



Dowry at the Crossroads of Cultures: Tradition and Modernity in Islamic Marriage in Indonesia and Malaysia

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Abstract:

This study aims to examine the dynamics of mahar (dower) practices in Islamic marriage in Indonesia and Malaysia by highlighting the intersection between traditional values and modernity. Mahar is an Islamic legal institution designed to protect women's rights; however, in practice, it is often influenced by cultural norms and social pressures. In various communities, mahar is not only seen as a religious obligation but also as a symbol of social status, potentially triggering economic inequality and marriage barriers. This research employs a normative juridical method with a statute approach and qualitative data analysis through the study of classical and contemporary fiqh literature, positive legal regulations in Indonesia and Malaysia, and societal practices. The findings reveal that although the fundamental principles of mahar in Islam emphasize simplicity and justice, its implementation is frequently shaped by social constructs that hinder the original intent of the sharia. In Indonesia, local customs such as those in Lombok and Minangkabau provide distinct nuances, while in Malaysia, Malay traditions and symbolic value of mahar have also transformed in the modern era. This study concludes that an educational and reinterpetive approach to mahar is necessary to ensure alignment with maqashid sharia. A renewed understanding of mahar practices is essential to maintain its relevance, fairness, and contextuality in contemporary Muslim societies.

Keywords: Mahar, Culture, Modernity.

Introduction

Islam, as a universal religion, has the main goal of bringing justice and equality to all humanity.¹ One aspect that stands out in Islamic teachings is the special attention to the position of women, who were often victims of injustice in various pre-Islamic societies. In this regard, the institution of dowry plays an important role as a form of respect for women's rights in marriage. Dowry was not just a material gift; it symbolized respect for the wife's dignity and position in the family and society.² With the advent of Islam, women were given full authority over the dowry, a revolutionary move that aimed to protect their property rights and elevate them from a marginalized position to one that was fairly respected.

¹ A.H. Asari Taufiqurrohman dkk., "The Role of Islamic Law, Constitution, and Culture in Democracy in the UAE and Indonesia," *Ahkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 24, no. 1 (2024): 97.

² Umar dkk., "Sejarah Hukum Perkawinan di Dunia Islam," *Student Research Journal* 3, no. 1 (2025): 264.





In pre-Islamic times, especially in the Arab region before the prophethood of Muhammad, women were often discriminated against. They were not only considered inferior to men but also often deprived of basic rights such as property ownership and inheritance. In fact, bad practices such as the "burial alive" of baby girls (wa'du al-banat) became a common phenomenon as women's status was considered shameful or detrimental to the family. In such patriarchal societies, women were often viewed as family property that could be utilized for specific purposes, without being given respect or protection.³

However, with the arrival of Islam, this view began to change significantly. Islamic teachings emphasize that women have the same rights as men in many aspects, including in the field of marriage.⁴ One of the tangible manifestations of Islam's commitment to gender justice is the institution of dowry. The dowry, which is required by Islamic law for husbands, is a specific gift given to the wife as a sign of respect and recognition of her contribution to the marriage. Not only that, the dowry also serves as financial security for the wife in the event of divorce or the death of the husband.⁵

In the Qur'an, Allah SWT says, "Give the dowry to the woman (whom you marry) as a willing gift." (QS An-Nisa [4]: 4).⁶ This verse shows that the dowry is a religious obligation to be fulfilled by the husband and that it should be given in good faith and without coercion. This shows how Islam provides protection to women, ensuring that they are not exploited or degraded in the marital relationship. Furthermore, dowry is not only material-in the form of money, gold, or other goods-but can also be in the form of knowledge, education, or even certain promises that benefit the wife.⁷ The dowry thus becomes a symbol of respect for the nobility of women and their role in building the household. It also reflects the Islamic principle of justice which emphasizes that every individual, whether male or female, has rights and dignity that must be respected.

By harmonizing its universal principles with local values, Islam succeeded in elevating women from a position that was often abused in pre-

³ Erika Amanda, "The Position of Women In the Political Field: In the Islamic View Of the Time Of the Prophet Muhammad SAW," *Al-Masail: Journal of Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2023): 41.

⁴ Muhammad Adres Prawira Negara, "Keadilan Gender Dan Hak-Hak Perempuan Dalam Islam (Studi Analisis Pemikiran Asghar Ali Engineer)," *Az-Zahra: Journal of Gender and Family Studies* 2, no. 2 (2022): 77.

