



RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Examining Inequities in the Administration of Dowry for Yakan Marriages: A Case Study Approach

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: May 21, 2024 Accepted: Aug 6, 2024	The administration of dowry is a practice with deep historical roots and varied cultural significance. Yakan elders employ a comprehensive dispute resolution method, involving community members, promoting accountability and respect, while preserving cultural integrity through their intellectual wisdom. This paper, using a case study approach, aims to examine inequities in the Administration of Dowry for Yakan Marriages. This study uses a qualitative case study design to examine dowry inequities in Yakan marriages. It uses methods like Semi-Structured Interviews, Focus Group Discussions, Participant Observation, and Document Analysis, with purposive sampling for knowledgeable participants, including married individuals, young adults, community leaders, and religious leaders. Study shows that dowry administration is a complex practice with economic, social, and legal implications. It reflects socio-economic issues and gender inequalities. Legal reforms and cultural shifts are needed to preserve benefits while addressing negative aspects. The proposed regulation of dowry practices in Pag-anda marriages aims to provide financial ease, discourage elopement, promote cultural and religious practices, reduce disputes, and uphold Yakan society's integrity, fostering harmony and stability.
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### INTRODUCTION

The Yakan people are a native ethnic group celebrated for their deep cultural heritage and enduring customs. They are esteemed for their skills in crafting, particularly their detailed weaving and textile work, which mirrors their lively artistic expression and cultural heritage. The Yakan community has a traditional structure centered around strong family units and communal bonds, with elders holding significant roles in upholding social harmony and transmitting cultural traditions. Their lifestyle is closely linked to their ancestral practices and the Islamic faith, both of which influence their daily routines, ceremonies, and community administration.

The Yakan predominantly reside in the southern Philippines, particularly on Basilan Island, which lies in the Sulu Archipelago. Basilan's lush landscape, with its mix of coastal areas and forested interiors, provides a rich environment for the Yakan's agricultural and artisanal practices. The island's geographic location has historically positioned the Yakan at a crossroads of various cultural influences, yet they have managed to preserve their distinct identity. In recent times, many Yakan have also migrated to urban centers like Zamboanga City, seeking better economic opportunities while continuing to uphold their cultural traditions amidst modern challenges.

The Yakan tribal system is truly unique, with a rich blend of traditional wisdom and strong community bonds. At the heart of this system are the intellectual elders and seniors, known as

**"Abahi' or Sara',"** who play crucial roles in resolving disputes. These respected figures have a deep well of knowledge about the Yakan's customary laws and cultural practices, all passed down through generations. Their profound understanding of Yakan traditions and values enables them to mediate conflicts with a remarkable sense of fairness and respect for everyone involved. This traditional way of resolving disputes is deeply woven into the fabric of Yakan society, focusing on healing and restoring harmony rather than punishment.

In handling disputes, the Yakan elders adopt a holistic approach, considering not just the conflict itself but also the underlying social and familial relationships. They mediate in communal settings, often involving other community members, to ensure transparency and collective participation. This method fosters a sense of accountability and mutual respect, as resolving conflicts is seen as a shared responsibility. By involving the broader community, the Yakan elders reinforce social cohesion and a sense of collective identity, which are vital for the community's stability and continuity.

The elders' intellectual wisdom shines in their ability to adapt traditional practices to modern issues, skillfully blending customary laws with Islamic principles. This ensures that their dispute resolution process remains relevant and effective, addressing contemporary challenges while preserving cultural integrity. The role of Yakan elders in mediating conflicts is a testament to their wisdom and leadership, and it plays a crucial part in maintaining the social fabric and cultural resilience of the Yakan people.

