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The Ministry of Religious Affairs' Role in Improving Mosque Imams' Welfare

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ABSTRACT

Mosque imams play an important role in maintaining religious life and providing spiritual and social guidance within Indonesian communities. However, their position and welfare remain underdeveloped, particularly because many imams serve in informal capacities without clear legal status, institutional support, or structured social security. This study aims to examine the function of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in improving the welfare of mosque imams and to analyze its policies from the perspective of Islamic law, through the concepts of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* and *siyāsah shar'iyah*. This research employs a qualitative method using a sociological-juridical approach. Primary data were obtained through interactions with mosque imams and policy implementers, while secondary data were derived from legislation, policy documents, and literature. The findings indicate that the Ministry of Religious Affairs has an important function in supporting mosque imams through religious guidance, capacity development, institutional strengthening, and programs. Nevertheless, the implementation of these functions remains subject to challenges related to coordination, accessibility, and the uneven distribution of welfare support. From the perspective of Islamic law, efforts to improve the welfare of mosque imams are consistent with the principles of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, particularly *ḥifẓ al-dīn* (protection of religion) and *ḥifẓ al-māl* (protection of property), as well as the principles of *siyāsah shar'iyah*, which emphasize justice, public welfare, and governance. The study contributes theoretically by strengthening the application of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* and *siyāsah shar'iyah* to contemporary religious welfare policies, and practically by providing a framework for developing more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable policies for mosque imams in Indonesia.

Keywords: Ministry of Religious Affairs; mosque imams; welfare.

INTRODUCTION

The role of the mosque imam in the Muslim community is a fundamental and central element in the structure of the Muslim community's religious life. As the leader of congregational prayers, the mosque imam also serves as a moral educator, moral guide, guardian of Islamic traditions, and unifier of the community, making him a strategic figure in maintaining the continuity of Islamic values

within the community.¹² The existence of mosque imams should not be taken lightly, because they are often considered the "life spirit" of the mosque and the surrounding community, playing a role in strengthening the social and spiritual structure of the congregation. While the role of mosque imams is vital, state recognition of them within the formal

¹ Syarul Azman Shahrudin et al., "Peranan Masjid Dalam Menyantuni Asnaf Al-Riqab," *Jurnal Pengajian Islam* 17, no. 2 (2024): 113–25, <https://doi.org/10.53840/jpi.v17i2.348>.

² Ismail Tuanany, Mahdi Malawat, and Syarifudin, "Penguatan Dakwah Kebangsaan Imam Masjid Rijali di Ambon," *Reswara: Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat* 3, no. 1 (2022): 35–47, <https://doi.org/10.46576/rjpk.v3i1.1237>.

institutional framework remains disproportionate. Currently, there is no national policy establishing standards or a uniform allowance system for mosque imams across Indonesia. This often results in mosque imams occupying informal positions, appointed by the community or mosque administrators without clear legal status and without structured social security.³⁴

Mosque imams occupy a significant position in the religious and social life of Muslim communities in Indonesia. Beyond their primary function of leading congregational prayers, imams frequently perform broader religious and social roles, including providing religious guidance, delivering sermons, facilitating Islamic education, and contributing to community development. Their position is therefore closely connected to the continuity of religious life at the grassroots level. Nevertheless, the welfare of mosque imams has not received proportional attention within the framework of public policy and religious governance. In many communities, the position of an imam remains largely informal and is closely dependent on mosque administrators and local communities. This condition raises important questions concerning the institutional recognition, welfare protection, and governmental support available to mosque imams.

Constitutionally, Indonesia is a state of law as affirmed in Article 1 paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution. In the concept of a modern state of law, recognition of the basic rights of citizens includes not only civil and political rights, but also social rights, including guarantees of welfare for strategic groups such as religious leaders. Furthermore, Article 29 paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution emphasizes that the state guarantees the freedom of every citizen to embrace their religion and to worship according to their religion and beliefs. This guarantee logically requires the state to also guarantee the social infrastructure that supports the continuity of worship, including the existence and welfare of mosque imams.

