

## The Role of Women as Breadwinners: A Case Study of Konang Galis Village, Pamekasan

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### Abstract

The role of women as the main breadwinners in Muslim families is often perceived as deviating from the normative construction of Islamic law, which places men as the primary providers of family livelihood. However, the social reality in Konang Galis Village, Pamekasan, reveals a more complex dynamic, where women consciously and actively assume the main economic role without experiencing social resistance or repressive religious legitimization. This study aims to analyze the factors that encourage women to become female breadwinners, their subjective experiences in carrying out this role, and the responses of families and the surrounding community within the framework of gender relations in rural Muslim society. Using a qualitative case study approach, this research combines in-depth interviews, field observations, and socio-religious analysis to examine shifts in household economic roles from a gender perspective. The findings show that women's decisions to become primary breadwinners are driven not only by economic factors, such as husbands' inability to work, but also by a strong sense of family responsibility and rational adaptation to structural conditions. Emotional support from families and social acceptance from the community function as crucial capital that enables women to manage their dual roles. This study affirms that the practice of female breadwinners is understood as a form of social *ijtihad* oriented toward family welfare, representing contextual, adaptive, and integrative gender relations aligned with religious values and local social realities.

**Keywords:** Family Breadwinner, Women, Gender, Economic Role, Muslim Workers

### Abstrak

Peran perempuan sebagai pencari nafkah utama (*female breadwinner*) dalam masyarakat Muslim sering dipersepsikan menyimpang dari konstruksi normatif hukum Islam yang menempatkan laki-laki sebagai penanggung jawab utama nafkah keluarga. Namun, realitas sosial di Desa Konang Galis, Pamekasan, menunjukkan dinamika yang lebih kompleks, di mana perempuan secara aktif dan sadar mengambil peran ekonomi utama tanpa mengalami resistensi sosial maupun legitimasi keagamaan yang represif. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis faktor-faktor yang melatarbelakangi perempuan menjadi *female breadwinner*, pengalaman subjektif mereka, serta respons keluarga dan lingkungan sosial dalam kerangka relasi gender masyarakat Muslim pedesaan. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif studi kasus, penelitian ini memadukan wawancara mendalam, observasi lapangan, dan analisis sosial-

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keagamaan untuk membaca pergeseran peran ekonomi rumah tangga dari perspektif gender. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa keputusan perempuan menjadi pencari nafkah utama tidak hanya didorong oleh faktor ekonomi, seperti ketidakmampuan suami bekerja, tetapi juga oleh kesadaran tanggung jawab keluarga dan adaptasi rasional terhadap kondisi struktural. Dukungan emosional keluarga dan penerimaan sosial masyarakat menjadi modal penting dalam menopang peran ganda perempuan. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa praktik female breadwinner dimaknai sebagai ijtihad sosial berorientasi kemaslahatan keluarga, merepresentasikan relasi gender yang kontekstual, adaptif, dan selaras dengan nilai-nilai keagamaan serta realitas sosial lokal.

**Kata Kunci:** Tulang Punggung Keluarga, Perempuan, Gender, Peran Ekonomi, Pekerja Muslim

## Introduction

Social and economic changes that have occurred in recent decades have influenced the dynamics of gender roles in various societies, as seen in Konang Galis Village, Pamekasan, where it is often the wife who earns a living for the family. This has become a common phenomenon and is familiar in the lives of the Konang community. Over time, the number of wives or homemakers who take on the role of family breadwinner has increased. Moreover, many women experience the burden of dual roles, managing household responsibilities while also working as breadwinners.<sup>1</sup> This situation highlights the differences in roles between men and women, often referred to as gender inequality.<sup>2</sup>

Ideally, the primary role of earners is often associated with men, while women are expected to focus more on household chores and child-rearing. This is reflected in the Javanese expression "dapur, sumur, kasur" (kitchen, well, bed), suggesting traditional roles where men hold significant authority in society. This notion is further supported by a verse from the Quran, Surah An-Nisa (4:34).

