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Deconstructing the Legitimacy of Patriarchy through Qur'anic Reinterpretation and Gender Education: Case Study in Bima's Muslim Society

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Abstract

Ideally, the Qur'an as a guide for Muslims contains universal principles of justice and equality that place men and women in balanced relations. However, the reality in the Muslim community of Bima shows that patriarchal structures are legitimized through conservative interpretations of the Qur'an, patrilineal customs, and social norms that position women in subordinate roles. This study aims to analyze how the legitimacy of patriarchy is constructed and maintained through Qur'anic interpretation, local customs, and social structures, as well as to propose deconstruction strategies through the reinterpretation of religious texts and gender education. This article employs a qualitative library research method with descriptive analysis. The findings

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reveal that the legitimacy of patriarchy in the Muslim community of Bima emerges from the close interaction between customs, conservative interpretations, and patrilineal social systems. Nevertheless, deconstruction can still be achieved through egalitarian reinterpretations of the Qur'an and the strengthening of gender education, thereby opening participatory dialogue between local customs, Islam, and human rights. The synergy of these two approaches provides a significant contribution to weakening patriarchy and offers an alternative model of gender justice within Muslim societies.

Keywords: Patriarchy, Muslim Bima, Qur'an

Abstrak

Idealnya, al-Qur'an sebagai pedoman hidup umat Islam mengandung prinsip keadilan dan kesetaraan universal yang menempatkan laki-laki dan perempuan dalam relasi yang seimbang. Namun, realitas di masyarakat Muslim Bima menunjukkan bahwa struktur patriarki justru dilegitimasi melalui tafsir konservatif al-Qur'an, adat patrilineal, dan norma sosial yang menempatkan perempuan pada posisi subordinat. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana legitimasi patriarki dibentuk dan dipertahankan melalui tafsir al-Qur'an, adat, dan struktur sosial, serta menawarkan strategi dekonstruksi melalui reinterpretasi teks keagamaan dan edukasi gender. Artikel ini tergolong dalam penelitian pustaka berbasis kualitatif dengan metode analisis deskriptif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa legitimasi patriarki dalam masyarakat Muslim Bima lahir dari interaksi erat antara adat, tafsir konservatif, dan sistem sosial patrilineal. Namun, dekonstruksi tetap dapat dilakukan melalui reinterpretasi al-Qur'an yang egaliter serta penguatan edukasi gender, sehingga membuka ruang dialog partisipatif antara adat, Islam, dan HAM. Sinergi keduanya memberi kontribusi signifikan dalam melemahkan patriarki dan menawarkan model alternatif keadilan gender di masyarakat Muslim.

Kata Kunci: Patriarki, Muslim Bima, Al-Qur'an

Introduction

Patriarchy is one of the oldest and most influential social systems in human civilization. This system creates an unequal power structure between men and women, where men are positioned as the primary authority in both domestic and public spheres, while women are often relegated to subordinate roles. The long history of patriarchy shows that this structure is not only inherited but also institutionalized through education, religion, custom, and even state policies. As a result, gender relations that should ideally be equal often experience distortion and injustice. Around the world, patriarchy manifests in different forms, adapting to local cultural, religious, and social contexts (Huda, 2020). However, its essence remains the same: to reinforce male dominance over women. In the modern

context, patriarchy has increasingly come under scrutiny because it contradicts principles of justice and gender equality, which are central to human rights. Therefore, dismantling the legitimacy of patriarchy becomes an important agenda, not only to achieve social justice but also to foster more humane interpretations of religion and culture.

In Bima society, West Nusa Tenggara, patriarchy exhibits distinctive characteristics due to its close intertwining with local customs and Islamic teachings. The patrilineal kinship system in Bima dictates that lineage, property, and social honor are passed exclusively through men. Consequently, women are often positioned as dependent, both economically and socially, on their fathers, husbands, or sons. In addition, conservative interpretations of Qur'anic verses, such as QS. An-Nisa: 34, are often employed to legitimize the unequal gender structure, while verses emphasizing equality, such as QS. Al-Hujurat: 13 and QS. Al-Ahzab: 35, are frequently overlooked (Aziza & Nugroho, 2025). Bima customs further reinforce the legitimacy of patriarchy, as women are rarely involved in customary decision-making processes and are often positioned as symbols of family honor without full autonomy. In this context, the Islamic teachings, which ideally convey justice, compassion, and equality, are often obscured by culturally biased practices and conservative religious interpretations. Consequently, the human rights discourse emphasizing equality is often perceived as foreign or even contrary to local values.