These provisions have not been concretely implemented in the form of affirmative policies for mosque imams. Law Number 39 of 2008 concerning State Ministries, which was later amended to Law Number 61 of 2024, does provide the legal basis for the establishment of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The function of this ministry is further emphasized in Presidential Regulation Number 140 of 2024 concerning the Organization of State Ministries, which states that the Ministry of Religious Affairs is tasked with administering government affairs in the religious sector to assist the President in governing. However, despite its broad religious authority, there is not a single article or verse that directly regulates the welfare of mosque imams as an object of policy.

The role of the government in religious affairs provides an important legal context for addressing this issue. Under Presidential Regulation Number 152 of 2024 concerning the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Ministry is responsible for administering governmental affairs in the religious sector, including the formulation, determination, and implementation of policies concerning Islamic community guidance, as well as technical guidance and supervision of religious affairs at the regional level. This institutional mandate provides a legal basis for examining the extent to which government policies can support religious actors who perform strategic functions within society, including mosque imams.

The Indonesian government's attention to mosque imams can also be observed through capacity-building programs. In 2024, the Ministry of Religious Affairs targeted the development of the capacity of 22,000 mosque imams throughout Indonesia through training programs implemented under the Ministry's strategic plan. The program indicates that the government recognizes the importance of strengthening the competence and quality of mosque imams. However, capacity development and welfare protection constitute different dimensions of public policy. Training programs may improve professional competence, but they do not necessarily address economic security, institutional recognition, social protection, or the long-term welfare of imams.

³ Abu Hurairah and Mahsuri, "Kesejahteraan Sosial Petugas Masjid Kota Bengkalis dan Sekitarnya: Ragam Tugas, Upah dan UMK," *Jurnal Matlamat Minda* 1, no. 2 (2021): 1–10.

⁴ Gema Patriawan, "Mekanisme Pengupahan (Ujrah) Pada Pengurus Masjid di Kabupaten Kubu Raya: Suatu Tinjauan Syariah," *JMI: Jurnal Muamalat Indonesia* 4, no. 1 (2024): 418–30.

Previous studies have examined various dimensions of mosque governance and welfare. Sutrisno, for example, examined regulations concerning the selection of mosque management and imam positions and emphasized the role of government regulation in improving mosque management and prosperity. The study primarily focused on mosque governance and institutional arrangements rather than the welfare of mosque imams as a distinct policy issue. Other studies have approached mosque welfare through Islamic legal and socioeconomic frameworks. Pasya et al. examined productive waqf management at the Syuhada Grand Mosque Foundation in Yogyakarta using a maqāṣid al-sharī'ah perspective, focusing on governance, benefit distribution, and community welfare. Similarly, research on the Al-Amin Mosque in Batam examined the integration of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah into mosque management strategies to promote the prosperity and welfare of the Muslim community.

Meanwhile, Decree of the Director General of Islamic Community Guidance Number 582 of 2017 concerning Guidelines for the Appointment of Mosque Imams only regulates the qualifications and administrative mechanisms for appointing imams. It does not explicitly mention the imams' economic rights, allowances, incentives, or social protection. Yet, the position of mosque imam is often held full-time and is crucial to the continuity of worship and Islamic activities at the community level. This lack of regulation demonstrates the weakness of the state's normative framework in affirming imams as professional religious servants.

This situation has been exacerbated by the removal of the role of mosque imams in performing marriages, which had traditionally been performed by many village or community imams. Since the enactment of Government Regulation No. 59 of 2023 (amending Government Regulation No. 48 of 2014) concerning Marriage and Reconciliation Fees, the task of registering marriages has been entirely transferred to official state registrars. While legally intended to improve administrative order, this indirectly eliminates a form of recognition or informal incentive for imams that has long been part of their community service.

The welfare situation of mosque imams is not only an administrative issue, but also has deep normative implications within the framework of Islamic law. In the perspective of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah, mosque imams are considered as part of *h.amma l al-dīn*, namely the guardians of religion, whose existence is essential in maintaining *hifz al-dīn* or protection of religion.⁵ Imams who are not prosperous will face difficulties in carrying out their duties optimally, including guiding the community and maintaining the quality of worship. This is in line with the perspective of Islamic jurisprudence, which emphasizes the state's obligation to provide a decent living for scholars and imams, as they play a crucial role in the dissemination of divine messages and the moral stability of the community.⁶

QS. Al-Taubah/9:122 emphasizes the importance of the existence of a group of religious guardians in the word of God: Translation: *It is not fitting for the believers to go out all together (to the battlefield). Why should not a portion of each group of them go (stay with the Messenger of Allah) to deepen their religious knowledge and warn their people when they return, so that they may guard themselves?* (QS. Al- Taubah/9:122).

