

Tradition of arranged marriage among Bugis girls in Mendahara Ulu

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Abstract

The practice of arranged marriage involving young girls in the Bugis community of Mendahara Ulu reflects a complex intersection between cultural authority and religious values. This study explores the mechanisms of power embedded in Bugis arranged marriage traditions by applying Michel Foucault's theory of power relations in conjunction with Islamic ethical principles. Employing a qualitative case study approach, the research involved Bugis women who had experienced arranged marriages. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and a literature review, then analyzed using critical discourse analysis. The findings reveal that arranged marriage functions not solely as a cultural norm but as a contested arena of power among parents, customary practices, and the women themselves. Key Islamic principles – such as gender justice and mutual consent – are often marginalized or narrowly interpreted. The study argues for a more integrative approach that harmonizes local customs with Islamic values to promote women's rights and agency. This research offers a nuanced perspective on how cultural and religious discourses shape the practice of arranged marriage in contemporary Muslim contexts.

Keywords: Arranged marriage, Foucault's theory, Women, Bugis

Abstrak

Praktik perjodohan terhadap anak perempuan dalam komunitas Bugis di Mendahara Ulu mencerminkan persinggungan kompleks antara otoritas budaya dan nilai-nilai keagamaan. Penelitian ini mengkaji mekanisme kekuasaan yang terkandung dalam tradisi pernikahan yang diatur dalam budaya Bugis dengan menerapkan teori relasi kuasa Michel Foucault serta prinsip-prinsip etika Islam. Menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif, penelitian ini melibatkan perempuan Bugis yang pernah mengalami pernikahan yang diatur. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dan telaah pustaka, lalu dianalisis menggunakan analisis wacana kritis.



Temuan menunjukkan bahwa pernikahan yang diatur bukan sekadar norma budaya, melainkan menjadi arena perebutan kuasa antara orang tua, adat istiadat, dan perempuan itu sendiri. Prinsip-prinsip utama dalam Islam—seperti keadilan gender dan persetujuan bersama—sering kali terpinggirkan atau ditafsirkan secara sempit. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya pendekatan integratif yang mengharmoniskan adat lokal dengan nilai-nilai Islam untuk mendorong pemenuhan hak dan agensi perempuan. Studi ini memberikan perspektif yang lebih mendalam tentang bagaimana diskursus budaya dan agama membentuk praktik pernikahan yang diatur dalam konteks masyarakat Muslim kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: *Perjodohan, Teori Foucault, Wanita, Bugis*

INTRODUCTION

Marriage in a culture can reflect the complexity of the values and norms that develop in that society. In Bugis society, which is rich in cultural heritage and tradition, the role of women in the arranged marriage process is often overlooked or considered a formality. The Bugis, as one of the oldest ethnic groups in Indonesia, originate from the South Sulawesi region, but are also found in many regions other than Sulawesi. This ethnic group has developed a rich culture, including a unique language, script, customs, norms, traditions, rituals and philosophy. Their development predates colonization and Islam's entry into Indonesia (Andi Bini Fitriani & Mia Siscawati, 2021).

In the Islamic context, the recommended first step for someone who wants to get married is to go through the process of an engagement or proposal, known as *Khitbah*. An engagement is considered a preliminary step towards a marriage contract. Its implementation varies, either through the suitor going directly to the party concerned, involving family, or using a trusted intermediary or messenger to make the request. The aspects that Islam emphasizes in relation to marriage proposals include consideration of religious and ethical issues. Before proposing to someone, it is important for the prospective suitor to consider matters such as kinship status that may preclude sharia marriage, either temporarily or permanently. Also, if a woman has already received a proposal from someone else, a new suitor is not allowed to propose to her.

From a religious perspective, practicing the Islamic *sunnah* of marriage and avoiding singleness is considered an act in accordance with the Prophet's *sunnah*. Marriage is an agreement that results in intercourse and creates rights, obligations and responsibilities between a man and a woman who are not *mahrams*. The way people find their life partners varies. Some have actively sought and found potential partners themselves, but many also rely on help

from other parties. This is the basis and influencing factor for the existence of the practice of arranged marriage. The process of arranged marriage is a very significant moment and should not be overlooked in one's life journey, as it builds the foundation for forming a happy family. Therefore, careful planning is required in preparation of all related aspects. Arranged marriage has a great impact in forming the marriage bond or family bond, which is the basic structure that supports the survival and development of a society and country (Rohman, A. F. & Ishaq, M., 2022) .

