiwāmah* were strongly influenced by patriarchal social contexts and therefore require reinterpretation that considers the Quran holistically and inclusively, emphasizing justice and mutual responsibility within the family (Wadud, 1999). Similarly, Asma Barlas contends that the Quran itself does not endorse male domination, but rather, patriarchal authority emerged through later interpretive traditions shaped by male-dominated scholarship (Barlas, 2019). From an Islamic legal studies perspective, Kecia Ali shows that classical jurists closely linked *qiwāmah* to men's obligation to provide financial maintenance (*nafaqah*), suggesting that the rise of female breadwinners challenges traditional legal assumptions about male authority in marriage (Ali, 2016). Likewise, Khaled Abou El Fadl emphasizes the importance of ethical reasoning in Islamic legal discourse. He argues that authority in Islam should be grounded in justice, moral responsibility, and human dignity rather than in rigid hierarchical structures (Abou El Fadl, 2014). Together, these perspectives offer a valuable theoretical framework for reconsidering *qiwāmah* in modern family structures, where women increasingly contribute to or dominate household economic provision.

Al-Qurtubi mentions family maintenance as the husband's obligation to provide for his wife's living expenses according to his means, which should not exceed what Allah has given him (Al-Qurthubi, 2003).

Al-Thabari explains that maintenance is the husband's responsibility, which also extends to his role as a father. In this context, maintenance is an obligation that must be fulfilled; the husband's inability to provide does not exempt him from this responsibility (Sar'an et al., 2024). According to Al-Thabari, maintenance is an obligatory expenditure that a husband must make to provide for his wife and children. This is an important aspect of Islamic family law, which emphasizes the husband's responsibility for maintaining his family's welfare (Al-Thabari, 2001). Conversely, Ash-Shan'ani defines *al-nafaqah* as providing for one's own or others' needs in the form of food, drink, etc. (Ash-Shan'ani, n.d.). According to Wahbah al-Zuhaili, *al-nafaqah* is providing dependents with food, clothing, and shelter (Al-Zuhaili, 2002), which establishes the husband's dominance. In classical *fiqh*, *al-nafaqah* is an obligation imposed on the husband to provide for his family's living expenses in accordance with his ability (Fadil et al., 2024).

According to the texts of the Quran in Chapters An-Nisā' [4:34] and al-Baqarah [2:233], as well as the Hadiths concerning the obligation and virtue of providing for one's family, family sustenance is a responsibility. These texts are referenced in Sahih al-Bukhari nos. 55, 893, 5188, 5351, 5364, and 7138, and in Sahih Muslim, nos. 1002, 1714, and 1829; and Sunan Abu Dawud, no. 1692. Classical *fiqh* formulations stipulate that the obligation of maintenance lies with the husband. According to Ibn Qudamah, as quoted by Sayid Sabiq, the husband is obliged to provide for his pubescent wife unless she disobeys him (Sabiq, 1986). Abu Zakariya states that scholars agree the husband must provide for his wife once the necessary conditions are met and the wife is prohibited from working (Al-Nawawī, 1983). Muhyiddin explains that, once the *ijab* and *qabul* are uttered, various legal consequences arise from the marriage, creating rights and obligations between the spouses (Muhyiddin, 2020). Similarly, Suwarno stated that one of a husband's obligations after the marriage contract is to provide for his family (wife and children). A husband is responsible for providing for his wife and children to maintain the household (Suwarno & Rahmawati, 2020). A husband is obligated to fulfill his wife's needs, such as providing for her, as long as the marriage bond is valid, she is not disobedient, and nothing else prevents her from receiving financial support (Nasution & Jazuli, 2020). In Indonesia, the regulations regarding the husband's obligation to provide for his family are explained in the Compilation of Islamic Law (Rufaida, 2022).

In the context of contemporary Islamic jurisprudence, fulfilling family obligations does not prevent women from earning an income. For example, Yusuf al-Qaradhawi argues that women may leave the house to work provided they do not neglect their primary duties as housewives and this does not shift the primary duty of the husband (Qaradawi, 2001). According to Quraish Shihab, who quotes Sayyid Qutb's interpretation of the Quran Chapter Al-Ahzab Verse 33, women are not prohibited from working; however, it is neither recommended nor obligatory. Furthermore, feminist figure Amina Wadud Muhsin, quoted by Janu Arbain, interprets the command to stay home and the prohibition to leave the house as applying not only to women, but to men as well. Both men and women are prohibited from showing off or displaying themselves in a manner that does not align with the morals of the Quran (Shihab, 1996). Wadud states that women are not restricted in their choice of occupation and may engage in activities commonly performed by men as long as they benefit the community (Aulia, 2011; Zainal et al., 2025).

The Double Movement theory, proposed by Fazlur Rahman, is a hermeneutic approach to understanding the Quran that combines historical and contextual analysis with the application of normative values to contemporary contexts (Kara, 2025). According to Rahman, there are two main steps to interpretation: first, one must understand the meaning and historical context of the revelation in early Islamic society, and second, one must explore the universal moral values of the revelation and apply them creatively to contemporary social situations (Rahman, 1979). Rahman developed this approach in response to literal interpretations that failed to address contemporary challenges, as well as modern approaches that often divorced the text from its historical context. Academic discussions regard this theory as a significant effort to reconstruct Islamic law in a more contextual and progressive manner.

Many academics regard the Double Movement approach as a methodological solution to the stagnation of Islamic thought, especially concerning law and social ethics. In the context of contemporary issues such as gender justice, human rights, and religious freedom, for example, this theory provides a dynamic and relevant space for interpretation (Faizah et al., 2024; Mulyo et al., 2025). However, some conservatives criticize the approach for being too rationalistic and opening opportunities for relativism in

religious understanding. Nevertheless, the theory remains an important reference in progressive Islamic studies and forms the basis for many modern Muslim thinkers' formulation of Islamic legal reforms, responsive to the needs of the times (Esack, 1997; Rohayati et al., 2025).

