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## Transformation of Gender Equality Values in the Household from an Islamic Family Law Perspective<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract:

This study explores the transformation of gender equality values in Muslim households in Soppeng Riaja Subdistrict, Barru Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, a rural area showing relatively advanced gender equality practices in public sectors such as governance, education, and health, while maintaining traditional role divisions in primary sectors. Employing a qualitative approach with a normative-sociological perspective, the research combines in-depth interviews with six purposively selected married women who balance domestic responsibilities and public work, non-participant observation, and documentation over six months. Findings reveal that gender equality is implemented through three key dimensions: justice (evident in deliberative decision-making and equal educational access), togetherness (reflected in flexible domestic task-sharing based on situational needs), and responsibility (demonstrated by women's active economic participation and financial management). The community adapts to these changes through gradual strategies, including shifting mindsets toward mutual understanding, reinterpreting religious and cultural beliefs to emphasize Islamic principles of justice and partnership, and altering daily behaviors to foster cooperation. Despite progress, challenges persist, including patriarchal cultural remnants, women's double burden, and limited understanding of gender equality concepts. The study concludes that gender equality in this context emerges adaptively by harmoniously integrating Islamic teachings, Bugis-Makassar customs, and modern demands, offering a contextual model for Muslim communities in Indonesia that neither rejects traditional nor religious values.

Keywords: gender equality; household transformation; Islamic family law; Maqashid al-Syariah; rural Muslim community.

### A. INTRODUCTION

Gender equality remains a critical issue in Indonesia, despite significant progress in recent years. Challenges persist, particularly in rural and remote areas, where a strong patriarchal culture leads to discrimination in education, employment, and the division of household roles (Sriharini et al., 2024). Women frequently face wage inequality, barriers to leadership positions, sexual harassment in the workplace, and the double burden of domestic and public responsibilities. At the national level, women's political participation remains low despite the existence of gender quotas, and gender inequality

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often becomes a source of family conflict, such as unbalanced role division and male dominance in decision-making (Triadi & Maryanto, 2024).

In rural areas such as Soppeng Riaja Subdistrict, Barru Regency, there are indications of relatively advanced gender equality practices compared to national trends. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) of Soppeng Riaja Subdistrict in 2022 show that the number of female civil servants (PNS) exceeds that of males in several local government units (Barru, 2023). The health and education sectors are also dominated by female workers, with more female teachers in local schools, for instance. However, in agriculture, plantations, and fisheries, the dominant sectors in the mountainous and coastal areas, heavy tasks are still predominantly performed by men, while women take on supporting roles such as plant care and processing harvests. The community in this region, which comprises three parts (mountains, coast, and subdistrict towns), applies gender equality values across education, employment, social life, religion, and politics, influenced by a blend of Islamic law, local Bugis-Makassar customs, and modern values. This phenomenon reflects a transformation in household values regarding gender equality, where women are increasingly active in the public sphere without fully abandoning their domestic roles.

Previous studies have extensively discussed gender equality within the context of Islamic family law in Indonesia and more broadly. These studies are generally normative-theoretical, historical, or focused on legal reforms to address issues such as domestic violence (KDRT) and gender injustice stemming from patriarchal interpretations. For instance, St. Rahmawati, in her article "Mainstreaming of Gender Equality in Islamic Family Law: Opportunities and Challenges," explores the opportunities and challenges of mainstreaming gender equality in Islamic family law. The study emphasizes the axiological relationship between gender equality and Islamic values, such as justice, compassion, and peace, to achieve harmonious households, yet it remains at a normative analytical level without field-based empirical data (Rahmawati, 2020). Similarly, Mufidah Cholil and Sudirman, in "Gender Equality in Islamic Family Law: Breaking the Chain of Domestic Violence to Achieve Harmonious Family," analyze reforms in Islamic family law aimed at breaking the cycle of domestic violence and realizing a *sakinah* (tranquil) family grounded in gender equality. Employing formal legal approaches, legal culture, *ushul fiqh*, *maqashid al-syariah*, and the universal value of *rahmah li al-'alamin*, the study highlights how patriarchal culture and gender-biased interpretations of sacred texts are primary causes of domestic violence against women, thus necessitating reform for harmonious families. The approach remains theoretical-normative without empirical investigation in specific communities (Cholil & Sudirman, 2019). Meanwhile, Busran Qadri and Ihsan Mulia Siregar, in "Islamic Renewal in the Field of Family Law: A Historical Analysis of Gender Equality," conduct a historical analysis of Islamic renewal in family law. The research demonstrates how Islam reformed discriminatory practices from the *jahiliyah* era to promote gender equality through the principle of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, with a focus on justice within the family (Qadri & Siregar, 2023).

