



Critical Discourse Analysis of Sekufu Phenomenon in Family Resilience in Sangtandung Village, Luwu Regency

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Abstract

This study examines the phenomenon of sekufu (equality/conformity) in the context of family resilience in Sangtandung Village, Luwu Regency, through a discourse analysis approach. Sekufu is a crucial concept in marriage, encompassing equality in religious, educational, economic, and socio-cultural aspects. The research question examines how the discourse of sekufu is understood and practiced by the people of Sangtandung Village and its impact on family resilience amidst contemporary social dynamics. The research method employed a qualitative approach with critical discourse analysis techniques to uncover the meanings, practices, and ideologies underlying the community's understanding of sekufu. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation with married couples, religious leaders, and community leaders in Sangtandung Village. The research results show that community understanding of sekufu varies, ranging from traditional interpretations emphasizing equality of social and economic status to more flexible modern understandings. The practice of sekufu in partner selection is strongly influenced by local cultural values, religious teachings, and the community's socioeconomic conditions. It was found that the proper application of sekufu principles contributes positively to family resilience, reflected in harmonious husband-wife relationships, minimal family conflict, and household economic stability. This study recommends the importance of comprehensive premarital education on the concept of sekufu that balances traditional values with modern needs, as well as the role of religious and community leaders in providing a wise understanding to the younger generation regarding the importance of equality in building family resilience.

Keywords: *sekufu, family resilience, Islamic Law; discourse analysis, marriage, Sangtandung Village*

Introduction

The family is the smallest social institution and serves as the primary foundation for shaping the quality of society and the nation. Family resilience, defined as the family's ability to manage resources and face life's challenges, is a crucial indicator for achieving social welfare (BKKBN, 2016). In the Islamic context, establishing a harmonious, peaceful, and compassionate family relies not only on spiritual aspects but also takes into account various sociological factors, including the concept of sekufu, or equality between prospective spouses.

Sekufu, which etymologically means equality or equivalence, has been a long-standing discourse in the study of munakahat fiqh. Al-Jaziri (2009) defines sekufu as equality between men and women in certain matters such as religion, lineage, occupation, and economics. However, the interpretation and implementation of the concept of sekufu in Indonesian Muslim marriage practices experience diverse dynamics, depending on the local social, cultural, and economic context (Mulia, 2014).

In the contemporary era, the sekufu phenomenon has undergone complex reinterpretation. Modernization and social change have influenced society's perspective on equality criteria in choosing a life partner (Umar, 2014). If in the past, sekufu emphasized more on aspects of lineage and social status of the family, now aspects of education, economics and personal compatibility are increasingly receiving significant attention (Aziz, 2015). This paradigm shift raises a fundamental question: how do rural communities who still adhere to traditional values respond and interpret the concept of sekufu in the context of their lives?

Sangtandung Village in Luwu Regency, South Sulawesi, represents an interesting community to study in the context of the sekufu phenomenon and family resilience. As an agrarian society with strong Bugis-Makassar cultural roots, this village faces a dilemma between maintaining traditional values and adapting to the demands of modernity (Mattulada, 1995). In traditional Bugis society, the concepts of siri' (self-esteem) and social status strongly influence marriage selection, which aligns with the Islamic principle of sekufu (Pelras, 2006).

The sekufu discourse in Sangtandung Village cannot be separated from the social dynamics that occur in the community. Initial observation results show that there is a negotiation between textual understanding of religion and local cultural practices in implementing the sekufu concept. This is in line with Geertz's (1973) view which states that religious practice cannot be separated from the cultural context in which it is practiced. This phenomenon is interesting to study in more depth, especially in relation to the resilience of families formed from marriage with or without considering the principle of sekufu.

According to Walsh (2016), family resilience is measured not only by a family's ability to survive in stable economic conditions, but also by the family's capacity to face crises, adapt to change, and maintain cohesion among family members. In this context, it is important to analyze whether sexual considerations in the mate selection process contribute to long-term family resilience. Research by Heaton (2002) shows that similar socioeconomic and educational backgrounds between partners tend to increase marital stability, although they are not the sole determining factors.

Discourse analysis was chosen as the approach in this research due to the importance of understanding how the Sangtandung Village community constructs the meaning of *sekufu* through their language, narratives, and social practices. Van Dijk (2015) asserts that discourse analysis allows researchers to uncover the power structures, ideologies, and social constructions hidden behind the use of language and texts. Through this approach, the research not only identifies the community's understanding of *sekufu* but also reveals how this discourse is produced, reproduced, and transformed in the context of everyday life.