The Yakan tribal system has its origins deeply rooted in the rich historical and cultural landscape of the southern Philippines. The Yakan people, indigenous to Basilan Island in the Sulu Archipelago, are believed to have settled in this region several centuries ago. Historical accounts suggest that the Yakan migrated to Basilan from neighboring islands and mainland Mindanao, gradually developing a distinct cultural identity. The introduction of Islam in the 14th century by Arab traders and missionaries significantly influenced their social and cultural practices, integrating Islamic principles with their indigenous customs (Majul, 1973).

The Yakan tribal system is characterized by a structured social hierarchy and a set of customary laws known as "adat," which govern various aspects of community life, including marriage, inheritance, and dispute resolution. Elders, known as "Abahi' or Sara'," play a pivotal role in maintaining these customs and ensuring social cohesion. They possess extensive knowledge of both adat and Islamic law, enabling them to mediate conflicts and provide leadership with a profound sense of fairness and justice. Over time, this system has demonstrated resilience, adapting to changes while preserving the core elements of Yakan cultural identity (Pallesen, 1985).

The present processes of Yakan marriages reflect a blend of traditional customs and Islamic practices, highlighting the cultural richness and religious influences within the community. Yakan marriages typically begin with a process known as "Pag-anda," where a male representative from the groom's family formally proposes marriage to the bride's family. This proposal involves negotiations, often mediated by elders, regarding the terms of the marriage contract, including the dowry (mahar) and other marital obligations. The negotiation process emphasizes mutual respect and consensus-building between the families involved, aiming to establish harmony and respect cultural norms (Acosta, 2006).

Once the terms are agreed upon, the actual marriage ceremony, called "Pagkawin," takes place. This ceremony is officiated by an Islamic religious leader, often in a mosque or a designated community space. It includes recitations from the Quran, prayers, and the formal exchange of vows between the bride and groom. Central to the ceremony is the payment of the dowry (mahar), which symbolizes the groom's commitment and responsibility towards the bride. The amount and nature of the dowry are agreed upon during the negotiation phase and hold significant cultural and symbolic value within the Yakan community (Pangarungan, 2003).

Following the marriage ceremony, festivities such as traditional dances, music, and feasting often accompany the celebration, marking the union of the two families. The process of Yakan marriages thus embodies a blend of customary practices and Islamic traditions, reinforcing cultural identity while adapting to contemporary social contexts. These rituals not only signify the union of two individuals but also reinforce communal bonds and the continuity of Yakan cultural heritage (Nimmo, 1971).

On the other hand, marriage is initiated in four phases; *Pag-bintak*: The phase where the man, accompanied by his family, visits the woman's home—specifically her parents and relatives—to express his interest and readiness to marry her is known as the initiation stage of marriage proposals among the Yakan. *Pagturul helling*: Others refer to this stage as “*Pagturul tayma'h*.” It involves following up on the agreements made during the initial proposal stage, which may include further discussions to confirm acceptance by the girl's family. *Pagpasti*: this phase involves confirming and finalizing the agreed-upon terms between both parties. It is also at this stage that the customary dowry (*mahr*) is determined. *Mahr* holds significant importance as a fundamental requirement in both traditional Yakan rites and Islamic principles during marriage contracts. Over generations, the Yakan have adapted their customs, establishing general practices that evolve over time and vary across different cultural contexts. Scholars often evaluate and validate these practices in relation to Islamic principles, reflecting ongoing cultural and religious dynamics. And *Pagtud buwas* or *Pagpassal*: Traditionally, after all marriage matters, including the agreed-upon customary dowry, have been finalized by both parties, the groom's family sends the specified dowry along with essential items for the bride such as hygiene tools, beauty products, underwear, and wedding attire to her home. This gesture typically occurs a day or two before the wedding ceremony, symbolizing preparation and readiness for the upcoming celebration. (Ismael, 2023)

The custom of dowry has deep historical origins and diverse cultural significance. This review of literature delves into the practice of dowry from various angles, examining its economic, social, and legal ramifications. It utilizes a broad array of sources to offer a comprehensive insight into the practice, its development, and its present status in different societies. The dowry tradition has been a fundamental aspect of numerous cultures globally, historically ensuring the financial security of women. In ancient Rome, dowries were utilized to provide financial backing to the bride and were frequently returned to her family in the event of divorce or the husband's death (Bennett, 1998). Similarly, in medieval Europe, dowries were essential for securing advantageous marriages and alliances (Schatzmiller, 1997).