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَنَاطٌ حَفِظَتْ لَٰلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ وَالَّتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاضْرِبُوهُنَّ فَإِنْ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا كَبِيرًا

Artinya: "Men are the caretakers of women, as men have been provisioned by Allah over women and tasked with supporting them financially. And righteous women are devoutly obedient and, when alone, protective of what Allah has entrusted them with. And if you sense ill-conduct from your women, advise them 'first', 'if they persist,' do not share their beds, 'but if they still persist,' then discipline them 'gently'. But if they change their ways, do not be unjust to them. Surely Allah is Most High, All-Great."<sup>3</sup>

Based on the verse mentioned, it can be understood that a woman's duties are fundamentally twofold: to be devout to Allah and to obey her husband. The verse also

<sup>1</sup> Karin Jurczyk et al., "Female-Breadwinner Families in Germany: New Gender Roles?," *Journal of Family Issues* 40, no. 13 (September 2019): 1731–54, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X19843149>.

<sup>2</sup> Sanita Deselia and Hariati Sinaga, "Gender Disparities in Technological Proficiency Among Women Online Workers in the Digital Economy Era," *HUMANISMA : Journal of Gender Studies* 8, no. 2 (December 2024): 106–21, <https://doi.org/10.30983/humanisma.v8i2.8742>.

<sup>3</sup> Jajasan Penjelenggara Penterdjema/Pentafsis Al-Qoeraan (1967) / Tim Penyempurnaan Terjemahan Al-Qur'an, "Al-Qur'an Dan Terjemahannya Edisi Penyempurnaan 2019, Juz 1--10," in *Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an* (2019), 13.

indicates that a wife should not leave the house when her husband is not home, as Allah safeguards women who remain at home in their husband's absence.

The husband's obligation to provide for his wife applies in all situations, whether the husband is wealthy or poor. Conversely, a wife is not required to spend her own money to support herself.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, within the Islamic perspective, gender roles are often influenced by textual interpretations and the cultural practices of the local community. A gender analysis of Muslim women as breadwinners requires a holistic approach that considers various aspects such as Islamic understanding, government policies, and socio-economic conditions. Nonetheless, by human nature, women and men are born with different roles and responsibilities.<sup>5</sup>

Female breadwinners often face financial challenges, such as managing living expenses for both themselves and their families, which have now become their responsibility. This situation brings about concerns regarding high living costs that must be met.<sup>6</sup> In addition, they need to manage finances effectively to ensure both short-term and long-term needs are fulfilled without facing financial hardship.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, social and psychological pressures arising from the dual roles often add to their burdens, affecting their well-being.<sup>8</sup>

In daily life, a wife working as an agricultural laborer must go to the field while her husband, who is unemployed, stays at home. In this situation, the wife decides to seek income due to the domestic burden of meeting daily living needs.<sup>9</sup> This shift reflects a broader global trend of the feminization of agriculture, in which women take on more agricultural labor and income-generating roles due to economic pressures and male migration or unemployment.<sup>10</sup> This condition is similar to what is observed in Konang Village, Galis Sub-district, Pamekasan, where one of the most fundamental changes is that married women can now work, and in some families, the wife has become the family's breadwinner. Previously, in Konang Galis Pamekasan, wives only assisted their husbands with fieldwork, but now there has been a shift in gender roles.

Research on gender studies in households has been extensive, focusing on various aspects, particularly economic factors and family resilience. For example, research by

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<sup>4</sup> Retno Agus Winanti, Khoirul Asfiyak, and Moh Muslim, "Istri Sebagai Pencari Nafkah Utama Akibat Suami Terkena PHK Dalam Persepektif Hukum Islam (Studi Terhadap Pengrajin Kopyah Di Dusun Ngablak Kecamatan Balongpanggang Kabupaten Gresik)," *Hikmatina: Jurnal Ilmiah Hukum Keluarga Islam* 3, no. 2 (2021): 62–70.

<sup>5</sup> Hajroni Hajroni et al., "Pengaruh Budaya Dan Agama Terhadap Keadilan Gender: Persepektif Kontemporer," *El-Hekam* 7, no. 1 (2023): 152–67.

<sup>6</sup> Sofia Ramdhaniar and Artiawati, "Bertahan Menembus Tantangan Kehidupan: Studi Kasus Pada Perempuan Pencari Nafkah Utama," *Ristekdik: Jurnal Bimbingan Dan Konseling* 5, no. 2 (2020): 203–10.

<sup>7</sup> Sri Fitri Wahyuni et al., "Keterkaitan Antara Literasi Keuangan Dan Pendapatan Pada Kesejahteraan Keuangan: Mediasi Prilaku Keuangan Generasi Sandwich," *Bursa: Jurnal Ekonomi Dan Bisnis* 3, no. 1 (2024).

