

Gender Inequality in Endogamous Marriage Practices: A Study of the Arab Community in Palembang

Lilis Sukmawati¹, Ajuan Tuhuteru²

¹Universitas islam negeri raden fatah palembang. Email: lilissukmawati_uin@radenfatah.ac.id

²Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Ambon: Email: a.tuhuteru@iaknambon.ac.id

Abstract

The world is now entering the 5.0 era where humans are required to think forward and be innovative in facing the challenges of the times. Gender equality is an important issue, but the gender gap is still evident, especially in terms of women's rights. Although many Indonesian women have occupied public positions, patriarchal perspectives are still widely found, one of which is in the practice of endogamous marriage. The purpose of this article is to analyze the gender perspective of Palembang Arabs who practice endogamous marriage. The approach used in this article is descriptive qualitative. The informants interviewed totaled five people, two women and three men. The data collection techniques used are observation, interview and documentation. The results showed that men consider women (sharifah) of Arab ethnicity to be submissive so that things that are prohibited such as not being highly educated, not being allowed to have other activities outside the home, and limiting their duties to only taking care of the house and children are things that make them appropriate or not to be used as wives. on the other hand, for women, education is something that is allowed in religion as the hadith which means "pursue knowledge from the mother's cradle to the grave", kitchen affairs are not only women's affairs but also men's affairs, so there is a need for communication

Keywords: Endogamous marriage; Gender inequality, Gender issues; Palembang Arab Village

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of the world has entered round 5.0 society era which is echoed as a post-industrial golden age. A time when humans are required to be able to solve problems and challenges of the times through the utilization of the industrial revolution that leads to an advanced and innovative mindset. Speaking of understanding or thinking patterns of society, the times can certainly answer the inequality of gender perspectives in society. Where gender does not only talk about sexuality that refers to women, but is in line with equality and the acquisition of rights for every human being. Gender-related conversations have been widely reviewed in various media and articles, how the status of women should have an equal place

with men, namely having the same human rights. However, the gender gap has become a reality that must be faced by almost all women around the world both in the public and private spheres, ranging from domestic affairs to reproductive issues (Setiawan et al., 2018) . Not infrequently the choice of life partners is also often regulated in ethnicity, culture and religion.

Gender inequality has occurred since long ago where women are placed in marginalized areas that have roles in domestic domains such as the kitchen, well and bed (Setiawan et al., 2018) . In addition, the concept of thinking and beliefs related to gender has been rooted and hidden in community traditions, religious beliefs, and policies (Sutarso, 2011) . This kind of condition puts women in a marginalized situation. Where the position of women is different from men because women are considered weak, soft, sensitive, and delicate creatures.

So that these various feminine traits make the position of women have opportunities that are not equal to men not because of women's inability, but because of the unavailability of other alternatives that can be done (Setiawan et al., 2018) . If we look at the current reality and conditions, women have the same place and role and are able to create change and progress for the Indonesian nation. This is evident from the many female cadres who have occupied public positions such as the Presidency, Rector, Manager, Dean and other positions.

Even so, patriarchal perspectives are still often found in the layers of society in Indonesia. Limitations on space for movement to marriage are also regulated in the family and community order. Therefore, many studies have discussed and examined the patriarchal perspective that has been applied in the family environment to this society. Such as Syarifah's research related to endogamous marriage in the descendants of Isa Al-Muhajir who live in the city of Pontianak. In her research, she found that if the practice of endogamous marriage is often practiced, it will threaten women's freedom and open up space for subordination (Rahmaniah, 2014).

Endogamous marriage is a marriage between ethnicities, clans, tribes, kinship in the same environment. Like the marriage between the Nasution clan from the Mandailing Batak tribe and the Nasution clan from the Mandailing Batak tribe who live in the same neighborhood (Rizkiati, 2012).

In other studies, endogamous marriages are also found in the Bugis tribe as research has been conducted by Neni Rahman that endogamous marriages are carried out due to arranged marriages in a family environment that is seen to maintain the purity of offspring, inheritance and territoriality (Saputra & Gollu, n.d.). Furthermore, Kurnia Rizkiati's research on endogamous marriage in the Arab descendant community of Palembang City. In her

research, she explained that the Arab village community adheres to religious endogamous marriage and endogamous descent which is done to maintain family secrets or disgrace (Rizkiati, 2012). As is the case in this Arab village community, endogamous marriages are still carried out and carried out in accordance with the customary and cultural provisions of the Arab village community. The practice of endogamous marriage in the Arab village community emphasizes marriage based on endogamous descent so that the community, especially women, must follow the traditions and customary norms that apply but are also believed by the community.

