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SOCIOLOGY | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Londo iha: Elopement and bride kidnapping amongst the Muslims of Monta, Bima, Indonesia

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Abstract: *Londo iha* is a form of bride kidnapping practiced by the Muslims of Monta, a district of Bima, Indonesia, that violates *sharia* (i.e. Islamic law). In this practice, a man steals away with a young woman, often for the purpose of marriage. Although marriage is strongly recommended by Islamic law, such an approach to marriage is considered to be against Islamic norms. This article seeks to explain why *londo iha* continues to be practiced by the Muslims of Monta, even though it violates Islamic law. Observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis are used to collect data. The observation is for Muslim wedding activity in Monta. The interview is designed to gather useful information by interviewing eight people who are involved with *londo iha*. Furthermore, document analysis is managed by obtaining some documents from Bima's Ministry of Religion Office that show *londo iha*'s involvement in several districts. Based on the collected data, this article finds that *londo iha* continues to be perceived as facilitating marriage and its continued practice is driven by various customary and religious norms. However, this practice has been controversial, as its validity is only recognized under customary norms. As it lacks religious validity, this practice has thus been detrimental to the social structures of Muslim-majority Monta. This article applies a simple

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The authors are members of the IA Scholars Laboratory (IASL), which in the past three years has focused its research on the technological and commercialization of education that Indonesia has experienced in the last twenty years. Under the coordination of Prof. Irwan Abdullah, IASL has carried out various case studies in various regions. Among other things, it has conducted a detailed exploration of *londo iha* as practiced by the Muslims of Monta District, for which it has employed diverse perspectives: Islamic jurisprudence/Islamic studies (Dr. Hamzah Hasan), religious/socio-political studies (Dr. Hasse Jubba), anthropology (Prof. Irwan Abdullah), Islamic studies (Dr. Abd. Rahman R), and education and morality studies (Dr. Mustaqim Pabbajah). All authors are lecturers at Indonesian universities, including Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar (Hamzah Hasan and Abd. Rahman R.), Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta (Hasse Jubba), Universitas Gadjah Mada (Irwan Abdullah), and Universitas Teknologi Yogyakarta (M. Pabbajah).

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

The practices of elopement and bride kidnapping have been oriented more toward customary values rather than religious ones. In Monta District, Bima Regency, many marriages begin with the bride being stolen away from her home through a practice known as *londo iha*. Between 2017 and 2019, more than 460 cases were reported. There is thus a clear contradiction between customary values and Islamic teachings. According to Islamic law, all Muslims should marry, and as such all Muslims strive towards realizing this obligation. However, in doing so, many Muslims have employed deviant approaches such as running away with young women who are not their *mahram*. Islam prohibits unmarried men and women from traveling together, as such behavior approaches *zina*. Nevertheless, many youths—motivated, among other things, by the cost of marriage or the failure to receive a parental blessing—continue to practice *londo iha*, which remains legitimized by customary law.

socio-religious perspective, and covers a relatively brief period of time; as such, it is necessary to conduct further research using a multi-disciplinary perspective and covering a broader range of cases.

Subjects: Criminology and Criminal Justice; History; Religion

Keywords: *londo iha*/elopement; custom; Islamic law; marriage

1. Introduction

Londo iha (elopement) is commonly practiced among the people of Monta, Bima, where it has customary validation even as it violates Islamic principles and jurisprudence. Even as historic and sociological factors are used to legitimize the practice, its illegality remains undeniable. According to data from the Ministry of Religion, Bima Regency Office (2020), 1,201 cases of *londo iha* occurred between 2017 and 2019. The practice was most prevalent in Monta District, where 460 cases were reported: 171 in 2017, 191 in 2018, and 98 in 2019. The prevalence of this practice may be attributed to several factors, most prominently the desire to marry (despite significant obstacles), and has resulted in elopement becoming normalized (Farida, 2017).

