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## Arranged Marriages among Young Educated Muslim Women in South Sulawesi, Indonesia

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### Abstract

Previous studies claimed that arranged marriages occur in underdeveloped societies, among the uneducated and low social classes. However, in Indonesia, especially in South Sulawesi, arranged marriages also occur among young educated muslim women. This study aims to answer why young educated Muslim women accept arranged marriages by their parents or families instead of marrying their boyfriends. This study also elaborated further on the issue of their feelings and experiences, such as feelings after marriage, dating experiences, and the reasons of their parents matched to them. This study used a postcolonial approach to analyze why young educated Muslim women accept arranged marriages. By conducting in-depth interviews with five young educated Muslim women who have married through the arranged process, this study found several reasons why young educated Muslim women accept arranged marriages, including the family system, religious teachings, economic considerations, and personal reasons that they consciously choose.

### Keywords:

*Arranged Marriages, Young Educated Muslim Women, Postcolonialism.*

### Abstrak

Beberapa penelitian sebelumnya mengklaim bahwa perjodohan terjadi di masyarakat terbelakang, di kalangan tidak berpendidikan dan di kelas sosial yang rendah. Namun, di Indonesia, khususnya di Sulawesi Selatan, perjodohan juga terjadi di kalangan perempuan muda muslim berpendidikan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjawab mengapa perempuan muda muslim terpelajar menerima perjodohan oleh orang tua atau keluarga mereka daripada menikahi pacarnya. Penelitian ini juga mengelaborasi lebih lanjut persoalan perasaan dan pengalaman mereka, seperti perasaan setelah menikah, pengalaman berpacaran, dan alasan orang tua menjodohkan mereka. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan postkolonial untuk menganalisis mengapa perempuan muda muslim berpendidikan menerima perjodohan. Dengan melakukan wawancara mendalam terhadap

*lima perempuan muda muslim terpelajar yang telah menikah melalui proses perjodohan, penelitian ini menemukan beberapa alasan mengapa remaja putri muslim terpelajar menerima perjodohan, antara lain sistem keluarga, ajaran agama, pertimbangan ekonomi, dan alasan pribadi yang secara sadar mereka pilih.*

**Kata Kunci:**

Perjodohan, Perempuan Muda Muslim Terpelajar, Poskolonialisme.

## **Introduction**

The notion of love and marriage is inseparable from space and time, and it cannot be separated from its social context, and the idea of love and marriage can vary from one culture to another. Previous studies on love and marriage tend to see love as a personal psychological aspect (Anderson 2014). In contrast, love is a phenomenon experienced by every human being and is not only a personal issue but also a societal issue (Illouz 1997). In short, love is not only a matter of personal choice but also a matter of social structure (Rusu 2018). The conception of love in society also affects people cognitively (Beall and Sternberg 1995), and in the Western culture in the mid-1900s, love became an integral part of marriage (Soloski et al. 2013). Suppose we see love as a social phenomenon. In that case, we cannot separate the analysis from the social structure in which love has the potential to disrupt or to change (in a dynamic sense) lineages and class strata in a particular society, and therefore, in the theory of power, love must be controlled (Foucault 1982); (Oyamot, Fuglestad, and Snyder 2010). One form of community control over love and marriage is seen through the practice of arranged marriages (Goode 1959), which is still rife in many parts of the world (Epstein, Pandit, and Thakar 2013); (Ghimire, Axinn, Yabiku 2006); including in Indonesia. If we read human history in the past, the practice of arranged marriages has occurred for thousands of years in various parts of the world. Although today the practice of arranged marriages is not as popular as it used to be, this

practice can still be found in many places (Coontz 2005); (Myers, Madathil 2011). Several studies revealed that arranged marriages are most common in Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Countries that fall into this category include India, China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Japan, Iran, Iraq, Korea, and Indonesia (Wafiroh 2018). Based on several research results, arranged marriages do not only occur in Indonesia or not only in Asian countries but also in European countries (Jones 2010); (Kiernan 1991).

In Indonesia, marriage has been a problem in the gender movement since the Women's Congress in 1938, and Foucault one of the issues discussed was about arranged marriages (Blackburn 2004; Martyn 2005; Suryochondro 1984; Vreede-De Stuers 1960). There has been much research on marriage, but there is still a dearth of discussion about arranged marriages. Although several previous studies have discussed arranged marriages in Indonesia, there are still frequent misunderstandings. For example, the assumption that arranged marriages only occur in backward, uneducated, low social classes, as many previous studies have shown. But the fact is, in Indonesia, especially in South Sulawesi, arranged marriages also occur among women who are educated, prosperous in the economic field, or are in the upper-middle class.

