



Primary Breadwinner Wives and Muslim Family Welfare: A Maqasid Framework

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Abstract

The phenomenon of wives serving as primary breadwinners has become increasingly prevalent in Muslim families due to socio-economic changes and shifting gender roles. Previous studies have generally examined this issue from legal, economic, or gender perspectives separately, while comprehensive analyses based on *Maqasid al-Shariah* remain limited. This article employs a qualitative method using content analysis. The data consist of scholarly literature on Islamic family law, gender studies, family well-being, and contemporary Maqasid al-Shariah discourse, which were analyzed to examine the role of wives as primary breadwinners and to formulate a conceptual model of Muslim family well-being based on Maqasid al-Shariah. The data were analyzed using content analysis through the five dimensions of Maqasid al-Shariah: protection of religion (*hifz al-din*), life (*hifz al-nafs*), intellect (*hifz al-'aql*), progeny (*hifz al-nasl*), and wealth (*hifz al-mal*). The findings indicate that wives' economic contributions can strengthen family resilience and well-being, while also creating challenges such as double burdens, psychosocial pressures, and patriarchal resistance. Wives as primary breadwinners can be recognized as a legitimate form of social adaptation within Muslim families, aligning with the objectives of Maqasid al-Shariah when balance across its five dimensions is sustained; the proposed multidimensional model thus offers practical guidance for strengthening family policy, empowerment initiatives, and household resilience.

INTRODUCTION

In the era of contemporary socio-economic transformation, gender roles within families have undergone significant changes. An increasing number of women, including wives in Muslim families, are participating in economic activities and, in many cases, have become the primary breadwinners of their households (Ulya et al., 2025). This phenomenon is driven by various factors, including employment instability among men, labor migration, economic crises, expanded access to education, and increasing employment opportunities for women (Alma'amun et al., 2018). These developments have generated new

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dynamics in household economic management, the division of domestic responsibilities, and gender relations, despite the normative position of Islamic family law, which places the primary responsibility for financial maintenance (*nafqah*) upon the husband (Hidayah, 2023). Previous studies indicate that this phenomenon is no longer an isolated occurrence but rather a growing social trend observed across various regions of Indonesia (Roshe et al., 2024).

From an Islamic perspective, this phenomenon can be examined through the framework of *Maqasid al-Shariah*, which emphasizes the protection of religion (*hifẓ al-din*), life (*hifẓ al-nafs*), intellect (*hifẓ al-'aql*), progeny (*hifẓ al-nasl*), and wealth (*hifẓ al-mal*) (Mohammed, 2024). This framework has increasingly been employed to analyze issues related to well-being, gender justice, and social policy because it provides a bridge between the normative values of Islamic law and evolving social realities (Niazi, 2016; Aziz et al., 2024). Several studies have also examined the phenomenon of wives serving as primary breadwinners from the perspectives of Islamic law and family welfare (*maslahah*).

Previous research suggests that women's participation in economic activities contributes significantly to household economic resilience (Nirmalasari & Putri, 2022). Other studies emphasize that Islam does not prohibit wives from engaging in economic activities, provided that such participation is based on mutual consent, family agreement, and principles of justice within the household (Handayani, 2022). Similarly, Khoiriyah and Basyar (2021) argue that the role of wives as primary breadwinners should be understood as an adaptive response to economic realities rather than a deviation from Islamic teachings. Nevertheless, most existing studies focus primarily on the legal aspects of financial maintenance, economic welfare, or localized case studies, with limited attention given to examining this phenomenon through the integrated dimensions of *Maqasid al-Shariah*.

Against this background, the present study aims to analyze the phenomenon of wives serving as primary breadwinners in Muslim families through the framework of *Maqasid al-Shariah*, focusing on the dimensions of *hifẓ al-din*, *hifẓ al-nafs*, *hifẓ al-'aql*, *hifẓ al-nasl*, and *hifẓ al-mal*. The study further seeks to develop a conceptual understanding of how wives' economic contributions contribute to the realization of family welfare and *maslahah* within the context of contemporary socio-economic change.

