



## Negotiating Gender Roles: The Shift of Wives Role as the Main Breadwinners in Wijirejo Village, Indonesia

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### Abstract

*This study aims to analyze the transformation of wives' economic roles as primary breadwinners in Muslim families in Wijirejo Village, Indonesia, and to examine its normative legitimacy through the perspectives of *maṣlaḥah* and Robert K. Merton's structural-functionalism theory. The study addresses the tension between the normative construction of Islamic family law, which positions the husband as *qawwām* with primary financial responsibility, and the social reality in which wives increasingly assume the role of main breadwinners due to economic pressures and unstable husbands' incomes. Employing a qualitative sociological approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with 12 wives who serve as primary breadwinners, participatory observation, and documentation, and analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model. The findings indicate that this role shift represents a form of structural and social adaptation grounded in the principle of *maṣlaḥah*. The wife's role as the main breadwinner does not contradict the *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* as long as it generates benefits and prevents harm. Integrating *maṣlaḥah* with Merton's functionalism reveals how Muslim families maintain social balance and religious values amid economic change. This study contributes to Islamic family law scholarship by offering an integrative socio-normative perspective on gender roles in contemporary Muslim society.*

**Keywords:** Breadwinner Wife; Gender Transformation; Livelihood; *Maṣlaḥah*; Structural Functional.

### Abstrak

Studi ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis transformasi peran ekonomi istri sebagai pencari nafkah utama dalam keluarga Muslim di Desa Wijirejo, Indonesia, serta menelaah legitimasi normatifnya melalui perspektif *maṣlaḥah* (manfaat) dan teori structural-fungsionalisme Robert K. Merton. Permasalahan yang dikaji adalah ketegangan antara konstruksi normatif hukum keluarga Islam yang menempatkan suami sebagai *qawwām* dan pemikul kewajiban nafkah dengan realitas sosial yang menunjukkan meningkatnya jumlah istri yang menopang perekonomian keluarga akibat ketidakstabilan penghasilan suami dan tekanan

ekonomi. Menggunakan jenis kualitatif dengan pendekatan sosiologis, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara dengan 12 informan yang merupakan pencari nafkah utama keluarga mereka, pengamatan partisipatif, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles & Huberman. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pergeseran peran ini merupakan bentuk adaptasi struktural dan sosial berdasarkan prinsip *maslahah*, di mana peran istri sebagai pencari nafkah keluarga tidak bertentangan dengan tujuan hukum Syariah, asalkan hal tersebut membawa manfaat dan tidak menimbulkan kerugian. Integrasi teori *maslahah* dengan fungsionalisme Merton menjelaskan bagaimana keluarga Muslim beradaptasi dengan tekanan ekonomi tanpa kehilangan keseimbangan sosial dan nilai-nilai agama mereka. Penelitian ini berkontribusi dalam memperkaya studi hukum keluarga Islam melalui pendekatan integratif yang menggabungkan norma-norma agama dengan teori sosial, sehingga membuka peluang untuk penelitian lebih lanjut terkait dinamika gender dan kepemimpinan keluarga dalam konteks masyarakat Muslim kontemporer.

**Kata Kunci:** Istri Penopang Keluarga; Transformasi Gender; Mata Pencaharian; *Maṣlahah*; Fungsionalisme Struktural.

## Introduction

Changes in the structure of Muslim families in various parts of the world show a global shift towards a reorganisation of gender roles, particularly in economic aspects (Samani & Marinova, 2020). This phenomenon is not only evident in the Middle East, which has undergone significant economic changes in the 21st century (Guessous, 2016; Shih, 2014), but also an increase in Southeast Asia (Fulu & Miedema, 2016; Ghodrati, 2020). Rapid modernisation, increasing economic pressures, and shifting social values have contributed to a reconfiguration of domestic and public relations between men and women (Turnaturi, 2018). This shift also challenges the normative structure of classical Islamic law, which traditionally places men as *qawwām* (protector and maintainer) or the party responsible for providing financial support (Ahmad & Rasheed, 2018; Nelli et al., 2024). In Indonesia, this phenomenon is increasingly evident in rural areas, which were previously considered relatively stable in maintaining gender roles, thereby encouraging new dynamics regarding how the principles in Islamic legal texts interact and adapt to developing social changes (Yumna et al., 2025).