In fact, women have the same rights and roles as men, especially the right to determine or choose a life partner. Based on the conditions that occur in the Arab village community as described above, it is necessary to study gender inequality in the practice of endogamous marriage in the Arab village community of Palembang.

In this regard, the purpose of this article is to analyze the gender perspective of the people who practice endogamous marriage. Researchers feel that this research is very important to study because issues related to endogamous marriage fall into the realm of patriarchal culture that limits women's rights. In fact, Thaib, et al., in (Rohilati, 2011) stated that one of the goals of marriage is to form a happy and eternal family, for that husband and wife need to help and complement each other so that each can develop their personality to help and achieve spiritual and material welfare together.

2. Methodology

The author uses a qualitative descriptive approach that focuses on understanding the problem in depth. This research employs in-depth analysis through interviews and observations to explore events, processes, and activities involving individuals or groups.

Before the results of this research can contribute to science, it is necessary to have a scientific critical analysis stage, namely thinking inductively to find out the facts and social phenomena that occur at the research location based on observations (Nugrahani, 2014). Based on this, the data analysis in this article was carried out using the Miles and Huberman interactive model.

The Miles and Huberman data analysis model consists of three components, namely data reduction, data presentation and conclusion drawing. As the following figure:

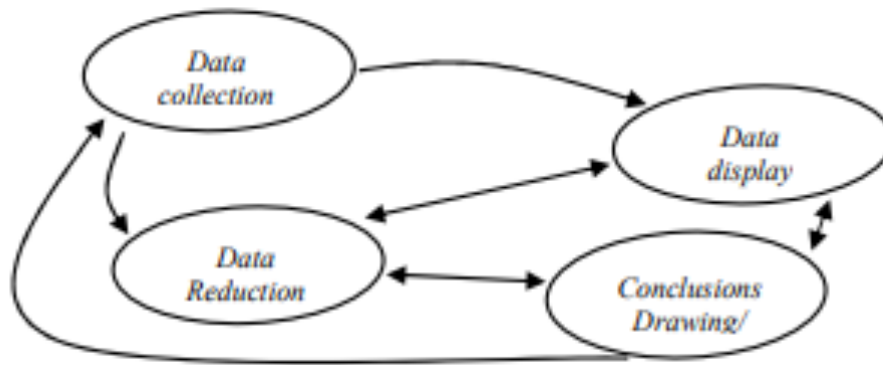


Figure 1. Miles and Huberman Data Analysis
Source: (Sugiyono, 2018)

The data source is all information or material provided by nature that must be sought, collected and selected by researchers (Nugrahani, 2014). The data sources in this article are primary data and secondary data. The selection of informants as primary data sources uses a snowball technique with certain criteria, namely gender, age and residents of the Palembang Arab village. In this regard, the informants who could be interviewed amounted to 5 people. three men and two women. While the secondary data sources in this article are the historical context, the shape of the house, and the settlement area map of the Palembang Arab ethnic community, apart from interviews, they also refer to the Archaeological Research News No. 14 researchers used from (Department of Culture and Tourism, 2006). Also from previous research such as (Fuadiyah & Hudaidah, 2021), (Mujib, 2000), and (Purwanti, 2017).

3. Results and Discussion

The transition from hunting to agricultural stages in the context of the development of society is key to how the concepts of private property, family, and community are slowly formed, (Rangi, 2021). After humans settled down, social changes and adjustments began to be made. Even so, (Rangi, 2021) in his book *Religion and Politics* states that these changes and adjustments took place over thousands of years. One of these changes is the creation of a social unit that we call the family.

Pip Jones (2009) in (Rangi, 2021) states that in human development, these social units and systems have evolved into the form we recognize today. Frederick Angels, in his book *The*

Origin of Family, Private Ownership and the State (2011), which develops the findings of Lewis Henry Morgan, states that the evolution of family development goes through at least four stages (Rangi, 2021). The earliest stage is the blood family or *consanguine family*. In this phase, a man and woman can have sexual relations with more than one person in a close kin relationship.

