



## **Wives as Breadwinners in the Family from an Islamic Legal Perspective (Case Study in Lambheu Village, Darul Imarah District, Aceh Besar Regency)**

**Rabzani Zammima Asri Purba**

Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry, Banda Aceh

Email: [210101043@student.ar-raniry.ac.id](mailto:210101043@student.ar-raniry.ac.id)

**Fakhrurrazi M. Yunus**

Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry, Banda Aceh

Email: [arrazie@ar-raniry.ac.id](mailto:arrazie@ar-raniry.ac.id)

**Gamal Achyar**

Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry, Banda Aceh

Email: [gamal.achyar@ar-raniry.ac.id](mailto:gamal.achyar@ar-raniry.ac.id)

### **Abstract**

In Islam and Indonesian marriage law, the husband is positioned as the primary provider (nafkah), while the wife manages household affairs. However, socio-economic changes and certain circumstances such as the husband's illness, disability, or insufficient income have led some wives in Lambheu Village, Darul Imarah District, to assume the role of the main breadwinner. This shift generates new dynamics, including emotional and social challenges, as well as questions about its compatibility with Islamic legal norms. This study aims to analyze the phenomenon of wives as primary breadwinners in Lambheu Village and to assess its implications for spousal rights and obligations and for the concept of nafkah from the perspective of Islamic law. The research employs a descriptive qualitative design based on fieldwork, combining document analysis, observation, and in-depth interviews. Primary data were obtained from wives who serve as the economic backbone of their families (case-based informants), while secondary data were drawn from fiqh literature, normative sources, and related studies. Data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that, from an Islamic legal perspective, the husband remains the principal party responsible for providing financial support, while the wife may work or contribute to family maintenance as long as she continues to observe household responsibilities and does so on the basis of mutual agreement. The Lambheu case indicates that wives typically work due to emergency conditions such as the husband's illness or financial hardship, highlighting the need for a fair interpretation of role distribution within the family. When carried out wisely and in accordance with Sharia, a wife's employment is not a violation but rather an effort to strengthen family

resilience and harmony. The article recommends strengthening household agreements through deliberation (*musyawarah*) on role-sharing, enhancing religious guidance and family counseling, and expanding community/state support (access to healthcare, economic empowerment, and social protection) so that wives' economic contributions do not negate the husband's *nafkah* obligation and the family's overall welfare (*maslahah*) is maintained.

**Keywords:** Wives as Breadwinners, Islamic Law, Family Livelihood, Gender Roles, Muslim Family, Lambheu Village, Socio-Economic Change.

## Introduction

Marriage is the process of uniting a man and a woman through a legal bond, making their relationship lawful. In marriage, there is an awareness of responsibility towards the family, the maintenance of offspring, and the division of tasks according to the respective responsibilities of the husband and wife.<sup>1</sup> Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 1 of 1974 concerning marriage in Article 1 states that marriage is a physical and emotional bond between a man and a woman who act as husband and wife, with the aim of building a happy and eternal family (household) based on belief in God Almighty.<sup>2</sup>

With the marriage contract, rights and obligations arise for the husband and wife, where each must carry out their duties in order to create harmony in the family. In Islam, believers are encouraged to get married for various reasons. Specifically, in terms of rights and obligations, including financial support that covers all needs, such as food, clothing, shelter, and so on, which is adjusted to the conditions and location, this is known as *nafkah*.<sup>3</sup>

As the head of the family, the husband is responsible for protecting his household and ensuring that his household complies with Islamic law. The roles and responsibilities of husbands and wives are shaped by differences in religious beliefs and culture within society, which place men in a higher position than women. Husbands have long been considered the main breadwinners, while wives have a greater role in managing the household and caring for children. In Islamic teachings, there is a strong basis for the division of responsibilities

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<sup>1</sup> Rusdaya Basri, *Fiqh Munakahat* (Jakarta: Kaaffah Learning Centre, 2019). 19

<sup>2</sup> Law No. 1 of 1974 on Marriage

<sup>3</sup> Sheikh Hasan Ayyub, *Family Law* (Jakarta: Pustaka Al-Kaustar, 2001). 433

between husbands and wives in the family. This is based on the words of Allah SWT in Surah An-Nisa' verse 34, which states that because they have greater strength than women and because they are responsible for the needs of their own families, men are responsible for women.<sup>4</sup>

The position of women in the household and family structure has been significantly affected by social and economic shifts in contemporary society. There has been a significant shift in the number of wives who work to support their families. The dual role of wives as breadwinners and housewives brings new dynamics to the family, which often makes it difficult for husbands and wives to divide tasks and responsibilities.<sup>5</sup>

Being the primary breadwinner in the family often causes emotional and social problems for women and the family as a whole. There are often discussions about the allocation of time and authority in the family, and how this affects peace within the family.<sup>6</sup>

