

Leadership Roles of Husband and Wife in Promoting Family Wellbeing from the Qur'anic Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Leadership within the family constitutes a foundational element in ensuring stability, harmony, and overall wellbeing. In Islamic family law and Qur'anic discourse, leadership is not merely associated with authority or decision-making power, but is intrinsically linked to responsibility, accountability, and ethical conduct. This article examines the concept of leadership of husbands and wives in shaping a prosperous and well-being-oriented family from a Qur'anic perspective. A qualitative research approach was adopted in this study, employing content analysis of primary sources, namely relevant Qur'anic verses and Hadiths, alongside secondary sources including classical and contemporary scholarly interpretations. The method involved systematic identification, categorisation, and thematic analysis of texts to explore the roles and responsibilities assigned to both spouses within the framework of Islamic family law. The discussion highlights the complementary and cooperative nature of husband and wife leadership, showing that the husband's role encompasses responsibility for provision, guidance, and protection, while the wife's role emphasizes support, care, obedience, and the safeguarding of family dignity. Both roles are interdependent, and their proper execution, guided by Qur'anic principles and ethical conduct, contributes to harmony, resilience, and emotional stability within the household. The study concludes that family well-being can only be realised through mutual collaboration, faith-based ethical leadership, and the fulfilment of divinely ordained responsibilities by both spouses.

Keywords: Islamic family law, family leadership, Qur'anic studies, husband and wife, family well-being

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a fundamental concept that underpins the effective management of any organisation, including the family as the smallest and most significant social institution. Within the framework of Islamic family law, leadership assumes a complex and multidimensional role, extending beyond authority and control to encompass responsibility, trust, and moral accountability. Leadership within the family unit is therefore closely connected to the realisation of harmony, stability, and prosperity, which ultimately contributes to the development of future generations.

Neglect of leadership responsibilities has been identified as one of the dominant factors contributing to family conflict and marital dissolution (Kevin & Jay D, 2009; Mohamad & Baharuddin, 2021). In response to this concern, this article examines the Qur'anic foundations of family leadership, with particular focus on the leadership roles of husbands and wives. Through an analysis of Qur'anic verses and scholarly interpretations, the article explores how effective leadership in both spiritual and material may serve as a key determinant in achieving family well-being.

The Concept of Leadership in Islam

The concept of leadership has been emphasised in Islam since the creation of Prophet Adam (a.s.), who was entrusted with the role of vicegerent (*khalifah*) on earth. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) elaborated this concept comprehensively in his well-known hadith:

“Each of you is a shepherd, and each of you will be questioned about those under your care.” (Narrated by Muslim: 1829)

This hadith establishes leadership as a universal responsibility bestowed upon every individual, according to their respective roles and capacities. Leadership is defined as the ability to lead which involves influencing, guiding, and motivating others towards the achievement of shared objectives (Robbins, 2003). From an Islamic worldview, leadership entails guiding oneself and others towards goodness and well-being in both this world and the Hereafter, grounded in adherence to the Shariah and the value of trust (Syed Ismail, 2021).

Effective Islamic leadership integrates faith and righteous deeds, ensuring that leadership functions as a means of promoting virtue and preventing wrongdoing (Yunus, 2004). This holistic understanding of leadership forms the ethical foundation upon which family leadership in Islam is constructed. In any administrative system, leadership is a universal and indispensable element in human life and governance, and leadership quality significantly determines organisational success. Ibn Taymiyyah (1995) emphasised that a competent leader must possess the qualities of *al-qudwah* (exemplary conduct) and *al-amin* (trustworthiness). This principle is clearly articulated in the Qur'an:

Meaning: “*Indeed, the best one you can employ is the one who is strong and trustworthy.*” (Surah al-Qasas: 26) Strength, in this context, extends beyond physical capability to include moral integrity and reliability. Leadership excellence is further reinforced by the Prophetic teaching that Allah loves those who perform their tasks with excellence (*itqan*) (at-Thabarani: 897). This hadith highlights the importance of process, diligence, and commitment in achieving quality outcomes.