Researchers have widely investigated elopement and bride kidnapping, noting that they are known and practiced under a broad range of names. For example, it is known among the people of Bima as *londo iha*; among the Buginese of southern Sulawesi as *silariang*; the Sasaks of Lombok as *merariq*; and the Gayo of Aceh as *munik*. Studies generally fall into three categories. First, studies that explore elopement and bride kidnapping as being justified by local custom, and thus continually practiced. Indeed, in some societies, bride kidnapping is considered the man's responsibility, and expected before marriage (Abd Fatah & Kasim, 2019; Farida, 2017; Mayasari, 2016; Triantini et al., 2017). Second, studies that view elopement and bride kidnapping as providing men with an alternative means of marrying the women they desire when their union is not blessed by their parents (Abd Fatah & Kasim, 2019; Wati & Lestari, 2019), even when these practices are recognized as violating religious norms (Ningsih et al., 2016). Another study shows that eloping is used to prevent matchmaking (Lurgain & Eyber, 2019). Third, studies that investigate the legal consequences of elopement and bride kidnapping (Murni et al., 2019; Ningsih et al., 2016), both of which involve a man stealing away with a woman with whom he has no existing ties. Such studies have yet to discuss elopement and bride kidnapping from the perspective of the Islamic norms and laws that they violate.

This article seeks to complement these aforementioned studies, which have generally viewed marriage as a religious obligation, rather than consider these practices as violating Islamic norms regarding marriage. This study emphasizes other aspects while considering why the people of Monta have continued to employ *londo iha* as a marital practice, even though it runs against the spirit and norms of Islam. To realize this goal, it asks three questions. *First*, how does *londo iha* (as practiced by the people of Monta) go against Islamic law and norms? *Second*, what cultural and customary factors are used by the Muslims of Monta, Bima, to legitimize the practice of *londo iha*? *Third*, how has *londo iha* influenced the social order of Monta?

This article departs from three arguments. First, in Islamic jurisprudence, *londo iha* may be categorized as *fakhsya*, and thus as violating Islam's mandate to protect all of humanity, following the principle of "*Maqasyid al-Syari'ah . . . al-Mukhafadzatu 'alan nasab.*" As stated by Sukardin, "the practice of *londo iha* runs contrary to Islamic law" (Sukardin, 2020). *Second*, the people of Monta do not consider *londo iha* to be deviant, and customary and religious expectations regarding marriage make *londo iha* enticing for (male) youths seeking a simple approach to marriage.

Third, *londo iha* plays two roles in Monta: it provides a means of facilitating and accelerating marriage, but it also detrimentally affects the structure of Monta society.

2. Literature review

2.1. Elopement and bride kidnapping

Marriage is a practice through which families are united in accordance with the laws and norms of society. When a marriage fails to fulfil religious and administrative obligations, it is deemed deviant. This is important in discussion of elopement and bride kidnapping, as Amri (2015) describes both as processes through which an individual steals away another person to take them as a husband/wife, in violation of society's laws and norms. Among the people of Bima, this practice is known as *londo iha*, a term that is derived from two words: *londo* ("descend") and *iha* ("break"). More specifically, *londo iha* refers to the practice of a young man furtively absconding with a young woman and taking her to an influential member of society (Zoleva, 2019). It may refer to the act of abducting a young woman, without permission, with the intent of marriage, or it may refer to the act of taking a young woman with her permission, but without the approval of her parents.

Elopement and bride kidnapping are commonly perceived as the fastest and simplest means of marrying while avoiding undesirable results and minimizing the complex cultural and customary traditions of society (Jasrun et al., 2018). Sardi (2016) argues that, in societies where the practice is uncommon, elopement and bride kidnapping may be perceived as an act of defiance, wherein youths oppose local norms and parental rule by taking control of their own marriages. In some societies, however, elopement and bride kidnapping are customarily practiced as a means of facilitating marriage and reducing its cost (Muthmainnah & Trisakti, 2010). Delameillieure (2017) describes these practices as processes through which youths achieve freedom in defiance of the social order, even when it runs contrary to deep-rooted religious and customary values.