Ideally, the Qur'an, as a guide for human life, contains principles of justice and universal equality that ensure balanced relations between men and women. Human rights principles, emerging from global awareness, also align with Islam's spirit of upholding human dignity without discrimination. Custom, in its ideal form, should maintain social harmony by prioritizing values of togetherness and justice (Gustianda, 2024). However, the reality in Bima Muslim society shows tensions and contradictions among these three elements. Customs tend to reinforce male dominance, conservative Qur'anic interpretations further justify patriarchal practices, and human rights values are seen as not fully compatible with local wisdom. This is the main issue of the study: how the legitimacy of patriarchy is constructed, institutionalized, and how it can be deconstructed through Qur'anic reinterpretation and gender education within the context of Bima Muslim society.

This study aims to analyze how patriarchal legitimacy is formed and maintained through Qur'anic interpretation, local customs, and social norms in Bima Muslim society, as well as how deconstruction efforts can be carried out through religious text reinterpretation and strengthened gender education. Academically, this research contributes by providing a critical analysis that links religion, culture, and human rights within the context of local patriarchy, enriching interdisciplinary studies on gender and Islam. Practically, the study is expected to offer alternative ideas in the form of more inclusive interpretations of religious texts and customary practices, which support gender justice while remaining rooted in Islamic values and local culture. Thus, this research not only addresses the problem of patriarchy but also opens a pathway for social transformation toward a more just society for women in Bima Muslim communities.

Literature Review

Studies on patriarchy in Muslim societies are not entirely new. For a long time, scholars have discussed how religion, particularly Islam, is often drawn into the arena of justification for patriarchal practices deeply rooted in local culture. Yadi Darmawan and Abdul Haris, in the article titled; "*Pembagian Waris Masyarakat Adat Bima Perspektif Munawir Sjadjali*," highlighted how inheritance practices in the Bima customary community often do not align with the fundamental principles of Islamic law, especially regarding the fulfillment of women's rights. Using the perspective of Munawir Sjadjali, known as a reformist figure in Islamic law, their study found that customs frequently position women in a subordinate role, even though Islam normatively provides clear portions in inheritance distribution (Darmawan & Haris, 2023). The similarity between this study and the author's research lies in the focus on the interaction between Bima customs and Islamic principles and their implications for gender justice. However, Darmawan and Haris limited their analysis to inheritance law, whereas the present study expands the discussion to the legitimacy of patriarchy as a whole, emphasizing deconstruction strategies through Qur'anic reinterpretation. Thus, their work provides both an important foundation and a distinguishing space for broader research.

Zuhrah et al., in the article titled; "*Aktualisasi Sasu'u Salemba dalam Pembagian Warisan Masyarakat Bima*," examined the Sasu'u Salemba customary practice as a tradition of inheritance distribution in Bima society, which emphasizes the principle of family deliberation. Their findings indicate that while this tradition highlights togetherness and social solidarity, it still fails to fully accommodate gender justice as regulated by Islamic law. Women often remain in marginal positions, even though their participation is acknowledged in deliberative forums (Zuhrah et al., 2021). The similarity with the present study lies in the recognition of the role of custom in reinforcing patriarchal structures. However, the key difference is that Zuhrah and colleagues focused primarily on local social practices regarding inheritance, whereas the present study seeks to unpack the legitimacy of patriarchy from a broader perspective, proposing Qur'anic reinterpretation as a strategy for ideological deconstruction, not merely analyzing customary tradition.

Nur Sa'adah Harahap and Uswatun Hasanah, in the article titled; "*Hak Perempuan dalam Islam: Tantangan Antara Prinsip HAM dan Budaya Patriarki*," made a significant contribution by addressing the tension between universal human rights values and the realities of patriarchal culture in Muslim societies. They found that although Islam normatively grants clear rights to women across various aspects, implementation is often hindered by deeply rooted patriarchal culture reinforced by gender-biased religious interpretations (Harahap & Hasanah, 2025). The similarity with the present study is the shared focus on how patriarchy impedes the realization of women's rights in Islam. However, Harahap and Hasanah's study is more conceptual and comparative, examining human rights principles versus patriarchal culture in a general Muslim context. In contrast, the present study emphasizes the specific context of the Bima Muslim community and proposes a deconstructive approach through Qur'anic reinterpretation applied contextually to the local case.