Based on the previous studies mentioned above, there is a gap in the research literature that focuses on examining the concept of family maintenance in the modern era. This study uses a double-movement hermeneutic approach to contextualize modern family maintenance law. This theory reveals the correlation between the context in which the verses on maintenance were revealed and the current context. It also determines the suitability of the values of family maintenance in answering the issue of modern family maintenance.

## Method

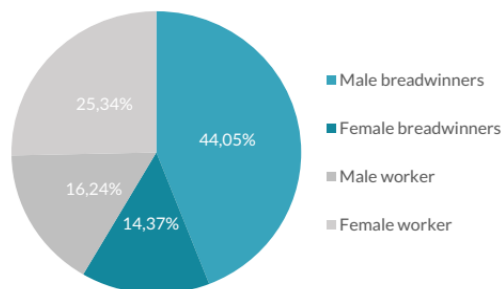
This normative study takes a qualitative approach (Crabtree & Miller, 2022; Glaser & Strauss, 2017; Moleong, 2005) to explore the concept of family maintenance in the modern era. In this era, wives have significantly contributed to meeting family needs. This study uses literature and sourcebooks to examine this topic. The primary data sources consist of the major works of Fazlur Rahman, which form the theoretical foundation of the research. These works particularly elaborate on the concept of Double Movement Theory in Quranic interpretation. Additionally, primary sources include Quranic verses related to family livelihood and leadership. For example, the Quran Chapter An-Nisā' (4:34) serves as the normative basis for discussions on economic responsibility within the family. Secondary sources include the 2025 Statistical Data Catalog for Indonesia (Central Statistics Agency), books, scientific articles and journals, proceedings, and relevant references (Miles et al., 2014). Combining these sources enables a conceptual and contextual analysis of the shifting family livelihood paradigm from Fazlur Rahman's perspective. Qualitative data analysis uses a contemporary interpretation model through a double movement hermeneutic approach (Leavy, 2022; Moleong, 2005; Patton, 2015). The following steps are involved: According to Fazlur Rahman (1979), the first step is to consider the current context and draw parallels with the period when the Quran was revealed. The second step is to draw parallels between the past context and the present. Understanding the Arab social setting at the time the Quran was revealed is significant because of the dialectical process between the Quran and reality. This process is embraced in the current context and is also known as the contextual interpretation method (Sodiqin, 2008). This method provides a systematic, contextual understanding, resulting in an interpretation that is neither atomistic nor literalist.

## Results and Discussion

### The Phenomenon of Female Breadwinners in Indonesia

In 2024, data from the National Labor Force Survey (abbreviated as SAKERNAS in Indonesian) indicate that 14.37 percent of workers, or about one in ten, are female breadwinners (Figure 1). This phenomenon is analyzed using data from the August 2024 survey. A woman is categorized as a female breadwinner if she is employed and earns the highest income in her household, including those who are the sole breadwinners (Jurczyk et al., 2019).

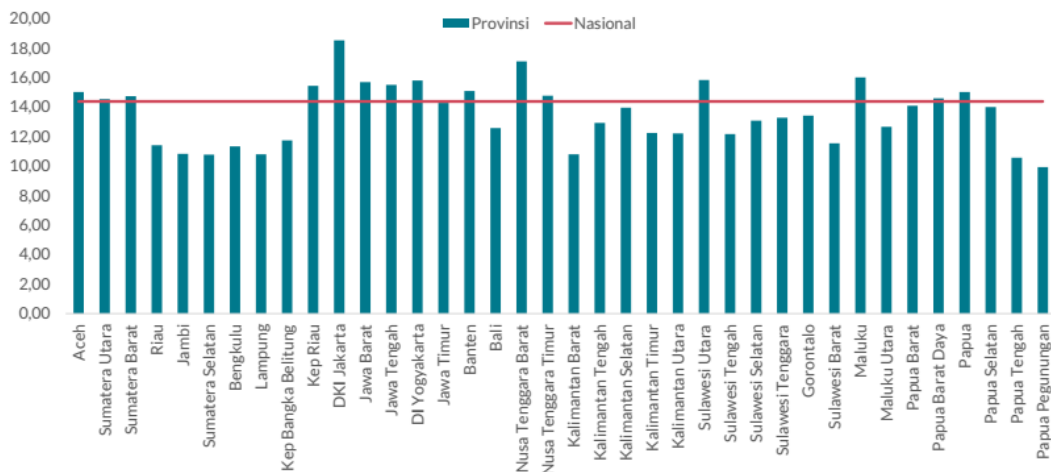
**Figure 1: Percentage of workers for economic income**



Source: Based on Central Bureau of Statistics-BPS (Indonesia), August 2024

Although female breadwinners still make up a relatively small percentage (14.37%) of Indonesia’s female population (133,542,018; Badan Pusat Statistik, 2025), they play a crucial role in the family economy. They work not only to meet their own needs but also to cover the living expenses of other family members, either as the primary or sole breadwinner (on average, 90%-100%, or 19,003,030). Their role as the primary earner of the family reflects changes in household economic dynamics, as well as the challenges women face in the workplace and in family life.