Such understandings of marriage have resulted in elopement and bride kidnapping becoming perceived as the best and most appropriate means of uniting two people. Yanto (2019) distinguishes between elopement and bride kidnapping as follows. In elopement, the decision to marry is made by both parties, who desire to avoid formal betrothal, and thus marry without the permission of their parents or customary norms. Bride kidnapping, meanwhile, refers to a process in which an individual absconds with someone who is engaged to another person, and thus contains an element of coercion. Nevertheless, in both forms, there are particular factors that drive individuals to make this decision: funds may be unavailable, permission may not be granted or denied, another marriage may already be arranged, or pregnancy may have occurred (Harianto et al., 2016). In matters of marriage, families and societies consistently emphasize class and caste in determining compatibility; this is because marriage does not involve only the interests of the individuals involved, but also their families and their heritage (Lurgain & Eyber, 2019). Where permission is denied, elopement and bride kidnapping are often practiced where permission is denied (Ahlawat, 2015). However, there are significant consequences for the married couple. In a case study in Puntland, for instance, Kenny et al. (2019) found that individuals who had eloped were ostracized by their families, as they were deemed to have dishonored their families.

2.2. Islamic law

Islamic law guides Muslims' every activity, prohibits deleterious practices, and provides principles for social life (Zain et al., 2014). According to Cardinal (2005), it has particular advantages over secular law, as it is designed to realize the Islamic values and truths that have been passed by Allah SWT through the prophets. Islamic law is built upon the values and morals contained within the Qur'an, including control, welfare, and justice, and thus suited to the issues and contexts faced by Muslims (Pabbajah et al., 2020). Islamic law has several goals, all of which are important for guiding and shaping society, thereby creating harmony, providing spiritual welfare, and integrating individuals' skills into the social order. In this manner, it staves off the threat of destruction (Noor,

2010). Supporting this argument, Essof (2011) writes that Islamic law does more than create a social order; in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, it provides guidance for Muslims' everyday life and behavior, as well as for interacting with others. Islamic law provides no space for doubt, and thus its guidance for all things—including marriage—is very clear. Likewise, the punishment is clear: particular sanctions are provided for all violations of Islamic law, and all practices that deviate from it, in both Islamic and customary law, and all such behaviors are deemed sins (Hakimi & Sa'adat, 2020).

Islamic law has three foundations: the Qur'an, the Sunnah and hadiths, and *Ijtihad* (the individual exegesis of scholars; Pakeeza, 2010). According to Law (2019), Islamic jurisprudence is oriented towards worship, alms, and social practices, including the limits on them set by Allah SWT. As such, it covers such matters as marriage, interpersonal relations, trade, and inheritance.

Both elopement and bride kidnapping deviate from the norms codified in Islamic law, and may thus be perceived as violating Islamic marital norms (Amri, 2015). Neither elopement nor bride kidnapping include the elements required for a valid marriage; they do not involve witnesses, representatives, or officiants, or require the permission of parents—all of which are required by the Qur'an (Soh, 2019). Because these marriages do not have religious legitimacy, they are deemed illicit (*zina*), and both parents and newlyweds face significant stigma (Naz et al., 2015). Furthermore, as noted by Neels (2012), Islamic and state laws have the authority to punish individuals who violate them. In a case study in Bone, Indonesia, Asni and Kamaruddin (2018) found that Islamic law plays an important role in reconciling families after elopement and bride kidnapping occurs, thereby providing the grounds for creating peace and harmony.

2.3. Social order

The social order shapes the roles and status of individuals within society, as well as their interactions with others. According to Hardin (2013), the social order emerges spontaneously as norms created to guide individuals' behaviors and interactions within diverse contexts. Society, thus, plays an important role in the development of the social order, as it creates new social institutions to ensure its continued survival (Sulaiman, 2016). It is through these processes that habits and traditions are created and normalized within groups and individuals (El-Haddad, 2020).

This highlights the dynamic relationship between custom and religion (Jubba et al., 2019), both of which Shemesh et al. (2013) note play an important role in shaping the laws and norms that guide the behaviors and attitudes of individuals and families. The social order, including the habits and traditions it incorporates, thereby influences all parts of everyday life—including marriage. Questions of authority and social status are inexorably involved in the marital process, and often emphasized by families, religious doctrines, and customary norms (Dery & Bawa, 2019).

