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**THE ECONOMIC ROLE OF WIVES IN ISLAMIC FAMILIES IN BALI:
AN ANALYSIS OF AWIG-AWIG FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ASMA
BARLAS (A STUDY IN BR. DINAS SAREN JAWA, BUDAKELING
VILLAGE, KARANGASEM, BALI)**

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ABSTRACT

The issue of the dual role played by wives in supporting the family economy is of great importance, particularly within the Balinese Islamic community amidst the dominance of patriarchal culture and customary rules (*awig-awig*). In the Br. Saren Jawa community in Budakeling Village, Karangasem Regency, Bali, Muslim wives contribute to the workforce to meet their families' needs, despite facing negative prejudices and pressure from the social environment. This study aims to further explore the role of wives in supporting the family economy within Balinese Islamic society and to analyse this role through the lens of Asma Barlas's gender theory, which emphasises the importance of equality and opposes patriarchy. The method employed in this study is qualitative, utilising a phenomenological approach. Data was collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The research subjects comprise Muslim wives who work and are actively involved in supporting the family economy. This research also employs an empirical legal approach to examine the influence of customary *awigs* on the reality of the role of wives in society. The findings of the study indicate that the role of wives is not confined to the domestic sphere, but extends to the public sector, both formally and informally. From Asma Barlas's perspective, the involvement of wives in work constitutes a form of resistance against the patriarchal system that restricts women's freedom. The involvement of Muslim wives in Bali extends beyond merely meeting economic needs; it is also part of efforts to liberate gender roles. This study concludes that the dual role of wives in Bali's Islamic society reflects social power and change within the framework of balanced Islamic values.

Keywords: *The Role of Wives, Family Economy, Balinese Islamic Society, Awig-awig, Asma Barlas.*

ABSTRACT

The issue of the dual roles undertaken by wives to support the family economy is of great significance, particularly within the Balinese Muslim community amidst the dominance of patriarchal culture and customary laws (*awig-awig*). In the Br. Dinas Saren Jawa community in Budakeling Village, Karangasem Regency, Bali, Muslim wives contribute by working to meet their families' needs, despite having to face negative prejudice and pressure from their social environment. This study aims to explore in greater depth the role of wives in supporting the family economy within the Balinese Muslim community and to analyse this role using Asma Barlas's gender perspective, which emphasises the importance of equality and opposes

patriarchy. The method employed in this study is qualitative with a phenomenological approach. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The research subjects consisted of Muslim wives who work and are active in supporting the family economy. This study also applied an empirical legal approach to explore the influence of traditional awig-awig on the reality of the wife's role in this community. The findings of the study indicate that the role of the wife is not limited to the domestic sphere alone, but also extends to the public sector, both formally and informally. From Asma Barlas's perspective, a wife's involvement in work is a form of resistance against the patriarchal system that restricts women's freedom. The involvement of Muslim wives in Bali is more than merely meeting economic needs; it is also part of an effort to liberate gender roles. This study concludes that the dual roles of wives in the Islamic community in Bali reflect strength and social change within a framework of balanced Islamic values.

Keywords: *The Role of the Wife, Family Economy, the Islamic Community of Bali, Awig-awig, Asma Barlas*

INTRODUCTION

Women are part of society and possess the same natural rights as men. Nevertheless, there are inherent differences between the two. Men are generally physically stronger, whilst women possess a distinctive maternal instinct. These differences should not form the basis for the subordination of women. On the contrary, women are entitled to equal treatment with men in all aspects of life. (Agustiari et al., 2022)

Gender equality provides equal opportunities for women and men to participate in various public spheres, such as education, politics, law, the economy, and socio-cultural life. With these opportunities, women have ample scope to pursue careers in line with their individual interests and abilities. Women's participation in the workforce is also a tangible manifestation of recognition of gender equality. (Suwindia, 2012)

According to Yoga Lamkaruna, women's careers can support the achievement of gender equality by providing financial independence and the authority for women to determine the direction of their lives. As a result, women are no longer entirely dependent on men, but are able to contribute actively to family and community life (Akbar, 2024).

Within the family context, life is inextricably linked to the influence of social stratification. This stratification can be observed across various dimensions, such as social class, race, ethnicity, culture and economic status. Economic status is a factor that significantly influences the behaviour of family members. Economic inequality often gives rise to social jealousy, which can affect the harmony of family relationships.