⁵ Annisa Rizky Amalia, "Tradisi Perkawinan Merariq Suku Sasak di Lombok: Studi Kasus Integrasi Agama dengan Budaya Masyarakat Tradisional" (Skripsi, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2017), 31.

⁶ Departemen Agama Republik Indonesia, *Al-Qur'an dan Terjemahannya* (Fitrah Rabbani, 2009), 77.

⁷ Khairuddin, "Mahar dalam Islam: Hukum, Tuntutan, dan Realitas Sosial," *Journal of Dual Legal Systems* 1, no. 2 (2024): 95.



Islamic societies to one that was valued and respected.⁸ The dowry, as one of the important instruments in this process, is clear evidence of how Islam recognizes women's rights and guarantees the protection of their dignity. This is one of the hallmarks of Islam as a universal religion that is relevant in every time and place, including in modern times.

Dowry, in Islamic terms, is more than just a material transaction; it is a protection of women's dignity that was often overlooked in pre-Islamic societies. In the times before the coming of Islam, women were often seen as objects that could be utilized for social or economic gain, rather than as individuals with rights and dignity. However, with the introduction of the dowry, Islam provided a strong foundation for respecting and protecting the dignity of women within the bonds of marriage. The dowry not only affirmed a woman's right of ownership over the property she received, but also signaled that women had an important role to play in social and family life.

Overall, the dowry became an important instrument in elevating the dignity of women from a position that was often abused in pre-Islamic societies. By providing respect for property rights, financial protection and authority in marriage decisions, the dowry affirmed that women had rights and dignity that should be respected. This institution became a powerful symbol of how Islam was committed to protecting the dignity of women, distancing them from the discriminatory treatment they were often subjected to in pre-Islamic societies.

Among previous studies, namely research conducted by Asrul Hamid et al. in 2025, in a journal entitled "Pergeseran Makna Mahar Dalam Tradisi Perkawinan Adat Mandailing: Perspektif Hukum Islam dan Nilai Sosial". This study discusses the shift in the meaning of dowry in Mandailing traditional marriage from the perspective of Islamic law and social values. The results of the study show that high dowries often become a barrier to marriage and trigger social conflicts in society.⁹ Unlike previous studies, this study has a broader and comparative scope, comparing dowry practices between two countries, Indonesia and Malaysia, each of which has cultural diversity, legal systems, and state policies that influence the meaning and implementation of dowries. The novelty of this study lies in its transnational comparative approach, which examines the dynamics of dowry not only from the perspective of custom or locality, but also from the interaction between traditional values and modernity in two majority Muslim countries with different legal systems and family policies. Furthermore, this study does not

⁸ Rizkia Permata Rabia Adawiyah, "Kedudukan Perempuan Dalam Islam Menurut Siti Musdah Mulia" (Skripsi, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2020), 54.

⁹ Asrul Hamid dkk., "Pergeseran Makna Mahar Dalam Tradisi Perkawinan Adat Mandailing: Perspektif Hukum Islam Dan Nilai Sosial," *Familia: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga* 6, no. 1 (2025): 22–41, <https://doi.org/10.24239/familia.v6i1.298>.



only examine the normative aspects of Islamic law but also highlights the influence of contemporary social and economic challenges, such as urbanization, consumerist lifestyles, and the impact of social media on mahar practices. Thus, this study offers a new, more contextual and relevant perspective on contemporary developments, contributing to a broader understanding of how the concept of dowry can be interpreted flexibly while remaining consistent with the fundamental principles of Islamic law.

Metode Penelitian

This research uses normative juridical research, which is an approach that focuses on the study of legal norms, both from classical Islamic legal texts and from positive regulations that apply in Indonesia and Malaysia.¹⁰ Normative juridical research is used because the topic discussed is closely related to the analysis of Islamic law regarding the institution of dowry and how these norms interact and transform in the context of culture and modernity.

The approach used in this research is the statute approach. Through this approach, the author analyzes various regulations governing the practice of dowry in marriage, such as Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage, the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI) in Indonesia, and regulations related to Islamic family law in Malaysia. In addition, this approach is also enriched by the study of Islamic legal sources such as the Qur'an, hadith, and fiqh literature from various madhhabs, to find the basic principles underlying the concept of dowry. This research is not only limited to normative analysis of legal texts, but also considers the socio-cultural dimensions that influence the implementation of these norms in society. Therefore, this normative approach is complemented by observations of the socio-cultural realities that accompany the practice of dowry in the two countries, so that a meeting point between legal norms and social practices can be found.