From an Islamic perspective, the role of the wife in the family is to care for and educate the children, while the husband is usually responsible for the household finances. However, as times change, many women now prefer to work or are even forced to support the family financially. This has sparked a number of discussions about whether the role of the wife as the breadwinner is in line with Islamic teachings, particularly in relation to her rights and responsibilities in the household.<sup>7</sup>

Researchers have introduced a new category of women who are the primary breadwinners of the family, referring to real-world situations in the

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<sup>4</sup> Bambang, Rudi, and Anas, "The Wife as the Primary Breadwinner and Its Impact on the Family from an Islamic Law Perspective (A Case Study of the Family Life of Female Migrant Workers in East Lampung Regency)," *Fitrah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 4, no. 2 (2018): 402, <https://jurnal.uinsyahada.ac.id/index.php/F/article/view/950>.

<sup>5</sup> Suaib, Abdullah, and Suci, "The Role of the Wife as the Primary Breadwinner of the Family from an Islamic Legal Perspective (Case Study of Tangkahan Durian Village, Brandan Barat Subdistrict, Langkat District)," *Mutawasith: Journal of Islamic Law* 1, no. 2 (2018): 231, <https://jurnal.iailm.ac.id/index.php/mutawasith/article/view/354>.

<sup>6</sup> Nurhayati, "Social and Psychological Consequences," *Journal of Islamic Psychology* 8, no. 3 (2020): 59-61, <https://jurnal.ugm.ac.id/populasi/article/view/12245>.

<sup>7</sup> Lilis Handayani, "The Role of Wives as Primary Breadwinners in the Perspective of Islamic Law (Case Study of Harum Sari Village, Tamiang Hulu District, Aceh Tamiang Regency)," *Journal of Legal and Cultural Analytics (JLCA)* 1, no. 3 (2022): 195, <https://journal.formosapublisher.org/index.php/jlca/article/view/981>.

field. Essentially, husbands still provide for the family even though they are still married and living together. In other words, wives are also responsible for providing for the family.

A similar situation occurs in the Lambheu community in Darul Imarah District, where women shoulder their husbands' duties and responsibilities at home, including meeting daily needs. This causes a number of internal and external problems. While men stay at home and do not help their wives, wives are expected to earn a living by trading, and some also become temporary employees.

Studies on breadwinning wives are relevant due to a number of social and economic changes. This is because this phenomenon is increasingly common in contemporary society and is crucial in providing guidance for Muslim households. This study emphasises the legal implications. The purpose of this study is to present an in-depth analysis of how Islamic law views the role of working wives and how this affects family life.

Studies on wives as primary breadwinners in Islamic law generally converge around two interrelated concerns: first, the affirmation of fiqh doctrines of *nafkah* that position the husband as the principal provider; and second, the reading of socio-economic realities that drive shifts in household roles. Within this framework, the article "Wives As Breadwinners In The Family from An Islamic Legal Perspective (Case Study in Lambheu Village, Darul Imarah District)" is situated as a study that tests how these normative principles operate when families face emergency conditions—such as the husband's illness, disability, or insufficient income leading wives to assume a dominant economic role to sustain household continuity.

Compared with Ismanto, Bambang, Muhammad Rudi Wijaya, and Anas Habibi Ritonga,<sup>8</sup> the context examined is markedly different. Ismanto et al. depart from the lived realities of migrant-worker families (TKW) in East Lampung, where the shift in *nafkah* is not merely a redistribution of economic

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<sup>8</sup> Ismanto, Bambang, Muhammad Rudi Wijaya, and Anas Habibi Ritonga. "Istri Sebagai Pencari Nafkah Utama Dan Dampaknya Dalam Keluarga Perspektif Hukum Islam (Studi Kasus Kehidupan Keluarga TKW Di Kabupaten Lampung Timur)." *Fitrah: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 4, no. 2 (2019): 397-416.

tasks but is also shaped by spatial separation (migration), the mother's physical absence from daily life, and its consequences for caregiving, emotional relations, and household authority. Accordingly, their contribution is strong in explaining the socio-psychological impacts of wives becoming the family backbone under conditions of labor migration, while also highlighting new vulnerabilities produced by distance and transformed family roles.

Meanwhile, Lubis, Kurniadinata, and Ramadani<sup>9</sup> adopt a more explicitly normative emphasis through their case study in Tangkahan Durian, Langkat. Their study underscores that a wife's role as the main breadwinner can be understood as permissible in Islam provided that it meets Sharia parameters—such as engaging in lawful work, safeguarding dignity, not neglecting domestic responsibilities, and being undertaken with mutual agreement or the husband's consent. In this sense, Lubis et al. reinforce the fiqh legitimacy that wives' economic contributions may be framed as ta'āwun (mutual assistance), without negating the foundational principle that nafkah remains the husband's obligation.