The social order is shaped through the behaviors of individuals who act, within varied contexts, based on diverse motivations and norms. According to Hardin (2013, p. 408), the social order has three functions: 1) cooperative endeavors towards achieving social change and creating order; 2) cooperative interactions; and 3) social order. In marriage, rituals and ceremonies provide a dynamic context, one that adapts to change; however, such rituals and ceremonies are not included in elopement or bride kidnapping (Utomo, 2014). Indeed, in the social order that has been traditionally maintained, divorce, elopement, and bride kidnapping are not readily accepted or understood (Le Bouteillec et al., 2011). Reinforcing the argument that family law is foundational for the social order, one's marital status influences one's interactions in society. Fundamentally, order and regularity are created in society through processes and criteria that have been established to ensure society's continued survival (Maddern & Maddern, 2011).

3. Method

Research for this article was conducted in Monta District, located in Bima Regency, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, between 2017 and 2019. As mentioned previously, the practice of *londo iha* is

most prevalent in Monta; according to data from the Ministry of Religion, Bima Regency Office (2020), 1,201 cases of *londo iha* occurred in Bima between 2017 and 2019. Of these, 460 (38.3%) occurred in Monta, more than the next two districts combined; Tambora District reported 144 cases (11.99%), while Ambalawi District reported 129 cases (10.74%). For this article, both primary and secondary data were collected. Primary data were collected in the field, through observations, interviews, and reviews of published data. Secondary data, meanwhile, were collected by reviewing relevant literature.

Observations focused on the people of Monta and their practice of *londo iha*, which has been prevalent amongst the Muslims of Monta. This practice is driven by a range of motivations; in some cases, the couple has been unable to receive the blessings of their parents, while in other cases there are elements of coercion. Interviews were conducted with eight informants: two religious leaders, two societal/customary leaders, one parent, two persons who committed *londo iha*, and one village administrator. These informants were selected for their knowledge and involvement in *londo iha*. On *londo iha*, they had been involved in a few settlements. A religious leader and a traditional figure played crucial roles. To eliminate any potential for controversy, they talked to the families about the ceremony. The informants were picked in order to obtain further motives, prompting *londo iha* to take precautions.

Questions were designed to ascertain their knowledge of *londo iha*, as well as its status in Islamic law. Meanwhile, documents selected for review were relevant documents obtained from the Office of Religious Affairs in Bima Regency.

Observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis were used to collect substantial information for this study. After being collected through these three methods, data were subsequently categorized based on their relevance to the research questions. Data were then presented as narratives and as quotes from interviews. After being mapped and presented, data were analyzed interpretatively to identify and elucidate the context. For data analysis, this study employed a phenomenological approach, viewing the practice of *londo iha* as a social text or fact that could be interpreted and contextualized.

4. Results

4.1. *Londo iha* as practiced in Monta: A violation of Islamic law

Two forms of *londo iha* are commonly practiced among the people of Monta. In the first, which is based on mutual attraction, the decision to elope is made mutually, and the man travels to the woman's home to take her away from her parents and marry her. The second, meanwhile, involves coercion; the young man decides to marry a woman who has yet to agree to marriage, then takes her away from her home. Both forms, be they based on mutual attraction or coercion, are against Islamic jurisprudence and norms, as in all cases young women are taken away from their homes without their parents' permission. Owing to its element of coercion, the latter also has legal implications under state law.

Likewise, both forms of *londo iha* are also violations of Islamic law because they involve unmarried people of the opposite sex who are not mahram (unmarriageable kin) being alone together (i.e., *khalwa*). No family or third party is involved, whereas Islamic law does not allow such a situation. Such acts are deemed potential precursors to *zina* (i.e. illicit sexual relations) and other activities that are prohibited by Islamic doctrine. This is further aggravated by the fact that *londo iha* tends to be practiced at night, when witnesses are less likely. MM, a societal leader in Monta, explained:

... *londo iha* goes against Islamic custom and tradition, as well as Islamic law, because *londo iha* is usually done at night, and people who are not mahram travel together to their destination (interview, MM, 65, 19 February 2020).

