

RECONSTRUCTING LEGAL PROTECTION FOR VULNERABLE FAMILIES THROUGH MAQĀṢID AL-SHARĪ'AH

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Abstract

The growing complexity of contemporary social life has exposed vulnerable families to multidimensional legal, economic, and institutional challenges that cannot be effectively addressed through conventional legal protection mechanisms. Existing legal systems remain predominantly procedural, fragmented, and litigation-oriented, limiting their ability to ensure substantive justice and sustainable rights protection. This study aims to reconstruct a legal protection model for vulnerable families from the perspective of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*. Employing normative legal research with a qualitative, library-based approach, the study examines contemporary literature on legal protection, family vulnerability, human rights, Islamic legal theory, and *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*. Data were analyzed using doctrinal, conceptual, and thematic approaches to evaluate the relationship between Islamic legal objectives and modern rights-based legal protection. The findings reveal that contemporary legal protection remains constrained by procedural formalism, institutional fragmentation, reactive intervention, and weak coordination among legal and social institutions. The study further demonstrates that contemporary interpretations of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, particularly those developed by Ibn 'Āshūr, Ahmad al-Raysuni, Mohammad Hashim Kamali, and Jasser Auda, reposition *maqāṣid* from a doctrinal method of legal interpretation into a comprehensive paradigm of justice, human welfare, and rights protection. Building upon this perspective, the article proposes the Integrated Maqāṣid-Based Legal Protection Framework (IMLPF), consisting of five interconnected dimensions: rights protection, institutional integration, preventive protection, responsive legal governance, and *maqāṣid*-based outcomes. The framework offers a holistic conceptual model for safeguarding vulnerable families while contributing to Islamic legal scholarship by operationalizing *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* as a framework for contemporary family law reform and rights-based legal protection.

Keywords: *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*; legal protection; vulnerable families; rights-based approach; Islamic family law.

Introduction

The protection of vulnerable families has emerged as one of the most pressing legal and social challenges of the twenty-first century. Rapid social transformation, economic inequality, digitalization, forced migration, climate change, and demographic shifts have fundamentally altered the structure and resilience of families across the world (Pretelli et al., 2026). Vulnerability is no longer confined to poverty alone but encompasses a broad spectrum of legal, social, and institutional disadvantages experienced by women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities, migrant families, and individuals affected by marital dissolution or domestic violence. International organizations consistently emphasize that effective legal systems must not merely resolve disputes but also function as mechanisms for protecting human dignity, preventing structural injustice, and ensuring equitable access to justice for vulnerable populations (Oliveira, 2025). Nevertheless, legal protection often remains fragmented because statutory regulations, judicial practices, and social welfare institutions operate independently rather than through an integrated rights-based framework. Consequently, many vulnerable families continue to encounter barriers in accessing legal remedies, enforcing judicial decisions, obtaining social assistance, and securing substantive justice despite the formal existence of legal guarantees (Khokhar, 2026). These developments demonstrate that legal protection must be understood not simply as procedural compliance but as a comprehensive system that safeguards human welfare through responsive legal institutions capable of addressing increasingly complex social realities.

The challenges become more evident within the context of Muslim-majority societies, where family law operates at the intersection of religious norms, state legislation, judicial institutions, and socio-cultural values (Butt, 2026). Although many jurisdictions have enacted comprehensive family law regulations intended to protect women and children, implementation frequently falls short of achieving substantive justice (Butt, 2026). Legal protection often emphasizes the adjudication of disputes while paying insufficient attention to the post-judgment realization of rights, including the enforcement of maintenance obligations, child support, property distribution, and protection against continuing economic vulnerability. Institutional fragmentation between courts, administrative agencies, and social service providers further weakens the effectiveness of legal protection. In Indonesia, for example, reforms in Islamic family law and judicial administration have expanded procedural access to justice; however, significant challenges remain in ensuring that judicial decisions translate into tangible improvements in the lives of vulnerable families (Rifqi et al., 2026). Similar conditions are observable in numerous Muslim jurisdictions, where legal certainty does not necessarily guarantee social justice, indicating the need for a broader normative framework capable of integrating legal effectiveness with the substantive objectives of Islamic law.

Several recent studies have examined legal protection for vulnerable families from different perspectives. First, research has highlighted the importance of improving women's access to justice through judicial reform and gender-sensitive legal institutions, demonstrating that procedural accessibility alone is insufficient to eliminate structural inequalities (Sudirman et al., 2025). Second, socio-legal studies have explored the protection of children's rights in family disputes, emphasizing the need for stronger institutional coordination between courts and child protection agencies (Strobel, 2026). Third, scholars investigating Islamic family law reform have argued that Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah provides an important normative foundation for interpreting legal provisions in ways that promote public welfare and social justice rather than rigid textualism (Aminudin et al., 2026). Fourth, comparative studies on family justice have shown that digital transformation within judicial systems can improve transparency, accountability, and access to legal services (Butt, 2026, 53. p.), although technological innovation alone cannot guarantee substantive protection for vulnerable groups. Fifth, interdisciplinary research integrating law and social policy has demonstrated that effective family protection requires collaboration among judicial institutions, governmental agencies, and community organizations to address the multidimensional nature of vulnerability.