Against this backdrop, the Lambheu article offers a distinctive contribution: it bridges normative fiqh readings of nafkah with socio-economic conditions characterized by health-related emergencies and economic instability. Thus, its central issue is not simply career choice or labor migration, but rather a family's survival strategy. The article argues that wives' economic roles should be understood as collaborative efforts to preserve household *maslahah* (welfare), while also pointing to practical responses—regular deliberation (*musyawarah*) on role-sharing, strengthening fiqh literacy on nafkah, facilitating family counseling, and expanding community/state support through healthcare services, economic empowerment programs, and social protection—so that wives' contributions do not become a source of conflict and the husband's nafkah obligation remains upheld within a framework of family justice.

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<sup>9</sup> Lubis, S., Kurniadinata, A.S. and Ramadani, S., 2018. Peran Istri Sebagai Pencari Nafkah Utama Keluarga Dalam Perspektif Hukum Islam: Studi Kasus Kelurahan Tangkahan Durian Kecamatan Brandan Barat Kabupaten Langkat. *Mutawasith: Jurnal Hukum Islam*, 1(2), pp.228-247.

## Research Method

This research examines the social phenomenon of the role of wives as breadwinners from an Islamic law perspective using descriptive qualitative methodology. The experiences, understandings, and meaning-making processes that emerge from the informants can be explored in a in-depth and contextual manner using this method. Descriptive qualitative methodology is used in this type of field research. When wives play the role of breadwinners in Muslim households, researchers aim to gain a direct understanding of the realities that arise. Here, normative evaluations of this phenomenon are examined through the prism of Islamic law.<sup>10</sup>

This research was conducted in Lambheu Village, Darul Imarah Subdistrict, which was chosen because it exhibits social phenomena related to the main topic of the research. The information used in this study includes: Primary data collected through in-depth interviews with breadwinning wives. Secondary data such as books, scientific journal articles, and previous research findings. In addition, the researcher used various data collection methods, such as interviews, which provided flexibility for the researcher in obtaining information while still paying attention to the research objectives. Field observation is the process of actively observing and documenting how wives carry out their roles in the context of daily household life. This documentation includes relevant legal information and a review of Islamic literature to support the field findings. Data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drafting are some of the data analysis strategies. To produce findings that accurately reflect the meaning of subjects related to Islamic law, analysis techniques are used to find specific patterns in the qualitative data collected to obtain findings that accurately reflect the meaning of subjects based on Islamic law.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Sugiyono, *Qualitative, Quantitative and R&D Research Methods* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2018). 224

<sup>11</sup> Abdul Fattah, *Qualitative Naturalistic Research Methods* (Bandung: Tarsito, 2003). 131

## The Concept of Nafkah in Islamic Law

The expenses that a husband spends on his family are known as nafkah. Linguistically, nafkah means to spend and go. Terminologically, nafkah refers to the expenses incurred by a person for people who need nafkah, such as clothing, shelter, food and other needs. The husband's obligation to provide for his wife and children is known as nafkah. Providing basic necessities such as clothing, food and shelter are the most important types of nafkah.<sup>12</sup>

According to Imam Malik, nafkah is defined as food that can satisfy human desires or circumstances while remaining within reasonable limits. Sayyid Sabiq emphasises that the provision of basic needs such as food, shelter, domestic help and medicine are components of sustenance. The husband is responsible for providing nafkah, even if the wife is considered to have more money. According to the scholars of fiqh, in the view of Badaruddin Al-Aini, nafkah is likened to the flow of something with what sustains it. According to Wahbah Al-Zuhaili, providing for the needs of those who depend on him, such as food, clothing, housing, and shelter, is what is meant by nafkah.<sup>13</sup>

The verses of the Qur'an and the Hadith of the Prophet are the basis for the obligation of nafkah. In Surah At-Talaq verse 7 of the Qur'an, Allah says: Meaning:

"Let those who have abundance give according to their means, and those whose means are restricted, let them give from what Allah has given them. Allah does not burden a person beyond what He has given him. Allah will grant ease after hardship."<sup>14</sup>

This verse illustrates the values of justice and flexibility in the obligation to provide for the family. In many verses and hadiths, the primary obligation of the husband is to provide. However, as a form of cooperation in the household, based on moral responsibility and sincerity, the wife can take on the role of

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<sup>12</sup> Iffah Muazammil, *Fiqh Munakahat (Islamic Marriage Law)* (Tangerang: Tira Smart, 2019). 234

<sup>13</sup> Agus Hermanto, *Issues in Islamic Family Law in Indonesia* (Malang: CV Literasi Nusantara Abadi, 2021). 291-292

<sup>14</sup> At-Talaq: 7

providing for the family when the husband is unable to fulfil this obligation or faces financial difficulties.

