

Baby engagement within the traditional ulama of the Madurese ethnicity: a *Maşlahā* analysis

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This study delves into the practise of infant betrothals within the traditional Madurese ulama's lineage, designed to preserve the clerical lineage. However, practical application reveals discrepancies where not all betrothals align with the initially arranged intentions. Instances of mismatches arise due to potential rejection by the children involved. This phenomenon is analysed through the lens of *maşlahab-maşadab*. This analysis unveils a nuanced perspective on the Madurese ulama's tradition of infant betrothal, highlighting its significance beyond local custom to encompass its associated

benefits and risks. Employing qualitative methods, this research draws upon in-depth interviews using purposive sampling techniques with Madurese community leaders well-versed in the region's marital customs. This study finds underscore that infant engagement practises, within Islamic law, do not contravene *sharia* provisions. The infant betrothal tradition, conducted by the Madurese ethnic ulama's lineage, aims to fortify kinship bonds among ulama families and identify optimal partners for children, considering familial background and religious erudition. Nevertheless, the study emphasises the imperative to prioritise the interests and preferences of the child throughout the engagement and marriage process.

Tulisan ini mengkaji tentang perjodohan bayi di kalangan trah ulama tradisional etnis Madura yang dilakukan demi menjaga keturunan trah dari ulama. Namun dalam praktiknya tidak semua perjodohan bayi berakhir menjadi pernikahan. Dalam beberapa kasus perjodohan bisa saja gagal karena penolakan dari anak yang dijodohkan. Fenomena tersebut dianalisis dengan konsep *maṣlahah-maṣṣadah*. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah kualitatif. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan wawancara mendalam. Informan diperoleh dengan metode sampling purposif. Informan yang dipilih merupakan tokoh masyarakat Madura yang memahami praktik perjodohan bayi di kalangan trah ulama Madura. Hasil Penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa perjodohan bayi ini secara hukum Islam tidak melanggar ketentuan syariat. Praktik perjodohan sejak bayi yang dilakukan oleh keluarga ulama etnis Madura memiliki tujuan mempererat hubungan kekerabatan dengan sesama keluarga ulama. Selain itu, perjodohan juga sebagai upaya mencari jodoh dan pasangan terbaik untuk anak, baik secara latar belakang keluarga maupun pengetahuan agamanya. Tujuan perjodohan bayi yang pada dasarnya adalah untuk memperoleh kemaslahatan, namun dapat menjadi mafsadah jika anak tidak setuju untuk melanjutkan perkawinan tetapi dipaksa oleh orang tua untuk tetap menikah. Oleh karena itu, perjodohan bayi di kalangan ulama tradisional harus mempertimbangkan persetujuan anak jika akan dilanjutkan pada jenjang perkawinan, sehingga kemaslahatan benar-benar dapat terwujud.

Keyword: *engagement of baby; Maṣlahah; ulama's family*

Introduction

Matchmaking constitutes a ritualistic procedure facilitating two individuals, typically involving man and woman, with the aim of formalising a union through marriage. Furthermore, matchmaking also encompasses an endeavour or process focused on establishing a marital connection orchestrated by families, often without the explicit consent or awareness of the two prospective spouses involved (Indah, 2022). Within the context of arranged marriages, no stringent minimum age requirement exists; however, this practise generally pertains to individuals capable of articulating their opinions and desires. This capacity for expression typically aligns with adulthood, although it may extend to encompass children capable of

effective communication. Contrary to prevailing assumptions, arranged marriages may transpire between infants, a custom upheld in certain indigenous communities in Indonesia. Noteworthy among these are the Ogan region (Ilhamudin, 2020), the South Sumatra region utilising the term “*kawin gantung*” (hanging mate) (Mahdi, 2020), the Toraja community in Sulawesi Tengah, Kurinci Jambi, Pulau Rote in Nusatenggara Timur (Bawono and Setyaningsih, 2020), and Madura (Karisiyati, 2017).

