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Negotiating Domestic Roles and Scholarly Authority: Reconstructing Islamic Family Law Based on Gender Equality Among Female Islamic Astronomy Practitioners in Indonesia

Imroatul Munfaridah
imroatulmunfaridah@uinponorogo.ac.id
Universitas Islam Negeri Kiai Ageng Muhammad Besari, Ponorogo, Indonesia

Abstract:
This article examines how women in Islamic astronomy in Indonesia negotiate domestic responsibilities and scholarly authority through the reconstruction of Islamic family law based on gender equality. Women in this field face tensions between social expectations regarding domestic roles and professional demands, often resulting in a double burden that limits their academic participation and recognition. This study employs a literature review and normative legal analysis of Islamic legal sources, legislation, and academic literature on gender equality, Islamic family law, domestic labor, and women's scholarly participation. The findings reveal that unequal domestic responsibilities and male-dominated perceptions of scholarly authority remain significant barriers to women's intellectual development. These challenges demonstrate that the issue extends beyond individual role management to structural inequalities within family and scholarly environments. Accordingly, reconstructing Islamic family law requires shifting from rigid gender-based role divisions toward a partnership model grounded in justice, consultation, shared responsibility, and gender equality. Guided by maqāṣid al-sharīʿah and maṣlaḥah, domestic responsibilities should be distributed fairly according to partners' circumstances, capabilities, and professional commitments. Families, educational institutions, and religious communities must also create inclusive environments that recognize women's scholarly contributions. This article argues that gender-equitable Islamic family law can strengthen women's scholarly authority, promote harmonious family relationships, and advance inclusive Islamic scholarship..

Keywords: Role negotiation, women, Islamic astronomy, scholarly authority, Islamic family law, gender equality, division of domestic roles.

Introduction

Social change in Muslim societies has brought women into educational, academic, professional, and religious spaces that were previously dominated largely by men. Women are no longer positioned solely as recipients or objects of religious knowledge; they have also emerged as producers of knowledge, educators, researchers, academics, and authorities in various fields of Islamic studies. These changes show that gender cannot limit intellectual ability or social contribution. From an Islamic perspective, men and women have equal capacity to perform good deeds and receive recognition for their contributions, while social distinctions that confine women to the domestic sphere should be distinguished from the fundamental principles of Islamic law, which emphasize justice and the common good.

Nevertheless, women's increased participation in public life has not automatically eliminated social constructs surrounding the gender-based division of roles. In many Muslim family contexts, women are still assigned primary responsibility for domestic work, childcare, household management, and meeting the family's needs. At the same time, professional and intellectual pursuits require time, mobility, consistency, skill development, and involvement in social and institutional networks. This creates challenges when women entering academia are still expected to do nearly all domestic work. Thus, the issue is not simply women's ability to manage multiple roles, but how family members distribute these responsibilities fairly.[1]

This issue becomes even more compelling when considered in the context of Islamic astronomy, or "*ilm al-falak*". This field holds a strategic place in Muslim religious life because it requires both astronomical and religious expertise, including determining prayer times and the direction of the qibla, establishing the Hijri calendar, and identifying the start of each lunar month. Women's involvement in "*ilm al-falak*" therefore reflects not only their participation in science but also their entry into producing Islamic knowledge, with implications for religious authority. The study's

[1] Ibid

abstract identifies this issue as key: women practitioners of Islamic astronomy stand at the intersection of domestic demands and the need to build and sustain scholarly authority.

In this context, scholarly authority cannot be understood simply as mastery of knowledge. Authority also involves gaining social recognition, access to academic spaces, opportunities to participate in scholarly forums, professional experience, and legitimacy within religious communities and academic institutions. Thus, someone with scholarly competence does not necessarily attain the same level of authority if they lack adequate opportunities to demonstrate, develop, and articulate that competence. Literature on women and the reform of Islamic family law shows that patriarchal social structures can affect women's opportunities to attain equal standing in religious and public spheres.

