



The Family Crisis in the Contemporary World and the Qur'an's Civilizational Response: A Theoretical–Applied Framework Based on the Triad of *Sakīnah*, *Mawaddah*, and *Rahmah* (Qur'an 30:21)

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Received: 2024/12/03 ; Revised: 2025/02/15 ; Accepted: 2025/03/22 ; Published online: 2025/07/08

Abstract

The family crisis in the contemporary world is not merely a demographic or legal phenomenon; rather, it signals a weakening of the civilizational function of this fundamental institution. Addressing the question, “What normative and practical potential does the Qur’anic triad of *sakīnah*–*mawaddah*–*rahmah* in Qur’an 30:21 offer for a civilizational response to the family crisis?”, this study seeks to develop a theoretical–applied framework for the institutional reconstruction of the family.

The research employs a textual–exegetical analysis of the verse, drawing upon classical and contemporary Shi‘i and Sunni Qur’anic commentaries, alongside a systematic review of international empirical evidence concerning marriage, divorce, and fertility. The study’s principal innovation lies in rereading the Qur’anic triad as a “civilizational matrix” comprising structural tranquility (*sakīnah*), enduring emotional capital (*mawaddah*), and a mechanism of ethical repair (*rahmah*), and in connecting these dimensions to institutional and social policy levels.

The findings indicate that when these three components are incorporated into the institutional architecture of the family—including education, welfare, media, and law—they can contribute to restoring the family’s fundamental functions and strengthening social capital.

Keywords: Family; the Qur’an; *Sakīnah*; *Mawaddah*; *Rahmah*; Family Crisis; Social Policy.

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<https://www.jspt.ir/>

Publisher: Urwat al - Wuthqa International Academic Research Institute

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22034/jspt.2026.560765.1144>



1. Introduction

International evidence indicates that the total fertility rate (TFR) in the countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)—comprising industrialized countries with established demographic and welfare indicators—declined from approximately 3.3 in the 1960s to around 1.5 in 2022, while the age at first marriage has increased substantially. These transformations have affected informal care networks, demographic sustainability, and the intergenerational transmission of values (OECD, 2024a, pp. 1–4; OECD, 2024b, Figure 4.11). Against this background, the family has moved beyond the sphere of the “private” and emerged as a public and civilizational issue.

In response to this situation, the central question of the present article is formulated as follows: What civilizational response to the family crisis can Qur’an 30:21, through the triad of *sakīnah*–*mawaddah*–*rahmah*, provide within a normative–applied framework? Such a framework is not limited to describing the ethical values of the family in the Qur’an; rather, it seeks to identify fundamental norms and translate them into patterns applicable at the institutional and social levels. Accordingly, concepts such as *sakīnah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah* are examined not merely as individual virtues or moral recommendations, but as organizing norms for familial and social relationships that possess the potential to be translated into measurable indicators for cultural and social policymaking. A further question is therefore how this framework can be translated into a measurable policy program (UNFPA, 2025, pp. 10–15).

From another perspective, the theoretical literature of modern sociology reports a transformation in the nature of the marital bond from a “stable social contract” toward a “fragile emotional partnership.” Anthony Giddens conceptualizes this transformation as a relationship whose continuation depends above all on the partners’ immediate satisfaction (Giddens, 1992, pp. 58–64). Zygmunt Bauman, in *Liquid Love*, similarly points to the fragility of human bonds under the logic of consumerism (Bauman, 2003, p. 28). Within such a context, a Qur’anic rereading of the family has the potential to restore the weight of commitment, responsibility, and spirituality to the architecture of intimate relationships.

The aim of this article is to develop a “civilizational response framework” grounded in the Qur’anic text and capable of being translated into assessable interventions at three levels: the individual/family, the local community, and national policy. To this end, the study first reviews the exegetical and empirical literature, then presents its theoretical framework and explains the research methodology. It subsequently analyzes the relevant Qur’anic verses and introduces the proposed model, before concluding with an analytical discussion

and conclusion.

Despite valuable exegetical and sociological studies concerning the family in the Qur'an, most existing research has either focused on marital ethics and the semantics of relevant concepts or examined the family crisis primarily through sociological description. By contrast, the systematic connection between the Qur'anic analysis of Qur'an 30:21 and its translation into a policy-oriented civilizational framework has received comparatively limited attention.

The principal innovation of the present study lies in moving the triad of *sakīnah–mawaddah–rahmah* beyond the level of moral recommendation and reconceptualizing it as a four-layer institutional model encompassing the epistemic, ethical, educational, and structural dimensions. This model possesses the potential to be connected to evaluation indicators and social policymaking and, in doing so, directly addresses the gap between religious text and civilizational intervention.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Qur'anic and Exegetical Studies on Qur'an 30:21

Contemporary analyses generally understand the triad of *sakīnah–mawaddah–rahmah* as a complementary conceptual structure underlying the Qur'anic understanding of the family. Using a comparative-analytical approach, Ismail and Zahiri, in the journal *Al-Bayan*, conclude that *sakīnah* represents the norm of structural tranquility within the marital bond, *mawaddah* constitutes emotional–volitional capital that generates commitment, and *rahmah* represents the compassionate, forgiving, and altruistic dimension of the relationship (Ismail & Zahiri, 2016, 14(2), pp. 206–222; especially pp. 210–218). This interpretation is broadly consistent with classical exegetical traditions. For example, Ibn Kathir, in his commentary on Qur'an 30:21, emphasizes *mawaddah* and *rahmah* as divine blessings that sustain the marital relationship (Ibn Kathir, 1994, Vol. 3, p. 414). Al-Tantawi similarly argues in *al-Tafsīr al-Wasīl* that the conjunction of *mawaddah* and *rahmah* signifies the integration of emotional attachment with altruistic care (al-Tantawi, 1998, Vol. 11, p. 76).