Leadership Management Within the Family

The concept of leadership within the family is commonly associated with the role of men as the head of the household, husband, and father. However, the active and complementary involvement of both husband and wife in fulfilling their respective roles within the family system significantly influences psychosocial development, emotional stability, and the overall well-being of family members. Previous studies consistently demonstrate that effective family leadership which is characterised by the cultivation of moral values within the household, effective communication, and close interpersonal relationships contributes to the creation of a supportive environment conducive to family well-being (Fingerman, Pitzer, Lefkowitz, Birditt & Mroczek, 2008; Thomas, Liu & Henderson, 2017).

In the context of the Industrial Revolution 4.0, dual-income families have become increasingly common, presenting new challenges in time and financial management (Putung & Basir, 2017). Children raised in wellfunctioning family units that are capable of managing challenges and resolving conflicts effectively tend to demonstrate higher levels of self-esteem, resilience, and emotional intelligence. These are elements that are essential to holistic well-being. Furthermore, parental role modelling and guidance play a significant role in shaping children's values, beliefs, and aspirations, enabling them to achieve balance in their lives.

The family also functions as the earliest educational institution (*madrasah al-ūlā*) for a child. Family education and upbringing guided by effective parental leadership constitute the foundation of a child's social well-being. This is because education imparted through sound leadership by both parents contributes to the development of a child's emotional maturity and moral character.

Household management is likewise founded upon mutual complementarity between spouses, mutual respect, and the safeguarding of each other's dignity. As stated by Allah the Exalted:

Meaning: “*They are garments for you, and you are garments for them.*”(Surah al-Baqarah: 187)

Among the essential criteria of effective leadership is the prioritisation of mutual agreement and consultation (*musyawarah*) in managing household affairs without adopting a self-centred attitude. Additionally, the ability of spouses to communicate effectively with one another helps to prevent misunderstandings and, in turn, reduces psychological stress within the household (Tengku Ismail & Sulaiman, 2020).

Leadership Roles of Husbands and Wives in the Qur'an

Islam provides comprehensive guidance for all aspects of human life, including family leadership. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) clarified the distribution of leadership responsibilities within the household:

“A ruler is a leader over his subjects and will be held accountable for those under his leadership. A husband is a leader over the members of his family and will be held accountable for them. A wife is a leader over her household, her husband, and her children, and she will be held accountable for those under her care. A servant is a leader over the property of his master and will be held accountable for what he manages. Indeed, each of you is a leader, and each of you will be held accountable for what you lead.”(Narrated by Muslim: 1829)

This hadith affirms that leadership within the family is a shared trust, with distinct but interconnected responsibilities.

The Leadership Roles of the Husband in the Qur'an

A husband is the head of the household and the leader of the family, responsible for managing matters related to security, protection, economic provision, and education within the family unit. This role is consistent with the distinction accorded to men as stated in Surah al-Nisa', verse 34. Allah the Exalted states:

Meaning: *“Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given some of them an advantage over others, and because they spend from their wealth. Thus, righteous women are devoutly obedient and guard what Allah has entrusted them to guard in the absence of their husbands. As for those from whom you fear disobedience, admonish them, then abandon them in their beds, and then discipline them. If they then obey you, do not seek ways against them. Indeed, Allah is Most High, Most Great.”* (Surah al-Nisa': 34)

Based on this verse, Sayyid Qutb (1992) asserts that it functions as both guidance and a regulatory framework for the family institution, which is to be administered under the leadership of men in their capacity as husbands. Leadership that is exercised through effective protection, guidance, and responsible management enables the family unit to attain well-being by mitigating factors that may undermine marital harmony, destabilise spousal relationships, and negatively affect the broader social environment.

In Surah al-Nisa', verse 34, Allah also describes men as *qawwamun*. According to Ibn Manzur (n.d.), the term *qawwamun* is the plural form of *qawwām*, which denotes one who maintains, safeguards, and carries out commands or responsibilities. Accordingly, the husband is regarded as a leader who bears responsibility for administering leadership within the household. Ibn Kathir (1998) interprets *qawwam* as referring to a leader, authority figure, and educator, whereas al-Qurtubi (2006) explains the term as one who fulfils obligations with diligence and provides proper care.

Therefore, based on the interpretations of classical scholars and Qur'anic exegetes, men are positioned as leaders with multiple roles and responsibilities, encompassing governance, management, guidance, and education of family members, as prescribed within the Islamic framework.