The novelty of this study lies in its attempt to develop a conceptual model of Muslim family well-being based on *Maqasid al-Shariah* within the context of wives serving as primary breadwinners. Unlike previous studies that primarily focus on the legal legitimacy of wives' employment or their contribution to household income, this study positions the phenomenon as a lens through which the relevance of the five fundamental objectives of Islamic law can be assessed in response to changing family structures in modern society. Through a synthesis of literature on Islamic family law, gender studies, and contemporary *maqasid* scholarship, this study proposes a conceptual framework that evaluates family well-being not merely through economic indicators but also through religious, psychological, intellectual, social, and family sustainability dimensions as reflected in the principles of *Maqasid al-Shariah* (Mufti, 2024).

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using content analysis (Akem et al., 2025; Anidari et al., 2026; Efendi et al., 2026; Eltoukhi et al., 2025; Engkizar et al., 2025, 2026; Sari et al., 2025; Thuwaiba & Salah, 2025). The

method was chosen to explore and interpret the discourse on wives serving as primary breadwinners in Muslim families from the perspective of *Maqasid al-Shariah*. The data comprised academic texts, including journal articles, books, conference proceedings, and other relevant scholarly publications. Data analysis followed the stages of content analysis: selecting relevant documents, coding key concepts, categorizing recurring themes, and interpreting the findings within the framework of *Maqasid al-Shariah*. Through this process, the study developed a conceptual model of Muslim family well-being that reflects contemporary family realities while remaining grounded in Islamic normative principles.

Data collection was conducted through a literature search of relevant academic sources obtained from national and international databases, including Google Scholar, Garuda, Crossref, and journals indexed in SINTA and Scopus. The search process resulted in 38 scholarly publications that met the inclusion criteria and were selected for analysis. The selected literature addressed topics related to wives as primary breadwinners, gender-role transformation in Muslim families, family well-being, and the application of *Maqasid al-Shariah*. Priority was given to peer-reviewed publications published within the last ten years, while several classical and foundational references were retained to strengthen the conceptual framework of *Maqasid al-Shariah*. The selected literature met the criteria of relevance to the research topic, particularly studies addressing wives as primary breadwinners, gender-role transformation in Muslim families, and the application of *Maqasid al-Shariah* in assessing family well-being. To ensure the quality and relevance of the sources, priority was given to scholarly publications published within the last ten years, while still incorporating classical references and foundational theoretical works that underpin the conceptual framework of *maqasid*.

The data were analyzed using content analysis through four stages: i) identifying and selecting relevant literature; ii) categorizing findings into major thematic areas; iii) synthesizing evidence related to the dynamics of wives serving as primary breadwinners; and iv) interpreting the findings through the framework of *Maqasid al-Shariah*, which encompasses the protection of religion (*hifẓ al-dīn*), life (*hifẓ al-nafs*), intellect (*hifẓ al-'aql*), progeny (*hifẓ al-nasl*), and wealth (*hifẓ al-māl*). Through these stages, the study moves beyond merely describing previous research findings and develops a conceptual synthesis of the relationship between women's economic roles and the realization of family *maslahah* (well-being) in Muslim families.

To enhance the validity of the analysis, source triangulation was employed by comparing and integrating findings from the literature on Islamic family law, gender studies, family well-being research, and contemporary *maqasid* scholarship. This approach enabled a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of wives serving as primary breadwinners within the context of socio-economic transformation in Muslim societies.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Wives as Primary Breadwinners from the Perspective of *Maqasid al-Shariah*

The phenomenon of wives serving as primary breadwinners in Muslim families can be analyzed through the framework of *Maqasid al-Shariah* to assess the extent to which such economic role transformations contribute to the realization of family welfare (*maslahah*). From the *maqasid* perspective, a social practice is not evaluated solely based on its conformity to traditional gender-role divisions but also on its capacity to fulfill the fundamental objectives of Islamic

law, namely the protection of religion (*hifẓ al-dīn*), life (*hifẓ al-nafs*), intellect (*hifẓ al-'aql*), progeny (*hifẓ al-nasl*), and wealth (*hifẓ al-māl*) (Padela, 2022).

With regard to *hifẓ al-māl*, wives' economic contributions play a significant role in strengthening family economic resilience through increased household income, the fulfillment of basic needs, and the reduction of poverty-related risks. In contemporary *maqasid* discourse, the protection of wealth extends beyond mere economic ownership to encompass economic sustainability and family financial resilience. Therefore, wives' participation in economic activities may be regarded as consistent with *hifẓ al-māl*, provided that such activities are conducted through lawful (*halāl*) means and do not involve practices that contradict Islamic principles (Suliswanto et al., 2025).

