

A Reflection on Gender Role Inequality in Domestic Relations Through Paris Paloma's Song 'Labour': A *Fiqh Al-Usrah* Perspective

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Abstract. Paris Paloma's song "Labour" speaks volumes of a woman's anger toward unequal domestic roles, which becomes a real reflection of often-ignored gender inequality in everyday life. Through sharp metaphors and lyrics, the song reflects the double burden, emotional manipulation, and unequal power relationships in both public and domestic realms. This article employs a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze the representation of gender inequality in the song's lyrics. Through the perspective of *Fiqh al-Usrah*, the analysis results show that the patriarchal values criticized in the song contradict Islamic principles of fair, equal family relations full of love. In Islam, men and women are created from the same element (*nafs wahidah*) and hold equal positions before Allah SWT. Principles of moral justice, deliberation, and partnership must be mainstreamed in the distribution of domestic roles. Thus, *Fiqh al-Usrah* provides an ethical and legal framework to overcome gender inequality practices in modern families. This study confirms that popular cultural works like songs can serve as reflective media and social critiques of religious and cultural practices that have not fully supported gender justice.

Keywords: Labor; Gender inequality; Relations domestic; Fiqh al- Usrah.

INTRODUCTION

Discourse about gender equality has become an integral part of social and cultural discourse. Today's women are no longer restricted from speaking out about their ideas in the public realm (Cheong et al., 2024; Geertsema-Sligh & Vos, 2022; Gibson et al., 2023; Larsson, 2021; Tsouroufli, 2023). This shows that modern women enjoy the freedom to pursue the highest levels of education possible, determine their career paths according to their choices, and even occupy leadership positions in various fields, including becoming heads of state. However, these achievements do not immediately signify that women's struggle for their rights is completely finished (Ghundol & Muthanna, 2025; Islam et al., 2025; Markwei et al., 2025). In fact, women still must face various challenges, from visible social discrimination to internal pressures born from limiting cultural constructions and self-identity. This is where the main essence of feminist ideology finds its relevance, namely as a continuous movement fighting for equality in various aspects of social, political, and economic life, especially in power relations between men and women, including in the domestic realm (Johnson et al., 2024; Ko & Leung, 2025; Palmén et al., 2020).

The inequality in women's roles, especially in the domestic realm, remains an ongoing reality in patriarchal society structures. The physical, emotional, and psychological burdens borne by women in family life are often viewed as "natural obligations" without considering dimensions of justice or equal role distribution (Amirtha et al., 2021; Rinekasari et al., 2024; Shahen et al., 2020). Various studies show that household work burdens remain predominantly shouldered by women. This condition indicates that the struggle for equality and justice is not yet complete. Issues of inequality persist in more subtle and hidden forms.

In this context, Paris Paloma's "Labour" has become one of the popular cultural expressions voicing criticism of gender role inequality in family life. The lyrics describe the emotional and physical burdens on women and how unseen domestic work becomes a layered load (Gita Putri et al., 2017; Naeem et al., 2021; Siti Maemunah & Irma Rahmawati, 2025;

Zakinszky-Toma, 2023). This song went viral among women because it is considered representative of the frequently unspoken stresses in everyday life. This demonstrates that literary works, including song lyrics, provide a space to voice women's experiences reflecting patriarchal culture. The song highlights how women are reduced to service entities in family relations, where they are often positioned as subjects to serve without acknowledgment of the burdens and responsibilities of their work. In lyrics such as “24/7 baby machine” or “just an appendage, live to attend him,” a clear narrative of criticism emerges against unequal traditional roles that position women as subordinates.

Based on the above, Paris Paloma's song *Labour* can be read not only as an expression of women's anger toward the injustices they face but also as social criticism that can be reviewed from an Islamic perspective. The lyrics in this song reflect the unseen yet continuously borne physical and emotional burdens on women. One progressive framework is *Fiqh al-Usrah* by Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir. This approach builds a family framework based on the principles of *al-'adl* (justice), *rahmah* (loving kindness), *musyawarah* (equality in decision-making), and *ta'awun* (cooperation), which underscore the importance of equal relationships between men and women in family life.

Moreover, the ideas in *Fiqh al-Usrah* are not only relevant for prospective couples but also serve as reflections for professionals in family-related fields, such as judges, advocates, courts, marriage counselors, or practitioners involved in family affairs, and even religious speakers. This emerges from reflections on various moments, including direct observations of family relations practices, teaching and discussion activities, and involvement in community spaces like the Indonesian Women's Ulema Congress (KUPI) network. Through this process, *Fiqh al-Usrah* presents an approach that is not only normative but also contextual, offering an understanding that family relations cannot rely solely on legal obligations but must also be based on humanistic values and liberating Islamic ethics.