Furthermore, based on the same verse, another dimension of the husband's leadership within the family lies in his responsibility to provide protection for family members. According to Ibn al-'Arabi (n.d.), the leadership qualities of a husband, as the head of the household, require him to ensure a continuous sense of security within the family and to treat its members with kindness. Protection of family members is not limited to safeguarding them from physical harm; rather, it also encompasses the provision of essential needs in accordance with the husband's capacity and circumstances (Halimah & Azahari, 2020). Moreover, this protective role includes guaranteeing safety by caring for and safeguarding the wife so that she may live in a state of security and peace.

The responsibilities of a husband encompass both outward (material) and inward (spiritual) dimensions (Bahri, 2015). Fundamentally, the obligation to provide maintenance (*nafkah*) falls under the leadership of the husband, who is required to fulfil the needs of the household in accordance with his financial capacity. This principle is established in the Qur'an, wherein Allah the Exalted states:

Meaning: *“Let the one who is affluent spend according to his means”*(Surah al-Talaq: 7)

The maintenance provided by a husband to his wife is therefore determined by the extent of his ability in carrying out this responsibility. Such maintenance includes the provision of clothing, food, and accommodation (Abu Bakar & Wan Abdullah, 2008). This obligation is further affirmed in a hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), narrated by Mu'awiyah al-Qushayri (may Allah be pleased with him), who asked the Prophet:

"O Messenger of Allah, what are the rights of the wife that are obligatory upon her husband?" He replied, "That you feed her when you feed yourself, and clothe her when you clothe yourself. Do not strike her face, do not insult her; and do not abandon her except within the house" (Narrated by Ibn Majah: 1850)

The obligation of a husband to provide maintenance to his wife constitutes a trust that must be fulfilled in accordance with the perfected principles of Islamic law. This responsibility represents a fundamental aspect of the husband's leadership in managing household affairs in order to establish family well-being.

In addition, among the duties and obligations of a husband is the provision of education, admonition, and advice when any action contravenes the principles of Islamic law. A husband is also expected to offer constructive guidance and sound counsel to his wife in the event of any shortcomings or mistakes.

The most essential form of education to be imparted is religious education, which serves as the core foundation in building family well-being. In achieving harmony within the family institution, religious education plays a crucial role in strengthening familial bonds, and regardless of the severity of challenges encountered within the household, returning to religious principles enables such trials to be faced with calmness and patience. Clearly, when a family prioritises religious values, it will give rise to a prosperous family characterised by *sakinah* (tranquillity) and *mawaddah* (affection). Moreover, the cultivation of spiritual consciousness in both character and thought provides a distinctive framework for the development of sound values and ethical conduct (Ahmad Helwani Syafi'i & Muhammad Syaoki, 2018).

This is supported by the words of Allah s.w.t.:

Meaning: *"And enjoin your family to perform prayer and be steadfast in doing so. We do not ask you for provision; We provide for you. And the good consequence (in the Hereafter) is for the righteous."* (Surah Taha:

132)

The guidance presented in the above verse highlights the elevated status of a husband as a leader who is entitled to issue directives. The command is directed to those under the husband's authority, namely his family members, to perform acts of worship that encompass both physical and spiritual dimensions (prayer and perseverance) and to submit wholly to the authority of Allah, the Ultimate Provider. Thus, the leadership of a husband, as portrayed in this verse, signifies his responsibility to provide proper religious guidance to his family.

Shared life within a household is naturally filled with emotions, which can vary between positive and negative tendencies. One of the characteristics of husbandly leadership recommended in the Qur'an is to avoid causing harm and to treat the wife kindly. Allah s.w.t. states:

Meaning: *"And live with them (your wives) in kindness."* (Surah An-Nisa': 19)

Based on this verse, Sayyid Qutb (1992) explains that, in general, Allah s.w.t. commands husbands to interact with their wives in a manner of kindness, which must be adhered to according to His Shariah. This directive serves as a form of protection that a husband, as the head of the family, is required to implement to consistently treat his wife well and to ensure that the family environment remains conducive and peaceful, thereby safeguarding the emotional well-being as well as the physical and mental health of family members.

