

Independent Women or Family Crisis? Re-reading Qur'an 4:32 to Rethink Women's Independence as a Foundation of Muslim Family Resilience

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submitted: 1 October 2025, accepted: 10 January 2026, published: 2 February 2026

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Abstract

The growing phenomenon of women's independence has significant implications for the resilience of Muslim families. However, its relationship with Islamic normative teachings is often insufficiently addressed. This study examines women's independence through a Qur'anic perspective, particularly Qur'an 4:32, which affirms equal rights of men and women to the fruits of their labor. Using a qualitative literature-based approach, the research analyzes Qur'anic texts alongside contemporary scholarship on gender relations and family resilience. The findings show that women's independence integrates socio-economic, psychological, and spiritual dimensions consistent with Islamic values of justice and responsibility. When practiced proportionally, it contributes to economic stability, better communication, and greater participation of women in family decision-making. A normative reading of Qur'an 4:32 indicates that women's independence is not a threat to family structure but a collaborative mechanism that supports the realization of a harmonious family (*sakinah, mawaddah, wa rahmah*). Grounded in the principles of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, women's independence can serve as a strategic foundation for strengthening Muslim family resilience in the modern era.

Keywords: *women's independence; QS. An-Nisa; family resilience*

INTRODUCTION

The Women's independence is becoming an increasingly prominent phenomenon in various areas of life. Women not only play a role in the domestic sphere, but are also active in the educational, economic, and social sectors. This increased role demonstrates a new awareness of women's potential as subjects who have the ability, responsibility, and right to determine the direction of their own lives (Kuldasheva & Ahmad, 2025; Yeboah et al., 2022). However, these dynamics have an impact on family life, both in terms of strengthening and challenging the resilience of the family itself. Women's independence can strengthen family structures through economic contributions, participatory decision-making, and mature emotional management.

Islam, through the Quran, has provided the basic principles of equality in work and appreciation for the role of women as stated in QS. An-Nisa [4]: 32. This verse emphasizes that men and women have equal rights to what they work for, so that Islam substantially recognizes women's independence in contributing to various fields of life (Al-Mannai, 2010; Ginting et al., 2024; Madzkuroh & Qomariyah, 2025). In this case, Islamic values serve as guidelines that lead women to exercise their independence in a balanced manner without shifting roles, but rather complementing and enriching family dynamics to create a harmonious, fair, and empowered household (Tambunan et al., 2024). Independent Women in the perspective of the Qur'an does not only refer to the ability to work or contribute economically, but also includes managing responsibilities, making wise decisions, and balancing roles in the household (Kati, 2021). This context then raises an important focus of analysis, namely how the meaning of women's independence can be understood in the context of Muslim family life, to what extent this independence plays a role in strengthening family resilience, and how women's independence based on QS. An -Nisa [4]: 32 can be used as a normative guideline for today's Muslim families in balancing individual independence with the sustainability and collective welfare of the household.

Several recent studies highlighting this issue, such as the study by Ponirah et al. (2024), show that women play a very important role in achieving family economic resilience. In line with this, research by Mahfiroh et al. (2024) found that the role of wives as primary breadwinners brings significant changes to family dynamics, whereby a balance of roles between husbands and wives, as well as good collaboration and communication, are very important for maintaining the strength and stability of the family. However, even though literature has examined the practical role of women (such as being the main breadwinner) in family resilience, there is a gap in connecting this empirical reality with the normative foundations of Islam. Existing research has not specifically and deeply examined how the concept of women's independence, particularly that which originates from QS. An-Nisa [4]: 32, can serve as a theological and ethical guideline for balancing roles and strengthening the resilience of contemporary Muslim families. Therefore, this study is an integrated analysis that places QS. An-Nisa [4]: 32 as the normative basis for women's independence. This study not only explains women's practical contributions to family resilience but also draws a line between women's normative right to empowerment (as affirmed by the Qur'an) and its implementation in forming a just and empowered family.