The data analysis technique used is qualitative analysis, namely by systematically managing and interpreting data to gain an in-depth understanding of the concept and dynamics of dowry in Islamic marriage.¹¹ The data used are legal documents, fiqh books, results of previous research, and empirical references on the practice of dowry in Indonesian and Malaysian society. The analysis was conducted by describing, reviewing, and synthesizing the data within the framework of Islamic legal thought and local culture, then adjusted to the context of growing modernity.

¹⁰ Jonaedi Efendi dan Prasetyo Rijadi, *Metode Penelitian Hukum Normatif dan Empiris*, 2 ed. (Kencana, 2022), 125.

¹¹ Miza Nina Adlini dkk., "Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Studi Pustaka," *Edumaspul: Jurnal Pendidikan* 6, no. 1 (2022): 975, <https://doi.org/10.33487/edumaspul.v6i1.3394>.



Research Results and Discussion

Dowry in Indonesian and Malaysian Culture: Between Tradition and Modernity

In Indonesia, the practice of dowry in marriage is not only influenced by Islamic teachings but also by a very diverse local culture. Indonesia, as the largest Muslim-majority country in the world, has a rich culture that is unique to each region. This makes the institution of dowry a complex phenomenon, where Islamic values combine with local traditions in different forms. In some regions, such as Lombok and Minangkabau, the dowry often reflects strong social stratification, while in others, it is seen more as a symbol of simplicity and ease.

In Lombok, the practice of dowry is heavily influenced by the customs that are closely tied to the lives of the local people. Dowries in this region are not only limited to cash, but can also take the form of land, livestock or other items of value.¹² The size of the dowry is often determined by the social status and education of the bride-to-be. For example, if the prospective wife comes from a noble family or has a high level of education, the dowry requested tends to be larger. This reflects the social stratification system that is still strong in Lombok society. However, this practice sometimes poses its own challenges, especially for prospective husbands from low economic backgrounds. High dowry demands can become a heavy burden, even preventing marriages from taking place. Some reports indicate that there are young couples who choose to postpone or even cancel their wedding plans due to the inability of the prospective husbands to fulfill the dowry demands that are considered excessive. This situation highlights the contradiction between the purpose of dowry as a respect for the rights of wives and the social reality that it sometimes becomes a barrier for couples who want to get married.

In contrast to Lombok, dowry practices in Minangkabau have unique characteristics as they are influenced by the matrilineal system that is dominant in the region. In Minangkabau society, lineage and inheritance of property is done through the mother's line.¹³ Although Islam is the main basis for marriage, Minangkabau customs exert a strong influence on the implementation of dowry. Mahar here is more symbolic and is often given in the form of useful items, such as gold jewelry or a set of kitchen utensils.

¹² Amalia, "Tradisi Perkawinan Merariq Suku Sasak di Lombok: Studi Kasus Integrasi Agama dengan Budaya Masyarakat Tradisional," 31.

¹³ Lilis, "Tradisi-Tradisi dalam Pembagian Harta Warisan di Masyarakat Minangkabau," *Siwayang Journal* 2, no. 1 (2023): 7.



Along with the times, modernity has begun to influence dowry practices in Indonesia. In some urban areas, especially among the younger generation, dowries are often seen as a symbol of simplicity and aesthetics. Many couples use ornamental dowries because they want something different, unique and nice in their marriage.¹⁴ The practice of dowry in Indonesia is a reflection of the interaction between Islamic teachings, local culture and modernity. On the one hand, Islamic values that emphasize simplicity and ease in marriage continue to be a reference for many couples. On the other hand, strong local customs often add a traditional dimension to dowry practices. Modernity, with all its dynamics, brings new changes that demand adaptation to traditional values. All of these phenomena show that dowry in Indonesia is not just a material gift, but also a reflection of interacting cultural values, religion and social realities. The challenges that arise, such as the financial burden of high dowry demands, need to be addressed with a more inclusive and awareness-based approach to the true meaning of dowry in Islam.