In this context, a disproportionate domestic burden can indirectly shape how women develop scholarly authority. When household responsibilities are automatically treated as women's primary obligation, women's academic and scholarly pursuits may be viewed as secondary activities rather than as an equal part of self-actualization and social contribution. As a result, women may have limited time to participate in academic forums, conduct research, build academic networks, travel for scholarly purposes, or enhance their professional skills. The study's abstract indicates that this tension does not always take the form of open conflict; it may instead emerge through a double burden, time constraints, demands to prove one's competence, and the need to gain legitimacy both within the family and in society.

These issues cannot be separated from the development of Islamic family law in society. In the fiqh tradition, discussions of the husband-wife relationship often link to concepts of family leadership, financial support, obedience, the division of labor, and domestic responsibilities. Problems arise when this construction is understood rigidly and applied as a division of roles based automatically on sex. In Indonesia, several studies indicate that the development of Islamic family law continues to contend with the

influence of patriarchal structures, even though national legislation has made a number of advances in protecting and recognizing women's rights.

These developments show that Islamic family law is not a construct frozen in past formulations of fiqh, but rather a field of law that continues to interact with social change. For example, studies on integrating Islamic family law and gender equality in contemporary Muslim societies show that family law reform can move toward more egalitarian relationships, though each country's social and cultural context shapes this process. In Indonesia, the family law model still reflects tensions between the principle of equality and hierarchical conceptions of the husband-wife relationship.[2]

Therefore, Islamic family law needs to be reread to distinguish the foundational values of sharia from legal constructs that emerged in specific social contexts. The values of justice, public welfare, respect for human dignity, and family protection can serve as a basis for evaluating whether a particular division of roles truly promotes the common good or instead perpetuates inequality. The *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* approach offers important scope for this kind of rereading, since it assesses law not only by a provision's formal wording but also by its aims, effects, and the welfare it seeks to achieve. For example, Jasser Auda's thought positions *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* as an important approach to reforming Islamic law and emphasizes women's equal standing in a range of social and legal matters.[3]

From this perspective, the division of domestic roles should not be understood as a permanent consequence of sex, but rather as responsibilities that can be negotiated according to each

[2] Ahmad Ash Shiddieqy, Akhmad Roja Badrus Zaman, Sumayyah Faqihah, Muhammad Nur Fathoni, dan Dinda Difia Madina, "Integration of Islamic Family Law and Gender Equality: A Comparative Study of Legal Reform and Social Norms in Contemporary Muslim Societies," *Legitima: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Islam* 7, no. 2 (2025).

[3] Utsany, Tw, dan Khamim, "Women's Rights and Gender Equality." Studi tersebut menggunakan pemikiran Jasser Auda dan *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* untuk menunjukkan kemungkinan pembaruan hukum keluarga Islam yang memberikan kedudukan lebih setara kepada perempuan.

partner's abilities, circumstances, needs, and mutual agreement. This reconstruction does not eliminate domestic responsibilities or diminish the value of family; instead, it shifts the basis for dividing responsibilities from a gender-based division of labor to a justice-based one. The principles of partnership, consultation, fairness, and shared responsibility matter because they help families support each member's development, including women's intellectual capacities.

This need becomes even more pressing when women are active not only in general academic settings but also in fields with religious authority, such as Islamic astronomy. Women practitioners of Islamic astronomy help develop knowledge that meets their communities' religious needs. Their involvement, therefore, is not merely a matter of individual choice or career development; it also helps build a more inclusive ecosystem of Islamic scholarship. When women are competent in Islamic astronomy but are constrained by a disproportionate division of domestic labor, the consequences affect not only the women themselves but also the development of knowledge and the institutional capacity of Islamic scholarship.

On the other hand, reconstructing Islamic family law on the basis of gender equality cannot be achieved simply by changing how household chores are divided. This reconstruction must address how family leadership (*qiwāmah*), husbands' and wives' responsibilities, rights and duties within the household, and the relationship between family responsibilities and individuals' right to develop their intellectual capacities are understood. Recent studies on reconstructing *qiwāmah and wilāyah* in the *Shafi'i* legal tradition show that these concepts can be reinterpreted through a *maqāṣid* approach that emphasizes justice, public welfare, and human dignity.[4] This approach helps develop a family law model that responds to social change without severing ties with the Islamic legal tradition.