Allah the Almighty states in the Qur'an, Surah al-Baqarah, verse 233, Meaning: *"...And the father's duty is to provide for their maintenance and clothing in a reasonable manner...."*

Verse 233 of Surah Al-Baqarah means that, without disregarding prevailing customs, financial support is measured according to need and in a manner appropriate to each party. The amount of financial support varies depending on the situation, time and circumstances. Financial support includes items such as fruit, food provided regularly in reasonable portions and even medicine, all of which are part of financial support.

From Mu'awiyah Al-Qusyairi Radhiyallahu Anhu, he said: I asked, "O Messenger of Allah, what are the rights of a wife over her husband?" The Messenger of Allah replied, "Feed her when you eat, clothe her when you clothe yourself. Do not strike her face, do not hurt her, and do not leave her anywhere except in the house."

Maintenance must be provided in sufficient amounts, not excessive, and must be in accordance with each person's ability. According to Imam Shafi'i, the amount of maintenance varies, namely one mud for those who are struggling, two muds for those who are well-off, and one and a half muds for those who are in between. According to Imam Malik, the amount of support is determined by the circumstances of each husband and wife, which will vary based on place, time, and circumstances.<sup>15</sup> According to the scholars, maintenance is defined as the expenditure of money for food, which includes the nine basic needs of clothing, food, and shelter. All costs necessary to meet basic living needs constitute maintenance.

Islam views nafkah as having material connotations, so husbands are obliged to work and save money to provide for their families. Therefore, men

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<sup>15</sup> Lailiyah Buang Lala, "Imam Shafi'i's Method of Legal Inference: An Analysis of the Concept of Wife's Maintenance," *Journal of Religion and Human Rights* 6, no. 2 (2017): 267, <https://ejournal.uin-suka.ac.id/syariah/inright/article/view/1454/1260>.



are obliged to provide for and care for their families because they are considered the imams of their families. However, if a wife wants to help her family, this is not obligatory, but it is morally acceptable for a wife to help her family in earning a living.

Therefore, only those who are entitled to receive financial support are the wife, children, and relatives. In other words, financial support is provided based on need, not quantity, due to concerns about wastefulness in certain situations.

### **The Role and Rights of a Wife in the Family According to Islamic Law**

In married life, the role of the wife is very important. Based on the values of justice and mutual respect, Islamic law governs the position of the wife not only in the home but also in matters of worship, social life and social relations. Although the wife is responsible for managing the household, she is not obliged to do so (Imam Malik and Shafi'i mention that if the wife comes from a wealthy family, she may hire a maid). In all matters that do not conflict with Islamic principles, a wife must also submit to her husband. This responsibility includes upholding the honour of herself and her family, managing the household effectively, and educating the children. However, the idea that "there is no obedience to any creature in disobedience to the Creator" limits a wife's obedience to her husband. This means that a wife is not obliged to obey if her husband gives her a command that is forbidden by Allah SWT. In Surah Ar-Rum verse 21,

*Meaning: "And among His signs is that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may find tranquillity in them, and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for a people who reflect."*

According to Islamic law, wives have a noble role as their husbands' life companions. The Qur'an mentions that husbands and wives are clothing for one another, which indicates a bond of mutual protection and complementarity. This shows that marriage in Islam is a cooperation based on love and peace.

A wife is entitled to rights over her husband after she fulfils her role as a wife and mother. A husband has two categories of obligations towards his

wife's rights. The first is financial (material) rights in the form of maintenance and dowry. The second is non-monetary rights, such as the right to fair treatment (if the husband has more than one wife) and the right to be free from violence.

### 1) Material rights

- a) A wife has a strong right to the dowry. No one can use the dowry for any purpose, whether it be the husband or other family members, unless the wife gives her voluntary consent. Islam has made the wife's right to receive dowry a primary right in marriage. Dowry is divided into two types, namely: mahar musamma, the amount and form of which are determined in the marriage contract. Mahar musamma is divided into two types, namely musamma mu'ajjal, which is dowry that must be immediately handed over by the man to the woman. Mahar musamma ghairu mu'ajjal is a dowry whose delivery is postponed. Mahar mitsil is a dowry that must be paid if a woman who has been consummated dies or if the woman has not been consummated but her husband has died, so that she is entitled to the mitsil dowry and receives a share of the inheritance.<sup>16</sup>
- b) Nafkah is the expenditure provided by the husband to his wife, children, family and other relatives for their daily needs. The main right of the wife and children and the main obligation of the husband is nafkah. Nafkah is an important contribution that brings happiness to the household if it is given to the wife sincerely and without stinginess. Food, clothing, shelter, jewellery, and other basic necessities required by the wife and family are all considered mandatory maintenance.<sup>17</sup>