In more recent semantic approaches, the co-occurrence of *mawaddah* and *rahmah* has been interpreted as the integration of volitional affection with altruistic action (Yazdanmehr, 2024, pp. 334–346). Among contemporary Shi'i exegetical works, *al-Mizān* provides a basis for reconstructing the semantic network of the verse through the method of Qur'an-by-Qur'an interpretation (*tafsīr al-Qur'ān bi-al-Qur'ān*) (Tabataba'i, 1374, commentary on Qur'an 30:21). *Tafsīr-e Nemūneh* interprets *mawaddah* as the enduring warmth of the marital relationship and *rahmah* as a mechanism of relational repair in times of difficulty (Makarim Shirazi, 1384, commentary on Qur'an 30:21). In *Tafsīr*

Tasnīm, the relationship between *sakīnah* and *sukūn* is examined within an existential and mystical framework, with particular attention to the ultimate tranquility afforded by the marital bond (Javadi Amoli, 1387, commentary on Qur'an 30:21).

Synthesis of the research gap: Most existing studies approach Qur'an 30:21 within the framework of marital ethics or lexical and semantic analysis. Comparatively little research has sought to connect the verse's triadic structure to a systematic model of civilizational response and to its translation into measurable policy interventions. This constitutes the principal research gap addressed by the present study.

2.2. Social, Demographic, and Policy Studies

At the level of demographic trends, *Society at a Glance 2024* documents the long-term decline in fertility and the transformation of marriage and divorce patterns (OECD, 2024a, pp. 1–4; OECD, 2024b, Figure 4.11). Recent policy reports further emphasize that the central issue is not merely a “decline in fertility preferences,” but rather a “fertility intention–achievement gap”: individuals are often unable to realize their reproductive preferences because of structural constraints, including housing costs, the costs of childcare, employment insecurity, and inadequate work–care balance (UNFPA, 2025, pp. 10–15).

These reports identify a range of policy pathways—including parental leave, tax-based support, and care services—that can be conceptually aligned with the idea of “institutional compassion”, insofar as institutional arrangements can reduce structural pressures and support families in sustaining relationships and achieving their desired family size.

2.3. Synthesis of the Literature and the Article's Innovative Contribution

The present article advances the existing literature in three principal respects:

- 1) It reconceptualizes the triad of Qur'an 30:21 as a “structural tranquility × emotional capital × institutional compassion” matrix;
- 2) It connects this matrix to policy layers and evaluation indicators, thereby translating Qur'anic normative concepts into an analytically assessable framework;
- 3) It aligns the proposed model with empirical trend data on marriage, divorce, and fertility, thereby creating a pathway for translating the Qur'anic text into measurable interventions (Ismail & Zahiri, 2016, pp. 206–222; OECD, 2024a, pp. 1–6; UNFPA, 2025, pp. 10–15).

3. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

3.1. Theoretical Framework

- Systems Theory and Reflexive Functionalism: The family is understood as a subsystem responsible for the production and transmission of moral and

social capital, whose functions must be redefined in light of contemporary circumstances (Parsons, 1951, pp. 15–45).

- **Religious Identity as a Protective Variable:** *Tawhīd* (divine unity) and *taqwā* (God-consciousness) enhance the family's resilience in the face of structural and cultural pressures. The triad articulated in Qur'an 30:21 provides the normative core of this identity (Qur'an 4:1; Qur'an 30:21).

- **Policy Translation of Religious Text:** The statement "*and He placed between you affection and mercy*" (*ja'ala baynakum mawaddatan wa-rahmah*) should not be understood solely as an inward or interpersonal experience; it can also be translated into the design of supportive institutional arrangements (Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, 1420/Vol. 25, p. 352; al-Tanṭāwī, 1998, Vol. 11, p. 76).

3.2. Research Methodology

- **Exegetical Textual Analysis:** Qur'an 30:21 is analyzed through a hierarchical engagement with classical commentaries, including those of Ibn Kathīr, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, and al-Tanṭāwī, alongside contemporary Shi'i commentaries such as *al-Mizān*, *Tafsīr Nemūneh*, and *Tafsīr Tasnūm*. Citations follow the author–year–volume/page format wherever stable page references are available (Ibn Kathīr, 1994, Vol. 3, p. 414; al-Tanṭāwī, 1998, Vol. 11, p. 76).

- **Systematic Review of Empirical Literature:** Macro-level indicators of the family crisis are extracted from OECD and UNFPA reports and subsequently linked to the normative implications of the Qur'anic verse.

- **Model and Indicator Formulation:** The triad of Qur'an 30:21 is translated into a four-layer model, and assessment indicators are developed across three levels of intervention: family, local community, and national policy.

- **Conceptual Validation:** The proposed model is cross-validated against relevant theoretical literature, particularly Giddens (1992, pp. 58–64) and Bauman (2003, p. 28), in order to assess its conceptual consistency with findings in the social sciences.

3.3. The Relationship between the *Sakīnah–Mawaddah–Raḥmah* Triad and Contemporary Family Theories

In contemporary sociological literature, the family is increasingly analyzed as an institution undergoing normative deconstruction—an institution whose internal bonds have become progressively more dependent upon individual satisfaction and fluid forms of choice. In his theory of the transformation of intimacy, Anthony Giddens discusses the emergence of the "pure relationship," a relationship whose continuity depends not primarily upon moral commitment or institutional obligation but upon mutual and continually renewable satisfaction (Giddens, 1992, pp. 58–64). Although this conception may strengthen individual autonomy, it can gradually weaken the institutional stability of the family and its

broader civilizational functions.