Besides, this independence for women also carries potential problems if it is not regulated proportionally. For example, there is a social stigma against wives who are too independent; they are considered selfish or even "exaggerating themselves," which can trigger domestic conflicts (Barnett et al., 2016; Magazine, 2004). There is also the possibility that economic independence opens the door to legal actions such as divorce, where a wife feels she has moral and legal grounds to end the marriage if her husband does not fulfill his obligations or if there is injustice. A case in South Sulawesi involving a wife who was a civil

servant and filed for divorce after obtaining permanent employee status clearly has the potential to create problems (Jeneponto.com, 2025).

The author believes that such conditions are not a problem arising from women's independence, but rather a problem of proportionality, depending on how rights and obligations in the household are managed fairly, communication is conducted openly, and roles and responsibilities are shared equally. If these aspects are well maintained, women's independence will actually strengthen family resilience: improving economic stability, increasing mutual respect, and reducing toxic dependence. Thus, measured independence accompanied by a shared commitment to each other's roles is not a threat, but rather the foundation of a stronger and more adaptive family.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach. The primary data source is the Qur'an, particularly QS. An-Nisa [4]: 32, which serves as the central normative foundation for examining the concept of women's independence in Islam. Secondary data are drawn from relevant classical and contemporary literature, including books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and scholarly works that discuss gender roles, Islamic family law, and family resilience. The research adopts a descriptive-analytical method to interpret the normative meaning of QS. An-Nisa [4]: 32 and to explore its implications for contemporary Muslim family dynamics. Data were collected through systematic documentation of relevant texts and analyzed using thematic analysis. This process involves identifying key concepts related to women's economic and social independence and examining how these concepts interact with the notion of family resilience.

To ensure analytical rigor, the study integrates normative Islamic perspectives with findings from contemporary scholarly discussions on gender and family studies. Through this approach, the research aims to contextualize the Qur'anic principle of equitable rights to the fruits of labor for both men and women within the realities of modern Muslim family life.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of Women's Independence and Family Resilience

Women's independence in the context of Muslim families is an integrated construct of three fundamental aspects: socio-economic, psychological, and spiritual (Fadhilazis Wijanarko & Madaniyyah, 2025). Socially, independence is manifested in the expansion of women's roles beyond the domestic sphere, enabling them to contribute actively to the economic and educational sectors. These contributions directly strengthen family resilience through improved welfare and participation in decision-making. The psychological dimension includes self-autonomy, such as women's ability to manage responsibilities, make wise decisions, and achieve a healthy balance of roles in the household (Agustini et al., 2023). Meanwhile, the spiritual foundation of independence is rooted in the teachings of the Qur'an, particularly QS. An-Nisa [4]: 32, which normatively affirms equal rights to the fruits of labor

for men and women, making independence an implementation of the values of justice and divine responsibility.

Before the advent of Islam, many pre-Islamic Arab societies viewed women as unequal, as objects, with very limited social, political, and economic access. The traditional understanding of women was often equated with “biological weakness,” so that their roles were reduced to domestic and reproductive ones. However, the arrival of Islam brought radical changes to the status of women. Based on the interpretation of QS. An-Nisa 4:1, for example, in modern studies conducted by researchers such as Mir'atun Nisa', it was concluded that this verse affirms that women and men were created as equal beings in physical and psychological aspects, so that essentially they are equal (Nisa, 2024). Therefore, Islam emphasizes that women and men have equal essential status, as stated in QS. An-Nisa verse 32, which states that each has rights, roles, and rewards for their efforts without discrimination or degradation.

