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THE CONCEPT OF FAMILY JUSTICE IN SURAH AN-NISA: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF MARRIAGE, INHERITANCE AND FAMILY RIGHTS

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ABSTRACT

Family is one of the fundamental institutions of human society, and Islam provides comprehensive guidance for establishing justice, responsibility, mutual respect, and protection within the family. Surah An-Nisa is particularly significant in this regard because it contains extensive Qur'anic guidance concerning marriage, inheritance, women's rights, orphans, financial responsibilities, and relationships between family members. The present study examines the concept of family justice in Surah An-Nisa through an analytical study of selected Qur'anic teachings concerning marriage, inheritance, and family rights. The study adopts a qualitative, descriptive-analytical approach based on the Qur'an, relevant commentaries, and contemporary academic literature. Recent scholarship has examined justice in Surah An-Nisa as a comprehensive principle operating at individual, family, and social levels. Other recent studies have specifically analyzed inheritance provisions in verses 11 and 12 and their relationship with justice and contemporary social practices. The study argues that family justice in the Qur'anic framework involves both rights and responsibilities and seeks to protect family members from exploitation, neglect, and unjust treatment. Particular attention is given to marriage, mahr, inheritance, protection of orphans, and the responsibilities of spouses. The study concludes that Surah An-Nisa presents family justice as an integrated moral, social, and legal principle that remains relevant to contemporary discussions of family rights and responsibilities.

KEYWORDS

Surah An-Nisa; Family Justice; Marriage; Inheritance; Family Rights; Islamic Family Law; Qur'anic Studies; Social Justice

INTRODUCTION

The family occupies a central position in Islamic social thought because it provides the primary environment in which individuals experience rights, responsibilities, care, cooperation, and social relationships. The Qur'an presents family life within a framework of moral responsibility and justice rather than merely treating it as a private social arrangement. Among the Qur'anic chapters that provide detailed guidance concerning family relationships, Surah An-Nisa holds particular significance. The Surah addresses marriage, inheritance, women's rights, orphan protection, financial responsibilities, family disputes, and principles of justice. Recent research describes Surah An-Nisa as containing broad principles of justice that operate at individual, family, social, legal, and ethical levels. The concept of family justice in Surah An-Nisa begins with the recognition of human relationships and mutual responsibilities. The opening verses of the Surah emphasize the common origin of humanity and command believers to remain conscious of Allah and maintain proper relationships with relatives. This opening framework establishes an important ethical foundation for the subsequent discussion of family matters. Justice within the family therefore cannot be understood merely as the distribution of material

resources; it also includes respect for human dignity, fulfillment of obligations, protection of vulnerable family members, and responsible conduct in interpersonal relationships.

Marriage represents one of the most important areas in which the Qur'anic concept of family justice becomes visible. Surah An-Nisa provides guidance concerning marriage and establishes responsibilities for those entering into marital relationships. The Qur'anic treatment of mahr, for example, recognizes a financial right belonging to the woman. Contemporary research on mahr describes it as not merely a formal requirement of marriage but also as an instrument associated with protection, welfare, dignity, consent, and marital commitment. This demonstrates that Islamic family justice includes concrete financial and ethical protections within marriage.

The Qur'anic approach to marriage also emphasizes responsible conduct. Family relationships involve rights as well as duties, and the fulfillment of these responsibilities contributes to stability within the household. Contemporary research examining husband-wife relations through interpretations of Surah An-Nisa 4:34 has highlighted the continuing scholarly discussion concerning marital responsibilities, authority, and gender relations. Such discussions demonstrate the importance of examining Qur'anic family principles carefully rather than interpreting individual verses without considering their wider ethical context.Another major dimension of family justice in Surah An-Nisa is inheritance. The Surah establishes specific provisions concerning the distribution of family wealth and recognizes the rights of different heirs. Verses 11 and 12 are particularly important because they establish inheritance shares for several categories of family members. Recent scholarship has examined these verses in relation to justice, gender, social responsibility, and contemporary inheritance practices. The existence of explicit Qur'anic provisions concerning inheritance demonstrates that financial justice is an essential part of family justice.