As for novelty, this study offers a fresh interdisciplinary approach by integrating popular culture analysis (through song lyrics) with Islamic family jurisprudence (*Fiqh al-Usrah*), a combination rarely explored in previous academic literature. While many studies discuss gender in Islam or feminist media analysis separately, this research bridges the two in a reflective and applicative manner. In addition, the use of *Fiqh al-Usrah* as an analytical framework provides a progressive and contextual perspective that differs from classical *fiqh* approaches often considered rigid. Thus, this study not only enriches the academic discourse at the intersection of gender, culture, and religion but also offers a practical and relevant perspective for understanding and addressing domestic inequality in modern Muslim societies.

Referring to this research framework, the study aims to study the lyrics of Paris Paloma's *Labour* as a reflection of women's experiences of domestic role inequality, then interpret them through the *Fiqh al-Usrah* perspective. The practical benefits of this research include: (1) providing an alternative ethical and legal framework for families and religious practitioners in addressing gender inequality in domestic relations; (2) offering critical insights for educators, counselors, and policymakers in developing gender-sensitive family education programs; and (3) enriching the discourse on the intersection between popular culture, gender studies, and Islamic jurisprudence, thereby promoting a more balanced and contextual understanding of religious values in modern life. Its purpose is to explore how feminist narratives in this popular literary work can intersect and dialogue with Islamic values that

uphold justice and mutuality in family relations.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a library research method. This approach was chosen because the study focused on the descriptive analysis of meaning in the lyrics of Paris Paloma's song *Labour*, as well as a reflective interpretation of women's role inequality in domestic relations based on the ideas expressed in Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir's book *Fiqh al-Usrah*.

The main data in this study consisted of the lyrics of *Labour*, which was released on March 24, 2023. Meanwhile, secondary data included the book *Fiqh al-Usrah*, used as a framework to reexamine realities in the perspective of just family relations according to Islamic values, along with various relevant academic journals.

Data collection techniques involved collecting, reading, recording, and processing information from relevant written sources, such as song lyrics, scientific references, and literature related to Islamic perspectives on family relations and gender equity. Data analysis was conducted descriptively and qualitatively by interpreting the content of the song lyrics and relating them to the principles explained in *Fiqh al-Usrah* to produce a comprehensive and critical understanding of reflections on inequality in domestic relations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Representation Inequality of Women's Roles in *Labor* Song Lyrics

Paris Paloma is an English singer and songwriter known for her works with dark, poetic, and sharp lyrics. Through her typical indie-folk and art-pop music style, she often explores specific themes, *such as* women's experiences, trauma, identity, and resistance to structural injustice. The song *Labour*, released in 2023, went viral globally because it is considered an artistic statement representing women's anger and fatigue within the patriarchal system, particularly in relation to house stairs. Paris explains that *Labour* was born from a feeling of “female rage”—women's anger caused by experiences of being restrained by the burden of domestic work that crosses boundaries. In an interview with *NME*, she conveyed: "When people listen to 'Labour', I want them to feel like their anger is valid."

Emotional torture from the head of your high table

All day, every day, therapist, mother, maid

Nymph, then a virgin, nurse, then a servant

Just an appendage, live to attend him

You make me do too much labor

Apologies from my tongue, and never yours

The false incompetence, it's dominance under guidance

If we had a daughter, I'd watch and couldn't save her, the emotional torture”

It's a mourning song for the self I gave away

I bit your hand 'cause I feel power

Did you think I was a pet you could play with?

24/7 baby machine, so you can live out your picket fence dreams

Lyrics in this song voice criticism of gender inequality in power relations, especially the injustice experienced by women in domestic relations still dominated by patriarchal values.

Analysis of several lyric excerpts from this song aims to unravel the social critique embedded therein through a gender perspective. Starting with the phrase "Emotional torture from the head of your high table," it describes the emotional suffering experienced by women as a consequence of domination by the ruling party in the relationship, which represents patriarchal structures. This lyric excerpt highlights that women are not only burdened with physical work but also suppressed mentally and psychologically in unequal and unjust relationships.