The lack of research that discusses arranged marriages in South Sulawesi, especially from a postcolonial perspective (showing the diversity of choices and reasons women accept arranged marriages), makes this research important. Based on this study, several pieces of literature state that arranged marriages occur because: (1) traditional/cultural heritage, those arranged marriages occur because it has become a tradition or culture of particular community groups, and it is passed down from generation to generation as part of socio-cultural identity; (2) maintain the family system, that arranged marriages occur because of maintaining the kinship system in certain familial principles in society; (3) for the sake of social and economic status, those arranged marriages are another strategy

to maintain the social and economic level of families or agencies involved with the broader community; (4) religious doctrine/religious reasons, there are many arranged marriages due to religious reasons, that religion, Islam for example, allows polygamy in some instances which is then used to legitimize arranged marriages. The last reason can be found easily in Islamic boarding schools, as an Islamic education environment (Abdullah 2014); (Dakir dan Umiarso 2017), where many arranged marriage cases occur (Wafiroh 2018).

Several other pieces of literature also show that a personal agency can overcome arranged marriages and that women's agency is not always lost in the case of marriage (Pande 2015; Fox 1975; Batabyal and Beladi 2002; Sheel 2005). A strong personal agency can provide more room for resistance to arranged marriages. Stronger romantic love also provides opportunities for both parties involved in the marriage to reject the arranged marriages (Bhopal 2000; Illouz 1997). Apart from the personal agency and strong romantic love, highly educated women may also reject the practice of arranged marriages, that they can think more critically about marriage, where women should be able to make their own choices and tend to have the view that arranged marriages is outdated (Bhopal 2011; Pande 2015; Bhopal 2000). Although in certain cases, arranged marriages are even more common among educated people.

In South Sulawesi, for example, the practice of arranged marriages is increasing among educated Muslim women. Therefore, this study wants to answer questions; why do arranged marriages occur among educated women, especially why do educated Muslim women accept arranged marriages instead of refusing and marrying their boyfriends? This study uses the perspective of the postcolonial theory, which recognizes the diversity of reasons in each person. Most studies on arranged marriages only look at a small part of arranged marriages in general about how women should break away from arranged marriages, whereas, in the postcolonial

context, everyone has their reasons, and it cannot be separated from the context of the person's feelings. The study argues that the postcolonial theory approach in viewing arranged marriage practices in South Sulawesi is important amid the lack of study and the misunderstanding of several previous studies.

Although this study claims that there is a dearth of study on arranged marriages in South Sulawesi, because there is limited enough study on this topic that examined the arranged marriages of educated women in South Sulawesi. However, there have been many studies on arranged marriages in general that come from different places. From these previous studies, there are at least three approaches that are commonly used in viewing arranged marriage practices, *first*, arranged marriages within the framework of personal agency; *second*, the relationship between arranged marriages and education; *third*, arranged marriages as part of the shame and honor.

One of the problems that are often associated with arranged marriages is personal agency. Previous studies have shown that women who experience arranged marriages still use their agency to become active actors. For example, Raksha Pande, confirms that some Asian women are not always passive actors; they are also able to use individual agency and their power to navigate their paths in terms of love and their marriage (Pande 2015). Pande study aims to prove that arranged marriages between Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi Women in the United Kingdom do not place women in the position of passive subjects. This study criticizes that both arranged marriages and forced marriages are cultural practices that undermine individual agency. However, that is not always the case. This Pande study uses the idea of postcolonial feminism by raising two old issues in the feminist debate, namely the idea of individual agency and the role of power in the struggle for women's rights. The results of this study indicate that some Asian women are not always passive actors; they can also navigate their way.

However, not all women can use their agency and become active subjects in the practice of arranged marriages. Greer Litton Fox found that love-match marriages (which are fully supported by private agencies) are more likely to be adopted by segments of society who have ideas about modernization and “modern ideas” (Fox 1975). Fox examines the issue of arranged marriages in contemporary Turkey. There are three main questions explored; *first*, in which segment of the population is the love compatibility versus traditional arranged marriages found. *Second*, what is the impact of mate self-selection on marital homogamy, and *third*, what impact does this type of marriage arrangement have on marital behavior. The results of this study indicate that the adoption of innovation in marriage patterns is most significant among the more modern segments of the population. Those from this segment are more capable of breaking away from the pattern of arranged marriages. This is in line with the findings of Helen Baykara-Krumme. Based on his study of 2000 Families who migrated to Europe, there is a strong decline in the arranged marriages culture over the last four decades. arranged marriages is less common among migrants in Western Europe than among those living in Turkey (Baykara-Krumme 2015).