The shifting gender roles phenomenon is particularly evident in Wijirejo Village, Bantul, Yogyakarta, which has experienced a striking shift in the economic structure of families. Population data shows that 2,848 women in this village are actively working, one of whom is being the employee in home industry of *emping* (belinjau cracker) (*Data Agregat Kependudukan DIY*, 2022). Wives involved in this sector do not merely contribute as economic supporters to their family, but have become the main

source of household income due to the instability of their husbands' earnings (Assaiq et al., 2025). This situation not only causes tension between *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) norms which emphasise obligation to provide financial support lies with the husband and social reality, but also has implications for the structure of authority, the distribution of domestic roles, and the balance of family relationships (Nisa & Muhtadin, 2023). This situation prompted this study to critically examine the transformation of the role of wives as primary breadwinners and how this is negotiated within the framework of Islamic family law, especially amid increasing economic pressures and changes in social structures.

So far, studies on women's involvement in the workforce from an Islamic perspective have generally focused on normative and ethical aspects, such as the importance of a husband's permission, ethics in the workplace, and the natural role of women in the domestic sphere (Assaiq, 2025; Farida & Kasdi, 2021; Miranti et al., 2022). On the other hand, several studies show a shift in the role of women, where wives are no longer limited to household activities, but also participate actively and competitively in the public sphere (Hermanto & Ismail, 2020; Medved, 2016; Neményi & Takács, 2016). Unlike these previous studies, this research places women's participation in the family economy within a multidisciplinary framework. This approach combines the concept of *maslahah* (benefit), oriented towards benefit and the avoidance of harm, with Robert K. Merton's structural-functionalism theory. The integration of these two concepts is used to understand the dynamics of social balance and gender role relations in Muslim family systems (Treviño, 2017). Through its framework on structural and functional aspects, Merton's theory provides analytical tools to explore how families adapt to economic changes and maintain their social functions.

The academic urgency of this article lies in its novelty in bridging the persistent tension between normative legal provisions and dynamically evolving social realities, particularly in the context of increasing economic pressures facing Muslim families and increasing uncertainty regarding the husband's income structure. This study goes beyond a purely doctrinal reading of maintenance by demonstrating how shifting economic responsibilities generate broader implications for family resilience, child rearing patterns, and marital relations. Its novelty is further reflected in linking this socio-legal transformation to concrete policy implications, including the formulation of women's economic empowerment programs, family resilience intervention models, and the renewal of Islamic family law discourse to be more socially responsive. By situating empirical family dynamics within the framework of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, this article provides an original perspective that redirects Islamic family law from a static, normative paradigm to a welfare and protection based legal approach that aligns with the realities of contemporary Muslim societies.

## Research Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with a sociological perspective to examine the transformation of the role of wives as primary breadwinners in Wijirejo Village, Bantul, Indonesia. The village was chosen due to the phenomenon of gender role transformation, particularly in the home industry sector, which dominates this region (Sugiyono, 2020). This study was conducted with informants selected using purposive sampling, consisting of 15 people from five married couples and two people who had been left by their partners, namely Mrs. SA and Mr. SU, Mrs. YA and Mr. KI, Mrs. NU and Mr. IS, Mr. SF and Mr. SU, Mrs. MU and Mr. WA, Mrs. SK, & Mrs. PO.

Data collection was conducted through interviews, participatory observation, and documentation of village demographic data. Interviews focused on understanding informants' perceptions of the shifting economic roles of wives. At the same time, observation was used to directly observe the dynamics of interaction and the process of role negotiation within families. Data analysis applied the Miles & Huberman interactive analysis model, which included the stages of data reduction, presentation of results, and conclusion.

In the analysis stage, this study combines *maslahah* and structural functionalism theories as its main theoretical foundations as those two complement each other in terms of normative legitimacy in Islamic law and social balance in sociological theory. Through the *maslahah* perspective, all forms of activities that benefit the family, including the role of the wife as the main breadwinner, are considered valid as long as they do not conflict with the *Maqasid al-Syariah* (objectives of Islamic law) to maintain benefit and avoid disadvantage. Meanwhile, Merton's functionalism views this shift in roles as a form of structural adaptation that ensures the stability of the family system through the shaping of new functions. The integration of these two theories enables the study to interpret the transformation of the wife's economic role not as a deviation, but as an adaptive strategy and a form of social *maslahah* in Muslim families facing modern economic pressures (Sutiapermana, 2022). To ensure the reliability of the findings, this study employed triangulation of sources and methods by comparing information from multiple informants and various data collection techniques. This approach provides a comprehensive image of the wives' contribution as the main breadwinners to the household economic resilience, as well as their impact on social balance and religious values in the lives of Muslim families in Wijirejo Village (Moon, 2019).