In the lyrics "All day, every day, therapist, mother, maid," women are depicted as operating various roles simultaneously, as emotional support providers, child caregivers, and household workers. This reflects the concept of the triple burden in gender studies, namely women's burdens in the domestic, productive, and reproductive realms, which are often not formally recognized. In the excerpt "It's me or the housework, not both," this expression shows the conflict between personal needs and domestic demands. Women feel they must choose between maintaining the household or preserving their own identity. This describes the frequent dilemma of double roles that causes mental exhaustion and loss of identity. These three excerpts can be categorized as expressions of women's exploitation in domestic roles.

Then, the lyric excerpts refer to the reduction of women's identity and roles. For example, "Nymph, then a virgin, nurse, then a servant" openly depicts the various social roles attached to women throughout their lives. Starting from being made into objects of sexual desire (nymph and virgin), to being burdened with nursing tasks and submitting as servants. These lyrics highlight how women's positions are often determined by others' interests, as objects of satisfaction, caregivers, or domestic labor power, without space to articulate their own personal desires and needs.

In the lyrics "Just an appendage, live to attend him," this further confirms the depiction of women as mere complements in men's lives, with their existence directed toward serving and fulfilling his needs. Meanwhile, the phrase "You make me do too much labor" highlights the unilateral work burden borne by women, especially the emotional labor that is frequently ignored. The feminist critique in these lyrics confirms how patriarchal norms burden women physically, mentally, and emotionally, as well as calling for liberation from unfair and exploitative relationships.

The lyric excerpts above highlight power inequality in relationships, where women are trapped in unequal dynamics. Then, in the lyrics "Apologies from my tongue, and never yours," this reflects emotional injustice when women are compelled to repeatedly apologize even when they are not at fault. In a patriarchal context, women are often burdened with providing sufficient responses to maintain harmony, while the other party escapes the obligation to confess errors.

The part "If we had a daughter, I'd watch and couldn't save her" describes a woman's despair in realizing that if they had a daughter, the child would likely experience similar oppression. This confirms that patriarchy not only influences individuals but also perpetuates injustice through values that continue to be taught and passed on.

The lyric excerpt "It's a mourning song for the self I gave away, I bit your hand 'cause I felt power" describes women's regret at feeling they have lost themselves because they must sacrifice their desires and freedom to serve others, namely the man. The "mourning song" part emphasizes lamentation over lost identity, whereas "I bit your hand 'cause I felt power" signifies an effort to resist, even if minimal, as a form of struggle to regain control over their

lives.

The peak is seen in the excerpt "24/7 baby machine, so you can live out your picket fence dreams." These lyrics describe women as continuous reproductive tools available to fulfill men's domestic ideals and fantasies. Women are satirically depicted as a "machine" that gives birth nonstop, available always, just to realize the male version of an ideal household. The phrase "baby machine" directly shows how women's reproductive function is exploited and reduced solely to a tool for producing offspring, without considering their own desires, needs, or agency. These lyrics convey criticism of social structures that position women passively, as the party responsible for "giving" offspring for the sake of fulfilling men's domestic dreams like a comfortable home, harmonious family, and children as symbols of life success. This reflects a form of inequality in gender relations, where women's bodies and biological functions are not seen as part of an autonomous identity that must be respected, but rather as a resource that can be used to meet norms and expectations shaped by masculine domination.

Analysis Relation Domestic in *Labor* Songs Based on Perspective *Fiqh al- Usrah*

Paris Paloma's song *Labour* poetically captures the dynamics of unequal and oppressive domestic relations. Women bear unrecognized work, emotional labor, physical labor, and even sexual labor. Some lyrics, like "*All day, every day, therapist, mother, maid, nymph,*" confirm the layered burdens women face in the family realm. She must serve as a container for mental burdens (therapist), child caregiver (mother), household caretaker (maid), and sexual satisfaction provider (nymph)—all simultaneously. This burden is endured almost without reciprocal support from the male partner.

If viewed through the perspective of *Fiqh al-Usrah*, the domestic relations depicted in this song starkly deviate from the values of justice and balanced roles emphasized by several contemporary scholars. Sheikh Abd al-Halim Abu Syuqqah, in his monumental work *Tahrir al-Mar'ah*, argues that relations between husband and wife are not a domination of one party over the other, but rather a reciprocal (*mutabadalah*), equal (*akfa'*), and mutually complementary (*ta'awun*) partnership. This principle derives from the morals of *mu'asyarah bi al-ma'ruf* (QS. an-Nisa : 19), which commands couples to treat each other with goodness, full respect, and equality as dignified human beings.