### 2) Non-material rights

In order to build and maintain a peaceful and healthy marriage, these non-material rights are very important. Wives in Islam are entitled to certain protections, but they are also required by Islamic law to maintain peace in

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<sup>16</sup> Muhammad Mutawali and Rahmah Murtadha, *Mahar in the Perspective of Islamic Law* (Bandung: Kaifah Publishing, 2018). 59-62

<sup>17</sup> Theadora Rahmawati, *Fiqh Munaqahat 1 (From the Process Leading to Marriage to the Rights and Obligations of Husband and Wife)* (East Java: Duta Media Publishing, 2021). 95

the household.<sup>18</sup> In addition to material rights, a wife has non-material rights that must be upheld by her husband. These rights include: a) treating her with respect and courtesy, b) providing protection, and c) protecting and caring for his wife.<sup>19</sup>

### **Wife as Family Breadwinner in Lambheu Village, Darul Imarah District**

Lambheu Village is located in Darul Imarah District, Aceh Besar Regency, Aceh Province. The latest population data shows that there are 7,465 people living in Lambheu Village. The Lambheu community faces a number of challenges as a place that continues to experience social and economic growth, such as meeting household needs and the role of family members in supporting the family economy. While wives carry out domestic roles, husbands usually play the role of breadwinners in traditional societies as heads of households. However, many wives also take on the role of breadwinners as the cost of living increases, the economy becomes unstable, and attitudes in society change.

According to the interviewees, wives who are breadwinners in Lambheu Village, Darul Imarah Subdistrict, have become breadwinners because their financial conditions are insufficient to meet their families' needs and because their husbands are no longer able to work due to physical disabilities or illness. A person's desire to work is a reflection of their mentality, and their actions determine the positive and negative aspects of their profession. The work carried out is in the form of trading, even if the work is halal and good in order to be able to support their lives. This occurs in Lambheu Village, Darul Imarah Subdistrict, where wives are the main breadwinners of the family.

Mrs N has been the source of income for her family for the past five years, after her husband fell ill and was unable to work. Mrs N sells cakes and fried snacks at nearby stalls. The proceeds from these sales are used to finance the daily needs of Mrs N and her family. This shows her determination and independence in overcoming various obstacles in life as a wife. Mrs N's actions

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<sup>18</sup> Syamsiah Nur, *Fiqh Munakahat: Marriage Law in Islam* (Tasikmalaya: Hasna Pustaka, 2022). 110

<sup>19</sup> Quraish Shihab, *Grounding the Qur'an: The Function and Role of Revelation in Society* (Bandung: Mizan, 2007). 327

are an example of a wife's responsibility and loyalty. When her husband, who was supposed to be the breadwinner, fell ill and was unable to work, she stepped in to support her children and took over the mother's duty of providing for their daily needs.<sup>20</sup>

In contrast, Mrs Y works because her family's financial needs cannot be met from a single source of income. Before becoming a civil servant, she worked as a temporary employee and sold cakes and clothes. Although she is now a civil servant, Mrs Y continues to carry out her duties as a housewife. Managing her time between work and family, especially for her children, is one of Mrs Y's biggest challenges. Mrs Y strives to meet her family's needs while ensuring that her children's education is not disrupted or interrupted. She works because her family's financial needs require a double contribution, not because she wants to fulfil her own needs. She carries out her role without neglecting her domestic duties.<sup>21</sup>

Similarly, Mrs A's husband used to be the breadwinner, but qadarullah, her husband, who previously worked as a construction worker, was unable to continue working after suffering a stroke that severely limited his movement, making it difficult for him to work. To support the family, pay the rent and finance her children's education, Mrs A works to earn a living. In the mornings, Mrs A sells breakfast dishes ( ) and in the afternoons she sells fried snacks near her home. She also remembers her responsibilities as a wife and mother, working together with her husband and children to complete household chores.<sup>22</sup>

Mrs. S is a simple small-scale trader who manages her business while balancing her busy family responsibilities. Since her first child started primary school, Mrs. S has been selling fried snacks in the schoolyard. Mrs. S emphasises that a wife's contribution to the family's financial support does not conflict with a woman's role at home. In fact, Mrs. S sees it as part of the shared responsibility of husband and wife to create a more independent and successful

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with Mrs N, on 10 May 2025

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Mrs Y, on 10 May 2025

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Mrs. A, on 2 July 2025

family. Mrs. S adds that her husband's support and assistance are very important for the operation of her business as well as for managing her time and household chores.<sup>23</sup>