## Result and Discussion

### Responsibility for Family Maintenance from the Perspective of Islamic Law and Indonesian Regulations

Livelihood is crucial in establishing a household foundation, as the economy is one of the key determinants of family welfare. The meaning of livelihood, when associated with marital problems, implies that it is something that has been taken from the husband's property to fulfill the needs of his wife and family (Yasin et al., 2023). Sulaiman Rasyid defines livelihood as all needs that apply according to circumstances and places, such as food, clothing, a house, and so on. The amount of livelihood required is sufficient to meet the needs, taking into account the circumstances and abilities of the obligated person, as well as the habits of each place (Rasyid, 2000).

The obligation of the husband to provide for his wife and children has received legitimacy from religious texts and legislation. This indicates that the issue of livelihood is a significant concern that receives special attention in both Islamic law and positive state law (Gazi, 2005; Welchman, 2011). The basis of the husband's obligation to provide for himself can be found in the Nash of the Qur'an:

وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ﴿٢٣٣﴾

This verse explains that a father has an obligation to meet all his wife's needs, including food and clothing, in a *ma'ruf* manner (beneficial). A husband should provide a decent place of residence, according to his ability, for his wife. And never do anything that narrows and troubles the wife's day by placing her in an unworthy place or allowing others to live with her (Assaiq, 2025).

Likewise, a hadith narrated from Sa'ad bin Abi Waqqash, reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) once said: "You do not provide for a living to hope for the face of Allah, but you will be rewarded even if you feed your wife's mouth" (Bukhārī, 2001). The hadith can be understood as saying that Islam gives great appreciation to husbands who provide for their family members sincerely because they expect the face of Allah. The level of livelihood that a husband must provide for his wife is adjusted according to the husband's ability.

Provisions regarding livelihood in Indonesia are also contained in Law No. 1 of 1974 Concerning Marriage, namely in Article 34 paragraph (1), which reads that the husband is obliged to protect his wife and provide everything necessary for domestic life according to his ability. Then, regarding the mechanism of the husband's obligation to provide for his wife, it is explained in more detail in article 80 paragraph (4) of the Compilation of Islamic Law, where a husband, with his income, bears: a) livelihood, *kiswah* (garment, cloth), and residence for the wife, b) household

costs, treatment costs and medical expenses for the wife and children, c) education costs for children. Thus, the provisions regarding livelihood, both in the Nash and the compilation of Islamic law, all state that the husband is the sole person responsible for fulfilling the household's livelihood (Salim & Wulandari, 2023; Suhaili et al., 2020).

### **The Transformation of the Wives Role as Primary Breadwinners in Wijirejo Village**

Based on data obtained from the village government, there are at least six *emping* (belinjau cracker) household industries that are still actively producing (Buku Monografi Desa Wijirejo, 2021). The existence of this household industry enables in providing job, especially for women living in this village environment. The majority of workers in the *emping* industry are married and family friendly women. This is because women are considered to have more skills and precision in the production process. In addition, by empowering women with families, it is expected that their families' economies will benefit, and they will be provided with employment and skills (Antoni et al., 2022).

In this case, the main breadwinner wives are female workers in the *emping* industry. Although in reality, the husband also works, it is the wife's income that remains the primary source for the family (Sahputra et al., 2021). To better understand the lives of each respondent in this study, the author describes the respondents' statements as follows:

1. Mrs. SA and Mr. SU

Mrs. SA is one of the workers in the *emping* household industry, while her husband works as an odd jobs worker. Mrs. SA has been employed for 4 years. In her home life, Mrs. SA plays the role of the main breadwinner. This is because Mrs. SA has a fixed monthly income. Mrs. SA works from Monday to Saturday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the afternoon. Regarding the division of roles and duties in the household, Mrs. SA and her husband agreed to work together, especially since their children are grown enough to do household chores. As a wife who has responsibility for her husband and children, Mrs. SA continues to carry out her work happily. Likewise, the husband always supports Mrs. SA's activities. He said that there are more positive impacts arising from his participation in earning a living, such as fulfilling primary household needs, paying for children's schools, and meeting other daily needs. On the other hand, the negative impact he feels is the limited time to gather and communicate with family members, as well as the difficulty of dividing time between social activities in the community. This is because when she has finished work, her body is tired, so she needs more time to rest.

