

Promoting Gender-Just Family Relations through Fiqh Mubadalah in Migrant Worker Communities

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<p>Keywords: Family Resilience; Fiqh Mubadalah; Migrant Workers (PMI).</p>	<p>Abstract. Referring to BP2MI data, in 2023 Indramayu was the largest contributor of Indonesian migrant workers (PMI), accounting for 6.97% of the national total. Beyond its economic benefits, labor migration generates persistent challenges in family relations, including role imbalances, double burdens, and weakened spousal communication. This program introduces Fiqh Mubadalah as an innovative framework for social transformation in migrant worker families. Using a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, the program involved 30 participants from prospective and retired PMI families in Krangkeng District, Indramayu. It aimed to enhance awareness of muafa'alah (collaboration) and musyarakah (mutual participation) within families, strengthen healthy and non-dominative communication, promote equitable division of household roles and responsibilities, and encourage mindset and behavioral changes aligned with mubadalah principles. The intervention was implemented through three stages: socialization, training, and monitoring. Its effectiveness was assessed using pre- and post-activity questionnaires, structured observations, and participant self-reflections based on clear indicators. The results show that 86.67% of participants increased their understanding of gender-just family relations grounded in muafa'alah and musyarakah. Furthermore, 70% adopted healthier communication patterns, 80% applied a fairer distribution of household roles, and 90% demonstrated sustained commitment to practicing mubadalah principles in daily family life. These findings indicate that the mubadalah-based PAR model effectively addresses gender inequality, strengthens family resilience, and produces relational outcomes oriented toward maslahah. As an operationalized model of Fiqh Mubadalah, this program offers a transferable framework for promoting socially just and inclusive family relations in other migrant worker contexts.</p>	<p>Katakunci: Fiqh Mubadalah; Ketahanan Keluarga; Pekerja Migran Indonesia (PMI).</p>

transformasi sosial dalam keluarga pekerja migran. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah Participatory Action Research (PAR) dengan melibatkan 30 peserta dari keluarga PMI calon maupun purna di Kecamatan Krangkeng, Kabupaten Indramayu. Program ini bertujuan meningkatkan kesadaran tentang prinsip *mufa'alah* (kerja sama) dan *musyarakah* (partisipasi timbal balik) dalam keluarga, memperkuat keterampilan komunikasi yang sehat dan non-dominatif, mendorong pembagian peran dan tanggung jawab rumah tangga yang adil, serta menumbuhkan perubahan pola pikir dan praktik keluarga yang sejalan dengan pendekatan mubadalah. Intervensi dilaksanakan melalui tiga tahap, yaitu sosialisasi, pelatihan, dan monitoring. Keberhasilan program diukur melalui kuesioner pra dan pascakegiatan, observasi terstruktur, serta refleksi peserta berdasarkan indikator yang jelas. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa 86,67% peserta mengalami peningkatan pemahaman tentang relasi keluarga berkeadilan gender berbasis *mufa'alah* dan *musyarakah*. Sebanyak 70% peserta menerapkan pola komunikasi yang lebih sehat dan setara, 80% menerapkan pembagian peran rumah tangga yang lebih adil, dan 90% menunjukkan komitmen berkelanjutan dalam mengamalkan prinsip mubadalah dalam kehidupan keluarga sehari-hari. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa model PAR berbasis Fiqh Mubadalah efektif dalam mengatasi ketimpangan gender dan memperkuat ketahanan keluarga pekerja migran, dengan luaran relasional yang berorientasi pada maslahah. Program ini juga menawarkan model yang dapat direplikasi untuk konteks keluarga pekerja migran di wilayah lain.

1 Introduction

In the context of labor migration—where physical separation, shifting economic roles, and increased caregiving responsibilities often disrupt traditional family dynamics—an ethical framework that emphasizes reciprocity and shared responsibility becomes particularly crucial (Fauk, Seran, and Ward 2025). A mubadalah family refers to a family grounded in Islamic values that emphasize cooperation between husband and wife, equality in communication, the rejection of domination by one party over another, and joint decision-making to achieve family prosperity. As stated by Kodir (Kodir 2019), *mufa'alah* (mutuality) and *musyarakah* (cooperation) between men and women in both public and domestic spheres form the foundation of the mubadalah concept (Nur, Mu'in, and Hamsidar 2023).