[4] Bisri Ali Mustofa, "Reconstructing Qiwāmah and Wilāyah in the Shāfi'ī Legal Tradition: Toward a Reform of Islamic Family Law in Indonesia," *Jurnal Mahkamah: Kajian Ilmu Hukum dan Hukum Islam* 10, no. 2 (2025).

Thus, the challenges faced by women practitioners of Islamic astronomy operate on three interconnected levels. First, the domestic level: how household and caregiving responsibilities are distributed. Second, the scholarly level: how women gain access, recognition, and legitimacy as holders of scholarly authority. Third, the normative level: how Islamic family law responds to changing roles for women and ensures that family norms do not become structural barriers to the development of women's capacities. These three levels are interconnected, so analyzing any one without considering the others yields an incomplete understanding.

Several studies have examined women's rights, gender equality, Islamic family law reform, and the reinterpretation of family-law concepts. However, research still needs to connect the negotiation of domestic roles with the development of women's scholarly authority in Islamic astronomy. Literature on family-law reform generally focuses on marriage, divorce, leadership, reproductive rights, and the protection of women, while women's experiences in specialized fields of Islamic scholarship, such as Islamic astronomy (*ʿilm al-falak*), have rarely been treated as a family-law issue.[5] This study therefore seeks to broaden the discourse on Islamic family law by including scholarly authority and women's participation in religious life as consequences of the division of roles within the family.

In light of these issues, this article examines how women practitioners of Islamic astronomy in Indonesia negotiate domestic responsibilities with the demands of building scholarly authority; how the framework of Islamic family law interacts with this division of roles; and how Islamic family law can be reconstructed on the basis of gender-equality principles. The study uses library research and legal analysis through a normative-critical approach, connecting Islamic family law principles with gender-equality perspectives and changes in women's social realities in academic and religious settings. This approach identifies tensions among legal norms, social constructs, and women's lived realities, while

also formulating a family law model that better responds to social change.

Ultimately, this study proceeds from the premise that gender equality in Islamic family law cannot be measured solely by whether household chores are divided equally. It must also be measured by the extent to which families provide each member with fair opportunities to develop their capacities and contribute to society. For women practitioners of Islamic astronomy, such opportunities are directly tied to their ability to advance knowledge, establish scholarly authority, and contribute to the religious needs of their communities. Accordingly, reconstructing Islamic family law on the basis of gender equality means moving from hierarchical relationships toward partnerships grounded in justice, consultation, shared responsibility, and the well-being of the family.

Women Practitioners of Islamic Astronomy Between Domestic Responsibilities and Scholarly Authority

The changing social lives of contemporary Muslims show that women are increasingly active in education, professional fields, research, and religious activities—areas previously more often associated with men. These changes affect how families and society understand the division of roles between men and women. Women can no longer be understood solely as responsible for domestic duties, since their intellectual and professional abilities are also an important part of social life. In this context, women's involvement in Islamic astronomy is one way in which women's participation in religious scholarship is expanding.[5]

Women's involvement in this field therefore has broader implications than simply increasing women's participation in education. Women who become academics, teachers, researchers, or practitioners of Islamic astronomy enter a space that, in many

[5] Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

social contexts, has traditionally been associated more often with men. Their presence also broadens who can acquire, produce, and communicate Islamic knowledge.

The question, then, is not only whether women have the opportunity to study Islamic astronomy, but also whether they have the social conditions to develop their expertise into scholarly authority. Authority requires a lengthy process involving education, experience, publications, academic networks, participation in scholarly forums, and social recognition. Equal access to education, therefore, does not automatically lead to equal authority.

In the context of Indonesian Muslim families, this process encounters gender-role constructs that continue to place women primarily in the domestic sphere. Rinaldo's study of Muslim couples in Indonesia shows that institutionalized family law tends to portray women as primarily oriented toward domestic responsibilities, while men are constructed as breadwinners and holders of authority within the household. At the same time, women's increasing access to education and employment opportunities creates tension between these norms and social realities.[6]

This tension reflects the negotiation of roles. Women do not always reject family responsibilities; instead, they seek arrangements that let domestic responsibilities coexist with academic and professional activities. Negotiation, then, does not mean conflict between family and career. It is a process of finding a configuration of relationships in which family interests and the development of individual capacities can proceed side by side.