From the perspective of *hifẓ al-nafs*, wives' income often contributes to meeting the health, nutritional, and welfare needs of family members, thereby supporting the protection of life and enhancing the overall quality of family well-being (Setiawan, 2024). Nevertheless, several studies indicate that serving as the primary breadwinner may also create a double burden, potentially resulting in physical exhaustion and psychological stress when domestic responsibilities are not shared equitably among family members (Ismanto et al., 2019). Consequently, the realization of *hifẓ al-nafs* requires support from both the family and the broader social environment, enabling women to fulfill their economic roles without compromising their personal well-being (Laila et al., 2024).

In terms of *hifẓ al-dīn*, wives' participation in economic activities does not conflict with the objectives of Islamic law as long as it does not hinder the fulfillment of religious obligations, compromise personal dignity, or undermine family values. Furthermore, such participation should be based on mutual agreement and consultation within the family. In this context, *maqasid* functions as an instrument of *ijtihad*, allowing adaptive responses to social change while maintaining adherence to the fundamental principles of Islamic law (Aziz & Anwar, 2022).

Furthermore, wives' economic participation may also contribute to the realization of *hifẓ al-'aql* by enhancing financial literacy, decision-making capacity, and entrepreneurial as well as economic skills. Previous studies indicate that women's involvement in economic activities is often associated with increased intellectual capacity and managerial competence, which generate positive outcomes for family well-being (Rangkuti et al., 2024). To maximize these benefits, continuous access to education and capacity-building opportunities for women is essential (Suliswanto et al., 2024).

Meanwhile, *hifẓ al-nasl* requires that economic role transformations do not undermine parenting responsibilities or family continuity. Several studies suggest that the quality of childcare and family interaction may decline when domestic responsibilities are distributed inequitably. Conversely, families that are able to adapt their roles flexibly tend to maintain child well-being and family stability, thereby facilitating the realization of the objective of protecting future generations (*hifẓ al-nasl*) more effectively (Zuhdan et al., 2025).

Based on the foregoing analysis, this study argues that the role of wives as primary breadwinners should not be assessed solely in terms of the legality of financial maintenance (*naḥqah*) or the increase in household income. Rather, the phenomenon should be evaluated through the balanced fulfillment of all dimensions of *Maqasid al-Shariah*. Accordingly, the success of wives' economic roles is determined not only by improvements in material well-being but also by their ability to sustain religious commitments, psychological well-being, intellectual development, and the quality of family relationships and parenting practices. This perspective demonstrates that *Maqasid al-Shariah* can serve as a

comprehensive evaluative framework for assessing the well-being of Muslim families amid contemporary socio-economic transformations.

Based on the synthesis of the literature, the role of wives as primary breadwinners exhibits a complex relationship with all dimensions of *Maqasid al-Shariah*. While this phenomenon offers significant opportunities for achieving *maslahah* (family welfare), it also presents challenges that must be carefully managed to ensure the balanced realization of the objectives of Islamic law. A summary of these interrelationships is presented in the following table.

Table 1. Synthesis of the Benefits and Challenges of Wives Serving as Primary Breadwinners Based on the Dimensions of *Maqasid al-Shariah*

<i>Maqasid</i> Dimension	Potential Benefits	Potential Challenges
<i>Hifẓ al-Din</i> (Protection of Religion)	Supports family responsibilities and the fulfillment of family maintenance obligations	Reduced time for religious activities if not properly managed
<i>Hifẓ al-Nafs</i> (Protection of Life)	Enhances the fulfillment of basic needs, health, and family well-being	Physical exhaustion and psychological stress resulting from the double burden
<i>Hifẓ al-'Aql</i> (Protection of Intellect)	Promotes women's capacity development, skills, and economic literacy	Psychological pressures that may hinder personal development
<i>Hifẓ al-Nasl</i> (Protection of Progeny)	Improves children's access to education and quality of life	Reduced intensity of childcare and parenting if responsibilities are not distributed proportionately
<i>Hifẓ al-Mal</i> (Protection of Wealth)	Strengthens family economic resilience and financial stability	Potential dependence on a single source of income or conflicts in household financial management

Table 1 demonstrates that the role of wives as primary breadwinners should not be evaluated solely on the basis of their contribution to household income. Each dimension of *Maqasid al-Shariah* reveals both potential benefits and challenges that must be carefully balanced and managed. Therefore, the success of economic role transformation within Muslim families largely depends on their ability to maintain equilibrium among economic needs, parenting responsibilities, psychological well-being, and religious values. These dynamics are examined in greater detail in the following section.