The next phase is the *Punaluan family*, where humans begin to recognize the kinship system through the female or maternal lineage. This is because the lineage through the pregnancy of female parents can be determined more definitively than male parents. At this stage, the inheritance system began to be applied based on the mother's lineage to daughters, because boys spent more time with the father's group going hunting. This shift occurred after humans settled down and abandoned the nomadic way of life, they also began to apply the concept of private ownership of territory, crops and livestock which became more important than just kinship relationships.

Next comes the *pairing family*. The *pairing family* is the stage where the rule of group marriage has been banned in the community, the agreed upon family form is pairing. In this phase, each person's partner slowly became recognized. the system of division of labor between men and women began to exist. At this stage also hunting is no longer a daily routine for male groups, they spend almost all of their working time cultivating the land as farmers and breeders. Gradually the position of women was eliminated, resulting in changes in the inheritance and ownership system. where, the previous stage of the inheritance system through the mother's or woman's lineage was changed to an inheritance system based on the male or father's lineage as well as inheritance rights that were previously passed on to daughters, at this stage boys also received inheritance.

The *monogamous family* is the next stage, where at this stage, the development of family systems such as the ownership system and inheritance is controlled based on the father's lineage to sons. and the concept that men are considered to work because their activities are more outside the home as farmers and herders, while work at home is not considered part of the work. After the introduction of the monogamous family, relationships in the form of cousins, uncles and aunts could be firmly identified in society. Likewise, the concepts of the *batih family* and extended family also began to be recognized. *Batih families* are family members consisting of fathers, mothers and children. while extended families can be drawn from grandparents and even great-grandparents on both sides of both mothers and fathers and all their descendants downwards. after the family system is recognized, family members who

are part of relatives are getting bigger, the rules that become a common agreement are also growing. Even in some ethnic groups, the prohibition of marriage with close relatives but with other ethnic groups is applied, one of which is the Arab ethnic group or ethnic Arabs in Palembang.

3.1. Endogamous Marriage Review in Gender Perspective

Marriage in society is not merely to form a family. more than that socially it can function as a social contract and a strategy to build alliances with other families. To understand endogamous marriage from a gender perspective, we first need to know what is called endogamous marriage and gender. Endogamy is marriage within the scope of one's own kinship, Al-Barry (1994) in (Hatta, 2019). Meanwhile, in the large Indonesian dictionary, it is stated that endogamy is a marriage principle that requires people to look for a mate within their own social environment, such as kinship, social class, or neighborhood (Language Development and Bookkeeping Agency, 2016).

There are several forms of marriage that occur in Indonesia. Among them are forms of marriage based on the number of wives, marriage based on the origin of the wife/husband, marriage based on kinship relations, and marriage based on the payment of Mas Kawin. Of the several forms of marriage, endogamous marriage is included in marriage based on the origin of the wife / husband, namely marriage between ethnicities, tribal clans, kinship in the same environment (Rizkiati, 2012). (Darussalam, 2017) reveals that endogamous marriage is a marriage between someone who comes from within his own group which aims to preserve his tribe or region. So that a group or community that has embraced Endogamous marriage requires marriage with a life partner who is someone who has the same descent as him and prohibits someone from marrying someone who has a different descent or tribe (Darussalam, 2017).

Endogamous marriages among ethnic Arabs have decreased, but the practice often occurs among modern Arabs, especially those who are geographically remote, who still hold tightly to the culture of endogamous marriage. Endogamous marriage among Arabs is considered an effort to maintain group identity. The practice often occurs among women, because among ethnic Arabs, lineage follows patrilineal rules, where descent is calculated based on the father's line. Therefore, in terms of marriage, men have the freedom to choose a partner according to their criteria, whether from among Arab ethnic women or from other groups. This condition applies differently to ethnic Arab women. They have an obligation to maintain their lineage by marrying men from the same group since birth, Bariyyati (2017) in (Allam & Ninin, 2023).

Lahmuddin (2018) in (Fitriana & Khaerun, 2020) also states that endogamous marriage is a marriage system that requires a person to marry a fellow tribe, descendant or group, and vice versa. This expression is in line with the thoughts of (Muzakki, 2017) and (Rahmaniah, 2014).