This complete and integrated independence of women is a fundamental prerequisite for realizing the concept of *sakinah, mawaddah, wa rahmah* families that are idealized in Islam. Independence based on the principle of equality from QS. An-Nisa [4]: 32 allows women to function as empowered and equal partners, not merely complements, in the household. The balance achieved through economic contribution and participation in deliberations can eliminate potential injustices and tensions, thereby creating peace of mind (*sakinah*) within the family. Furthermore, this atmosphere of fairness and mutual respect fosters love (*mawaddah*) and compassion (*warahmah*) based on mutual understanding, forgiveness, and acceptance of each other's shortcomings among family members (Masri, 2024). Therefore, Independent Women serves as an essential ethical and practical foundation for achieving a harmonious and resilient family.

Islam's recognition and appreciation of women's independence is further based on a balanced understanding of nature and role. Islam clearly distinguishes between nature, which is limited to women's unique biological functions (such as conceiving, giving birth, and breastfeeding), and social, economic, and political roles, which are dynamic in nature (Adliah & Muchtar, 2022). Based on the principle of equality in striving and doing good deeds, women have the same rights as men to actualize themselves and actively participate in the public sphere, such as in business or pursuing education, as long as they do not violate Islamic values and continue to fulfill their primary responsibilities to maintain harmony and educate the younger generation in the family. Thus, the active involvement of women is seen as the full implementation of the potential permitted by religion, where their presence aims to complement, not replace, the role of the husband, in order to achieve overall family resilience.

In this context, it is important to distinguish between classical and modern interpretations in understanding the position of women. Classical interpretations generally reflect a more patriarchal mindset, especially when interpreting verses on gender relations such as QS. An-Nisa [4]:34, which is often understood as a form of male superiority over women. However, contemporary studies show a paradigm shift. In the modern perspective,

the concept of *qiwāmah* is no longer understood as a male privilege, but rather as a functional responsibility related to protection, economic provision, and family management. Ismail's (2023) research on gender equality in Surah An-Nisa also confirms that modern interpretations emphasize cooperation and partnership between men and women, rather than hierarchical relationships (Ismail et al., 2024).

The view of the position and role of women in Islam is further explained by M. Quraish Shihab, who interprets the concept of *al-qawwāmah* not as a form of male superiority, but as a moral and social responsibility to protect and provide for the family. In his view, the relationship between husband and wife should be an equal partnership, based on the principles of *mu'āsyarah bi al-ma'rūf* (living together in harmony) and deliberation in household decision-making. Therefore, women who work independently or play an active role in society are not contrary to Islamic teachings, as long as it is done within the framework of family responsibility and balance. This view is emphasized in Quraish Shihab's work entitled "*Wawasan Al-Qur'an: Tafsir Maudhu'i atas Pelbagai Persoalan Umat*" (Insights from the Qur'an: Thematic Interpretation of Various Issues Facing the Ummah), (Shihab, 2007) which emphasizes that equality and cooperation between husband and wife are the main foundations for building a harmonious and resilient family.

The *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* approach provides an important theoretical framework for strengthening arguments about women's equality and independence. In this approach, the main objectives of sharia are to create justice, protect rights, and promote human welfare. Therefore, the interpretation of verses about gender relations cannot be separated from the spirit of justice. Khoirunnisa's (2022) study shows that *maqāṣid syariat* rejects all forms of violence and injustice against women in the family (Khoirunnisa & Ruslandi, 2022). Overall, the *maqāṣid* approach emphasizes that women's independence is an integral part of the objectives of sharia: to protect the dignity, property, and life of the family.

In the contemporary social context, women's roles have expanded to include positions such as head of the family and public leader. Nuraeni (2025) asserts that female heads of families are not only capable of managing the economic aspects of the household but also of building the emotional and spiritual resilience of family members (Nuraeni & Ariyanto, 2025). In addition, Nisa's (2024) study on the political role of Muslim women shows that since the early days of Islam, women have been actively participating in deliberations, education, and advocacy (Nisa et al., 2024). In Indonesia itself, contemporary research shows that women face structural challenges in the form of patriarchal culture, social resistance, and low legal awareness. Therefore, legal education and advocacy are very important so that women can effectively fight for their rights (Wulandari, 2022).