Dynamics and Challenges of Wives Serving as Primary Breadwinners

The literature indicates that the increasing role of wives as primary breadwinners constitutes part of the socio-economic transformation of Muslim families, shaped by various structural and cultural factors. In many cases, this shift emerges when families face economic constraints resulting from declining male productivity, unstable employment, health-related issues, or crisis situations that require households to seek alternative sources of income (Maitoza, 2019). At the same time, expanded access to education, employment opportunities, and entrepreneurial activities has contributed to the growing economic participation of wives within households (Anggraeni & Meilinda, 2024). Previous studies also suggest that wives' decisions to become primary income earners are generally motivated by the desire to improve family well-

being, particularly in meeting educational, healthcare, and other basic household needs (Putra & Soediro, 2021).

Nevertheless, this transformation of economic roles does not occur without challenges. Numerous studies reveal that patriarchal norms, which traditionally position men as the primary breadwinners, continue to shape societal perceptions of female breadwinners. As a result, women often encounter social pressures and identity-related tensions within both family and community settings. Furthermore, many women continue to bear primary responsibility for domestic work and childcare despite becoming the principal economic contributors to their families. This situation gives rise to the phenomenon of the double burden, which may adversely affect their physical and psychological well-being (Vhiama et al., 2023). Other challenges identified in the literature include limited policy support, such as inadequate childcare services, insufficient workplace flexibility, weak social protection mechanisms, and restricted access to economic resources that could sustain women's participation in the public sphere.

Within the context of Muslim families, these dynamics are further influenced by diverse interpretations of religious norms. Some perspectives continue to regard financial maintenance (*nafqah*) as the exclusive responsibility of husbands, whereas more contextual approaches allow for greater flexibility in the distribution of economic roles, provided that such arrangements promote family welfare (*maslahah*) (Yani, 2024). Studies on migrant families and working women also suggest that the nature of employment, work intensity, and geographical distance from family members may affect parenting quality and household stability if not accompanied by adequate adjustments in domestic responsibilities.

From the perspective of *Maqasid al-Shariah*, these dynamics demonstrate that the role of wives as primary breadwinners extends beyond economic provision and encompasses the protection of life, intellect, progeny, and overall family continuity. Increased household income and improved access to education and healthcare services contribute to the realization of *hifẓ al-mal* and *hifẓ al-nafs*, while double burdens, psychosocial pressures, and inadequate social support may hinder the achievement of these objectives. Consequently, contemporary maqasid scholarship emphasizes the importance of balancing economic welfare with the protection of family functions when addressing the phenomenon of female breadwinners. This finding is consistent with international studies highlighting that spousal support, social services, and family-responsive policies are critical factors in promoting family well-being and reducing the psychosocial risks experienced by women serving as primary breadwinners (Aladsani, 2022).

Implications of Wives Serving as Primary Breadwinners for Family Harmony, Gender Justice, and Family Well-Being

The literature indicates that wives' roles as primary breadwinners generally emerge as a response to family economic needs, particularly when husbands' incomes are insufficient or unstable. This phenomenon has been documented across various contexts of Muslim families, including migrant-worker households, informal-sector families, and those affected by economic crises (Sirin et al., 2020). Such transformations not only influence household economic conditions but also reshape family relationships, perceptions of gender justice, and overall family well-being.

From the perspective of family harmony, wives' increased economic contributions can strengthen family resilience by facilitating the fulfillment of basic needs and reducing financial pressures (Nugroho & Wulandhari, 2023).

However, these benefits do not automatically translate into improved family relationships. Several studies suggest that conflicts may arise when changes in economic roles are not accompanied by corresponding adjustments in the distribution of domestic responsibilities. The double burden experienced by wives may lead to physical exhaustion and psychological stress, which can ultimately affect the quality of family interactions (Qothrunnada et al., 2024). Therefore, effective communication and a proportional division of responsibilities are essential for maintaining family harmony.

Changes in economic roles also influence perceptions of gender justice within the family. A number of studies indicate that some families have begun to adopt more egalitarian partnerships through the shared distribution of economic and domestic responsibilities. Others, however, continue to adhere to traditional gender constructions that position men as the primary breadwinners, creating value tensions when wives become the principal income earners. Within Muslim family contexts, differing interpretations of religious norms further shape societal acceptance of this phenomenon. The *Maqasid al-Shariah* approach provides a framework that accommodates role adjustments oriented toward family *maslahah* while upholding the principles of justice and shared responsibility (Mubarak et al., 2023).