This verse indicates that there must be a group of people in society who specifically study religion and provide guidance to the community. In the modern context, this role is played by mosque imams, Quran teachers, and religious instructors. Therefore, the state is obliged to support their existence so that the *maqs.ad hifz al-dīn* (the highest good) is optimally achieved. , in the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW... it is mentioned: The case of Barru Regency can serve as an important example to examine how the state bridges the gap between formal regulations and the real needs of grassroots religious servants. Therefore, this research not only offers an academic contribution but also opens up space for policy

⁵ Md. Abu Sayem, Naerul Edwin Kiky Aprianto, and Adam Voak, "Perspective on the Islamic Welfare State: The Goals of Economic Development Justice," *El-Jizya: Jurnal Ekonomi Islam* 11, no. 1 (2023): 103–20.

⁶ Rosalind Warden, Jonathan Scourfield, and Peter Huxley, "Islamic Social Work in the UK: The Service User Experience," *British Journal of Social Work* 47, no. 3 (2017): 737–54, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26364170>.

advocacy based on *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (obligatory objectives) and *siyasah shar'iyah* principles, in order to achieve justice and prosperity for religious guardians.

In the context of a modern state model like Indonesia, the welfare state principle demands minimum guarantees for groups providing public services, including mosque imams. The state should not rely solely on civil society to fund all religious services, given the strategic and ongoing role of imams in society.⁷ The state's failure to recognize mosque imams as subjects of formal policy raises serious questions regarding the direction of national religious politics and the social sensitivity of the prevailing legal system.⁸

As a result of the lack of legal and public policy studies regarding the welfare of mosque imams, this study seeks to integrate Islamic legal analysis and positive law, utilizing an interdisciplinary approach to present a more just and structured policy model. By combining studies of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, constitutional law, and public policy theory, it is hoped that constructive solutions will emerge for the formulation of regulations that are more responsive and sensitive to the role of mosque imams. The state, as the protector of citizens' rights in the political, economic, and spiritual dimensions, has a responsibility to be actively present in ensuring the continuity of religious duties in society, including through integrative and transformative policies for the welfare of mosque imams.

Focusing on the issue of mosque imams' welfare from the perspective of Islamic law, the author examines this topic by addressing the following research questions: (1) the Ministry of Religious Affairs' policy regarding mosque imams' welfare ? and (2) the impact of and obstacles to the implementation of said policy for mosque imams ?

RESEARCH METHODS

This research was conducted with a full commitment to the principles of academic ethics

⁷ Rio Febriannur Rachman, "The Policy to Optimization of Social Media for Traffic Management in Islamic Perspectives," *Journal of Islamic Civilization* 3, no. 1 (2021): 13–23.

⁸ Paris Manalu, Sugianto, and Andi Lala, "Comparison of the Value of Welfare Principles in National Law and Islamic Law," *International Journal of Social Service and Research* 3, no. 11 (2023): 2811–16.

applicable to scientific tradition, particularly in qualitative research involving humans as subjects and primary data sources. Research ethics is a fundamental component in maintaining scientific integrity and respecting participants' rights. Researchers must practice honesty, openness, and social responsibility to ensure that every stage of the research is conducted with respect for the dignity and confidentiality of informants.⁹

The principle of informed consent is very important, where researchers are responsible for explaining the purpose of the research and giving participants the freedom to accept or refuse their involvement without any pressure.¹⁰ Studies show that transparency in the data collection process and respect for individual privacy can increase respect and integrity in researcher interactions with participants.¹¹ In line with this, in local contexts that have certain cultural norms, the implementation of research ethics must be adapted to avoid violating individual rights and dignity.

The primary approach used in this research is a sociological-legal approach. This approach views law not only as a normative text but also as a social institution that interacts directly with people's lives. Therefore, the Ministry of Religious Affairs' policies are analyzed not only based on written positive legal formulations, but also through an examination of how these policies are implemented, accepted, and perceived by the public, in this case, mosque imams and policy implementers in the field. This approach is crucial to avoid a gap between written policy (*Das Sollen*) and actual implementation (*Das Sein*).