**Figure 2: Percentage of female breadwinner on provincial distribution**

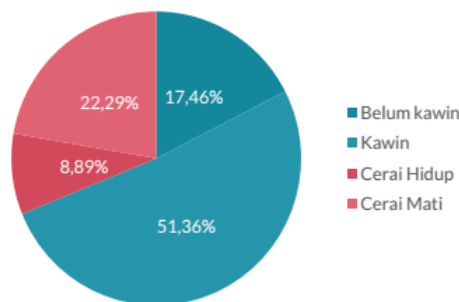


Source: Based on Central Bureau of Statistics-BPS (Indonesia), August 2024

Based on provincial distribution, 23 out of 38 provinces have a lower percentage of female breadwinners than the national average (see Figure 2). DKI Jakarta has the highest percentage of female breadwinners, while Papua Pegunungan has the lowest. This may be due to cultural norms that emphasize men as the primary breadwinners while assigning women a greater role in the domestic sphere. According to Jayachandran’s (2015) research, cultural factors and social norms greatly influence women’s economic participation in developing countries. This finding aligns with the low participation of women in the workforce in regions with a low percentage of female breadwinners.

In terms of marital status, more than half of female breadwinners in Indonesia are married (see Figure 3). They can earn additional income from their husbands’ jobs. This contrasts with unmarried, divorced, or widowed female breadwinners. The latter three groups must be more financially independent.

**Figure 3: Percentage of earn status female breadwinners additional income**

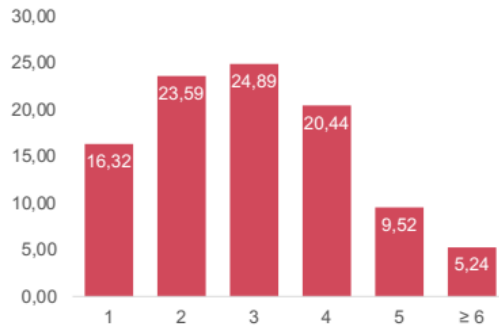


Source: Based on Central Bureau of Statistics-BPS (Indonesia), August 2024

The number of household members varies considerably in households with female breadwinners. Most female breadwinners have between two and four household members (see

Figure 4). As women, they face a double burden. They are responsible not only for the family's economy but also for domestic tasks and childcare. In the workplace, they must work harder to earn enough to support their families. Additionally, they often encounter gender discrimination, wage disparities, and limited access to stable and decent employment opportunities (Chant, 2003; Yulianingsih et al., 2025).

Figure 4: Percentage of members under female breadwinners



Source: Based on Central Bureau of Statistics-BPS (Indonesia), August 2024

### Family Economic Roles: Normativity, Interpretation, and the Dynamics of Modernity

Imam Malik bin Anas (d. 93 AH/714 CE), founder of the Maliki school of thought, defined *al-nafaqah* as sufficient food to meet human needs without excess. According to Ibn Humam (d. 861 AH/1457 CE), a Hanafi scholar, *al-nafaqah* is providing for one's life needs. Al-Khathib al-Syarbini (d. 977 AH/1570 CE), a follower of the Shafi'i school, defined sustenance as a person's expenditures on those under their care. These expenditures include basic necessities such as food, clothing, housing, water, energy, and other essential household needs (Suwarno & Rahmawati, 2020).

The legal basis for determining family maintenance can be found in verse 233 of Surat al-Baqarah. According to Ibn Katsir (d. 774 AH/1373 CE), this verse establishes a father's obligation to provide for and clothe the mother of a breastfeeding baby properly, according to the customs of their respective countries and within the limits of his ability and reasonableness (Katsir, 2012). The legal basis for maintenance is also seen in the Quran Chapter An-Nisa', Verse 34. Imam Jalaluddin As-Suyuthi (d. 911 AH/1505 CE), in his interpretation of this verse, said that men, with their advantages of knowledge, intellect, and physical strength, are obliged to fulfill their duties as husbands and advise their wives if they commit *nusyūz* because men are the leaders of women (Al-Mahalli & Al-Suyuti, 1998).

Additionally, the obligation to provide for one's family is mentioned in several hadiths and is supported by the consensus of scholars. Scholars agree that a husband must provide for his wife if the conditions that make it obligatory are met, such as if the financial support arises from a valid marriage contract and the continuation of a normal marital relationship (without *nusyūz*), and if the husband is able to provide. These conditions must be met. A wife under her husband's control is not permitted to work; therefore, she must be provided for by her husband, as a slave is provided for by her master. However, the analogy (*qiyas*) between a wife and a slave does not equate the two in terms of status because analogizing something with something that is not equivalent is invalid (Suwarno & Rahmawati, 2020).

Furthermore, the majority of scholars have established several conditions for a wife to receive financial support from her husband, as stated by Wahbah al-Zuhaili (1986). First, the wife grants her husband authority over herself by either surrendering completely (*al-taslim*) or showing her willingness to do so by not refusing her husband's desires. This applies regardless of whether sexual relations have occurred. Second, the wife must be of age (*baligh*), meaning she is capable of consummation. Third, a valid marriage contract must exist; if the marriage contract is invalid (*fasid*), the husband is not obligated to provide maintenance for his wife. Fourth, the wife must not neglect

her husband's rights when under his control, unless it involves actions that are not permitted by Islamic law or caused by the husband himself, such as the wife's disobedience.

Based on this, Islam holds men responsible for providing for their families. According to Islamic teachings, husbands are obligated to provide for their families' needs and expenses according to their ability. This obligation arises from marriage and causes a man to be responsible for his wife and children. If wives work to help provide for the family, there is no text that prohibits it, and it is normal. Women may work in various fields, either independently or with others, inside or outside the home, with government or private institutions, as long as they perform their work in a dignified and polite manner and can maintain their religion while avoiding the negative impacts of such work on themselves and their environment (Muttaqin et al., 2026; Yenti, 2011).