2. Mrs. YA and Mr. KI

During the marriage period, Mrs. YA was the main breadwinner in the family. This is because her husband does not have a job or a steady income. Mrs. YA's motivation to work is to support her two children and meet her own life needs. The habit of working has been inherent in Mrs. YA since she was young. As a working mother, Mrs. YA spends more time at work. He has been working for approximately 5 years. Mrs. YA works every day, from 08:00 to 16:00. The income earned as a worker is used to pay for children's school fees and daily shopping, and a portion is set aside as savings. The negative impact felt by Mrs. YA is related to her physical condition. She felt tired when she came home from work, having spent the entire day there, and still had to fulfil her obligations as a wife and mother. On the other hand, Mr. KI thinks that despite his wife's job, the responsibility for the child remains with the mother. With conditions like this, children do not get maximum attention. Often, this also triggers quarrels in the household.

3. Mrs. NU and Mr. IS

Mrs. NU is a housewife who becomes the main breadwinner for her family. In spite of Mr. IS job as an odd job worker in construction, his income is uncertain, and it is a reason for Mrs. NU to consider a job that provides a stable monthly income. Mrs. NU chooses to become an *emping* worker because she is lack of skill, so it was difficult to find another job. The positive impact for Mrs. NU's family from working as an employee is that it helps the family's economy. Mrs. NU's income is used to finance the family's daily needs, make community contributions, pay off debts, and cover children's school fees. Meanwhile, the negative impact as conveyed by Mr. IS while his wife was working, was the difficulty of dividing time between family and work, limited time for childcare, and several unsolved household chores.

4. Mr. SF and Mr. SU

Mrs. Siti Fatimah has been an *emping* worker for approximately 20 years. Previously, Mr. SU worked as a gardener, but after the accident that occurred in 2017, he was unable to work and be the main breadwinner; therefore, Mrs. SF took over the role of the main breadwinner for her family. Mrs. SF knew that the one who was obliged to make a living was her husband. However, because of her husband's condition, Mrs. SF decided to continue working for the sake of life. In one day, Mrs. SF can process 30 kilograms of cassava into chips. The *emping* made by Mrs. SF is not only distributed to the retailers but also marketed online. The positive impact felt by Mrs. SF from her work is the fulfilment of daily household needs, as well as the ability to purchase other necessities such as clothes and vehicles, which enables her to support her children.

Meanwhile, the negative impact on Mrs. SF is her physical condition, which is often compromised because she has to work extra hours, and sometimes there are disputes due to the burden she carries, as well as the lack of good communication with her family.

5. Mrs. MU and Mr. WA

Mrs. MU is the main breadwinner in her family and the head of the family because her husband has passed away. For Mrs. MU, work is no longer an option but a necessity. Even though she feels physically incapable, Mrs. MU will continue to work hard to meet her family's economic needs. The income made by Mrs. MU is used to cover children's school fees, daily expenses, electricity bills, and to pay off debts. The most significant thing Mrs. MU feels with her dual role and the burden she carries is the decline in her physical condition. Mrs. MU also felt tiredness and boredom, but she had no other choice but to continue living her work and life. The conflict she feels is a sense of fatigue because she works and struggles alone to survive and support her children after her husband passed away.

6. Mrs. SK

Mrs. SK is an *emping* worker with the status of the main breadwinner in the family. Mrs. SK has been married twice during her life and has three children. The first child is from the first husband (who has been divorced), and the next two children come from the second husband. Mrs. SK eventually decided to work because her husband had fled. As a cement worker, Mrs. SK can produce 10 kilograms of cement daily from *belinjau* materials. Mrs. SK also works as a housekeeper from house to house. The positive impact of Mrs. SK's work is that she can support her three children and pay for their education. In addition, Mrs. SK believes that by working and earning her own money, she is more independent and does not let others interfere with her life or that of her children. Meanwhile, the negative impact felt by Mrs. SK, given her role as the main breadwinner at this time, is the limited time and moments of togetherness with her children, as parenting is often taken over by grandmothers or aunts.