From this literature review, it can be concluded that discourse on inheritance, Bima customs, and patriarchal culture has been extensively studied from both Islamic legal and social perspectives. However, no research has directly linked the issue of patriarchy with deconstruction through Qur'anic reinterpretation within the framework of the Bima Muslim community. Most studies stop at analyzing customary practices or the general conflict between human rights and patriarchal culture, without positioning the Qur'an as the primary instrument for ideological deconstruction of patriarchy. This represents the research gap that the present study seeks to address. Accordingly, this research contributes a new perspective, suggesting that the legitimacy of patriarchy in Bima society can be understood not only through customs and social practices but also through dialogue with the reinterpretation of sacred Islamic texts, as a means to foster gender justice in accordance with maqashid al-shariah and the demands of modern civilization.

Research Methodology

This article falls under qualitative library-based research. The methodology employed is descriptive analytical study (Benuf & Azhar, 2020). The primary sources of this research are the Qur'an, particularly verses related to gender relations, such as QS. An-Nisa: 34, QS. Al-Hujurat: 13, and QS. Al-Ahzab: 35. Meanwhile, secondary sources include academic books, conference articles, and scientific journals published within the last five years that are relevant to the themes of patriarchy, Bima culture, Qur'anic exegesis, and human rights perspectives. Data were purposively selected based on eligibility criteria, namely thematic relevance, strength of theoretical and empirical approaches, and the credibility of the publisher or author. Data validation was conducted through library source triangulation, comparing findings from various journals, books, and Qur'anic interpretations to examine the consistency of arguments. The validity of the data was tested thematically by cross-checking among sources regarding the concepts of patriarchy, Bima customs, Qur'anic exegesis, and human rights to ensure the analysis was not biased toward a single perspective.

Data analysis was carried out using thematic content analysis, in which the literature was coded according to major themes: patriarchal practices in the Muslim community, Qur'anic exegesis on gender relations, the role of women in Bima customs, and human rights perspectives. This process was conducted through literature synthesis using an interpretive correlational model, linking customs, Qur'anic texts, and human rights principles within the framework of patriarchal structures. The research draft was systematically organized in three steps: first, compiling literature review results by theme; second, connecting them with relevant theoretical frameworks; and third, constructing a coherent analytical narrative to address the research questions. This approach produced an in-depth depiction of how the three value systems interact and shape the social reality of women in Bima.

Patriarchal Culture and Gender Relations in Bima

The Bima community possesses a social and cultural system deeply rooted in patriarchal patterns. In this tradition, men are positioned as the central authority within the family and community, while women are often placed in subordinate roles. The patrilineal kinship system forms the foundation regulating all social relations, from inheritance of family names and property to social honor. Boys are regarded as the heirs of lineage and future family leaders, whereas girls are seen merely as biological links who will eventually join their husband's family (Nurmila, 2015). Consequently, from early life, women in Bima are situated within a social framework that restricts their mobility and authority. Within the family structure, patriarchal dominance is evident in parenting patterns and the division of responsibilities. Fathers are positioned as the main decision-makers, while mothers are directed toward managing domestic needs.

Boys are raised with the understanding that they will one day become the heads of families to be respected, while girls are taught to be obedient, compliant, and maintain family honor through behaviors aligned with customary norms. This unequal power relation shapes a collective mentality that men are more entitled to public authority, whereas women are confined to the private sphere. This condition becomes further entrenched as it is institutionalized through customs and traditions. In various customary ceremonies, men always occupy central roles as leaders or decision-makers, while women are rarely, if ever, given the opportunity to hold strategic positions. Nevertheless, in daily life, Bimanese women play vital practical roles, such as managing households, supporting family economics, and preserving cultural continuity through informal education of children. However, these practical roles are not matched by structural legitimacy within customary or community political frameworks.

This phenomenon aligns with Huda's (2020) analysis in the context of the Samin community, where women, despite being active cultural agents, remain structurally subordinate to men. Similarly, in Bima, women play a significant role in preserving traditional values, yet masculine customary norms restrict their space for expression and participation. Patriarchal culture is not merely habitual but institutionalized through unwritten rules guiding collective behavior (Huda, 2020). Moreover, strategic community forums, such as customary deliberations or conflict mediation processes, are almost entirely controlled by men. Women are seldom included, even when issues discussed directly concern their lives. Their absence in public forums is not due to incapacity but due to customary norms restricting their participation. Hence, patriarchy not only limits women's roles but also blocks their access to critical decision-making processes affecting social life.