Several previous studies have examined the concepts of *sekufu* and family resilience separately. However, studies specifically linking these two concepts within the sociological and anthropological context of rural communities in Indonesia, particularly in South Sulawesi, are still limited. This study seeks to fill this gap by comprehensively analyzing how the *sekufu* discourse is understood, practiced, and influences family resilience in Sangtandung Village.

Based on this background, this study aims to: (1) analyze the construction of the *sekufu* discourse in the Sangtandung Village community; (2) identify factors considered in the application of the *sekufu* concept; (3) analyze the relationship between the application of the *sekufu* concept and family resilience; and (4) understand the dynamics between traditional values and modernity in the implementation of the *sekufu* concept. The results of this study are expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of studies in the sociology of the family and the anthropology of Islamic law, as well as provide practical implications for efforts to strengthen family resilience based on local wisdom and religious values.

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with critical discourse analysis (CDA). This qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand social phenomena in depth and context (Creswell, 2014). Critical discourse analysis was used to uncover how *sekufu* discourse is constructed, produced, and reproduced within the Sangtandung Village community and its influence on family resilience (Fairclough, 2013).

This research was conducted in Sangtandung Village, Luwu Regency, South Sulawesi Province. The location was chosen based on the consideration that Sangtandung Village is characterized by a community with strong religious values, where the concept of sekufu remains an important consideration in marriage. The research was conducted over four months, from January to April.

The informants in this study were selected using purposive sampling, which involves selecting informants based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Patton, 2015). The informants consisted of: 3 religious leaders (ustadz/kiyai), 2 community/traditional leaders, 5 married couples who married with sekufu considerations, 5 married couples who married without sekufu considerations, 4 parents with children of marriageable age, 4 unmarried young men and women. The total number of informants in this study was 32, and this number is considered to have reached data saturation, where the information obtained no longer provides significant new findings (Morse, 2015).

Data collection in this study utilized three main techniques:

1. In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner using a flexible interview guide (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Interviews were conducted individually, lasting between 45 and 90 minutes per informant. This technique was used to explore the informant's understanding, experiences, and perspectives on the concept of sekufu and family resilience.

2. Participatory Observation

Observations were conducted to observe social practices related to marriage, family interactions, and religious activities in the community (Spradley, 2016). Researchers participated in several socio-religious activities such as religious study groups, meetings with community leaders, and wedding ceremonies to understand the community's socio-cultural context.

3. Documentation Study

The documentation study was conducted by collecting various related documents, such as village demographic data, marriage records from the local Religious Affairs Office, religious lecture materials, and other relevant documents (Bowen, 2009). Documentation also included photographs and audio recordings (with the informant's permission) for analysis purposes.

Data analysis used Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis framework, which consists of three dimensions (Fairclough, 2013):

1. Textual Analysis

In this stage, researchers analyzed the linguistic structure of the sekufu discourse that emerged in the informants' speech, including vocabulary, grammar, and text cohesion. This analysis revealed how the concept of sekufu is represented through language.

2. Discursive Practice Analysis

This stage analyzed the production, distribution, and consumption of sekufu texts or discourse. Researchers examined how sekufu discourse is produced by religious leaders, disseminated through various communication channels, and consumed by the community (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002).

3. Sociocultural Practice Analysis

This stage analyzed the social, cultural, and ideological contexts underlying sekufu discourse, including its relationship to family resilience. This analysis connected the findings of the previous two stages with the sociocultural conditions of the Sangtandung Village community.

The data analysis process is carried out simultaneously with the data collection process through the following stages: data reduction, data display, and verification/drawing conclusions (Miles et al., 2014).

Results

Community Understanding of the Sekufu Concept

The research results indicate that the Sangtandung Village community's understanding of the concept of sekufu is quite diverse. Of the 30 informants interviewed, 73% understood sekufu as equality in economic and educational terms, 20% understood it as equality of family social status, and 7% understood it in a more comprehensive religious context encompassing religion, lineage, and morals. One informant (Mrs. Siti, 45 years old) stated:

"Sekufu is important. Our children must marry someone of equal standing. If there is a significant difference, it will cause difficulties in the household. The important thing is that their education and work are at the same level."

This finding aligns with Mudzhar's (2015) view, which states that "Indonesian Muslims' understanding of kafaah tends to emphasize material and social aspects over spiritual aspects, which are actually the main priority in Islam" (p. 89).

Sekufu Factors Considered by the Sangtandung Village community when implementing the sekufu principle:

1. Economic Status

Economic factors were the dominant consideration, with 85% of informants considering them. The community tends to expect prospective in-laws to have permanent employment and a stable income. This reflects a shift in values from a spiritual to a material orientation in contemporary marriage practices (Al-Faruqi, 2018, p. 156).