In practice, negotiation may involve scheduling, dividing household chores and childcare, receiving support from a partner, and adjusting academic activities. These patterns show that the family is not, in fact, a static institution. It can reproduce inequality, but it can also transform gender relations when partners divide

[6] Rachel Rinaldo, "Obedience and Authority among Muslim Couples: Negotiating Gendered Religious Scripts in Contemporary Indonesia," *Sociology of Religion* (2019)

responsibilities according to their specific circumstances and mutual agreement.

The concept of the double burden helps explain this issue. A double burden arises when women enter the public sphere while expectations remain that domestic work is primarily their responsibility. In such situations, women's success in managing both spheres often justifies an unequal division of labor: because women are considered "capable," people treat the additional burden as normal.

This issue directly affects the development of scholarly authority. Scholarly work requires time that cannot always be rigidly scheduled, for activities such as research, writing, attending seminars, academic travel, teaching, discussion, and networking. When women's time is structurally absorbed more by domestic work, their opportunities to build academic capital become more limited.

Thus, barriers to women's scholarly authority do not always take the form of explicit prohibitions. They can operate indirectly through how time and opportunities are distributed. Women may formally have the right to study and work, but if domestic responsibilities are not shared fairly, those formal rights do not necessarily translate into equal substantive opportunities.

These findings highlight the importance of distinguishing between formal equality and substantive equality. Formal equality means that women have the same opportunities under the law. Substantive equality, by contrast, requires social and family structures to enable women to make real use of those opportunities. For practitioners of Islamic astronomy, substantive equality means having time, family support, mobility, and social legitimacy to develop their expertise.

This issue is also related to the construction of gender identity in Muslim families. Rinaldo shows that Muslim couples in Indonesia can use religious discourse about wives' obedience and husbands' leadership to negotiate their gender identities.[7] Thus,

[7] Ibid

religion does not always function as a set of rules applied mechanically; it also serves as a language couples use to understand and negotiate their relationships.

For women who practice astronomy, these negotiations can be more complex because their scholarly work also has a religious dimension. They are not merely pursuing professional work; they are contributing to the development of knowledge Muslim communities need. Therefore, women's scholarly activities should not be viewed solely as an individual interest, but also as a contribution to the religious life of the community.

From the perspective of Islamic family law, this issue shows that the division of domestic roles should be understood in light of the law's objectives, rather than simply following socially inherited role assignments. Rokhmad and Susilo emphasize the need to reconstruct authority in Indonesian Islamic family law so that women's rights are guaranteed more equally in both legal and institutional contexts.[8]

Therefore, women who practice Islamic astronomy can be positioned as important subjects in discussions on reforming Islamic family law. Their experience of negotiating domestic responsibilities and scholarly pursuits shows that a just family model need not eliminate domestic roles, but should change how those roles are distributed. More relevant principles include partnership, consultation, flexibility, and the sharing of responsibilities according to each partner's circumstances and abilities.

Gender Construction in Islamic Family Law and the Problem of Dividing Domestic Roles

Islamic family law is one of the areas of law most closely connected to everyday life because it governs marriage, the relationship between spouses, their rights and obligations, and family life. As a result, the frameworks embedded in family law

[8] Abu Rokhmad and Sulistiyono Susilo, "Conceptualizing Authority of the Legalization of Indonesian Women's Rights in Islamic Family Law," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 11, no. 2 (2017): 489–508.

influence how society understands relations between men and women.

In Indonesia, discussions of gender relations cannot be separated from the Marriage Law and the Compilation of Islamic Law. These legal instruments emerged from the interaction of fiqh traditions, the needs of the modern state, social practices, and developments in Islamic legal thought. Indonesian Islamic family law therefore cannot be understood as entirely identical to any single classical fiqh framework.

One issue worth examining is the division of roles between husbands and wives. When the husband is understood as the head of the family and the wife as its manager, this norm can allocate responsibilities. However, if interpreted hierarchically, that division can become a superior–inferior relationship.

