
The Role of Customary Leaders in Resolving Domestic Disputes (Case Study of the Towani Tolotang Community in Amparita District, Sidenreng Rappang Regency)

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Islamic Family Law Study

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ABSTRACT

Family is the smallest social unit that plays a crucial role in maintaining social harmony and welfare. However, domestic conflicts between spouses are inevitable due to differences in character, interests, and socio-economic pressures. In the context of Indonesia's plural society, dispute resolution is not only conducted through formal legal mechanisms but also through customary practices rooted in local wisdom. This study aims to analyze the role of customary leaders in resolving household disputes within the Towani Tolotang community in Sidenreng Rappang Regency, South Sulawesi. This topic remains relatively underexplored in existing literature, particularly in the context of social transformation and the increasing influence of formal law. This research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation involving customary leaders, married couples, and community figures. The findings reveal that customary leaders (uwa) play a central role as mediators, resolving domestic conflicts by emphasizing cultural values such as *siri'* (honor), *pacce* (empathy), and *lempu'* (honesty). The dispute resolution mechanism is carried out through structured yet flexible customary mediation stages that prioritize deliberation, moral guidance, and reconciliation before reaching a final decision. The study also finds that this mechanism is relatively effective, as most domestic disputes are resolved through customary mediation without leading to divorce. This helps strengthen family harmony and social cohesion within the community. In conclusion, the role of customary leaders remains relevant as a form of living law that preserves family integrity and sustains local cultural values amid modernization.

Keywords: Customary Leaders; Towani Tolotang; Household Disputes; Customary Mediation; Living Law

A. INTRODUCTION

The family constitutes the smallest social unit that plays a fundamental role in shaping the structure and stability of social life. Despite their normative function as spaces of harmony and collective well-being, domestic relations are inherently vulnerable to conflict due to differences in character, interests, and socio-economic pressures. Such conflicts necessitate effective dispute resolution mechanisms that are not only legally valid but also socially accepted within the community.

In Indonesia's plural legal system, the resolution of domestic disputes does not rely exclusively on formal legal institutions but also incorporates customary mechanisms that function as part of living law. These mechanisms persist because they are embedded in local cultural values and social structures. One such example can be found in the Towani Tolotang community in Amparita, Sidenreng Rappang Regency, South Sulawesi. This community maintains strong adherence to customary norms, in which traditional leaders – such as To Matoa and other customary authorities – play a central role in regulating social order and resolving disputes. In this context, customary leaders act as mediators who emphasize values such as *siri'* (honor), *pacce* (solidarity), and *lempu'* (honesty) in addressing domestic conflicts.

Previous studies have demonstrated that customary law remains significant in dispute resolution, particularly in family-related conflicts. Nurhayati (2019) argues that customary mechanisms in South Sulawesi are oriented toward reconciliation rather than punishment, thereby maintaining social cohesion.¹ Similarly, Rahman (2020) highlights that community-based mediation rooted in local wisdom tends to produce more sustainable conflict resolution outcomes compared to formal litigation. Furthermore, Sari (2021) emphasizes that integrating cultural values into dispute resolution strengthens collective identity and social harmony. On the other hand, Fitriani (2022) points out that the growing influence of formal legal systems is challenging the authority of customary institutions, particularly among younger generations. In line with this, Anjana (2025) identifies *siri'*, *pacce*, and *lempu'* as the moral foundations that guide peaceful conflict resolution in Bugis-Makassar society.¹

However, despite these contributions, existing studies tend to focus on the general role of customary law or cultural values in conflict resolution, without examining how customary leaders operate within specific indigenous communities undergoing contemporary social transformation. In particular, there is a limited scholarly discussion on the Towani Tolotang community, especially regarding how their customary leaders adapt to the growing influence of formal state law and shifting social dynamics. This indicates a clear research gap concerning the contextualized role,

¹ Firki Anjana, et al., "Siri'na Pacce dalam Penyelesaian Konflik Hukum Adat dalam Masyarakat Bugis-Makassar," *Jurnal Humaniora dan Sosial Sains* 2, no. 2 (2025): 203–9.

mechanisms, and effectiveness of customary dispute resolution within this community.