In Malaysia, the institution of dowry is also undergoing a process of adaptation to Malay culture, which has strong local traditions and values. Malay culture has a strong influence in shaping the identity of Malaysian society, including in marriage practices.¹⁵ In terms of dowry, the Malay tradition often adds symbolic and aesthetic elements that enhance the meaning of the dowry as a tribute to the woman's family. Dowries in traditional Malay marriages are usually given in the form of high-value items, such as gold jewelry, silk fabrics, or a certain amount of cash. These items not only reflect the financial means of the prospective husband, but are also considered as symbols of the nobility and dignity of the woman's family.

However, as in Indonesia, the size of the dowry is often influenced by factors such as the social status, education and reputation of the woman's family.¹⁶ In some communities, a high dowry demand is often seen as an indicator of family prosperity and prestige. This creates social pressure for prospective husbands, especially those from lower economic backgrounds, to meet the standards considered ideal by the community. Although the tradition of dowry in Malay culture remains strong, modernity has brought significant changes in the way dowry is understood and implemented. Among the younger generation, especially in big cities like Kuala Lumpur and Johor Bahru, dowry is often seen as a symbol of simplicity and practicality. Many

¹⁴ Muhammad Fikri Nur Fathoni, "Faktor-Faktor Penyebab Calon Pengantin Memilih Mahar dengan Bentuk uang Hias (Studi Kasus di Kecamatan Sekampung Kabupaten Lampung Timur)" (Skripsi, IAIN Metro, 2018).

¹⁵ Haryani Sitanggang dkk., "Peranan Adat Melayu dalam Membangun Identitas Budaya," *Pemajuan Kebudayaan Dalam Gempuran Zaman* 3 (t.t.): 16.

¹⁶ Muhammad Salim Mahmudi dkk., "Studi Analisis Penentuan Jumlah Mahar oleh Toko Adat Perspektif Hukum Islam," *Bureaucracy Journal: Indonesia Journal of Law and Social-Political Governance* 3, no. 3 (2023): 3085.



couples opt for small nominal dowries, such as RM50 or RM100, as a way of adjusting to modern economic conditions and lifestyles. This practice is also driven by the understanding that the dowry should not be a heavy financial burden, but rather a symbol of the husband's seriousness in starting a home life.

Modernity has also influenced the way dowries are given. In today's digital era, some couples choose to give dowries in the form of stocks, which are more practical and relevant to the lifestyle.¹⁷ This reflects adaptation to technology and changing social values that prioritize efficiency and convenience. However, despite the trend towards simplicity, challenges remain. In some traditional communities, high dowry demands are still an issue that is difficult to eliminate. This phenomenon is often triggered by social pressure that considers dowry as an indicator of a family's social status. As a result, many prospective husbands feel pressured and find it difficult to meet these expectations, especially under difficult economic conditions.

Interaksi Antarbudaya dan Modernitas dalam Praktik Mahar

The practice of dowry is a reflection of the interaction between Islamic teachings, culture and modernity. On the one hand, Islamic values that emphasize simplicity and ease in marriage continue to be a reference for many couples. On the other hand, strong traditions often add a symbolic dimension to the practice of dowry. Modernity, with all its dynamics, brings new changes that demand adaptation to traditional values.¹⁸ All of these phenomena show that dowry is not only a material gift, but also a reflection of interacting cultural values, religion and social realities. The challenges that arise, such as the financial burden of high dowry demands, need to be addressed with a more inclusive approach based on awareness of the true meaning of dowry in Islam.

Dowry practices in Indonesia and Malaysia reflect an interesting intersection of local tradition and modernity. In both countries, traditional values influenced by local culture and Islam meet the social changes brought about by modernity. This interaction creates a unique dynamic in the implementation of dowries, where traditional elements combine with modern values that emphasize simplicity and convenience. In Indonesia, local traditions such as Lombok and Minangkabau customs give a distinctive color to dowry practices. In Lombok, dowries often reflect strong social stratification, with high dowry values used as an indicator of a woman's family's social status. Meanwhile, in Minangkabau, the dominant matrilineal

¹⁷ Joni Alif Utama dan Rizka Fitriyah, "Studi Eksplorasi Tentang Mahar Pernikahan Berupa Aset Digital Saham Dalam Perspektif Islam," *LitaskuNu: Jurnal Hukum & Keluarga Islam* 1, no. 1 (2025): 37.