In Madurese society, a cultural tradition involving arranged marriages orchestrated by the family, commonly by parents or relatives, is referred to as “*abbakalan*” (Ridwan, Susanto and Rahmawati, 2023). This *abbakalan* is not bound by age restrictions, as it is applicable to both adults and minors, even extending to individuals yet to be born. Diverse categories of matchmaking exist within this tradition, encompassing “*bhakeal eko-akoaghi*” (matchmaking from the womb), matchmaking initiated during childhood, “*seba*” matchmaking (typically associated with specific motives, often due to indebtedness) (Ningsih and Handoyo, 2015), and various other modes of matchmaking (Tomimah and Faruq, 2020). The practise of infant matchmaking persists through successive generations as an intrinsic part of Madurese customary matchmaking. Remarkably, this traditional approach does not consider the age of the prospective bride, maintaining its customary adherence over multiple generations (Munawara, Yasak and Dewi, 2015). Prospective grooms are typically within the age range of 0 to 20 years, while prospective brides range from 3 to 15 years old.

The Madurese community views infant matchmaking as an inherent and customary practise. Notably, even among traditional Madurese ulama, instances exist wherein individuals have undergone arranged marriages initiated by their families since infancy. This form of matchmaking is motivated by the imperative to preserve the political lineage’s identity and maintain the cohesion of familial bonds. The practise serves to uphold the sanctity of brotherhood (*sa taretanan*) and kinship (*sa bhela’an*) between two familial units (Ridwan, Susanto and Rahmawati, 2023). Additionally, it endeavours to forestall children from engaging in actions that contravene religious and customary standards. The phenomenon of infant matchmaking is documented in specific regions across Madura as well (Munawara, Yasak and Dewi, 2015).

The practise of arranging marriages for children is not exclusive to the broader Madurese

community; it extends to families or lineages of traditional Madurese ulama. These lineages uphold the custom of arranging marriages for their descendants by adhering to the principle of endogamous union. This principle dictates that the descendants or family members of Madurese ethnic ulama seek matches for their offspring within families sharing a similar scholarly lineage. Endogamous marriage is characterised by a restriction that permits only members of a specific community or group to marry individuals belonging to the same group (Darussalam, 2017). Endogamous unions encompass diverse limitations that align with the cultural norms of each community group. Such limitations may encompass religious, village-based, tribal, or descent-based endogamy (Rahmaniah, 2014).

The process of matchmaking with the objective of marriage often represents a significant influence wielded by parents and families in selecting their children's life partners (Muhadi, 2015). Given that marriage is regarded as a profound religious act and a crucial milestone in an individual's life journey, stringent criteria are occasionally imposed in the selection of potential spouses. Likewise, within the customary practise of matchmaking observed within the traditional Madurese clerical lineage, infant matchmaking is conducted to secure a suitable prospective son-in-law based on favourable family lineage, particularly emphasising connections within the ulama community. As this pairing is determined during infancy, the child is relieved of the task of seeking a partner according to their personal preferences. The practise of infant matchmaking, however, can result in rejection by one or both prospective brides when they reach maturity and readiness for marriage. Such rejection may stem from the perception that the selected candidate does not align with their personal desires (Salahudin, 2021). The consequences of rejection and failed unions pose a potential threat to the cohesion between the two ulama families.

The practise of matchmaking since infancy within the traditional Madurese ulama lineage has evolved into a perceived necessity to establish an exemplary marriage, predicated not only on religious principles but also societal norms. The ideal sought through this practise involves pairing individuals from similar familial backgrounds, often rooted in either a 'pesantren family' or an 'ulama family' (Ma'arif et al., 2023), with the ultimate aim of fostering a harmonious and contented household (*sakinah*). Moreover, the union between two ulama families, facilitated through matchmaking and marriage, is anticipated to fortify

the bonds of kinship between these familial units (Munawara, Yasak and Dewi, 2015). Nevertheless, in practicality, this perceived idealisation leads to challenges and resistance, particularly among individuals who find themselves unwilling participants in arranged marriages orchestrated by their parents.

The study of arranged marriages has garnered considerable attention, particularly concerning the tradition of arranged marriages prevalent in Madura. One such instance is observed within the Bakeong community in Sumenep, Madura, where arranged marriages are fundamentally rooted in the notion of fulfilling an indebted honour (Ningsih and Handoyo, 2015). Moreover, Karisiyati (2017) documented the practise of matchmaking since the womb, known as the *Bhaakal Ekakoagbi* tradition, prevalent in the Pamekasan of Madura. The inquiry into the matchmaking tradition within Madurese society also sheds light on its implications for gender equality, as articulated by Munawara, Yasak and Dewi (2015). Their findings suggest that, due to the matchmaking tradition in Madura, women destined for arranged marriages often lack agency in expressing their preferences.