Based on this gap, the primary issue addressed in this study is how customary leaders resolve domestic disputes within the Towani Tolotang community in Sidenreng Rappang Regency. This study further examines the stages and mechanisms of customary dispute resolution and evaluates their effectiveness and social impact on family harmony and community cohesion.

This study departs from the assumption that customary leaders continue to play a significant role as moral authorities who can mediate domestic conflicts through culturally grounded approaches. However, this role is increasingly challenged by the expansion of formal legal awareness and changing perspectives among younger generations. Therefore, this research aims to provide a more contextual and analytical understanding of the relevance and effectiveness of customary dispute resolution in contemporary society.

B. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research approach with a descriptive-analytical method to examine the role of customary leaders (uwa) in resolving household disputes within the Towani Tolotang community in Amparita, Sidenreng Rappang Regency, South Sulawesi. This approach is used to understand social phenomena, cultural values, and the role of customary institutions that cannot be measured quantitatively.

The research primarily relied on a key informant, namely a customary leader (uwa) who also possesses formal legal expertise as a notary and is recognized as an authority within the Towani Tolotang community. The selection of this informant was conducted purposively based on their central role, knowledge, and direct involvement in customary dispute resolution. In the context of Towani Tolotang society, access to informants is regulated by customary norms, and researchers cannot freely select participants without approval from customary authorities. Therefore, the use of a key informant reflects both methodological consideration and respect for local cultural practices.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, supported by observation and documentation. The interview focused on exploring the informant's experiences, perspectives, and practices in resolving household disputes. Observation was conducted to understand the mediation process, while documentation provided supporting data from written sources, including books, journals, and customary records.

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.² The analysis began with data coding, in which interview data were categorized into key themes, including the role of uwa, stages of mediation, and dispute resolution outcomes. These themes were then organized into analytical narratives to identify patterns and relationships. Conclusions were drawn and continuously verified to ensure consistency with the empirical data.

To ensure data validity, this study employed triangulation using multiple data sources and methods, including comparisons among interview results, observations, and relevant literature.³ This approach enhances the credibility and depth of the findings despite the limited number of informants.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Role of Customary Leaders in Resolving Household Disputes

The findings indicate that the customary leader (uwa) holds a central and authoritative role in resolving household disputes within the Towani Tolotang community. The uwa is not merely a formal leader but is perceived as a moral authority who embodies wisdom, neutrality, and social responsibility.⁴ This perception positions the uwa as the primary figure to whom community members turn in times of domestic conflict.

Empirically, the uwa serves multiple roles, including that of mediator, advisor, and social stabilizer. As a mediator, the uwa facilitates dialogue between disputing parties by providing a neutral space for communication.⁵ As an advisor, the uwa offers moral guidance based on cultural values such as siri' (honor), pacce (empathy), and lempu' (honesty). As a stabilizer, the uwa ensures that disputes do not escalate into broader social tensions that could disrupt community harmony.

The mediation process emphasizes reconciliation rather than determining fault. The uwa prioritizes calming emotions and encouraging both parties to reflect on their responsibilities within the household. The following statement illustrates this approach:

² Qomaruddin and Halimah Sa'diyah, "Kajian Teoritis Tentang Teknik Analisis Data dalam Penelitian Kualitatif: Perspektif Spradley, Miles dan Huberman," *Journal of Management, Accounting, and Administration* 1, no. 2 (2024): 77-84.

³ Dedi Susanto and M. Syahrani Jailani, "Teknik Pemeriksaan Keabsahan Data dalam Penelitian Ilmiah," *QOSIM: Jurnal Pendidikan Sosial & Humaniora* 1, no. 1 (2023): 53-61.

⁴ Franklin Sochima Enekwe, "Uwa Philosophy," *ScienceOpen Preprints*, 2024.

⁵ Hasudungan Sinaga, et al., *Membedah Mediasi Sebagai Alternatif Penyelesaian Sengketa* (Mega Press Nusantara, 2024).