¹⁸ Rudi Hartono I dkk., "Urgensi Mahar sebagai Bentuk Komitmen dalam Ikatan Pernikahan Islam," *Reflection : Islamic Education Journal* 2, no. 2 (2025): 250.



system influences the way dowries are given, with a focus on symbolic meanings rather than material aspects. Similarly, in Malaysia, the Malay tradition adds aesthetic and symbolic elements to the implementation of dowry, such as the traditional ritual of tepung tawar as a form of respect for the woman's family.¹⁹

Modernity has brought significant changes in the way dowry is understood and implemented in both countries. In the digital era, modernity has also influenced the way dowries are given. This shows that modernity has not only brought about changes in social values, but also in the methods of implementing traditions. The interaction between tradition and modernity in dowry practices creates a unique intersection. On the one hand, traditional values that emphasize respect for the woman's family and symbolization of social status remain a reference point for many communities. On the other hand, modernity encourages awareness of the importance of simplicity and convenience in marriage, in accordance with Islamic principles. This intersection is reflected in more flexible dowry practices, where couples can choose to follow local traditions or adapt to modern values according to their needs.

However, challenges remain. In some cases, high dowry demands are still an issue that is difficult to eliminate, especially in rural areas or traditional communities. This phenomenon is often triggered by social pressures that consider dowry as an indicator of a family's social status. Therefore, it is important to continue educating people about the true meaning of dowry in Islam, which is as a respect for the rights of the wife and not as a financial burden. This whole phenomenon shows that the intersection of tradition and modernity in dowry practices is the result of a dynamic interaction between cultural values, religion and social realities. With a wise and inclusive approach, dowry can be a tool to strengthen the relationship between two families, while reflecting the values of justice and equality in marriage.

Social and Economic Challenges in Dowry Practices

The practice of dowry, despite its deep meaning in Islam as a respect for the rights of wives, often faces significant social and economic challenges in Indonesia and Malaysia. Some of these challenges relate to high dowry demands, social pressures, as well as the impact on the economic stability of young couples. In this regard, it is important to understand how these challenges affect the practice of dowry and how solutions can be developed to address these issues.

¹⁹ Sarra Jastika Bohari dan Mohamad Maulana Magiman, "Simbol dan Pemaknaan Ritual Adat Tepung Tawar Dalam Perkahwinan Masyarakat Melayu Sarawak," *Jurnal Komunikasi Borneo* 9 (2021): 23.



One of the main challenges in dowry practice is the high demand for dowry, which is often perceived as an indicator of the social status of a woman's family. In some communities, especially in rural areas or traditional communities, dowry is not only seen as a religious obligation, but also as a means of demonstrating family prosperity and prestige. This phenomenon can create significant social pressure for prospective husbands, especially those from low economic backgrounds.²⁰ In Indonesia, for example, in areas such as Lombok, high dowry demands are often a barrier to young couples getting married. Many prospective husbands feel pressured and find it difficult to meet these expectations, so they choose to postpone or even cancel wedding plans. This not only affects the couple's personal lives, but can also worsen social conditions in the community, as many young people end up postponing marriage or choosing not to get married at all. In this case, the dowry is no longer seen as the wife's right, but as a tool to improve the family's reputation. This pressure can create internal conflict within the family, especially if the prospective husband is unable to fulfill the demand. In some cases, this social pressure can also lead to unhealthy marriages, where couples feel forced to marry to meet societal expectations. This is contrary to the purpose of marriage in Islam, which is to create a family that is *sakinah, mawaddah, wa rahmah*.²¹

Another challenge arising from the practice of dowry is its impact on the economic stability of young couples. High dowry demands often place a burden on prospective husbands, especially those who are just starting their careers or have low incomes.²² Many husbands-to-be have to go into debt or sell assets to fulfill dowry demands, which can ultimately affect their financial stability after marriage. In Indonesia, for example, reports show that many young couples experience economic hardship after marriage due to the debt burden they incur to pay the dowry. This not only affects their quality of life, but can also create tension in the household. In some cases, this financial burden can even lead to divorce, as couples are unable to cope with the economic pressure caused by the dowry.

To address these challenges, it is important to educate people about the true meaning of dowry in Islam. Dowry should be understood as a symbol of a husband's seriousness in building a household, not as a heavy financial burden. This education can be done through religious programs in mosques, schools, or social media, which emphasize the importance of simplicity and

²⁰ Dini Tri Hidayatus Sya'dyya, "Mahar dalam Al-Qur'an: Kajian Hermeneutika Abdullah Saeed Pada Kata Qintha QS. An-Nisa [4]: 20," *At-Taisir: Journal of Indonesian Tafsir Studies* 5, no. 2 (2024): 20.