A number of studies on Indonesian migrant families demonstrate that the prolonged absence of one spouse—most commonly wives working abroad—often leads to a redistribution of domestic and caregiving roles that is not always accompanied by an equivalent shift in decision-making authority (Kodir 2019). Empirical studies also highlight communication as a critical issue in migrant worker families (Hwang and Beauregard 2022). Long-distance communication mediated by digital technologies is often irregular and constrained by time differences, access, and emotional distance, which can intensify misunderstandings and reduce marital intimacy (Prakoso et al. 2024). These tensions frequently persist even after family reunification, as couples struggle to renegotiate roles and authority structures that had shifted during the migration period (Alhanouti 2025). Consequently, previously functional marital arrangements may become fragile, increasing the risk of relational gaps both during separation and after reunion (Zartler 2021).

According to the report by the Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency (BP2MI), in 2023, Indramayu Regency ranked as the largest contributor of migrant workers in Indonesia, accounting for 6.97% or 19,178 out of 274,965 total PMIs. This figure far exceeds East Lombok, which ranked second with 13,111 workers, and Cilacap, which ranked third with 11,344 workers (Annur 2024). This situation raises concerns about the family life of former and prospective PMIs in Indramayu, who are vulnerable to shifting household roles and experiencing a *double burden*. Given the high number of migrant workers originating from Indramayu indicates a structural link between labor migration and heightened family resilience vulnerability, as prolonged spousal separation and role substitution systematically weaken emotional cohesion, caregiving stability, and shared decision-making within households (Wu and Du 2025).

The families of prospective and former PMIs were selected as the focus of this program. This community faces unique challenges that require a gender-equitable and faith-based approach such as *Fiqh Mubadalah* to strengthen family resilience and well-being. The selection of Indramayu Regency—particularly Krangkeng District—as the location of this program is based on several considerations. First, empirically,

Indramayu is one of the regions with the highest numbers of Indonesian Migrant Workers, making it a strategic site for interventions targeting migrant families. Second, from a sociological perspective, the prolonged absence of one spouse due to overseas employment has significant implications for marital relations, parenting patterns, and the redistribution of domestic roles, which often places women in a position of double burden. Third, from a gender perspective, these dynamics highlight the urgency of promoting more balanced and reciprocal relationships between husbands and wives to prevent structural inequality within the household. Fourth, from a cultural and religious perspective, the strong attachment of the community to religious values provides a conducive context for introducing *Fiqh Mubadalah* as a normative framework that resonates with local beliefs while promoting mutuality and justice. Therefore, this program aims to empower families of prospective and former PMIs in strengthening marital relationships based on *mubadalah* principles. This approach aligns with Suharto's view (Widyaswara, P., Murdyastuti, A., Negoro 2022) that empowerment can be understood both as a process of strengthening the capacity of marginalized groups and as an outcome of social change that enables individuals to gain control over their lives, meet their needs, and solve their problems.

Through the *mubadalah* approach, couples are encouraged to: first, respect each other's roles and contributions, especially for those taking on domestic responsibilities. There are two types of household role divisions: traditional, in which the husband serves as the breadwinner while the wife focuses solely on domestic roles such as managing the home and raising children, and egalitarian, where the division of roles is more flexible, allowing both partners to take on any role without being bound by patriarchal social norms (Wongpy 2021). Second, engage in equal communication and make joint decisions—especially amid the dynamic changes that occur during and after one partner works abroad. Communication is not only about what is said and received but also about *how* it is expressed—through tone, body language, and facial expressions (Widyaswara, P., Murdyastuti, A., Negoro 2022).

Furthermore, existing research and empowerment programs have largely documented shifts in gender roles and focused on economic empowerment, particularly among women migrant workers and returnees. Farah (Farah 2020; Saleh 2023; Yunena 2019), for instance, highlights the phenomenon of multiple roles assumed by female migrant workers, yet remains largely descriptive and does not extend to normative or educational interventions aimed at strengthening family relations and long-term family resilience. Similarly, Saleh (Farah 2020; Saleh 2023; Yunena 2019) emphasizes sustainable empowerment for former women migrant workers through organizational and economic capacity-building, but positions the family merely as a contextual background rather than as the primary subject of transformation. Yunena (Farah 2020; Saleh 2023; Yunena 2019) also frames empowerment mainly in economic terms, reducing family resilience to financial independence while leaving issues of gender relations, role negotiation, parenting dynamics, and religious legitimization of roles insufficiently addressed.