In an interview, Mrs M explained that she started selling fruit due to her family's urgent economic needs. Complications from an illness meant that her husband had to take complete rest, forcing him to resign from his old job as a pedicab driver. This situation led Mrs M to take over her husband's role as the family breadwinner. Mrs M's income is uncertain due to conditions such as the types of fruit available and the season, which affect her income. However, she remains grateful because her sales are sufficient to meet the daily needs of her family and children. Mrs M added that she is proud to be able to make a sincere and direct contribution to her family, even when she is tired. Mrs M emphasised the value of hard work and dedication, especially for women in similar situations.<sup>24</sup>

The dynamics of the wife's position in the family economy when the husband is unable to be the breadwinner are explained based on interviews with five informants, namely the wives who are the breadwinners of their families: Mrs N, Mrs Y, Mrs A, Mrs S, and Mrs M. The main reasons wives take over the responsibility of the family finances are circumstances such as serious illness or lack of income. However, the informants still showed their dedication to their duties as mothers and wives, which they carried out together with their husbands and children.

This phenomenon shows that women's contribution to family income does not always justify their conventional roles. On the contrary, it serves to foster family unity. In addition to managing the household, women play an important role in maintaining family resilience to bounce back from difficulties, as is the case in Lambheu Village, Darul Imarah District, for a number of reasons.

The dual role of wives has a number of benefits, including: First, they can provide financial stability for the family when needed. Second, they set an example of independence, accountability and tenacity. Third, they continue to

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with Mrs. S, on 2 July 2025

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Mrs M, on 2 July 2025

prioritise their important role in the emotional and academic development of their children while also being the main breadwinners. Fourth, there is cooperation between spouses in dividing household roles and creating harmony.<sup>25</sup>

Women are allowed to work, but if they do so without following Sharia principles, there is a possibility of several negative consequences, including: First, wives may neglect their roles at home, especially in caring for children and maintaining family harmony, due to their busy work schedules. Second, social mixing and slander, where researchers believe that unlimited interaction between men and women in the workplace can trigger slander. Third, the collapse of the family leadership structure. If the wife takes on the main role as breadwinner, it is considered to weaken the husband's role as head of the family, as stated in QS. An-Nisa: 34. Fourth, the dual role of the wife can cause physical and psychological fatigue, which can affect family unity. Fifth, the disruption of the mother's role as a child educator can result in children losing emotional support and direct supervision from their mother, which can cause children to grow up in an environment lacking moral guidance.<sup>26</sup>

### Islamic Legal Perspective on Working Wives

As long as the work is lawful, does not lead to fitnah, and does not violate the rights of the husband and children, Islam does not prohibit a wife from working. Both men and women are permitted to work for the greater good, according to the Qur'an. Depending on their respective skills, Islamic law does not specifically prohibit women from working in the public sector. As for women who worked during the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the following are notable examples:

- a) Siti Khadijah bint Khuwailid. A merchant and the first successful career woman in Islamic history. She was the first Muslim woman to break the

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<sup>25</sup> Siti Djazimah and Ihab Habudin, "Wives as Primary Breadwinners: A Study of Kapok Crafters in Imogiri Village, Bantul, Yogyakarta," *Al-Ahwal* 9, no. 1 (2016): 61-67, <https://ejournal.uin-suka.ac.id/syariah/Ahwal/article/view/1100>.

<sup>26</sup> T. Elfira Rahmayati, "Conflicting Roles of Career Women," *Journal of the Ganesha Polytechnic Institution Medan Juripol* 3, no. 1 (2020): 155, <https://jurnal.polgan.ac.id/index.php/juripol/article/view/10920>.

barriers for women to enter the workforce. In fact, Siti Khadijah's business generated a lot of money, which was used to support the Prophet's mission in the early days of Islam.<sup>27</sup>

- b) Zainab bint Jahsh ( , the Prophet's wife) worked in leather tanning and handicrafts, and her products were sent to charitable organisations.
- c) Asma' bint Abu Bakr (a companion of the Prophet), in addition to tending to the family's goats and milking them, also worked in a date palm orchard.
- d) On the battlefield, Ummi Athiyah was a woman who prepared food, tended to the wounded, and cared for the sick.<sup>28</sup>

The reality is that during the time of the Prophet Muhammad, there was no distinction between men and women, allowing women to participate in public affairs and contribute to the advancement of society. Islam takes a firm stance on social and personal life, valuing women's contributions in various aspects of life. Household duties are flexible and influenced by culture, placing a strong focus on husbands and wives to reach mutual agreement through discussion in order to maintain harmony in the household.