The recognition of inheritance rights also has a broader social significance. When family wealth is distributed according to established principles, the possibility of arbitrary deprivation can be reduced. Contemporary research on inheritance practices has identified situations in which customary practices may conflict with Qur'anic inheritance principles, particularly where women's inheritance rights are restricted. This makes the study of Surah An-Nisa especially relevant for understanding the relationship between religious principles and actual family practices.The protection of orphans is another important component of family justice in Surah An-Nisa. The Surah repeatedly emphasizes the proper treatment and protection of orphaned children and their property. This reflects a broader Qur'anic principle that family and social relationships must protect those who are vulnerable. Recent research on Surah An-Nisa has specifically identified inheritance, guardianship, maintenance, and protection of human dignity as important dimensions of Qur'anic justice for women and orphans. Family justice also requires responsible management of property and trusts. Surah An-Nisa addresses the rights of individuals whose economic vulnerability could make them susceptible to exploitation. This principle is particularly important in family structures because financial relationships can significantly affect the well-being and security of family members. The Qur'anic emphasis on preserving rights and avoiding unjust consumption of another person's wealth therefore represents an important element of family justice.

The concept of justice in Surah An-Nisa should consequently be understood as broader than equality in a simple numerical sense. The Qur'anic framework connects justice with rights, duties, responsibilities, protection, and appropriate treatment according to particular circumstances. Contemporary scholarship on Islamic inheritance similarly examines the relationship between specific inheritance rules and broader concepts of social responsibility and justice. The contemporary relevance of these principles is particularly important because family structures and social conditions continue to change. Questions concerning women's employment, financial responsibilities, marriage, inheritance, and household decision-making have generated renewed scholarly discussion about the interpretation of Qur'anic family teachings. A 2026 study on qiwāmah in Surah An-Nisa 4:34, for example, examines the concept in the context of women increasingly serving as primary breadwinners and considers how contemporary circumstances affect interpretations of marital responsibility. Therefore, studying family justice in Surah An-Nisa requires attention to both the Qur'anic text and the interpretive traditions surrounding it. It is necessary to distinguish between the principles explicitly established by the Qur'an and the different ways those principles have subsequently been interpreted and practiced. Such an approach allows researchers to examine family justice without reducing the Qur'anic framework to either purely historical rules or purely contemporary assumptions.

The present study focuses on three major areas: marriage, inheritance, and family rights. Marriage is examined in terms of rights, responsibilities, mahr, and ethical treatment. Inheritance is analyzed with particular attention to the Qur'anic recognition of family members' financial rights. Family rights are examined more broadly through the protection of women, children, orphans, and other vulnerable members of the family. Through this approach, the study seeks to demonstrate how Surah An-Nisa develops an interconnected framework of family justice.

The significance of this study lies in its attempt to understand family justice as a comprehensive Qur'anic concept. Rather than examining marriage, inheritance, and family rights as separate legal topics, the study considers their common foundation in justice, responsibility, dignity, and protection. This approach can contribute to contemporary Islamic studies by demonstrating how different Qur'anic provisions work together to establish ethical and social principles for family life.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the concept of family justice presented in Surah An-Nisa, with particular emphasis on marriage, inheritance, and family responsibilities.
2. To analyze the Qur'anic principles concerning the rights and responsibilities of spouses, children, women, orphans, and other family members.
3. To explore the contemporary relevance of the Qur'anic principles of family justice for modern Muslim families and societies.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What principles of family justice are presented in Surah An-Nisa?

2. How does Surah An-Nisa address marriage, inheritance, and the rights and responsibilities of family members?
3. How are the Qur'anic principles of family justice relevant to contemporary Muslim families and societies?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of family justice in Islamic thought has received considerable attention because the Qur'an provides detailed guidance concerning marriage, inheritance, financial responsibilities, and the protection of vulnerable family members. Surah An-Nisa is particularly significant because its teachings combine legal, ethical, and social dimensions of family life. Recent scholarship has emphasized that the concept of justice in this Surah extends beyond individual rights and includes the protection of women, orphans, and other vulnerable members of society. Mohammed (2026) argues that the Qur'anic approach in Surah An-Nisa establishes important foundations for justice through provisions related to inheritance, guardianship, maintenance, and protection of human dignity.Marriage is one of the central themes discussed in the literature concerning Surah An-Nisa. Qur'anic marriage principles emphasize responsibility, financial obligations, and ethical treatment between spouses. One important element is mahr, which represents a financial right of the woman. Contemporary research has examined mahr not simply as a formal component of marriage but as a mechanism connected with women's dignity, welfare, and financial protection. This perspective demonstrates that family justice includes practical economic protections within marital relationships.

