

Determination of Dowry in the Bugis-Makassar Community: An Islamic Law Perspective on Local Cultural Practices

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the practice of establishing dowry within the Bugis-Makassar community and to assess its alignment with the tenets of Islamic law and dominant local cultural norms. This study utilizes a qualitative methodology grounded in a normative-sociological framework. Data were gathered by literature review, analysis of Islamic legal sources, and scrutiny of customary behaviors within Bugis-Makassar marital traditions. The results show that setting the dowry is not only seen as a religious duty in the marriage contract, but also as a sign of respect, family honor, and cultural identity. In reality, the amount of dowry is frequently determined by social standing, education, ancestry, and familial consensus. From the standpoint of Islamic law, the establishment of dowry is permitted, provided it does not cause difficulty to the groom, does not include compulsion, and is consistent with the ideal of ease in marriage. Thus, it can be inferred that the practice of dowry determination within the Bugis-Makassar community exemplifies a reconciliation between Islamic legal principles and the maintenance of local cultural values, provided it does not contravene Islamic teachings.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a social and religious institution that is very important in people's lives. (Yilmaz, I, 2025). In Islam, marriage is not only seen as a physical and spiritual link between a man and a woman, but also as an act of worship meant to create a family that is peaceful (*sakinah*), loving (*mawaddah*), and kind (*rahmah*). The dowry (*mahr*) is one of the most important parts of an Islamic marriage. The dowry is a required gift from the groom to the bride as a sign of respect, duty, and honesty in starting a family. Islamic law is unambiguous about its place: it is the bride's exclusive right, and the Sharia does not set strict rules about its form and amount. (M. Ameer, & S. Khan, 2023)

In reality, the decision on the dowry is not only based on religious rules. In many parts of Indonesia,

conventions, traditions, social standing, and local cultural values also affect the dowry. This shows that marriage customs are typically a place where Islamic teachings and local culture come together. The Bugis-Makassar community is one among the groups that has a significant and complicated marriage tradition. In our culture, marriage is not just a private matter between two people; it also has to do with family honor, social status, and keeping old ideals alive. In the Bugis-Makassar society, conversations regarding dowry are intimately tied to things like the bride's family position, her education, her lineage, the family's financial situation, and other social aspects. In real life, the dowry is generally seen as a sign of respect for the bride and her family. But on the other hand, asking for too much dowry can cause problems including putting a strain on the groom's finances, delaying the wedding, and changing the meaning of dowry from a religious duty to a sign of social status. This circumstance brings up an important scholarly question about how dowry determination is done and if it follows Islamic law. (Sudirman, 2021).

The research problem in this study stems from the conflict between the normative principles of Islamic law, which advocate for ease, mutual consent, and non-burdening conditions in the determination of dowry, and the actualities of local cultural practices that may view dowry as a symbol of family honor and social status. Islamic law permits flexibility in the determination of dowry, contingent upon mutual agreement, absence of force, and adherence to the ideal of fairness. In other cultures, meanwhile, dowry can become an unreasonably high responsibility, putting economic and social pressure on the groom. This leads to the question of whether these behaviors are still in line with Islamic law or if they have become cultural burdens that need to be looked at again. (Berktaş, F. & Demirbaş, B, 2024)

This study concentrates on the analysis of dowry determination within the Bugis-Makassar community as an integral component of their traditional marriage system, while also assessing it through the lens of Islamic law. The examination encompasses not only the quantum of dowry but also the underlying motivations, cultural values, familial roles in the negotiating process, and the societal significance attributed to dowry. Consequently, this study aims to comprehend dowry not merely as a legal construct but also as a socio-cultural phenomena that persists in its evolution within society. (Bennett, L, 2021).