Economically, dowry serves as a form of inheritance for daughters in patriarchal societies where they may not have direct access to family wealth. However, in contemporary contexts, the practice has often been criticized for placing a significant financial burden on the bride's family. This burden can exacerbate gender inequalities and contribute to socio-economic pressures (Anderson, 2007). In India, for example, dowry demands can lead to significant financial distress and even “dowry deaths,” where brides are harassed or killed over insufficient dowry payments (Menski, 1998). The dowry system also has profound social and cultural dimensions. It is often seen as a symbol of the bride's family's status and a means of securing social prestige (Caldwell, Reddy, & Caldwell, 1983). In some cultures, dowry practices have evolved to adapt to changing social norms and economic conditions. For instance, in some African societies, the traditional practice of bride price has transformed to include more modern and negotiable forms of dowry (Ansell, 2001).

The dowry system has undergone significant reforms in many countries from a legal standpoint. In India, for instance, measures such as the Dowry Prohibition Act (1961) and subsequent revisions have been put in place to address the practice and safeguard women against dowry-related violence (Rastogi & Therly, 2006). Despite these legal frameworks, enforcing them continues to be a challenge, and dowry practices persist in both open and concealed forms. Within Islamic societies, the dowry,

referred to as "mahr," is a compulsory gift given by the groom to the bride, with the aim of ensuring her financial security. Islamic teachings stress that the mahr should not be a burden, reflecting principles of fairness and mutual consent (Esposito, 2001). Nevertheless, cultural customs sometimes deviate from religious doctrines, leading to increased dowry requests that can strain families financially (Engineer, 2004).

This paper, using a case study approach, aims to examine inequities in the Administration of Dowry for Yakan Marriages. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the common practices and cultural norms surrounding the administration of dowry in Yakan marriages?
2. What are the key factors contributing to inequities in the administration of dowry in Yakan marriages?
3. How do socioeconomic status and family dynamics influence dowry practices among the Yakan community?
4. What are the personal experiences and perceptions of Yakan women and men regarding dowry administration and its fairness?
5. What legal and customary regulations govern dowry practices in Yakan marriages, and how do they address or perpetuate inequities?

## **METHODOLOGY**

The investigation utilizes a qualitative case study design to examine disparities in the management of dowry in Yakan marriages. By using a case study approach, a thorough analysis of specific occurrences and settings can be undertaken, offering a comprehensive comprehension of the issue. To obtain detailed and comprehensive data, a range of qualitative research methods will be utilized, including Semi-Structured Interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Participant Observation, and Document Analysis. A purposive sampling technique will be employed to select participants who possess knowledge about dowry customs and can present diverse viewpoints. The selection of participants will be guided by the following criteria: Married Individuals, Young Adults, Community Leaders and Elders, and Religious Leaders.

## **DISCUSSION**

In Yakan culture, marriage holds a revered and intricate place, deeply embedded in social customs and traditional norms. One fascinating aspect of Yakan marriage is the classification of marriages based on how they are initiated. Among these classifications, marriages initiated by elopement stand out, particularly in how the dowry is administered.

Yakan marriages can be initiated in various ways, reflecting the diverse cultural practices and societal structures of the community. Typically, marriages are arranged through formal negotiations between families, where the dowry, or "*Ungsud*" is a central element. The dowry is meticulously discussed, negotiated, and agreed upon by both families, involving a blend of cash, jewelry, traditional textiles, and household items. This process underscores the importance of family honor, social status, and the mutual respect between the bride and groom's families.