The literature also discusses the responsibilities of spouses and the interpretation of Qur'an 4:34. Contemporary scholars have examined the concept of qiwāmah and its relationship to family responsibility and changing economic circumstances. Imron and Sukendar (2026), for example, examine the interpretation of qiwāmah in the context of women who contribute substantially or primarily to household income. Their study illustrates how contemporary circumstances have encouraged renewed scholarly examination of traditional interpretations of marital responsibility. This literature is important for understanding family justice because rights and responsibilities within marriage cannot be examined independently of changing social and economic realities.
Inheritance represents another major dimension of family justice. Surah An-Nisa provides detailed guidance concerning the distribution of family wealth, particularly in verses 11 and 12. The literature generally recognizes these verses as central to Islamic inheritance law because they establish specified shares for different relatives. Contemporary studies have examined these provisions in relation to gender, social justice, and customary practices. Such research indicates that the Qur'anic inheritance system should be studied not only as a collection of numerical rules but also within its broader objectives concerning family responsibility and protection of legitimate financial rights.

Women's inheritance rights are particularly important within this literature. The Qur'anic recognition of women as heirs represents a significant dimension of their financial rights. Contemporary discussions have examined situations in which cultural or customary practices may limit women's access to inheritance. From the perspective of family justice, preventing

unlawful deprivation of inheritance is essential because financial injustice can have long-term consequences for women's social and economic security. Recent scholarship on divine justice and gender equity has therefore connected Qur'anic inheritance provisions with broader discussions of women's rights and justice.The literature also highlights the relationship between family justice and orphan protection. Surah An-Nisa repeatedly emphasizes the proper treatment of orphans and the protection of their property. This concern demonstrates that justice within the family extends beyond relationships between spouses. Children and orphans may possess limited ability to protect their own financial and social interests, making ethical and legal protection particularly important. Mohammed (2026) identifies the protection of women and orphans as a major component of the Qur'anic framework of justice in Surah An-Nisa.

Another theme in contemporary literature is the distinction between Qur'anic principles and cultural practices. Family structures in Muslim societies are influenced by religious teachings, legal systems, cultural traditions, and local customs. These influences do not always produce identical practices. Consequently, researchers have emphasized the importance of returning to primary Qur'anic sources when evaluating questions of marriage, inheritance, and family rights. Such an approach can help identify whether a particular practice is directly based on Qur'anic teachings or has developed through later cultural and social traditions.Recent scholarship further indicates that family justice should be understood through the interconnected concepts of rights and responsibilities. The Qur'anic framework does not discuss rights without simultaneously emphasizing obligations. Spouses have responsibilities toward one another, parents have responsibilities toward children, guardians have responsibilities toward orphans, and family members have responsibilities concerning financial rights. This reciprocal structure suggests that justice is achieved not simply when individuals demand their own rights but when members of the family fulfill their responsibilities toward others.The literature also demonstrates the continuing relevance of Surah An-Nisa for contemporary family studies. Changes in employment patterns, household economics, education, marriage practices, and women's social participation have raised new questions concerning the application of traditional family concepts. Contemporary Qur'anic scholarship therefore increasingly examines how established principles can be understood in changing social contexts while maintaining fidelity to the primary text.
Overall, the reviewed literature shows that family justice in Surah An-Nisa is a multidimensional concept involving marriage, inheritance, economic rights, protection of vulnerable people, and reciprocal family responsibilities. However, there remains a need for integrated studies that examine these dimensions together rather than treating each issue separately. The present study addresses this gap by bringing marriage, inheritance, and family rights together under the broader Qur'anic concept of justice.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology to examine the concept of family justice in Surah An-Nisa, particularly in relation to marriage, inheritance, and family rights. The research is based primarily on textual and documentary analysis of relevant Qur'anic verses, supported by classical Qur'anic interpretations and recent academic literature. The selected verses are

examined according to their themes and their relationship with broader Qur'anic principles of justice, responsibility, dignity, and protection. Contemporary scholarly studies published between 2023 and 2026 are also consulted to understand current academic discussions concerning Islamic family law, inheritance, marital responsibilities, and family rights. The research does not use statistical surveys or experimental data because its primary purpose is to interpret and analyze religious texts and scholarly discussions. Through this methodology, the study seeks to develop a systematic understanding of how Surah An-Nisa establishes principles for maintaining justice and fairness within family relationships.