The principal research inquiries examined in this study encompass: the methodology of dowry determination within the Bugis-Makassar community; the determinants affecting the dowry amount; the interpretation of dowry in the context of *adat* (customary law) and familial honor; and the assessment of these culturally influenced practices by Islamic law. These inquiries are essential in elucidating the interplay between religious standards and cultural behaviors in Muslim countries. Furthermore, this study is pertinent in the framework of contemporary social transformation, as communities encounter the difficulty of maintaining traditions while reconciling them with religious tenets and modern circumstances. (Bradford, B, 2023)

This research is significant academically since it intersects Islamic law, the sociology of law, and cultural anthropology. Conversations about dowry usually only talk about the legal duty in normative Islamic jurisprudence. In social practice, dowry has many connotations than just its legal meaning. It can also be a cultural symbol, a way to negotiate with others, and a sign of honour. This study seeks

to elucidate the interplay between Islamic law and local practices about marriage, specifically among the Bugis-Makassar community.

This research also possesses practical significance. In daily life, dowry frequently serves as a pivotal element in the facilitation of marriage proceedings. Discrepancies in perceptions concerning suitable dowry amounts may postpone or obstruct marriage. So, looking into dowry customs is important to help people understand how to balance respect for local traditions with following Islamic rules. This study serves as a reflection that while local customs should be kept, they should not contradict the basic purpose of marriage in Islam, which is to form a healthy and viable family without incurring extra obligations. (Chen, Q. & Mahmood, R, 2025)

There are several ways to look at how important this research is. Theoretically, it contributes to the body of knowledge in Islamic law, particularly in the field of Islamic family law and the interaction between Sharia and customary practices. It could also be a source for more research on dowry, marital customs, and Islamic law in Indonesia's local settings. Methodologically, it promotes an integrative approach that amalgamates normative legal analysis with sociological viewpoints. In reality, this research helps the Bugis-Makassar community by helping them better grasp the meaning of dowry in Islam and making sure that cultural customs stay in line with the values of fairness, ease, and mutual consent. It gives religious and traditional officials a chance to help the community figure out how to set the dowry in a way that honors both Islamic principles and local customs. The findings may inform policymakers, scholars, and religious institutions in formulating culturally appropriate strategies for Islamic family law. (Sanusi et al, 2025)

The examination of dowry determination in the Bugis-Makassar community through the lens of Islamic law and local cultural practices is of considerable scholarly and practical importance. It does not only talk about dowry as a legal necessity; it also talks about how people understand, negotiate, and practice it in society. This study seeks to establish a peaceful equilibrium between Islamic legal principles and local cultural values, ensuring the preservation of traditions without undermining the fundamental teachings of Islam.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS FORMULATION

Several pertinent prior studies can substantiate research on the determination of dowry within the Bugis-Makassar society. First, a research by Rusman et al. in the *Jurnal Diskursus Islam* investigates the Bugis Bone community's perception of land as dowry, indicating that dowry is regarded not only as a legal obligation for marriage but also as possessing symbolic and social significance within the local customary framework. This research underscores that dowry customs in Bugis society are intricately linked to respect, social standing, and familial traditions.

Second, Palita cites an article by Zahrum N. and Anita Marwing that came out in *BUSTANUL FUQAHA* (2023) and looks at 'uang panai' in Bugis-Makassar marital traditions from an Islamic law point of view. The research underscores that local customs are permissible provided they do not conflict with Sharia principles and do not impose undue burdens.

Third, a study by Mawadda Warahmah et al. (2025) shows that a woman's social standing, education, family background, and job are all important factors that affect the amount of uang panai. The study also stresses the need to balance respect for culture with the Islamic ideal of ease. These studies show that research on dowry in the Bugis-Makassar community is still very important, especially when it comes to looking at how Islamic law, local cultural values, and customary practices are related.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study was undertaken in the Bugis-Makassar community in Makassar City, South Sulawesi, as a site that significantly embodies local cultural practices in the determination of dowry. The study was conducted during three months, from May to July 2025. This study utilizes a qualitative research design with a normative-sociological framework, analyzing the notion of dowry in Islamic law while concurrently assessing its use in social contexts. This technique is used because to the study's emphasis on both legal standards and the social and cultural factors that shape dowry practices. The data sources include both primary and secondary data. Interviews with traditional elders, religious leaders, married couples, and family members who were part in the dowry determination process were used to gather primary data. The research sample was chosen via purposive sampling, which means that the people chosen were those who had firsthand knowledge and experience of the activity. Books, academic publications, legal records, and other Islamic law material were used to get secondary data. The study of the data was done utilizing a descriptive-analytical process that included data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. This method seeks to elucidate the relationship between Islamic law and local cultural practices in the determination of dowry within the Bugis-Makassar community.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Dualism of Mahar Meaning between Syar'i and Cultural