Londo iha is done furtively, at night, without involving third parties. As such, there is significant potential for illicit activities. Particularly dangerous is the risk of *zina*, which is strictly prohibited in Islam. As stated in the Qur'an, in Surah al-Isra, Verse 32 (QS 17: 32):

... And do not come near to adultery (*zina*); surely it has been an obscenity and odious as a way.

Third, the potential for illicit pre-marital activities. The practice of *londo iha* makes it easier for young men and women to become involved in intimate activities that, when done outside marriage, are deemed *haram* Islamic law. By doing such activities, thus, the couple violates Islamic norms and teachings. According to Islamic law, marriage is a sacred bond that must be honored and maintained from the beginning. Islamic jurisprudence provides specific guidelines for the courting process, and these must be followed before marriage occurs. It begins with the introduction process, or *ta'aruf*, wherein the potential bride and groom learn about each other. The importance of this process is underscored by the Qur'an in Surah al-Hujurat, Verse 13 (QS 49: 13), which reads: "We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may 'get to' know one another."

Based on this brief review, it is evident that *londo iha* (as practiced in Monta), violates Islamic law. This is supported by four points: (1) the unmarried couple, who are not *mahram*, travel without supervision and over a great distance; (2) religious sources prohibit the act of *khalwa* that is intrinsic to *londo iha*; (3) the young woman is taken from home without the permission of her parents; and (4) the perpetrators of *londo iha* have reached the age of majority.

4.2. Cultural and customary factors that legitimize *londo iha*

Despite violating Islamic law, *londo iha* continues to be practiced. Three factors are identified as legitimizing this practice. First, environmental factors. The practice of *londo iha* continues to be perceived as normal and acceptable by the people of Monta. Young men are driven by various motives to commit *londo iha*. Some, for instance, are interested in women who have not reciprocated their feelings, and thus choose to abduct them. Other youths realize that the parents of their intended would not accept their advances, and thus decide to commit *londo iha*. No matter the motivation, the practice of *londo iha* has continued in Monta, and even become more prevalent in recent years. Indeed, a culture of imitation is evident, and many acts of *londo iha* are inspired by previous cases. This was mentioned by MS, a religious leader in Monta:

The desire, the decision to marry [through *londo iha*], often comes after they see that friends and relatives have married, [and it is realized] even when the family of their intended won't give their blessings. (Interview, MS, 60, 22 July 2019).

Second, a lack of education is a major driver of the *londo iha* practice. With limited formal education, individuals—particularly men—are more likely to involve others in activities that violate the laws and norms of society. Regarding the importance of education, MS (the Village Head of Sekuru Village), explained:

... those involved in *londo iha* in Monta ... mostly it is done by boys and girls who haven't received higher education. The majority of those involved have only finished junior high school, or at most senior high school (interview, MS, 35, 25 July 2019).

Likewise, economic factors often drive the young men of Monta to *londo iha*, as they perceive it as a shortcut to or alternative means of marrying their beloved. When men lack money, but nonetheless desire to marry, *londo iha* offers them an easy alternative—even though the marriage may not be accepted by the parents of their beloved. HD, the parent of a girl, explained:

Usually, *londo iha* happens when a man has limited financial capacity. For example, if a man lacks the money to marry, he will find another way to marry the person he loves; for marriage, men must pay the bride price etc. In such situations, they'll choose to run away with their intended, to make the marriage easier (interview, HD, 45, 19 February 2019).

The decision to commit *londo iha* may also be influenced by parents' unwillingness to bless a union. Where a young man wants to marry his beloved in accordance with local customs and religious norms, but are unable to obtain the blessings of her parents, he may decide that *londo iha* is the only possible way of realizing this union. One informant explained:

We love each other. I tried proposing, following the processes set out by customary law and tradition, as well as the Islamic law that guides the people of Monta, Bima, but because the union wasn't blessed by her parents ... their disapproval was shown by the high bride price, set at Rp. 50,000,000 (fifty million rupiah). Needless to say, fifty million was too much for us, and so we chose *londo iha* (interview, DD, 24, 20 February 2019).