Bimanese customary values are regarded as absolute moral guidelines, making violations not just social deviations but also insults to family honor. Family honor serves as a symbol of dignity that women are especially tasked to protect. This concept often constrains women from expressing themselves, voicing opinions, or claiming their rights. Many women in the customary community refrain from speaking out for fear of violating social norms or being ostracized. This situation reinforces patriarchal dominance, as women are forced into silence to protect the family's image (Alfirdaus et al., 2022). Additionally, patriarchal dominance is evident in inheritance practices. Sons are prioritized in receiving

inheritances, while daughters often receive symbolic portions or are excluded entirely. This indicates that women's economic rights are restricted by customs favoring men as legitimate owners of family assets, creating economic dependence on fathers, husbands, or sons, and limiting women's autonomy.

Limited access to formal education in the past also reinforced patriarchal dominance. Although educational opportunities have expanded, cultural norms still often regard higher education for women as unnecessary, since they are expected to become wives and mothers. This perspective restricts women's academic and professional development while legitimizing patriarchy across social life. Patriarchal culture also influences marital relations in Bima (Imansyah et al., 2025). Women are expected to be obedient to husbands, who are seen as heads of households with full authority. In practice, major household decisions are largely determined by husbands, while wives execute these decisions. This pattern frequently produces ongoing gender injustice, from limiting women's right to work to weakening their role in household conflict resolution. Nevertheless, it is important to note that Bimanese women maintain significant roles in preserving cultural identity. They safeguard traditional values, teach the mother tongue, and nurture social continuity. However, their position as cultural agents is never formally recognized within customary structures. This demonstrates that patriarchy not only governs power relations in the public sphere but also controls how women's contributions are perceived and valued within society.

Qur'anic Interpretation: The Legitimacy of Patriarchy among Bima Muslims

In Bima society, religion holds a very important position as a source of values, a guide for life, and a moral authority. Islamic teachings are understood not only as matters of worship but also as a social ethical framework that regulates relationships among individuals within families and communities. However, in social reality, religious interpretations often tend to reinforce patriarchal structures that are already deeply rooted in local customs and culture (Parhan et al., 2024). This is evident in the way religious texts are read, interpreted, and taught, thereby creating normative legitimacy for the subordinate position of women in society. One of the Qur'anic verses most frequently used as the basis for legitimizing patriarchy is QS. An-Nisa: 34, which states;

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ إِمَّا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَّإِمَّا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أُنْوَافِهِمْ فَالصَّالِحَاتُ
قَاتِنَاتٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِلْعَيْبِ إِمَّا حَفَظَ اللَّهُ

"Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given some of them (men) preference over others (women), and because they (men) spend out of their wealth for them..." (QS. An-Nisa: 34)

This verse is understood literally as an affirmation that men hold a higher status than women in all aspects of life. Such an understanding has been institutionalized within family and community traditions, so that fathers, husbands, and even sons are perceived as having authority over women.

However, many contemporary studies indicate that this verse has a specific socio-historical context and should not be interpreted as absolute and universal. A literal understanding of religious texts without considering the maqashid al-shariah often becomes the root of gender inequality. In this regard, traditional exegesis emphasizes hierarchical relations between men and women rather than the principles of mutuality, justice, and partnership also taught in the Qur'an. Consequently, religious interpretation reinforces the already entrenched patriarchy in Bima society. Women are considered naturally subordinate, while men seem to possess divine legitimacy to dominate both public and domestic spheres.

Research by Jauhari & Thowaf (2019) reveals that Islamic educational institutions, particularly pesantren, still largely teach conservative gender interpretations. Narratives about women as "pious wives" who are obedient and submissive to their husbands dominate over narratives about female leadership or active participation in social life. Such teaching patterns shape a societal mentality that accepts gender inequality as natural, rather than a social construct that can be critiqued or changed (Jauhari & Thowaf, 2019). In the context of Bima society, religious interpretation is not merely spiritual guidance but also a normative instrument determining social structure. Women's subordinate position is regarded as religiously legitimate, thereby reinforcing male authority in all aspects of life. The high authority of religion in society makes it difficult to challenge conservative interpretations, as questioning traditional exegesis is often seen as opposing the religion itself. In fact, Islamic texts also contain principles of equality and justice, as Allah SWT states;

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَيَاءُ بَعْضٍ ۚ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَاوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيَتَّقِيُّمُونَ
الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَيُطْبِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ۚ أُولَئِكَ سَيِّرُكُمْ هُمُ اللَّهُ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