Mahar, in the context of marriage within Bugis Makassar community, possesses significant meaning, both from the *syar'i* (Islamic law) viewpoint and from a more extensive cultural standpoint. For one thing, *mahar* is seen as a duty that the groom must accomplish in order for the marriage to be legal under Islamic law. However, among the Bugis Makassar community, *mahar* has a more complicated connotation. It is a sign of honor, dignity, and social validity for the woman's family. (Nurhikmah, Purnamasari & Nursalam, 2025).

From the *syar'i* point of view, *mahar* is the woman's right that the husband must offer her as a gesture of respect and dedication in the marriage. Islamic teachings stress the necessity of offering *mahar* as a sign of respect and duty for the wife. In this context, *mahar* has spiritual and religious significance and is an important aspect of the wedding ceremony. For the marriage to be valid in the eyes of the religion, the rite must be conducted.

In the Bugis Makassar society, nevertheless, *mahar* is more than just a religious duty. Mahar also has a social and cultural side that is just as important. In Bugis tradition, mahar is a sign of the woman's

family's social rank and honor. Giving a high or fancy *mahar* is generally a sign of the woman's family's status and place in the social hierarchy. So, *mahar* is not just a deal between the couple; it is also a social event that affects the status and ties between families. In this case, *mahar* is a way for the woman's family to gain more social credibility. The woman's family feels more appreciated if the *mahar* shows that they are of high social standing, and this is often talked about in their society. So, even though *mahar* is a religious duty in Islam, the amount and kind of *mahar* given in a marriage can be affected by local customs and traditions. In other circumstances, *mahar* even becomes a way for people to negotiate with each other that combines religious and cultural values. (Mawaddah et al, 2024).

In Bugis Makassar society, *mahar* is also a symbol of a woman's worth. In this culture, women are highly respected, and giving a huge *mahar* is a way to show that respect. The woman's family thinks that the *mahar* will show how much respect and honor the groom's family has for them, which will make them look better in the eyes of the community. But the dual meaning of *mahar* often causes problems between what religious teachings say is right and what tradition says is right. In Bugis Makassar community, for instance, *mahar* is often presented in the form of money or precious commodities that are more in line with *adat* (customary law), which may be too much or not enough for the groom's financial situation. This creates a problem between keeping high cultural values and following the less strict rules of *mahar* in Islamic law. (Rizal Saputra, Isandi & Putra, 2024).

The duality of *mahar's* meaning as both *syar'i* and cultural in Bugis Makassar community illustrates its role as a religious duty and a significant social emblem for the woman's family. Islam has precise rules about *mahar*, however in Bugis Makassar society, the amount and type of *mahar* are often affected by the way people usually do things. This puts people in a tough spot between doing what their religion says they should do and meeting the high social standards of the community. Consequently, comprehending *mahar* in this society cannot be exclusively interpreted via a theological lens; it must also be examined within the framework of culture and the prevailing social values of the community. (Temel, S, 2024)

B. Social Determinants in the Setting of Mahar

The method of figuring out the *mahar* amount in marriage in different cultures, like the Bugis Makassar civilization, is affected not only by religious legislation but also by fundamental social issues. The quantity of *mahar* is often affected by social factors such family position, level of education, lineage (*nasab*), and financial situation. These factors show that the setting of *mahar* is more of a social construction that is shaped by the social structure and norms that already exist in society. (Asmah & Putri, 2024).