Harmony within the household is generally closely linked to the fulfilment of the family's basic needs. Married couples aspire to a peaceful and prosperous life, one indicator of which is financial security. Consequently, meeting basic needs such as clothing, food and shelter is a key factor in maintaining family stability and harmony. (Amrullah, 2023)

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In principle, the obligation to provide for the family rests with the husband. The husband is obliged to provide for his wife's material and emotional needs. Material support covers physical needs such as food, clothing and housing, whilst emotional support encompasses affection, a sense of security and a harmonious family relationship. However, when these needs are not adequately met, there is scope for the wife to participate in meeting the family's financial needs. (Fahham, 2018)

A wife's participation in the family economy is often manifested through work. This demonstrates her courage in fulfilling a dual role: that of homemaker and breadwinner. A wife's roles can be divided into formal and informal roles. Formal roles relate to tangible contributions to generating income, whilst informal roles are more emotional and flexible in nature, such as providing moral support and maintaining family harmony. These two roles complement one another in creating a balanced family.

Furthermore, the roles of wives can be classified into three categories: domestic, productive and social. Domestic roles relate to household tasks and the care of family members. Productive roles relate to activities that produce goods or services, whilst social roles involve voluntary participation in community activities. (Fitri et al., 2023)

The phenomenon of women's dual roles is clearly evident in Balinese society. Married Balinese women generally fulfil three roles simultaneously: family, economic and traditional-religious. Each of these roles entails responsibilities that must be met. The main factors driving Balinese women to fulfil dual or even triple roles are the strong influence of traditional norms (*awig-awig*), beliefs and religious doctrines in community life. (Furiyah, 2022)

In addition to cultural factors, a family's financial situation is also a key reason why a wife takes up employment. When her husband's income is insufficient, she is compelled to contribute to meeting the family's needs. This phenomenon is not limited to Hindu women in Bali, but also applies to Muslim women.

Many Muslim women in Bali also fulfil dual roles as part of their responsibility towards their families. However, this phenomenon is often viewed negatively by some members of the Muslim community who still hold conservative views. According to this view, a wife's primary role is to stay at home, whilst the husband is responsible for providing for the family. This view tends to reinforce a patriarchal culture that restricts women's freedom of movement. (Fitri et al., 2023)

One factor influencing this view is a rigid understanding of religion, such as that held by some groups within the *Jamaah Tabligh*. In practice, there are situations where husbands focus more on preaching without fulfilling their financial obligations, meaning that wives must work to meet the family's needs. This situation highlights an imbalance in the division of roles within the household. (Furiyah, 2022)

To understand this phenomenon more fairly, this study adopts Asma Barlas's perspective. Barlas argues that patriarchal characteristics do not stem from the

teachings of the Qur'an, but rather from traditional interpretations that are gender-biased. She emphasises the importance of reinterpreting religious texts to bring them more into line with the principles of justice and equality.

Through this approach, the role of women, including wives, can be understood more proportionately without undermining Islamic values. Barlas's thinking provides legitimacy for the idea that women have the right to participate in various fields, including the economy, provided they remain within the bounds of religious teachings.

Within Bali's Muslim community, there remains a belief that wives should not be involved in economic activities. However, this view often clashes with the realities of life, which demand joint contributions to meeting the family's needs. By employing Barlas's framework, religious texts can be interpreted in a more contextual and gender-equitable manner. (Hamid, 2024)

Thus, the role of wives in supporting the family economy does not conflict with Islamic principles; rather, it is in line with the values of justice and the common good. Asma Barlas's thinking offers a critique of the patriarchal system whilst proposing an alternative understanding that is more relevant to the current social conditions of society.

Against this background, this study aims to examine the role of wives in supporting the family economy within the Balinese Muslim community, specifically in Br. Dinas Saren Jawa, Budakeling Village, Karangasem, using Asma Barlas's perspective. '

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach involving field research. This approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of the wife's economic role within Balinese Muslim families, particularly in the context of *awig-awig* and Asma Barlas's perspective. Qualitative research allows researchers to explore the meanings, experiences, and views of research subjects more comprehensively, so that the social realities occurring in society can be understood contextually. (Muhaimin, 2020)

The research was conducted in Br. Dinas Saren Jawa, Budakeling Village, Bebandem Sub-district, Karangasem Regency, Bali. The research subjects included Muslim wives who play an economic role within the family, their husbands, community leaders, and local religious figures. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation. Interviews were used to obtain information regarding the informants' experiences and views, whilst observation aimed to directly observe daily life practices. Documentation was used as supporting data in the form of notes, archives, and other relevant written records. (Oktavia, 2021)