The issue becomes more complex as families' social circumstances change. More women now pursue higher education, work, become academics, and participate in organizations and public life. This shows that contemporary family life does not always fit a model that imagines men solely as public actors and women solely as domestic actors.

Rinaldo shows that improvements in Indonesian women's education and employment opportunities challenge the male-breadwinner model, which positions men as the primary earners and holders of authority.[9] These social changes show that gender norms within the family constantly confront a dynamic reality.

For women astronomers, these changes become even more pronounced. Astronomy work may require participation in academic activities, conducting observations, attending scholarly forums, teaching, carrying out research, or engaging in religious activities outside the home. If women continue to shoulder all domestic work, these activities may create a double burden.

Ultimately, unequal divisions of domestic labor are not merely a matter of household convenience. They can affect women's opportunities to pursue further education, attend conferences,

[9] Rinaldo, "Obedience and Authority among Muslim Couples."

publish their work, build professional networks, and gain recognition as experts. Thus, the division of domestic labor has epistemic consequences for who gains authority as a knower.

Studies of authority in Islamic family law show that gender issues are not limited to the content of legal norms; they also concern who has the authority to formulate and interpret those norms. Rokhmad and Susilo emphasize that the dominance of gender-insensitive religious and political authorities can perpetuate inequality for women.[10]

From this, it becomes clear that reconstructing Islamic family law requires broadening the sources of authority. Legal interpretation should not consider only the perspectives of men as religious scholars, legislators, judges, or holders of social authority. Women's experiences are also an important source for assessing whether a legal framework truly produces justice in real life.

This does not mean we must reject all classical fiqh frameworks. Fiqh is an intellectual product that emerged from ijtihad in a particular social context. It can therefore be reread in light of changing social conditions, provided that such reconstruction retains a strong methodological foundation and normative orientation.

From this perspective, the concept of *qiwāmah* should be distinguished between its function as a responsibility and claims of superiority. Family leadership can be understood as a trust to ensure the family's well-being, rather than a license to control every decision one's spouse makes. This kind of reconstruction creates space for a more collaborative model of family leadership.

Recent studies on reconstructing *qiwāmah* and *wilāyah* in the *Shafi'i* legal tradition point in a similar direction, framing qiwāmah as a shared responsibility (*takāful*) rather than solely as male authority. This approach connects the reinterpretation of classical concepts with *al-'adl*, *maṣlaḥah*, and human dignity.[11]

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[10] Rokhmad and Susilo, "Conceptualizing Authority."

[11] Bisri Ali Mustofa, "Reconstructing Qiwāmah and Wilāyah in the Shāfi'ī Legal Tradition: Toward a Reform of Islamic Family Law in Indonesia," *Jurnal Mahkamah: Kajian Ilmu Hukum dan Hukum Islam* 10, no. 2 (2025).

This model applies to families in which one or both spouses are deeply engaged in intellectual pursuits. In such families, leadership need not divide public and domestic spheres along gender lines; instead, spouses can support one another in meeting the family's needs and developing their individual potential.

Thus, the central issue in Islamic family law is not whether responsibilities are divided, but what that division is based on. If gender is the sole basis, the law risks failing to respond to reality. By contrast, if responsibilities are allocated based on fairness, ability, circumstances, and mutual consultation, family law can promote equality while safeguarding the family's well-being.

Women's Scholarly Authority in Islamic Astronomy: Access, Legitimacy, and Social Recognition

Scholarly authority is a person's ability to gain recognition as someone qualified to produce, explain, and disseminate knowledge. In Islamic astronomy, scholars can establish this authority through education in astronomy, mastery of calculation methods, observational experience, research, teaching, and participation in scholarly forums.

Because Islamic astronomy is connected to matters of worship, scholarly authority in this field also has a social and religious dimension. Practitioners are expected not only to be technically accurate but also to earn the trust of the public or religious institutions.

This position means that establishing women's authority involves challenges beyond simply earning an academic degree. Women may be highly competent yet still have to contend with social assumptions about who is considered qualified to speak on behalf of religious knowledge.