However, when a marriage is initiated by elopement, the dynamics of dowry administration change significantly. Elopement, often a spontaneous and less formal way of union, necessitates a different approach to dowry. In such cases, the dowry is typically fixed, bypassing the usual lengthy negotiations. This fixed dowry is a culturally established amount or set of items, predetermined by community norms and accepted as a standard for marriages initiated under such circumstances.

The practice of fixing the dowry in cases of elopement and other similar forms serves multiple purposes. Firstly, it provides a quick resolution to the marriage process, ensuring that both families

and the community can move forward without prolonged disputes. It also maintains a sense of order and predictability within the society, as everyone understands the expected dowry in such situations. Additionally, a fixed dowry helps in preserving family honor and social harmony, as it minimizes the potential for conflicts and misunderstandings that could arise from hasty or unplanned unions.

Moreover, the fixed dowry in elopement scenarios reflects a balance between respecting traditional customs and adapting to the realities of spontaneous marriages. It acknowledges the union's legitimacy while upholding the cultural significance of the dowry as a symbol of commitment and support.

In Yakan culture, marriage is not only a personal union but a communal event, deeply rooted in long-standing traditions and norms. Over the decades, the ways marriages are initiated have evolved, reflecting shifts in societal attitudes and cultural values. Among these various methods, elopement and similar forms of marriage initiation have remained prevalent, though they are currently met with disfavor within the community.

Traditionally, Yakan marriages are arranged through a formal process involving negotiations between the families of the bride and groom. These negotiations encompass discussions about the dowry, or "ungsud," which is a significant aspect of the marriage contract. The dowry comprises a range of items, including money, jewelry, traditional fabrics, and household items, representing the groom's dedication and the respect shown to the bride's family.

Nevertheless, in cases where marriages are started through elopement or similar methods, the typical formalities and negotiations are avoided. Instead, a set dowry is determined, following a culturally accepted standard. This ensures a quick resolution to the marriage process and provides a clear and expected path for both families involved.

In spite of the efficiency and historical precedence of this practice, elopement and other non-traditional marriage beginnings are currently discouraged in Yakan culture. The disapproval results from various factors. Initially, elopement is viewed as a departure from the established customs that highlight family involvement and mutual consent. The traditional process of arranging marriages through family negotiations is deeply valued for fostering unity, respect, and social cohesion.

Moreover, elopement can be perceived as undermining the role of elders and the community in the marriage process. In Yakan society, elders play a crucial role in mediating and facilitating marriage arrangements, ensuring that the union is conducted with dignity and honor. Elopement, by circumventing these roles, can lead to a sense of disrespect and disregard for cultural protocols.

Despite these contemporary views, it is important to acknowledge that elopement and similar practices have been part of Yakan culture for many decades. Historically, these methods provided a means for couples to unite, particularly in situations where formal negotiations were not feasible or where love and personal choice took precedence over arranged agreements.

In reconciling the present disapproval with the historical practice, Yakan culture continues to navigate the balance between tradition and modernity. While the preference for formal, family-negotiated marriages remains strong, the fixed dowry system for elopement reflects an adaptive approach, ensuring that even unconventional unions are respected and recognized within the community framework.

In contrast, Yakan community of modern times discourages marriages that are initiated in the forms of disgrace as it gives causes to possible disputes and disagreements between families and sometimes leading to major family feuds. Group of the *Ulama'* (Islamic Scholars) have also stated that it is, in addition, disconformity to Islamic legal norms. Additionally, a fixed amount of dowry has been established for such forms of marriages which are accordingly an inequity because of its nature to have been discouraged. On the ground of ease, couples, teens, and even minors use this forms as an

alternative when formal marriage or "*Pag-anda*" is hard for them. Respondents of different sectors preferred that cultural practices must be addressed to resolve the existing and continuous disgrace in the yakan society.