Furthermore, this article emphasizes that husband-wife relations should stand on the foundation of *ta'awun* (joint work) and uphold *mutamatsilah* (commensurability). No household tasks or personal services should solely burden the wife, as the principle of *muqabalah* (balance) demands that rights and obligations be reciprocal in nature. In other words, domestic work cannot be answered unilaterally. If the wife is fully involved in child parenting and home care, husbands also have obligations to participate and support, both with energy, time, and economic resources.

In the lyric excerpt "*You make me do too much labor,*" the injustice of role distribution in the household is clearly referenced. In line with this, the principle simultaneously rejects interpretations of *qiwamah* that tend to view household leadership authoritarily in the hands of men. With the foundation of morals in the household—especially husband-wife relations—*qiwamah* in modern understanding is no longer interpreted as absolute singular male leadership. Instead, scholars interpret *qiwamah* as collective responsibility for both men and

women to protect, provide, manage, and ensure household welfare, requiring active joint work from both parties. This means that, in the *Fiqh al-Usrah* framework, role division between husband and wife cannot be done rigidly or rigidly.

In the context of the *Labour* song, the reality Paloma criticizes shows how patriarchal norms still force women to perform emotional and domestic work unilaterally. This condition clearly contradicts *Fiqh al-Usrah*, where household management is a shared trust. There are five principles of husband-wife relations emphasized: commitment to a sturdy agreement (*mitsaq ghalizh*), pairing and partnership (*zawaj*), willingness (*taradhin*), good treatment (*mu'asyarah bi al-ma'ruf*), and habitual deliberation (*tasyawur*) in decision-making.

Thus, the *Labour* lyrics can be read as a critique of social realities where *Fiqh al-Usrah* principles are not yet fully implemented. The ideal domestic relationship in *Fiqh al-Usrah* positions husband and wife as equal partners who support, respect, and share roles fairly. Household work is not a burden for one party, but a collective responsibility undertaken with mutual awareness to safeguard family welfare.

Reflection on the Values of Justice in Relation Domestic Perspective *Fiqh al-Usrah*

When reading *Labour* through the lens of *Fiqh al-Usrah*, it is clear that relationship problems in domestic patriarchal settings are not only cultural issues but also stem from religious interpretations that are often misused. In fact, both the Qur'an, hadith, and the thoughts of contemporary scholars support a family model that is equal, fair, and mutually beneficial, empowering. Paris Paloma's criticism is actually a call for reflection: have the principles of *ta'awun* and *mu'asyarah bi al-ma'ruf* truly manifested in the domestic spaces of today?

In *Fiqh al-Usrah*, handling such conflicts must be placed within a framework of noble morals, where the husband-wife relationship is duly built on principles of justice, deliberation, and mutual appreciation, so that there is no domination or oppression of one party over the other. The principles that Islam teaches as a basis are that badness must be faced with goodness, as the word of Allah SWT states: "indeed good deeds eradicate bad deeds." This goodness not only functions to delete evil but also upholds justice, where there may be no party that continues to be harmed or treated unfairly.

Bad actions in the household can take the form of light, moderate, or heavy matters. Light ones, like not giving greetings; moderate ones, like small problems that are not talked about; and heavy ones, like physical violence or infidelity. If all this is left alone, it can lead to injustice, emotional oppression, or even gender role inequality in the household. Therefore, *Fiqh al-Usrah* emphasizes the importance of both parties reflecting on themselves, asking each other for forgiveness, and closing badness with real goodness.

In family life, one of the hot issues discussed in relation to domestic matters is the problem of household work (*khidmah al-bait*). This topic often causes debate, especially regarding who has the main responsibility for carrying it out, how its distribution should be, and how justice and morals must be integrated into it. In *Fiqh al-Usrah*, household work is understood not just as a question of who is obliged to clean the home, cook, or wash. More than that, household work is seen as part of a partnership relationship between husband and wife, carried out with principles of noble morals, justice, and shared work.

If traced through classical jurisprudence views, the majority of scholars, particularly in the Hanafi, Maliki, and Shafi'i schools of thought, explain that household work, in a legal sense,

precisely becomes the husband's responsibility. The wife has the right to request a household worker or request that the husband do it alone. If the husband does not want to fulfill this need, the wife even has the right to demand divorce. However, the wife may still perform household tasks, such as cooking, washing, and tidying up the home, as long as it is done willingly from the heart. In this case, the husband is obliged to express love, respect, or give rewards for the wife's hard and tiring work.