In reality, women play a crucial role in improving society. According to Quraish Shihab (2002), the Quran explains that women have the same responsibilities as men in social matters. In fact, women have several religiously supported rights, including: First, they have the right to choose a job. Women have the right to work in various fields, either independently or with others, inside or outside the home. They can work in government or private institutions as long as they carry out their work respectfully and politely, as long as they can maintain their religion, and as long as their work does not cause harm to themselves or their families (Zafar & Abu-Hussin, 2025). Second, women have the right and obligation to study. Many verses and hadiths of the Prophet PBUH discuss the obligation to study, which applies to both men and women. It is implicitly clear that women have equal rights in education. This is in view of women's important role as the primary educators in the household who prepare the next generation (Husamah et al., 2025).

While Islam does not encourage women to work outside the home, it also does not prohibit it if circumstances force them to do so or if there is no one else to cover living expenses. History shows the profile of Khadijah, a beautiful, intelligent, wealthy, and devout woman who succeeded in business to fund the needs and interests of Islam and Muslims. Even though she had dual responsibilities, she did not neglect her primary role. Asma', the daughter of Abu Bakr, devoted all her abilities to helping her husband proselytize by doing work considered unsuitable for women.

In Islam, women are not required to seek a livelihood because husbands are responsible for providing for their families. Muslim women may work to support their families, as long as they do not expose their *aurat* or become arrogant. They may leave the house as long as they are doing so for a matter permitted by Sharia and it does not compromise their honor or purity (Firdaus et al., 2020). Women's careers are permitted as long as they observe several Sharia provisions so that their careers do not deviate from Islamic law. First, career women must ask their husbands or guardians for permission because Islamic law requires it. Second, their work must not involve interacting with strangers. Professional women must avoid *iktilath*. Third, career women should cover their *aurat* from non-mahram men and avoid anything that could cause *fitnah*. Fourth, they must commit to Islamic morality, showing sincerity and honesty in their speech (Rosydiana, 2023).

There is essentially no minimum or maximum limit to the amount of maintenance that a husband can provide. According to Ibn Katsir, there is no limit to the amount or duration of maintenance for a wife. This concept is closely related to the key words *matâ'* and *ma'rûf*, which are used in the Quran. Various exegetes translate these words differently. Ibn Kathir defines *matâ'* as an obligation to provide *mut'ah* (entertainment) to a divorced woman, as compensation for the pain caused by the divorce. This verse emphasizes the importance of husbands providing for their wives and of each partner fulfilling their obligations according to their respective capacities or abilities (Al-Damsyiqi, 1999).

Based on this, it is clear that, in Islam, a wife helping her husband meet the family's needs is not prohibited, as long as it is done in accordance with Sharia law and with the agreement of both parties. This does not diminish the husband's obligation to provide for his family because, in Islam, the obligation to provide for the family is based on marriage itself, *istimta'*, and *ihtibas*. Therefore, if a wife helps her husband meet the family's needs, it is solely an expression of her care and affection for her husband and family. It does not negate her husband's responsibility to provide for them.

### Family Maintenance in Discourses of Obligation, Justice, and Equality

The Quran contains several verses that impose the obligation of family support on husbands. One such verse is Al-Baqarah 2:233. According to al-Baghawi, as quoted by Nuraeni and Masruchin, the central theme of this verse is breastfeeding. The connection to the husband's obligation to provide for his wife is that breastfeeding a child requires money. This expense is the husband's responsibility. The obligation to provide for the family is based on the husband being the head of the household. This is implied by the words *رَزَقُهُنَّ* and *وَكَسَوْتُهُنَّ*. In his interpretation, al-Baghawi defines the word *رزق* as expenses or financial support, while *كسوة* means clothing (Masruchin & Nuraeni, 2021). It is important to understand that the context of this verse is divorce. In this case, a divorced wife who is still breastfeeding her child is still the husband's responsibility.

In short, the above verse implies an obligation to cover breastfeeding costs. These costs become the husband's obligation because the child will bear his name. In essence, the child is considered born for him because he will be the child's legal father (Darmawan, 2021). Therefore, it is clear that the obligation to provide sustenance is a burden placed on a husband. Al-Thabari explains that this verse commands the father of the breastfed child to provide sustenance to the mother of the breastfed child in the form of commonly eaten food and clothing like what the husband wears. Allah SWT knows the circumstances of each servant and the extent of their wealth or poverty because some are wealthy, some are poor, and some are of moderate means (Al-Thabari, 2001).

Furthermore, the verse that establishes the obligation to provide for one's family is found in the Quran Chapter An-Nisa, Verse 34. Imam Al-Qurthubi interprets this verse by saying that a husband is obligated to provide for his wife and defend her. When a husband can no longer provide for his wife, he ceases to be her leader. Therefore, if a husband is no longer the leader of his wife, the marriage contract is invalidated because there is no longer a purpose for the marriage. Al-Qurthubi indicates that if a husband can no longer provide for his wife, the marriage contract is also invalidated. This is also the opinion of the schools of thought of Imams Malik and Shafi'i. However, according to Imam Hanafi, the marriage contract is not invalidated because a husband who cannot provide for his wife is like a person who is in debt and is given a grace period until he can pay it off (Al-Qurthubi, 2003).

Based on the evidence, interpretations, and views of the classical scholars mentioned above, it is clear that Allah SWT has made it the husband's responsibility to provide for his wife, which is a logical consequence of marriage. Thus, married women are guaranteed sustenance from their husbands in a reasonable manner. Since this obligation is so significant, if a husband is unable to fulfill it, the marriage becomes invalid. Some also argue that the husband is indebted to his wife and must pay when he is able, while the marriage remains valid.