Data analysis was conducted descriptively using data reduction, data presentation and the drawing of conclusions. The collected data was then analysed

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using Asma Barlas's perspective to examine how the economic role of wives is understood within the framework of gender justice and critique of patriarchy. To ensure the validity of the data, this study employed source and method triangulation, thereby ensuring the scientific reliability of the findings. (Murdiyanto, 2020)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

General Overview of the Research Location

Br. Dinas Saren Jawa is one of the banjars in Budakeling Village, Bebandem Sub-district, Karangasem Regency, Bali. This banjar has a distinctive characteristic as it is the only area inhabited by a Muslim community in Budakeling Village, where the majority of the population is Hindu. Geographically, Budakeling Village is a hilly area covering approximately 215.280 hectares and is divided into eight banjar dinas.

The population of Budakeling Village stands at 5,113 people comprising 1,510 households. In Br. Dinas Saren Jawa itself, there are 164 Muslim households comprising 307 men and 251 women. Ethnic diversity, including Balinese, Javanese, Madurese and Sasak communities, indicates a fairly dynamic social interaction within this area.

Economically, the community of Budakeling Village is dominated by the agricultural, livestock and trading sectors. Some members of the community work as farm labourers, small traders and livestock farmers. These relatively modest economic conditions are one of the key factors influencing the structure and dynamics of roles within the family, including the role of women or wives in supporting the family economy. (Harmanda et al., 2024)

In Balinese society, awig-awig, or customary law, plays a vital role as a guide for regulating social life, including the division of roles within the family. Awig-awig takes the form not only of written rules (parerem) but also of unwritten customs passed down through generations via oral tradition. In this context, there is a local saying, "nak luh harus nyemak gaen lebih", which emphasises that women are expected to take on a greater role in family and community life. (Sari et al., 2020)

The Role of Wives in Supporting the Family Economy

The research findings indicate that the role of wives in the families of the Balinese Muslim community in Br. Dinas Saren Jawa is not limited to the domestic sphere, but also encompasses economic and socio-religious roles. These roles are known as the ‘triple roles’, namely the domestic role, the productive (economic) role, and the socio-religious role. (Said, 2020)

In practice, domestic roles remain the wife’s primary priority, such as managing the household, serving her husband, and caring for the children. However, the family’s unstable economic situation encourages wives to participate in economic activities. These activities are carried out without neglecting domestic roles, but rather run concurrently (Sugara et al., 2024) .

Based on the interview findings, wives engage in a variety of occupations, such as running a laundry business, trading at the market, running a small shop, working as a teacher, sewing, and managing home-based businesses such as the production of tofu and tempeh. These activities demonstrate women’s flexibility in adapting to the family’s economic circumstances. (Sari et al., 2020)

The main motivations for wives to work can be categorised into several factors. Firstly, economic factors, namely the need to meet the family’s basic needs such as food, children’s education and day-to-day necessities. Secondly, factors relating to the husband’s circumstances, such as an irregular income or declining health. Thirdly, the factor of independence, namely a woman’s desire not to be entirely dependent on her husband. Fourth, educational factors and a more open mindset regarding women’s roles in the public sphere. (Busura, 2024) Furthermore, there are strong cultural factors through awig-awig (traditional regulations) that indirectly encourage women to play an active role in various aspects of life. The culture of “nak luh nyemak gaen lebih” serves as social legitimacy for women to take on dual or even triple roles simultaneously. (Oktarina et al., 2023)

In reality, the wife’s economic role is not intended to replace the husband’s role as the primary breadwinner, but rather to serve as an additional contribution to

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maintaining the family's economic stability. This indicates a flexible and adaptive division of roles, depending on the circumstances of each family.

Analysis from the Perspective of Asma Barlas

To understand this phenomenon in greater depth, this study employs Asma Barlas's perspective, which emphasises an anti-patriarchal approach and gender equality in the interpretation of religious texts.

1. The Concepts of Family and Marriage

According to Asma Barlas, the family in Islam is not built on the basis of patriarchy, but on the principle of equality between men and women. The Qur'an does not classify people by gender when determining their worth or roles, but rather according to their level of faith and piety. ((

The Qur'an itself affirms the idea of gender equality based on its teaching that men and women share the same inherent nature (fitrah). However, there are many Muslims who affirm the theme of gender inequality and the privileging of husbands from the teachings of the Qur'an, using Qur'anic verse 34 of Surah An-Nisa' as a basis, which is misinterpreted. They conclude that men are protectors (even rulers) over women.