Overall, the construction of Independent Women in Muslim families illustrates the integration of Islamic values with contemporary social dynamics that demand a balance of roles between men and women. When women's independence is synergized with the principles of justice, responsibility, and partnership as reflected in the teachings of the Qur'an and the interpretations of modern exegetes such as M. Quraish Shihab, a family model oriented towards collaboration and mutual empowerment is formed. Women's independence

in this context is not intended to create competition with men, but to optimize contributions to family resilience and harmony. Egalitarian relationships based on Islamic moral values are an important foundation for the realization of a *sakinah, mawaddah, wa rahmah* family. Thus, Independent Women serves as a conceptual framework that strengthens the structure of Muslim families in facing the challenges of modernity.

The Contribution of Women's Independence to Family Resilience Based on QS. An-Nisa

The Qur'an is the main source for every issue, so that the contribution of women's independence to family resilience can be explained through a strong basis, namely:

Q.S An-Nisa ayat [4]: 32:

وَلَا تَتَمَنَّوْا مَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بِهِ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ ۗ لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوا ۗ وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا كَسَبْنَ ۗ وَسَأَلُوا اللَّهَ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا

Translation: Do not envy what Allah has given some of you more than others. Men have a share of what they have earned, and women have a share of what they have earned. Ask Allah for some of His bounty. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing of everything. (Q.S An-Nisa ayat [4]: 32)

The meaning of QS. An-Nisa [4]: 32 can be understood more deeply through the explanations of classical and contemporary exegetes. In Tafsir Al-Misbah, Quraish Shihab emphasizes that this verse contains a message that humans should not be jealous of the blessings that Allah has given to others, because every individual, both male and female, certainly has opportunities and responsibilities in accordance with their respective capacities (Shihab, 2002). Meanwhile, Ibn Kathir's interpretation explains that Allah gives different privileges and responsibilities to men and women as a form of balance, not inequality. Men are given the obligation to provide for their families, while women are entitled to the fruits of their own labor (Katsir, 2008). Thus, both interpretations emphasize that Islam recognizes women's right to the sustenance that Allah has decreed without envy towards the excesses of others.

Furthermore, modern interpretations such as those of Musdah Mulia and Sahiron Syamsuddin emphasize that the division of roles within the family is flexible, contextual, and can be adjusted to the needs of the family. Using the *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* approach, they state that a woman can become the head of the family if she has greater capacity or if the family situation demands it, as long as the objectives of sharia, namely justice, protection, and welfare, are maintained. Nuraeni Ariyanto's study of Musdah Mulia's framework of thought shows that female leadership in the family is a logical consequence of the principles of reciprocity (*mubādalah*) and substantive justice (Nuraeni & Ariyanto, 2025).

This verse also emphasizes that the principle being upheld is not independence in a competitive sense, but rather justice and independence in responsibility. Islam does not place men and women in a position of competing with each other to demonstrate superiority, but affirms that both have different roles and obligations that are equally valuable in the eyes of Allah. Every individual is given the right to strive and reap the rewards of their efforts, while

at the same time being required to carry out their responsibilities in accordance with their designated capacities. Thus, QS. An-Nisa [4]: 32 becomes the moral basis that women's independence is not to compete with men, but to optimize their potential within the corridor of fair, balanced, and complementary responsibilities for the sake of family and community harmony.

The interpretation of justice and independence in QS. An-Nisa [4]: 32 has real implications for the lives of modern Muslim families. This is reflected in women's contribution to independence in three main aspects of family life. From an economic perspective, independent women are able to support their families' needs without negating the husband's role as the main breadwinner. Her contribution actually strengthens cooperation and economic stability in the household.

Empirical findings reinforce this. Research by Arifianti, Nasution & Juliati (2024) on Muslim women in Melati I Village, Perbaungan shows that working women are able to improve family financial stability through additional income, diversification of economic sources, and reduction of economic vulnerability risks. However, they face the challenge of a double burden in balancing work, household, and social roles. The strategies they use include open communication with their partners, negotiation of role sharing, and flexible time management in accordance with Islamic values (Arifianti et al., 2024).