The understanding of classical scholars is not the same as the opinion of contemporary Islamic scholars and experts, such as Muhammad Syahrur. When interpreting the Quran Chapter An-Nisa Verse 34, Syahrur states that the word *قوامون* can be fulfilled by both men and women. Sometimes men are superior to other men, and sometimes women are superior to other women. Alternatively, men may be superior to women, or women may be superior to men (Shahrur, 2000). Superiority in this context is not determined by physical appearance, but rather by expertise and scientific knowledge. Then, Allah explains that superiority is seen in a person's wealth, which is not limited to a person's ability to provide for their family. Rather, it encompasses a broader area, including the ability to invest in sectors such as trade, industry, agriculture, education, and teaching (Shahrur, 2000). Some scholars, however, note methodological similarities in their approaches to interpreting the Quran, especially in their efforts to contextualize Islamic teachings for modern society. Shahrur's work has shifted the classical scholars' understanding of sustenance from the husband's sole obligation to a shared obligation of the husband or wife, depending on who is superior (Hasanah et al., 2025).

Amina Wadud expressed a similar opinion with different wording. She argued that the word *قوامون* should not be understood solely in the context of the husband-wife relationship. Instead, she

said, it should be understood in a broader context: society as a whole. She rejected interpretations that emphasized the superiority of men over women. She offered a new concept called the “functional” concept. This concept describes the functional relationship between men and women in society as a whole (Irsyadunnas, 2015). According to this concept, men and women both have a responsibility to build a society that strengthens each other. Thus, *qawwamun* is understood as a man’s ability to provide physical protection and material support to women. If a man cannot fulfill his responsibilities, he is not worthy of being called a *qawwam*, or leader (Wadud, 1999). The central message of interpreting the above verse using a feminist hermeneutic approach is that either the husband or the wife can play the role of leader.

### **Contextualising the Double Movement Approach in Modern Family Maintenance**

The modern era is characterized by significant changes, including technological advances, urbanization, increased social mobility, and shifts in social norms and values. Modern society evolved from traditional societies that underwent changes in all areas, including culture, politics, economics, and social life. Lifestyles have become more complex, technologically advanced, and rapidly changing. Modern society is also a social order that prioritizes rationality, universalism, and functional specialization. It includes an education system adapted to the needs of the times (Rizik, 2021).

Traditionally, the man (husband) has been the breadwinner of the family, while the wife has been more dominant in managing the household. However, this situation is certainly not the same in the modern era, where both husbands and wives play active roles outside the home. It is now common for wives to dominate in terms of work and income (Alhadhrami et al., 2018). This change is due to the pressure for women’s emancipation and strong advocacy for gender equality, both of which have significantly impacted family life, particularly in terms of family maintenance. Given the ongoing social dynamics, including within Muslim families, this phenomenon inevitably affects the legal status of modern family maintenance.

This phenomenon is one of the contemporary issues that must be addressed through contemporary *ijtihad*. *Ijtihad* is a serious and sincere effort to create new legal rules in response to legal issues that arise in the modern era. This process involves a structured, multifaceted approach that uses scientific methods and *usul al-fiqh* to find relevant, just legal solutions while considering social realities and the context of the times. Using this method, a *mujtahid* can discover the fundamental spirit of Islamic teachings: justice, benefit, and equality (Al-Qaradawi, 1998).

One phenomenal figure whose method of *ijtihad* is relevant to answering the issue of family maintenance in the modern era is Fazlur Rahman (Nugroho et al., 2023). According to Rahman, the Quran and hadith substantively form the basis for action in this world (Rahman, 1979). They both provide guidance on how humans should behave in relation to one another. God exists in the minds of humans to regulate behavior when humans are religiously and morally intelligent. The regulation referred to by Rahman is the essence of something. According to him, in medieval history, regulation was not based on essence but on the objects of concrete human experience (Rahman, 1979). Human experience became an end in itself while neglecting the ethical and legal aspects of the Quran.

In this regard, Rahman offers a hermeneutic theory of interpretation called the “double movement.” The theory works as follows: First, it moves from the contemporary situation to the time when the Quran was revealed. Second, it moves back from the revelation to the contemporary situation. Examining the historical context of the revelation is crucial because the Quran is a divine response conveyed through human means, specifically through prophetic reasoning (the Prophet Muhammad’s mind). This divine response is evident in the socio-moral context in which the Prophet Muhammad delivered his message (Yusuf & Sadat, 2021).

The first movement consists of two stages. First, an interpreter must understand the statements of the Quran by studying the historical situations surrounding the text, including both specific and general contexts (e.g., religion, society, customs, institutions, and behavior) (Rahman, 1979). Second, the Quran’s answers to specific situations are generalized into general moral and

social statements, such as justice, equality, and freedom. These moral and social statements are derived from specific texts by thoroughly considering their socio-historical context.

Meanwhile, the second movement is from the situation of revelation to the contemporary situation, in accordance with Rahman's statement: "The second is to transition from a general view to a specific one that must be formulated and realized now. In other words, the general must be embodied in the present, concrete socio-historical context" (Rahman, 1979). General principles derived from specific texts must be adapted to the socio-historical context of contemporary Muslim society. In this context, knowledge of the "past" alone is insufficient. Rather, an in-depth study of the contemporary situation and analysis of related elements are required. With this model, priorities can be established, and the values of the Quran can be implemented in new ways. If the double movement interpretation theory is applied properly, then all the commands and instructions of the Quran can be revived (Ainurrofiq, 2019).