Despite these valuable contributions, existing scholarship remains characterized by several important limitations. Most studies examine vulnerable families from isolated perspectives, focusing either on doctrinal legal analysis, institutional performance, gender equality, children's rights, or digital justice without integrating these dimensions into a comprehensive legal protection model. Research applying Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah frequently remains normative, concentrating on legal interpretation rather than reconstructing institutional mechanisms capable of operationalizing maqāṣid within contemporary family justice systems. Conversely, socio-legal studies often evaluate institutional effectiveness without employing Islamic legal philosophy as an analytical framework for assessing whether legal institutions genuinely fulfill the objectives of justice, welfare, and human dignity. Consequently, the literature has yet to develop an integrated conceptual framework capable of linking legal institutions, rights protection, social welfare, and the higher objectives of Islamic law within a unified model of legal protection for vulnerable families.

This study addresses these gaps by reconstructing legal protection for vulnerable families through an integrated Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah framework that moves beyond conventional doctrinal analysis toward a holistic socio-legal model. Unlike previous studies, this article conceptualizes legal protection as a multidimensional system encompassing legal institutions, judicial implementation, social protection mechanisms, and community participation, all evaluated through the five fundamental objectives of Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah. The study therefore contributes to the growing literature by

proposing a rights-based and welfare-oriented model capable of strengthening legal protection in contemporary Muslim societies. It further seeks to demonstrate that *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* should function not merely as an interpretative doctrine but as a comprehensive framework for reconstructing family law institutions that are more responsive, inclusive, and socially transformative.

Research Method

This study employs normative legal research using a qualitative approach to reconstruct the concept of legal protection for vulnerable families through the perspective of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*. Rather than examining legal norms solely as positive rules, this research explores the philosophical, conceptual, and normative foundations of legal protection within contemporary Islamic family law. The study adopts a library-based research design, relying on authoritative documentary sources to develop a comprehensive analytical framework for understanding the relationship between legal protection, family vulnerability, and the higher objectives of Islamic law.

The sources of data consist of primary and secondary legal materials. Primary materials include international human rights instruments concerning family protection, Indonesian legislation on marriage, child protection, domestic violence, social welfare, and judicial administration, as well as classical and contemporary works on *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*. Secondary materials comprise peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, policy reports, and academic commentaries published by recognized national and international institutions. Preference is given to recent studies indexed in Scopus and Web of Science to ensure that the discussion reflects current scholarly developments in socio-legal studies, Islamic legal theory, and family law reform.

Data were collected through systematic literature review techniques. Relevant publications were identified using academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, HeinOnline, Google Scholar, and official legal repositories. The literature selection emphasized publications addressing vulnerable families, legal protection, Islamic family law, *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, access to justice, and socio-legal perspectives. The collected materials were then classified according to thematic relevance to facilitate conceptual synthesis and comparative analysis.

The analysis employs a qualitative doctrinal and conceptual approach supported by thematic content analysis. Legal norms, scholarly arguments, and theoretical perspectives were critically examined to identify the strengths and limitations of existing legal protection frameworks. The analytical process is guided by the five essential objectives of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*, *ḥifẓ al-naḥs*, *ḥifẓ al-'aql*, *ḥifẓ al-nasl*, and *ḥifẓ al-māl*) as the principal evaluative framework. These objectives are utilized not merely as ethical principles but as analytical instruments for assessing whether contemporary legal

protection mechanisms adequately safeguard the rights, welfare, dignity, and social security of vulnerable families. Through this framework, the study develops a reconstructed model of legal protection that integrates Islamic legal philosophy with contemporary principles of human rights, access to justice, and responsive legal governance.

Results and Discussion

The Legal Protection Crisis of Vulnerable Families: Contemporary Challenges and Institutional Limitations

The growing complexity of contemporary society has fundamentally transformed the nature of legal protection required by families. While the family continues to be universally recognized as the basic unit of society and the primary institution responsible for nurturing human development, it has simultaneously become one of the social institutions most exposed to structural vulnerability. Economic globalization, rapid technological change, demographic transitions, migration, urbanization, armed conflict, public health crises, and widening socio-economic inequality have collectively reshaped family structures and generated new forms of legal insecurity that extend beyond the capacity of conventional legal institutions. As a result, legal protection can no longer be understood merely as the existence of statutory guarantees or judicial remedies but must instead be viewed as an integrated system capable of preventing vulnerability, protecting rights, and promoting social resilience. This shift reflects a broader transformation in contemporary legal scholarship, where the effectiveness of law is increasingly assessed not by the number of enacted regulations but by its capacity to safeguard individuals and families facing structural disadvantages (Abidi et al., 2026).

Within this broader context, the concept of *vulnerable families* has become central to legal and social policy discussions. Vulnerability refers not simply to individual weakness or temporary hardship but to a condition in which families experience a diminished capacity to protect their fundamental rights due to intersecting economic, social, legal, cultural, or institutional constraints (Marta, 2025). Unlike traditional legal classifications that identify beneficiaries according to specific demographic characteristics, contemporary vulnerability theory emphasizes that vulnerability arises through the interaction between personal circumstances and institutional environments. Families become vulnerable when legal systems fail to provide adequate protection against risks that threaten their physical security, economic stability, social participation, or human dignity. Consequently, vulnerability should be understood as a dynamic and multidimensional condition rather than a static legal status, requiring legal institutions to adopt more responsive and adaptive approaches capable of addressing diverse forms of disadvantage.