Based on these relevant studies, most empowerment initiatives have predominantly focused on improving family finances without necessarily addressing the urgent need for social and relational transformation within migrant worker families (Amrith 2025). As a result, the deeper challenges faced by these families—such as unequal power relations between spouses, tensions arising from role changes, and the lack of shared responsibility in caregiving and decision-making—remain largely unresolved. In contrast, this program emphasizes social change through collaborative engagement between women and men (husband and wife) by employing the *Fiqh Mubadalah* approach, which is grounded in principles of reciprocity, mutual responsibility, and gender justice within Islamic teachings. By positioning the family as the central locus of intervention, this program seeks to build family resilience not only in economic terms but also across social, emotional, and ethical dimensions. Ultimately, the program aims to foster migrant worker families that are healthy, strong, and *maslahah*—that is, families characterized by harmony, mutual support, and positive contributions to both household and community life.

The objectives of this program are, first, to provide structured mentoring aimed at enhancing family members' awareness and understanding of the principles of *mufa'alah* (mutuality) and *musyarakah* (cooperation), including the development of healthy communication skills, the transformation of gender equality mind-sets and practices, and the promotion of a fair division of household roles and responsibilities. Second, the program seeks to analyse the outcomes of the mentoring process in fostering the realization of *mubadalah*-based families.

The expected benefits of this program include increased awareness and understanding of gender equality, improved communication skills within the family, a fairer and more balanced division of household roles and responsibilities, enhanced overall family quality among former and prospective PMI households, and the development of family models that are healthy, resilient, and *maslahah*.

2 Method

This program employs the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach. The program focuses on families of prospective and former Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) residing in Krangkeng District, Indramayu Regency, as the main subjects of the community engagement. These families were chosen because they face various socio-economic and family challenges during the transition period before and after migration, making them a strategic community to strengthen through the concept of *Fiqh Mubadalah*.

The planning and organization process was carried out collaboratively with the assisted community. Families of prospective and former migrant workers were not only positioned as research subjects but as co-designers and decision-makers in formulating activities. In coordination with the *Desbumi (Desa Peduli Buruh Migran)* Coordinator in Krangkeng, community representatives—including husbands, wives, and family elders—were involved in needs assessment discussions, participatory planning meetings, and feedback sessions. This ensured that every stage of the program was contextually relevant and aligned with the real conditions of the target community.



Figure 1. Diagram of the PAR-Based Community Service Process

Following the PAR model, the method integrates research, action, and reflection in a continuous cycle aimed at building collective awareness and empowerment. PAR promotes transformative engagement by: First, empowering vulnerable and marginalized community groups to develop self-capacity and agency, Second, encouraging a process that is *from, by, and for* the community, where participants act as agents of change while facilitators guide them toward independence; and Third, positioning community institutions as key drivers for social, cultural, economic, and religious progress (Afandi, Agus. 2022),. The ultimate goal is to achieve inclusive social transformation grounded in the lived experiences of the participants.

Tabel 1. Implementation Stages of the Program

Stage	Focus	Description	Methods/Techniques
To Know	Situation Mapping	Collecting baseline data to identify key needs and issues of migrant worker families.	Surveys and needs assessment
To Understand	Participant Selection	Selecting participants relevant to the mentoring objectives.	Purposive sampling
To Plan	Program Design	Designing activities and mentoring materials based on mubadalah principles.	Participatory planning
To Act	Implementation	Conducting training and mentoring to strengthen	Workshops and mentoring

		cooperation within families.	
To Reflect	Evaluation and Follow-up	Evaluating outcomes and planning follow-up actions for sustainability.	Monitoring and evaluation

This structured sequence allows participants to engage in each phase—from problem identification to reflection—ensuring that the process remains participatory, transformative, and sustainable.

3 Results

The program resulted in the development of participatory and transformative learning processes that strengthened family resilience among prospective and former PMI families. Through an approach grounded in PAR, the mentoring activities produced several significant outcomes.

First, program socialization activities successfully established a shared understanding of the objectives of the program and the core principles of *fiqh mubadalah*. Participants demonstrated increased openness in sharing their lived experiences related to gender roles, family communication patterns, and the impacts of labor migration on household harmony. This process contributed to the creation of a collective awareness of the importance of mutuality and cooperation in family life.

Second, the *Mubadalah Family Workshop*, conducted over a six-hour session, generated substantive learning outcomes. The knowledge-sharing sessions enhanced participants' understanding of *mubadalah* values, gender equality in Islamic perspectives, and the practical application of *mufa'alah* (mutuality) and *musyarakah* (cooperation) within families. Role-playing simulations enabled participants to practice conflict resolution, joint decision-making in parenting, and emotional management during periods of spousal separation. Reflective dialogue sessions further strengthened empathy, critical reflection, and solidarity among participants, fostering stronger community bonds.