7. Mrs. PO

Mrs. PO is an *emping* worker and has owned an *emping* home industry for approximately 30 years. Initially, Mrs. PO started this business for economic reasons, as her husband was unemployed. Mrs. PO realized that it was her husband who was obliged to meet the family's needs, but after her husband's death, she became the main breadwinner. Mrs. PO's chips business can produce 20 to 30 kilograms of cassava chips in one day. The positive impact felt by Mrs. PO is that she can meet her family's needs and maintain their economic stability. In addition to having a positive effect on her family, Mrs. PO's business can also benefit the

neighbors' economy, as she works with them around her house. The negative effects that Mrs. PO felt as the main breadwinner in the family included a lack of attention to her child's growth, strained communication within the family, and, not infrequently, fatigue, which led to disputes with her children.

Based on the results of interviews with the seven families of *emping* workers, in general, the wives' participation in work is primarily to meet the cost of living and family needs due to the difficult economic conditions. The wives realize that, with the family's unstable financial condition and the rising cost of living, a new problem will certainly arise in their family (Rispanyo, 2021). In addition, the husband's condition is also a reason for wives to work, which is divided into three categories: husbands with low and uncertain incomes, husbands who do not work, and husbands who have passed away or gone away. The income they earn as *emping* workers is the main source of income to support their family's life (Fesanrey et al., 2020).

The portrait of the wife's life as a breadwinner in the family, which has affected workers in Wijirejo Village, has had both positive and negative impacts. The various impacts caused by this phenomenon are logical consequences of changing the role of the wife as the main breadwinner. The most important positive impact felt is related to the stability of the family's economy and the fulfilment of daily household needs. This stability is because the wives' monthly income tends to be certain and stable. Another positive impact is the skills improvement, financial independence for the wife, and tolerance among family members, which are valuable qualities that the wife develops. Meanwhile, the negative impact of the wife's role as a breadwinner is evident in her negligence in several areas of her obligations, the lack of attention and time for the family, and the emergence of internal conflicts within the family. This negative impact is caused by the lack of intensity during family meeting time (Husni et al., 2015). However, if the husband has allowed his wife to work and earn a livelihood from the beginning, then both positive and negative impacts are part of the consequences that must be accepted. These impacts are a result of a wife's efforts to maintain her family's survival.

### **Maslahah (Benefit) and Legitimacy of the Wife's Economic Role**

The fulfilment of livelihood in the view of Islamic law represents the embodiment of rights and obligations within the family. Livelihood is a primary need and influential in every household's life (Rahman, 2022). In principle, the obligation to provide for the wife and children in Islamic law is an obligation imposed on the husband. However, in certain circumstances, if a husband is unable or has problems earning a livelihood, then the wife is allowed to make a financial contribution to her household. In the household, husband and wife are required to understand and

complement each other. The implementation of rights and obligations must be based on several principles, one of which is the principle of partnership and equality in household life (Imtihanah, 2020). The development of the assumption so far about work opportunities has become a societal paradigm that men have authority over public work. In contrast, women have traditionally been given authority over domestic work (household), even though the problem of roles inherent in men and women is not a matter of unchangeable God's nature, but a result of cultural construction that can evolve with the development of time and changing needs (Royhan & Sukiati, 2023).

By principle, a woman is not burdened with the obligation to earn a livelihood, both for herself and for her family. Women are entitled to a livelihood from their husbands if they are married, or from their guardians if they are not married. Islam highly respects the position of women due to their significant role and duties in a noble society, particularly as wives and mothers (Nurani, 2021). This is related to its primary role and responsibility in educating children and attending to all their household needs. On the other hand, Sharia and Islam also do not distinguish between the rights of men and women to work; both are given the opportunity and freedom to try and seek a livelihood on this earth, as contained in QS. Annisa: 32. (Ghodrati, 2020).

وَلَا تَتَمَنَّوْا مَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بِهِ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ ۚ لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا كَتَبْنَا لَهُمْ  
وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا كَتَبْنَا لَهُنَّ مِمَّا رَزَقْنَهُنَّ ۚ وَسَأَلُوا اللَّهَ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا

The verse means "and do not crave what Allah has given some of you over others. Men will be rewarded according to their deeds and women equally according to theirs. Rather, ask Allah for His bounties. Surely Allah has perfect knowledge of all things."