These three studies are normative-historical or theoretical in nature, discussing Islamic reforms and principles at a general or national level, without in-depth empirical

investigation in local rural communities. A significant research gap lies in the lack of field studies exploring the transformation of gender equality values in the daily lives of households within specific Muslim communities, such as those in rural South Sulawesi, where a unique blend of Islamic law, local customs (e.g., Bugis-Makassar traditions), and modernization is at play. Previous research rarely analyzes community adaptation strategies to these changes, such as women's increasing participation in formal sectors while maintaining traditional domestic role divisions, or applies the perspective of Islamic Family Law (including *Maqashid al-Syariah*) to empirical phenomena where gender equality practices are relatively advanced, as evidenced by BPS data from Soppeng Riaja Subdistrict. This leaves a gap for more contextual, empirical, and community-based research.

The novelty of this study lies in its examination of the transformation of gender equality values in households from the perspective of Islamic Family Law in the Muslim community of Soppeng Riaja Subdistrict, Barru Regency, a rural area with empirical data indicating women's dominance in governance, health, and education sectors, yet traditional role divisions in primary sectors. Unlike prior studies, which are predominantly normative, historical, or theoretical, this research combines a field-based empirical approach with analysis from the perspective of Islamic Family Law (particularly *Maqashid al-Syariah* theory) to uncover the dynamics of transformation, community adaptation strategies to socio-cultural-religious challenges, and the alignment of these value shifts with Islamic teachings (the Qur'an, Sunnah, and scholarly opinions). The primary novelty resides in its exploration of a unique local case that integrates Islamic law, Bugis-Makassar customs, and modern influences, thereby offering a new contribution to the discourse on gender equality that is empirically grounded while remaining rooted in Islamic principles.

Based on the problem background, the objectives of this study are:

1. To understand the transformation of gender equality values occurring in Soppeng Riaja Subdistrict, Barru Regency, particularly within the households of the local Muslim community.
2. To identify the strategies employed by the community in addressing the challenges of transforming gender equality values in households in Soppeng Riaja Subdistrict, Barru Regency, from the perspective of Islamic Family Law.

## **B. METHODE**

This study is a field research employing a qualitative method with a normative-sociological approach, aimed at describing and analyzing the transformation of gender equality values in the households of the Muslim community in Soppeng Riaja Subdistrict, Barru Regency, while examining it from the perspective of Islamic Family Law, particularly the theory of *Maqashid al-Syariah*. The research location was selected in Soppeng Riaja Subdistrict, Barru Regency, South Sulawesi Province, because its community demonstrates relatively advanced gender equality practices in public

sectors, such as women's dominance in governance, education, and health, based on 2022 BPS data, while still maintaining domestic role divisions influenced by Islamic law and local Bugis-Makassar customs. The research lasted six months, from preparation to final analysis.

Primary data were obtained from six female informants selected purposively based on the following criteria: being married, having household responsibilities, actively working in the public sphere, and willing to share experiences regarding family role division. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured in-depth interviews focusing on changes in domestic-public task division, family decision-making, and views on the compatibility of these changes with Islamic teachings (recorded with permission and lasting 45–90 minutes), non-participant observation of informants' activities at home and workplace to observe husband-wife interaction patterns as well as the influence of religious and customary values (conducted in 10–15 visits), and documentation in the form of activity photos, informants' personal notes (if permitted), and local BPS statistical data. Secondary data complemented primary findings through books, scientific journals, theses, dissertations, and normative documents related to Islamic Family Law.