According to the yakan community, the following are the forms of marriages though currently practiced but are culturally and religiously discouraged:

1. *Pag-lahi* – defined as elopement
2. *Pag-pole'* – a circumstance where a woman appear herself to the man's house or *sara'/community elder's* house declaring to marry him and she will stay until wedding is formally officiated.
3. *Pag-paguwa' surat* – in a way of writing in a piece of paper, the man and the woman both affix their signature in testimony of their consent to get married.

In the contrary, formal marriage or "*Pag-anda*" establishes honor, integrity in the yakan society and gives reputation to both family. However, few yakans specially the groom's party have been motivated by this form of marriage for the reason that the bride's family will have the freedom of setting the amount of dowry to the highest value without following the Islamic mandate of giving ease to the groom's favour. The result is, discouraged forms of marriage which in most cases, gives disgrace and leaves shame to the family will be a rampant practice and a continuing solution to marriage difficulties and problems. And rest assured, formal marriage will no longer be the aim of the community.

### **Dowry specification**

Marriage is a significant social institution, rich with tradition and cultural significance. The way marriages are initiated, as well as the dowries associated with them, reflect the community's values and social structures. Among these practices, the dowry system highlights a stark contrast between elopement and the more traditional, legitimate form of marriage known as *Pag-anda*.

Elopement and other similar forms, although a longstanding practice, is currently frowned upon in Yakan society. This form of marriage initiation, where a couple chooses to unite without the formal consent and involvement of their families, bypasses the traditional negotiations and ceremonies that are deeply valued in the culture. Despite its disfavor, elopement continues to occur, and the dowry for such unions is set at a fixed amount of 35 thousand pesos. This standardized dowry ensures a swift resolution, providing a clear and predictable path for both families, despite the unconventional nature of the union.

In contrast, *Pag-anda* represents the legitimate and highly esteemed form of marriage in Yakan culture. This process involves extensive negotiations between the families of the bride and groom, where the dowry, or "*Ungsud*" is meticulously discussed and agreed upon. The dowry in *Pag-anda* marriages often includes a variety of items such as cash, jewelry, traditional textiles, and household goods, symbolizing the groom's commitment and the respect accorded to the bride's family. The amount can be substantial, sometimes reaching a level that the groom's family finds difficult to afford.

This disparity in dowry amounts between elopement and *Pag-anda* marriages highlights the community's attitudes toward these different forms of union. The fixed dowry of 35 thousand pesos for elopement reflects a practical approach, ensuring that even in less traditional circumstances; the marriage is recognized and respected. However, the high dowry in *Pag-anda* underscores the cultural importance placed on formal negotiations and family involvement, emphasizing the value of maintaining social norms and honouring familial ties.

The significant cost associated with *Pag-anda* dowries can present a financial burden to the groom's family, often necessitating substantial savings or contributions from extended family members. This

high cost underscores the societal emphasis on demonstrating financial stability and commitment, reinforcing the community's values of honor, respect, and social cohesion.

Despite the practical benefits of the fixed dowry for elopement, the current cultural disfavor towards this practice highlights a preference for maintaining traditional norms and the social order they uphold. The community's preference for *Pag-anda* marriages reflects a deep-seated respect for cultural protocols and the roles of elders and families in facilitating and blessing the union.

Respondents from the group of Islamic scholars in Basilan stated that, In Islam, marriage is considered a sacred and significant institution, forming the foundation of a stable and harmonious society. One of the essential components of a marriage contract in Islam is the dowry, known as "*mahr*." The *mahr* is a mandatory gift from the groom to the bride, symbolizing respect, commitment, and responsibility. While the specifics of the *mahr* can vary widely depending on cultural practices and individual circumstances, Islam emphasizes that the dowry should not be a burden or an impediment to marriage.

Islam's conception of *mahr* is based on the ideas of ease, justice, and compassion. The Quran specifically tackles the topic of dowries and exhorts believers to treat it with respect and decency. Allah says: "And give the women [upon marriage] their [bridal] gifts graciously" in Surah An-Nisa (4:4). In contrast, this passage emphasizes that the dowry should be a source of joy and mutual consent rather than a financial burden. If they give up something freely to you, however, then take it in contentment and ease.

The teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) further emphasize the importance of simplicity and ease in the matter of dowry. The Prophet (peace be upon him) encouraged modesty and discouraged excessive demands. In one hadith, he said: "*The best of marriages are those that are easiest.*" (Ibn Majah). This hadith reflects the Islamic principle that marriage should be facilitated and not complicated by financial burdens, making it accessible to all believers regardless of their economic status.

Moreover, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) practiced what he preached. When his daughter Fatimah (may Allah be pleased with her) was married to Ali (may Allah be pleased with him), the *mahr* was set at a modest amount, consisting of a suit of armor, a humble gesture that reflected the principle of simplicity and ease. This example serves as a model for Muslims, illustrating that the value of a marriage lies not in the material wealth exchanged but in the mutual commitment, love, and respect between the spouses.

Islamic jurisprudence also supports the notion that the *mahr* should not be a burden. Scholars agree that the primary purpose of the dowry is to honor the bride and provide her with financial security. However, they also emphasize that it should be set at a level that is fair and reasonable, taking into account the groom's financial capacity. The *mahr* should be agreed upon mutually, without coercion or excessive demands, ensuring that it does not become a source of hardship or a barrier to marriage.

There is a lot of sense in this strategy. First of all, it keeps marriage affordable for everyone and keeps it from becoming a privilege reserved for the affluent. Islam encourages social justice and inclusivity by maintaining an appropriate *mahr*, which enables people from various socioeconomic situations to follow the Sunnah of marriage. Second, it emphasizes the spiritual and emotional ties over worldly concerns, creating a climate of mutual respect and understanding between the families of the bride and groom.

### **Regulating dowry in Yakan culture: promoting formal marriages and discouraging elopement and other similar forms**

Respondents from various sectors, including religious leaders, community elders, and young adults, have expressed their views on the current dowry practices.

In Yakan culture, marriage is a revered institution, deeply rooted in traditions and social norms that have been passed down through generations. However, the evolving economic and social landscape has brought to light the challenges associated with dowry practices, particularly for Pag-anda (formal marriages) and elopement. According to many respondents from various sectors, regulating the dowry for Pag-anda and setting a higher dowry for elopement could address these challenges, providing financial ease to the groom's party and preserving cultural and religious values.

### **Regulating dowry for Pag-anda**

Pag-anda, the formal and highly esteemed form of marriage in Yakan culture, involves a series of negotiations between the families of the bride and groom. These negotiations typically result in a dowry that includes substantial amounts of cash, jewelry, traditional textiles, and household items. While this process underscores the importance of familial involvement and mutual respect, it often places a significant financial burden on the groom's family.

Respondents from different sectors advocate for the regulation of dowry in Pag-anda marriages to alleviate this burden. By establishing a standardized dowry range, determined by a committee comprising religious leaders, community elders, and representatives from various sectors, the financial strain on the groom's party can be significantly reduced. A regulated dowry ensures that the amount is reasonable and reflective of the community's economic conditions, making formal marriages more accessible and appealing.

Furthermore, regulated dowry practices can encourage more people to opt for Pag-anda, reinforcing the cultural and religious values associated with this form of marriage. By promoting awareness and acceptance of the standardized dowry through community meetings and educational programs, the community can foster a culture of fairness and inclusivity. This approach not only preserves the integrity of the marriage institution but also strengthens social cohesion by ensuring that marriage remains a viable and respected option for all.

### **Discouraging elopement and other similar forms**

Elopement, although historically practiced, is currently disliked in both Islam and Yakan culture. The negative perception of elopement stems from its deviation from traditional protocols, often resulting in family or clan feuds. Despite its disfavor, elopement continues to occur, primarily due to the relatively modest fixed dowry of 35 thousand pesos, which makes it an attractive alternative for couples seeking a quick union.