The verse shows that women also have the right to work. The history of the Prophet's travels has demonstrated the involvement of women in war, including providing care, treating injuries, and supplying equipment to wounded soldiers. Additionally, some women are also involved in business affairs and assist their husbands in agriculture (Fatakh, 2018).

Quraish Shihab, in his book, views a woman is allowed to work in various fields, inside and outside home, independently or with others, in government or private settings, as long as the work is done respectfully and politely and they can maintain religious beliefs, while also avoiding the negative impact of their work. In short, a woman is allowed to work as long as the job requires it, and as long as they needs the job (Shihab, 1994). The contribution of wives in financial affairs can be seen from the lives of wives who work as *emping* workers in Wijirejo Village. The primary motivation for wives to take on the role of breadwinner in the family is to meet the family's needs. Whether it is because of helping the husband or due to

conditions that require a wife to be the main breadwinner for her family. Regarding the relevance of the wife as the main breadwinner in the concept of *maslahah* (benefit), based on the results of interviews with seven families regarding her quality and influence in life, this phenomenon belongs to the category of *maṣlahah ḍarūriyyāh* (basic necessities). *Maṣlahah ḍarūriyyāh* is a benefit related to the basic needs of human beings in this world and the hereafter that are necessary to maintain and maintain *Maqāsidu asy-Syarī'ah* (the purpose of the Islamic law). In this context, livelihood is a basic need in the household. If the wife does not work or relies solely on her husband's income, it is feared that this will have a negative impact and threaten the family's survival (Firdaus et al., 2024; Kayadibi, 2019).

The easiest standard to determine whether a phenomenon is included in *maṣlahah ḍarūriyyāh* is to assess its impact. Whether the effect is by the purpose of maintaining religion (*Maqāsidu asy-Syarī'ah*) or not. To see the benefits in the families of *emping* workers, it is based on three categories of conditions:

1. Husband with low and erratic income

The efforts made by Mrs. SU, Mrs. YA, and Mrs. NU in deciding to become the main breadwinners for their families have been relevant and in line with the concept of *Maqāsidu asy-Syarī'ah* in terms of: first, *hifzu an-nasl* (the protection of lineage). In this context, the wife's decision to work for a living is an attempt to maintain the lives of their children. This is based on the idea that wives work to provide for the family's needs, including those of their children. Second, *hifzu al-aql* (the protection of intellect). The positive impact of the wife being the main breadwinner in the family is related to economic stability. In addition, the income earned by the wife is used to finance her children's education, courses, and recitation classes as an effort to avoid ignorance. The *emping* workers also receive additional classes and training, held by the local village government, to improve their skills (Nurasyiah et al., 2022).

2. The Condition of the Unemployed Husband

The next condition is caused by the husband who does not have job. Mrs. SF's efforts in working and becoming the main breadwinner have been in line with the concept of *Maqāsidu asy-Sharī'ah*, specifically in the case of *hifzu an-nafs* (the protection of life) which is the second goal of Islamic law. Mrs. SF's efforts to work and earn a living as a worker demonstrate her commitment to maintaining her life and her family's. This is because her husband is no longer able to work due to his physical condition following the accident. So that Mrs. SF became the sole breadwinner for her family. The fact that he spends money every month on food and health expenses is proof of life maintenance, as his goal is to support his family. Second, *hifzu al-māl* (the protection of

wealth) as in how Mrs. SF's role in earning a living to support her family is a manifestation of her efforts to maintain the family's wealth. Because financial support is a staple thing that must exist in the household. The income earned by Mrs. SF every month brings stability to her family's economy, helping to alleviate poverty (Muin, 2021).

3. The Passing Away or Fleeing Husband

Mrs. MU and Mrs. PO experienced this condition. Both of them became the main breadwinners for their families due to the death of their husbands. In general, if the husband has passed away, the responsibility for fulfilling the family's economic needs automatically shifts to the wife. Meanwhile, the condition experienced by Mrs. SU as the main breadwinner is due to her husband leaving and disappearing without trace for many years. These conditions force wives to work for the survival of their children. The condition of Mrs. MU, Mrs. PO, and Mrs. SU is relevant to the concept of *Maqāsīdu asy-Syari'ah* as follows: first, *hifzu an-nafs* (the protection of life) as their efforts to make a living are a form of life maintenance. This is because three of them are single breadwinners who meet all the basic needs in their families due to the absence of their husbands. Second, *hifzu al-māl* (the protection of wealth). Even though they are the sole breadwinners, they work to maintain the family's economic stability as a way of avoiding poverty. Third, *hifzu an-nasl* (the protection of lineage). The primary reason wives make a living is that they must guarantee the life of their children, including financial stability and access to education, among other essentials (Yusuf, 2020).