“In resolving household disputes, we do not immediately determine who is right or wrong, but we first try to calm both parties and encourage reconciliation.” (Uwa, 2025)

This finding suggests that emotional management and moral persuasion are key components of the mediation process. The authority of the uwa is further reinforced by the community's strong adherence to cultural values, which serve as informal norms that regulate behavior. As a result, compliance with the uwa's decisions is largely voluntary and socially internalized.⁶

The central role of the uwa reflects the concept of living law, where norms that develop organically within society function effectively as regulatory mechanisms. The legitimacy of the uwa is not derived from formal legal authority but from collective recognition and cultural acceptance. This aligns with socio-legal perspectives that emphasize the effectiveness of informal institutions in managing social conflicts.

However, this strong authority also raises critical issues regarding power relations and neutrality. The position of the uwa as a highly respected figure may create implicit pressure on disputing parties to accept mediation outcomes, even when those outcomes do not fully represent their interests. In this context, the mediation process may not always reflect equal bargaining power between parties.

A key question that emerges is whether all parties particularly vulnerable individuals such as women have equal opportunities to express their perspectives. The expectation to maintain harmony and avoid conflict escalation may lead individuals to suppress their grievances. This indicates that the emphasis on reconciliation, while socially beneficial, may unintentionally limit the expression of dissenting voices.

Furthermore, the reliance on a single authority figure raises concerns about subjectivity in decision-making. Without formal procedural standards, the outcome of mediation largely depends on the personal judgment of the uwa. While this flexibility allows for contextual solutions, it may also lead to inconsistencies and bias.

From the perspective of Islamic family law, the role of the uwa can be compared to the concept of hakam, which aims to facilitate reconciliation between spouses. Both emphasize dialogue and conflict resolution. However, Islamic law generally recommends that representatives from both parties be involved to ensure balance and fairness. In contrast, the uwa operates as a singular authority, which may reduce representational balance. This indicates that while there is conceptual alignment, there are also structural differences in implementation.

⁶ Rasman, *Strategi Komunitas Hindu Tolotang dalam Melestarikan Budaya Tolotang* (Skripsi, IAIN Parepare, 2023).

Thus, the role of the uwa demonstrates both strengths and limitations: it is effective in maintaining social harmony, but it also raises concerns regarding equality, neutrality, and accountability.⁷ The integration of these systems reflects the reality of legal pluralism in society. Therefore, the uwa not only plays a local role but also contributes to the broader legal framework.

2. Stages and Mechanisms of Customary Dispute Resolution

The findings reveal that the mechanism of household dispute resolution in the Towani Tolotang community is structured yet flexible, involving an initial consultation, private deliberation and mediation, time for reflection, and final decision-making. The process begins with an initial consultation, where one of the parties approaches the uwa to communicate the problem. This stage serves as both an entry point for dispute resolution and a form of emotional release. The uwa listens without making immediate judgments, allowing individuals to express their concerns freely.

Subsequently, both parties are invited to participate in a private mediation session. Confidentiality is strictly maintained to preserve family dignity, which is closely related to the cultural value of *siri'*. During the session, the uwa ensures that both parties are given opportunities to speak, while guiding the discussion toward mutual understanding

This mechanism differs significantly from formal legal procedures, as it emphasizes consensus and reconciliation rather than adjudication. The existence of such a system reflects the strength of local wisdom in managing social conflicts. It also demonstrates that customary law remains functional in regulating community behavior. The process is not merely technical but deeply embedded in cultural and moral values. Therefore, the mechanism serves both legal and social purposes. In this sense, dispute resolution becomes a means of maintaining collective stability. By providing a safe space, the uwa builds trust and openness. This trust becomes the foundation for further mediation. Thus, the initial stage plays a crucial role in shaping the entire process.