<sup>8</sup> Ulfa Ramadhani Nasution and Syarif Husein Pohan, "Kedudukan Seorang Istri Sebagai Pencari Nafkah Utama Dalam Keluarga: Studi Di Desa Aek Lancat, Lubuk Barumun, Padang Lawas, Sumatera Utara," *Jurnal Kajian Islam Interdisipliner* 6, no. 1 (June 2021): 51, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jkii.v6i1.1128>.

<sup>9</sup> Agnes Quisumbing et al., "Measuring Women's Empowerment in Agriculture: Innovations and Evidence," *Global Food Security* 38 (September 2023): 100707, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gfs.2023.100707>.

<sup>10</sup> M. Niaz Asadullah and Uma Kambhampati, "Feminization of Farming, Food Security and Female Empowerment," *Global Food Security* 29 (June 2021): 100532, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gfs.2021.100532>.

Lukman Budi Santos highlights the concept of qira'ah mubadalah, emphasizing the importance of flexible cooperation between spouses in fulfilling family responsibilities.<sup>11</sup> Nunung Susfita's research explains that while many modern women work and succeed, this still conflicts with classic Islamic norms that designate men as the primary earners.<sup>12</sup> Research by Salama. shows that in Karangampel village, In daily life many women work in factories and are the primary breadwinners, while their husbands manage household duties.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Suharna's research indicates that in Enrekang Sub-district, many wives work as civil servants to meet family needs and improve their living standards.<sup>14</sup>

However, these studies still focus on economic aspects and policies without deeply exploring how social dynamics and gender construction in society influence women's roles as breadwinners. Therefore, this research aims to fill that gap by examining how female breadwinners adapt to social norms and how society responds to these role changes. Thus, this study not only enriches the discourse on women and economics but also offers new perspectives on the accompanying social dynamics.

This research is conducted in Konang Galis Village, Pamekasan, to investigate how female breadwinners fulfill their responsibilities within the family, how gender analysis plays a role in household dynamics, and how women manage their earnings to support their families. Understanding these aspects, this research is expected to contribute to the development of a more comprehensive study of women's issues based on the evolving social reality.

## Method

This study uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. Qualitative methodology is research that produces descriptive data, which can consist of written or spoken words from individuals, as well as observable behaviors from their surroundings.<sup>15</sup> The case study design is used to explore a specific topic or event, whether at the individual or group level, to gain in-depth knowledge about the occurrence.<sup>16</sup> In this case, the case study is located in Konang Village, Galis Sub-district, Pamekasan.

Data collection techniques in qualitative research typically include observation, interviews, questionnaires, and documentation studies.<sup>17</sup> However, in this study, the data

<sup>11</sup> Lukman Budi Santoso, "Eksistensi Peran Perempuan Sebagai Kepala Keluarga (Telaah Terhadap Counter Legal Draft-Kompilasi Hukum Islam Dan Qira'ah Mubadalah)," *Marwah: Jurnal Perempuan, Agama Dan Jender* 18, no. 2 (2020): 107, <https://doi.org/10.24014/marwah.v18i2.8703>.

<sup>12</sup> Nunung Susfita, "Analisis Gender Terhadap Partisipasi Kaum Perempuan Dalam Upaya Memenuhi Kebutuhan Hidup Ekonomi Keluarga Pada Zaman Modern," *Qawwam* 11, no. 2 (2017): 95–108.

<sup>13</sup> Nadiatus Salama, "Suara Sunyi Pekerja Pabrik Perempuan," *Sawwa: Jurnal Studi Gender* 7, no. 2 (May 2012): 37, <https://doi.org/10.21580/sa.v7i2.648>.

<sup>14</sup> Suharna, "Tinjauan Hukum Islam Terhadap Istri Sebagai Pencari Nafkah Utama Dalam Keluarga PNS Di Kecamatan Enrekang Kabupaten Enrekang The Overview of Islamic Law towards Wife as a Breadwinner in Civil Servant Family in Enrekang," *Jurnal Al-Qadau Peradilan Dan Hukum Keluarga Islam* 5, no. 1 (2018): 49–58.

<sup>15</sup> J.W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4th ed. (Washington DC: SAGE Publications, 2014).

<sup>16</sup> Mudjia Rahardjo, *Studi Kasus Dalam Penelitian Kualitatif: Konsep Dan Prosedurnya*, no. 1 (Malang: UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim, 2017), 14:55–64.