This understanding has significantly influenced international human rights discourse, where legal protection increasingly prioritizes substantive equality over formal equality. International legal instruments recognize that equal treatment does not necessarily produce equitable outcomes because individuals and families possess unequal capacities to exercise their legal rights. Consequently, contemporary legal protection demands differentiated measures capable of addressing the specific needs of those facing structural disadvantages. Rather than treating every family identically, modern legal systems are expected to recognize varying degrees of vulnerability and design institutional responses accordingly. Such an approach reflects the evolution from a purely rule-based conception of justice toward a rights-based framework emphasizing human dignity, social inclusion, and equitable access to legal protection.

Among the groups most frequently experiencing legal vulnerability are women, particularly those confronting domestic violence, divorce, economic dependency, discriminatory inheritance practices, or unequal access to legal resources. Although significant legislative reforms have strengthened women's legal status in many jurisdictions, structural inequalities continue to limit the realization of these rights in practice. Women frequently encounter barriers in accessing legal representation, enforcing maintenance obligations, securing child support, or obtaining effective protection against continuing violence (Afroze et al., 2025). These challenges are often exacerbated by patriarchal social norms, unequal economic opportunities, and institutional practices that prioritize procedural completion over substantive justice. Consequently, the existence of legal rights does not automatically guarantee effective legal protection when institutional mechanisms remain insufficient to overcome entrenched structural inequalities.

Children constitute another category requiring heightened legal protection due to their dependence on adults and limited capacity to safeguard their own interests. Family breakdown, neglect, abuse, forced marriage, trafficking, child labor, and inadequate access to education continue to expose millions of children to multiple forms of vulnerability. Legal systems increasingly recognize that children's rights extend beyond immediate physical protection to include psychological well-being, educational opportunities, identity preservation, and participation in decisions affecting their lives (Zahir et al., 2026). Nevertheless, institutional fragmentation often undermines effective protection because judicial institutions, child welfare agencies, educational authorities, and healthcare providers frequently operate independently without sufficient coordination. As a result, legal interventions tend to address individual disputes while failing to resolve the broader structural conditions generating child vulnerability.

Older persons also represent an expanding category of vulnerable family members as demographic aging transforms population structures worldwide. Increased life expectancy has generated new legal challenges relating to financial dependency, healthcare access, inheritance disputes, neglect, and elder abuse. Many elderly individuals experience diminished economic independence while simultaneously assuming caregiving responsibilities for grandchildren or other dependent family members. Despite growing recognition of elderly rights within international legal discourse, domestic legal systems frequently lack comprehensive mechanisms capable of integrating healthcare, social security, legal assistance, and family support into a coherent protective framework. Consequently, elderly persons often remain legally invisible until disputes escalate into formal litigation, by which point preventive interventions have become significantly more difficult.

Similarly, persons with disabilities continue to experience substantial legal barriers despite progressive developments in disability rights legislation. Contemporary disability studies increasingly reject medicalized understandings of disability in favor of social models emphasizing environmental and institutional obstacles that restrict equal participation (Al-Sari, 2025). Within family settings, persons with disabilities often encounter discrimination in education, employment, healthcare, inheritance, marriage, and access to judicial institutions. These challenges become even more pronounced when legal procedures fail to provide reasonable accommodations or accessible communication mechanisms. Accordingly, legal vulnerability is produced not solely by physical or intellectual impairments but by institutional failures to ensure inclusive participation within legal processes and broader social life.

Economic vulnerability further intensifies legal insecurity among low-income families. Poverty limits the ability to access legal representation, obtain documentary evidence, participate in judicial proceedings, or pursue lengthy litigation. Financial hardship also increases exposure to eviction, labor exploitation, debt, inadequate housing, food insecurity, and restricted educational opportunities. Importantly, poverty should not be viewed merely as an economic condition but as a legal phenomenon affecting the practical enjoyment of fundamental rights. Individuals lacking financial resources frequently confront procedural obstacles that wealthier litigants can more easily overcome, thereby creating unequal access to justice despite formal legal equality. Such disparities illustrate that legal protection cannot be separated from broader questions of socio-economic justice.

Migration has introduced additional dimensions of family vulnerability in an increasingly interconnected world. International migrant workers, refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced families frequently encounter overlapping legal uncertainties concerning immigration status, employment rights, family reunification,

citizenship, access to education, and healthcare. Separation from traditional family support networks often compounds these challenges, particularly for women and children left behind or accompanying migrant workers abroad (Said et al., 2025). Jurisdictional conflicts between national legal systems further complicate the protection of transnational families, creating gaps in legal responsibility that frequently leave vulnerable individuals without effective remedies. Consequently, migration demonstrates how globalization has transformed family vulnerability into a transnational legal issue requiring greater institutional cooperation beyond national boundaries.

Although the categories of vulnerable families differ considerably, they share common structural factors that continuously reproduce legal insecurity. Poverty remains one of the most significant drivers of vulnerability because economic deprivation restricts access to education, healthcare, legal services, and stable employment while simultaneously increasing dependence on informal survival mechanisms. Economic inequality also interacts with geographical disparities, where families residing in rural or marginalized communities often experience reduced access to courts, administrative institutions, and social welfare programs. Consequently, vulnerability emerges not solely from individual circumstances but from broader socio-economic structures that systematically distribute legal opportunities unequally across society.