First, family standing is one of the most important things that affects how much *mahar* a person gets. In traditional societies, families with a greater social standing usually want a higher *mahar*. This status is sometimes affected by the family's place in society, such as whether they are important figures in *adat* or local government or whether they are part of the nobility. A higher *mahar* is typically considered as a sign of respect and honor for the family, which is an important part of the current social order. Families with higher social status sometimes control the bargaining process for

mahar, expecting that the amount they get reflects their social standing. (Ullah, R, 2022)

Also, the level of education is a crucial factor in setting the *mahar*. In a lot of cultures, like Bugis Makassar, how educated you are is a sign of how smart you are and how well you can live. People generally think that a bride or her family with a greater level of education is more valuable, which is shown by a higher *mahar*. Education is thought to enhance value, hence the bride's family may ask for a bigger *mahar* to show how much they value the marriage. (Iqbal, M. & Zaman, K, 2022)

Lineage or *nasab* is also very important in deciding how much the *mahar* is, especially in societies like the Bugis Makassar society who value familial lineage. Families with noble or respected lineages generally request a greater *mahar* as a way to show respect for their family and ancestors. In this scenario, *mahar* is not only a sign of the family's social status, but it is also a way to protect the honor and dignity of their lineage. On the other hand, families with a less prestigious ancestry may accept or ask for a smaller *mahar*, however this isn't usually the case. (Van der Veer, P, 2023)

The amount of *mahar* is also affected by the state of the economy. In societies that are more modern and based on a market economy, the family's financial situation can determine how much *mahar* they can give or get. Families that have more money normally ask for a greater *mahar*, whereas families that are having trouble with money may prefer to establish a smaller *mahar* so that the groom's side doesn't have to pay too much. This is often affected by practical factors, like whether or not the groom can afford to pay the *mahar* based on his financial situation at the moment. (Javed, A, 2021)

In Bugis Makassar society, the amount of *mahar* is affected by significant social factors such family position, education level, lineage, and economic condition. People consider *mahar* as more than just a religious or customary duty; they also see it as a sign of social position, prestige, and the cultural values that are important in society. So, the practice of setting the *mahar* shows that there is a social construction that includes more than just religious duties. So, it is crucial to comprehend the setting of *mahar* as part of a bigger social dynamic, where *mahar* shows how society is structured and how people are ranked. (Saleh, 2020).

C. Normative Consistency with Islamic Law Principles

The determination of *mahar* in Muslim marriage procedures is of great significance, both in Islamic law and social customs. In Islamic law, the *mahar* is the woman's right that the male must provide her in order for the marriage to be recognized. In theory, the establishment of *mahar* in society adheres to Islamic law, if it is founded on mutual consent, free from coercion, and does not impose an excessive burden on the man. (Kalpaklıoğlu, B, 2024)

First, Islamic law says that both people must agree to provide the *mahar*, especially the man who gives it. This shows that you care for and respect the woman. The giving of *mahar* with the agreement of both parties also shows the idea of fairness in marriage, which is the basis for a good and happy relationship. In other words, as long as both parties agree to and agree to the amount of *mahar* without being forced or pressured, it is in line with Islamic law. In Islamic law, the *mahar* should not be a hardship for the male. The quantity of *mahar* should be in line with what he can afford so that the pair doesn't have any problems or stress once they get married. This is vital so that *mahar* is not

just a sign of love for the lady, but also a sign of how easy it is to live together. So, the quantity of *mahar* shouldn't be more than what the guy can afford, since Islamic law stresses the need for balance in all areas of life. (Khan, H, 2023).

But in real life, society often has an effect on the amount of *mahar* through its practices or social standards. Some customs say that high *mahar* is a sign of family honor and status. It is vital to stress that the decision of *mahar* in Islam must still be made with the agreement of both parties, without any pressure or force from any side. The bride's family may anticipate a greater *mahar* because of their social rank or prestige. However, as long as the guy does not feel burdened by it and agrees to it freely, this practice does not go against Islamic law. (Malik, Z, 2021)

In other circumstances, though, figuring out the *mahar* that includes delivering valuable products or paying extra expenditures can be hard on the man, especially if the amount is excessively high or not in line with what he can afford. In this instance, while societal or customary variables may affect the procedure, if the assessment of *mahar* surpasses the man's capacity or compels him to provide more than he can afford, it could be seen inconsistent with Islamic values that emphasize ease and justice in marriage. It is in line with Islamic law to set *mahar* in a way that is fair, uncomplicated, and doesn't put too much pressure on the guy. So, even if the *mahar* may be different in different cultures and customs, the most important thing is that it doesn't hurt or push the person giving it, and that both parties agree on it. (Müller, F, 2022)