Against this framework, the Qur'anic triad of *sakīnah*–*mawaddah*–*rahmah* in Qur'an 30:21 provides a normative model that can be meaningfully compared with several conceptual gaps in modern theories of the family. *Sakīnah* may be understood as a form of enduring existential security that extends beyond short-term psychological satisfaction. Allameh Tabataba'i explicitly maintains that *sakīnah* in this verse refers to a tranquility arising from existential affinity and an intrinsic complementarity between human beings, rather than merely to emotional calm or temporary psychological stability (Tabataba'i, 1374, Vol. 16, p. 166).

The Qur'anic concept of *mawaddah*, moreover, denotes more than a transient feeling. It refers to a form of conscious and volitional affection that contributes to the continuity and durability of the relationship. Makarim Shirazi describes *mawaddah* as “an affection formed through reason and responsibility that sustains the marital bond” (Makarim Shirazi, 1384, Vol. 5, p. 463). This conceptualization can be fruitfully correlated with the notion of enduring emotional capital in contemporary theories of social capital.

Finally, *rahmah* functions as a mechanism of relational repair. In his analysis of *Liquid Love*, Zygmunt Bauman demonstrates how the absence of mechanisms of ethical repair renders human relationships increasingly fragile (Bauman, 2003, p. 28). By contrast, Qur'anic *rahmah*—which, in Javadi Amoli's interpretation, is grounded in forgiveness, self-sacrifice, and prioritizing the other over oneself—serves as a mechanism for sustaining the relationship under conditions of crisis (Javadi Amoli, 1387, Vol. 27, p. 289).

Accordingly, the triad articulated in Qur'an 30:21 can be understood as a normative response to the theoretical crisis of the family under modernity—a response that reconceptualizes freedom within the horizon of commitment and love within the broader horizon of civilizational responsibility.

4. An Analytical Definition of the Family Crisis in the Contemporary World

International data from the past decade indicate that the family crisis has emerged simultaneously along three major axes:

- 1) Demographic dimension: declining fertility and rising divorce rates;
- 2) Psychological–cultural dimension: erosion of the internal commitments underlying marital bonds;
- 3) Structural dimension: weaknesses in support systems and family-oriented policies.

4.1. The Demographic Dimension

Across 26 OECD member countries, the average marriage rate declined from

7.5 marriages per 1,000 inhabitants in 1970 to below 4 in 2023, while the divorce rate increased to 2.1 (OECD, 2024b, Table 4.12). These data are consistent with the 2025 UNFPA report, which identifies family stability as one of the indicators of the health of civilization (UNFPA, 2025, p. 11).

Particularly in Western societies, the concept of marriage has undergone a transformation from a “stable contract” into a “lifestyle option” (Giddens, 1992, p. 61). One consequence of this transformation is increased generational isolation and a weakening of the intergenerational transmission of culture.

4.2. The Psychological–Cultural Dimension

Giddens (1992), in his theory of the “pure relationship,” explains that in modern society a marital bond continues only insofar as personal satisfaction is maintained, rather than because of a binding moral obligation. Bauman (2003, p. 28), likewise, through his concept of “liquid love,” argues that in a consumer society relationships, much like commodities, retain their value insofar as they continue to generate satisfaction. Within such a context, the family may gradually shift from an institution of socialization and education into a transient and contingent relationship.

4.3. The Structural–Policy Dimension

At the level of social structure, family policies in many industrialized countries suffer from a lack of institutional integration. Insurance, employment, housing, and education systems do not operate in a coordinated manner toward strengthening the family. According to the OECD 2024d report, “without civilizational design, the family institution becomes merely a consumer of fragmented policies rather than a producer of social capital” (pp. 4–6).

This situation corresponds closely to what the Qur’an addresses at the ethical and epistemic levels through the disruption of *mawaddah* and *rahmah*: when relationships become deprived of meaning, institutions themselves lose much of their capacity for reproduction and renewal.

4.4. The Family Crisis as a Crisis of Meaning and Institution

An analysis of demographic and social data indicates that the contemporary family crisis cannot be reduced merely to economic or legal factors. Although variables such as employment insecurity, rising housing costs, and economic pressures play an important role in postponing marriage and reducing fertility, these factors alone cannot adequately explain the depth and breadth of the family’s institutional deterioration. Beneath these developments lies a more fundamental “crisis of meaning” concerning the definition of the family and its function within individual and collective life.

In recent sociological literature, the family has gradually been reduced from a

normative, meaning-generating institution to a lifestyle choice. Through the concept of the “pure relationship,” Giddens demonstrates that under late modernity, the marital bond is grounded not in enduring commitment but in continually renewed mutual satisfaction (Giddens, 1992, pp. 58–64). Within such a framework, marriage remains meaningful insofar as it provides immediate emotional gratification; when that function declines, dissolution of the relationship increasingly comes to be regarded as a natural outcome. This conceptual transformation turns the family from a civilization-building institution into a fragile and readily consumable relationship.

Zygmunt Bauman describes this condition through the notion of “liquid love”—a form of love lacking stable mechanisms of ethical repair and continuity within a consumer-oriented logic (Bauman, 2003, p. 28). In such an environment, values such as sacrifice, forgiveness, and intergenerational commitment are increasingly displaced by individual self-actualization. The direct consequence of this transformation is the weakening of the “moral capital of the family” and, at the macro level, the erosion of social capital—a phenomenon that Durkheim regarded as a precursor to broader civilizational crises (Durkheim, 1957, pp. 112–115).