<sup>17</sup> R K Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 12th ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, 1995).

collection techniques used are interviews and field observations. The primary data obtained from this research is the result of direct interviews with the relevant informants, as well as field observations. The informants in this study include two women: Mrs. Suryati (41 years old), Mrs. Haniyati (41 years old), who are the primary breadwinners (female breadwinners), Mrs. Mutmainnah, who is a member of the community that is not a female breadwinner, and Mr. Abdul as a religious leader in Konang Village, Pamekasan. The secondary data from this research includes documentation recordings of the interviews conducted by the author with the informants and literature reviews where the data sources are taken from relevant books and scientific journals pertaining to the topic and analyzed from a gender perspective. The data analysis techniques used in this study involve data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.<sup>18</sup> The stages of the research are carried out through several steps, including: First, identifying the reality of the phenomenon in the field (pre-research observation). Second, creating a title and research plan that aligns with the occurring phenomenon. Third, designing data acquisition plans that include observation guidelines, interview questions, and making a documentation list for potential needs.

### **Results and Discussion**

#### **Concept of Breadwinner and Women's Role in the Family**

Every activity, behavior, or societal pattern undoubtedly has its reasons, including why women work. The reasons for this can be summarized as follows: First, because the husband's income does not meet the family's needs. This is often a fundamental reason why women enter the workforce. Second, the need for someone to fill roles beyond just being a wife and mother. The role of women can lead to boredom due to the tasks they perform. To alleviate this boredom, women may seek interactions with new people, engage in different activities, and face new challenges. Third, working can fulfill a need for power and achievements that a woman may not have accomplished while living in the family structure.<sup>19</sup> These insights are based on statements from individuals regarding their reasons for working, as revealed through interviews with mothers who serve as breadwinners for their families. One respondent stated,

*“The reason I decided to work and become the family's backbone is to meet our household needs. I have children in school who require significant financial support. I worry that if I were to lose my husband, I would have no work experience. Thus, I choose to trade instead of farm because I prefer trading.”*<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, another informant shared a slightly different perspective:

*“The reason I decided to become the family's breadwinner is that men today are unable to work as they used to because my husband is often ill. So, there was no*

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<sup>18</sup> M.B. Miles, A.M. Huberman, and J. Saldana, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, 2nd ed. (London: SAGE Publications, 2014), <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=3CNrUbTu6CsC>.

<sup>19</sup> Agnieszka Zielińska et al., “Re-Visiting Women’s Work Motivations and Career Needs: International Evidence from the Perspective of Self-Determination Theory,” *Gender in Management: An International Journal* 40, no. 3 (April 2025): 505–25, <https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-01-2024-0029>.

<sup>20</sup> Suryati, *Hasil Wawancara* (2024).

*choice but for us wives to work in various jobs. Currently, I work as a fish dryer. There are many needs to fulfill, especially with children still in school, so I have to work.*<sup>21</sup>

Both statements indicate that women's decisions to become primary breadwinners are driven by a combination of family economic demands and household structural conditions, particularly the need to cover children's education costs and ensure family economic sustainability.<sup>22</sup> High financial needs, particularly for children's education, are the primary factor driving women to take on a central economic role, while husbands' limited ability to work, whether due to health conditions or economic instability, reinforces this shift in role. Women not only respond to emergencies but also consider sustainability and economic independence by choosing the type of work deemed most realistic and appropriate to their capacities. This reflects women's rational adaptation in maintaining family economic resilience, as emphasized in contemporary gender studies and Islamic law, which position women's economic contributions as contextual and legitimate social practices.<sup>23</sup>

This once again underscores the significant economic role of women, as they serve a central function in the family as a source of economic resources. Women's roles extend beyond household duties to economic and commercial sectors. Therefore, this phenomenon does not merely represent progress towards equality or a new burden imposed by economic crises that force women to take on these roles. Instead, the fact that women can become breadwinners is not simply a matter of choice but a response to the conditions that require them to endure under different family circumstances.<sup>24</sup>

Moreover, we should recognize that, regardless of societal perceptions of changing family roles when wives become earners, it reflects the courage and resilience of women, who are creations of Allah SWT. However, underlying this resilience is often a sense of coercion for the women who work, as noted in an interview with a religious leader, who remarked, *"Many women who work do so passively; they merely accept their given circumstances."*<sup>25</sup> This context indicates that there is an element of resignation affecting women's decisions to work, yet it is crucial to consider the individuals who are family breadwinners to ensure they do not feel pressured, isolated, or dissatisfied with their lives.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, social support is essential, especially from family and a more inclusive work environment, so they can fulfill their roles without excessive burdens.