Following the initial consultation, the uwa summons both parties to attend a mediation session. The meeting is conducted in a private setting to ensure confidentiality and protect family dignity. This confidentiality is closely related to the cultural concept of *siri'*, which emphasizes honor and self-respect. The closed nature of the meeting prevents the spread of personal issues into the wider community. It also reduces social pressure on the parties involved. By maintaining

⁷ Wahyuni Prasetyaningsih, "Mediasi Penal Sebagai Alternatif Penyelesaian Sengketa Antara Suami dan Istri pada Tindak Pidana Kekerasan dalam Rumah Tangga," (2017).

privacy, the uwa creates a more comfortable environment for discussion. This approach supports open communication between both parties.

The mediation process is gradual and non-coercive. The uwa does not impose immediate decisions but provides time for reflection, allowing both parties to reconsider their positions. In some cases, the process may take a long time, depending on the complexity of the dispute. If reconciliation cannot be achieved, the uwa may eventually allow the case to proceed to formal legal institutions. However, this is considered a last resort after all customary efforts have been exhausted.

"We usually invite both parties to sit together and talk. Everything is discussed privately so that family dignity is maintained." (Customary Leader, 2025)

During the mediation session, the uwa ensures that both parties have equal opportunities to express their perspectives. This balanced approach prevents bias and promotes fairness. The uwa acts as a neutral facilitator, guiding the discussion toward mutual understanding. Cultural values such as lempu' (honesty) and pacce (empathy) play a central role in this stage. These values shape how individuals communicate and respond during the process. They also function as informal norms that regulate behavior. As a result, the mediation becomes both fair and culturally grounded.⁸

The mediation process is not aimed at determining guilt but at restoring relationships. This reflects the principles of restorative justice, which emphasize reconciliation rather than punishment. The uwa encourages both parties to reflect on their responsibilities and roles within the household. This approach promotes mutual understanding and emotional healing. It also helps reduce tension and the escalation of conflict. The process focuses on rebuilding trust between the parties. Therefore, the outcome is more sustainable and acceptable.

Another important stage is to allow time for reflection before making any final decision. The uwa does not impose immediate solutions but allows the parties to reconsider their situation. This flexibility is essential in reducing emotional tension. It also encourages rational thinking and self-awareness. In many cases, the process may take several sessions over a long period. This gradual approach allows for deeper reflection and understanding. It also increases the chances of reconciliation.

"We do not rush decisions. Sometimes we give them time to calm down and think carefully before making any decision." (Uwa, 2025)

⁸ Wihdaniah, Andi Agustang, and Arlin Adam, "Pernikahan Tolotang di Kelurahan Amparita Kecamatan Tellu Limpoe Kabupaten Sidenreng Rappang," *Phinisi Integration Review* 3, no. 2 (2020): 165–72.

In certain cases, the uwa may involve extended family members or respected community figures. This collective approach reflects the communal nature of the Towani Tolotang society. Family involvement strengthens the legitimacy of the process. It also creates a sense of shared responsibility in resolving the conflict. The presence of additional figures can provide new perspectives. This helps facilitate more balanced discussions. As a result, the mediation process becomes more inclusive.

The stages of dispute resolution practiced in the Towani Tolotang community also reflect the concept of tahkim in Islamic law, which involves appointing a neutral and trusted mediator to resolve conflicts. In this system, the mediator is expected to act fairly, listen to both parties, and guide them toward a mutually acceptable solution. The uwa fulfills these criteria through a structured yet flexible mediation process that emphasizes dialogue, fairness, and moral responsibility. This indicates that the customary mechanism is compatible with Islamic principles of dispute resolution, particularly in its emphasis on justice and reconciliation.

In addition, the gradual and non-coercive nature of the mediation process aligns with Islamic jurisprudence, which discourages hasty decisions in marital disputes. Islam encourages patience, reflection, and careful consideration before taking drastic actions such as divorce. The provision of time for reflection in the customary process reflects this principle, as it allows both parties to reassess their relationship. Therefore, the mediation stages in the Towani Tolotang community not only represent local wisdom but also embody the ethical and procedural values emphasized in Islamic family law.