To discourage elopement, respondents suggest setting a higher dowry for such unions. By significantly increasing the dowry amount for elopement, the community can make this form of marriage less attractive and more difficult to pursue. This measure aims to reduce the incidence of elopement by creating a financial deterrent, encouraging couples to adhere to the more respected and culturally aligned practice of Pag-anda.

Moreover, highlighting the negative consequences of elopement, both culturally and religiously, can reinforce the community's disapproval of this practice. By educating young adults and their families about the potential for familial disputes and the lack of respect associated with elopement, the community can foster a collective commitment to upholding traditional values. This approach not only discourages elopement but also promotes harmony and stability within the community.

## **CONCLUSION**

The administration of dowry is a complex and multifaceted practice with significant economic, social, and legal implications. While historically it served as a means of securing women's financial future, contemporary practices often reflect deeper socio-economic issues and gender inequalities. Legal reforms and cultural shifts are essential to address the negative aspects of dowry practices while



preserving their intended benefits. Understanding the nuances of dowry across different cultures and historical contexts is crucial for developing effective strategies to manage and reform the practice.

Yakan marriages, with their classification based on initiation methods, showcase the rich tapestry of cultural practices surrounding union and dowry. When marriages are initiated by elopement, the fixed dowry mechanism stands as a testament to the community's ability to blend tradition with practicality. It ensures that even in less conventional unions, the cultural essence of dowry – symbolizing respect, support, and familial commitment – remains intact, reinforcing the enduring values of Yakan society.

The practice of elopement in Yakan marriages highlights the dynamic interplay between enduring traditions and evolving societal attitudes. While currently disliked, the historical persistence of elopement underscores its role in the cultural fabric of Yakan society. This duality reflects a community's resilience in upholding its values while adapting to changing times, ensuring that the essence of respect, commitment, and familial honor remains integral to the institution of marriage.

The administration of dowry in Yakan marriages, whether through elopement or *Pag-anda*, reflects a complex interplay of tradition, practicality, and societal values. While elopement and its fixed dowry provide a pragmatic solution for spontaneous unions, the high dowry in *Pag-anda* marriages underscores the cultural significance of formal negotiations and family involvement. This dual approach ensures that marriage, regardless of its initiation, remains a respected and integral part of Yakan society.

The ideals of ease, justice, and compassion serve as the foundation for the Islamic view of dowries. Mahr should be approached modestly and sensibly in accordance with the teachings of the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), to avoid placing undue financial strain on the groom's family. Islam preserves the sacredness of marriage by encouraging simplicity and mutual consent, which makes marriage a source of happiness, harmony, and stability in society. It is imperative that Muslims live by these precepts in order to support unions that really represent the ideals and teachings of Islam.

The regulation of dowry practices in Yakan culture addresses the dual challenges of promoting formal marriages and discouraging elopement. By standardizing the dowry for *Pag-anda*, the financial burden on the groom's party can be alleviated, making formal marriages more accessible and appealing. Simultaneously, setting a higher dowry for elopement creates a financial deterrent, aligning marriage practices with cultural and religious values and reducing the potential for familial disputes.

These measures, supported by respondents from various sectors, aim to preserve the integrity of the marriage institution in Yakan society. By fostering fairness, inclusivity, and respect for tradition, the community can ensure that marriage remains a source of joy, harmony, and stability, reflecting the true spirit of Yakan culture and Islamic teachings.

The proposed regulation of dowry practices aims to provide financial ease to the groom's party in *Pag-anda* marriages and to discourage the practice of elopement by setting a higher dowry. These measures are expected to promote the preferred cultural and religious practices, reduce familial disputes, and uphold the integrity of the marriage institution in Yakan society. By aligning dowry practices with the community's values and economic realities, these recommendations seek to foster harmony and stability within the community.

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