Regarding the rejection and acceptance of *shari'i* (compliant with Islamic law), the phenomenon of the wife as the main breadwinner in the family belongs to the category of *maṣlahah al-mulghah* (benefit in the contrary of abrogation). The term refers to the benefit linked to human intellect, but in essence, it is contrary to the text of al-Qur'ān and al-Hadith. In the context of the wife, who often plays the role of the main breadwinner, numerous benefits are obtained. However, if we refer back to the text of *Nash* (abrogation), the role of the main breadwinner is not an order or obligation imposed on the wife (Khamim et al., 2025).

Meanwhile, when viewed from the perspective of the subject being referred to, this phenomenon is included in *maṣlahah 'āmmah* (common good). This is because the impact or benefit that occurs is not only for the wife but also all family members who depend on her. Thus, the wife's choice to work and earn a living for her family is a form of prevention that aims to prevent greater harm from occurring. Wives decide to work and spend their time outside the home to maintain their family life as it should be. This follows one of the rules of *fiqh*:

### درء المفاسد مقدم على جلب المصالح

"*Rejecting harm should take precedence over bringing harm*" (Lobah, 2016; Omar & Muda, 2017).

Therefore, when a wife is faced with several choices, like to work outside the home or spend time at home, she should first consider the consequences of each decision. Then prioritize something that can reject or eliminate affection rather than taking a benefit. In this context, wives who choose to work and use their income to meet the family's basic needs make an effort to reject greater affirmation that could come from their families (Hidayati et al., 2022).

### Structural Functional Balance in Family Dynamics

Functional structural theory, as proposed by Robert K. Merton, emphasizes the concept of balance within the family system as it carries out its functions. This theory posits that each individual occupies a specific status, and certain rights and obligations accompany that status. According to this theory, it is necessary to assign roles to men and women to create social order. The application of functional structural theory in the context of the family is evident in the rules and division of roles established within a family. A clear division of roles and good implementation can help create structure and order in family life. The role referred to in the theory of structural functionalism is the division of tasks and activities that must be carried out in the family (Stinchcombe, 2017; Treviño, 2017). Looking at a phenomenon through the perspective of structural functionalism theory, two important aspects are interrelated, those are:

#### 1. Structural Aspects

Family members, including a husband, wife, and children, form a structure within the family that is considered a unit. In the phenomenon of wives as breadwinners in Wijirejo Village, there are three main elements to see the internal structure of the family:

##### a. Social status

Social status within the family serves to assess how each member can perform their role in the household social system. In Wijirejo Village, the economic role of the family is no longer determined solely by gender, but by the functional contributions each member for the family's livelihood. This is evident in the shift in the social status of wives, who have transitioned from being domestic managers to becoming the primary economic actors supporting the family's welfare. This shift has led to a restructuring of social relations within the household, where wives have gained new social recognition for their role in maintaining economic stability. At the same time, husbands have adapted to become domestic supporters or additional breadwinners. In the context of the Wijirejo *emping* community,

social status does not rely on patriarchal hierarchy, but on the productive abilities and moral responsibilities of each family member. This shift reflects more egalitarian and adaptive social structure, showing that family balance can be maintained even when gender roles are negotiated, as long as the principles of welfare, solidarity, and the social function of the family are upheld (Fakhyadi et al., 2025).

b. Social Function

The family life of *emping* workers in Wijirejo Village reveals that, despite complete family units comprising fathers, mothers, and children, challenges persist. However, in this context, not all roles can carry out their functions properly. As experienced by Mrs. SK, despite being married, her husband left home and disappeared without a trace. This event impacted on the dysfunctional role her husband played as a breadwinner in her family, similar to the conditions experienced by the families of Mrs. SU, Mrs. YA, Mrs. NU, and Mrs. SF. Although the husbands of the *emping* workers still exist, all of them cannot carry out their function as breadwinners properly because there is no definite job. Therefore, it has an impact on the uncertainty of fulfilling their livelihood every month for his wife and family. However, when at home, the husbands also assist their wives in doing household chores. The existence of a husband who is still working, even with a low and uncertain income, is now turning into an additional breadwinner in the family. This happens because the wife often needs to be the main income in the family (Widyasari & Suyanto, 2023).

c. Social Norms

Social norms in society regarding family relationships typically portray husbands as the primary breadwinners for the family. The husband should meet all household needs, including the education and health costs of his wife and children. The discussion of the obligations and roles inherent in marriage has also been regulated in national legislation, as contained in Law No. 1 of 1974 concerning marriage. Therefore, as the head of the family, the husband is responsible for making big decisions that affect the family as a whole. However, in the family life of *emping* workers in Wijirejo Village, it is the wife who is the main breadwinner and provides economic support for the family (Field et al., 2021).