The personal agency factor is also inseparable from economic (mathematical) considerations, especially when agents think about deciding whether to accept or reject arranged marriages. For example, Amitrajeet A. Batabyal and Hamid Beladi, who studied the comparison between arranged marriages and love marriages, found that the decision to accept an arranged marriage depends on a comparison of the estimates of the amount of time needed by the agents to find a partner, especially the estimated total time for the agents to find a partner (Batabyal and Beladi 2002). That is, there is an economic calculation for agents, female or male subjects involved in arranged marriages, to accept arranged marriages. This study shows that agents or actors who will decide to accept or reject

an arrangement have an estimation of whether they still have sufficient time to find a surrogate or the man/woman they want to marry or not. They tend to compare the estimated time it will take them (participating agents) to find a partner.

Private agencies also provide space for women to think about or consider the practice of arranged marriages. However, economic issues also playing significant role apart from a personal agency, as shown in the field research conducted by Ranjana Sheel in Vancouver, British Columbia, which examined the relationship between money, marriage, and gender for the status of women (Sheel 2005). This study shows how economic elements, such as money and so on, contribute to developing women's status in society, especially in the practice of marriage. Just like the result of study conducted by Philipp M. Lersch in Germany, that women and man gain unequally in their wealth attainment through marriage (Lersch 2017).

Apart from discussing economic factors and the personal agency of women involved in arranged marriages, previous studies have also questioned education. Does the education level of a woman or a man influence and determine his choice to accept the practice of arranged marriages? Some research on this, Kalwant Bhopal, for example, examined the effect of education on the participation of South Asian women in the traditional practice of arranged marriages and the practice of giving dowries. (Bhopal 2000) Bhopal found that women with higher levels of education tend to reject certain aspects (arranged marriages and dowries) of their traditions.

Conversely, women with lower levels of education tend to accept and continue their traditions, including accepting the practice of arranged marriages. Similar research results can be seen in a study by Fauzia Ahmad, who examined the increasing participation rate of British South Asian Muslim women in higher education (Ahmad 2001). This study further

explores Muslim women's motivations to enter higher education and sees that these things have also changed the current discourse around Muslim women. The results of this study indicate that higher education is an asset for women to maintain and gain social prestige so that they can become more independent and make their own decisions.

Similar results can be seen in a study which Bhopal also conducted on Indian women's participation in the educational community and their contribution to arranged marriages (Bhopal 2011). By using Etienne Charles Wenger's theory of social capital, this study found that educated women can negotiate their participation in arranged marriages, mainly because education is considered a means to develop a broader bond of connection' than uneducated women. The results of other studies also support that education is closely related to the practice of arranged marriages, for example, the research conducted by Yingchun Ji on the negotiation process between education and marriage, specifically to answer the question of whether women continue education after marriage and how they combine their roles as families and their role as students simultaneously during that transition period (Ji 2013). This study shows that for women with low education, those who are betrothed to continue their education are more likely to continue their education than those who marry for love or marry a partner of their choice. For better-educated women, those who marry for love are more likely to continue their education than those who are betrothed. More educated women who balance personal autonomy and obedience to cultural authority gain parental support in both the formation of their marriage and their personal development. In short, this research shows that education provides space for women's freedom and independence to reject the practice of arranged marriages and that with good education, they (both women and men) can free themselves from the practice of arranged marriages. Unfortunately, this is not the case in South Sulawesi, where arranged marriages are rife among educated women.



In South Sulawesi, especially in the Bugis-Makassar community, there are cultural values or philosophies of life known as '*Siri na Pacce*' ('*Siri*' means shame or self-respect, while '*Pacce*' means honor and dignity. '*Siri na Pacce*' more or less implies shame or self-respect that needs to be guarded and maintained, so that dignity and worth are maintained.) The Bugis-Makassarese often legalized certain things based on this philosophical principle to maintain shame and honor. I hypothesize that common arranged marriages in South Sulawesi cannot be separated from this philosophy of life, in which previous studies on arranged marriages based on shame and honor still limited enough. There is a joint study conducted by Esther Miedema, Winny Koster, Nicky Pouw, Philippe Meyer, and Alben Sotirova on early marriage in Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Ghana, Burkina Faso, and Senegal shows that early marriage in some societies in Asia aims to protect family honor and social status, and also to secure the future of young women in their socioeconomic aspects (Miedema et al. 2020). In short, arranged marriages are based on shame and honor.