From this perspective, declining fertility or rising divorce rates should be understood not as the primary causes but as outward manifestations of a deeper crisis of meaning. OECD reports likewise implicitly suggest that purely financial policies, without reconstructing the meaning and social function of the family, are unlikely to produce lasting effects (OECD, 2024a, pp. 4–6). In other words, before being a demographic crisis, the family crisis is a crisis concerning the “telos of the family”—the question of what the family ultimately exists to accomplish.

At this juncture, the Qur’anic conception of the family, particularly as articulated in Qur’an 30:21, offers an alternative horizon. The Qur’an does not define the family primarily through transient satisfaction but around the concept of *sakīnah*—an existential tranquility arising from intimacy, shared human constitution, and a meaningful bond between woman and man (Tabataba’i, 1374, Vol. 16, p. 166). Within this framework, *mawaddah*, as enduring emotional capital, and *rahmah*, as a mechanism of ethical repair, acquire functions that extend beyond personal emotion and become constitutive elements sustaining the family institution.

Accordingly, the contemporary family crisis may be understood as a consequence of a rupture between institution and meaning. A family deprived of meaning is unlikely to maintain long-term stability even in the presence of extensive economic support. Conversely, a family that recovers its meaning and civilizational function may be better equipped to withstand structural pressures

with greater resilience. This is precisely the point at which the Qur'an's civilizational response moves beyond the level of moral recommendation and becomes an analytical framework for the institutional reconstruction of the family.

On this basis, if empirical evidence indicates a deterioration in family stability, while theoretical analysis suggests that this deterioration is associated with the reduction of the family to a consumer-oriented relationship lacking mechanisms of ethical repair, then the family crisis should primarily be understood as a civilizational and semantic crisis, rather than merely an economic or legal one. This conclusion highlights the need to reconsider alternative, meaning-generating models for the family institution.

5. A Civilizational Reading of Qur'an 30:21

Qur'an 30:21 states:

“And among His signs is that He created for you spouses from among yourselves so that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Surely, in this are signs for those who reflect.”

5.1. Syntactic Structure and Ontological Significance

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī interprets the expression “*min anfusikum*” (“from among yourselves”) as indicating a common origin and essential unity of the human kind, while he regards “*li-taskunū ilayhā*” (“so that you may find tranquility in them”) as the ultimate purpose of marriage (Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, 1420, Vol. 25, p. 352). Allameh Tabataba'i (*al-Mizān*, commentary on Qur'an 30:21) understands *sakīnah* as a form of tranquility arising from intimacy and mutual affinity, belonging to the category of existential tranquility rather than merely psychological calm (Tabataba'i, 1374, commentary on Qur'an 30:21).

This interpretation reveals the connection between the family and a Tawhīdic ontology: human beings find tranquility in one another precisely because both originate from a single primordial self (*nafs wāḥidah*) (Qur'an 4:1).

5.2. The *Sakīnah–Mawaddah–Raḥmah* Triad as a Functional System

In Makarim Shirazi's interpretation (1384, Vol. 15, p. 463), *mawaddah* represents the enduring warmth of emotional attachment, while *rahmah* functions as a restorative force within the relationship. Javadi Amoli (1387, Vol. 27, p. 289) likewise emphasizes that *rahmah* within the family bond constitutes a foundation for the continuity of civilizational life, because without mercy and compassion, *mawaddah* can degenerate into competition, friction, and relational exhaustion.

From the perspective of institutional design, the triad articulated in the verse can therefore be understood as corresponding to three fundamental functions of

the family institution:

Component	Micro-Level Function	Macro-Level Civilizational Function
<i>Sakīnah</i>	Creating tranquility and psychological security	Cultural stability and social cohesion
<i>Mawaddah</i>	Sustaining affection and enduring relational attachment	Generational and social integration
<i>Raḥmah</i>	Forgiveness and self-sacrifice	Moral and civilizational reconstruction in times of crisis

In this sense, the Qur’anic expression “*ja’ala baynakum*” (“He placed between you”) can be understood as referring to a divine act that operates at both the ontological and legislative levels: God has embedded these three principles within the order of existence as well as within the normative structure of revealed religion.

5.3. The Psychological Implications of *Sakīnah*, *Mawaddah*, and *Raḥmah* for Family Functioning

An analysis of the triad *sakīnah–mawaddah–raḥmah* demonstrates that these concepts, in addition to their theological and ethical significance, possess profound psychological functions in the formation and continuity of the family institution.

5.3.1. *Sakīnah* and Emotional Regulation

According to Allameh Tabataba’i, “*li-taskunū ilayhā*” in Qur’an 30:21 refers to a stable and deeply rooted state of tranquility arising from existential intimacy and affinity rather than from transient emotional arousal (Tabataba’i, 1374, Vol. 16, p. 166). From a psychological perspective, such tranquility corresponds closely to the notion of stable emotional regulation—a condition in which an individual, within the context of a secure relationship, develops the capacity to manage anxiety and emotional tension.

The absence of such *sakīnah* may contribute to increased emotional exhaustion and chronic familial conflict, phenomena frequently observed in contemporary accounts of unstable family relationships (OECD, 2024b, Table 4.12).

5.3.2. *Mawaddah* and Secure Attachment

In the Qur’an, *mawaddah* denotes a form of conscious and volitional affection that contributes to the durability of the relationship. Makarim Shirazi describes *mawaddah* as “an affection that sustains the relationship after the initial emotional intensity has subsided” (Makarim Shirazi, 1384, Vol. 15, p. 463).

This conception can be meaningfully correlated with the psychological concept of secure attachment, through which trust, commitment, and

psychological security are strengthened.

In the absence of *mawaddah*, the relationship may be reduced to the pursuit of momentary satisfaction, corresponding closely to the condition that Giddens conceptualizes as the “pure relationship” (Giddens, 1992, pp. 58–64).