Prior research has extensively addressed the phenomenon of arranged marriages in Madura, encompassing urban and rural settings, yet has not specifically delved into the traditional Madurese ulama lineage. The existing body of research highlights that the minimum age for arranged marriages is documented as early as 8 years old. Over 30 percent of recorded marriages in Indonesia fall under the category of arranged marriages, as defined by prevailing regulations concerning the age threshold for children. In broader terms, the prevalence of strong customary traditions stands as a significant contributor to the prevalence of early marriages in Indonesia (Yunita and Az'zahra, 2021). On one hand, adherence to these customary traditions serves to preserve cultural heritage and local wisdom. On the other hand, it also engenders challenges, impacting both the matched candidates and the families involved in the matchmaking process. Infant matchmaking exhibits the potential for both positive and negative outcomes, contingent upon how these familial relationships are upheld and managed, whether the matchmaking is annulled or successful.

This study aims to delve into the practise of infant matchmaking within Madura, with a specific focus on its prevalence among Madurese ethnic ulama families. The primary

objectives encompass an exploration of the challenges arising from this practise of infant matchmaking and an in-depth examination of the underlying significance embedded within the tradition of infant matchmaking. Furthermore, this research endeavours to analyse the essence of infant matchmaking within the context of Madurese traditional ulama families employing the framework of *maṣlahā* theory.

Method

This study is situated within the realm of qualitative research, specifically employing field research methodologies. A notable qualitative approach utilised herein is the phenomenological framework (Gorrell and De Nobile, 2023). The investigation focused on Madurese ethnic ulama due to their pivotal societal roles, commanding respect, and occupying a prominent status within their community's social hierarchy (Mukharrom and Abdi, 2023). As erudite scholars of Islamic religious knowledge, known as ulama, oversee the practise of arranged marriages. The research delves into interview-derived data pertaining to the tradition of baby matchmaking within the Madurese ethnicity. It examines the historical underpinnings and origins of this practise, elucidates the intricate process involved in baby matchmaking, and probes into the attitudes and behaviours of children involved both before and after their matchmaking and subsequent marriage.

The study employed purposive sampling, following the methodology outlined by Ames, Glenton and Lewin (2019), also known as judgment-based sampling (Etikan, 2016). This approach involves researchers specifying information needs and seeking individuals with the required knowledge or experience. The selected informants were essential members of the traditional Madurese ethnic ulama. This research originated from growing discontent regarding the cultural practise of baby matchmaking within the Madurese ulama community, a sensitive issue regarding the failure to establish family ties through arranged marriages, making direct information acquisition challenging. Hence, the chosen informant, the chairman of the Madurese community association, possessed comprehensive insight into baby matchmaking within Madura, particularly among the Madurese ulama. Subsequently, in-depth interviews were conducted with these chosen informants. Data obtained underwent identification, condensation, and verification for analysis, employing the *maṣlahā* theory. *Maṣlahā*, serving

as a benefit within *shari'a* for human welfare (Al-Buthi, 1977), covers religious, personal, intellectual, offspring, and socio-economic welfare, aligning with the objectives of *shari'a*, known as *maqāsid shari'a* (Aziz, 2022). While perceived as akin to utilitarianism (Fadel, 2022), balanced pursuit of *maşlahah* and avoidance of *mafsadah* (harm) are crucial in Islamic jurisprudence (Mutalib et al., 2020).

Baby-matching in a Madurese ulama family

Arranged marriages are entrenched customs prevalent among the traditional Madurese ethnic ulama community, extending even to unborn fetuses whose gender is predetermined by their parents. This practise is notably prevalent in the Sebenih, Bancoran, Bangkalan, and wider Madura regions (Syamsudin, 2021). The tradition of arranging marriages for children under the age of five has persisted across generations, evolving into a customary matchmaking practise within the traditional Madurese ulama circles (Bawono and Setyaningsih, 2020). Families within this traditional ulama sphere find solace and familiarity in the prospect of their offspring being matched with a prospective life partner from a similar ulama lineage. Infants who are part of arranged marriages are irrevocably linked to their respective spouse's family unit, precluding any future matchmaking proposals. Such children are bound by their prior arranged marriage, growing, and maturing within their parental households until reaching puberty or adulthood. Upon attaining adulthood, parents partake in a ritual ceremony to formalise the marriage (Syamsudin, 2021).