On the topic of shame and honor, arranged marriages cannot be separated from the social environment and society. That is, shame and honor cannot be seen only as part of a purely personal sense but in a broader social framework. Even love, which we often think of as a personal issue, is a social issue, as Anne E. Beall and Robert J. Sternberg point out in their research (Beall and Sternberg 1995). In their study, they seek to answer questions about what romantic love is, why love differs from one period and culture to another, and what love's function is for certain cultures? They argue that "love is a fundamental social construct for society in many ways"—love has been conceptualized at different times and places, and therefore love varies from culture to culture. In short, love is also a socio-cultural issue.

Another previous study examining arranged marriages was the research conducted by Nihayatul Wafiroh on marriages that took place in

Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia (Wafiroh 2018), shows that women have agency, especially in arranged marriages, by taking five large Islamic boarding schools in East Java and one female informant from each of the Kiai's children. However, despite the context in a religious institution, this study does not answer the question of why women choose to accept an arranged marriage and do not see the relationship between the concept of an ideal marriage for young people and what they experience, in other words, it does not question its postcolonial aspects.

Andriyati carried out another research that took place in the pesantren environment on arranged marriages (Andriyati 2006). This study seeks to answer the question of how female students perceive arranged marriages and the arranged marriages process in the pesantren environment. The results of his research indicate that several factors that influence students' perceptions of arranged marriages include personal experience, social interaction, and appreciation of religious life. With the background of religious organizations, Savitri conducted similar research on the dynamics of arranged marriages in the marriages of activists of the Islamic movement or Islamic organizations (Savitri 2007). This study looks at the dynamics of arranged marriages through a psychological perspective, that group dynamics also affect individuals in groups, especially in terms of arranged marriages. The results of this study indicate that the group's organizational transformation influences the proportion of choices, approvals, considerations, and individual decision-making, especially in the case of marriage.

From the various previous studies that have been carried out, none have looked at the practice of arranged marriages within the theoretical framework of postcolonialism. In addition, they tend to see that education contributes to the decline in arranged marriages, whereas in South Sulawesi, this is not the case. In other words, even among educated people, arranged marriages are still possible. This is what this study wants to answer and to elaborate on.

This study applies a qualitative research methodology, which allows researcher to explore the personal experiences of educated Muslim women who experience arranged marriages. The primary data were educated Muslim women who experienced arranged marriages and came from various regions/districts/regencies in South Sulawesi (Wajo Regency, Gowa Regency, Pinrang Regency, Soppeng Regency, and Makassar City). Educated Muslim women here mean women who are Muslim and have taken undergraduate education in college. The word “educated” here literally means those who have completed their undergraduate education in college or are pursuing their undergraduate education in college. In addition, the age range of my sources/informants, namely young educated Muslim women aged 18-24 years. The informants were divided into two; main sources (women who experience arranged marriages) and supporting sources (actors involved in the arranged marriages process). While the data collection uses in-depth interviews and literature studies.

### **Postcolonialism as Conceptual Framework**

One of the theories uses in this study, is the theory of postcolonialism, which can explain the practice of arranged marriages in modern times and among educated people. Although until now, the debate about the definition of “postcolonial” in social theory is not over (Loomba 2015). The term postcolonialism is often misunderstood when the words “post” are interpreted as indicating “time” after colonialism ends, whereas, as stated by Jorge de Alva (Loomba 2003), the term postcolonialism should not be understood as a condition of “after” colonialism ended but as a fight against the discourses and practices of colonialism.

Since postcolonialism is more of a fight against the practice of colonialism, this theory is also often associated with transdisciplinary critical discourse, especially about globalization and representational politics

(race, class, gender/sexuality, ethnicity, religion) (Puilan 2002) related to other dimensions such as economics, political, social, psychological and so on as a postcolonial (postcolonial) condition (Ritzer 2007). The postcolonial theory rejects essentialism and rejects the identification of groups of people, societies, and cultures that are then considered universal. The reason is that knowledge is power; when knowledge essentialism is applied, violence occurs. The knowledge referred to here is not ordinary. However, as proposed by Michel Foucault, knowledge is an ideology that has no basis in reality, which is used solely to justify the harm done to the lives of others, to oppress and exploit others for the sake of pleasures and benefits of a particular person (Foucault 1982).