5.3.3. *Rahmah* and Family Resilience

Rahmah constitutes a relational repair mechanism in times of crisis. Javadi Amoli defines *rahmah* as the “capacity to move ethically beyond the other’s error and weakness” (Javadi Amoli, 1387, Vol. 27, p. 289). From a psychological perspective, this quality corresponds to the concept of family resilience—that is, the capacity to preserve and reconstruct relational bonds when confronted with stress, conflict, and adversity.

Bauman demonstrates that, in modern relationships, the absence of such mechanisms of relational repair makes interpersonal bonds highly fragile (Bauman, 2003, p. 28). By contrast, a family in which *rahmah* has become institutionally embedded possesses a greater capacity for self-repair and renewal, even following serious conflict or periods of crisis.

If *sakīnah* is conceptualized as enduring existential tranquility, *mawaddah* as conscious emotional capital, and *rahmah* as a mechanism of ethical repair, then the triad articulated in Qur’an 30:21 can be understood as an institutional logic capable of organizing family relationships at both the individual and social levels. Accordingly, the significance of this verse cannot be confined to moral exhortation. Rather, it contains substantial potential for the design of the institutional architecture of the family within a civilizational horizon.

6. Complementary Qur’anic Verses Related to the Family

A structural analysis of the Qur’an demonstrates that the concept of the family is constituted within a broader network of interconnected verses.

6.1. Qur’an 4:1 – The Ontological Foundation of Human Unity

“O humankind! Be mindful of your Lord, Who created you from a single soul...”

Tabataba’i (1374, Vol. 4, p. 234) regards the unity expressed through “one soul” (*nafs wāḥidah*) as the basis of the essential complementarity and parity of woman and man, while Makarim Shirazi (1384, Vol. 3, p. 55) identifies it as the foundation for equality in human dignity alongside the differentiation of social roles. This verse thus provides the ontological foundation of *sakīnah*.

6.2. Qur’an 25:74- The Family as a Context for Intergenerational Formation

“Our Lord! Grant us from among our spouses and offspring comfort to our eyes...”

In *al-Mīzān*, *qurrat a ‘yun* (“comfort to our eyes”) is interpreted as referring to righteous offspring whose moral development contributes to the reform and flourishing of society (Tabataba’i, 1374, Vol. 15, p. 345). This verse therefore reinforces the educational and intergenerational dimension of *rahmah*.

6.3. Qur’an 64:14–15 – A Warning against the Transformation of Values

“Indeed, among your spouses and children are enemies to you, so beware of them...”

Tabataba’i (1374, Vol. 4, p. 267) explains that the notion of “enmity” in this context refers to becoming preoccupied with worldly attachments to the extent that one is diverted from remembrance of God. Thus, *sakīnah* requires sustained faith-based vigilance.

6.4. Qur’an 66:6 – Educational Responsibility

“Protect yourselves and your families from a Fire...”

Javadi Amoli (1387, Vol. 27, p. 289) emphasizes that a righteous family constitutes the foundation of a righteous society and that the health of the family is a fundamental condition for the flourishing of civilization. Family well-being therefore represents a crucial foundation of civilizational continuity.

6.5. Qur’an 65:2 – The Principle of Social Hope

“And whoever is mindful of Allah, He will make a way out for them.”

This verse occurs within the context of divorce and demonstrates that even relational rupture has a pathway toward restoration within the divine normative order. It thus points to the possibility of structural mercy within Islamic law, whereby even conditions of crisis are not conceived as devoid of mechanisms for recovery and renewal.

Table 1. Complementary Qur’anic Dimensions of the Family

Core Axis	Key Theme	Verse	Domain of the Verse	Relation to <i>Sakīnah–Mawaddah–Rahmah</i>
Human unity	Ontological unity of humankind	Qur’an 4:1	Ontological	Provides the existential foundation for <i>sakīnah</i>
Righteous offspring	Formation of the next generation	Qur’an 25:74	Educational–intergenerational	Reinforces <i>sakīnah</i> and the formative dimension of <i>rahmah</i>
Guarding against heedlessness	Sustaining <i>sakīnah</i> despite competing attachments	Qur’an 64:14–15	Realistic/anthropological	Ethical vigilance for preserving relational stability
Moral guardianship	Sustaining the family through responsibility	Qur’an 66:6	Ethical–protective	Continuity of <i>mawaddah</i> through moral responsibility
A path beyond crisis	Possibility of recovery after rupture	Qur’an 65:2	Normative–responsibility	Social and institutional <i>rahmah</i>

Taken together, this network of verses delineates a broader Qur’anic semantic framework of the family and expands the triad of Qur’an 30:21 from the level

of interpersonal affection to the level of a civilizational framework for family life.

7. The Qur'an's Civilizational Logic for Reconstructing the Family

The body of Qur'anic verses examined above demonstrates that, within the Qur'anic worldview, the family is not merely an ethical institution but rather the "living cell of a monotheistic civilization." This logic can be analyzed at four levels:

7.1. The Epistemic Level: *Tawhīd* as the Foundation of Familial Unity

According to Qur'an 4:1, the foundational basis of the bond between woman and man is the concept of "*naḥs wāḥidah*" ("a single soul"). Tabataba'i (1374, Vol. 4, p. 234) interprets this unity as signifying the common nature and shared teleological orientation of human beings. At the civilizational level, such unity constitutes a foundation for cultural convergence; just as human beings originate from a single soul, civilization itself emerges from harmony and coherence within the family.