From the perspective of family well-being, increased household income generated through wives' economic contributions has been shown to expand access to education, healthcare, and other basic necessities, thereby supporting the realization of *hifẓ al-mal* (protection of wealth) and *hifẓ al-nafs* (protection of life) (Ekaputri et al., 2025). Nevertheless, family well-being cannot be measured solely through economic indicators. The quality of child-rearing, emotional stability within the family, and healthy social relationships also constitute essential components of well-being that are closely related to the objective of *hifẓ al-nasl* (protection of progeny). Various studies suggest that the positive effects of wives serving as primary breadwinners are more likely to be realized when families are able to reorganize caregiving responsibilities and receive adequate social and policy support.

Based on the literature synthesis, the implications of wives serving as primary breadwinners are multidimensional in nature. While this phenomenon can strengthen family resilience and well-being, it may also generate psychosocial pressures when not accompanied by equitable role distribution, family support, and contextual understandings of religious teachings. Accordingly, the perspective of *Maqasid al-Shariah* underscores that the success of economic role transformation within families is determined not only by increased income but also by the ability to preserve family harmony, gender justice, and comprehensive family *maslahah*.

This study is subject to several limitations. First, it relies exclusively on secondary data derived from existing literature and does not empirically test the conceptual model proposed in this study. Future research is therefore needed to validate and refine the model through qualitative and quantitative approaches across diverse contexts of Muslim families.

A Maqasid al-Shariah-Based Conceptual Model of Muslim Family Well-Being

Based on the content analysis of the literature on Maqasid al-Shariah, family well-being, and the socio-economic dynamics of Muslim families, this study proposes a conceptual model of Muslim family well-being grounded in the five essential objectives of Islamic law (*al-daruriyyat al-khams*). The model conceptualizes family well-being as a multidimensional construct that extends beyond economic welfare to include religious, physical, intellectual, familial, and

financial dimensions. These dimensions are viewed as interconnected components that collectively contribute to the realization of *maslahah* (public interest) and sustainable family welfare. The proposed model is presented in figure 1.

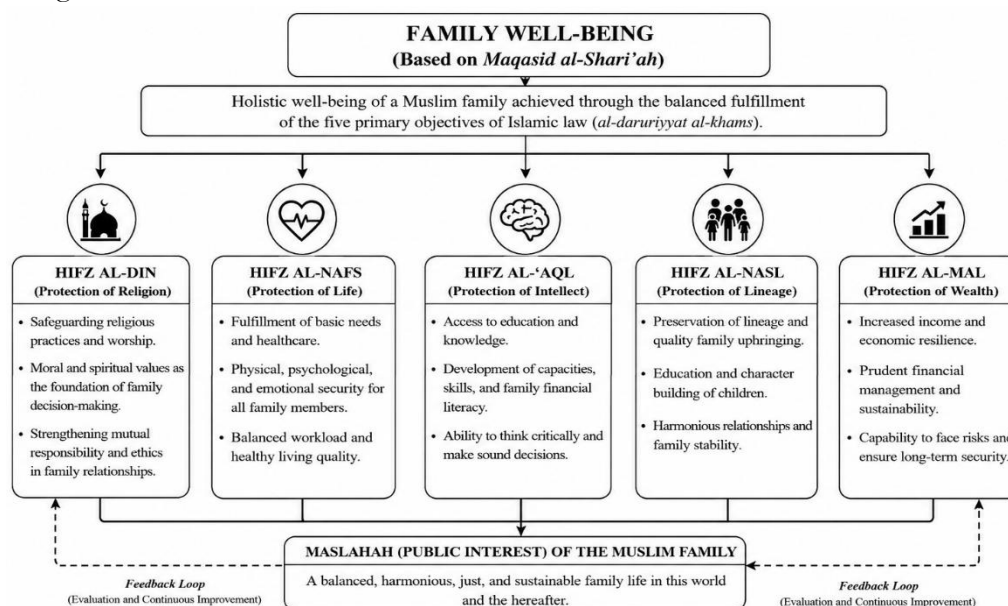


Fig 1. Conceptual Model of Family Well-Being Based on *Maqasid al-Shariah*

As illustrated in figure 1, family well-being is positioned as the ultimate outcome of the balanced fulfillment of the five objectives of *Maqasid al-Shariah*, namely *hifz al-din*, *hifz al-nafs*, *hifz al-'aql*, *hifz al-nasl*, and *hifz al-mal*. Each dimension represents a specific aspect of family welfare, while their integration reflects the holistic nature of Islamic well-being. The model further emphasizes that the achievement of *maslahah* functions as both an outcome and a mechanism for continuous improvement through feedback processes that strengthen family resilience and sustainability.