<sup>21</sup> Haniyati, "Interview Result," 2024.

<sup>22</sup> Efa Rodiah Nur, Fathul Mu'in, and Hamsidar Hamsidar, "The Reconstruction of The Livelihood Concept from A Mubādalāh Perspective in Lampung Province," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 7, no. 3 (November 2023): 1897, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v7i3.17613>.

<sup>23</sup> Asrizal Saiin et al., "Walking Together: Dynamics of Muslim Wives Dual Role in Rural Areas Pursuing Career and Household Responsibilities," *El-Mashlahah* 14, no. 1 (June 2024): 127–48, <https://doi.org/10.23971/el-mashlahah.v14i1.7827>.

<sup>24</sup> Silvia Febriyanti Igrisa and Andriyanto Andriyanto, "Women and Financial Independence: Analysis of Implications for Negotiation of Power in The Household," *Syntax Literate ; Jurnal Ilmiah Indonesia* 9, no. 8 (August 2024): 4047–53, <https://doi.org/10.36418/syntax-literate.v9i8.16003>.

<sup>25</sup> Abdul Bakir, "Live Interview Result," 2024.

<sup>26</sup> Helen Kowalewska and Agnese Vitali, "The Female-Breadwinner Well-Being 'Penalty': Differences by Men's (Un)Employment and Country," *European Sociological Review* 40, no. 2 (April 2024): 293–308, <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcad034>.

Notably, not all women in the community of Konang are breadwinners, as some women hold ideal views about who should work in a family. An interview with members of the community revealed, “*Indeed, many women are family breadwinners, but not all; there are also women who handle domestic duties while their husbands work.*”<sup>27</sup> This emphasizes that women's roles toward their husbands are limited to serving, supporting, and providing a safe space for sharing experiences, while husbands are expected to be the primary breadwinners for their families.<sup>28</sup>

### **Gender Analysis and the Life of Muslimah in Konang Village as Breadwinners**

The term "gender" is introduced by social scientists to explain the differences between women and men as a divine creation and what is constructed by societal views and culturally socialized.<sup>29</sup> This distinction is important because we often confuse inherent traits of humans (gender) that can actually change or be modified. Understanding gender differences helps us reconsider the distribution of roles traditionally assigned to men and women. Gender differentiation is recognized as something that can change, is not permanent, and thus allows us to construct a more dynamic representation of the realities of gender relations in society, which is also more accurate and aligned with actual conditions of communal life.<sup>30</sup>

However, in Konang Village, Galis, Pamekasan, while this village is still deeply rooted in culture and religion, the term "gender" remains quite unfamiliar, particularly among the older generations. It is customary for women to have dual roles, typically as housewives and also as farmers. Working as farmers and managing agricultural land, whether in the dry or rainy seasons, has become a daily routine. The settlement pattern in Konang Village, where houses are adjacent to rice fields, facilitates the community's agricultural activities.

Based on these facts, gender analysis complements and corrects existing social analyses that can be used to examine the social relationships between men and women, as well as the consequences that arise.<sup>31</sup> Differences in gender social concepts lead to variances in the roles of men and women in society. Generally, gender brings about changes in roles, responsibilities, functions, and spaces where people engage in activities. On the other hand, in the society of Konang, Galis, Pamekasan, the view on roles and responsibilities in earning a living is not perceived as burdensome. Therefore, working as a farmer is not seen as a differentiation from gender concepts or household task distributions. It is evident that many women, once married, manage agricultural land.

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<sup>27</sup> Mutmainnah, “Live Interview Result,” 2024.

<sup>28</sup> Medhy Aginta Hidayat and Mohammad Afifuddin, “Gender Negotiation, Religious Identity, and Social Identity among Female Pilgrims (Ebhu Ajjhi) in Rural Madura,” *Jurnal Studi Agama Dan Masyarakat* 20, no. 1 (June 2024): 23–32, <https://doi.org/10.23971/jsam.v20i1.7648>.

<sup>29</sup> A. Utaminingsih, *Kajian Gender: Berperspektif Budaya Patriarki* (Malang: Universitas Brawijaya Press, 2024), <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=2ygDEQAAQBAJ>.