Accordingly, *sakīnah* in Qur'an 30:21 should not be understood merely as personal tranquility. Rather, it represents the manifestation of an existential tranquility rooted in *tawhīd*—a tranquility through which the monotheistic society continually reproduces and sustains itself (Nasr, 2012, p. 93).

7.2. The Ethical Level: *Mawaddah* and *Raḥmah* as the Energies of Civilization

Makarim Shirazi (1384, Vol. 15, p. 463) explains that *mawaddah* denotes "a conscious affection that sustains the relationship," while *raḥmah* represents a form of unconditional and restorative love. If these two elements are removed from the family, the foundations of civilization begin to erode, because civilization depends upon the continued cultivation of forgiveness, compassion, and mutual solidarity at the social level.

In sociological terms, *mawaddah* may be conceptualized as relational emotional capital, while *raḥmah* may be understood as ethical capital for relational repair (Durkheim, 1957, pp. 112–115). These two forms of capital are precisely among the resources that have experienced substantial erosion within modern social life.

7.3. The Educational Level: The Family as the Arena for Civilizational Reproduction

Qur'an 66:6 commands: "*Protect yourselves and your families from a Fire*" (*qū anfusakum wa-ahlikum nāran*). This command indicates that educational responsibility is not merely an individual ethical obligation but also a

civilizational mission. Javadi Amoli (1387, Vol. 27, p. 289) explains that when education within the family becomes detached from faith, society enters a trajectory of civilizational decline.

From this perspective, the family constitutes the primary institution for reproducing “faith capital” across generations.

7.4. The Institutional Level: *Rahmah* within Social Structures

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (1420, Vol. 25, p. 352) interprets the Qur’anic expression “*and He placed between you affection and mercy*” (*ja’ala baynakum mawaddatan wa-rahmah*) as indicating a divine institution or establishment that operates at both the ontological and legislative levels. In this sense, God has established a structural mechanism for the realization of *rahmah* within social life.

From a contemporary perspective, this conception can be translated into welfare, economic, and educational policies designed to preserve and strengthen the family institution (OECD, 2024d, pp. 4–6).

Accordingly, *rahmah* should not be reduced to an individual emotional disposition. It can also be translated into the design of equitable and family-supportive institutions, ranging from parental leave and accessible childcare to economic measures that support childbearing and family formation.

8. Critiquing the Secular Discourse on the Family and an Analytical Conclusion

8.1. A Critique of the Secular Model

In the twenty-first century, the family within the secular discourse has increasingly been transformed into an institution centered on satisfaction and consumption (Bauman, 2003, p. 28). Within this discourse, love is defined independently of responsibility, and the relationship remains viable only as long as personal pleasure persists. The consequences include rising divorce rates, delayed marriage, and the erosion of intergenerational solidarity (Giddens, 1992, pp. 58–64).

By contrast, the Qur’anic model of the family rests upon three fundamental pillars:

Dimension	Secular Logic	Qur’anic Logic (Qur’an 30:21)
Purpose of the relationship	Personal satisfaction	Existential tranquility (<i>sakīnah</i>)
Moral foundation	Social contract	Divine covenant
Continuity of the relationship	Variable desire	Enduring <i>mawaddah</i> and <i>rahmah</i>
Social function	Pleasure and individual choice	Education and civilizational reproduction
Concept of freedom	Separation from commitment	Freedom within the framework of responsibility

As Soroush argues, modern civilization, by removing the sacred dimension from love, has transformed it from a “divine covenant” into an “emotional contract” (Soroush, 1996, p. 174). The Qur’an, by contrast, restores love to the sphere of the sacred through the triad articulated in Qur’an 30:21.

8.2. A Comparative Analysis of the Family Model in the Qur’an and Modern Western Civilization

Modern Western civilization has largely redefined the family within the framework of liberal individualism, in which the human being is understood as an autonomous agent oriented primarily toward personal fulfillment and pleasure. Accordingly, marriage has increasingly been reduced from an “ethical covenant” to a “consent-based contract” (Giddens, 1992, p. 61).

By contrast, the Qur’an grounds the family in a Tawhīdic anthropology. The verse “*He created you from a single soul*” (*khalaqakum min nafsin wāhidah*) (Qur’an 4:1) clearly indicates that the relationship between woman and man is founded upon existential commonality and a shared human teleology. Tabataba’i regards this unity as the basis for equality in human dignity and the complementarity of social roles (Tabataba’i, 1374, Vol. 4, p. 234).

Within the Qur’an’s civilizational logic, the purpose of marriage is expressed through “*li-taskunū ilayhā*” (“so that you may find tranquility in them”), that is, the attainment of existential tranquility. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī identifies this expression as the ultimate purpose of marriage and emphasizes that without *sakīnah*, the other functions of the family are also liable to deteriorate (Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, 1420, Vol. 25, p. 352). Within the secular discourse, however, psychological satisfaction tends to substitute for existential tranquility, rendering relational bonds more fragile.

The Qur’an likewise elevates love from the domain of personal emotion to that of ethical responsibility. *Mawaddah* and *rahmah*, as two complementary pillars, remove the marital bond from the logic of “emotional consumption.” In Soroush’s formulation, modern civilization has reduced love to an emotional phenomenon by removing its sacred dimension (Soroush, 1375, p. 174), whereas the Qur’an reconceptualizes love as a civilization-building force.

8.3. Theoretical Synthesis

A comparative analysis of the relevant Qur’anic verses demonstrates that the Qur’an addresses the family at four interconnected levels:

- **Tawhīdic ontology:** Human beings originate from a single soul (Qur’an 4:1).
- **Psychology of tranquility:** The marital bond is oriented toward *sakīnah* (Qur’an 30:21).
- **Ethics and education:** *Mawaddah* and *rahmah* provide the foundations for

sustaining the relationship (Qur'an 30:21 and 25:74).