The synthesis of the literature indicates that the well-being of Muslim families in the context of wives serving as primary breadwinners cannot be assessed solely through increased income or the ability to meet household economic needs. Previous studies have demonstrated that family well-being is a multidimensional construct encompassing economic, psychological, social, educational, and spiritual dimensions (Irianto et al., 2021). Accordingly, the *Maqasid al-Shariah* framework offers a more comprehensive approach to evaluating the success of economic role transformations within Muslim families.

From the perspective of *Maqasid al-Shariah*, family well-being is not determined solely by the realization of *hifz al-mal* (protection of wealth), but also by the family's ability to maintain a balance among the protection of religion (*hifz al-din*), life (*hifz al-nafs*), intellect (*hifz al-'aql*), progeny (*hifz al-nasl*), and wealth (*hifz al-mal*). This perspective is consistent with contemporary *maqasid* scholarship, which increasingly recognizes well-being as a central objective of human development and Muslim family welfare (Yusof et al., 2019).

Based on the findings of this study, a *Maqasid al-Shariah* based conceptual model of Muslim family well-being in the context of wives serving as primary breadwinners can be explained through five interconnected dimensions. First, the dimension of *hifz al-din* is reflected in the family's ability to maintain religious practices, moral values, and spiritual responsibilities despite changes in household economic roles. Second, *hifz al-nafs* is realized through the fulfillment

of basic needs, physical and mental well-being, and the creation of a sense of security for all family members. Third, *hifz al-'aql* is manifested through expanded access to education, personal capacity development, financial literacy, and improved decision-making capabilities within the family. Fourth, *hifz al-nasl* relates to the continuity of parenting functions, children's education, and the quality of relationships among family members. Finally, *hifz al-mal* is reflected in enhanced economic resilience, income stability, and the family's capacity to meet its needs sustainably (Fauziyah et al., 2024).

This model demonstrates that the success of wives serving as primary breadwinners cannot be evaluated solely in terms of their contribution to household income. Increased earnings that are not accompanied by psychological well-being, effective parenting, family harmony, and the preservation of religious values do not fully reflect the realization of *maslahah*. Conversely, families that are able to maintain balance across all five dimensions of *Maqasid al-Shariah* are more likely to achieve a holistic and sustainable form of well-being. These findings reinforce the view that *maqasid* serves not only as a normative foundation of Islamic law but also as an evaluative framework for understanding social change and the transformation of gender relations in contemporary Muslim families (Anisa, 2025).

Based on this model, Muslim family well-being may be understood as a condition in which transformations in household economic roles generate comprehensive *maslahah* through the balanced preservation of religion, life, intellect, progeny, and wealth. Consequently, the phenomenon of wives serving as primary breadwinners should not be viewed merely as a shift in household economic structure, but rather as an adaptive strategy through which Muslim families seek to realize the objectives of *Maqasid al-Shariah* amid contemporary socio-economic change.

CONCLUSION

This study offers a novel contribution by developing a *Maqasid al-Shariah*-based conceptual model of Muslim family well-being that positions the five essential objectives of Islamic law (*hifz al-din*, *hifz al-nafts*, *hifz al-'aql*, *hifz al-nasl*, and *hifz al-mal*) as integrated dimensions for evaluating family welfare in the context of wives serving as primary breadwinners. Unlike conventional approaches that emphasize economic indicators, the proposed model provides a multidimensional framework encompassing religious, psychological, intellectual, social, and economic well-being. The findings imply that the phenomenon of wives as primary breadwinners can be understood as a legitimate form of socio-economic adaptation within Muslim families when it promotes *maslahah* and maintains balance among the objectives of *Shariah*. Accordingly, this study provides a theoretical foundation for future empirical research and offers practical insights for policymakers, family institutions, and community stakeholders in designing family support programs grounded in the principles of justice, partnership, and family well-being.

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