The process of arranging matches for babies predominantly involves the boy's parents, occasionally including the boy's grandfather in decision-making. The boy's family assumes a pivotal role in determining the viability of such matches for their child. The impetus for arranging these unions may originate from either family involved. Typically, the initiation stems from the boy's family, but occasionally, the girl's family also takes part in initiating such arranged marriages. In instances where a woman or multiple women within the ulama lineage become pregnant, the extended family within this ulama community takes proactive steps to arrange matches for unborn children. Plans are outlined or preparations are made regarding which child will be matched with whom even before the child's birth. Subsequent discussions between the families aim to ascertain the compatibility of the proposed

match, eventually progressing to technical discussions pertaining to the logistics of the matchmaking plan (Salahudin, 2021).

Regarding who can be matched, Kodir (2021) recouted

“The paramount principle guiding arranged marriages is their adherence to religious norms. Hence, it is customary for arranged marriages to occur among close relatives, including older and younger siblings. Within Islam, such marital unions are not forbidden as these relationships are not classified as mahram”.

According to Salahudin (2021), arranged marriages within the traditional Madurese ulama lineage are driven by four key factors. Firstly, the politics of lineage identity aim to preserve the familial ulama lineage from intermingling with other lineages. This preservation is upheld by matching offspring from infancy or even before birth to ensure the continuity of the ancestral ulama line. Secondly, emotional considerations seek to provide children with certainty regarding their future spouses, fostering a sense of serenity and alleviating anxieties about their household life ahead. Thirdly, the factor of religious adherence plays a role in using matchmaking as a proactive measure to avoid transgressing prohibitive acts and steering clear of extramarital relations, which contravene customary and religious norms. Lastly, the ancestral tradition factor signifies that arranged marriages have been a longstanding practise since the time of Madurese ancestors. Consequently, the Madurese ethnic community feels a sense of guilt and unease when deviating from this deeply ingrained tradition of arranged marriages (Aini and Nuqul, 2019).

Following mutual agreement between both parties, a customary ritual known as the matchmaking procession is initiated shortly thereafter, often marked by the *khitbah* or engagement ceremony (Salahudin, 2021). After the *khitbah*, the paired man and woman maintain the status of “*ajnabiyah*”, referring to individuals other than *mabram* (Zulfikar and Kurniawan, 2023). As non-*mabram*, specific restrictions persist between them, delineating actions that are impermissible between individuals who are not *mabram* (Suhaimi, 2014).

Distinguish between two categories of marriage: one founded on affection and the other orchestrated by relatives or parents, recognised as an arranged marriage (Nursyifa, 2020). In contrast, Rifai (2020) contends that marriage transcends individual preferences, encompassing the interconnection between two kinship groups. In this perspective, the

union of two individuals in matrimony consolidates the alliance between these kinship units. Consequently, marriage does not invariably stem from mutual affection; rather, it frequently involves familial or parental arrangements. Such unions persist across generations, aimed at securing societal standing (status) and progeny (Aini and Nuqul, 2019).

Marriages aimed at preserving identity are notably observed in instances such as the union involving a *sayyid* (a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad). In this scenario, a *sayyid* man retains his title even when marrying a non-*syarifab*, whereas a *syarifab* (a female descendant of the prophet) is not permitted to wed a non-*sayyid* man to safeguard the continuity of their lineage (Mustafa and Bahram, 2020). A similar practise is evident in the Bakeong community of Sumenep Madura, emphasising endogamous marriages to uphold lineage purity (Ningsih and Handoyo, 2015). In Javanese philosophy, considerations revolve around *bibit* (ancestral lineage), *bebet* (appearance), and *bobot* (personal qualities) (Hartanto, 2020). This ideology governs the practises of arranged marriages within Javanese society.

The ceremonial practise of matchmaking for Madurese infants below the age of five commences with parents expressing their desire to arrange marriages for their children. Upon mutual consent between the two families, both seek guidance and counsel from their respective elders or family leaders. Subsequently, these elders provide a fatwa or counsel, ensuring the commencement of the match on an auspicious and propitious day (Salahudin, 2021).