The postcolonial approach or theory wants to see and dismantle the study of arranged marriages, which often sees it as a uniform and one pattern. As in postcolonialism, subject and power relations are often contradictory (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2013), that violent practices often do not only occur between the colonizer and the colonized; even the position of the colonizer and the colonized becomes blurred (Gandhi 2014). One actor in the practice of arranged marriages may at one time be in the position of the colonizer, but at another time, maybe in the position of the colonized. The relationship between the subject/actor and their respective powers is contradictory. However, the underlying relationships are power, domination, and hegemony (Said 2010). Therefore, it is necessary to observe in-depth, especially the practice of arranged marriages, so that we can gain an understanding. Better things about arranged marriages are happening nowadays among educated women.

Many discourses can be approached using a postcolonial approach, as long as the discourse has four characteristics (Suwondo 2014) that characterize the postcolonial theory: First, there is a hierarchical-dominative power relation (superior, inferior, subaltern). Second is the emergence of dual identities or those found in the practice of diaspora

and hybridization. Third, there are attempts at imitation or mimicry, creolization, ambivalence, mockery, and others. Fourth is the emergence of aspects of resistance or other forms such as irony, compromise, and deconstruction. In this study, the main attention is directed to ambivalence and resistance (Bhabha 2007), especially in the thought of Homi K. Bhabha as one of the leading figures in postcolonial theory.

Furthermore, through postcolonial theory, women in arranged marriages are not only seen as passive subjects who follow and preserve their culture/traditions but also as active subjects who can navigate and modify their culture (Pande 2015). The postcolonial approach to arranged marriage issues shows the complex dynamics between women who accept arranged marriage because there is no other choice and women who accept arranged marriage because of their own decisions and desires. This approach is, at the same time, a critique of previous studies that view women as merely passive subjects and tend to generalize.

### **Profiles of Married Educated Young Muslim Women**

There were five women interviewed in this study. They were in “arranged marriages,” women who had married at the behest and choice of their parents. Every interview always started with the question, do they agree to be called as “arranged marriage,” or a marriage arranged by their parents, or an arranged marriage? The five women interviewed agreed to call their marriage an arranged marriage, and they agreed to do so. Even though one of them, Fathma did emphatically say that her marriage was a forced marriage; she was forced to marry the supervisor of her pesantren and she had no other choice, so she chose to live it.

All the women interviewed were Muslim women, in the age range between 18-24 years, and educated (at least they were pursuing a bachelor’s degree). Below are profiles of five women who have given their answers to my questions about the reasons they accepted the arranged marriage.

The female names in table (1) are pseudonyms, in order to maintain the confidentiality of the interviewees, but all information about their answers and opinions, is described as is and as complete as they are disclosed.

No.	Name / Age	Age	Origin/Regency
1.	Zahra	24	Wajo
2.	Nissa	20	Gowa
3.	Fathma	19	Pinrang
4.	Azizah	22	Soppeng
5.	Nadila	24	Makassar City

Table (1): The informant profiles and all publications.

**Zahra** is a Muslim woman from Wajo Regency, who got married on August 2019, exactly four months after she finished her undergraduate. Before getting married, she had a boyfriend and was in a relationship with him for three years. Her parents found out that she has a boyfriend, but her parents insisted on not accepting her boyfriend and chose to marry off to another man. The man who became her husband was two years older, 26 years old, and from the same city, Sengkang, Wajo Regency.

**Nissa** is a woman of seven siblings from the Gowa Regency. She married on February 2020 while she was still in her first semester in college. Nissa and her husband now have a son. Before deciding to marry, Nissa was in a relationship with a man (her boyfriend), but her parents did not know it. As she admitted, her parents forbade her to date. Her husband, a man, chosen by her parents, is the same age, 20 years old, and comes from the Bulukumba district.

**Fathma** is the eldest of three children from Pinrang Regency, who was married on October 2020. She admitted that she accepted the marriage because it was arranged or forced. She actually did not want the marriage. Fathma, was preparing to continue to the higher education (age 18) when her parents decided to marry her off to a 35-year-old pesantren builder. The man who became her husband came from Bone Regency and teaches at the *Yastrib* Islamic Boarding School.