Family dissolution through divorce constitutes another important source of vulnerability, particularly where legal systems inadequately regulate post-divorce responsibilities. The termination of marriage frequently generates disputes concerning child custody, maintenance, property division, inheritance, and housing, with women and children disproportionately bearing the socio-economic consequences (Jannah et al., 2025, 965. p.). In many jurisdictions, obtaining a favorable judicial decision does not necessarily ensure compliance with maintenance obligations or effective enforcement of court orders. Consequently, legal protection frequently ends at the point of adjudication rather than continuing through the realization of rights, leaving vulnerable family members exposed to prolonged economic insecurity and social instability.

Equally significant is the persistent prevalence of domestic violence, which represents not only a criminal offense but also a profound failure of legal protection within the family institution itself. Violence undermines physical security, psychological well-being, economic independence, and social participation while frequently creating intergenerational cycles of trauma affecting children and other family members. Although legislative reforms have expanded criminal sanctions and protective measures, survivors continue to encounter significant barriers in reporting violence, accessing legal assistance, obtaining protection orders, and rebuilding independent lives. These realities illustrate that legal protection must extend beyond punitive responses toward

comprehensive systems integrating legal, psychological, economic, and social support mechanisms.

The multidimensional nature of these vulnerabilities demonstrates that contemporary families face challenges extending far beyond the traditional scope of family law. Legal insecurity increasingly results from the interaction of economic inequality, institutional fragmentation, technological transformation, demographic change, and social exclusion. Consequently, the growing diversity of vulnerable family experiences requires legal protection frameworks capable of responding to interconnected forms of disadvantage rather than isolated legal disputes. This observation provides the foundation for critically examining whether existing legal systems possess the institutional capacity to protect vulnerable families effectively, a question that becomes central to the subsequent discussion on the limitations of contemporary legal protection frameworks.

Despite the growing recognition of family vulnerability within international human rights discourse and domestic legal reforms, contemporary legal protection remains constrained by institutional paradigms that are insufficiently responsive to the multidimensional realities experienced by vulnerable families. Most legal systems continue to conceptualize protection primarily as the enforcement of legal rules and the resolution of disputes through formal judicial procedures (Rivero, 2025). While these functions remain indispensable for maintaining legal certainty and the rule of law, they frequently overlook the broader social, economic, and institutional conditions that shape an individual's ability to enjoy substantive legal protection. Consequently, legal protection is often reduced to procedural compliance rather than evaluated according to whether it effectively restores rights, prevents future harm, and strengthens the resilience of vulnerable families.

One of the most significant limitations lies in the procedural orientation of contemporary legal systems. Legal institutions traditionally measure their effectiveness through procedural indicators such as the number of cases resolved, compliance with procedural deadlines, or the issuance of legally binding judgments. These indicators undoubtedly contribute to judicial accountability; however, they provide only a partial assessment of justice (Quevedo Caballero et al., 2025). For vulnerable families, the conclusion of litigation does not necessarily signify the realization of their rights. A divorced woman who obtains a favorable judgment regarding child maintenance but cannot enforce payment, an elderly parent awarded inheritance rights but unable to execute the judgment, or a child legally recognized as entitled to protection yet remaining exposed to neglect all illustrate the gap between procedural justice and substantive justice. In such circumstances, legal success on paper fails to translate into meaningful improvements in the everyday lives of those whom the law is intended to protect.

This procedural orientation is closely associated with the persistence of legal formalism. Formal legal reasoning generally emphasizes statutory interpretation, procedural validity, and institutional competence while giving comparatively less attention to the social consequences of legal decisions. Although legal certainty constitutes a fundamental principle of the rule of law, excessive formalism risks transforming legal institutions into mechanisms concerned primarily with administrative correctness rather than human welfare. Vulnerable families frequently require legal responses that are flexible, contextual, and capable of addressing complex social realities that cannot be fully anticipated by legislative provisions alone. When judicial institutions prioritize procedural regularity over substantive outcomes, legal protection becomes reactive instead of transformative, addressing disputes only after significant harm has already occurred.

A further institutional weakness is the fragmented nature of legal protection. Responsibility for safeguarding vulnerable families is commonly distributed across multiple governmental agencies, judicial institutions, social welfare departments, child protection authorities, healthcare providers, educational institutions, and civil society organizations. While specialization may enhance technical expertise within individual sectors, it often generates administrative fragmentation that weakens coordination and delays effective intervention. Each institution tends to operate according to its own legal mandate, procedural requirements, and organizational priorities, creating overlapping responsibilities in some areas while leaving critical gaps in others. Families experiencing multiple vulnerabilities frequently encounter a complex bureaucratic landscape in which access to one institution depends upon documentation or decisions issued by another, resulting in prolonged delays and diminished legal effectiveness.

Institutional fragmentation becomes particularly problematic in cases involving interconnected legal and social issues. Domestic violence, for example, is rarely confined to criminal liability alone. Survivors often require immediate physical protection, temporary shelter, psychological counseling, legal representation, child protection services, healthcare, employment assistance, and long-term economic support (Said et al., 2024). Yet these services are commonly administered by separate institutions operating under distinct legal frameworks and administrative procedures. The absence of integrated case management frequently obliges vulnerable individuals to navigate multiple institutions independently, thereby increasing emotional stress, financial burdens, and the likelihood that legal protection will remain incomplete. Such institutional separation reflects an outdated understanding of legal protection as an isolated judicial function rather than a coordinated public responsibility.]