On the other hand, a different opinion comes from the Maliki school of thought. According to this sect, household work is the wife's obligation. This view is then reinforced by the opinions of contemporary scholars like Sheikh Abu Zahrah. He uses an approach of justice: if the husband works full-time to fulfill the family's livelihood, then a stay-at-home wife is considered fair if she contributes by taking care of household work. This logic of justice is what is used to confirm that the obligation can shift according to household conditions. *Fiqh al-Usrah* then processes this difference of views into a more contextual approach. Household work obligations may not be seen rigidly but rather must adapt to the family situation. For example, if the husband does not work full-time, or if the wife works and even becomes the main economic support for the family, then the distribution of household work must be discussed again with principles of justice, deliberation, and mutual help. Based on the above, household work, including non-biological reproductive tasks like nursing children, bathing, feeding, or parenting, is not the wife's legal obligation. Even according to Imam Malik, the obligation to breastfeed children becomes the husband's responsibility, especially related to economic burdens, which are firmly entrusted fully to the husband. *Fiqh* also emphasizes the importance of the husband treating his wife well, especially psychologically and emotionally. As for the wife's main task in jurisprudential perspective, it more emphasizes an attitude of obedience to the husband.

More than that, reflection on gender justice also means remembering the reason for accepting and loving one's spouse. Spouses must be viewed as God's noble and dignified creation, not parties who can be treated as one pleases. Someone who is used to judging or demeaning their partner must get used to reminding themselves of their spouse's kindness, respecting, appreciating, and treating their partner with full love as part of Allah's verses.

In this context, gender justice is also realized in good daily habits like greeting each other, saying goodbye, thanking with love, asking for forgiveness, mutual help, eating together, sleeping together, educating children together, and cleaning the house together. These habits show a fair distribution of roles between husband and wife and close the gap for unilateral domination. In short, three keywords that can be held in married life are *mawaddah*, *rahmah*, *sakinah*. *Mawaddah* here is not only interpreted as just a feeling of love for one's spouse but rather love accompanied by sincerity in accepting the spouse's advantages and disadvantages. This naturally must be passed through adaptation, lowering the ego, negotiation, giving in, and so on. Then, *rahmah* is mutual love, sympathy, respect, and honoring each other. To preserve this feeling, endeavor between one and the other is required in the life that is lived. As for *sakinah*, this is the most important key among the three, where peace is the most necessary thing in a relationship, the tranquility where all this can be achieved through justice.

Furthermore, it can be understood that glorious morals in family relations also become an important part of mitigating divorce, which is seen as something that Allah SWT hates the most. If *nusyuz* still happens and develops into escalating heavy conflict (*syiqaq*), then the way

out is settlement in a good way (*imsak bi ma'rûf*) or separation in an honorable way (*tasrih bi ihsan*), still ensuring the rights of all parties, especially women and children. This is where gender justice is upheld so that there is no injured party or arbitrary treatment.

For that, Islam emphasizes that women and men are basically created from one and the same element (*nafs wahidah*). This confirms that both have an equal position before Allah SWT and are encouraged to race each other to reach piety and good deeds as best as possible. This principle of equality at the same time becomes an important foothold for reviewing the reality of women's role inequality in domestic relations, especially in the realm of family law, which may not become a tool for oppressing women, as once occurred in past practices where divorce, polygamy, oaths, or other domination practices were made into tools of restraint. The Prophet SAW gave a firm testament so that men always do good to women and treat them in a dignified way. This testament also confirms that household relations must be built on noble morals and gender justice, without oppression of one party over the other. Thus, the discourse about values of justice in the household cannot be separated from the basic principles of *Fiqh al-Usrah*, which places morals as the soul of family law.

CONCLUSION

Through Paris Paloma's song *Labour*, the inequality of women's roles in household work is depicted as a persistent real-world issue. The song serves as a vital reflection on the need to revitalize gender justice values in married life, with Paloma's critique reminding us that *Fiqh al-Usrah*'s objective of achieving a family characterized by *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah*—tranquility, love, and mercy—can only be realized through domestic relations grounded in work equality, justice, and full respect for women's dignity. *Fiqh al-Usrah* emphasizes fair, equal, and mutually supportive family dynamics that value contributions through equitable role distribution in domestic relations. Thus, the song's reflection underscores that family relations must always be based on principles of justice and partnership to avoid inequalities detrimental to one party. For future research, empirical studies could explore how *Fiqh al-Usrah* principles are practically implemented in modern Indonesian Muslim households through surveys or case studies of dual-income families.

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