"And those who believe, men and women, are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, establish prayer, give zakat, and are obedient to Allah and His Messenger. They will be granted mercy by Allah; indeed, Allah is Mighty and Wise." (QS. An-Nisa: 34)

The verse above emphasizes that men and women are guardians for one another, meaning they share equal social, spiritual, and moral responsibilities. However, this verse is rarely used as a basis for establishing equitable gender relations. Instead, verses that seemingly place women under men are more frequently cited and emphasized. This indicates that the primary issue lies not in the text itself, but in gender-biased patterns of interpretation. Patriarchal bias in religious exegesis is largely influenced by the dominance of classical fiqh, which emerged from highly patriarchal social and cultural contexts of the past. Classical fiqh, which often fails to respond to contemporary gender issues, continues to be used as the main reference for understanding male-female relations (Sholikhah, 2025). As a result, religious interpretations tend to be insufficient in addressing modern challenges, including demands for gender equality and social justice. In the case of the Bima community, this is reflected in the persistent religious

legitimization of social practices that place women in subordinate positions.

Moreover, patriarchal interpretations are reinforced by the authority of religious leaders who hold dominant positions in society. Ustaz, kyai, or adat-religious figures often emphasize interpretations that affirm male leadership. As they are seen as moral and spiritual representatives, their interpretations are rarely questioned. This causes gender-biased views to be increasingly accepted as natural and even as part of religious truth that cannot be contested. The effect of such patriarchal religious interpretation not only limits women's agency in the public sphere but also impacts domestic life (Achmad, 2024). Women are encouraged to submit to their husbands, even in situations detrimental to themselves. Many choose silence in cases of domestic violence because they feel religion teaches absolute obedience to husbands. Thus, religious interpretation becomes not only a normative foundation but also a social control mechanism restricting women's freedom.

Nevertheless, movements for the reinterpretation of religious texts from an equality perspective are beginning to emerge in academic discourse and gender activism. Some contemporary scholars emphasize the importance of reading texts through the lens of maqashid al-sharia, the higher objectives of Islamic law that prioritize justice, public welfare, and reciprocity. This approach is expected to shift societal perspectives from patriarchal interpretations toward more responsive readings that align with contemporary realities, including in Bima, where patriarchal traditions remain strong (Rifat & Nurwahidin, 2022). However, the greatest challenge lies in how such reinterpretations can be widely accepted. Deeply rooted patriarchal culture often leads to resistance, with reinterpretation seen as liberalization that conflicts with tradition. Therefore, change must be implemented gradually through cultural and educational approaches, so the community does not feel its religious identity is threatened. In the Bima context, this can be done through religious dialogue, more inclusive Islamic educational curricula, and strengthening the role of women in religious organizations.

Customs, Islam, and Human Rights: Spaces of Conflict and Negotiation

The tension between customs, Islam, and human rights is one of the most complex issues in the study of women in Indonesia. These three value systems—customs as a cultural heritage, Islam as the majority religion, and human rights as a product of modern global consciousness—each carry strong legitimacy. However, precisely because all three are normatively authoritative and considered important, their intersection often generates conflicts, especially regarding the status and treatment of women (Harahap & Hasanah, 2025). This phenomenon can be observed across various regions, including Bima, where women face a sharp identity dilemma between cultural demands, religious obligations, and awareness of their human rights. In the context of customs, women are often positioned within social structures that emphasize obedience, compliance, and adherence to traditional norms. Customs demand that women protect family honor, submit to parents, husbands, and broader social structures. This subordinate position is justified as necessary to maintain social harmony and preserve local values. Yet, this pattern frequently limits women's autonomy in making important decisions

regarding education, marriage, or careers. Consequently, customs tend to reinforce women's roles in the domestic sphere while restricting their participation in public life.

Meanwhile, Islam as a religious teaching contains a more complex dimension. On the one hand, Islam grants significant respect to women, including rights to education, property ownership, and spiritual dignity equal to men. However, the interpretation of Islam in local communities is often more influenced by classical fiqh, which is hierarchically gendered. Classical fiqh tends to place men as leaders (qawwam) and women as those expected to obey. When such interpretations intertwine with social practices and customs, they reinforce patterns of female subordination. Unlike customs and classical fiqh interpretations, human rights advocate a more egalitarian paradigm. The core principles of human rights demand recognition of gender equality without compromise. Women should not be treated as second-class citizens but must receive equal rights in education, employment, political participation, and protection from all forms of discrimination. These human rights principles are often seen as conflicting with conservative customs and Islamic interpretations, raising debates on whether universal human rights values can be fully applied in local contexts (Syarifuddin et al., 2024).