● **Social institution:** The family constitutes the primary cell of civilization (Qur'an 66:6).

On the basis of this network, the Qur'anic conception of the family can be formulated as a four-dimensional civilizational model:

Layer	Qur'anic Concept	Civilizational Function
Epistemic	<i>Tawhīd</i>	Unity and meaning
Ethical	<i>Mawaddah</i> and <i>Raḥmah</i>	Enduring solidarity
Educational	Faith and <i>taqwā</i>	Reproduction of values
Institutional	Social support	Cultural continuity

8.4. Connection with Contemporary Empirical Findings

OECD and UNFPA reports indicate that countries implementing family-oriented policies tend to achieve more balanced fertility outcomes as well as higher levels of family satisfaction (OECD, 2024a, pp. 4–6). In this respect, secular empirical evidence appears to converge, at least functionally, with the Qur'anic logic: when a society creates forms of “institutional mercy,” families are more likely to achieve greater stability.

This convergence suggests that Qur'anic teachings are not merely spiritual or normative; they also possess practical and potentially measurable dimensions.

8.5. Policy Translation of the *Sakīnah–Mawaddah–Raḥmah* Triad into Family Governance

According to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, the expression “*ja‘ala baynakum mawaddatan wa-rahmah*” (“He placed between you affection and mercy”) in Qur'an 30:21 refers simultaneously to an ontological and legislative divine establishment (Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, 1420, Vol. 25, p. 352). This interpretation creates a basis for translating the concepts articulated in the verse into the domain of social policymaking.

At the level of *sakīnah*, policies aimed at securing the family’s economic security—including employment stability, housing security, and the reduction of economic anxiety—play a fundamental role. OECD reports indicate that employment insecurity is among the major factors contributing to delayed marriage and declining fertility (OECD, 2024a, pp. 4–6).

At the level of *mawaddah*, education in communication skills, conflict resolution, and marital commitment, delivered through educational and media systems, becomes particularly important. Such policies represent institutional expressions of enduring emotional capital.

At the level of *rahmah*, institutional measures such as parental leave, support for working mothers and fathers, and compensatory policies addressing family

crises become relevant. The UNFPA report emphasizes that the gap between “fertility intentions” and their realization is largely associated with insufficient structural support for individuals and families (UNFPA, 2025, pp. 10–15).

Accordingly, family policymaking within a Qur’anic framework does not amount merely to the moralization of social policy. Rather, it entails designing structures capable of institutionalizing *mawaddah* and *rahmah* at the social level.

8.6. Case Study: Convergence between Family-Oriented Policies and the Logic of Institutional Mercy

An examination of family policies in several developed countries indicates that, even within secular frameworks, some of the more successful policy models have approached the logic of “institutional mercy.” Scandinavian countries, for example, have sought to mitigate aspects of the family crisis through extensive parental leave, financial support for families, and work–life balance policies (OECD, 2024b, Table 4.12).

Although these policies are not designed on explicitly religious foundations, they perform functions broadly comparable to the Qur’anic concept of *rahmah*: namely, compensating for vulnerabilities and supporting human relationships under conditions of structural pressure.

This convergence suggests that the Qur’anic logic of the family possesses a capacity that extends beyond specific cultural boundaries and may serve as a basis for a broader civilizational dialogue on the future of the family.

9. Critical Assessment

9.1. First Critique: Idealism and Distance from Social Reality

One common criticism of the Qur’anic model of the family is that it is excessively idealistic and insufficiently aligned with the complexities of contemporary life—from economic pressures to cultural transformations. Critics argue that concepts such as *sakīnah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah* tend to remain at the level of moral exhortation rather than possessing genuine potential for institutionalization.

In response, it may be argued that this criticism is based on a minimalist reading of the Qur’anic text. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, in his interpretation of the expression “*ja’ala baynakum mawaddatan wa-rahmah*” (“He placed between you affection and mercy”), explicitly maintains that the verb *ja’ala* refers to a real mechanism operating within both the ontological and legislative orders, rather than merely to an abstract moral recommendation (Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, 1420, Vol. 25, p. 352). In other words, the Qur’an addresses structures capable of concrete realization, provided that they are appropriately reconstructed and

translated at the institutional level.

Contemporary empirical evidence also lends support to this interpretation. OECD reports indicate that countries that have strengthened institutional support for families have been able to mitigate aspects of family instability (OECD, 2024a, pp. 4–6). This convergence suggests that the Qur’anic model should not be regarded as merely idealistic; rather, it can be understood as a realistic and structurally oriented framework.

9.2. Second Critique: Incompatibility with Cultural Diversity and Contemporary Lifestyles

A second criticism maintains that the Qur’anic family model, because of its religious origins, lacks the capacity to respond adequately to contemporary cultural diversity and plural lifestyles and is therefore applicable only within relatively homogeneous societies.

This criticism, however, appears to result from reducing Qur’anic concepts to particular cultural forms. Allameh Tabataba’i emphasizes that concepts such as *mawaddah* and *rahmah* belong to the category of innate and universal human values, rather than constituting merely contingent cultural prescriptions (Tabataba’i, 1374, Vol. 16, p. 168). Consequently, these principles possess the capacity to be adapted to diverse social and cultural contexts.

Moreover, the UNFPA report indicates that in culturally diverse societies, the principal barriers to stable family life are not necessarily cultural differences themselves but rather inadequate structural support and economic pressures (UNFPA, 2025, pp. 10–15). These findings suggest that the Qur’anic triad, understood as a transcultural framework, can provide a basis for civilizational dialogue concerning the future of the family.