DISCUSSION

Ministry of Religion's Policy on the Welfare of Mosque Imams

In the context of the religious life of Muslim communities in Indonesia, particularly in Barru Regency, South Sulawesi, the role of the mosque

⁹ Ivan Buljan et al., "Student Moral Foundations in the Context of Research Misbehavior: An Experimental Study," *J Empir Res Hum Res Ethics* 18, no. 3 (2023): 154–60, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/15562646231168919>.

¹⁰ Ruth A. Ebny et al., "Moral Integrity and Moral Courage: Can You Teach It?," *Journal of Nursing Education* 52, no. 4 (2013): 229–33, <https://doi.org/10.3928/01484834-20130311-01>.

¹¹ Priscilla K Gazarian et al., "Patients' and Care Partners' Perspectives on Dignity and Respect During Acute Care Hospitalization," *J Patient Saf* 17, no. 5 (2021): 392–97.

imam has a much broader meaning and function than simply leading worship rituals. The imam is not only responsible for leading congregational prayers but also plays a vital role in various social, educational, and moral aspects of the community.^{12,13} The imam of the mosque is also a role model for the congregation, a source of religious questions, and a pioneer in community initiatives. This underscores the imam's strategic position as a bridge between religion, society, and the state in the context of religious practice.^{14,15}

This study employs the concepts of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* and *siyāsah shar'īyyah* as analytical frameworks for examining the role of the government in improving the welfare of mosque imams. These concepts are based on the understanding that Islamic law is not solely concerned with compliance with normative provisions, but also aims to promote public welfare, justice, and human well-being.

Maqāṣid al-sharī'ah refers to the fundamental objectives and purposes intended to be achieved through the implementation of Islamic law. The concept emphasizes that Islamic law is fundamentally oriented toward the realization of *maṣlaḥah* (benefit or public welfare) and the prevention of *mafsadah* (harm). In its classical formulation, the principal objectives of Islamic law include the protection of religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), life (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), intellect (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*), lineage (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*), and property (*ḥifẓ al-māl*). These objectives provide a normative basis for assessing whether a legal rule or government policy is capable of providing adequate protection and benefits to society.

From this perspective, government policies implemented through the Ministry of Religious Affairs to improve the welfare of mosque imams may be understood as a form of public policy that has a significant dimension of *siyāsah shar'īyyah*. The government's role is not limited to the administrative management of religious affairs, but also extends to creating conditions that enable religious figures to perform their functions properly and sustainably. Policies concerning capacity building, religious guidance, institutional strengthening, empowerment, and welfare support for mosque imams may therefore constitute instruments for realizing public *maṣlaḥah*.

Over time, mosques have transformed from mere places of worship into centers for various social, educational, and economic activities. Many mosques now serve as community development centers, hosting social activities such as religious studies, courses, and health services. The role of the imam now also includes the responsibility of curating these programs.¹⁶

The welfare of mosque imams is a crucial issue in this context. Most imams do not receive the necessary attention in the form of material support, such as salaries or allowances, with existing policies often limited to small incentives deemed insufficient to meet their basic living needs.¹⁷ Therefore, their welfare should be regulated more comprehensively by the government.

State officials, specifically the Ministry of Religious Affairs, have a mandate to support imams through development and empowerment programs. The Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, in line with the state's responsibility to facilitate the proper implementation of worship. This demonstrates that the role of imams is not solely seen from a traditional perspective, but rather in a more formal context and integrated within the structure of religious life. However, challenges remain in implementing this policy, and many regions still experience a lack of attention to the welfare of imams.¹⁸

¹² Eka Siskawati, Ferdawati, and Firman Surya, "Bagaimana Masjid dan Masyarakat Saling Memakmurkan? Pemaknaan Akuntabilitas Masjid," *Jurnal Akuntansi Multiparadigma* 7, no. 1 (2016): 70–80, <https://doi.org/10.18202/jamal.2016.04.7006>.