In this context, authority combines epistemic competence and social legitimacy. Epistemic competence concerns mastery of knowledge, while social legitimacy concerns recognition by the community. Inequality can arise when women are competent but lack equal access to spaces where legitimacy is conferred.

The division of domestic labor is indirectly related to this issue. Time spent on caregiving and housework reduces opportunities to attend scholarly forums, build networks, conduct research, or keep up with the latest developments in the field.

Thus, domestic burdens can create what might be called an inequality of epistemic opportunity. Women are not directly barred from becoming experts, but social structures make the costs they must bear to attain that status greater.

In the study of Islamic family law in Indonesia, the question of authority concerns who is given the opportunity to interpret the law. Rokhmad and Susilo argue that authority in forming family law must be restructured so that no particular group monopolizes it and women receive adequate representation.[12]

This argument extends to the field of Islamic astronomy. As more women enter higher education and scholarly professions, the Islamic astronomy community needs to base recognition primarily on competence. Gender should not be an initial indicator of an expert's credibility.

This change requires institutional support. Islamic universities can provide equal access to laboratories, research opportunities, publications, seminars, and academic networks. Religious organizations can expand opportunities for women to participate in training and in fatwa forums or religious consultation related to Islamic astronomy.

Families are also epistemic institutions in a certain sense, because family support determines how much time a person can devote to learning and contributing. A spouse's support is not merely practical assistance; it also recognizes the value of women's intellectual work.

In this context, the relationship between spouses should be understood as mutually supportive. A husband's intellectual pursuits should not automatically take priority over his wife's.

[12] Rokhmad and Susilo, "Conceptualizing Authority."

Spouses can determine priorities through dialogue about family needs, professional opportunities, and each spouse's stage of life.

This principle is consistent with the idea that the family can be a space for negotiating gender identity. Rinaldo shows that Muslim couples in Indonesia do not always follow gender norms in the same way as the ideal model presented in legal discourse. Instead, they adapt them to everyday realities.[13]

Therefore, women's success as practitioners of Islamic astronomy should not be measured by whether they can "remain ideal women" while pursuing scholarly work. A fairer measure is whether family structures and institutions provide conditions that allow all family members to develop their potential without bearing a disproportionate burden.

Women's scholarly authority must ultimately be understood as both a structural and an individual issue. Individual competence remains important, but it requires a social ecosystem that provides access, time, opportunity, and legitimacy. In this context, reconstructing Islamic family law is directly connected to developing women's scholarly authority.

Reconstructing Islamic Family Law Based on Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah and Gender Equality

Reconstructing Islamic family law should begin with the understanding that Islamic law has an interpretive dimension. Fiqh is the product of human reasoning about the sources of Islamic law, so fiqh rulings can be reconsidered as social conditions change. This understanding creates room for reform without compromising fidelity to Islamic principles.

In this context, *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* can serve as a framework for assessing whether a particular legal construct continues to promote the common good and justice. The *maqāṣid* approach allows focus on the purposes of the law, rather than only on the literal form of its rules.

[13] Rinaldo, "Obedience and Authority among Muslim Couples."

The first foundational principle is justice (*al-'adl*). The division of domestic labor is not fair merely because it conforms to social custom. Justice must be assessed by the proportion of burdens, benefits, opportunities, and responsibilities each family member bears.

The second principle is maṣlaḥah, or the common good. Families have an interest in maintaining stability, well-being, and the development of all their members. If women's scholarly activities contribute to both the family and society, making room for those activities can be part of the family's common good.

A study of changes in women's economic roles in Indonesian Muslim families shows that shifts in the division of roles can be understood through the concept of maṣlaḥah when they help families maintain balance and prevent harm.[14] Although the study focuses on economic roles, its analytical principles can, to a limited extent, apply to the division of scholarly roles.

The third principle is respect for human dignity (*karāmah insāniyyah*). Women should not be treated merely as instruments for meeting domestic needs. A woman is a legal subject with intellectual, moral, and social capacities.

The fourth principle is consultation. In families where both partners pursue professional or academic activities, they should discuss decisions about household chores, caregiving, academic pursuits, and career development together. Consultation shifts the relationship from a command-based model to a deliberative one.