<sup>30</sup> P. Rilla Sovitriana, *Kajian Gender Dalam Tinjauan Psikologi* (Ponorogo: uwais inspirasi indonesia, 2020), <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=80wIEAAQBAJ>.

<sup>31</sup> R. Rinaldo, *Mobilizing Piety: Islam and Feminism in Indonesia* (New York: OUP USA, 2013), <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=1YdNEAAQBAJ>.

Interviews with respondents regarding their feelings as breadwinners and the responses or forms of support from those close to them when a wife or housewife decides to become the breadwinner yield insight as follows:

*“It’s just normal here; it’s common for women to work and support their husbands. When my husband was working, we didn’t work. Now that he is unable to work, we are the ones providing for the children. The family supports me working. They say if we don’t earn ourselves, who will provide for the family? The children don’t react much because they don’t understand this yet.”<sup>32</sup>*

Another informant provided a slightly different perspective on her feelings as a family breadwinner and the responses from those close to her:

*“I feel happy to work and help the family earn a living (there is no social pressure). Many people say they feel sorry for us, especially since my husband is often ill. However, I get support for working, especially from my children. They are happy when their mother works, seeing that their father is too sick to work anymore.”<sup>33</sup>*

From these two statements, it can be inferred that both informants feel they made the decision to work without coercion from others; instead, their families provide emotional support. There are differing reasons for their decisions to work; one is due to her husband being unable to work, and the other because her husband is ill. This highlights that social support is a crucial factor that helps workers align their professional roles and family roles, whether in the form of assistance provided or received.

This situation indicates that women, or wives, hold dual roles within their families. They fulfill domestic roles as housewives while also engaging in public roles outside the home, such as working to meet the family’s living needs.

### **Women's Income as Breadwinners in Konang Village**

The public sphere, which was once predominantly reserved for men, now sees an increasing presence of women and housewives. The reality of a woman or wife working outside the home inevitably brings implications and impacts for her family, both socially and economically.<sup>34</sup> Thus, the economic impact results in household income that helps meet daily living needs. A wife serving as a breadwinner contributes to fulfilling her family's economic requirements through her time and effort. Women who work typically aim to earn wages, usually received daily after their work. They hope that their employment will bring about improvements in their family's living conditions.<sup>35</sup> Women often find work in the home industry, as such opportunities are readily available in their local environments. Those

<sup>32</sup> Suryati, “Interview Result.”

<sup>33</sup> Haniyati, “Interview Result.”

<sup>34</sup> Hilmiana Hilmiana and Yusuf Iskandar, “The Role of Women in Improving the Welfare of Their Families to Improve Their Conditions during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Indonesia,” *Cogent Business & Management* 11, no. 1 (December 2024): 2373465, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2024.2373465>.

<sup>35</sup> Nurul Mahmudah, Viviana Khairunnisa, and Muhammad Syakir Alkautsar, “Menakar Dampak Perempuan Bekerja Dalam Meningkatkan Pendapatan Rumah Tangga,” *SETARA: Jurnal Studi Gender Dan Anak* 4, no. 02 (January 2023): 280, <https://doi.org/10.32332/jsga.v4i02.5502>.

wishing to work require some form of empowerment, especially concerning skills and workplace knowledge, since the desire to work is often driven by economic necessity.<sup>36</sup>

Moreover, the needs within a family are numerous and not limited to everyday expenses; they also include educational costs and urgent expenses (such as healthcare) and unforeseen costs. Despite women in Konang Village already contributing to their families, their incomes are often modest but do impact family revenue. Interviews with informants regarding whether their earnings from work meet their daily needs reveal varied responses:

*“Alhamdulillah, I receive income, although it’s not enough because I have two children still in school. There are other daily needs starting from what’s in the kitchen. Therefore, when my income falls short, I help neighbors by wrapping petis (a local food) or working in the rice fields. I take any work just to earn some money.”* (Haniyati)

This aligns with Heather Boshey's view that women working outside the home often earn less than men and may neglect responsibilities typically expected in the home.<sup>37</sup> This exemplifies the persistent gender gap in the workforce, where women face barriers to earning equal wages compared to men.<sup>38</sup> Additionally, female breadwinners often experience dilemmas between fulfilling professional demands and maintaining family balance. Another informant responded differently regarding whether her income was sufficient for daily needs: *“It’s more than enough, and I even have some left over to save.”* (Suryati)