Wives are permitted to work in Islam, but in accordance with Islamic law. The following conditions must be met by a wife for her work to be approved:

- a. Obtaining permission from her husband. The husband has the right to prohibit his wife from working if the job causes harm or interferes with household obligations. However, if the job is good and does not conflict with Islamic law, the husband is encouraged to give his permission.
- b. Maintain her primary duties as a wife and mother. If a wife is a worker, she must not neglect her primary duties as a wife, namely caring for children, serving her husband, and managing the household.
- c. Engaging in lawful work that does not involve sinful activities such as nightlife, casinos, usury, and so on. In the Qur'an, Surah Al-Ma'idah verse 2 states that,

Meaning: *"...and do not help one another in sin and enmity..."*

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<sup>27</sup> Titin Fatimah, "Career Women in Islam," *Musawa* 7, no. 1 (2015): 42, <https://ejournal.uin-suska.ac.id/index.php/al-fikra/article/view/3823>.

<sup>28</sup> Rusdaya Basri, *Fiqh Munakahat: 4 Mazhab Dan Kebijakan Pemerintah* (Depok: Rajawali Pers, 2024). 104

- d. Work should not lead to defamation, and work should not lead to ikhtilath, which is mixing with men, or khalwat, which is being alone with non-mahram men. Therefore, women must cover their aurat properly and avoid tabarruj or dressing up.<sup>29</sup>

Wives are permitted to work in Islam as long as they meet the above requirements and do not violate Islamic law. As long as they do not violate Islamic law, husbands are free to control and approve their wives' work.

According to Surah At-Talaq:7, seeking livelihood is the primary duty of the husband. However, due to the phenomenon of income shortages, unstable employment or other unforeseen circumstances, couples are often forced by economic conditions to contribute to the family income. This has sparked debate in Islamic law regarding restrictions on women's employment, especially in the household and in society.

Taking into account Islamic law, social norms and the financial needs of the family, scholars have different opinions regarding the rights and responsibilities of wives in their careers. As long as it does not conflict with Islamic teachings, their opinions on women working outside the home indicate that this is still permissible. In general, Imam Syafi'i allows women to work as long as it does not conflict with their religious beliefs. If there is an urgent need, a woman may leave the house to work, according to Imam Shafi'i, on the condition that she obeys Islamic law and good morals. He said, "If a woman works out of urgent need and she is able to protect herself and does not violate Islamic law, then it is not prohibited." This illustrates how flexible Islamic law is when it comes to basic needs.

Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal said, "There is nothing wrong with a woman working if it is necessary, as long as she maintains her honour and does not cause slander," said Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, who agreed with this. This means that as long as women uphold their honour and understand the limits of Sharia

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<sup>29</sup> Dwi Runjani Juwita, "The Islamic Legal Perspective on Career Women," *El-Wasathiya: Journal of Religious Studies* 6, no. 2 (2018): 188-89, <https://jurnal.stisalhilalsigli.ac.id/index.php/tahqqa/article/download/120/93/401>.



law and do not neglect their other obligations, especially if they are married, they are not prohibited from engaging in activities outside the home.

Meanwhile, Imam Malik explained the types of work that women can do. Imam Malik encouraged people to work in jobs that are commonly done and do not involve harm or slander, such as teaching and sewing. It is mentioned in Al-Mawaddah, "I do not see a problem when women teach and sew, because those are jobs commonly done by women" ( ).<sup>30</sup>

Islam provides a balanced solution to this issue by encouraging women to continue to play their primary role in the home, even though they are also involved in the family economy or livelihood activities. Islam states that it is permissible (mubah) for women to work and that it can be sunnah or even obligatory if necessary. Yusuf Qaradawi emphasises that there is no sharia law in Islam and that women are allowed to work as long as their work is beneficial to others. Some of the requirements mentioned include the husband's consent, work that does not interfere with the wife's domestic duties, and adherence to Islamic ethics of covering the aurat and preventing unrestricted sexual contact between the opposite sexes.<sup>31</sup>

According to Islamic law, the husband has the primary responsibility to provide financial support, as stated in QS. At-Talaq:7 and QS. Al-Baqarah:233. However, the wife may take on this role in emergency situations, such as if her husband has a chronic illness or is lacking in financial means. This is in line with Islamic law, as emphasised by Imam Al-Ghazali in Ihya' Ulumuddin. Permitting actions that were previously prohibited under certain circumstances. Preserving life (hifz al-nafs) in accordance with the objectives of Sharia law.

The situations of Mrs N and Mrs A, where the wife took on the role of primary breadwinner for the family because her husband was unable to work. As long as it is based on good intentions and maintains norms of decency and family obligations, the role of the wife in this situation is acceptable in Islamic law and can even be considered hifz al-mal. As in Islamic law, women are

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<sup>30</sup> Ahmad Yani and Moh Jazuli, "The Value of Wife's Maintenance in the Views of Classical and Contemporary Scholars," *Teraju: Journal of Sharia and Law* 2, no. 2 (2020): 165-67, <https://ejournal.stainkepri.ac.id/teraju/article/download/164/111>.