Furthermore, the term gender has a broad scope. Gender relates to the behavior of individuals, both men and women who are formed in society. *Women's Studies Encyclopedia* in (Ghummiyah & Mualifah, 2024) defines gender as the formation of mental differences, attitudes, characters and behaviors possessed by men and women due to the formation of cultural concepts. Gender is included in the study of feminism which is distinguished based on the characteristics or social characteristics of a person. These social traits are masculine or feminine which are the result of socio-cultural construction. So that the attributes of masculinity do not have to be addressed to men and vice versa feminine does not have to be addressed to women (Khuza'i, n.d.). In addition, Gender is also defined as the roles, functions, statuses and responsibilities of men and women that stem from the results of the socio-cultural construction of society introduced from generation to generation. It can be said that gender is the result of an agreement between individuals that is not natural (Asich & Hut, n.d.). Therefore, gender has different variations in each region because gender can change and can be exchanged from one individual to another based on time and local culture (Asich & Hut, n.d.).

In a patriarchal cultural society, biological differences are seen as a consideration in behavior, which results in restrictions on rights, access, participation, control and enjoyment of information utilization empowerment. In the end, the roles, duties, positions and obligations between men and women vary greatly from one society to another. As in some societies, it is very rigid in limiting the roles that should be performed by men and women. For example, it is considered strange or less authoritative for a man to dry cloth and it is considered bad for a woman to leave the house to work (Asich & Hut, n.d.).

In relation to this, gender issues are usually discussed in terms of gender inequality (bias) and gender equality. The issue of bias is related to injustice against women. This condition positions religious teachings as the root of all injustice or discrimination against women. In fact, this is not the case, but rather a cultural practice or community tradition that is sometimes far from the concept of religious teachings, especially Islam.

In the meeting of Islamic law with the customs or culture of the local community, there are various approaches used. Among them, using good cultural practices, rejecting bad cultural

practices, improving the cultural practices of the local community and so on. In this interaction, the ulama or preachers compromised a lot with local customs and traditions. As a result of this interaction, various Islamic cultures were born based on local realities, where gender patterns and relationships also differ from one society to another. There are several causes of gender inequality, including religious and cultural interpretation factors, Elfi Muawanah (2006) in (Lubis, n.d.).

In the context of gender inequality, (Mukramin & Salsabila, 2023) states that gender inequality is not only related to social structures but also impregnated by customs that regulate married life. Customs and community norms become powerful tools to maintain social status and reinforce patriarchal values. Believing in the practice of endogamous marriage as a system of rules in maintaining the purity of descendants, women (Syarifah) are expected to maintain the purity of the Prophet Muhammad's lineage, because marrying a non-Sayyid man is considered a major violation of custom (Mukramin & Salsabila, 2023). However, this rule does not apply to Sayyid men who have the freedom to choose a life partner outside of non-Sayyid descent without social pressure or customary sanctions (Awalia, 2021). This shows the double standard in marriage customs that are believed to place women at a disadvantage compared to men. Thus, gender inequality appears in the form of unequal social expectations between men and women regarding the choice of life partners as well as social relations.

3.2. Portrait of endogamous marriage in Arab villages

Through a series of rituals and/or traditions, each moment in the wedding procession not only marks the physical union between the bride and groom, but also the spiritual one between the bride and groom. Each element in the wedding procession, from the exchange of rings, generally or through introduction by parents to the sacred vows, reflects commitment and hope for a future together. In this regard, based on the findings obtained in the field through interviews, the endogamous marriage process in the Arab village of Palembang is the same as the general marriage procession. The difference is that it begins with a meeting between the bride and groom through their parents (arranged marriage), then the engagement which is represented by the family of the male party (groom) without first meeting the bride and groom before it is legal.



(a) Before the marriage ceremony



(b) The process of the marriage ceremony

Figure 2. View of the atmosphere before and during the marriage ceremony process

Source: Personal Documentation

The marriage ceremony is one of the most crucial events in the wedding ceremony, as it marks the establishment of a bond between two individuals, characterized by the utterance of promises and commitments in the presence of witnesses and authorities. It not only marks the legality of a marriage, but also creates a deep spiritual bond between the bride and groom. In this regard, the marriage ceremony procession carried out by residents of the Arab village community is slightly different from the general one. The marriage ceremony in Arab villages is only attended by men from both parties, even if there are invited guests or female relatives, they are placed separately and can only watch through the monitor or TV screen that has been provided.