Figure 3. The *Mubadalah* Family Workshop

Third, community empowerment outcomes were evident in the formation of peer support groups facilitated through the Desbumi network. These groups functioned as sustainable support mechanisms, providing safe spaces for continued discussion, collective problem-solving, and mutual assistance—particularly for wives managing household responsibilities independently while their spouses work abroad.

Finally, monitoring, evaluation, and reflection activities demonstrated measurable improvements in participants' understanding of *mubadalah* principles, gender equality, and healthy family communication practices, as captured through surveys and in-depth interviews. Reflection sessions also enabled participants and facilitators to identify ongoing challenges and formulate concrete follow-up strategies. This process culminated in the development of a Community-Based Family Resilience Action Plan (*Rencana Tindak Lanjut*—RTL), serving as a foundation for sustaining and scaling the program's impact.



Figure 4. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reflection Activities

The evaluation results indicate that most of the program objectives were achieved effectively. The level of achievement was measured using four main indicators. First, increased awareness of *mufa'alah* (mutuality) and *musyarakah* (cooperation). After participating in the training and socialization activities, 83.33% of participants reported a clearer understanding of mutual cooperation and shared decision-making within the family. Overall, this indicator reached an achievement rate of 86.67%, showing that most participants were able to comprehend and apply *mubadalah* values in their daily family interactions. Second, improved family communication skills. Approximately 66.67% of participants demonstrated improvements in open and honest communication with family members, while 70% showed better ability to manage family conflicts constructively using inclusive and respectful communication strategies.

Third, shifts in gender equality mindsets and practices. The program encouraged meaningful changes in participants' perceptions of gender roles. As many as 76.67% of participants began to reconsider traditional gender norms and move toward a fairer division of domestic responsibilities. Furthermore, 90% of participants expressed a strong commitment to practicing gender equality within their households, indicating a significant normative shift. Fourth, fairer division of roles and responsibilities within the family. Around 80% of participants adopted a more balanced distribution of household tasks, emphasizing shared responsibility regardless of gender. This change reflects growing awareness that domestic roles should be based on mutual agreement and capacity rather than rigid gender expectations.

Overall, the program achieved success rates ranging from 66.67% to 90% across all indicators. These findings demonstrate that the *fiqh mubadalah* approach was effective in strengthening participants' understanding of mutual cooperation, gender equality, healthy family communication, and equitable role-sharing.

Beyond measurable indicators, the program also generated several positive social transformations within the target communities: Behavioral change: Families began to apply mubadalah principles in everyday life, as reflected in increased mutual respect, improved

communication, and fairer sharing of household responsibilities. Emergence of new social institutions: A Peer Support Group for *Mubadalah* Families was established as an informal community-based institution led by local participants. This group now functions as a sustainable support network that continues discussions and learning activities independently. Development of local leadership: Several participants—particularly women from former PMI households—emerged as local change agents, initiating discussions and informal education in their neighborhoods on gender equality and family well-being. Strengthened collective awareness: Participants developed a shared understanding of family equality rooted in Islamic values. *Mubadalah* was no longer perceived as a Western feminist concept, but rather as an Islamic ethical framework grounded in *mufa'alah* (mutuality) and *musyarakah* (cooperation). Transformation of social perceptions: The community began to view migrant families not merely as recipients of economic remittances, but as units of moral, emotional, and social resilience. This shift aligns with the inclusive and transformative goals of the PAR approach.

4 Discussion

Quantitatively, the program outcomes were measured using a combination of pre- and post-intervention questionnaires, structured observations, and focused group discussions (FGDs). The questionnaires were administered before and after the mentoring activities to assess changes in participants' understanding, attitudes, and practices related to mubadalah principles. The results show that 83.33% of participants demonstrated improved understanding of mubadalah values, 76.67% experienced positive changes in attitudes toward gender roles, and 80% reported practicing shared decision-making in household matters. These quantitative findings were further validated through observations during mentoring sessions and FGDs, which captured participants' reflections and behavioral changes in family interactions. Overall, the results indicate that the integration of *fiqh mubadalah* within the PAR framework effectively promotes social transformation in migrant communities. This finding supports Afandi et al. (Afandi, Agus. 2022),

who argue that participatory models empower marginalized groups by fostering collective awareness and self-determination.