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, carried out concurrently with data collection, involving data reduction by transcribing interviews verbatim, summarizing relevant information on gender equality value transformation and normative Islamic views while eliminating non-essential elements; data display in the form of narratives, direct quotations, thematic tables, and inter-category relationship matrices to identify transformation patterns and adaptation strategies; and conclusion drawing verified through source and method triangulation as well as the Maqashid al-Syariah framework, thereby producing credible answers to the two research objectives.

Data validity was ensured through source and method triangulation (comparison of interviews, observations, documentation, and literature), member checks by returning initial findings to informants for confirmation, thick description of the local socio-cultural-customary context to support transferability, and an audit trail in the form of detailed documentation of the entire process to maintain dependability and confirmability. Thus, this study yields in-depth, contextual, and accountable findings regarding the transformation of gender equality values in households from the perspective of Islamic Family Law.

## C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study reveals that the transformation of gender equality values in households in Soppeng Riaja Subdistrict, Barru Regency, occurs gradually and adaptively, influenced by the interplay of Islamic law, Bugis-Makassar customs, and the demands of modern life. The findings indicate the implementation of relatively advanced gender equality in the public sector, such as women's dominance in governance, education, and health; however, in the household sphere, equality is realized through flexible patterns that continue to respect functional differences. The following discussion integrates the

research findings with analysis, relevant theories (such as those from Fakhri, Connell, Kabeer, Nussbaum, Sen, and Capra), previous studies, and the perspective of Islamic Family Law.

### **Implementation of Gender Equality Values in Households in Soppeng Riaja District, Barru Regency**

Based on research findings in Soppeng Riaja Subdistrict, Barru Regency, the community has implemented gender equality values in household life through three main dimensions: justice, togetherness, and responsibility. These findings align with Fakhri's concept, which emphasizes that gender equality is not merely about eliminating biological differences but rather about providing equal rights, balanced role distribution, and shared responsibilities for both men and women.

#### **1. The Value of Justice in Decision Making and Access to Education**

The value of justice in households in Soppeng Riaja Subdistrict is manifested through the practice of *musyawarah* (deliberation) in making strategic family decisions. Interview results indicate that husbands and wives actively participate in determining important decisions, such as children's education, financial management, and future planning. As expressed by Aminah, "When it comes to important family decisions, for example, regarding finances or children's education, they are always discussed." This statement illustrates a deliberative process in which both parties are equally involved. The practice of *musyawarah* reflects a transformation from the traditional patriarchal model toward more egalitarian relations (Widnyani, 2025). Although in some cases the final decision is still made by the husband as the head of the family, the two-way communication demonstrates respect for women's intellectual capacity. This aligns with Connell's concept of gender order, which emphasizes the need for power redistribution to achieve gender justice in social relations (Sholeh & Juniarti, 2022).

Hani reinforces this finding by stating that important decisions are always thoroughly discussed: "For decisions, yes, they are definitely talked over carefully first; we discuss, for example, the long-term implications and what risks need to be considered carefully." This statement indicates that husbands and wives act as equal partners in planning the family's future, rather than in a superior-subordinate relationship. An interesting aspect of applying the value of justice is granting daughters the freedom to make their own educational choices. Nur Hudaya stated, "The child determines their own choice. We just guide them." This attitude reflects respect for children's rights to think and develop according to their potential without coercion based on gender, while also demonstrating the transmission of gender equality values to the next generation.

Equality in access to education serves as an important indicator of the implementation of the value of justice. The data show that families provide equal opportunities for sons and daughters to pursue higher education. Aisyah explained the importance of education for women: "Women need to go to school because... because

now it's not like before; the economy today means they can help, and there will definitely be changes if both work together." This statement reveals an awareness that women's education is strategically valuable to the family's economic well-being. Several respondents have educational backgrounds equivalent to those of their spouses. Aminah stated, "My educational background and my father's are the same, yes, both completed master's degrees," while Hani revealed, "My partner or husband has already completed a master's in literature, whereas I am currently striving to finish my master's." This educational equality creates important capital for egalitarian relationships, as women possess balanced academic capacity and bargaining power.

From Kabeer's perspective, this condition reflects women's empowerment through access to educational resources, which enhances their agency in decision-making. Fakih asserts that educational equality represents a transformative step toward eroding women's subordination, as knowledge empowers them to participate equally in family and social dynamics (Sugitanata et al., 2024).