Another study of female civil servants in Islamic universities also confirms that women with dual roles can still maintain family resilience through effective role management. They apply the principle of *mubādalāh* in task distribution, intensive communication, role prioritization, and increased spirituality as a counterbalance to their burdens. The study confirms that women's work does not weaken the family, but rather strengthens family resilience when managed collaboratively (Hidayati et al., 2022).

Furthermore, psychologically, women's independence helps maintain emotional stability within the family. Women who are mentally and spiritually mature are able to manage conflicts wisely and become a source of calm for family members (Purnomosidi et al., 2022). In terms of children's education, independent women serve as role models of resilience, discipline, and empowerment. Through these examples, children learn the meaning of responsibility and hard work, which ultimately strengthens the resilience and character of the family as a whole (Puspitasari et al., 2016).

Thus, women's contributions in the domestic and public spheres are complementary, not mutually exclusive. This principle is in line with *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, which emphasizes justice, protection of rights, and the welfare of the family. Legal awareness and advocacy for women are important elements in ensuring that women's rights are protected under sharia and positive law, as shown in research on women's consciousness-raising in family relationships (Wulandari, 2022).

Therefore, it is important to understand that women's independence is not a form of opposition to the family structure, but rather an effort at self-actualization that actually strengthens it. When independence is exercised proportionally and remains grounded in the values of justice, responsibility, and balance of roles as emphasized in QS. An-Nisa [4]: 32,

what emerges is not role tension, but synergy that fosters collective strength within the household. In this balance, the family becomes more economically stable, emotionally mature, and spiritually harmonious. Thus, women's independence that is in line with Islamic principles does not weaken but rather strengthens the foundation of the family and makes it more adaptive to the times.

The Values of Women's Independence as the Foundation for a Harmonious and Just Family

QS. An-Nisa [4]: 32 emphasizes three main values that form the basis of women's independence, namely justice, responsibility, and appreciation for sustenance and each person's role. First, the value of justice is evident in the recognition that men and women are equally entitled to the fruits of their labor. This shows that Islam values hard work regardless of gender, so that each party is entitled to recognition for their contribution to the family. Second, the value of responsibility teaches that each individual is responsible for their respective roles, whether as breadwinner, homemaker, or educator of the next generation. Independence in Islam does not mean unlimited freedom, but freedom accompanied by moral and spiritual responsibility. Third, the value of appreciation for sustenance and roles emphasizes the importance of accepting differences without envy. Every advantage and disadvantage is part of Allah's decree that must be appreciated and carried out harmoniously. Thus, QS. An-Nisa [4]: 32 serves as a guideline for women's independence to be carried out fairly, responsibly, and with mutual respect, so that a harmonious and just family can be created.

Additionally, the value of equality in QS. An-Nisa [4]: 32 is reinforced by QS. An-Nisa [4]: 1, which affirms that men and women were created from *nafs wāḥidah*, one and the same soul. This verse shows that gender relations in Islam are symmetrical, not hierarchical, and emphasizes the principle of reciprocity in building family life and social activities. This is in line with Nisa's (2023) analysis, which shows that the Muslim women's movement interprets QS. An-Nisa [4]:1 as the theological basis for substantive equality between men and women (Nisa, 2021).

The meaning of equality in QS. An-Nisa [4]:1 is also reinforced by contemporary studies on the theology of the creation of women, particularly Nisa's (2022) research which examines the concept of *nafs wāḥidah* as the foundation of equal gender relations. The study shows that the creation of men and women from the same entity implies equality in dignity, rights, and spiritual capacity for both in carrying out their social and family roles (Nisa, 2024). Thus, this basis for creation not only provides theological legitimacy for equality, but also supports the principle that women's independence in the family and society is part of the structure of justice mandated by Sharia law. The relationship between men and women is not defined as one of domination, but rather as a cooperative relationship based on balance, deliberation, and respect for the capacities of each party.