From an anthropological point of view, arranged marriage is a stage taken by humans to reach marriage. This process is the beginning for two different individuals to get to know each other. In the Islamic context, arranged marriage is often referred to as "*Khitbah*". However, sometimes the term arranged marriage is also interpreted as marriage itself. The fundamental distinction between arranged marriage and the process of courtship lies in the presence of a mutual agreement or formal contract in arranged marriage, which engages the consent of both parties. Match selection plays a very important role in the institution of marriage because it depends on the system adopted by different communities in a particular region, with the aim of forming a family unit in society. The influence of the family is also a crucial factor in social life, not only as a place of relationship between husband, wife, children and parents, but also as a relationship that exists within a larger social network, namely society. Therefore, society pays special attention to the blending of families who are about to get married. Arranged marriage is often linked to factors such as a person's social, economic and educational status. This has become a norm or hereditary habit in society. Parents who arrange marriages for their children tend to look for life partners who are equal in economic, social and educational terms. Families who are financially well-off tend to consider someone as a good candidate for a son-in-law if there is economic compatibility. Families with a high social status will look for a life partner who is socially compatible. Similarly, families with highly educated children will look for partners who have the same level of education (Muhammad Idris, Abnan Pancasilawati, 2022) .

The importance of introductions between prospective husbands and wives is recognized as a means to gather information on various aspects, including physical, spiritual and others. This information can be a positive consideration that encourages the acceleration of the engagement or a negative indicator that can hinder the process. The prelude to marriage, which involves an engagement, is a tradition common to all countries, including Indonesia. Indonesia, with its diversity of ethnic groups and customary traditions,

includes an engagement tradition that reflects the heritage of its ancestors. For example, the Bugis Wajo people from Sulawesi who settled in Jambi, maintained the tradition of engagement even though they moved far from their hometown (Husnatunnisa et al., 2021) .

Marriage itself is a social institution laden with cultural meanings, norms and power. In Bugis society, the practice of arranged marriages for girls is not only a form of preserving tradition, but also a reflection of the complex power relations between family, custom and the women themselves. The Bugis are known for having a strong customary structure and a value system rooted in the principles of *siri' na pacce*, which is the price of determining one's life partner.

Previous studies have highlighted various aspects of arranged marriage in Bugis society (Fitriani & Siscawati, 2021) . Yanuarti (2021) highlighted the position of women in the Bugis cultural system which is still influenced by patriarchal structures. It also notes that the practice of arranged marriage in Bugis Wajo still takes place despite contact with Islamic law and state law. However, these studies have not explored arranged marriage from the perspective of power within the framework of Foucault's theory and its integration with Islamic values, for example, uses Foucault's theory to look at power relations in novels, but has not been applied specifically to the cultural context and practice of arranged marriage (Ayuningtyas, 2019).

The state of the art of this research lies in critically analysing the practice of arranged marriage by integrating Foucault's theory of power and Islamic perspectives together. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of how power works not only formally, but also through hidden social mechanisms. In addition, this research also fills a void in the literature regarding the integration of Islamic values with the traditional practice of arranged marriage in Bugis society, which has not been widely studied in an interdisciplinary manner.

According to Foucault, the representation of power in reality can be distinguished through two methods. The first method involves the use of violence and repressive measures as a form of representation of power. An example of this is making individuals obey with the threat of using firearms and other physical threats. Meanwhile, the second method involves the covert exercise of power, which often involves science and educational institutions as a means of representation. For example, power can be exercised through knowledge and education to achieve certain goals without relying on physical violence or direct repression (Ayuningtyas, 2019). Foucault's theory of power highlights that power is not only a hierarchical structure applied by authority,

but also as a force that permeates horizontally into all aspects of social life (Wicaksana, 2023) .

Since Islam was introduced and recognized in the kingdom of Bone, there has been an interaction between local culture and Islamic law in the *pangadereng* system. In particular, this is reflected in the regulation of Bugis community life, which has become a source of law, especially in relation to the marriage procession. Before Islam entered Sulawesi, the *pangadereng* system, also known as the Bugis customary system, consisted of four elements: *ade'*, *rapang*, *bicara*, and *wari*. However, with the introduction and acceptance of Islam in the kingdom of Bone, the *pangadereng* system underwent changes and was adapted to Islamic law, which was later referred to as *sara'* (Islamic law). In this context, *sara'* became the fifth element in the *pangadereng* system, which is an addition based on Islamic teachings, covering the fields of fiqh, kalam, moral teachings, and Sufism (Raden et al., 2021) .