Men are the protectors of women by virtue of what Allah has given some of them over others, and by what they spend of their wealth. The righteous women are obedient and guarding in their absence what Allah has guarded. As for those from whom you fear disobedience, admonish them, and abandon them in their beds, and against them. But if they obey you, then seek no means against them. Verily Allah is Exalted, Great. 3

Meaning: "Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has made some of them excel others and because they spend from their means. Therefore, the righteous women are those who are obedient to Allah and guard in their absence whatever Allah has commanded them to guard. As for those women from whom you fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, then admonish them, and (if that fails) separate from them in bed, and strike them. But if they obey you, seek not against them means of annoyance. Verily, Allah is Most High, Most Great.

In this context, women have an equal right to participate in various aspects of life, including the economic sphere. Barlas also emphasises that there is no prohibition in the Qur'an against women being financially independent. Indeed, historical examples such as Khadijah demonstrate that women can be active economic agents.

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Thus, the role of the wife in supporting the family's economy is not a deviation, but rather part of the implementation of the value of justice in Islam. (Suwindia, 2012)

2. The Relationship Between Husband and Wife

Barlas rejects the patriarchal interpretation of Surah An-Nisa: 34, which is often used to justify male dominance. He emphasises that the term *qawwamun* does not imply absolute power, but rather economic responsibility and protection. In the context of Balinese Islamic society, where wives also contribute to the family economy, the husband-wife relationship takes on a more partnership-like nature. The economic role is no longer singular, but becomes a shared responsibility. (Saraswati, 2017)

Furthermore, the concept of *qanitat*, which is often interpreted as obedience to one's husband, is interpreted by Barlas as obedience to Allah. This means that women's economic activities cannot be regarded as a form of disobedience, provided they remain within the bounds of Islamic values.

Meanwhile, the concept of '*nusyuz*' cannot be used to restrict women's activities either. Barlas emphasises that '*nusyuz*' is not a form of disobedience towards one's husband, but rather a violation of the principle of justice within the marital relationship, which can be committed by either party. (Warsah, 2018)

3. An Intertextual and Social Contextual Approach

Barlas also emphasised the importance of reading religious texts within a social context (intertextuality and extratextuality). In this regard, cultural practices such as *awig-awig* must be understood in context and must not conflict with the principles of justice in Islam.

In Balinese society, *awig-awig* are often viewed as a patriarchal system. However, reality shows that women actually play a vital role in the family economy. This highlights a gap between social norms and practices. From this perspective, the role of the wife in supporting the family economy can be understood as a manifestation of the value of mutuality in Islam. Women are not merely domestic complements, but also key actors in maintaining the family's economic sustainability. The role of the wife in Balinese Islamic families is multidimensional, encompassing domestic, economic, and socio-religious roles. (Damayanti & Purwanti, 2025)

A wife's economic participation is driven by economic and cultural factors, family circumstances, and an awareness of the importance of independence. Local customs (*awig-awig*) do not entirely restrict women, but rather provide scope for them to play an active role. Asma Barlas's perspective suggests that the economic role of wives does not conflict with Islamic teachings, but rather aligns with the principles of justice and equality. The husband-wife relationship in this context is one of partnership, not the domination of one party over the other. Thus, the role of wives

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in supporting the family economy within the Balinese Islamic community represents a form of integration between local cultural values and progressive Islamic teachings. Women do not merely act as homemakers, but also as economic agents who contribute to the family's well-being. (Wahyuni & Ulfah, 2021)

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the role of wives in supporting the family economy within the Balinese Muslim community in Br. Dinas Saren Jawa is shaped by social and cultural constructs enshrined in customary laws (*awig-awig*). This role encompasses domestic duties as a mother and wife, an economic role in supporting the family's economic activities, as well as customary and religious roles. The wife's involvement in the family economy is directed more towards being a supporter rather than the primary breadwinner.

From Asma Barlas's perspective, women or wives are not prohibited from having economic independence, as the Qur'an recognises the existence of women's economic agency. In the husband-wife relationship, the wife's participation in economic activities is permitted, but the primary responsibility for providing for the family remains with the husband. Thus, the wife's contribution is viewed as complementary to, rather than a substitute for, the husband's role.

Furthermore, the approaches of intertextuality and extratextual context open up scope for reinterpreting the *awig-awig* so that they do not confine the role of the wife solely to the domestic sphere. Wives should also be given the opportunity to participate in the public sphere, including in economic activities, provided this remains consistent with the principles of justice and mutual understanding in Islam.

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