The fifth principle is partnership. Partnership does not mean that every task must be divided mathematically equally. A fair division may vary depending on circumstances. At certain times, the husband may take on a greater share of domestic responsibilities; at other times, the wife may take on a different share. The basis should be needs and mutual agreement, not gender.

[14] Haura Salsabiela El Sabrina Nazar et al., "Negotiating Gender Roles: The Shift of Wives Role as the Main Breadwinners in Wijirejo Village, Indonesia," *Yudisia: Jurnal Pemikiran Hukum dan Hukum Islam* 16, no. 2 (2025).

Within this framework, *qiwāmah* can be understood as a responsibility, not a right to dominate. Studies on reconstructing *qiwāmah* and *wilāyah* propose moving away from a hierarchical interpretation toward shared responsibility, protection, and the common good.[15]

Such a reconstruction is also consistent with studies on women's rights and gender equality that draw on Jasser Auda's thought. This approach emphasizes reforming family law by considering its context and objectives, rather than simply preserving existing frameworks without evaluation.[16]

Within this framework, the division of domestic responsibilities can be viewed as a matter of social and legal ijtihād. The law need not require every family to follow an identical pattern of division. Instead, it should provide principles that ensure the division is nondiscriminatory and does not lead to exploitation. This reconstruction is also important for women who practice astronomy, since scholarly work has a social-contribution dimension. Society needs experts who can provide knowledge about prayer times, the direction of the qibla, calendars, and issues in Islamic astronomy. Therefore, restricting women from developing their expertise could also limit society's own pool of scholarly resources.

Family law that responds to these realities should give couples room to arrange the division of responsibilities in ways suited to their circumstances. A woman conducting research, attending a conference, or carrying out academic duties can receive support from her spouse, just as a man can take on domestic responsibilities when circumstances require it.

Thus, reconstructing Islamic family law on the basis of gender equality does not seek to erase the biological differences between men and women. Rather, it seeks to ensure that biological differences do not establish social hierarchies or inflexible divisions

[15] Mustofa, "Reconstructing Qiwāmah and Wilāyah."
[16] Royan Utsany, Afrizal Tw, and Khamim Khamim, "Women's Rights and Gender Equality: An Analysis of Jasser Auda's Thoughts and His Contribution to Renewal of Islamic Family Law in Indonesia," *Journal of Islamic Law* 3, no. 1 (2022).

of labor. The ultimate goal is to foster a just family that promotes well-being and supports the development of all.

The Partnership Family Model as a Foundation for Strengthening the Scholarly Authority of Women Practitioners of Islamic Astronomy

Based on the preceding discussion, the reconstruction of Islamic family law needs to be translated into an operational model of family relationships. A relevant model is the partnership family, which views husbands and wives as equal subjects who share rights, obligations, capacities, and responsibilities for sustaining the family.

The partnership model differs from a model in which roles are divided completely symmetrically. Equality does not mean that each partner must perform exactly the same amount of work. It means that no family member is automatically assigned particular tasks solely because of their gender.

In families of Islamic astronomy practitioners, this model can be applied by allocating time and tasks based on actual circumstances. When one partner has an intensive research or teaching schedule, the other can take on greater domestic responsibilities. Conversely, when circumstances change, partners can renegotiate the division of responsibilities.

Flexibility matters because academic life does not always follow a fixed schedule. Seminars, research, observations, teaching, conferences, and organizational activities may take place outside regular working hours. A family system that is too rigid is more likely to burden the person with the greatest domestic responsibilities.

In a partnership model, domestic work must be recognized as valuable work. Cooking, cleaning the home, caring for children, and managing family needs enable all family members to participate in public life. Domestic work is therefore not “women’s work,” but part of producing family well-being.

This recognition has important implications for women’s scholarly authority. When partners recognize domestic work as a

shared responsibility, women have more time and energy to develop their academic expertise. Domestic support can thus be seen as one of the social conditions that make knowledge production possible.

Educational institutions also have a responsibility to create inclusive environments. Colleges and universities can provide women with equal opportunities to access research, laboratories, publications, conferences, and academic leadership.