From these two statements, it can be said that while one informant finds her income inadequate for daily needs, the other feels her earnings are sufficient, even allowing for savings. This indicates that income or earnings from work is a matter of concern within household life, as it directly affects the ability to meet family needs. Lower earnings lead to more difficulty fulfilling living expenses. Factors such as education level, the number of family members employed, and the income of partners can influence a family’s earnings.<sup>39</sup> However, on the other hand, the researcher also asked about the hopes of both informants regarding their future in household life. It turned out there were slight differences in their responses. First, Suryati stated:

*“My hope is to continue earning a living and keep working because I enjoy trading. Even if my husband works in the future, I will still want to work.”*<sup>40</sup>

In contrast, Haniyati stated:

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<sup>36</sup> Santi Setyaningsih et al., “Women Empowerment through Creative Industry: A Case Study,” *Procedia Economics and Finance* 4 (2012): 213–22, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671\(12\)00336-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671(12)00336-X).

<sup>37</sup> Heather Boushey, “The New Breadwinners,” *The Shriver Report: A Woman’s Nation Changes Everything*, 2009.

<sup>38</sup> Diahhadi Setyonaluri and Ariane Utomo, “Negotiating Work, Family, and Traffic: Articulations of Married Women’s Employment Decisions in Greater Jakarta,” *Gender, Work & Organization* 31, no. 6 (November 2024): 2423–45, <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.13069>.

<sup>39</sup> Wardihan Sabar, Abd. Rahim, and Aulia Rahman Bato, “The Role of Women’s Agricultural Workers and Household Economic Resilience,” *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Humaniora* 12, no. 1 (April 2023): 52–59, <https://doi.org/10.23887/jish.v12i1.51701>.

<sup>40</sup> Suryati, “Interview Result.”

*“As a mother, we want our family to be like others, with both husband and wife working. But because my husband is often ill, I have no choice but to work to ensure we have enough for our daily life.”<sup>41</sup>*

These statements indicate a shared resolution among the informants; regardless of their circumstances, they remain committed to working. Although the husband traditionally has the role of the family's primary provider, these women, as wives, view their work as essential for contributing to their family's livelihood.<sup>42</sup> Thus, the roles of wives or mothers in the family economy are to support the family's autonomy through their skillsets. According to Soleman et al., women are often seen as companions to their husbands, assisting in additional income generation rather than being regarded as career women. Furthermore, women are often the largest victims of poverty, bearing heavier burdens than men as they strive to secure additional income to compensate for their families' insufficient earnings. This is especially true for women who are heads of households and the sole breadwinners.

## Conclusion

Based on the research results, the following conclusions can be drawn. First, the reasons women in Konang Village decide to become breadwinners are to meet the daily needs of their families whose husbands are no longer working. Furthermore, they also support their children's education. Second, the women feel happy to be able to work to help earn a living for their families. Of course, their decision to work is not coerced by any party. The responses from those around them include emotional support and encouragement from family members, including husbands, children, and siblings. Third, the income of working women is that they always receive the results of their work. Furthermore, the hope of female breadwinners in their families is that they will continue to work under any circumstances, even if their husbands are able to work again. The most important finding in this study is that women in Konang Village have several reasons for working. Some work based on personal desire, while others work because their husbands are ill and unable to work.

While this study contributes to understanding the dynamics of women as breadwinners in Konang Village, it still has several limitations. These limitations include the limited scope of the study, which is limited to a single village, making the findings difficult to generalize broadly to different regional or cultural contexts. Furthermore, this study focuses more on the subjective experiences of women breadwinners without in-depth inclusion of the perspectives of others, such as husbands, children, or community leaders.

Therefore, further research is recommended to expand the location and number of informants, and utilize diverse methodological approaches, both qualitative and quantitative, to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the role, challenges, and impacts of women as primary breadwinners in the family. Further research could also examine the implications of this role for gender relations, family well-being, and the long-term sustainability of children's education.

<sup>41</sup> Haniyati, “Interview Result.”

<sup>42</sup> misdawita Misdawita, “Strengthening The Household Economy Through The Role Of Women On The Coast Of The Rokan River Rokan Hilir Regency,” *Jurnal Apresiasi Ekonomi* 11, no. 2 (June 2023): 403–11, <https://doi.org/10.31846/jae.v11i2.622>.

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