The participants involved in the matchmaking process for infants under five years old can be categorised into two primary groups. The first comprises the nuclear family, encompassing the parents, grandparents, and elders within the familial lineage. The second group comprises the close relatives of the child intended for matchmaking, including siblings, paternal and maternal relatives, close family connections, and certain religious figures within the local community. Upon the consensus of the nuclear family and the boy's close connections, they collectively visit the girl's residence. An assortment of food offerings is presented as gifts to the girl's family, accompanied by the groom's presentation of valuable items, referred to as *peningset*, symbolising the commitment to the matchmaking alliance, such as bracelets, necklaces, or other esteemed possessions (Kodir, 2021).

The commencement of the matchmaking ceremony involves the repetition of *Surah al-Fatihah*, led by an elder figure from the community. This recitation is dedicated to various

revered figures, including Prophet Muhammad, families, companions, wives, descendants (*abl al-bait*), *tabiin*, and other esteemed members of family. The recitation may be reiterated up to three times (Salahudin, 2021). Subsequently, recitation of holy verses from the Quran follows, followed by a declaration from the male side expressing their intent for the union. The woman's family responds to this intent, often accompanied by the presentation of *peningset* and occasionally the *ijab qabul*. The proceedings conclude with prayers and a communal meal. Salahudin (2021) notes that this ceremonial sequence adheres to religious dictates (*shari'a*).

In the context of upholding the objectives delineated by *shari'a*, arranged marriages within the Madurese ulama community serve to preserve progeny (*hifẓ al-nasl*), uphold religious values (*hifẓ al-din*), and safeguard wealth (*hifẓ al-māl*) (Mangini, 2018). Ulama aspire for their offspring to perpetuate the lineage within the scholarly community, ensuring what is considered a suitable match or *sekufu* (*hifẓ al-nasl*) (Mahbub, 2013). Seeking a partner from within the ulama sphere also aims to cultivate adequate religious knowledge (*hifẓ al-din*). The community ethos regards the ulama not only as religious guides but also as moral and psychological pillars (Geertz, 1960). Furthermore, concerning the preservation of wealth (*hifẓ al-māl*), these matches are designed to prevent the transfer of property or riches from either party to another family (Abidin, 2018).

The paramount advantage of an arranged marriage lies in ensuring the welfare of the involved parties, particularly the child. Hence, the objectives and advantages of *shari'a* should fundamentally align with the child's best interests. The process of arranging marriages from infancy aims to benefit the child, yet such benefits should also consider the child's consent. Ultimately, it is the child who will subsequently navigate the married life that stems from an arranged union.

The issues surrounding infant matchmaking among Madurese ulama families

This form of arranged marriage, as indicated by Syamsudin (2021), entails two implications. Firstly, there are implications for the bride and family. Following the completion of the matchmaking ceremony, the paired boy and girl return to their respective parents. Subsequently, the relationship between the two families strengthens, characterised by

mutual support through charitable offerings, such as food, and collaborative assistance for their matched children. This marital arrangement fosters enhanced social cohesion between the two families. However, the personal relationship between the matched children remains ordinary, devoid of significant differences.

In their day-to-day lives, children who have been engaged in arranged marriages typically engage in regular activities without experiencing evident physical or psychological pressures. Parents afford them the freedom to engage in Quranic recitation and pursue religious education through both formal and informal channels, including the opportunity to study at pesantren salafiyah. Interestingly, a considerable number of graduates from these pesantren salafiyah further their studies in Saudi Arabia. Those educated in pesantren salafiyah often exhibit obedience and adherence to parental wishes. Conversely, children enrolled in formal educational institutions, including universities, tend to adopt a more rational approach, impacting their academic mindset. The nature of children's education significantly influences the prospective sustainability of their arranged marriages.

The second implication pertains to religious and social aspects. Over time, children matched in infancy gradually assimilate into society, maturing into adulthood. The social interactions within this community are regulated, particularly for the girls. These girls are constrained in their social engagements, especially with individuals of the opposite gender who are not their *mahram*. Their education and social interactions, spanning from childhood to adulthood, significantly moulded the personalities and perspectives of these individuals initially matched as infants. There have been instances where, despite being matched since infancy, these individuals, for various reasons, did not proceed to establish a household. In cases where both individuals have been accepted into the arrangement since childhood, upon reaching the appropriate age to commence married life, the marriage agreement is renegotiated. Conversely, if their childhood engagement was solely contractual, both families graciously annul the marriage plans.