Another critical weakness concerns the predominantly reactive character of existing legal protection mechanisms. Contemporary legal systems generally intervene

after rights have already been violated rather than preventing vulnerability before it materializes into legal disputes. Judicial proceedings, administrative sanctions, and criminal prosecutions are activated only once harm has occurred, meaning that legal protection often functions retrospectively rather than preventively. For vulnerable families, however, prevention is frequently more valuable than post-dispute resolution. Early legal counseling, accessible mediation services, social assistance, family education, economic empowerment, and community-based intervention can significantly reduce the likelihood that family conflicts escalate into prolonged litigation or irreversible social harm. Nevertheless, preventive legal strategies remain relatively underdeveloped within many national legal systems, which continue to allocate substantially greater institutional resources toward adjudication than prevention.

The limitations of reactive legal protection are further intensified by persistent inequalities in access to justice. Although the principle of equality before the law is widely recognized within constitutional and international legal frameworks, practical access to justice remains unevenly distributed. Economic hardship, geographical isolation, limited legal literacy, linguistic barriers, digital exclusion, and social discrimination continue to restrict the ability of vulnerable families to exercise their legal rights effectively. Legal aid services, where available, are frequently underfunded or concentrated in urban centers, leaving marginalized communities with limited opportunities to obtain professional legal assistance. Consequently, legal rights that formally exist within statutory frameworks may remain inaccessible to those most in need of protection.

The rapid expansion of digital technologies has simultaneously created new opportunities and new forms of exclusion. Digitalization has improved judicial administration through electronic case filing, virtual hearings, online legal information, and integrated administrative services. These innovations have the potential to increase efficiency, transparency, and public accessibility. However, technological advancement has also exposed a growing digital divide affecting economically disadvantaged families, elderly persons, individuals with disabilities, and residents of remote areas lacking reliable internet infrastructure. Digital exclusion therefore represents a contemporary dimension of legal vulnerability, demonstrating that technological modernization alone cannot guarantee equal access to justice unless accompanied by inclusive policies capable of accommodating diverse social conditions.

Gender inequality continues to reinforce many of these institutional shortcomings. Although contemporary legal reforms increasingly recognize gender equality as a fundamental legal principle, women continue to experience structural disadvantages within family relations and legal institutions. Economic dependency, unpaid care responsibilities, unequal bargaining power, discriminatory social norms, and gender-based violence collectively reduce women's ability to access and utilize legal remedies

effectively. Even where legislation formally guarantees equal rights, institutional practices may unintentionally reproduce gender inequalities through evidentiary requirements, procedural complexity, or insufficient support services. Consequently, legal protection must move beyond formal declarations of equality toward institutional arrangements capable of addressing structural disparities that prevent women from exercising their legal rights on equal terms.

These institutional weaknesses reveal a broader conceptual problem underlying contemporary legal protection. Existing legal frameworks frequently remain grounded in a litigation-centered paradigm that equates justice with dispute resolution. Under this model, courts occupy the central position, while preventive services, community participation, social welfare institutions, and restorative mechanisms are regarded as complementary rather than integral components of legal protection. Such an approach inadequately reflects the multidimensional nature of family vulnerability, where legal problems are often inseparable from economic insecurity, psychological trauma, social exclusion, and institutional fragmentation. Litigation undoubtedly remains an essential mechanism for protecting legal rights, but it cannot serve as the sole indicator of an effective legal protection system.

A rights-based approach offers a more comprehensive alternative by redefining legal protection as the realization of substantive rights rather than merely the administration of legal procedures. Within this perspective, the effectiveness of legal institutions should be evaluated according to their ability to ensure that vulnerable individuals actually enjoy their legally recognized rights in practice. Legal protection therefore encompasses not only judicial adjudication but also preventive intervention, institutional coordination, social assistance, legal empowerment, and sustainable mechanisms for rights enforcement (Ridlo et al., 2026). Such an approach recognizes that justice cannot be separated from human dignity, equality, and social welfare, all of which constitute essential components of meaningful legal protection.

Accordingly, the crisis of legal protection confronting vulnerable families is not merely a problem of inadequate legislation or insufficient judicial capacity. It reflects a deeper structural challenge concerning the conceptual foundations upon which legal protection has traditionally been constructed. Procedural formalism, institutional fragmentation, reactive intervention, unequal access to justice, and litigation-centered governance collectively limit the capacity of existing legal systems to respond effectively to increasingly complex forms of family vulnerability. These limitations demonstrate that incremental legal reform alone is unlikely to produce comprehensive protection unless accompanied by a fundamental reconstruction of the underlying normative framework. Such reconstruction requires a legal paradigm capable of integrating rights protection, institutional responsiveness, social welfare, and human dignity into a coherent

conceptual model. It is within this context that *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* offers a promising analytical framework, not merely as a source of religious legitimacy, but as a comprehensive philosophy of law capable of reorienting legal protection toward the realization of justice, welfare, and the holistic protection of vulnerable families in contemporary society.

Reinterpreting Legal Protection through *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*: From Normative Doctrine to Rights-Based Framework

The limitations of contemporary legal protection discussed in the previous section reveal that procedural reforms alone are insufficient to address the multidimensional vulnerabilities experienced by modern families. What is required is not merely institutional improvement but a fundamental reorientation of the philosophical foundations upon which legal protection is constructed. Within Islamic legal thought, *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* provides a particularly valuable framework for such reconstruction because it shifts legal reasoning from strict textual conformity toward the realization of justice, welfare, and human dignity (Al-Turabi and Auda, 2025). Rather than viewing law as an end in itself, *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* understands legal norms as instruments designed to secure the comprehensive well-being of humanity. This perspective offers important possibilities for reconceptualizing legal protection beyond procedural legality toward a rights-based paradigm centered upon substantive justice.