Figure 3: The bride is accompanied by relatives and invited guests watching the marriage ceremony on a television screen.

Source: Personal Documentation

In addition to the marriage ceremony, there is one more stage before the reception, namely the hena night. Malam hena is one of the events in the wedding program before the akad, which is the giving of decorations on the palm of the bride's hand. Unlike the akad procession, the malam hena is only attended by the female family of both parties so that the bride is allowed to open her hijab. In picture (c) above, it is clear that the women, invited guests, relatives and families can only watch the akad procession, which is a sacred moment in a marriage, only through a television screen. The data found that the residents of the Arab village in every procession including the marriage contract are still based on Islamic theology so that the bride and groom or relatives and invited guests are not allowed to be in one room during the procession.



(d) Ahead of the marriage ceremony



(e) The process of the marriage ceremony

Figure 4: The atmosphere before and during the marriage ceremony process

Source: Personal Documentation

The wedding procession also serves as a celebration of love attended by various people, from family, relatives, friends to clans or groups. The presence of these loved ones provides moral but also emotional support for the couple, and also adds to the warmth of the atmosphere. Through this togetherness, all those present witness and celebrate an important event in the couple's lives, but also establish closer relationships between family members, relatives, friends and groups and provide good prayers for the couple. ¹In addition, wedding receptions by the Arab village community are conducted in mass, at least 5-8 couples in person and in conjunction with the *Haul**. In addition to the wedding reception, other activities are also carried out such as giving names and others with the aim of getting barokah (blessing). In

* *Haul* is the day when the Palembang Arab village community commemorates the death of Habib Abdurrahman Al Munawwar. Habib Abdurrahman Al Munawwar was an ethnic Arab who came from Hadramaut, South Yemen in the early 18th century to Palembang.

addition to blessings, the reception process is carried out massively to ease the burden but also many donors so that the event is lively and many prayers are obtained by the bride and groom from the many who attend. During the reception process as usual, there are also treats such as gambus and others that are full of Arabic identity.



(a) The performers were seen playing traditional Arabic musical instruments.



(b) Two people were seen playing one of the Arabic dances.



(c) A man is seen playing one of the Arabic musical instruments.

Picture 5. A view of the program during the reception
Source: Personal Documentation

In addition to the above, the wedding procession also reinforces cultural values and traditions. Each culture has its own way of carrying out the wedding procession, all of which reflect the identity and heritage of each culture. Of course, the event is not only about the bride and groom, but also the recognition and preservation of values passed down from generation to generation, as well as creating deeper meaning for all involved. The Arab villagers of Palembang are no exception.

3.3. Arab village men's perspectives on Endogamous Marriage Practices

A. Darussalam, Lahmuddin (2018) in (Fitriana & Khaerun, 2020) states that endogamous marriage is a marriage system that requires a person to marry a fellow tribe, descendant or group, and vice versa. The practice of endogamous marriage in the Palembang Arab village community is the same as other Arab ethnic groups in Indonesia. However, the

Palembang Arab village community group has a little leeway because it does not have to be the same clan as others.

If men of Alawiyyin descent do not marry women from their group, it is likely to result in an increase in the number of unmarried sharifahs who die (Hatta, 2019). Referring to the marriage practices carried out by the Arab ethnic community, namely exogamy and endogamy for men, while only endogamy for syarifah or women, as well as the "prohibition" of non-Alawiyyin (non-Arab) men marrying syarifah (greeting for Arab women).

(Hatta, 2019) in his dissertation "The Practice of Creating Sociality of Tariqah Alawiyah for the Alawiyyin in the Maluku Islands" revealed his findings that he found one informant who in his marriage practice, because he found a partner (wife) who was not a sharifah so that his parents did not approve, until during the marriage process there were no relatives present.

In relation to this, my findings in the field that from several informants met revealed that along with the development of globalization, there were also ethnic Arab communities (women) married to non-Arab men, so that the person concerned chose to leave the Arab village.