## 2. Functional Aspects

As for the functions carried out in the context of the wife's life as the main breadwinner in the family, it can be seen as follows:

### a. Role Differentiation

The division of roles that occurs in the family life of the main breadwinner wife in Wijirejo Village can be described as follows: the husband works as a casual worker; if the husband's condition is not working, then the husband is at home doing chores and taking care of the children. Meanwhile, the wife, as a housewife and the main breadwinner in the family, and the children participate in learning activities and assist with doing chores (Widyasari & Suyanto, 2023).

### b. Solidarity Allocation

The distribution of relationships between family members in the life of a breadwinner wife in Wijirejo Village can be observed from the husband's willingness and support for his wife's work. Based on the interview results from several families, including those of Mrs. MU, Mrs. PO, Mrs. NA, and Mrs. SU, experience difficulties at work. Another family member, such as a husband or children, also helps complete household chores. The participation of husbands and children in helping with household chores can ease the burden on the wife and minimize problems. It is just that some other families consider this to be an obligation that the wife must fulfill, which becomes one of the triggers for family quarrels (Nasruloh & Hidayat, 2022).

### c. Economic Allocation

The economic allocation is evident in the income earned by the wife from her employment as a working individual. The wife's income is not solely used for her own interests, but rather she uses it to meet the family's needs. These needs include the family's daily expenses, the costs of children's education, health expenses, community contributions, and other similar expenses (Anjani et al., 2024).

### d. Political Allocation

This political allocation refers to the division of power within the family. The participation of the wife in working and being the main breadwinner in the family, on the one hand, has a good impact on the husband, because it is an effort to ease the burden on the husband. Still, on the other hand, it increases the burden and responsibility of the wife. Likewise, the husband's participation in helping to complete household chores is a form of tolerance. Related to the dominance of power in the household, wives tend to have more authority in regulating and controlling the family's finances (AL Hourani & Algharbawi, 2022).

This functional structural theory holds that a shift in functions and overlapping roles within the family can lead to an imbalance in household life. The imbalance referred to in this theory is evident in the emergence of various negative impacts on the family of the main breadwinner, including quarrels, a lack of time for the wife, and poor family communication. However, this impact is still considered reasonable, which does not endanger the sustainability of the households of *emping* workers.

According to this theory, each family member must live the life according to their respective roles to achieve balance. The role of the main breadwinner, who works as a laborer in Wijirejo Village, suggests that this phenomenon is not in accordance with the concept of balance presented in the functional structural theory proposed by Robert K. Merton. This occurs because of the transition of roles and functions that occur between spouses. Wives, who in essence play a significant role and are responsible for managing the household and children, are now increasingly taking on the main breadwinning role for their families. Likewise, the husband, who was supposed to play the role of the main breadwinner and be responsible for financial affairs, now switched to the role of an additional breadwinner in the family (Daraz et al., 2025).

## Conclusion

This study found that the shift of the role of wives as primary breadwinners in Wijirejo Village is a form of social and economic adaptation based on the principle of *maslahah* (benefit) in Islamic law. The study demonstrates that the involvement of wives in supporting the family economy cannot be considered a deviation from Sharia norms, but rather a form of genuine benefit in maintaining family survival and social balance. The integration of *maslahah* theory with Merton's structural functionalism offers a more comprehensive understanding of how religious values can interact constructively with modern social dynamics. Scientifically, this study enriches the body of Islamic family law by introducing an integrative approach that bridges the normative legitimacy of the family and its social function in the context of gender shifts. However, this study has limitations because its scope is still limited to one village with specific economic characteristics. Therefore, further research is needed to compare similar phenomena in other regions with different socio-economic conditions, including religious dimensions, education, and changes in family leadership patterns in contemporary Muslim societies.

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