RESEARCH APPROACH

The study uses a qualitative descriptive and analytical approach. The descriptive aspect identifies the major Qur'anic teachings concerning family justice, including marriage, mahr, inheritance, responsibilities between spouses, protection of orphans, and the rights of family members. The analytical aspect examines the meanings and relationships among these principles in order to understand the broader Qur'anic concept of justice. Particular attention is given to relevant verses of Surah An-Nisa and their thematic connections. Contemporary academic literature is incorporated to identify different scholarly interpretations and to consider the relevance of Qur'anic family principles in present-day Muslim societies. This approach allows the research to examine both the textual foundation of family justice and its contemporary academic significance.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research follows a descriptive-analytical research design based on documentary and textual study. First, relevant verses of Surah An-Nisa are identified according to the three major areas of the research: marriage, inheritance, and family rights. Second, these verses are organized thematically and examined in relation to concepts such as justice, responsibility, financial protection, dignity, and social welfare. Third, relevant scholarly literature from 2023–2026 is reviewed to provide contemporary academic context. Finally, the findings from the Qur'anic text and scholarly literature are synthesized to develop an integrated understanding of family justice. The design is appropriate because the research focuses on interpretation, analysis, and synthesis rather than numerical measurement.

DATA ANALYSIS

The collected material is analyzed through thematic analysis. Relevant Qur'anic verses and scholarly discussions are first categorized into major themes: marriage and marital responsibilities, mahr and financial rights, inheritance, protection of orphans, and general family rights and responsibilities. Each theme is then examined to identify the principles of justice reflected in the relevant Qur'anic teachings. The analysis also considers how contemporary scholars interpret these principles and how they relate them to current family and social conditions. Similarities and differences among the scholarly perspectives are considered without treating any single contemporary interpretation as universally applicable. The final analysis

brings the themes together to explain how Surah An-Nisa presents family justice as an interconnected system of rights, responsibilities, protection, and ethical conduct.

FINDINGS

The analysis indicates that family justice in Surah An-Nisa is based on a combination of rights and responsibilities. The Qur'anic framework does not focus exclusively on one family member but establishes obligations and protections for different members of the family. Marriage, inheritance, financial rights, and protection of vulnerable persons are interconnected within the broader principle of justice.The first major finding concerns marriage and marital responsibility. Surah An-Nisa establishes marriage within a framework of obligations, financial responsibilities, and ethical conduct. The recognition of mahr demonstrates that financial rights form an important component of marital justice. Contemporary scholarship also indicates that discussions of marital authority and responsibility continue to develop as social and economic conditions change.The second major finding concerns inheritance justice. The Qur'anic provisions concerning inheritance establish defined rights for eligible family members. These provisions provide a structured approach to the distribution of family wealth and seek to prevent arbitrary deprivation. The recognition of women and other family members as heirs demonstrates the importance of financial rights within the Qur'anic concept of family justice.

The third finding concerns the protection of vulnerable family members. Surah An-Nisa gives particular attention to orphans and their property. This indicates that family justice requires active protection of those who may be unable to defend their own interests. The same principle can be understood more broadly in relation to individuals who experience economic or social vulnerability.

The fourth finding is that family justice extends beyond legal rules to moral responsibility. The Qur'anic framework emphasizes honesty, trust, fairness, responsibility, and protection from exploitation. Therefore, justice within the family requires not only compliance with formal rights but also ethical behavior toward other family members.

The fifth finding indicates that the principles of Surah An-Nisa remain relevant to contemporary family discussions, particularly concerning marriage, women's economic rights, inheritance, and changing family responsibilities. However, their contemporary application requires careful interpretation of the Qur'anic text alongside awareness of historical context, legal traditions, and present social conditions.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the concept of family justice in Surah An-Nisa with particular reference to marriage, inheritance, and family rights. The analysis demonstrates that the Qur'anic concept of family justice is multidimensional and combines legal rights with moral and social responsibilities. Surah An-Nisa provides guidance concerning marital relationships, mahr, inheritance, protection of orphans, financial responsibilities, and the treatment of vulnerable family members.The study concludes that justice is a central organizing principle of family relationships in Surah An-Nisa. Marriage is associated with responsibility and financial

obligations; inheritance establishes recognized rights for eligible family members; and the protection of orphans demonstrates the responsibility to safeguard vulnerable individuals. These provisions collectively demonstrate that family justice involves both the recognition of rights and the fulfillment of responsibilities.The study also finds that the Qur'anic principles remain relevant to contemporary academic discussions about family relationships. Modern changes in economic conditions, women's employment, family structures, and social expectations have generated new questions about how Qur'anic family principles should be interpreted and applied. Contemporary scholarship can contribute to these discussions by carefully distinguishing the Qur'anic text from historical interpretations and cultural practices.Ultimately, Surah An-Nisa presents family justice as a balanced system of rights, responsibilities, protection, and ethical conduct. A deeper understanding of these principles can contribute to scholarly discussions of Islamic family studies and provide a foundation for further research into marriage, inheritance, women's rights, and family welfare in contemporary Muslim societies.

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