A husband's love is not merely expressed through words. Rather, it must also demonstrate compassion and care. Therefore, this attitude should reflect leadership characterized by tolerance and sensitivity toward the needs and interests of the wife. Moreover, the relationship between spouses is metaphorically likened to clothing for one another. The marital relationship is meant to foster mutual support and shared management of household affairs, as stated in the words of Allah s.w.t.:

Meaning: *"They are clothing for you and you are clothing for them."* (Surah Al-Baqarah: 187)

This verse illustrates that spouses are a source of tranquility which serves as a foundation for fostering love and compassion, enabling both partners to actively participate in managing the household, assist one another, and complement each other to cultivate happiness and prevent disputes. This concept is exemplified in the life of

Prophet Muhammad S.A.W., who assisted Siti Khadijah r.a. in managing household affairs with mutual cooperation, even before receiving divine revelation, thereby demonstrating resilience and partnership in family life (Ibnu Hasyim, 1992).

Accordingly, the role of a wife as a helper in household management is not a responsibility to be borne alone; it requires collaboration with the husband to strive together to the best of their abilities. Hence, such mutual cooperation is rightly expected from a husband who understands and supports his wife, contributing to a harmonious and well-ordered household characterized by tranquility and affection in accordance with the guidance set forth by Allah s.w.t.

The Leadership Roles of the Wife in the Qur'an

Within the institution of the family, the wife serves as a supporter of the husband's leadership. The aspect of a wife's leadership toward her husband reflects obedience, akin to a fortress that upholds and strengthens the family institution (Jasmi, Mohammad & Mohamed, 2004). Accordingly, the husband occupies the highest position in Islam in the eyes of his wife. As stated in the hadith of Prophet Muhammad S.A.W.:

Translation: *"If I were to command anyone to prostrate to another, I would certainly command women to prostrate to their husbands, for Allah has granted the husband such significant rights that become the obligation of the wife."*(Narrated by Abi Dawud; 2140)

Thus, a husband's pleasure becomes a means for the wife to attain the pleasure of Allah s.w.t. The obedience of a wife in exercising her role as a supporter is realized when she receives her rights, including her previously agreed *mahr* (dower).

By nature, this represents a form of reciprocal responsibility, where the husband, as the head of the family, is tasked with earning and providing sustenance, while the wife, as the assistant to the head of the family, is responsible for safeguarding the household wealth and managing domestic affairs (Abu Bakar & Wan Abdullah, 2008). This division of responsibilities constitutes a management practice that should be implemented to ensure mutual agreement in handling family matters. Such an approach is considered crucial for establishing a prosperous and harmonious household (Jasmi, Mohammad & Mohamed, 2004).

The husband's leadership in demonstrating responsibility for provision encourages the wife's obedience, wherein she manages the household's administration, oversees family wealth, and takes care of the children while the husband is engaged in earning sustenance (Abu Bakar & Wan Abdullah, 2008).

One of the responsibilities entrusted to a wife is to be prudent in safeguarding and managing her husband's wealth in accordance with Islamic law. A relationship founded on trust, accountability, and love between husband and wife can foster a prosperous and harmonious family.

Furthermore, the leadership of a wife is reflected in her ability to preserve herself, thereby upholding her own dignity as well as the dignity of her husband. This form of protection, as a function of leadership, can have a positive impact on family life by preventing the wife from falling into immorality or wrongdoing (Halimah & Azahari, 2020). Through exercising leadership in obedience and maintaining proper conduct, a wife is promised great reward in the Hereafter. As Allah s.w.t. states:

Meaning: *"The righteous women are devoutly obedient and guard in the husband's absence what Allah would have them guard."*(Surah An-Nisa': 34)

This verse illustrates the obedience of a wife to her husband, particularly in his absence, commanding the wife to be obedient and to safeguard her own dignity, as well as that of her children and husband, so that they are preserved and protected by Allah s.w.t. (Syaiikh Shafiyyurrahman, 2000). Similarly, a wife must exercise caution in her interactions to avoid compromising her dignity or that of others and to refrain from engaging in prohibited acts.

Thus, the sacrifice of a wife in protecting her honor and nobility represents a highly esteemed role, performed to obey her husband and attain his pleasure, thereby strengthening the integrity of the family institution (Sayyid

Qutb, 1992). This reflects the profound wisdom behind every command of Allah s.w.t. directed toward His believing and pious servants.