Religious organizations also play a strategic role. Because Islamic astronomy is connected to the community's religious needs, Islamic organizations can recognize women's expertise through training, discussion forums, certification, research, and participation in relevant religious activities.

Such institutional recognition matters because scholarly authority rests not only on individual ability. It also results from the interaction between expertise and structures of recognition. When institutions provide equal opportunities, women are more likely to turn their expertise into recognized authority.

Reforming family law must therefore go hand in hand with social change. Legal norm changes without cultural change can create a gap between rules and practice. Conversely, cultural change without a legal framework may lack institutional protection.

Studies of women's domesticity show that social traditions and low levels of legal literacy can sustain unequal divisions of household labor, while education and more progressive religious discourse can create opportunities for change toward more collaborative family relationships.[17]

From this perspective, women who practice Islamic astronomy can contribute to broader social transformation. Their presence shows that women can advance Islamic knowledge while also fulfilling domestic responsibilities as family members. The

[17] Moh. Irham Maulana, Dzulfikar Rodafi, and Nur Hasan, "Deconstructing the Domestic Role of the Wife in Community Tradition: An Analysis of Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah and Marriage Law," *Bayan Islamic and Islamic Studies* 4, no. 2 (2025)

issue is not choosing one identity over the other, but building structures that allow both to be pursued fairly.

A partnership model also changes how we understand women's contributions. Women should not have to prove that their scholarly activities do not interfere with family life by taking on all the domestic work themselves. Instead, families need to establish ways to share work so each member can contribute according to their abilities.

Thus, reconstructing Islamic family law on the basis of gender equality can create a family and scholarly ecosystem in which each strengthens the other. Families support the development of women's capacities, while women's scholarly activities contribute to their families and society. At this point, negotiating domestic roles is no longer merely an individual strategy women use to get by; it becomes part of transforming family structures toward more just and beneficial relationships.

Conclusion

The development of Islamic astronomy in Indonesia has opened increasingly broad opportunities for women to become active participants in knowledge production. Women can serve as academics, researchers, crescent observers, observatory managers, educators, activists in astronomy communities, and knowledge producers. This shift shows that scholarly authority can increasingly rest on competence, integrity, experience, and methodological ability rather than on gender alone. However, women's growing scholarly authority has not automatically changed domestic relationships. Women who practice Islamic astronomy may still face social norms that place housework and caregiving primarily on women. As professional demands increase, this can create a double burden.

This issue points to the need to reconstruct Islamic family law. Reconstruction does not mean eliminating the concepts of family, *qiwāmah*, financial support, or the responsibilities of husbands and wives. Rather, it means shifting how these concepts

are understood—from hierarchical relationships toward relationships grounded in responsibility, reciprocity, consultation, and the common good. The *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* approach provides a basis for ensuring that family law promotes the common good and protects various aspects of human life, including the development of reason and intellectual capacity. Meanwhile, the *mubādalah* approach provides a basis for understanding responsibilities and relational values as reciprocal between men and women.

In this context, the experiences of women who practice Islamic astronomy have epistemic value. Their experience of combining domestic work with crescent observation, research, observation, teaching, and academic activities can provide an important basis for evaluating the construction of family law. This article proposes a *Maqāṣid-Mubādalah*-Based Astronomy Family model grounded in reciprocity, competence, flexibility, consultation, protection of scholarly authority, and the common good. The model emphasizes that gender equality does not mean erasing the differences between husbands and wives. Equality means ensuring these differences do not become grounds for subordination, marginalization, or disproportionate burdens. Thus, women should not have to choose between being mothers, wives, and scholars. A just family makes it possible for these three identities to coexist harmoniously through shared responsibilities and mutual support. Ultimately, reconstructing Islamic family law must shift from the question "Who holds power?" to "Who is responsible, how are responsibilities shared, and how is the common good achieved?"

For women who practice Islamic astronomy, these questions matter especially. Women who can read the skies, observe the crescent, calculate the movements of celestial bodies, develop observatories, and produce Islamic knowledge need families that also make room for the pursuit of knowledge. In this way, the sky and the family need not be two conflicting spheres, but can be two spheres of service that strengthen one another.

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