Nur Hudaya emphasizes the urgency of equal education: "In my opinion, it's equally important, because women cannot work as hard physically as men." This statement demonstrates an awareness that, despite physical differences, education is key for women to access career opportunities that do not rely solely on physical strength. Munirah strengthens this argument: "Seeking knowledge is indeed obligatory... Yes, it's obligatory. Seeking knowledge has nothing to do with gender. It's obligatory for anyone, in my view." This perspective aligns with Nussbaum's capabilities theory, which holds that women must have equal access to education to achieve full well-being.

## **2. The Value of Togetherness in the Division of Domestic Roles**

The value of togetherness in Soppeng Riaja is evident in the flexibility of household task division. Although women still dominate domestic work such as cooking, laundry, and childcare, there is an awareness of mutual assistance. Aminah explains, "Cooking is mostly my responsibility, but sometimes when I have external duties or am ill, he takes over occasionally, though fundamentally it's mine. As for him, he handles outside matters and the children's schooling." This statement indicates that husbands take over domestic tasks when wives are occupied or facing physical constraints.

This pattern of cooperation reflects a shift from rigid role divisions toward a more collaborative, situational approach. (Jabar & Frinaldi, 2025) Aisyah states, "For example, both of us with my husband; for instance, if the wife cooks and cleans, the husband does the washing, and they take turns caring for the children." The equality applied here does not mean identical shares, but rather fairness based on conditions, abilities, and family needs. This aligns with Kabeer's concept that women's empowerment contributes to overall family well-being, making gender equality a foundation for inclusive social development.

Hani reveals a more complex dynamic: "Yes... for housework, sometimes my husband helps, sometimes it's mostly me... So sometimes for washing dishes or clothes, he helps, depending on my husband's mood; if he wants to help, alhamdulillah, and

thankfully, my husband doesn't force me to do the housework." Although cultural norms still influence the view of housework as a "woman's duty," the husband's non-coercive attitude reflects a changing awareness that household responsibilities are not solely women's obligations.

From Fakih's perspective, this condition can be interpreted as a form of social transformation toward gender equality, in which traditional role constructions are gradually being replaced by more flexible practices. This attitude of mutual respect represents an important step in eroding gender subordination and stereotypes (Ferdiansyah et al., 2025).

Husniatil Bahri provides a more progressive illustration: "In general, in the family, I have the primary duty of cooking, but when the time comes that I can't cook, eh my husband can step into the kitchen. It doesn't have to be all women's work. For laundry, there's a washing machine; if I'm not around, he operates it himself. Like that. It's almost like mutual help, mutual assistance, mutual support." This statement shows that modern technology also facilitates a more equal division of roles, making it easier for husbands to take over domestic tasks.

Nur Hudaya reinforces this finding: "There are many benefits; usually, when I come home from traveling, I help. Usually, when it's time to eat, I prepare the food, and he gets the plates. The point is mutual help. If I wash, he hangs it out to dry." This attitude of mutual assistance indicates that a harmonious household is built on the foundation of cooperation and empathy, rather than domination by one party.

A unique manifestation of the value of togetherness is the practice of giving children names that incorporate elements from both parents. The couple, Muhammad Ramzy Amiruddin and Tsamrah Fuadah, named their daughter "Zara Nabila," an acronym derived from both of their names. Similarly, the couple Muchtar Wujedan and Andi Dewi Rara Amiati gave the surname "Muarrar" (an acronym from their names) to all three of their children: Ahmad Nidhal Muarrar, Izzah Insyirah Muarrar, and Ahmad Rafa Muarrar.

This practice reflects the values of gender equality, as explained by Fakih. When a child's name is composed from a combination of the father's and mother's names, it demonstrates that family identity is no longer monopolized by the male lineage, as is common in patriarchal traditions, but is constructed jointly. This practice marks a shift in gender construction toward more egalitarian relational patterns, where women receive equal symbolic and social recognition. From Fakih's perspective, this action is part of a social transformation that erodes gender subordination while simultaneously strengthening the values of justice and partnership in building a family (Halimatussa'diyah et al., 2024).