If an agreement is not reached after several mediation sessions, the uwa will not issue a divorce decree immediately. Instead, he will give the couple time to calm down and reassess their relationship. This process can take a long time, even years, depending on the seriousness of the problem and the emotional readiness of both parties. In Towani Tolotang culture, divorce is considered a last resort and should be pursued only when amicable solutions are truly impossible. In the absence of strong evidence of serious violations such as domestic violence or infidelity, the uwa will reject the divorce request and advise the couple to improve communication and the relationship.

This view reflects a religious principle consistent with Islamic teachings: "*maa jama'a Allahu laa yufarriquhu alinsan*" (what God has joined together, should not be separated by humans).⁹ Therefore, customary resolution is not only a social

⁹ Nur Farhana Abdul Rahman and Nur Farhana, "Pemahaman Konsep Tauhid Asas Keharmonian Kepelbagaian Agama," *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 1, no. 2 (2012).

mechanism but also a form of moral and spiritual education for couples facing conflict. Through the uwa's guidance, couples are encouraged to understand marriage as a sacred bond that must be maintained with responsibility, patience, and compassion.

If reconciliation cannot be achieved after several attempts, the uwa may consider allowing the case to proceed to formal legal institutions. However, this decision is taken cautiously and only after all efforts have been exhausted. This shows that divorce is viewed as a last resort within the community.¹⁰ The reluctance to approve divorce reflects a strong commitment to preserving family unity. It also highlights the moral responsibility of the uwa. Therefore, formal legal action is considered secondary.

The entire mechanism demonstrates a holistic approach that integrates emotional, cultural, and social dimensions. It does not only resolve disputes but also strengthens relationships and social cohesion. The process reinforces community values and moral principles. It also ensures that conflicts do not disrupt social harmony. By prioritizing reconciliation, the system promotes long-term stability. Thus, customary mediation remains highly relevant in contemporary society.

3. Effectiveness and Social Impact of Customary Dispute Resolution

The findings demonstrate that the customary mediation system led by the uwa is highly effective in resolving household disputes within the Towani Tolotang community. This effectiveness is supported by strong trust in the uwa, the internalization of cultural values, and the preference for maintaining family harmony. The mediation process contributes to social stability by preventing the escalation of conflicts and preserving relationships within the community.

In addition, the mechanism plays an important role in maintaining cultural identity. The consistent application of values such as *siri'*, *pacce*, and *lempu'* ensures the continuity of local traditions and reinforces collective identity.

This effectiveness is reflected in the high rate of successful conflict resolution without leading to divorce. Approximately 95% of cases are resolved through customary mechanisms, indicating strong trust among community members. This level of effectiveness shows that customary institutions remain relevant despite the presence of formal legal systems. It also confirms that local wisdom continues to play an important role in maintaining social order. The success of this system is not accidental but supported by various interconnected factors. Therefore, its effectiveness must be understood from multiple perspectives.

¹⁰ Imayah, "Proses Perceraian Masyarakat Hukum Adat Towani Tolotang di Desa Buae Kecamatan Watang Pulu Kabupaten Sidrap," (2022).

One of the main factors contributing to this effectiveness is the strong social legitimacy of the uwa. As a respected figure, the uwa possesses moral authority that is deeply rooted in cultural values and traditions. This authority allows the uwa to influence behavior through advice and persuasion rather than coercion. Community members tend to comply voluntarily with the guidance provided. This form of influence is more sustainable because it is based on internal awareness. The legitimacy of the uwa strengthens the overall mediation process. Thus, trust becomes the foundation of effectiveness.

"We trust the uwa more than going directly to court because they understand our culture and situation better." (Community Member, 2025)

This statement highlights community members' preference for culturally grounded solutions. Customary mediation is perceived as more empathetic and contextually appropriate compared to formal legal processes. The uwa understands not only the legal aspects but also the social and emotional dimensions of the conflict. This understanding allows for more tailored and acceptable solutions. As a result, the decisions made are more easily accepted by both parties. The process also minimizes resistance and dissatisfaction. Therefore, cultural understanding becomes a key factor in effectiveness.