As social creatures, humans essentially have the instinct to form families through marriage bonds. men and women have relative responsibilities and roles in achieving the desired household goals. For this reason, the relationship between husband and wife becomes increasingly complex because the position of both in the family has an important role as a measure of happiness in society.

Even the existence of a culture adopted by a group of people such as a patriarchal culture often makes women's position in the social structure weak. As a result, the division of roles and responsibilities in the household is still influenced by the perspective of the community in the context of gender, making the wife's role only in the domestic sphere. In this regard, the findings obtained from several informants as representatives of the men of the Arab village community where they think that education for women is okay but should not be high because in the end (after marriage), they are at home and take care of children.

In addition to education that should not be high, a wife (sharifah) should not have activities other than at home, if there are activities outside the home then the person concerned is even considered unsuitable and / or not worthy of being a wife. Of course, this view, when viewed from a gender perspective, can be said to limit the space for women to move even in the social context, because their activities are only limited to the home with various existing

rules. In line with this, While and Hasturi in (Widyasari & Suyanto, 2023) stated that this patrilineal cultural system is the cause of the low role of women in the public sphere, even this cultural system positions the role of wives lower than men so that it strengthens the position of men.

In addition to education, the view of men (Arab community) that women (wives) should not work, because if so, it makes them feel higher than their husbands. Even so, if there are ethnic Arab women who marry non-Arab men, it is because the person concerned is influenced by promiscuity or because they have a high education so they meet various people.

3.4. Perspectives of women in Arab villages

In relation to the context of relationships, internal residents of the Palembang Arab community, especially Sharifah, understand the traces of the endogamous marriage process that in the process and definition of the Alawiyyin kinship structure, women are still included as part of the family, as is the understanding of the Palembang population in general. In the context of relationships, there should be no maximum or minimum limit between women and men, because as social beings, building kinship or relationships with other humans is part of human instinct.

In the context of endogamous marriages that are tied to women (sharifah), simply to maintain offspring, almost all informants admit it. However, when faced with the stigma that women eventually after marriage are in the kitchen to take care of children and others. There is a slight misunderstanding of this, a necessary finding as previously described that for the sharifah, kitchen matters are not only women's affairs as women can also be highly educated, so discussing these matters with their spouses is the solution expected by women.

Apart from kitchen matters, the context of education for women is permissible. One informant revealed that there is a religious recommendation related to studying, namely from birth / mother's womb until entering the grave / death, so they do not agree if the concept is as conveyed by the men above. Furthermore, related to the practice of endogamous marriage for the sharifah, for them it is a tradition or culture that has been done long ago by previous parents so it is not an obligation.

Based on this explanation, there are differences in perspective between the men and women (sharifah) of the Palembang Arab village community in responding to this matter, although all of them recognize it as part of an effort to maintain the descendants who are related to the prophet.

4. Conclusion

The conclusion that can be drawn based on the findings and discussion above is that in general, the marriage process carried out by combining several bride and groom pairs as well as other activities becomes social capital in reducing expenses. However, the perspective of the Arab village community regarding the practice of endogamous marriage from the gender side shows a difference of opinion between men and women. Men consider that ethnic Arab women (sharifah) are basically submissive so that things that are prohibited in the cultural system and traditions adopted such as not being highly educated, not being allowed to have other activities outside the home, and limiting their duties to taking care of the house and children are things that make the woman suitable or not used as a wife.

In addition, women do not carry offspring so that if an Arab woman marries a man of non-Arab descent her lineage is cut off, besides that the person concerned becomes a topic of conversation among members of the Arab community because it is considered to violate the rules. Meanwhile, for women (sharifah), considering education is something that is allowed in religion through one of the hadiths which means *"pursue knowledge from the mother's cradle to the grave"*. The women consider the kitchen not only a woman's business but also a man's business, so it needs to be discussed with the husband. Basically, the views of the sharifahs expect togetherness and democracy in household affairs, not relying on one person, namely the man alone.

Based on maintaining offspring, and obeying customary norms as a necessity, the women of the Arab community obey and submit to the practice of marriage, although from the data found there are one or two people who have married men outside the community, besides that the powerlessness is also seen from their views by using the prophet's hadith in answering the restrictions on duties and the right to education.

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