In specific circumstances, instances arise where two families encounter difficulties in solemnising the matrimonial union of their previously arranged children, leading instead to familial discord. Instances of dissent towards arranged marriages manifest when the anticipated betrothed individuals have matured, as evidenced in a particular case within

a Madurese clerical family. The son, previously betrothed, was afforded the opportunity to pursue education at a *pesantren* situated in Jawa Timur. Following the completion of his studies at this traditional institution, he proceeded to further his education in Saudi Arabia. Upon concluding his educational pursuits, the now-mature and of-age son returned to his parental abode. Deliberations concerning the matchmaking between the respective parents of the prospective spouses culminated in the establishment of the date for the marriage confirmation ceremony, or *isbat* nikah. The celebratory wedding ceremony, known as *walimah al-ursh*, was conducted lavishly, with attendance from numerous guests. However, the bride, secluded within her chambers, expressed reluctance to emerge and declined to meet the groom, citing mismatched expectations as the cause. Consequently, amidst this festivity, a dissolution of the marriage ensued.

According to the research findings, the practise of arranged marriages in Madura encompasses three distinct forms. Firstly, marriages are arranged for infants or children below the age of five, extending even to children yet to be born (Karisiyati, 2017). Secondly, the matchmaking process is employed for children aged above five years, extending into adolescence or adulthood, grounded in customary norms (Suhaimi, 2014). Thirdly, arrangements for adult children allow the prospective bride and groom to articulate their consent. This established framework of arranged marriages has persisted across time and remains prevalent due to the profound adherence of the Madurese community to the age-old customs and traditions passed down through generations. Those who deviate from these ancestral customs face potential misfortunes and a diminished quality of life (Salahudin, 2021).

Arranged marriages in Madura are chiefly orchestrated by parents, denying children the autonomy to select their future life partners. Within ulama traditions, the institution of marriage aims to safeguard the purity of lineage, hence favouring matrimonial unions within the same familial lineage as an ideal practise. The responsibility for upholding the pre-arranged marriages of infants lies with the parents, justified by customary law and perceived alignment with Islamic principles (Danial, 2023).

The Madurese ethnic ulama's infant matchmaking serves noble objectives and complies with *shari'a*, aiming to help parents find suitable matches from reputable lineages for their children. This practise also shields children from seeking life partners, averting potential

moral pitfalls related to opposite-sex interactions. Nonetheless, these commendable intentions can yield adverse effects. Initiated in infancy, this practise negates the child's ability to consent, depriving matched children of agency in selecting partners according to their preferences. Indonesia's strong patrilineal, matrilineal, and parental structures underscore the paramount role of parental and familial authority in marriages (Indah, 2022). Similarly, within Madurese ulama-led infant matchmaking, adherence to parental authority and safeguarding family reputation lead to accepting arranged partners (Ridwan, Susanto and Rahmawati, 2023). Concerns persist that coerced arranged marriages, lacking children's consent, might significantly impact household sustainability.

As elucidated by Syamsudin (2021), specific instances have indicated instances of resistance from brides who find themselves married to partners arranged since infancy. In such cases, subsequent to the legal validation of the marriage contract, the bride exhibits rebellion by refusing to engage or acknowledge her spouse, culminating in divorce. This situation exacerbates the repercussions, extending beyond the immediate couple to affect the families involved. The failure of an arranged marriage is deemed disgraceful, engendering a rupture in the amicable ties between the respective families.

The practise of arranging infant marriages within the Madurese ethnic ulama lineage is fundamentally aimed at fostering prosperity. This objective aligns with the *maşlahah* principle, wherein the aspiration is to secure compatible matches (*kafa'ah*) among fellow scholars, considering their shared religious knowledge and family background (Kodir, 2021). *Maşlahah* stands as a significant benchmark frequently employed in *ijtihad* processes and serves as an approach to delineate the objectives underpinning *sharia* implementation (Fadel, 2022). *Scholars* affirm that wherever *maşlahah* exists, it embodies the law of Allah, indicating that any aspect encompassing *maşlahah* reflects divine law. Therefore, *maşlahah* stands as a pivotal concept within Islamic law (Ghofur and Susilo, 2017). Generally, the realisation of *maşlahah* can be based on two principles: firstly, to attain benefits and goodness for humanity, known as *jalb al-manāfi'* or *jalb al-masāliḥ*. Secondly, to forestall and avert harm or detriment, often referred to as *dar'u al-mafāsīd* (Ichsan and Dewi, 2020).