Another factor that supports effectiveness is the internalization of cultural values such as *siri'*, *pacce*, and *lempu'*. These values act as moral guidelines that regulate individual behavior within the community.¹¹ They encourage individuals to maintain harmony and avoid actions that may damage family dignity. The presence of these values creates a strong sense of responsibility among community members.¹² It also reduces the likelihood of conflict escalation. As a result, mediation becomes easier to achieve. Thus, cultural values function as informal social control mechanisms.

The personalized approach adopted by the uwa also plays a significant role in ensuring effective mediation. By understanding the emotional and psychological conditions of the parties involved, the uwa can provide appropriate and balanced solutions. This approach allows the mediation process to address deeper issues beyond the surface conflict. It also helps build emotional connections between the mediator and the parties. Such connections increase the chances of successful reconciliation. Therefore, empathy becomes a critical element in the process.

"Most couples who come here do not end up divorcing, because they are reminded of their responsibilities and family values." (Community Leader, 2025)

¹¹ Hadawiah, et al., "Tradisi dan Kepercayaan: Eksplorasi Komunikasi Ritual dalam Merajut Kerukunan Komunitas Bugis Towani Tolotang Sulawesi Selatan, Indonesia," *Jurnal Pekommas* 9, no. 1 (2024): 177–87.

¹² Reski SPR, *Strategi Manajemen Konflik dalam Membangun Harmonisasi Beragama di Masyarakat Towani Tolotang di Kecamatan Tellu Limpoe Kabupaten Sidrap* (Skripsi, IAIN Parepare, 2024).

This statement illustrates that mediation is not only about resolving disputes but also about reinforcing moral awareness. The process encourages individuals to reflect on their roles and responsibilities within the household. This reflection contributes to long-term behavioral change. It also helps prevent future conflicts. In this sense, customary mediation functions as both a resolution mechanism and a preventive tool. Thus, its impact extends beyond immediate dispute settlement.

From a socio-legal perspective, this phenomenon reflects the concept of legal pluralism. Customary law operates alongside formal state law and religious law in a complementary manner.¹³ These systems do not necessarily compete but can coexist harmoniously. In practice, formal legal institutions often recognize the role of customary mediation as a preliminary step. This recognition strengthens the position of customary law within the broader legal system. It also demonstrates the flexibility of legal practices in Indonesia. Therefore, pluralism becomes a key characteristic of the system.

The social impact of this mediation system is significant in maintaining community stability. By resolving disputes internally, conflicts do not escalate into broader social problems. This contributes to stronger social cohesion and harmony among community members. It also prevents the fragmentation of social relationships. The system ensures that disputes remain within manageable boundaries. As a result, the overall stability of the community is preserved. Thus, mediation plays a vital role in maintaining social order.

In addition, the system contributes to the preservation of cultural identity. The continuous application of customary values ensures that traditions remain alive. It also strengthens the sense of belonging among community members. Younger generations can learn directly from the mediation process. They observe how conflicts are resolved peacefully and respectfully. This serves as an informal educational process. Therefore, customary mediation also functions as a cultural transmission mechanism.

The effectiveness of customary mediation in resolving household disputes can also be analyzed through the framework of *maqashid al-shari'ah*, particularly in preserving family integrity (*hifz al-usrah*) and lineage (*hifz al-nasl*). Islamic law places great importance on maintaining the stability of the family as a fundamental social institution. By minimizing divorce and promoting reconciliation, the role of the *uwa* contributes to achieving these objectives. This demonstrates that the customary mediation system not only functions socially but also fulfills important religious goals within Islamic legal thought.

¹³ Faijul Islam, "Legal Pluralism in South Asia: The Sustainable Role of Customary Law in Modern Legal Systems," *Journal of Legal Research and Polity* 2, no. 2 (2025): 67–88.

Moreover, the emphasis on harmony, responsibility, and moral accountability in the mediation process reflects broader Islamic values related to social justice and communal well-being.¹⁴ The success of this system in maintaining social cohesion and reducing conflict aligns with the objectives of Islamic law to promote welfare (*maslahah*) and prevent harm (*mafsadah*). Therefore, the customary practices of the Towani Tolotang community can be understood as a form of contextualized application of Islamic law that integrates local culture with universal religious principles.