The tension arising from these differing value systems creates ethical and normative dilemmas for Bima women. They are expected to be culturally obedient, doctrinally religious, and simultaneously aware of their human rights. This often leads women to experience what is called an "identity split." On one hand, they do not wish to be seen as opposing customs or religion, as this could attract social stigma. On the other hand, they feel it is unjust if their human rights are ignored. As a result, many women choose to remain silent to preserve social harmony, even if this often means sacrificing personal interests and aspirations. However, Indonesian history shows that the tension between customs, Islam, and human rights is not impossible to reconcile. Women's struggles in Indonesia, from the colonial era to the present, have often been pursued through reinterpretation of religion and culture. Female figures have successfully negotiated space for themselves by utilizing religious and cultural legitimacy while remaining open to modern ideas of equality. For example, Kartini's advocacy for women's education represents a reinterpretation of Islamic and Javanese cultural values with a progressive approach.

The importance of progressive reinterpretation of religion and culture becomes a way to overcome the deadlock between customs, Islam, and human rights. Through such an approach, customary values emphasizing social harmony can be maintained without restricting women's freedom. Similarly, Islamic teachings can be reinterpreted contextually to align with the spirit of equality inherent in sacred texts. This approach enables the creation of a fair compromise in which women can maintain their cultural and religious identity without losing their human rights (Yuanitasari & Kusmayanti, 2021). It is also important to understand that this tension is not solely rooted in normative differences but also in social power structures. In patriarchal societies, both customs and religious interpretations are often dominated by men, leaving women with little room to voice alternative interpretations. In other words, this issue is not merely a conflict

between three value systems but also concerns who holds the authority to interpret these values. Therefore, opening spaces for women to participate in interpreting customs and religion is an essential step toward reducing this tension.

Moreover, globalization and modern education play a significant role in raising women's awareness of their human rights. The more Bima women gain access to higher education and broader social networks, the greater their ability to negotiate their position amid the tug-of-war between customs, Islam, and human rights. Nevertheless, the challenges are considerable, as modernization is often perceived as a threat to the cultural and religious identity of local communities. From a sociological perspective, the tension between customs, Islam, and human rights can also be seen as part of the dynamics of social transformation. Every society experiences negotiation between tradition, religion, and modern values. Women are at the forefront of this process because their bodies and identities often become the symbolic battleground between these three value systems. Consequently, women are not only victims but also key actors in determining the direction of social change.

Legally, Indonesia faces a significant challenge in harmonizing multiple legal systems: customary law, Islamic law, and national law based on human rights. This harmonization effort is not always easy, as each system has a strong basis of legitimacy (Hidayah, 2023). However, Indonesia's success in establishing a plural legal system presents an opportunity to formulate regulations that favor gender justice without sacrificing cultural and religious values. In short, the tension between customs, Islam, and human rights in the treatment of women should not be viewed merely as an unresolved conflict. Instead, it can become a space for creative dialogue to develop fairer and more humane understandings. Women have significant potential to act as agents of change bridging these differences, particularly through education, political participation, and reinterpretation of religious and cultural values. In this way, women do not only bear the burden of tension but actively contribute to formulating solutions. Thus, although Bima women and Indonesian women in general still face identity dilemmas between customs, Islam, and human rights, the future remains open for more progressive approaches.

Deconstructing Patriarchal Legitimacy: Reinterpreting the Qur'an

Patriarchy in Muslim societies often gains legitimacy from conservative religious interpretations, particularly literal readings of Qur'anic verses. In religious discourse, men are frequently positioned as central figures with authority, while women are seen as supporters or complements. QS. An-Nisa: 34, which describes men as *qawwam* (maintainers) over women, is often used to justify male dominance in both domestic and public spheres. Such interpretations establish social norms that place women in subordinate positions, even restricting their participation in strategic decision-making spaces (Harahap & Hasanah, 2025). Yet, this verse emerged in the socio-historical context of 7th-century Arabia, a society heavily structured by patriarchy, meaning its significance cannot be separated from the conditions of its time. Deconstructing patriarchal legitimacy through Qur'anic reinterpretation is crucial for restoring Islam's universal message

that emphasizes justice and equality. Reinterpretation here does not merely replace old meanings with new ones but dismantles established gender-biased interpretive constructs. Through a contextual approach, Qur'anic messages can be reread to be relevant to the needs of modern societies demanding equal rights. For instance, QS. Al-Hujurat: 13 clearly asserts that human dignity is not determined by gender but by piety. Likewise, QS. Al-Ahzab: 35, which mentions men and women equally in receiving rewards for righteous deeds, demonstrates that the Qur'an inherently rejects gender hierarchies.