The purpose of this study is to investigate and analyze in depth the practice of arranged marriages among Bugis girls in Mendahara Ulu, by adopting Foucault's theoretical approach and exploring its relationship with Islamic values. First, the research aims to explore the power dynamics underlying the arranged marriage process, focusing on understanding the ways in which power is exercised, both overtly and covertly, in the context of Bugis social norms and traditions. Second, it aims to apply Foucault's theoretical approach in analyzing arranged marriages as a practice involving power plays. It seeks to understand how power is organized, distributed and exercised within the dynamics of the arranged marriage process, exploring elements that may be overlooked or hidden behind this practice.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design, as it is able to explain social phenomena in depth and contextually (Creswell, J. W, 2014; Yin, R. K, 2018) . This study focuses on arranged marriage n to explore the meaning and dynamics of power and cultural values involved in the practice. Participants in this study were Bugis women who had direct experience with the practice of arranged marriage, as well as community leaders and parents who were involved in the process. The sampling technique used purposive sampling with certain criteria such as involvement in the practice, age, and social role. This approach enabled the researcher to obtain relevant and context-rich information (Patton, M. Q, 2015) . Data collection was conducted through two main techniques, namely in-depth interviews and desk research. Interviews were semi-structured with open-ended guidelines to allow flexible exploration

of the informants' narratives (Moleong, L. J, 2019) . In addition, a literature study of relevant journals, books and legal documents was conducted, to strengthen the theoretical and conceptual framework of this research. The main instrument is the researcher himself, assisted by interview guidelines developed from Foucault's concepts and the principles of justice in Islam (Creswell, J. W, 2014) . The data analysis technique uses a thematic approach based on critical discourse analysis. The analysis was carried out in stages: data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles, M.B et al., 2014) . The focus of the analysis was directed at the narratives of power relations, customary norms, and religious values found in the data. To increase data validity, researchers used source and method triangulation. In addition to comparing interview results with written sources, member checking was also carried out on informants to ensure the accuracy of interpretations (Alwasilah, A. C., 2002; Flick, U, 2018). Through this method, the research is expected to explore the complexity of arranged marriage practices holistically and thoroughly.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The practice of arranged marriage for girls in the Bugis tribe in Mendahara Ulu can be analyzed through Foucault's theoretical approach by considering its relation to Islamic principles. Foucault's theory emphasizes the analysis of power and control that occurs in the structure of society, as well as how social norms are produced and maintained. In the context of Bugis arranged marriage, Foucault's theory can be used to understand the power dynamics of arranged marriage, in which traditional norms and adherence to customs play a strong role. The role of religion, particularly Islam, also has a significant impact on the arranged marriage process. Islamic principles on gender justice, consent in marriage, and women's rights can be integrated in the analysis. In Islam, the arranged marriage approach must take into account the will and consent of the child, avoid coercion, and ensure that the marriage is built on the mutual consent of both parties. As YT said in her interview:

“Dijodohin atau dikenalin tu boleh boleh bae, tapi balek lagi zen yang jalani pernikahan nantiknyo tu kan kami, jadi yo dk boleh dipakso, dan harus melalui persetujuan dan sesuai dengan syariat islam. Apolagi sekarang banyak orang tua nyekolahkan anak tinggi tapi cuma biak biso dijodohin dengan orang yang ngasih panai besak, itu kan udah salah. Aku sebagai orang bugis ni sekarang udah yang malas rasonyo nak balek, soalnya tu selalu ditanyoin tentang calon, dan selalu yang nak ngejodohin terus”. It means that "being matched or introduced is fine, but yes again zen, who undergoes the marriage later is us as children, so yes it should not be forced,

must go through consent and in accordance with Islamic law. Especially now that many parents send their children to high schools just so they can be matched and get a high dowry, that's already wrong. As a bugis person, I am now too lazy to go home because I am always asked about candidates, and it is always the one who wants to make a match."