Classical Islamic jurisprudence traditionally developed *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* as a method for identifying the higher objectives underlying divine legislation. Jurists such as al-Juwaynī, al-Ghazālī, and al-Shāṭibī established that Islamic law seeks to preserve five indispensable interests (*al-darūriyyāt al-khams*): religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), life (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), intellect (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*), lineage (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*), and property (*ḥifẓ al-māl*) (Labini et al., 2024). For centuries these objectives primarily functioned as normative principles guiding juristic reasoning and determining whether particular legal rules promoted or undermined public welfare. Their principal role was methodological, assisting scholars in interpreting legal texts and resolving questions for which explicit scriptural guidance was limited.

Although this classical framework remains foundational, contemporary social transformation has significantly expanded both the scope and function of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*. Globalization, technological innovation, human rights discourse, constitutionalism, and increasingly complex social relations have generated legal challenges that extend beyond the contexts originally addressed by classical jurists. Questions concerning digital justice, gender equality, child protection, disability rights, migration, environmental sustainability, and institutional governance cannot be adequately resolved through literal textual interpretation alone. Consequently, modern

scholars increasingly argue that *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* should not merely explain the purposes of individual legal rules but should function as a comprehensive philosophy capable of guiding the development, implementation, and evaluation of contemporary legal systems.

This intellectual transformation is particularly evident in the works of Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir Ibn 'Āshūr, who reconceptualized *maqāṣid* as a dynamic legal philosophy oriented toward the realization of universal human welfare rather than the preservation of legal formalism. Ibn 'Āshūr argued that the objectives of Islamic law should be understood through broad principles such as justice, freedom, equality, social order, and human dignity. By emphasizing universal values instead of isolated legal rulings, he shifted *maqāṣid* from a narrow juristic methodology toward a comprehensive framework for legal reform capable of responding to changing social realities. This expansion represented an important departure from earlier approaches because it encouraged legal scholars to evaluate whether existing institutions genuinely fulfilled the ethical objectives of Islamic law rather than merely conforming to inherited doctrinal formulations (Jusmin et al., 2026).

Ahmad al-Raysuni further developed this perspective by emphasizing that *maqāṣid* should function as the central philosophy of Islamic legislation rather than an auxiliary interpretative tool. According to Raysuni, the legitimacy of legal institutions ultimately depends upon their capacity to achieve *maṣlaḥah* and prevent *mafsadah*. This understanding implies that legal systems cannot be evaluated solely through procedural legality or textual conformity but must also be assessed according to their practical consequences for human welfare. Such reasoning significantly broadens the analytical relevance of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, enabling it to engage contemporary questions of governance, social justice, institutional accountability, and legal protection.

A similar expansion appears in the writings of Mohammad Hashim Kamali, who argues that the objectives of Islamic law should be interpreted through the broader language of human rights, constitutional governance, and public interest. Kamali emphasizes that justice, equality, consultation, accountability, and respect for human dignity constitute essential manifestations of the higher objectives of the Sharī'ah (Mir and Anjum, 2025). Consequently, Islamic legal philosophy should not be perceived as existing in opposition to contemporary human rights discourse but rather as providing an ethical foundation capable of reinforcing universal principles of legal protection. This interpretation positions *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* as an evolving normative framework that remains relevant within pluralistic constitutional societies.

Perhaps the most influential contemporary reformulation is provided by Jasser Auda through his systems approach to *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*. Rejecting linear and reductionist legal reasoning, Auda proposes that Islamic law should be understood as an

open, dynamic, and interconnected system capable of responding to continuously changing social conditions. His systems theory introduces principles such as openness, multidimensionality, interrelatedness, purposefulness, and cognitive flexibility, enabling Islamic legal reasoning to move beyond rigid doctrinal classifications toward holistic problem-solving. Within this framework, legal institutions are evaluated not merely according to procedural compliance but according to their ability to produce justice, welfare, inclusion, and sustainable social development.

Auda's approach is particularly significant for contemporary legal protection because it transforms *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* from a theory concerned primarily with legal interpretation into an evaluative framework applicable to institutional performance (Prawira et al., 2025). Courts, administrative agencies, legislative policies, legal aid institutions, and social welfare systems can all be examined through the extent to which they realize the higher objectives of Islamic law. Consequently, the success of legal protection should no longer be measured exclusively by procedural efficiency or judicial productivity but by whether legal institutions effectively preserve life, dignity, equality, family integrity, intellectual development, and economic security. Such an approach substantially broadens the analytical capacity of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, positioning it as a normative benchmark for assessing legal systems rather than merely interpreting legal texts.

This paradigm shift reflects a deeper transformation in the understanding of the relationship between law and society. Whereas classical formulations often emphasized the preservation of religion through legal obedience, contemporary *maqāṣid* scholarship increasingly recognizes that protecting religion itself cannot be separated from protecting the human beings whom religion ultimately serves. Accordingly, the focus of Islamic legal philosophy moves from preserving legal rules toward preserving human welfare, dignity, justice, and social harmony. This evolution does not abandon the classical objectives of the Sharī'ah; instead, it reinterprets them within the realities of contemporary society, allowing Islamic law to function as a living ethical system capable of responding to emerging forms of vulnerability. In this way, *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* provides the conceptual bridge through which legal protection can be reconstructed as a genuinely rights-based framework rather than remaining confined within procedural or doctrinal formalism.