However, a major challenge lies in the legacy of classical interpretations heavily influenced by the masculine culture of their interpreters. These interpretations were shaped by the social, political, and cultural conditions of patriarchal societies, making them inherently gender-biased (Ahmad, 2015). As a result, many verses that convey messages of equality are interpreted to justify female subordination. This shows that patriarchy is not an Islamic teaching per se but a human interpretation produced within specific social structures. Therefore, deconstructing patriarchy through Qur'anic reinterpretation is an urgent step to challenge the legitimacy that has long hidden behind sacred texts. Qur'anic reinterpretation is not intended to deny existing interpretive traditions but to provide a critical and contextual reading. This process involves three main steps: critique, selection, and contextualization. Critique identifies gender bias in traditional interpretations; selection extracts progressive elements from classical interpretive heritage; and contextualization ensures the Qur'anic message remains relevant to contemporary challenges. For example, the concept of *qawwam* can be understood not as a justification for domination but as a form of responsibility and protection that men must exercise toward their families. With this understanding, gender relations can be seen as a complementary partnership rather than a hierarchical relationship.

Moreover, reinterpretation addresses inherited verses often viewed as reinforcing patriarchy. QS. An-Nisa: 11–12, for example, allocates a larger share of inheritance to men than women. Classical interpretations treat this as a fixed rule reflecting male superiority. However, contextual reinterpretation explains that these rules were shaped by the socio-economic conditions of Arabia, where men bore full responsibility for their families. In modern societies, where women also contribute economically, rereading inheritance verses can focus on substantive justice rather than purely numerical division (Naik, 2011). In this way, the Qur'an is understood as an elastic text capable of providing guidance in response to changing times. Deconstructing patriarchal legitimacy through the Qur'an also requires a paradigm shift in understanding textual authority. Traditionally, interpretations are viewed as final and absolute, though they are human products with inherent limitations and interests. Recognizing this opens space for more inclusive readings. Reinterpretation allows alternative interpretations that affirm gender equality without undermining the Qur'an's authority. Thus, religious authority ceases to function as a tool of domination and becomes a means of liberation.

Furthermore, Qur'anic reinterpretation can lay the foundation for social reconstruction within Muslim communities. When the message of equality in the Qur'an is widely understood, the patriarchal legitimacy often accepted as "natural"

will be questioned. Societies can recognize that gender discrimination is not a religious mandate but a cultural practice perpetuated through certain interpretations. This awareness can foster a more just social order where men and women equally enjoy rights and opportunities in all aspects of life. Beyond being an intellectual movement, Qur'anic reinterpretation also serves as a theological endeavor to restore Islam to its original mission: *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy for all worlds). Islam exists to promote justice and compassion for all humanity, not to perpetuate structural injustice.

Therefore, deconstructing patriarchy through Qur'anic reinterpretation forms part of an intellectual and spiritual struggle to uphold societal welfare. Progressive interpretations emphasizing gender equality are tangible efforts to revive the universal values of Islam (Subki et al., 2021). However, the reinterpretation project faces challenges. Resistance often arises from conservative circles that regard classical interpretations as absolute truths. Pushback also comes from societies accustomed to patriarchal structures, seeing them as untouchable traditions. Thus, reinterpretation must be carried out strategically, emphasizing strong theological arguments and demonstrating that these new readings align more closely with the Qur'an's spirit. In this way, reinterpretation can be accepted as part of religious dynamism rather than a threat to tradition.

Gender Education

Patriarchy as a social system is deeply rooted in societal structures, particularly within traditional Muslim communities around the world. This system positions men as the primary holders of authority, while women are often placed in subordinate roles. Patriarchal legitimacy is reinforced not only through customary practices and traditions but also via religious interpretations and social practices considered consistent with religious norms. In this context, gender education emerges as a crucial instrument for deconstructing patriarchal legitimacy, as it introduces, conveys, and internalizes values of equality throughout society (Mubarok & Misbah, 2022). Gender education does not merely teach about equal rights between men and women but also fosters critical awareness of unequal social structures. It encourages individuals to recognize that gender inequality is not a divine fate but a social construct that can be changed.