9.3. Third Critique: The Potential Threat to Individual Rights, Particularly Women’s Rights

Some critics argue that the Qur’an’s emphasis on the family may potentially contribute to restrictions on individual rights—particularly women’s rights—and may weaken individual freedom of choice.

Such an interpretation, however, is not consistent with established exegetical readings. The Qur’anic statement “*khalaqakum min nafsin wāhidah*” (“He created you from a single soul”) (Qur’an 4:1) explicitly points to the common ontological origin of women and men. Allameh Tabataba’i regards this verse as establishing the basis for equality in human dignity, while differences in social roles are understood in functional rather than ontological terms (Tabataba’i, 1374, Vol. 4, p. 234).

Makarim Shirazi likewise emphasizes that *mawaddah* and *rahmah* are reciprocal and mutual qualities and that any interpretation based on domination

is inconsistent with the spirit of the verse (Makarim Shirazi, 1384, Vol. 15, p. 463). Accordingly, the Qur'anic family model should not be understood as inherently incompatible with individual rights; rather, by establishing conditions of emotional and ethical security, it can provide a supportive environment for the flourishing and protection of individual rights.

Conclusion

The present study sought to answer the question of what normative and practical potential the triad of *sakīnah*–*mawaddah*–*rahmah* in Qur'an 30:21 holds for a civilizational response to the family crisis. The findings demonstrate that this triad should not be understood merely as a set of moral virtues governing the relationship between spouses. Rather, it can be reread as a normative and institutional logic for reconstructing the family. Within this framework, *sakīnah* represents existential tranquility and security, *mawaddah* signifies emotional and commitment-generating capital, and *rahmah* denotes the ethical and restorative capacity of the relationship. Taken together, these three dimensions provide the foundations for family stability and for the continuity of its broader social and civilizational functions.

An examination of complementary Qur'anic verses and exegetical perspectives demonstrates that, within the Qur'anic worldview, the family is not merely a private institution. Rather, it is defined in relation to *tawhīd*, human dignity, intergenerational formation, ethical responsibility, and the preservation of social cohesion. The family can therefore be understood as the “first cell of a monotheistic civilization”—an institution in which knowledge, ethics, and education converge and through which spiritual and social capital is transmitted across generations.

At the same time, an examination of contemporary sociological literature indicates that the current family crisis cannot be explained solely in terms of economic, legal, or demographic indicators. Declining fertility, delayed marriage, rising divorce, and the weakening of intergenerational bonds are associated not only with structural conditions but also with a degree of erosion in the meaning of family and a weakening of the mechanisms of commitment, empathy, and relational repair. The family crisis should therefore be understood as a multidimensional phenomenon in which economic and institutional factors interact with cultural, psychological, and meaning-related transformations.

Against this background, the principal innovation of the study lies in moving the *sakīnah*–*mawaddah*–*rahmah* triad beyond the level of moral description and reconstructing it as a four-layer civilizational model: an epistemic layer centered on *tawhīd* and human unity; an ethical layer centered on *mawaddah* and *rahmah*; an educational layer emphasizing faith, *taqwā*, and the

intergenerational transmission of values; and an institutional layer focused on family-support structures. This model demonstrates that family stability is not merely the product of interpersonal emotional bonds but is also dependent upon the quality of institutions, social policies, and the cultural environment surrounding the family.

One of the most significant findings of this study is that these Qur'anic concepts possess substantial potential for policy translation. Within such a framework, *sakīnah* can provide a normative basis for policies aimed at strengthening families' economic, employment, and housing security; *mawaddah* can be reflected in programs for communication skills, conflict resolution, and the strengthening of marital commitment; and *rahmah* can be translated into supportive and restorative policies, including parental leave, support for working parents, care services, and assistance to families facing periods of crisis. Accordingly, the Qur'anic response to the family crisis does not amount merely to the moralization of family policy. Rather, it requires the design of institutional structures that enable Qur'anic values to be realized in everyday family life.

On this basis, although economic and social policies are indispensable for strengthening families, they are unlikely to generate sufficient long-term stability without addressing the meaning of family and its moral and emotional capital. Conversely, the integration of structural support with the reconstruction of meaning can create the conditions for a family that is resilient, responsible, and capable of fulfilling its civilizational functions. From this perspective, the triad of *sakīnah*–*mawaddah*–*rahmah* can serve as a bridge connecting religious norms, the social sciences, and public policy.

Ultimately, the Qur'an's civilizational response to the family crisis is neither a call to withdraw from the contemporary world nor a simplistic return to historical family patterns. Rather, it entails the institutional reconstruction of the family on the basis of a meaning-generating, ethical, and human-centered logic. Within this framework, the Qur'anic family is an institution for providing tranquility, cultivating human beings, transmitting values, generating social capital, and reproducing ethical life across generations. The revitalization of the family from a Qur'anic perspective should therefore be understood not merely as a cultural or demographic project but as part of a broader process of civilizational reconstruction, in which *sakīnah* constitutes the foundation of tranquility, *mawaddah* the force of relational cohesion, and *rahmah* the mechanism of continuity and repair.

Directions for Future Research

Building on the findings of the present study, three avenues for future research may be proposed:

- 1) Empirical studies among families that have adopted Qur'an 30:21 as a

meaningful framework for family life, examining its relationship with marital satisfaction, family resilience, and parenting practices;

2) Statistical modeling and empirical testing of the relationship between the degree of belief in and commitment to the *sakīnah–mawaddah–rahmah* triad and indicators such as familial intimacy, marital stability, and social capital;

3) Comparative studies of the relationship between the Qur’anic family model and family-oriented policies in Muslim-majority countries, including Iran, Malaysia, and Indonesia, with the aim of identifying both shared capacities and context-specific differences.

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