### **3. The Value of Responsibility in Economic Participation**

Women in Soppeng Riaja Subdistrict not only fulfill domestic roles but are also actively engaged in economic activities. Many wives work as teachers, civil servants, farmers, gardeners, seamstresses, or run small businesses to support family livelihoods. In some households, women even play a key role as family financial managers.

Husniatil Bahri explains, "The father works at a pesantren as a teacher. Then I teach myself; I'm a teacher too. So we both work, and coincidentally, we are both civil servants." This statement indicates that both husbands and wives make equal economic contributions, aligning with Fakih's concept of gender equality. Women's access to formal employment, similar professions, and equivalent bureaucratic status reflects a reduction in subordination and gender stereotypes that typically position men as the primary breadwinners. Aminah reveals her motivation for working: "Because it's indeed our nature to help the economy; the drive comes from improving our economy, our children's, our future, that's what motivates us, so we tend to seek other jobs." This statement shows that gender equality is realized through the recognition and provision of opportunities for women to work and participate in enhancing family economics. This aligns with Nur's view that gender equality is not merely a matter of moral justice but also a prerequisite for human development, where women's empowerment through economic access strengthens overall family well-being (Nursyifa, 2020).

Hani describes the transformation of women's roles: "Now, many women work to earn a living. It's different from before. Women used to just stay at home, managing the household, but even so, women still work even though housework is seen as women's tasks, not men's." This statement highlights a transformation in women's roles that is consistent with evolving gender-equality values, reflected proportionally within households. Women are now granted access to work and contribute to family economics without losing their domestic position.

Another important aspect is women's authority in managing family finances. Husniatil Bahri states, "Eh, I am the treasurer, I am the treasurer, but there are some things that do not come to me. I understand that we each have needs... Not everything has to be discussed. Not everything has to go through the wife either." From a gender equality perspective, the role of women as family treasurers indicates the existence of partnership in the household economic sphere and trust in women's managerial capacity. Although some financial decisions are still held by the husband, this practice of sharing economic responsibilities demonstrates growing trust and an increasingly equal financial partnership. These findings align with Kabeer's capabilities theory, which encompasses three aspects: resources (access to economic and educational opportunities), agency (the ability to make decisions), and achievements (social outcomes and well-being). Women's involvement in family economics shows that gender equality occurs when women have control over resources and decisions in their lives (Bhattacharyya et al., 2025).

### **Community Strategies in Facing the Transformation of Gender Equality Values in Households in Soppeng Riaja District, Barru Regency**

The transformation of gender equality values in households in Soppeng Riaja Subdistrict does not occur abruptly but unfolds gradually through a dialogical, adaptive process. The local community adjusts to social and cultural changes through patterns of open communication, mutual understanding of each other's circumstances, and the development of cooperation in household management. Capra asserts that value transformation is not merely superficial behavioral change but a paradigm shift in

thinking that influences how individuals and groups build relationships and interact with their socio-cultural environment. In Soppeng Riaja, this shift is reflected in more egalitarian household practices, such as flexible role divisions, decision-making through dialogue, and equal opportunities in education and economic activities.

### 1. Changing Ways of Thinking: From Gender Stereotypes to Mutual Understanding

The first strategy employed by the community is transforming mindsets about gender roles in the household. The people of Soppeng Riaja Subdistrict have begun to view men and women as having equal capabilities in decision-making, education, and economic roles. The traditional mindset that confined women solely to the domestic sphere is gradually shifting toward an understanding that cooperation and *musyawarah* (deliberation) are the keys to family harmony. Capra emphasizes that social change does not occur instantaneously but through adjustments in values and relational patterns within societal systems. This aligns with conditions in Soppeng Riaja, where gender equality emerges not by rejecting local culture but by slowly reinterpreting its meanings. Old cultural elements are retained but given new, more equitable interpretations (Umriana et al., 2016).

This change in thinking is evident in the attitude of mutual understanding between husbands and wives (Mardlatillah & Saadah, 2022). Aminah explains how she understands her husband's workload: "If I see he's busy, I don't push it; I understand too, because I'm at school, but he has more school-related work than I as an ordinary teacher, while he has many other duties as a teacher." This statement shows that role division is no longer based on rigid gender stereotypes but on an assessment of each party's actual workload. This flexible attitude reflects acceptance that household responsibilities should be shared based on ability and circumstances, not solely on gender.