²¹ Irwana dkk., "Menggali Dampak Perjudohan Paksa Terhadap Kesehatan Mental Anak: Perspektif Psikoanalisis dan Nilai-Nilai Hukum Keluarga Islam, di Desa Plaosan Kecamatan Krucil, Probolinggo," *Cendekia: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 11, no. 1 (2025): 155.

²² Ahmad Musthofa, "Mahar Dalam Perkawinan Perspektif Imam Empat Mazhab" (Skripsi, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2025), 5.



ease in marriage. In addition, the role of community leaders and religious leaders is crucial in changing people's perceptions of dowry. They can provide concrete examples of simple yet meaningful dowry practices, so that people can follow their example. In some communities, there has been a movement to promote symbolic dowries, such as small amounts of money or other useful items, as a form of adjustment to modern economic conditions and lifestyles.

All of these challenges suggest that the practice of dowry requires a wise and inclusive approach to ensure that it remains relevant to the needs of modern society. With the right solution, dowry can be a tool to strengthen the relationship between two families, while reflecting the values of justice and equality in marriage.

Conclusion

Based on an in-depth study of the practice of dowry in Islamic marriage culture in Indonesia and Malaysia, it can be concluded that this phenomenon not only represents the obligations of sharia, but also illustrates the complex intersection of religious teachings, customs, and the dynamic influence of modernity. Mahar, which was originally interpreted as a form of respect for women's dignity and rights, in practice underwent a transformation of meaning in line with social, economic and cultural developments in society. This institution continues to struggle between efforts to preserve Islamic values of justice and simplicity, and social pressures that emphasize status symbols and prestige.

In Indonesia, cultural diversity creates a wide variety of dowry practices. In some areas, such as Lombok, the dowry acts as a measure of social status, where a high value is considered a symbol of family dignity. This phenomenon has resulted in an economic burden on the male party, and in some cases has even become a barrier to marriage. In contrast, in communities such as Minangkabau, the dowry tends to be more symbolic, but still contains strong cultural values. These two patterns show that interpretations of dowry are not uniform, but are shaped by local values that have lived for generations. Meanwhile, in Malaysia, the influence of Malay customs has shaped the implementation of dowries in a more aesthetic and ceremonial form. Cultural elements such as the tepung tawar ceremony, as well as the provision of symbolic items of high value, indicate that the practice of dowry in this country places more emphasis on symbols of social esteem. However, modernization has also influenced the younger generation in redefining the meaning of dowry. In big cities, the tendency to simplify dowries has become more common, as a form of adaptation to economic realities as well as the spirit to build a household based on the principles of equality and mutual understanding.



The interaction between traditional and modern values in both countries creates an interesting dialectic. On the one hand, local traditions maintain the form and value of dowries based on the norms of their respective communities. On the other hand, modernization has led to demands for simplicity and efficiency, in line with Islamic teachings that call for simplicity in marriage. Thus, new practices were born, such as the use of symbolic dowries in the form of small money, stocks or functional goods, as an attempt to balance cultural demands with the economic and spiritual realities of the era. However, it cannot be ignored that the practice of dowry continues to face challenges. The financial burden posed by high dowry demands is not only burdensome for individuals, but also has the potential to hinder marriage and create gender inequality in family relations. Social pressure to meet certain dowry standards often leads to debt or household instability after marriage. In this context, the dowry risks moving away from its basic purpose of honoring women and becoming a source of structural injustice hidden in cultural packaging.

The solution to this challenge is not to abolish the institution of dowry, but to recontextualize it in accordance with the spirit of *maqashid sharia* and contemporary social conditions. An educative and participatory approach involving religious, traditional and educational leaders is needed to build new awareness about the essence of dowry. Campaigns on simplicity, awareness of fairer Islamic law, and increased social literacy regarding the function of dowry need to be expanded so that people are no longer trapped in excessive symbolism. Thus, dowry is not just a tradition or a legal obligation, but a reflection of the changing dynamics of civilization. To keep the substance of dowry relevant and functional in strengthening the institution of Islamic marriage, a more progressive, fair and contextual understanding is needed. The practice of dowry should be a bridge between the spiritual values of Islam and the socio-cultural reality of society, rather than an obstacle to the creation of a *sakinah* family. Collective awareness to balance cultural heritage with pure Islamic teachings is the key to reforming the practice of dowry to be more just, inclusive and grounded in the lives of today's Muslim communities.

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