Spousal Leadership and Family Well-Being

Family well-being can be achieved when both spouses fulfil their leadership responsibilities in accordance with Islamic teachings. Leadership within the family is intended to be exercised jointly and reciprocally by both husband and wife, with each assuming roles that are complementary in nature. Nevertheless, Islam assigns the husband a greater degree of responsibility and accountability in family leadership, as he bears primary obligations related to provision, protection, and overall direction of the household (Halimah & Azahari, 2020). This principle is clearly articulated in the Qur'an, as Allah s.w.t. states in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 228:

Meaning: “*And they (women) have rights equivalent to their obligations in a just manner (and not contrary to the Shariah). But the husbands have a degree over them.*” (Surah Al-Baqarah: 228)

Spousal leadership in Islam is therefore characterised by balance and complementarity rather than domination or unilateral control. While the husband is entrusted with a higher degree of leadership responsibility, this authority is bound by ethical conduct, justice, compassion, and accountability. Correspondingly, the wife plays a vital leadership role through her contributions to emotional stability, moral nurturing, household management, and the preservation of family dignity. When both spouses perform their respective roles with mutual respect, cooperation, and sincerity, leadership within the family becomes a shared effort aimed at sustaining harmony and stability. The leadership roles of husbands and wives are summarized in the table below:

Table 1: Husband and Wife Leadership Values Based on the Qur'an

Leadership Management	Characteristics
Individual Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsibility in terms of provision (<i>Surah AtTalaq: 7</i>)
Education and Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing religious instruction and guidance (<i>Surah Taha: 132</i>) Obedience and safeguarding personal dignity (<i>Surah An-Nisa': 34</i>)
Communication Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintaining calmness and patience in response to the wife's emotional expressions (<i>Surah Al-Fajr: 27-30</i>)
Protection and Supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing protection, security, and comfort (<i>Surah An-Nisa': 34</i>) Treating the spouse well (<i>Surah An-Nisa': 19</i>)
Distribution of Duties and Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exercising tolerance and mutual assistance in household affairs (<i>Surah Al-Baqarah: 187</i>)

Leadership is viewed as a trust rather than a privilege, requiring patience, wisdom, and continuous selfregulation. Qur'anic guidance provides comprehensive principles on communication, mutual consultation, conflict resolution, and kindness, all of which are essential for nurturing a healthy family environment. Adherence to these principles enables spouses to manage challenges constructively and maintain emotional balance within the household. In addition, spousal leadership significantly influences the emotional and psychological development of family members, particularly children. A family environment guided by cooperation, empathy, and ethical responsibility allows children to internalise positive values such as respect, resilience, and emotional intelligence. This not only strengthens family cohesion but also supports the Qur'anic vision of the family as a foundational institution for producing balanced, morally grounded individuals. Accordingly, understanding the specific leadership roles and responsibilities assigned to both husband and wife is essential for comprehending how Qur'anic principles are operationalised within the structure of the Muslim family.

CONCLUSION

Islam, as a comprehensive and holistic way of life, provides clear, systematic, and ethically grounded guidance on leadership within the family institution. Qur'anic family leadership extends beyond the notion of authority or hierarchy and instead emphasises trust (*amanah*), accountability, moral responsibility, mutual protection, and compassion as its foundational principles. Leadership within the family is therefore viewed as a form of worship, in which both husband and wife are entrusted with distinct yet interrelated roles that contribute to the overall well-being of the household. The findings of this study highlight that the integration of spiritual and material dimensions of leadership by both spouses forms the cornerstone of family well-being. The husband's role in provision, guidance, and protection, alongside the wife's role in nurturing, safeguarding dignity, and managing domestic affairs, reflects a balanced and complementary leadership model as prescribed by the Qur'an. When these roles are performed with sincerity, mutual respect, and cooperation, they foster emotional stability, moral development, and resilience within the family unit. Furthermore, this study emphasizes that family well-being cannot be achieved through unilateral leadership or rigid role expectations, but rather through collaborative engagement rooted in faith and ethical conduct. Adherence to divine guidance ensures that leadership remains just, compassionate, and responsive to the evolving needs of family members. Ultimately, Qur'anic family leadership offers a timeless framework for cultivating harmonious, stable, and prosperous families, making it highly relevant for addressing contemporary challenges faced by Muslim households in an increasingly complex social landscape.

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