The transformation of mindsets is also reflected in spontaneous task-sharing practices that do not always require formal discussion. Husniatil Bahri explains: "There's no discussion; it's just automatic. For example, if there's a ditch to clean or a leaking roof tile, I can't do it. I don't have the skill for that, and it seems like it's indeed a man's job. He just takes the initiative himself. Similarly, for women's tasks, I don't need to be asked; if I have time and he understands."

From Capra's perspective, this pattern illustrates a paradigm shift from rigid rules based on traditional hierarchy toward a shared awareness of each individual's abilities and comfort. Although remnants of traditional thinking persist, such as the notion that repairing roof tiles is a "man's task," the relationships formed demonstrate a shift toward more responsive and flexible interaction patterns. Tasks are performed based on awareness and initiative, rather than coercion or role conflict. This pattern of "mutual understanding without needing to ask" reflects a value transformation toward more harmonious, participatory, and adaptive integration (Ulya et al., 2021).

### 2. Reinterpretation of Belief Systems: Between Religious Teachings and Social Reality

The community's belief system in Soppeng Riaja Subdistrict in addressing gender equality unfolds through a process of reinterpretation of religious, cultural, and social

norms that have long served as the foundation for shaping the roles of men and women in the family. This change does not emerge abruptly but through a gradual process marked by rereading religious teachings and local wisdom that were previously understood rigidly.

In the context of a highly religious community, Islamic teachings serve as the primary reference for evaluating the appropriateness of gender roles. Religious sermons, pengajian (Qur'anic study sessions), and discussions encourage a new understanding that Islam essentially teaches principles of justice ('adl), partnership (musyarakah), and mutual respect, rather than domination by one party. Old beliefs that positioned men as the sole breadwinners and women as fully responsible for domestic affairs are beginning to shift. The community now understands that role division in the household is not absolute but can be negotiated based on abilities, conditions, and mutual agreement (Bouchouk & Ayaz, 2024).

This reinterpretation of belief systems is evident in the practice of providing domestic skills education equally to boys and girls. Munirah explains: "People usually say...Eh... women are the ones who cook, for example, wash dishes, clean the house. But here, no, we do it together. Oh yes, so everyone is skilled at cooking, my sons are good at it, and my daughters too." This statement demonstrates the early internalization of equality values, where all family members are taught domestic skills without distinction based on gender. Equitable domestic education makes family members more independent and less dependent on gender stereotypes.

However, the lack of education and societal understanding of gender equality poses an obstacle to the transformation process. Many individuals still misinterpret gender equality as an effort to displace or even rival men's position in family leadership. Husniatil Bahri asserts: "What hinders it is perhaps the lack of education and broad insight... The root is a lack of understanding of what gender equality truly means, because gender equality does not mean that women obstruct men's leadership, no. But rather, we each have roles and mutually understand what our personal and social needs are." This misinterpretation arises due to limited access to education, information, and adequate insight. When knowledge about gender is restricted, patriarchal traditional values remain dominant and difficult to replace with newer, more egalitarian ones. As a result, the community struggles to distinguish between biological roles that are innate and social roles that can actually be negotiated according to family conditions.

Within Capra's framework of thought, this shift illustrates that changes in belief systems occur through an evolutionary process involving alterations in perspective that integrate old values with new, more relevant interpretations. Traditional values that previously emphasized male superiority are now reinterpreted as symbols of responsibility rather than absolute authority. Principles of musyawarah (deliberation), cooperation, and mutual assistance are understood as integral to religious values that support gender equality (Sudantra & Dharma Laksana, 2016).

This transformation in belief systems is reinforced by the community's social experiences, which demonstrate that women possess equal capabilities to manage finances, participate in family economics, and take productive roles outside the home.

The community is increasingly aware that more flexible role divisions can enhance family harmony and efficiency in completing household tasks. Consequently, gender equality values are becoming more widely accepted because they prove compatible with cultural identity and religious teachings and even strengthen family quality of life.