Reconstructing Legal Protection for Vulnerable Families: An Integrated *Maqāṣid*-Based Legal Framework

The preceding discussion has demonstrated that contemporary legal protection for vulnerable families remains constrained by procedural formalism, institutional fragmentation, reactive intervention, and a litigation-centered understanding of justice.

Although legislative reforms, judicial modernization, and the expansion of legal rights have improved certain aspects of access to justice, these developments have not fundamentally transformed the manner in which legal systems protect vulnerable individuals and families (Yadav, 2025). Existing legal frameworks continue to evaluate success primarily through procedural indicators, including the number of cases resolved, compliance with statutory requirements, and judicial efficiency, while giving comparatively less attention to whether legal institutions genuinely restore rights, strengthen family resilience, or promote long-term social welfare. Consequently, legal protection frequently remains fragmented across multiple institutions, producing isolated interventions that fail to address the interconnected social, economic, and legal dimensions of family vulnerability.

This limitation reflects a deeper conceptual problem rather than merely an institutional deficiency. Contemporary legal protection has largely evolved through sectoral reforms, where judicial institutions, social welfare agencies, child protection services, legal aid organizations, healthcare providers, and religious institutions perform their respective functions independently. While specialization contributes to administrative efficiency, it often weakens coordination and reduces the overall effectiveness of legal protection. Vulnerable families rarely experience legal problems in isolation. Economic hardship is frequently accompanied by family conflict, domestic violence, child neglect, psychological distress, educational disruption, and administrative barriers that cannot be adequately resolved through litigation alone (Tung et al., 2025, 2. p.). Therefore, reconstructing legal protection requires moving beyond fragmented institutional responses toward an integrated model capable of connecting legal, social, administrative, and ethical dimensions within a coherent system of rights protection.

Building upon the reinterpretation of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* developed in the previous section, this study proposes the Integrated Maqāṣid-Based Legal Protection Framework (IMLPF) as a new conceptual model for protecting vulnerable families. Unlike conventional legal protection models that concentrate primarily on dispute resolution, the IMLPF conceptualizes legal protection as a multidimensional and interconnected system guided by the higher objectives of Islamic law. Within this framework, *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* functions not merely as a source of normative legitimacy but as an operational paradigm for evaluating and designing legal institutions capable of safeguarding human dignity, ensuring substantive justice, strengthening institutional responsiveness, and promoting sustainable family welfare. Accordingly, legal protection is no longer understood as the final stage of judicial adjudication but as a continuous process encompassing prevention, coordination, implementation, accountability, and rights realization (Fathurrahim, 2026).

The proposed framework consists of five mutually reinforcing dimensions that collectively establish a holistic model of legal protection. Rather than operating independently, these dimensions interact dynamically, reflecting the systems-oriented understanding of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* advanced by contemporary Islamic legal scholarship. Each dimension represents a specific institutional function while simultaneously contributing to the realization of the overarching objectives of justice (*al-'adl*), public welfare (*maṣlaḥah*), human dignity (*karāmah al-insān*), and sustainable family resilience. The first dimension, Rights Protection, positions the fulfillment of fundamental rights as the primary objective of legal protection. Conventional legal systems frequently assume that judicial recognition automatically guarantees the realization of rights. However, vulnerable families often continue to experience legal insecurity despite obtaining favorable judicial decisions because enforcement mechanisms remain weak, legal literacy is limited, and socio-economic inequalities restrict practical access to justice. Within the IMLPF, rights protection extends beyond formal legal recognition to include effective access to justice, legal aid services, non-discriminatory treatment, gender equality, and meaningful participation in legal processes. Every component of the legal system is therefore evaluated according to its capacity to ensure that vulnerable individuals can effectively exercise their rights rather than merely possess them in theory. This rights-oriented perspective aligns *ḥifẓ al-naḥs*, *ḥifẓ al-naḥs*, and *ḥifẓ al-māl* with contemporary understandings of human rights, emphasizing the protection of life, family integrity, and economic security as indispensable foundations of legal justice (Bhuiyan et al., 2026).

The second dimension, Institutional Integration, addresses one of the most persistent weaknesses identified within contemporary legal protection systems, namely administrative fragmentation. Effective protection cannot depend exclusively upon courts because family vulnerability encompasses legal, psychological, economic, educational, and social dimensions. Accordingly, the IMLPF promotes structured collaboration among judicial institutions, legal aid providers, child protection agencies, social welfare offices, healthcare institutions, religious organizations, and community-based support mechanisms. Institutional integration enables information sharing, coordinated intervention, and comprehensive case management capable of responding to multiple dimensions of vulnerability simultaneously. Rather than functioning as isolated service providers, institutions become interconnected components of a unified protection ecosystem in which legal decisions are supported by complementary social and administrative measures. Such integration significantly increases the likelihood that judicial outcomes translate into tangible improvements in the lives of vulnerable families (Meyer, 2025).

The third dimension, Preventive Protection, represents a fundamental shift from reactive legal intervention toward proactive rights protection. Existing legal systems frequently intervene only after substantial harm has occurred, by which point litigation becomes the primary mechanism for resolving disputes. Although judicial adjudication remains essential, it cannot substitute for preventive strategies capable of reducing vulnerability before conflicts escalate. Within the IMLPF, preventive protection encompasses family mediation, legal education, community-based counseling, psychological support, economic empowerment, early identification of risk factors, and digital monitoring systems designed to detect emerging vulnerabilities (Widodo, 2026). This preventive orientation reflects the essential philosophy of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, which prioritizes the prevention of harm (*dar' al-mafāsid*) alongside the realization of public benefit (*jalb al-maṣāliḥ*). Consequently, legal protection becomes a continuous social process rather than a purely judicial response to completed violations.