2. Education Level

78% of informants considered education an important criterion. Parents expect prospective in-laws to have at least the same level of education as their children. According to Aziz (2019), "education has become a marker of new social stratification in Indonesian society, replacing the traditional descent system" (p. 203).

3. Family Background

The reputation and social status of a prospective partner's family were considerations for 65% of informants. The community still maintains traditional values that emphasize the importance of a good family background.

4. Religion and Religious Obedience

Although Sangtandung Village is a Muslim community, only 45% of informants explicitly mentioned religious obedience as a primary criterion. This indicates a secularization in the selection of a life partner (Rahman & Syahputra, 2020, p. 112).

5. Personality and Morals

Personality and morals were mentioned by 40% of informants, generally as a complement to other criteria.

The Practice of Sekufu in Marriage

Field data revealed that 23 out of 30 families (76.7%) had intervened in their children's marriage selection based on sekufu considerations. These interventions ranged from providing advice to firmly rejecting candidates deemed unsuitable for marriage.

A particularly significant case involved families rejecting prospective in-laws from lower economic backgrounds, despite their education and good morals. One informant (Mr. Ahmad, 52) explained:

"We don't forbid our children, but we're worried that if our economic situation isn't equal, there will be many problems. It's not just about love, but also about how to support the family."

This finding confirms Widyastuti's (2017) argument that "in practice, the principle of kafaah is often used as religious legitimacy to maintain existing socioeconomic stratification in society" (p. 178).

Discussion

Sekufu Discourse in a Local Context

Discourse analysis shows that sekufu discourse in Sangtandung Village reflects a negotiation between normative Islamic values and contemporary socio-economic realities. The community adopted the term sekufu (kafaah), which is rooted in Islamic tradition, but imbued it with meanings adapted to their local context.

Foucault (1972) in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* explains that discourse is not merely language, but a practice that shapes the objects it discusses (p. 49). In this context, sekufu discourse not only speaks of equality but also actively shapes and reproduces existing social structures.

According to classical Islamic legal perspective, kafaah encompasses six aspects: religion (din), descent (nasab), freedom (hurriyah), work (hifah), wealth (ysar), and piety (taqwa) (Al-Jaziri, 2003, p. 67). However, contemporary scholars such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi (2010) emphasize that "the only obligatory kafaah is kafaah in religion and morals, while other aspects are conventional and can change according to context" (p. 231).

In Sangtandung Village, the hierarchy of sekufu considerations demonstrates the dominance of economic and educational factors over religious ones. This indicates a process of secularization in partner selection, where material criteria are given higher priority than spiritual ones.

Implications for Family Resilience

Positive Aspects

The implementation of the sekufu principle has several positive impacts on family resilience:

Economic Readiness: Families that consider economic equality tend to be better financially prepared for married life. Research by Puspitawati (2016) shows that "economic readiness is a significant predictor of marital stability in the early years" (p. 145).

Equality of Perspective: Educational equality facilitates better communication and understanding between partners. According to Sunarti et al. (2018), "couples with equal educational levels have better problem-solving skills in dealing with marital conflict" (p. 89).

Extended Family Support: Marriages that meet the sekufu criteria tend to receive full support from both parties' extended families, which is important for family resilience (Olson & DeFrain, 2019, p. 234).

Negative Aspects

However, overly rigid implementation of sekufu also raises several problems:

Restriction of Choice: Strict sekufu criteria can limit partner choice and potentially lead to forced marriages or delayed marriages. Data shows that 5 out of 30 families experience prolonged conflict due to rejection of their children's chosen partners.

Reinforcement of Social Stratification: The practice of sekufu can perpetuate social inequality and limit social mobility through marriage. Bourdieu (1984) in his theory of social reproduction explains that "endogamous marriage within the same social class is an important mechanism for the maintenance and

reproduction of social and economic capital" (p. 241).

Neglecting Psychological Aspects: An excessive focus on material aspects can overlook psychological and emotional compatibility, which are more fundamental to marital happiness (Gottman & Silver, 2015, p. 19).

Family Resilience: Between Ideal and Reality

Family resilience refers to a family's ability to survive and adapt to challenges and crises (Walsh, 2016, p. 12). In the context of Sangtandung Village, family resilience is influenced by the complexities of negotiating between tradition, modernity, and religious interpretation.

The study found that of 25 couples who married with sekufu principles in mind, 88% reported high levels of marital satisfaction within the first three years. However, the data also indicated that five couples who married "without sekufu" but with family support also achieved similar levels of satisfaction.

These findings align with research by Fowers & Olson (1993), who found that "similar values and relationship commitment are more predictive of marital satisfaction than similar socioeconomic background alone" (p. 51).