The success of this program can be explained through three theoretical lenses, the first of which is Participatory Action Research (PAR) theory. The active involvement of participants as co-researchers reflects Freire's (Afandi, Agus. 2022) concept of *conscientization*, whereby individuals critically recognize their social realities and develop the capacity to transform them through reflective action. In practice, this process was evident during facilitated group discussions and reflection sessions, where PMI families openly discussed their experiences of unequal role distribution, limited communication, and emotional strain during periods of spousal separation. Several participants explicitly acknowledged that they had previously perceived domestic responsibilities as "natural" gender roles, but through collective dialogue and mentoring, they began to reinterpret these roles as shared responsibilities grounded in the principle of mubadalah. These reflective discussions enabled participants not only to identify structural gender inequalities within their households but also to formulate concrete actions—such as shared decision-making and cooperative task allocation—to transform their family relationships. This demonstrates how Freirean conscientization was operationalized within the PAR framework, linking critical awareness directly to practical social change among PMI families.

Second, Islamic gender justice theory. The *fiqh mubadalah* approach, as conceptualized by Kodir (Afandi, Agus. 2022), emphasizes the reinterpretation of Islamic texts by shifting from a hierarchical reading of gender roles to a reciprocal and ethical understanding of marital relations. In this program, the most influential reinterpretations for participants involved Qur'anic and prophetic teachings on marriage as *mu'āsyarah bi al-ma'rūf* (living together in kindness), mutual responsibility (*takāful*), and shared trust (*amanah*) in family life. Through guided discussions, participants were encouraged to read these values not as obligations imposed on one gender, but as moral responsibilities shared by both spouses. This reinterpreting process significantly shaped participants' attitude changes, particularly in redefining domestic work

and decision-making as collective duties rather than gender-specific tasks. As a result, behavioral shifts—such as shared household responsibilities, joint parenting decisions, and more open spousal communication—emerged as concrete expressions of an internalized *mubadalah*-based Islamic ethic. These findings demonstrate that *fiqh mubadalah* functions not merely as a normative discourse, but as an applicable interpretive framework capable of transforming everyday family practices.

Third, social change and empowerment theory: The emergence of peer groups and local leaders aligns with Bandura's (Bandura 1986) concept of *social learning* and Korten's empowerment model (Rohmah and Husniyah 2025), where communities become the primary agents of change. In this case, *mubadalah* acted as the cultural framework through which empowerment was actualized. Moreover, communication can serve as a key factor in the success of mentoring programs (Bandura 1986), particularly in fostering empowerment and driving social change within communities.

The process from socialization to reflection shows a continuum of transformation:

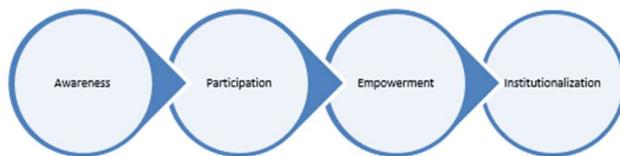


Figure 5. Diagram of Social Transformation

The creation of new social institutions (peer groups), the rise of community leaders, and the adoption of *mubadalah*-based family practices collectively mark the beginning of sustainable social transformation in Krangkeng District.

5 Conclusion

The program to strengthen family resilience through *Fiqh Mubadalah* among former and prospective migrant worker families in Krangkeng District, Indramayu, demonstrated substantial empirical and

social outcomes, evidenced by improved spousal communication, more equitable divisions of domestic roles, and the establishment of Mubadalah Family Groups as sustainable community-based institutions grounded in the principles of mutuality (mufa'alah) and cooperation (musyarakah). Methodologically, the findings confirm the effectiveness of the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach in facilitating participatory learning, collective reflection, and joint action that lead to meaningful and sustainable social transformation, while also reinforcing Fiqh Mubadalah as an inclusive and context-sensitive framework within applied Islamic family and gender studies. Accordingly, this study recommends replicating similar initiatives in other migrant-sending regions through cross-sector collaboration; strengthening Mubadalah Family Groups as continuous platforms for family education and advocacy; integrating Fiqh Mubadalah into premarital and family education curricula; conducting longitudinal studies to assess long-term impacts on family stability, emotional well-being, and women's empowerment; and fostering multi-stakeholder collaboration among academics, religious leaders, migrant worker protection institutions, and women's organizations to institutionalize mubadalah ethics as a foundation for family-centered social development.

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