However, despite its effectiveness, the system faces several challenges in the modern era. The influence of modernization and changing social values may reduce reliance on customary mechanisms. Younger generations may prefer formal legal solutions due to perceptions of efficiency and certainty. Increased access to legal institutions also provides alternative pathways for dispute resolution. These factors may weaken the authority of customary leaders over time. Therefore, adaptation is necessary to ensure sustainability.

Overall, the effectiveness of customary mediation in the Towani Tolotang community lies in its ability to integrate cultural values, social legitimacy, and emotional understanding. The system not only resolves disputes but also strengthens relationships and community cohesion. Its impact extends to preserving cultural identity and promoting moral values.¹⁵ Despite existing challenges, the system remains relevant and functional. With proper adaptation, it can continue to play an important role in contemporary society.

The effectiveness of this mediation system can be understood within the framework of legal pluralism, where customary and formal legal systems coexist and complement each other. The reliance on customary mediation demonstrates that local institutions remain relevant in addressing social issues. However, the notion of effectiveness requires critical examination. The absence of divorce does not necessarily indicate the successful resolution of conflict. Disputes may be suppressed rather than fully resolved, particularly when individuals feel pressured to maintain harmony.

This raises a fundamental question: is the system effective because it resolves conflicts, or because it discourages open confrontation? The emphasis on harmony may lead to the normalization of unresolved tensions within the household. Additionally, the system tends to prioritize collective values over individual autonomy. While this strengthens social cohesion, it may also limit personal

¹⁴ Zafar Ali, et al., "The Role of Islamic Values in Promoting Social Justice and Community Welfare," *International Research Journal of Management and Social Sciences* 5, no. 1 (2024): 575–85.

¹⁵ Lilik Mulyadi, *Mediasi Penal dalam Sistem Peradilan Pidana Indonesia* (Penerbit Alumni, 2022).

agency, especially for individuals in vulnerable positions. This suggests that effectiveness must be evaluated not only in terms of outcomes but also in terms of fairness and inclusivity.

From the perspective of *maqashid al-shari'ah*, the system is aligned with the preservation of family integrity (*hifz al-usrah*). However, Islamic law also emphasizes justice (*'adl*) and the prevention of harm (*mafsadah*). Therefore, a balance must be maintained between preserving family unity and ensuring that individuals are not subjected to unjust conditions.

Finally, the sustainability of this system is challenged by modernization. Changing social values and increased access to formal legal institutions may reduce reliance on customary mechanisms. This indicates the need for adaptation to ensure that the system remains relevant while addressing contemporary issues such as gender equality and legal protection.

D. CONCLUSION

This findings of this study indicate that customary leaders (*uwa*) play a central and strategic role in resolving household disputes within the Towani Tolotang community in Sidenreng Rappang Regency. The *uwa* functions not only as a mediator but also as a moral authority who maintains social harmony through culturally grounded values such as *siri'*, *pacce*, and *lempu'*. The dispute resolution process is carried out through structured yet flexible stages that prioritize reconciliation, deliberation, and the preservation of family unity. This study also finds that customary mediation is generally effective in maintaining social cohesion and preventing conflict escalation. However, its effectiveness must be understood in relation to social pressure and unequal power relations among disputing parties.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of socio-legal studies by reinforcing the concept of living law and legal pluralism, showing that customary institutions remain relevant in regulating social life alongside formal legal systems. However, it also highlights the need to critically examine issues of fairness, representation, and protection of vulnerable individuals within customary mechanisms. From a policy perspective, this study suggests that the integration between customary dispute resolution and formal legal institutions should be strengthened, particularly by recognizing the role of customary leaders while ensuring legal safeguards for justice and equality. Finally, this study opens opportunities for further research into gender perspectives, power dynamics, and the long-term impact of customary mediation, especially in the context of modernization and shifting social values.

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