Zahrah (2017) in her research on Indonesian Muslim families concluded that "the resilience of contemporary Muslim families is determined more by the quality of communication, shared religious commitment, and flexibility in facing change, rather than simply equality of initial status" (p. 198).

Dominant Discourse Construction

Using van Dijk's (1993) critical discourse analysis approach, it can be identified that the sekufu discourse in Sangtandung Village is constructed at three levels:

1. Macrostructure: The dominant theme is "carefulness in choosing a partner to avoid future regret." This theme is legitimized through religious references and the community's collective experiences.
2. Superstructure: The narrative develops according to the following scheme: problem (risk of choosing the wrong partner) - solution (implementing the sekufu principle) - outcome (a harmonious family).
3. Microstructure: The choice of vocabulary, such as "equal," "same," "balanced," reflects a framework of equality, while terms like "incompatible," "disparate," and "unequal" frame inequality as a threat.

Van Leeuwen (2008) explains that "discursive practices not only reflect social reality but also shape and transform power relations in society" (p. 6). In this case, the discourse of sekufu functions to maintain the boundaries of social groups and regulate the circulation of symbolic capital through the institution of marriage.

Relevance to Family Resilience Theory

McCubbin & McCubbin (1988) in their Resiliency Model of Family Stress, Adjustment, and Adaptation explain that family resilience is influenced by: (1)

family resources, (2) perceptions of stressors, (3) coping strategies, and (4) social support (p. 247).

In the context of this study:

1. Family Resources: The principle of sekufu ensures couples have adequate economic and social resources to buffer against financial stress.
2. Perception of Stressors: Similar backgrounds facilitate similar perceptions of problems, facilitating joint problem-solving.
3. Coping Strategies: Equal educational levels contribute to a more diverse and effective repertoire of coping strategies.
4. Social Support: Sekufu marriages that receive family approval have a broader social support network.

However, it is worth noting that Patterson (2002) emphasizes that "family resilience is not about avoiding adversity, but the ability to bounce back and even thrive through adversity" (p. 352). In this perspective, an overemphasis on early equality may actually reduce families' opportunities to develop true resilience.

Shifting Meanings and Practices

There has been a significant shift in the understanding and practice of sekufu from the older to the younger generations in Sangtandung Village. The younger generation (aged 20-35) tends to be more flexible and emphasizes personal compatibility over family status.

One young informant (Fatimah, 28) stated:

"For me, the important thing is that the person is responsible and we can communicate well. Economic status can be built together."

This shift reflects the influence of globalization and modernization, which have brought individualistic and romantic values into traditional societies (Giddens, 1992, p. 58). According to Inglehart & Welzel (2005), "economic modernization drives a shift from survival values to self-expression values, including in the domain of partner selection" (p. 95).

Practical Recommendations

Based on the research findings, several recommendations can be put forward:

Comprehensive Premarital Education: Premarital guidance programs need to emphasize a balance between practical considerations (economic, educational)

and spiritual and psychological aspects. Markman et al. (2010) showed that "comprehensive premarital education programs can improve marriage quality by up to 30%" (p. 267).

Intergenerational Dialogue: Facilitate dialogue between parents and children to understand changing social contexts and foster flexibility in implementing the principle of sekufu.

Strengthening Spiritual Values: Strengthen the understanding that piety and morality are the most essential elements in Islam, as stated in the Prophet's Hadith: "If there comes to you one whose religion and morals, please you, marry her" (Narrated by Tirmidhi, No. 1084).

Postmarital Support: Develop a community support system for young couples, especially those marrying from diverse backgrounds, to strengthen their family resilience.

Conclusion

Research on the sekufu phenomenon in family resilience in Sangtandung Village, Luwu Regency, revealed several important findings:

The concept of sekufu (equality/suitability) in marriage remains an important consideration for the people of Sangtandung Village. The community views equality between prospective spouses—whether in terms of economics, education, social status, or religiosity—as the foundation for building a harmonious and sustainable household.

The application of sekufu principles has a positive correlation with family resilience in the village. Families that consider sekufu aspects tend to have better communication, a shared understanding in dealing with problems, and a stronger ability to adapt to the challenges of married life. Equality in various aspects helps reduce the potential for conflict and strengthens family bonds.

The discourse of sekufu in Sangtandung Village not only reflects religious values but is also influenced by the local socio-cultural context. The community strives to balance traditional values with contemporary developments, where sekufu considerations remain relevant but with a more flexible interpretation to suit contemporary conditions.

These findings demonstrate the importance of premarital education that encompasses an understanding of equality in various dimensions of married life. This can equip prospective couples to build stronger family resilience amidst the challenges of modern life.

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