**Azizah** is a Muslim woman from Soppeng Regency, who was married on January 2021. Before getting married, Azizah had a boyfriend and currently studying in college. Azizah said that the day before the wedding, her boyfriend still had time to contact her parents, but her parents rejected it. Now, Azizah has just given birth to her first child. Azizah's husband is 29 years old and from the same district, Soppeng Regency. According to Azizah's confession, she and her husband have a family relationship; Azizah's grandmother and her husband's grandfather are brothers.

**Nadila** is the eldest of two children born and settled in Makassar City. Nadila got married exactly a year after her undergraduate graduation, on August 2020, and now Nadila is pregnant with her first child. Nadila's husband is 29 years old and from Palu, Central Sulawesi. In Nadila's own family, two of her cousins are also matched. Before accepting her match, she had been in a relationship with her college friend for approximately four years; she had just ended the relationship the day before getting married.

### **Their Reasons for Accepting Arranged Marriages**

At the beginning of the interview, after they shared their agreement to call their marriage as arranged marriage, the first question asked: "Why did you accept the marriage? What is your reason?". According to Zahra, she accepted the marriage as fate because a few months before she was married, her mother died and advised her to marry the man her family chose, even though she had a boyfriend at the time. In a forced situation, she must repay her mother's services by fulfilling her request to marry the family's choice.

"I think, my marriage was fate. If my mother had not died, I probably would not have agreed to the current marriage. Before my mother died, she wanted me to marry someone the family chose. Whose background is known to my family. You

could say it was forced at the time. Like it or not, I have to live. Yes, it's my mother's last wish. During this time, my parents always obeyed all my wishes, I felt had no other choice. I just need to obey, besides because my mother died suddenly and since childhood my parents and I have never lived together. I have never cared for or reciprocated every drop of sweat and sacrifice of my parents. So that choice was my only way to make up for it all. At least I can heed my mother's last message." (Interview with Zahra, 05 December 2021).

For that reason, after paused and thought for a while, Zahra continued that as the only child in the family, she admits to accept whatever her parents want. In addition, she also thought that it was not a bad choice because his mother had also married his father because of an arranged marriage. As she said, "because I am their only child, like it or not, I have to accept whatever it is. If it is not me who fulfills their wishes, who else... My mother is the same, she was also matched in the past." (Interview with Zahra, 05 December 2021).

While the reason of Nissa in accepting her marriage because she felt that her parents choose the best for her. For her, it was good things, so she did not to refuse it; "Because my parents were very willing me to marry, there is no reason for me to refuse it. My parents' good intentions cannot be rejected. Then my husband's family has long wanted to be with me. It is not good to reject my family because they are good people. So, I leave everything to my parents. I don't accept, but I don't refuse either." (Interview with Nissa, 11 December 2021). In addition, she also felt that her parents, especially her father, had never asked her for anything, and her father's only request was to accept this arranged marriage, so she accepted; "my reason is also because of my father's wish. My father never asked me for anything, that's why I accepted your request, father." (Interview with Nissa, 11 December 2021).



Fathma was the saddest women for me. When she asked, why she had accepted the “arranged marriage,” she immediately said that it was forced. She never accepted the marriage she had. She did not accept getting married at 18 to a teacher at the pesantren where she was studying. The man was much older, 35 years old. It made her cry as if her parents did not want to listen to Fathma. When she asked the same question the second time, the question “why did she choose to marry?” she replied; “I do not want to accept it, but no matter what, even if you cry, my parents’ blood still accepts it. To the point where you wanted to run away from my father’s house.” She continued:

“Actually, if you look at people like laughing, you will be happy, even though you are not at all. It’s like laughing but my heart is not laughing. I am trying to feel sorry for this *Ustadz* but I cannot bro. I have been trying to like it for three months, but I cannot until now. Because I know the pass, I do not like it even more, but the point is that you are like yelling when you are angry. I will keep asking my mom and my family, I am sure I will be the one to blame. Keep saying I am your destiny, just accept it. I said why did I try this once, I wanted to be like other people. I was not pressured like this, I wanted to feel like I was in college but I lost my hopes for college, the pass was arranged, I lost all my dreams. I lost my future.” (Interview with Fathma, 12 December 2021).