The fourth dimension, Responsive Legal Governance, emphasizes the institutional qualities necessary for maintaining public trust in legal protection systems. Contemporary governance increasingly requires legal institutions to operate transparently, efficiently, accountably, and adaptively within rapidly changing social environments. Digital transformation provides important opportunities for improving judicial administration through electronic case management, integrated databases, online legal services, and real-time monitoring of case implementation (Mansour et al., 2026). Nevertheless, technological innovation must remain guided by principles of inclusivity and equality to ensure that digital justice does not generate new forms of exclusion. Within the proposed framework, responsive governance therefore integrates technological modernization with ethical accountability, transparency, accessibility, and institutional responsiveness. Courts are evaluated not only according to procedural efficiency but also according to their capacity to provide equitable, accessible, and human-centered legal services consistent with the higher objectives of Islamic law.

The fifth dimension, Maqāṣid Outcomes, distinguishes the IMLPF from conventional legal protection models by introducing outcome-based evaluation grounded in the higher objectives of the Sharī'ah. Rather than measuring institutional success solely through quantitative indicators such as case clearance rates or administrative performance, the framework evaluates legal protection according to substantive outcomes reflecting justice, human dignity, family welfare, resilience, and social sustainability. Justice is understood as the equitable realization of rights; welfare refers to the enhancement of material and non-material well-being; family resilience denotes the capacity of families to withstand and recover from social and economic adversity; human dignity reflects the recognition of every individual's intrinsic worth; while social sustainability concerns the long-term ability of legal institutions to maintain

harmonious and inclusive communities (Junaidah et al., 2025). These outcome indicators transform *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* into practical evaluative standards capable of assessing whether legal institutions genuinely fulfill their ethical and social responsibilities.

Taken together, these five dimensions establish a coherent framework that redefines legal protection as an integrated system of rights realization rather than a sequence of isolated institutional procedures. The framework recognizes that justice cannot be achieved solely through adjudication but requires continuous interaction among legal norms, institutional coordination, preventive intervention, responsive governance, and measurable social outcomes. By integrating these dimensions within a single conceptual model, the IMLPF bridges the longstanding divide between Islamic legal philosophy and contemporary rights-based legal governance, demonstrating that *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* is capable of functioning as both a normative foundation and an operational framework for legal reform.

The principal contribution of this framework lies in its ability to reposition *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* from a doctrine primarily associated with legal interpretation to a comprehensive paradigm for institutional design and legal protection. Whereas previous scholarship has largely employed *maqāṣid* to justify particular legal rulings or interpret statutory provisions, the IMLPF extends its application to the broader architecture of legal governance. In doing so, it provides a multidimensional model through which legislators, judges, policymakers, and social institutions may evaluate and redesign legal protection mechanisms according to their capacity to safeguard rights, strengthen institutional responsiveness, and promote sustainable family welfare. Accordingly, this study argues that the future development of family law should no longer be measured solely by doctrinal consistency or procedural efficiency but by its ability to realize the higher objectives of justice, dignity, welfare, and human flourishing envisioned by *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the contemporary legal protection of vulnerable families remains limited by procedural formalism, fragmented institutional arrangements, reactive intervention, and litigation-centered governance. Although legal reforms have expanded access to justice and strengthened statutory guarantees, they have not fully ensured the realization of substantive rights for vulnerable groups, including women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities, migrant families, and economically disadvantaged households. These limitations indicate that effective legal protection requires a more comprehensive framework capable of integrating legal institutions, social welfare mechanisms, and rights-based governance within a coherent system of justice. By reinterpreting *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* through contemporary Islamic

legal thought, this study argues that *maqāṣid* should no longer be understood merely as a doctrine for legal interpretation but as a normative and operational paradigm for protecting human dignity, promoting social welfare, and realizing substantive justice. The evolution of *maqāṣid* scholarship, particularly through the contributions of Ibn 'Āshūr, Ahmad al-Raysuni, Mohammad Hashim Kamali, and Jasser Auda, provides a philosophical foundation for evaluating legal institutions according to their capacity to fulfill human rights and public welfare rather than procedural compliance alone. This perspective bridges Islamic legal philosophy with contemporary rights-based approaches and expands the role of *maqāṣid* in legal reform. The principal contribution of this study is the development of the Integrated Maqāṣid-Based Legal Protection Framework (IMLPF), which reconstructs legal protection through five interconnected dimensions: rights protection, institutional integration, preventive protection, responsive legal governance, and *maqāṣid*-based outcomes. Unlike existing approaches that emphasize dispute resolution or statutory compliance, the proposed framework integrates legal, institutional, and social dimensions into a holistic model for protecting vulnerable families. The framework offers both a theoretical contribution by extending the application of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* to institutional legal governance and a practical contribution by providing policymakers, courts, legal aid organizations, and social welfare institutions with a conceptual foundation for developing more inclusive, coordinated, and rights-oriented family protection systems. Future research may strengthen this conceptual model through empirical validation across different legal systems and socio-cultural contexts, particularly within Muslim-majority societies undergoing family law reform and judicial modernization.

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