This proves that patriarchal culture and power relations are very dominant, Bugis women have no choice over arranged marriages made by parents. Similarly, arranged marriages are often part of a social mechanism that reproduces patriarchal power in traditional families and communities. In the Bugis cultural structure, the position of women is still constructed as objects of social relations, not autonomous subjects (Fitriani, A. B & Siscawati, M, 2021). In Bugis tradition, power over marriage decisions is often organized through family symbols and social status, rather than by the personal will of the individual (Bahri, S. & Damanik, R., 2021) .

The findings of the interviews with informants show that although the practice of arranged marriage has been part of the custom for generations, there is a tension between personal will and social expectations. As stated by YT, marriage without consent is a form of coercion that is against Islamic law. This is in line with the Islamic principle that requires the consent of the bride and groom (Idris, M et al., 2022; Rohman, A. F. & Ishaq, M., 2022) .

Foucault's theoretical approach can help to see how women's agency in the context of arranged marriages can emerge or be suppressed by existing power structures and social norms. The link with Islam in this analysis is important to emphasize that the implementation of arranged marriages in the Bugis tribe should not contradict religious principles. Women's right to consent in Islam must be respected, and coercion in arranged marriages must be avoided. Thus, this approach attempts to harmonize local traditions with Islamic values that promote justice, equality and consent in the context of marriage.

The practice of arranged marriages for girls in the Bugis community in Mendahara Ulu reflects a combination of traditional power and social construction rooted in customary and religious interpretations. In Michel Foucault's approach, power does not only appear in coercive forms, but works through social structures that subtly shape individual mindsets and behaviors (Ayuningtyas, 2019; Foucault, M, 1977) . Customary norms that make arranged marriages an inherited custom also become instruments of social control over women's agency. ASE mentioned: *"Dan pastinyo tu di dalam undang undang kan jugo udah diatur dan dijelasin tentang perkawinan, kayak misalnya dk boleh nikah kalo masih dibawah umur, kalo dak salah tu ado ketentuan umur nikah kan"*. It means that

"and of course the law has also explained about marriage, for example about not being allowed to marry underage, and if I'm not mistaken there is also a provision for the age of marriage".

This proves that although women have space to express their opinions, symbolic power in the form of customary norms often suppresses their personal choices, as described in a study of urban Bugis women (Afriani, Y & Sari, R. D, 2022) . The principle in Law No. 1/1974 also explicitly states that marriage must be based on the agreement of both parties. In this context, state regulations and Islamic religious principles reinforce each other on the importance of consent in marriage (Raden et al., 2021; Rohana & Aini, 2020) . With the enactment of Law No.1 of 1974 on marriage, indigenous people are expected to adjust to the prevailing regulations. Parents are not allowed to force their will on their children. Although they are allowed to match their children with other people, they are expected to still ask for permission and consent from their children. This is done so that the marriage proceeds with the consent of both parties, not because of coercion. Marriages built on coercion are considered unhealthy and can disrupt household harmony in the future.

This dynamic is exacerbated by the pressure of the traditional value of *siri' na pacce*, which demands that Bugis women maintain the good name of the family, even if it means sacrificing the right to personal choice (Murniati, 2021) . Rejection of a partner from outside the tribe is perceived as harming collective honor, even though Islam does not limit the choice of partner to ethnicity or caste (Qibtiyah, 2020; Syihab, M. Q, 2020) . ASE then added: *"Sebenarnya persoalan perjodohan ni sangat kompleks, sebagai anak kito diharuskan patuh samo orang tuo, tapi orang tua kadang tu lupo kalo anak jugo punyo hak untuk nolak. Kek kasus kawan kito ija yang dijodohin, padahal dio punyo pacar, cuman karna pacarnya bukan orang bugis, orang tuonyo nolak, dan malah dijodohin dengan orang lain yang dari suku bugis. Dan seberapo kuatpun dio nolak dengan cowo pilihan orangtuonyo, selalu dan selalu orangtuonyo ngenalin samo cowo yang suku bugis. Jadi kayak kito diberi pilihan tapi tetep harus yang samo suku bugis, dak boleh dengan suku yang lain"*. It means: *"Actually, the issue of arranged marriage is very complex, as children we are required to obey our parents, but parents sometimes forget that children also have the right to refuse arranged marriages. Like the case of our friend Ija who was arranged marriage. She had a boyfriend, but just because he wasn't from the Bugis tribe, her parents refused, and instead arranged a match with someone else from the Bugis tribe. And no matter how strongly she rejected the guy her parents chose, only the Bugis tribe was introduced. So it's like as a Bugis child we are given the choice of choosing a partner who is introduced, but the choice must be the same Bugis tribe, not allowed with other tribes "*.