While Azizah, when she asked “why did she accept the match?”, she replied that she simply wanted to make her parents happy, even though she had a boyfriend, although she found it hard to accept; “If it were not for my parents’ request, I would not have thought about getting married, at that time, I wanted to finish college first and want to work to make my parents happy, of course. Then, the reason I accepted the arranged marriage was because I wanted to make my parents happy. If this way I can make my parents happy, why do not I do it. Moreover, at that time my parents begged me, the more I could not bear to refuse my parents’

request. Yes, although it was hard for me to accept at first. If my parents see the man well, then I believe that the man is indeed good for me, how could my parents choose a bad man for me?" (Interview with Azizah, 13 December 2021).

The reason for Nadila's acceptance of the arranged marriage is quite different from the reasons of the other four women. Nadila married a year after she finished her undergraduate education. When she worked and found out that her parents chose a man for her, she felt lucky. First, because she got a man who has a job, and second, the man is more mature than her. Nadila admits that she is happy with her husband now; they do a lot of work together, although sometimes she still thinks about her former lover, whom she left because she married another man. In addition, Nadila also said that she left her boyfriend because she knew he was not as mature as her husband, and she wanted to live a family life with a more mature man, and, of course, with a man who is also financially secure. She explained:

"I am simple, I want to marry someone who is really serious, even though I am a few years apart. I mean, I accepted my parents' choice because I know this guy is more settled than my boyfriend, who does not want to live comfortably? I mean, my boyfriend is still so-so and I cannot wait for long time, you know after all that the girls have to get married fast because of the biological factor?" (Interview with Nadila, 07 December 2021).

From Nadila's explanation, the point is that she accepted her parents' choice because it suited her choice, even though she had a boyfriend. From her point of view, her boyfriend still needs to try further to match the status of the man her parents chose. Moreover, she also admitted that her parents guaranteed that after she married the man, she would be employed in her husband's office. That is the fact, after getting married, Nadila worked together with her husband in the same office.

### **Their Feelings after Their Marriages**

The end of the interviews, the informant was always asked the question: “how did you feel after getting married? how do you feel now?”. From the five women interviewed, four are happy and grateful to be married to the man who is now her husband. As expressed by Zahra, that “in the first year, I could not accept it, but this past year, I have accepted and *alhamdulillah*, I am happy.” Nissa also said the same thing, “if I asked how I feel now, *alhamdulillah*, I am happy because I have been blessed with one son. Likewise, Azizah said, “I have mixed feelings, especially in the early days of marriage, I had to adapt to new people, even a new life, but after getting married and having children, I am happy. Just like Nadila, “I am happy to be married to the man who is my husband now.”

What is different is Fathma. She said, “I hope to get a divorce one day.” Because of his heavy story and experience, I dare not to ask, “how are you feeling now?” I think that question will only peel the wound deeper. But of all the women interviewed, only Fathma was unhappy with her marriage. Four out of five women who got married because of an “arranged marriage” stated they were happy.

From this, love can be built and cultivated, although not everyone can do it. As long as the marriage takes place on the wishes of both parties concerned. Love between the two can be cultivated and can be formed over time, but when marriage is not based on the wishes and agreements of both parties concerned, love will be difficult to build. Although aspects of religion work to legitimize, for example, in some cases, including in the case of Fathma, religion is the reason. Their marriage is destiny, and as religious and believer people, they have to accept it as a part of destiny in their life.

## The Reasons Their Parents Matched Them

In another session, the five women asked with the question, “why do you think your parents set you up with the man who is now your husband?” This question used to find out how the gender regime works in this case. From their point of view, there are three keywords for their matchmaking: family system, religion and money.

For example, Zahra’s answer stated that their parents chose the man who has now become her husband because, “one of my uncles knew and was very close to my husband. The rest of my family also know my husband’s family. Moreover, we are one city” (interview with Zahra, 05 December 2021). Likewise, in the case of Nissa “we were arranged because our parents have been friends for a long time, they are like family. So, my parents also do not worry about my life anymore, because I live with my husband’s family, whom they have known for a long time” (interview with Nissa, 11 December 2021). A similar reason can be found in the case of Azizah, “I think maybe because we are family, my grandmother and my husband’s grandfather are brothers. But maybe also because my parents couldn’t refuse their parents’ marriage proposal” (interview with Azizah, 13 December 2021).

Apart from the family system factor, religion and money factors also have a place in the reason why the matchmaking took place. Among them is what was experienced by Fathma and Nadilah. According to Fathma, her parents set her up with a teacher at the pesantren where she studied because the teacher’s religion was good, according to her parents. Besides that, he had a lot of money. Fathma admitted this, she said “my parents said he was good because he was an ustadz. Even though I have refused many times, my mother always said, “you think you are beautiful, so you can refuse? Even though you cry with your blood, I still accept the ustadz” (interview with Fathma, 12 December 2021). In addition, Fathma also added, “and also because of money, because he has a lot of money. Even

though I already said how much money would it be if it were not for my happiness” (interview with Fathma, 12 December 2021). The same factor can be found in the case of Nadila, her parents set her up with a man who is well-established and has a job.