The baby matchmaking tradition within the Madurese ulama lineage serves the purpose of averting *mafsadah* (harm), with the intention to safeguard the offspring of fellow

ulama lineages from potentially unsuitable matches. Nonetheless, this practise also yields consequences by disregarding the desires of the child, thereby impacting their future domestic life. This situation presents a conflict of *mafsadah*. According to the fiqh principle “*idbā tazāhamati almāṣidi quddima al-akḥaffu minba*”, which dictates that when multiple *maṣlahah* or *mafsadah* conflict, the greater *maṣlahah* takes precedence. Similarly, in instances where various dangers collide, the least severe *mafsadah* should be chosen (Mulyo et al., 2023). Hence, the optimal approach involves five methods: reconciling and synthesising between the two, prioritising and evaluating one over the other, making choices that consider both perspectives, seeking consensus, and exercising restraint or refraining from penalising by leaving both options intact (Ahmad, 2016).

The impact of two potential harms, which are the concerns of parents about the loss of the ulama lineage and the ramifications for the future domestic life of the children, needs explication within the context of practised arranged marriages. In this scenario, preserving lineage aligns with one of the *maqāṣid shari’a*, specifically *ḥifẓ an-nasl* (preservation of progeny). However, when weighed against the damage or *mafsadah* incurred by enforcing parental desires through infant matchmaking, the detrimental effects are notably greater. Marriages coerced under duress significantly impact household harmony. Steiner and Becker (2019) assert that a woman marrying an undesired partner affects the children born from that union. This is attributed to the increased psychological stress experienced by the woman or prospective mother in a marriage with an undesired partner.

To mitigate greater *mafsadah*, three pivotal measures should be undertaken. Firstly, positioning the practise of infant matchmaking as a local cultural tradition necessitating preservation while concurrently ensuring the proper fulfilment of infants’ rights to foster their unhindered growth and development. The endorsement of arranged marriages for infants need not be forbidden, provided there are assurances of upholding the child’s rights in a conventional manner. Secondly, persistent education is imperative for religious, community, and traditional leaders regarding the legal norms prevailing in Indonesia. This is crucial to prevent infant matchmaking activities from contravening national laws. Article 6 of Law No. 1 of 1974 concerning marriage in Indonesia stipulates that marriage terms must be predicated on the consent of both the bride and groom. Hence, the

paramount criterion lies in the willingness of potential candidates to participate in arranged marriages since infancy. Despite neither Islam nor Indonesian marriage laws prohibiting arranged marriages, due consideration must be given to the preferences and consent of the prospective partners. Islamic law indeed aims to safeguard human rights, precluding any maltreatment under the guise of culture or religion (Carobene, 2023). Thirdly, it is imperative for parents to grant their children full autonomy in determining their future. While parents serve as guardians, their obligations include guiding their children to receive appropriate education and avoiding detrimental practises. Child marriage stands as one such detrimental practise (Paul and Mondal, 2021). Arranged child marriages remain permissible only if they safeguard the child's rights, ensuring that what is intended as beneficial does not inadvertently become the most harmful. Parents are entrusted with providing educational direction and guidance while respecting the child's autonomy.

Conclusion

The practise of arranging infant marriages within the traditional Madurese ethnic ulama lineage has evolved into a prevalent custom within the Madurese community. This tradition stems from the ulama families' desire for their offspring to find potential life partners within the same ulama lineage, along with an intention to shield children from the perils of promiscuity. However, the execution of arranged marriages by Madurese ethnic ulama at infancy inherently denies children the opportunity to grant consent. Such arrangements made during infancy deprive children of the autonomy to select a prospective partner based on personal criteria, leading to uncertainty regarding their acceptance of the match in adulthood.

Guided by the fiqh principle "*idhā tazāhamati almfāsidi quddima al akhaffu minha*", where the least harmful *mafsadah* is chosen when conflicts arise, parents aim to prevent the *mafsadah* of their children from finding a partner from the clerical family. Yet, a greater *mafsadah* may emerge if children later refuse marriage due to their parents' arranged selection. This refusal could disrupt the harmonious relationship between the two ulama families, generating greater societal repercussions. Consequently, in practise, prioritising the children's wishes becomes essential to avert heightened *mafsadah*. A comprehensive understanding of baby

matchmaking among Madurese ethnic clerics necessitates an in-depth examination. *Maṣlahah-maṣṣadāh* analysis offers a novel perspective, shedding light on this tradition beyond mere local wisdom, considering its associated benefits and risks.

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