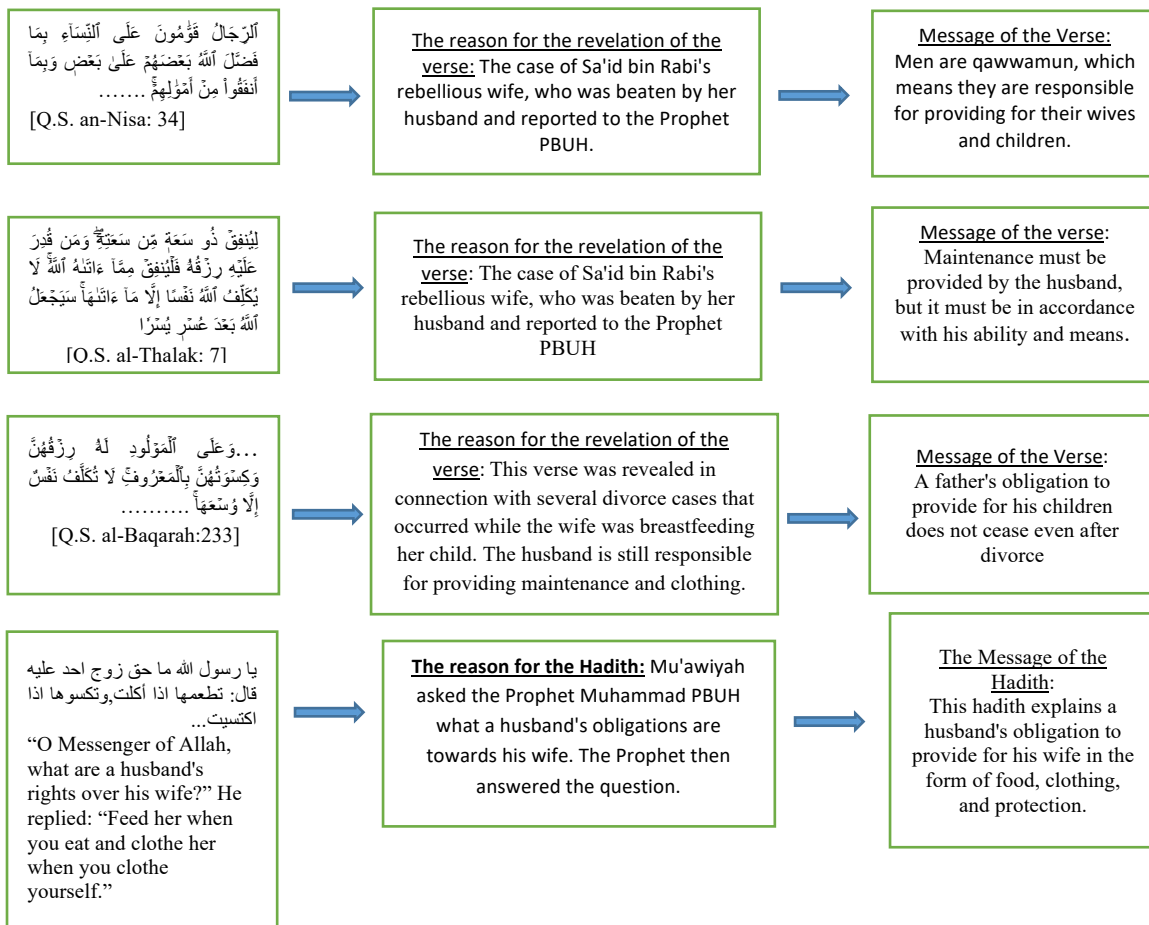
Rahman strongly emphasizes a holistic understanding of the Quran. He criticizes the current atomistic interpretation of the Quran, which ignores its unified message (Wekke, 2025). According to Rahman, the Quran is a concrete and coherent worldview without contradictions when understood holistically. In the context of Rahman's theory, this holistic understanding is achieved by studying the macro situation of Arab society at the time of revelation and generalizing to capture the text's moral message, the purpose of the Quran's revelation (Izza, 2021).

According to Islamic family law, the husband is responsible for providing for the household. This obligation is based on three verses: Chapter An-Nisaa' Verse 34, Al-Thalaq 7, and Al-Baqara 233. These three verses inform that, as the head of the family, the husband is fully responsible for protecting and providing for his family (wife and children) in accordance with his means. Zamakshari's interpretation of Chapter An-Nisa, Verse 34, which uses the word "*qawwamun*", illustrates the ideal husband's leadership and responsibility towards his wife (Al-Khawarizi, n.d.). However, it is important to remember that the word used is "*al-rijal*," meaning masculinity, and not all men have advantages over women. Thus, the word "*al-rijal*" in the verse does not refer to gender but to the virtues and advantages possessed by men and women alike (Arsal, 2020). The central message of this verse is that husbands and wives have different strengths, and neither is superior to the other. Rather, they complement each other so that the household runs smoothly. This verse does not indicate that men are superior; rather, it emphasizes the heavy responsibility of the husband as the head of the family.

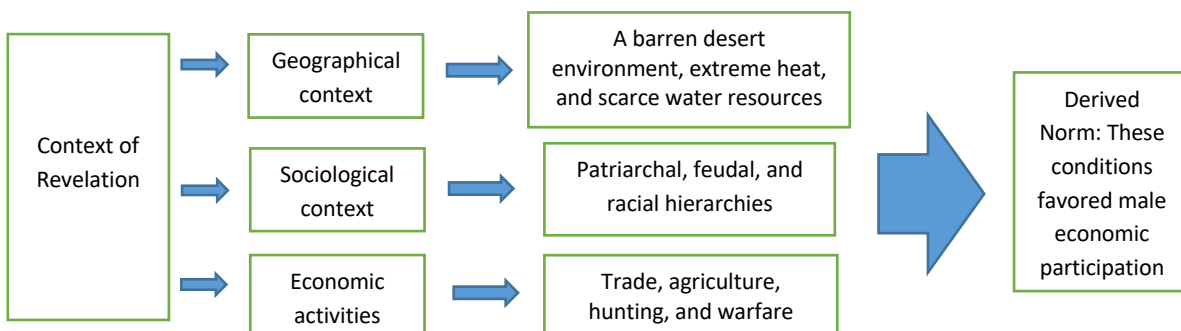
An analysis of the socio-historical context of the verses on husbands' obligation to support their families is relevant to the social conditions of that time. Men were dominant in the workforce, while women were not allowed to work outside the home. Women were responsible for managing the household and preparing for the needs of their husbands and children. However, this does not mean that no women worked outside the home; some did, but they were not as free as they are in the modern era. According to Muhammad Quraish Shihab (1992), in the early days of Islam, women engaged in various activities. Examples include Ummu Salim bint Malhan, who was a beautician; Khadijah bint Khuailid, the wife of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, who was a merchant; Raithah, the wife of Abdullah bin Mas'ud, who worked because her husband and children could not support the family; and Al-Syifa, a woman skilled in writing, who was appointed by Caliph Umar bin Khaththab as an official in charge of the Medina market.