<sup>31</sup> Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Contemporary Fatwas* (Jakarta: Gema Insani, 1985). 443

allowed to carry out this aspect of *maslahah ammah* (public interest), especially in cases where the husband is unable to carry out his duties financially or physically.

Mrs Y's situation illustrates a form of economic cooperation within the household, where the wife strives to fulfil other demands instead of her husband's responsibilities. This is in line with the views of modern academics who support women working as long as they do not neglect their primary family responsibilities. This is also in line with the views of Wahbah Az-Zuhaili in his book, *Al-Fiqh Al-Islam Wa Adillatuhu*, who argues that women are legally allowed to work. Wives are allowed to work to support their families when their husbands are unable to pay the bills, as long as they comply with Sharia law.

Even in the cases of Mrs S and Mrs M, it shows how women can help families become more economically resilient. These efforts can be classified as righteous deeds from an Islamic perspective, especially if they are done for the benefit of the family.

There are differences of opinion among scholars from the four main schools of thought as to whether the husband's obligation to provide maintenance has been abolished or still applies if he is unable to do so. The majority of scholars, especially from the Shafi'i and Maliki schools of thought, argue that even if the husband is unable to provide maintenance, the obligation to do so still applies. According to this perspective, unpaid maintenance is still considered the husband's obligation to his wife, which must be repaid once he is able to do so. This is due to the fact that a wife's right to maintenance is permanent and does not end simply because her husband is experiencing financial difficulties.<sup>32</sup>

The Hanafi school of thought, on the other hand, argues that if a wife voluntarily provides maintenance without expecting anything in return or without conditions, it does not become a debt owed by the husband. However, it can become a debt that must be repaid if the wife demands payment or if the husband makes a commitment to pay at a later date.

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<sup>32</sup> Rachmat Syafe'i, *Fiqh Munakahat* (Bandung: CV Pustaka Setia, 2011). 130

Based on the five case studies in this research, it can be concluded that when a wife takes on the role of breadwinner, it is usually due to financial constraints, as in the cases of Mrs Y, Mrs S, and Mrs M, or because her husband is ill, as in the cases of Mrs N and Mrs A. The husband's obligation to provide for his family is not reduced in Islamic law. Therefore, the wife's assistance is seen as a form of ta'awun (cooperation) in the household, but it does not exempt the husband from his obligation to provide for the family.

Consequently, if there is no full agreement or waiver of rights from the wife, she has the right to declare that maintenance must be provided if she bears all household expenses for a specified period. From the perspective of justice and balance of roles, this perspective not only upholds the legal status of maintenance but also protects women's rights in the household.

Therefore, Islamic law allows women to work as long as they obey the Sharia, maintain their dignity and do not neglect their responsibilities at home. In this situation, women actively contribute to creating a lasting family in terms of spirituality, social and financial aspects, rather than just being a complement.

In addition to providing for the family, a husband has an obligation to protect and lead his wife and children. Meanwhile, a woman takes care of the home and educates the children. Therefore, if a husband is unable to provide for the household, a wife may help earn a living, but only with her husband's permission and while continuing to fulfil her responsibilities as a wife without neglecting her husband's responsibilities.<sup>33</sup>

It can be concluded that wives are permitted to work. Women are not prohibited from doing anything outside the home as long as they respect the boundaries of Islam and respect and do not neglect their other obligations, especially if they are married. If a wife obeys the rules and does not violate Islamic law, she is allowed to work. For various reasons that make a woman work, it can be seen as an obligation.

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<sup>33</sup> Nazhifah Attamimi, *Fiqh Munakahat* (Bogor: Hillian Press, 2010). 55

## Conclusion

Based on the results presented, it can be concluded that from the perspective of Islamic law, the husband bears the primary responsibility for providing for the family. Wives can participate in or even take over the role of breadwinner, although the social and economic considerations are complex. Islamic law allows women to work as long as they comply with their domestic obligations and do so with the mutual consent of their husbands. A case study in Lambheu Village, Darul Ijarah Subdistrict, indicates that wives work because their husbands are ill, the family lacks funds, or other circumstances. This situation requires a fair and wise reinterpretation of responsibilities in the home. Therefore, as long as it is done wisely and in accordance with Islamic law, the role of wives in employment should not be seen as a violation of Islamic principles, but rather as a way to strengthen bonds within the household. This article recommends: (a) formulating family agreements through regular deliberation (*musyawarah*) on the division of roles in provision (*nafkah*), childcare, and domestic work; (b) strengthening literacy on *fiqh* of *nafkah* and family-relational ethics through guidance from religious leaders; (c) facilitating family counseling to prevent and manage conflict; and (d) expanding community/state support in the form of healthcare services, economic empowerment programs, and social protection—so that wives' economic contributions remain collaborative and do not negate the husband's *nafkah* obligation.

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