### 3. Behavioral Change: Real Practices in Daily Life

The transformation of gender equality values occurs not only at the cognitive level but is also manifested in concrete behavioral changes in everyday life. These behavioral changes are reflected in real practices such as more flexible household task divisions, women's involvement in economic activities, and husbands' support for their wives' education and careers (Setyaningrum et al., 2022). In daily practice, some families have become accustomed to husbands' involvement in domestic work. Husniatil Bahri explains: "In general, in the family, I have the primary duty of cooking, but when the time comes that I can't cook, eh my husband can step into the kitchen... It doesn't have to be all women's work. For laundry, there's a washing machine; if I'm not around, he operates it himself. Like that. It's almost like mutual help, mutual assistance, mutual support." This statement indicates that husbands are no longer bound to traditional roles but are willing to take over domestic tasks when their wives are unavailable.

Munirah reinforces this finding by describing situational cooperation patterns: "Yes, it depends on the situation. If I can, I'll help him, since he's busy too. Meanwhile, he can also wash dishes and everything, do the laundry. Oh yes, while I also help earn money." This pattern shows that role division is based on each party's actual busyness, rather than assumptions that certain tasks must be performed by a specific gender. Munirah adds, "It depends on the situation. Whichever can be helped... it depends. If I'm not there or if I'm busy, yes... he works in the kitchen. It just depends on the situation, because scheduling isn't that important either, since everyone's busyness differs."

This statement reflects an adaptive and contextual form of equality. Couples opt for casual communication and readjust their roles based on their levels of busyness. Women do not immediately impose opinions but wait for the right moment to express views and build mutual understanding (Elizabeth et al., 2023). This indicates a process of role negotiation based on ability rather than solely on gender, reflecting a gradual adaptation to changes in gender equality values.

Forms of behavioral change are also evident in husbands' support for wives during vulnerable periods, such as the postpartum phase. Nur Hudaya states: "It's necessary when there are many tasks. He usually helps after I've given birth. He usually helps with washing." Husbands' involvement in caring for postpartum wives, assisting with housework, and childcare reflects a shift from hierarchical relations toward complementary cooperation.

From Capra's perspective, these actions demonstrate the integration of newer, more humanistic and systemic values: the wife's physical and mental health, family harmony, and relational sustainability become part of an interconnected whole that mutually influences one another. This practice of reciprocity serves as evidence of a value transformation moving from patriarchal patterns toward a partnership paradigm,

aligning with Islamic principles of gender equality that emphasize balance, justice, and shared well-being (Santoso, 2019).

Communication strategies through *musyawarah* (deliberation) serve as a key element in behavioral change. Hani explains: "For decisions, yes, they are definitely talked over carefully first; we discuss, for example, the long-term implications and what risks need to be considered thoroughly. It has become a habit to discuss matters deemed important, including financial issues." Aminah adds, "Yes, sometimes, but I look at the situation when it's possible; when he's busy, during casual chats, oh, I can bring it up here. It should be like this for me, like that for you, and then he says yes, later."

This communication pattern indicates that no decision is imposed by one party. Instead, husbands and wives communicate first to determine who is more capable or has the time to perform certain tasks. Decisions on role division are made through mutual agreement rather than on the basis of gender superiority. Through discussion, awareness emerges that domestic work is not solely a woman's burden but can become a shared responsibility according to agreement. This represents an adaptive form of gender equality value transformation, in which the community does not abruptly abandon old culture but refines it into more just and contextually appropriate practices.

#### 4. Challenges in the Transformation of Gender Equality Values

Although positive efforts are underway to implement gender equality values, this study also identifies several challenges that hinder the transformation process. Connell emphasizes that gender inequality arises because social structures place men in dominant positions, and gender equality can be achieved through social transformation and active male involvement in that change. The challenges identified emerge from both internal family factors and the broader social environment.

First, the persistence of patriarchal culture. Some segments of society still adhere to a patriarchal culture that positions men as the dominant party in the family, leading to important decisions being largely dominated by husbands (Modiano, 2021). Aminah reveals: "Sometimes he is dominant, and I yield; I mean, men's thinking is more prominent on issues like education, so I follow." Husniatil Bahri adds: "Eh, we discuss first. It starts with a discussion, but in the end, eh, the husband decides."