Similarly, another informant who had married through *londo iha* stated:

I was forced to commit *londo iha* because I wasn't accepted by her parents. They showed it indirectly, by asking for too much money for shopping, and so *londo iha* was the best way for our marriage to happen (interview, JL, 20, 2019).

Generally speaking, the youths who practice *londo iha* tend to have received comparatively little education and come from families of limited financial means. These youths enjoy a mutual attraction, but their desired union does not receive their parents' blessings—often due to their financial situation.

Third, the culture of Monta seems to allow such behavior, even though it is not permitted by religious law. Acceptance of *londo iha* tends to be driven by three fundamental factors. *First* is the principle of *kasabua Nggahi labo kasubua rawi* ("mutual agreement"). When *londo iha* occurs, and after its perpetrators reach the home of a local religious leader (*cepelebe*), their families come together to begin planning the marriage, seeing it as a means of restoring good relations. *Second* is the principle of *kadese rakantasa angi* ("equality"), which holds that all people are equals, even when they have different social situations. This principle guides many of society's activities, including the resolution of cases of *londo iha*. Both families are positioned as equals, and both have the desire to restore good relations by ensuring that their children are married in the eyes of the law and religion. *Third* is the principle of *kalembo ade kapaja sara* ("acceptance"), which holds that mistakes and improprieties can be accepted and forgiven. This principle also holds that "forgiving the mistakes of children is much better than hatred". Past mistakes can be forgiven, and children can be welcomed back into their families.

4.3. The influence of *londo iha* on the social order of Monta's Muslim community

The use of *londo iha* for marriage has a significant and detrimental effect on the social order of Monta's Muslim community. This can be seen in the three fundamental shifts that have occurred in interpersonal relations. *First*, after children commit *londo iha*—thereby ignoring Islam's command to *birrul walidain*, or do right by one's parents—their relations with their parents are soured. After marriage, both male and female children tend to distance themselves from their parents and their families, focusing only on their own interests. Sons, by stealing away with a young woman, fail to observe Islam's command to obey one's parents, and indeed they often lie to their parents when committing *londo iha*. IS, a religious leader (*cepelebe*), explained:

Londo iha is done without the knowledge of parents or other family members. Children commit *londo iha* as they please, not heeding their parents or religion (interview, IS, 50, 7 November 2019).

The strain on parent–child relations was also acknowledged by MS, the Chief of Sakuru Village, Monta. According to this informant, *londo iha* blemishes the family's good name and remains remembered by the community. On one occasion, he spoke publicly about the effects of *londo iha*, stating:

... the act of *londo iha* does not only damage the bonds between the parents of those who commit it in our community, but also blemishes the good names of the perpetrators' extended family, and is discussed widely by the community in many places and during various events (interview, MS, 35, di Monta 2019).

HG, a societal leader in Monta, likewise confirmed the practice's detrimental effect on parent–child relations. He explained:

Londo iha can severely damage family bonds. If they don't seek a solution, this will result in kinship bonds being severed. As such, here in Monta, *londo iha* is always resolved quickly by the families, so that it has no lasting repercussions (interview, HG, 45, 2019).

Second, the act of *londo iha* stresses the relationship between families. When a young man decides to commit *londo iha*, this will not only strain the communications between children and their parents (as detailed above), but also the relations between the couple's families; indeed, conflict is not uncommon. *Londo iha* is done furtively; a young man steals away with the woman he desires, often because he believes that he would be rejected if he formally sought her hand in marriage. Although their goal is noble, the approach cannot be accepted by Islamic law, as it is viewed as violating religious law and social ethics. Its perpetrators, similarly, face social sanctions such as social ostracization. Often, those who accompany the groom are not provided food, as the bride's family holds that doing so will only waste time. *Londo iha* is commonly done to expedite the marriage process; providing food, conversely, is akin to asking guests to stay longer, and thus runs contrary to this goal.