Contextually, it can be concluded that the revelation of Quranic verses regarding family expenses being the responsibility of the husband rather than the wife was certainly influenced by the situations and conditions experienced and developed in social life at that time. The revelation came directly to the Arabian Peninsula and was conveyed by the Prophet PBUH. It was not conveyed to a culturally void society, but rather to a cultured society that already had knowledge in various fields. However, at that time, they lacked civilization and human values, including in domestic life. Husbands tended to be authoritarian and belittle the role of their wives because they worked and provided for their families (Newby, 2021). The following schematic can be used to gain

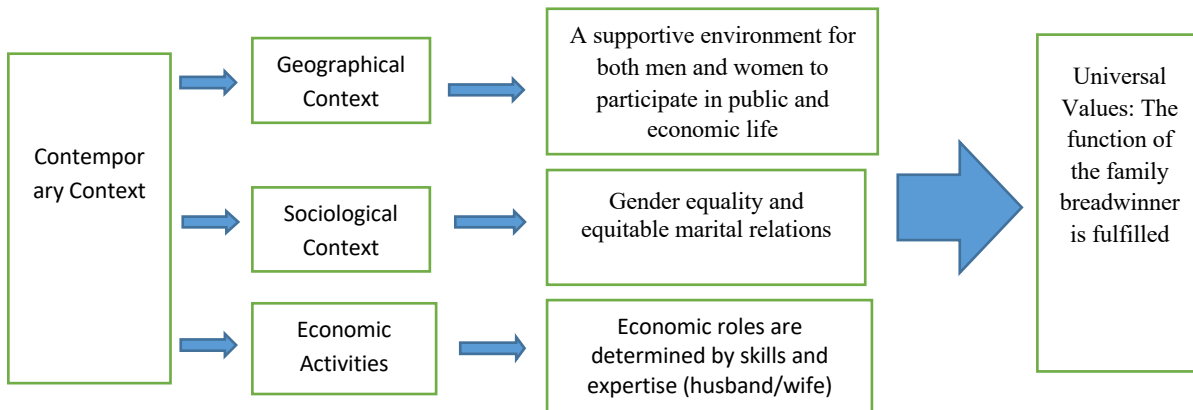
a complete understanding of the chronology and message of the verses on financial support in the Quran and Hadith:



As stated in the above text, the husband's role as provider of sustenance is certainly relevant to the macroanalysis of *asbabun nuzul*, which includes the geography of Arabia and the sociocultural system of the Arab people at that time. First, geographically, the Arabian Peninsula is a barren region dominated by deserts, mountains, and arid highlands with limited water sources, resulting in a nomadic lifestyle (Hitti, 1974). This shows that the Arabian Peninsula is a dangerous and challenging region for women to navigate. Second, socio-culturally, the Arab people are known to adhere to patriarchal, feudal, and racial systems (Al Faruq, 2024). These geographical and sociological conditions impacted the work and livelihoods of people in the Arab world at that time, who tended to rely on physical strength for occupations such as trade, livestock farming, agriculture, hunting, and warfare. Thus, it is highly relevant that the verse states that men are strong and suitable for working and providing for their families, as illustrated in the following diagram:



The situation and conditions described in the verse are certainly different from those of the modern era, in which people's way of life is constantly influenced by scientific and technological advances. In terms of family livelihoods, there have certainly been changes and dynamics because access to work and income is open to both men and women. In fact, there are more job opportunities for women than men. Nowadays, it is almost impossible to distinguish between the types of work men and women do. This means that men and women have equal opportunities to develop their potential and work in various fields and places. The modern era's context of family livelihoods is illustrated in the following diagram:



In this modern era, the relevant concept of family income is that both spouses have the opportunity to be breadwinners because they both have the opportunity to acquire skills or expertise. Research on financial support and economic roles within the family goes beyond analyzing texts and contexts to formulate concrete normative implications in Islamic family law in Indonesia. This is done by proposing a reconstruction of norms that affirm husband-wife relationships based on partnership and equal responsibility. This can be achieved by redefining the concept of head of the family as not solely gender-based, but rather based on the principles of responsibility, deliberation, and mutual agreement. Additionally, the rights and obligations of husbands and wives should be reformulated to include alimony within the framework of proportional justice and economic capacity. This approach would acknowledge the normative basis of the husband's obligations while also recognizing the wife's economic contributions as part of the principle of reciprocity. Furthermore, this reform should be viewed through the lens of *maqāṣid al-syari'ah*—justice, protection, and benefit—and aligned with the constitutional principle of equality among citizens. This can be achieved through progressive reinterpretation of regulations such as the Compilation of Islamic Law (abbreviated as KHI Indonesian) and strengthening judicial guidelines in the Religious Court. Thus, the research is transformative, encouraging the renewal of Islamic family law responsive to modern family dynamics.