Through formal curricula as well as informal programs such as training, community discussions, or social campaigns, gender education instills the understanding that men and women have equal roles in development, family, and society. Thus, gender education targets not only knowledge but also shapes new perspectives and attitudes that are more just. A key strategy in gender education is uncovering biases embedded in religious narratives, customs, or positive law that are often used to legitimize patriarchy. When women are taught to obey without room for negotiation, or when men are granted absolute authority in households, these are perceived as final truths. However, through critical educational approaches, society can be encouraged to question these constructions. Gender education facilitates dialogue between religious values and universal justice

principles, enabling new awareness without denying existing cultural or religious identities.

Furthermore, gender education functions as a bridge between theory and practice. In academic contexts, the concept of gender equality is often discussed abstractly, but the real challenge lies in implementing it in daily life. Through ongoing educational processes, communities learn to apply equality principles in household relationships, workplaces, and public spaces. For example, equitable division of domestic labor, equal access to education for boys and girls, and women's involvement in public decision-making are tangible outcomes of internalizing gender education (Nursaptini et al., 2019). Gender education also emphasizes the importance of involving men in social transformation. Gender issues are often perceived as "women's matters," yet dismantling patriarchy cannot succeed without active male participation. Educational programs invite men to understand that patriarchy not only disadvantages women but also imposes rigid expectations of masculinity on men. Gender education opens a dialogue space where men can become equal partners in the struggle for social justice, rather than perceiving change as a threat.

In Muslim communities, gender education has strategic significance as it can synergize with the reinterpretation of religious teachings. Many religious leaders are beginning to integrate gender issues into sermons, study circles, and Islamic educational curricula. This is important because religious legitimacy holds significant power in shaping community behavior. By teaching that the Qur'an fundamentally affirms spiritual and social equality between men and women, gender education can reinforce Islamic values as *rahmatan lil 'alamin*. This approach proves more effective because it uses language and authority familiar to the community (Maula et al., 2024). Additionally, gender education serves as a driver of generational change. Children who grow up with an equal understanding of male-female relationships are better prepared to build inclusive societies. Schools, pesantren, and other formal educational institutions become primary arenas for instilling awareness of equality from an early age. If young generations are equipped with critical knowledge about gender, they will not only reject discrimination but also become agents of change advocating justice in various aspects of life. Thus, gender education is not merely a contemporary discourse but a long-term social investment.

Implementing gender education does present challenges. Resistance often arises from conservative circles, viewing it as contrary to religious or local cultural values. However, dialogical and contextual educational approaches can minimize such resistance. By involving community leaders, scholars, and educational institutions, the internalization of gender equality can gain broader acceptance. Participatory gender education—rather than top-down imposition—is more readily adopted because it is not perceived as a threat to collective identity (Anwar, 2012). Ultimately, deconstructing patriarchal legitimacy through gender education is a civilizational project. It addresses not only the relationships between men and women but also broader social, political, economic, and cultural structures. A gender-just society is better able to create social harmony, strengthen democracy, and enhance the quality of human development. Therefore, gender

education should not be viewed merely as an academic agenda or feminist issue but as a fundamental necessity for building a just and civilized society.

Conclusion

Patriarchal legitimacy in Bima Muslim society is established through the strong intertwining of local customs, conservative Qur'anic interpretations, and patrilineal social structures. Bima customs, which emphasize male lineage and limit women's participation in public spaces, further reinforce gender inequality. This is compounded by biased religious interpretations, particularly of verses such as QS. An-Nisa: 34, which are understood literally without considering their socio-historical context. As a result, women experience marginalization in both domestic and public spheres, while the Qur'an's universal values of equality and justice, as articulated in QS. Al-Hujurat: 13 and QS. Al-Ahzab: 35, receive inadequate attention. In this situation, the discourse on human rights emphasizing gender equality is often viewed as foreign, or even contradictory to local wisdom, complicating efforts to dismantle patriarchal structures.

The deconstruction of patriarchy remains possible through two main avenues: Qur'anic reinterpretation and gender education. Reinterpretation provides a more egalitarian theological foundation by emphasizing that Islam fundamentally upholds human dignity and equality regardless of gender. Meanwhile, gender education plays a strategic role in cultivating critical awareness—through both formal and non-formal programs—to challenge unequal social constructions. The synergy of these approaches opens a space for dialogue between local customs, Islam, and human rights, weakening the entrenched legitimacy of patriarchy. With a participatory approach grounded in local values, this deconstruction is not only relevant for Bima Muslim society but can also serve as an alternative model for other Muslim communities facing similar challenges.

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