These statements indicate that although the decision-making process begins with discussion, the husband remains the final decision-maker. Women tend to yield because they perceive men's thinking as more dominant in certain matters, such as education. This reflects participatory equality but not equality in authority. The husband's role as leader (*qawwam*) is still upheld based on cultural and religious understandings. Husbands' dominance in final decisions shows that gender equality remains in a semi-implementative stage, where wives have the right to voice opinions but not yet equal authority in the outcomes.

Hani explains the root of this issue: "I think the challenge is, yes, because of old traditions or cultures that we consider still attached to our daily lives. For example, washing dishes must be done by women, cooking too... Women, actually, it's old traditions, old culture that still clings until now, eventually becoming a suggestion in

our minds that women's tasks belong to women."

Husniatil Bahri reinforces this analysis: "It's still there, still there. Including things like cooking. If I feel I have no other duties, I go straight to the kitchen; if I feel uncomfortable, I definitely get up from whatever I'm doing and go straight to the kitchen. It's already ingrained and seems difficult to change." This statement shows that traditional gender roles remain deeply embedded from childhood, particularly through social and cultural education that requires women to take on domestic tasks. Women feel a moral and social burden to immediately perform housework when not busy, as a form of "gender obligation".

Second, the double burden on women. The dual role of women in the household represents a significant challenge in the transformation of gender equality. Although women now have opportunities to participate in economic activities, they continue to face demands to fulfill all domestic obligations (Kasim et al., 2025). Hani explains: "Now, many women work to earn a living. It's different from before. Women used to just stay at home, managing the household, but even so, women still work even though housework is seen as women's tasks, not men's."

This quotation highlights a shift in gender roles, where women no longer solely handle domestic work but also contribute to earning income. Women make economic contributions to the family, thus no longer being entirely dependent on their husbands. However, domestic work is still regarded as women's "natural duty," even as they engage in public sphere employment. Equality has been achieved in economic roles, but not fully in the division of domestic burdens. This condition creates a double workload that can affect women's physical and psychological health as well as their overall quality of life.

Third, limitations in understanding the concept of gender equality. A lack of insight into the concept of gender equality remains an obstacle, with some segments of society viewing it as synonymous with "dominating men," leading to resistance against changes in household relational patterns (Jatiningsih, 2024). Husniatil Bahri asserts: "What hinders it is perhaps the lack of education and broad insight. Then the social factors in society, yes, that's the root. The root is a lack of understanding of what gender equality truly means, because gender equality does not mean that women obstruct men's leadership, no."

This misinterpretation arises due to limited access to education, information, and adequate insight. When knowledge about gender is constrained, patriarchal traditional values remain dominant and difficult to replace with newer, more egalitarian ones.

#### **D. CONCLUSIONS**

This study concludes that the transformation of gender equality values in households in Soppeng Riaja Subdistrict, Barru Regency, has occurred gradually, adaptively, and contextually through the harmonious integration of Islamic teachings, Bugis-Makassar customs, and the demands of modern life. The local community implements gender equality across three main dimensions: justice, togetherness, and responsibility, manifested through deliberation in decision-making, flexible domestic

role divisions based on situational needs and abilities, and women's participation in family economics without eliminating respected functional differences. This transformation is driven by strategies involving shifts in mindset toward mutual understanding, more inclusive reinterpretations of religious and cultural belief systems, and daily behavioral changes oriented toward cooperation and partnership. Nevertheless, the process still faces challenges, including the persistence of patriarchal culture, women's double burden, limited understanding of gender equality concepts, and minimal structural support, resulting in achieved equality that is participatory and flexible rather than fully egalitarian in authority.

These findings confirm that gender equality in the household sphere does not require rejecting traditional and religious values but can be attained through gradual adjustments that continue to honor biological and functional differences, in line with Islamic principles of justice ('adl) and partnership (musyawarah). Thus, the gender equality model in Soppeng Riaja offers a contextual alternative for Muslim communities in Indonesia, where modernity and tradition can operate in synergy.

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