To understand the concept of *al-naḥqah* (family maintenance) through universal values, one must read the verses and hadiths not only at the legal-formal level (i.e., who is obligated to provide), but also at the level of *maqāṣid* (i.e., ethical and public interest objectives) underlying them. This approach reveals that the obligation of *naḥqah* in the Quran and Hadith is part of a value system that guarantees sustainability and justice in the family, not merely a hierarchical construct. First, justice (*al-'adālah*), based on the Quran Chapter Al-Ṭalāq [65]:7, affirms the principle of proportionality: those who can give according to their means and those who can give only according to their ability. This shows that the substance of *naḥqah* is distributive justice, not merely a fixed burden. In the modern context, justice can be understood as dividing economic responsibilities according to the actual circumstances of the husband and wife. Second, love (*al-mawaddah wa al-rahmah*), based on Chapter al-Rum (30:21), places the relationship between spouses within a framework of love and mercy. Financial support is not merely a financial obligation, but an expression of responsibility

based on care and empathy. Thus, fulfilling the family's needs becomes a concrete manifestation of love. Third, trust (*al-amānah*): In the hadith narrated by Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim about "*kullukum rā'in*", the husband is referred to as a leader who will be held accountable. This shows that *naḥqah* is a moral and spiritual trust, not merely a social obligation. Fourth, equality (*al-musāwah*). Although classical texts place the husband as the party obliged to provide for the family, the value of equality can be understood at the level of partnership. Chapter al-Baqarah (2:187) refers to spouses as each other's "clothing", indicating a relationship of mutual protection and complementarity. In this context, economic roles can be flexible without abandoning the principle of responsibility. Fifth, *al-shūrā* (deliberation), based on Chapter Al-Baqarah [2]: 233, emphasizes the importance of deliberation in family matters. This indicates that the ideal financial support arrangement should be mutually agreed upon and include financial management and the division of domestic and public roles. Sixth is protection (*himāyah*). The concept of *qiwāmah* in Chapter Al-Nisā' [4:34] is often understood as leadership. Ethically, however, it also means protection and responsibility. This protection includes the economic, social, and psychological security of family members.

Last but not least, in the past, physical abilities were prioritized, whereas in the modern era, skills are prioritized. Nowadays, husbands and wives can determine who will be the breadwinner based on their respective skills. If it turns out that the wife is more competent than her husband, then she becomes the breadwinner, and the obligation rests with her. The contextualization and transformation of the maintenance law is relevant to what Ibn Hazm stated in his work: "If the husband is poor while his wife is well-off, then the obligation of maintenance is borne by the wife" (Al-Andalusi, 1431). This opinion inspires spouses to complement each other to maintain the integrity of the household because the idea is to complement each other.

## Conclusion

This study illustrates that reinterpreting the text and context of the maintenance provision through Rahman's approach presents a new paradigm: the husband's obligation can be imposed on the wife. This is in line with the universal Islamic value that maintenance must function within the family. This is based on the geographical factors of the Arab region, which is a desert with a hot climate, making it more feasible for men than women. Similarly, Arab society adheres to a patriarchal, feudal, and racial system in which men are considered stronger and more decisive in all matters, including providing financial support for their families. Although men are referred to as breadwinners, this role is particular and temporary.

In the modern era, especially in Indonesia, acceptance of this paradigm is particularly relevant, as the obligation to provide for the family has shifted from husbands to wives due to challenges in employment opportunities, mass education, population growth, and low wages, resulting in the phenomenon of female breadwinners. Therefore, Muslim families can realize the method of understanding the text of *al-naḥqah* using universal values such as justice, compassion, trust, equality, deliberation, and protection, which has proven relevant in the modern era. This study proposes a new concept of *qiwāmah*, suggesting it should not be understood merely as gender-based structural authority, but rather as an ethical and functional responsibility that adapts to the family's socio-economic context. Within this framework, female breadwinners are not viewed as a deviation from Islamic norms but as a form of social adaptation consistent with Quranic principles of justice, welfare, and cooperation within the family. This concept also reinforces the idea that Quranic values should be interpreted through a process of understanding the historical context of revelation and reapplying its moral principles to contemporary realities, ensuring that Islamic family law remains relevant to the dynamics of modern society.

This study contributes to the strengthening of family financial stability, investment in children's education, and improvement of living standards through the joint religious participation of husbands and wives in family life and academic studies. Therefore, this research proposes a new conceptual model, "contextual-functional *qiwāmah*", in which family leadership is determined by responsibility, capability, and economic and social contributions, rather than by gender, in contemporary contexts. One limitation of this study is that the results do not fully represent the complexity of family sustenance practices in global

Muslim communities. Methodologically, the study is limited by the lack of access to primary data in the form of in-depth interviews with female breadwinners from diverse backgrounds, which may introduce bias when generalizing the findings. Therefore, future researchers are recommended to expand the study with a multidisciplinary approach (sociology, anthropology, law, and economics) and conduct comparative research between Indonesia and other Muslim countries. This will provide a more comprehensive picture of the dynamics of the paradigm shift in modern family income. This will enrich the scientific literature and provide practical contributions to the development of Islamic family law that is responsive to social change.

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## Conflict of Interest

The researcher hereby respectfully declares that he has no affiliation with, or involvement in, any organization or entity that may have a financial interest (including, but not limited to, honoraria, educational grants, participation in speakers' bureaus, membership, employment, consultancies, stock ownership, other equity interests, expert testimony, or patent licensing arrangements), nor any non-financial interests, such as personal or professional relationships, affiliations, knowledge, or beliefs related to the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript. Accordingly, this statement is made truthfully and with full awareness.

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