### **Their Dating and Their Parents’ Responses**

The question included during the interview was, “were you ever banned from dating by your parents? If so, why do you think your parents forbade you to date?” in the interview questions to see the postcolonial aspect of this case. From their answers, there were three out of five women admitted that their parents had forbidden them from dating. This shows the existence of global power relations, a cross between the modern concept of love (which teaches the concept of dating and others) and local traditions (which do not recognize dating practice). This local tradition can form religion, culture, or noble values. Three of the five women interviewed admitted that their parents had forbidden them from dating. Despite the ban, they still have boyfriends on campus, where they study together, meet, and interact more.

For example, Zahra said that she had a boyfriend before they married? She explained that she had a boyfriend who was from Makassar and before the match, she even thought that she only wanted to marry a Makassar people and did not want to marry a man from her village, she put it like this, “I just said I want to marry a Makassar person, not a Sengkang person” (interview with Zahra, 05 December 2021). Whether she was ever banned from dating by her parents, she replied, “Yes, I was banned.” When she asked again, “Why do you think your parents forbade you to date?” She replied, “my parents are afraid that their children are trapped in promiscuity, so both [father and mother] cannot let me date” (interview with Zahra, 05 December 2021). The same thing happened to Azizah. When she was betrothed and forced to marry a man of her

parent's choice, Azizah told her parents that she had a boyfriend. His father said, "previously I had forbidden you to date; this is why I did not give you permission to date" (interview with Azizah, 13 December 2021).

From this, we can understand that young educated Muslim women struggle between traditional or local ideas of love (represented by their parents' point of view) and modern or contemporary (represented by their perspective). The perspective of these educated young Muslim women is largely shaped by the narratives of romantic love they get in education so that it is different from the perspective of their parents on romantic love. Moreover, in these cases, we can see the power relation worked between parents and children in terms of the way they choose and develop a romantic love. In some conditions, educated young Muslim women cannot negotiate it, but in other conditions, they can. These negotiations mean that the "gender project" is very fluid, and power relations have a role to play in this context.

## **Conclusion**

Who would have thought that the love we call something natural and autonomous can mean something else, which can also mean social construction? The social construction meant here is that love can ultimately change and be shaped and built according to its social context. This can be seen from the results of this study, women who are arranged initially do not love the man who will be their husband, then they get married, and finally, love each other. Although, of course, not all women can experience the same love process. Everyone has their way of loving. Some women can adapt their feelings of love, meaning, if they are matched, they can love the man who becomes their husband; some cannot do such things. Therefore, it is essential to give everyone, especially women, the opportunity to make their own choices and agreements when asked to marry.

Furthermore, the results of this study also show that the phenomenon of arranged marriage that occurs among educated young Muslim women is largely based on aspects related to these three keywords: family system, religion, and economy. This can be seen in the reasons for the educated young Muslim women interviewed in the study. For example, some women accept an arranged marriage for destiny or religious reasons. For this reason, they assume that accepting their parents' decisions is a form of devotion to their parents and is religious. Another reason is the family system. Keeping the line of intimacy between families or maintaining the resources that have been the family's modality for a long time, the modalities meant here include social modalities. Another reason is economic interest. Parents tend to match their daughters to financially well-off men even though they are sometimes much older than their daughters.

This article also adds a new finding to research on the topic of gender and education, that arranged marriage does not only occur in societies with low levels of education or in women who have no education, but also occurs and is experienced by women who are studying in college. In addition, arranged marriage cannot be seen as a purely conservative act because women who accept and make their own choices can live happily. However, the practice of arranged marriage cannot be considered suitable for all women or groups because this practice is not necessarily desired and accepted by them.

Meanwhile, the postcolonial aspect of the arranged marriage phenomenon can be seen in the desire of these young educated Muslim women to live in a modern way. They were arranged, and they had a traditional love affair. Another aspect, for example, is the view of a romantic relationship, courtship, or dating. Some parents forbid their children to date because they are afraid that their children will be trapped in Western-style promiscuity. That kind of association is considered not

following the noble values found in the local community or the local culture.

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