Third, the weakening of societal bonds. *Londo iha* has long been practiced by the people of Monta for generations. Nevertheless, the practice of *londo iha* often has a detrimental effect on the interpersonal bonds in society, as those involved often face social sanctions. For instance, if a couple decides to hold a wedding reception after committing *londo iha*, neighbors may decide not to attend, even though they would have attended had the marriage not involved elopement or bride kidnapping. Likewise, although food is usually provided at wedding receptions, this does not always hold for couples who have committed *londo iha*. It may thus be surmised that the practice of *londo iha* indirectly distances the Muslims of Monta from Islam, which teaches them to create good relations with Allah SWT and their peers (as emphasized by Surah al-Imran, verse 112).

As shown above, the practice of *londo iha* runs contrary to the teachings of Allah, such as the command for children to obey and do right by their parents (in Surah Luqman, Verse 14). It strains communication between parents and their children, between the couples' extended families, and even between members of society. As such, the practice runs contrary to marriage's goal of strengthening the bonds between families.

5. Discussion

Londo iha, the practice of elopement and bride kidnapping in Monta, has continued to be practiced and receive legitimization within local culture. This practice has a noble goal, i.e. promoting marriage to realize religious teachings. However, its approach is categorized as *fakhsya* (ignoble) and as violating the principles of Islamic law. Foundational to Islamic law, as recorded within the *maqasyid al-syariah*, is the need to protect one's lineage (*al-Mukhafadzatu 'alan nasab*), and this implies that all acts that could potentially lead to *zina*—illicit sexual relations, a major sin in Islam—must be avoided (Kisworo, 2016). Nevertheless, despite violating Islamic law, *londo iha* continues to be practiced by the Muslims of Monta. This is exacerbated by their minimal knowledge of Islamic doctrine, as a result of which they are more likely to continue the practice. Eloping or *londo iha*,

which is more common in Bosnia-Herzegovina, can be traumatizing for adolescent females' psychologically (Doubt, 2014; Tuce, 2014).

Behind the practice of *londo iha* are two mutually opposed elements: Islam's emphasis on the importance of marriage, and a premarital activity that deviates from social and religious norms. More specifically, during *londo iha*, a young man steals a woman away from her family without their permission, which significantly harms the relations between their families. Likewise, *londo iha*—unlike formal marriage proposals—contains elements of coercion, even when mutual attraction exists, as couples' parents and families are forced to accept the union to minimize potential harm. The motivations are likewise different; men choose to commit *londo iha* to avoid paying the bride price or seeking their families' blessings. Although this practice runs contrary to the *ta'aruf* process set by Islam, and violates societal norms of honesty and etiquette, it continues to be accepted by the people of Monta (Darwis, 2019).

Although elopement and bride kidnapping are widespread, the practices are controversial. For example, it is an integral part of Sasak culture, but it is taboo among the Gayo of Aceh (who perceive it as violating religious norms). *Londo iha* is a local custom rather than a religious ritual. Instead, they are Muslims, and they are unable to abandon their heritage. However, it may result in a social-religious dilemma. Islamic law seeks to create legal certainty, especially in determining what is *halal* (accepted) and *haram* (prohibited). *Londo iha* is commonly perceived as bringing its perpetrators closer to *zina*, and thus considered *haram*—an act that brings its perpetrators closer to destruction and damnation (Noor, 2010). In other words, the practice distances Muslims from their religion's teachings, being something that runs contrary to established norms (Essof, 2011). For young men, however, this is an acceptable risk; the normal approach to marriage is more difficult due to high bride prices (Abd Fatah & Kasim, 2019), the expense of marriage ceremonies (Murni et al., 2019), and the difficulty of obtaining parental blessing (Wati & Lestari, 2019).

Nevertheless, due to society's ambivalence regarding the practice, there are no mutually agreed upon sanctions for *londo iha*. Indeed, the lack of formal sanctions contributes to the continued practice of *londo iha* among Monta's Muslims. Problems are solved through negotiations, rather than legal means. This reinforces the view that *londo iha* is a natural and acceptable behavior, one that is not prohibited and no punishment—even though such practices, as argued by Hakimi and Sa'adat (2020), are highly injurious to societal bonds.