D. Tension between the Idealism of Sharia and Cultural Reality

The process of determining *mahar* in the Bugis Makassar community illustrates a clash between the Islamic law's goal of easiness and the local culture's quest of repute. In Bugis Makassar community, family honor is very significant. *Mahar* is often seen as a sign of the woman's family's social status and respect. Islam claims that setting up a *mahar* should be easy, but in real life, it usually costs a lot of money, which can make marriage tougher and take longer. In Bugis Makassar culture, *mahar* is not only a religious duty, but it also shows how important the woman's family is. In Bugis culture, the amount of *mahar* usually relies on the family's social status and ancestry (*nasab*). Families with a higher social position, like those with noble lineages or famous persons in the community, frequently ask for a bigger *mahar* to show respect for that status. People usually consider that a high *mahar* means that the woman's family is well-respected in the community. (Rahman, A, 2024)

Islamic teachings suggest that the man should be able to provide *mahar* freely, however in Bugis Makassar community, cultural factors can occasionally get in the way of this. Some of the bride's relatives may ask for a very high *mahar*, including diamonds, a lot of money, or even land and property. The groom may not be able to pay for these things. This high *mahar* can make the groom and his family wait years to save up enough money. This means that it takes longer to get married than it would otherwise. One evident example of this contradiction is that in Bugis Makassar society, a high *mahar* is usually a non-negotiable requirement for marriage. For instance, in Bugis culture, families with noble or high-status lineages often establish a high *mahar* to protect their family's honor. This *mahar* can be exceedingly high, which could make it hard for the groom to pay for it. It can take him a long time to collect enough money to pay the *mahar*. (Said, L, 2025)

This huge mahar could potentially pose problems with the groom's money. In a lot of cases, the groom has to borrow money or give up precious goods to meet the high *mahar* requirement. Money troubles may be quite hard on newlyweds, which can make the relationship very stressful. Even while *mahar* is meant to demonstrate respect for the woman, the high *mahar* that is anticipated by local culture can go against the Islamic principle that things should be easy and fair.

In the Bugis Makassar community, the high *mahar* might also cause weddings to happen later than they should. Some couples, especially those with low incomes, may not be able to meet the high *mahar* demand. Since of this, people could decide to wait to get married or even abandon their plans since they can't afford the *mahar* that is seen as fitting. In this case, local cultural norms about social standing have more of an effect on the decision to marry than Islamic rules, which value ease and simplicity. (Shofiatul Jannah, Mufidah & Suwand, 2021).

The clash between the idealism of sharia and the practical world reveals how local culture can make people break Islamic regulations about *mahar*. Islamic law specifies that *mahar* should be easy and not a burden, however in Bugis Makassar society, local conventions sometimes set a high *mahar* as a show of social standing. This makes marriage more expensive and takes longer. To retain ethnic practices and follow Islamic norms that stress harmony and ease in family life, you need to find a balance.

CONCLUSION

The determination of *mahar* in Bugis Makassar society illustrates a conflict between the tenets of Islamic law and the indigenous cultural traditions that have evolved. According to Islamic law, *mahar* should be a duty that both parties agree to, is not too much trouble, and is based on the man's financial situation. In Bugis Makassar culture, though, social position, family prestige, and traditional standards often affect the *mahar*, which is a lot of money. This can cause problems with money and make marriage take longer. Local cultural norms sometimes put the bride's family's dignity and reputation first, which leads to greater *mahar* amounts. This is in contrast to Islamic precepts, which stress comfort and simplicity in marriage. This contradiction shows the difference between the idealism of Islamic law, which says things should be easy, and the cultural reality, which says that social status symbols are more important in the community.

This study indicates the necessity for a more equitable approach between the observance of Islamic principles and the preservation of local cultural traditions. Setting an extremely high *mahar* might impede marriages and impose a burden on the groom, potentially diminishing the quality of the marital partnership itself. Future research should focus on identifying pragmatic alternatives to reconcile the determination of *mahar* within the frameworks of Islamic law and local culture, as well as investigating the function of customary institutions in facilitating education regarding the accessibility of *mahar*. Additional research is necessary to enhance the comprehension of the social and economic ramifications of high *mahar* practices within society and to offer direction on the formulation of a just and non-oppressive *mahar*.

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