The necessity to match same-tribe is a form of domination of ethnic homogeneity values that hinder social integration and the right of individuals to choose freely (Zulaikha, 2019) . So in this case what parents do to match their children must be with the same tribe, namely Bugis, it is wrong, because in Islam, the opinion of children in choosing their life partners must be respected and listened to. Islam places the consent of both parties as the main principle in the marriage contract, with a strict prohibition on any form of coercion (Idris, M et al., 2022; Rohman, A. F. & Ishaq, M., 2022) . Women have the full right to accept or reject a proposal or marriage, and even to choose their own spouse from a different tribe, a right that they did not have in the days of *jahiliyyah*. Forcing a woman to marry a man she does not want can have both worldly and religious repercussions. From a psychosocial perspective, coercion in arranged marriage can cause mental distress and disrupt household harmony (Nurfadilah & Kurniawati, 2021) . Therefore, it is important to integrate the values of gender justice and respect for women's human rights in the traditional arranged marriage system (Handayani, 2022) . The Prophet himself has rejected forced marriages, indicating that the consent of the bride and groom is a condition for a valid marriage.

However, the prohibition against coercion does not mean that the guardian has no role in choosing a spouse for the woman he represents. The guardian, who is generally more experienced and mature, is required to give good advice and seek the opinion and permission of the woman before marrying her off. The consent of a widowed woman is expressed verbally, while that of a virgin is sufficient by her silence, since virgins are generally shy to express their wishes. Judging from some of the factors that influence parents (guardians) in carrying out arranged marriages, this tradition in the Wajo Bugis community in Mendahara Ulu Village is in line with Islamic law. In Islam, marrying someone is also recommended by taking into account aspects such as beauty, wealth, lineage and religion, which are not much different from the factors that influence parents in choosing a match for their children.

Overall, an analysis using Foucault's theory on the implementation of arranged marriages for girls in the Bugis tribe can provide deep insights into the dynamics of power, social norms and women's agency. Integration with Islamic principles is important to ensure that local traditions do not violate the religious values of the community. The practice of arranged marriage in the Bugis community needs to be critically reinterpreted so that it does not contradict progressive Islamic principles and the state constitution. Foucault's approach provides an understanding that power is not only embedded in

individuals, but also in social relations that need to be studied reflectively and contextually (Suryani, N & Alawiyah, T, 2023) .

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that this research highlights the complexity of the dynamics of arranged marriages for girls in the Bugis tribe in Mendahara Ulu by applying Foucault's theoretical approach and exploring its relation to Islam. The analysis involved an understanding of power in arranged marriages, both overtly and covertly manifested, as described by Foucault. It was found that arranged marriage is not only a conventional social practice but also includes a strong role of power and control involving various elements in Bugis society. In addition, the involvement of Islamic values is a key element in this arranged marriage context. Islamic principles, including consent and gender justice, have a significant impact in shaping views and practices of arranged marriage. It appears that the interaction between Bugis customary values and Islamic principles creates a complex dynamic in marriage-related decision-making, where there is at once an adherence to tradition and an attempt to conform to Islamic teachings. Arranged marriage among the Bugis is not just a cultural phenomenon, but also a reflection of multiple social forces and religious values. The application of Foucault's theory opens up a critical view of the power structures underlying arranged marriages, while its relation to Islam highlights the complexity of harmonizing traditional and religious values. As such, this research provides a deeper understanding of the factors that shape arranged marriages in Bugis society and how the interaction between local culture and religious teachings can create a unique and complex dynamic.

As a brief suggestion for future research, it is suggested to go deeper in exploring women's perspectives in the context of arranged marriages in the Bugis tribe. Research could focus on the experiences of individual Bugis women, involving their narratives and aspirations regarding arranged marriages. In addition, research could expand the scope of analysis to the impact of arranged marriage on women's lives, in terms of social, economic and psychological well-being. In addition, looking at the deeper linkages between local traditions, Islamic religion and gender values could provide richer and more contextualized insights. Finally, integrating cross-disciplinary perspectives, such as religious studies, anthropology and psychology, can lead to a holistic understanding of the phenomenon of arranged marriage in Bugis society.

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