In modern Muslim families, the implementation of values of justice, responsibility, and appreciation for sustenance and roles is reflected when husbands and wives proportionally

share economic, domestic, and decision-making responsibilities, so that women's contributions to their efforts are valued equally; for example, in research by Arifianti et al. (2024), which shows that women traders in Melati I use open communication with their husbands so that their dual roles can remain balanced without damaging family relationships. In a study by Nastagin and Huda (2022), it is shown that career women and their husbands apply the principle of *mubādalah* (reciprocity) in regulating the division of labor so that the emotional and spiritual well-being of the family is maintained.

In addition, empirical findings from various contemporary studies confirm that the practice of role justice in Muslim families not only strengthens the harmony of husband-wife relationships but also increases overall family resilience. Research by Hidayati & Susilawati (2022) shows that women who work in the domestic or public sector are still able to maintain family stability when there is emotional support and role collaboration from their partners, especially through regular dialogue about each other's needs and burdens. This flexible and mutually agreed role-sharing model has been proven to prevent role conflict and emotional exhaustion, while increasing the effectiveness of household economic management. The study also emphasizes that families that apply the principles of deliberation and reciprocity (*mubādalah*) tend to have stronger spiritual resilience because each family member feels that their contributions are recognized (Hidayati et al., 2022). These findings are consistent with the research of Arifianti et al. (2024) and the study by Nastagin & Huda (2022), thereby strengthening the argument that a fair and communicative division of roles is the main foundation of the resilience of modern Muslim families. Therefore, Muslim families that apply the principles of justice, reciprocity, and open communication tend to have stronger resilience. A flexible and mutually agreed division of roles not only minimizes conflict, but also improves economic, emotional, and spiritual well-being. The *mubādalah* approach in husband-wife relationships provides a practical foundation for managing the dynamics of modern families in a more equitable and harmonious manner, while remaining in line with normative Islamic values.

With the implementation of equal communication and fair division of roles as demonstrated in modern Muslim families, a balance is created that forms the foundation of family resilience. The implications of applying these values are evident when women's independence does not lead to domination, but rather strengthens household harmony through mutual understanding and emotional support. The family becomes more resilient because each party feels they have the space to play a role and develop according to their capacity. Thus, QS. An-Nisa [4]: 32 provides a paradigm that true independence is not a competition between men and women, but an effort to strengthen each other in justice. This verse emphasizes that every individual has the right to the fruits of their labor, but still within the framework of balance and shared responsibility. In the context of the modern Muslim family, this principle serves as a guideline for building mutually respectful relationships, where women's independence is not interpreted as an attempt to rival their husbands, but as a form of active contribution to strengthening the resilience, harmony, and overall well-being of the family.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the concept of Independent Women in the perspective of Islamic Family Law has a strong normative basis in QS. An-Nisa '[4]: 32 which emphasizes equal rights to effort and contribution between men and women. Women's independence has proven to play an important role in strengthening family resilience through economic stability, improved decision-making quality, and the formation of more egalitarian relationships. Challenges such as social stigma and role tensions do not stem from independence itself, but rather from an imbalance in communication and role distribution within the family. With the application of the principles of equality and deliberation, women's independence actually becomes a pillar for the realization of a *sakinah, mawaddah, wa rahmah* family amid modern social dynamics.

Further research is recommended to deepen the study through an empirical approach involving various socio-economic backgrounds to assess how the understanding of QS. An-Nisa '[4]: 32 influences the practice of women's independence in the family. Exploration of structural factors such as patriarchal culture, legal literacy, and access to education and economy is also important to identify reinforcing and inhibiting variables. The integration of contemporary fiqh, *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, and quantitative data-based gender analysis is necessary to produce a more comprehensive, adaptive, and contextual model for strengthening Muslim families.

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