Londo iha has two effects, which are mutually opposed: it provides a means of expediting marriage, but it also creates tension. *Londo iha* is perceived by many members of local society as detrimental to the social order of Monta. It affects not only the families of the perpetrators, but also broader society. For example, the couple's children may face bullying, even though they were not involved in their parents' decisions. According to Islamic law, the mistakes of the parent must not burden their children. All children are born innocent, unblemished by the sins of their parents. Even individuals who participate in the *londo iha* can have traumatic psychology as a result of it. It can also be found in Bosnia and Herzegovina, even if it has been slowing for the past six years, but it is still happening (Tuce, 2014).

Even though the people of Monta, as with other residents of Bima, adhere to the philosophy of *maja labo dahu*, the practice of *londo iha* creates tension within society. This philosophy has moral force, as it combines local wisdom with Islamic law—both of which clearly distinguish between the good things that are permitted and the bad things that are prohibited. With the bonds between them weakened by the practice of *londo iha*, the people of Monta have neglected to observe the teachings of *maja labo dahu* and ignored the prohibitions set by Islamic law.

At the conceptual level, the practice of *londo iha* among the Muslims of Monta reflects the broader tension of local customs and religious teachings. Not only does this further underscore the much-remarked upon contestation of these forces in Muslim societies, as well as the dangers posed by said

contestation (Jubba et al., 2018; Pabbajah et al., 2021) and the lack of sanctions. This could potentially lead to social conflict (Triantini et al., 2017). If an act of *londo iha* is not solved appropriately (in accordance with Islamic law and custom), or if the families affected by the practice cannot reach an agreement—leading to the couple being returned to their families—the marriage is annulled. As such, it is important for all involved to understand the best way of resolving the situation, to avoid causing further harm and promote the greater good. This is in accordance with the principle of *Dar'ul mafāsīd muqaddam 'alā jalbil masālih* (“avoiding harm is more important than doing good”). This doctrine is foundational in Islamic jurisprudence, being derived from the principle of *al-dararū yuzālu* (“danger must be avoided”). In the case of *londo iha*, the greatest danger lies in the possibility that the families cannot reach an agreement. This could do more than sour the relations between their families; if the union results in a pregnancy, but is subsequently dissolved, the child will be born without a father. This results in significant stigma for the mother, the child, and their extended family.

6. Conclusion

Even as the practices of elopement and bride kidnapping have been abandoned elsewhere, they have remained strong in Monta. *Londo iha* remains prevalent, even though it violates the principles of Islamic law—particularly the command to protect one's lineage (*al-mukhafadzatu 'alan nasab*), which is a cornerstone of family harmony and social order. This article has shown that the practice of *londo iha* in Monta has been reinforced by local customs, and as a result local Muslims have embraced a practice that runs contrary to the teachings and spirit of Islam. This practice is closely associated with various societal ills, including financial hardships, limited access to education, and misunderstandings of religious doctrines.

The practice of *londo iha* has diverse motivations. It is perceived by locals as part of Monta custom, and thus positively accepted. Indeed, it has been presented in several media not only as a way for a young man to prove his bravery (by stealing away with his intended), but also as a way for a young man to show that he is capable of taking a leadership role in his family. This study, conversely, has shown that young men in Monta tend to commit *londo iha* to marry a woman whose parents will not bless their marriage. Many are also motivated by financial considerations, as they are unable to afford the requested bride price or the cost of marriage. This practice, though common, nevertheless runs contrary to religious (read: Islamic) norms.

Data for this article was collected in Monta District, Bima Regency, between 2017 and 2019, and therefore future studies should take a broader temporal scope. Likewise, this article has limited its discussion to a socio-religious perspective; consequently, other factors—such as the history of the practice and society's response to perpetrators—have not been discussed here. As a result, the question of raping potential on *Londo Iha* has not yet been thoroughly examined in this article, and it should be considered a noteworthy matter for future research. Future studies should thus take a broader perspective, employing a multi-disciplinary approach to understand the practice of *londo iha* to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the practice amongst the Muslims of Monta, Bima.

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