¹³ Mustain, "Dinamika Fungsi Masjid di Indonesia: Dari Lokus Pengajaran Islam Ke Pemberdayaan Sosial Ekonomi Umat," *EL-HIKMAH: Jurnal Kajian dan Penelitian Pendidikan Islam* 17, no. 2 (2023): 109–21, <https://doi.org/10.20414/elhikmah.v17i2.8998>.

¹⁴ Muhammad Sarbini et al., "Pendidikan dan Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Tentang Fungsi Masjid Sebagai Sentral Kegiatan Umat Melalui Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat," *Khidmatul Ummah: Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat* 1, no. 1 (2020): 26–38, <https://doi.org/10.30868/khidmatul.v1i01.982>.

¹⁵ Fahrudin and Pandu Hyangsewu, "Manajemen Pengelolaan Masjid Menuju Masjid Yang Bersih, Suci, dan Sehat Berbasis Teknologi Informasi," *Jurnal Abmas* 22, no. 2 (2022): 63–70.

¹⁶ Fahrudin and Hyangsewu.

¹⁷ Sarbini et al., "Pendidikan dan Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Tentang Fungsi Masjid Sebagai Sentral Kegiatan Umat Melalui Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat."

¹⁸ Sarbini et al.

Furthermore, the function of mosque imams as mediators in social conflicts and their role in educating the community is very significant. As community leaders, imams are often involved in easing social tensions or resolving problems within the community. Furthermore, the involvement of imams in health and education programs in mosques emphasizes the importance of maximizing the mosque's potential as a socio-diaconal institution, where the imam acts as a driving force in implementing social and material programs.¹⁹

Integrating all these functions requires professionalism in mosque management. Research shows that effective mosque management can contribute to improving the well-being of the congregation. This demonstrates that clarity in the division of tasks and responsibilities, as well as the implementation of sound accountability, are essential pillars in carrying out these functions. In this regard, collaboration between the imam, mosque administrators, and the community is essential to create an ecosystem that supports the active participation of the congregation in various mosque activities.²⁰

Given these challenges, it is crucial to provide ongoing support to imams through training and capacity building, as well as appropriate incentives to enable them to perform their duties optimally. This will not only improve the quality of religious services but also contribute to social stability in local communities. The well-being of imams significantly impacts the dynamics of religious life and social interactions within Muslim communities in Indonesia.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs actually has various legal instruments and policies that can serve as a basis for developing mosque imams. However, these regulations have not been clearly integrated into the welfare of imams. Many regulations only address the requirements and competencies of imams, without explicitly addressing their financial rights. The implications of this weakness are evident in the field, where the incentives received by imams vary widely between regions, even between sub-

districts within a single regency. In Barru, for example, some imams receive an incentive of Rp 200,000 per month, while in other sub-districts it can be as much as Rp 500,000. This disparity is not merely a technical issue but also reflects policy weaknesses at the national and regional levels.

Furthermore, the implementation of Ministry of Religious Affairs policies in Barru is influenced not only by central regulations but also by local factors. The local government, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), the Indonesian Mosque Council (DMI), and the congregation all contribute, albeit in varying capacities. This fragmentation of roles between these parties often results in inconsistent and unsustainable imam welfare policies. When there is regional budget support, imam welfare improves slightly; but when regional budgets decrease, incentives are reduced again. This indicates that imams remain vulnerable to fluctuations in policy and economic conditions.

At this point, it can be emphasized that the role of mosque imams lies at the intersection of religious obligations and state responsibilities. The state has asserted itself as a state governed by law, guaranteeing religious freedom, yet technical policies guaranteeing the welfare of imams remain weak. This raises a major question: to what extent has the Ministry of Religious Affairs' policy in Barru Regency been able to address the welfare needs of imams, and what gaps remain in its implementation? This question will be answered in the following discussion, starting with the normative foundation and continuing with the implementation of the policy on the ground.

The state, as a policymaker, needs to develop more inclusive programs that involve not only mosque imams but also the wider community, to ensure that all parties contribute to creating a supportive environment for worship and social activities in mosques. Thus, the role of mosque imams should be viewed not only from a religious perspective, but also from the perspective of their influence on social stability and community development.²¹

¹⁹ Mustain, "Dinamika Fungsi Masjid di Indonesia: Dari Lokus Pengajaran Islam ke Pemberdayaan Sosial Ekonomi Umat."

²⁰ Mustain.

²¹ Jamilah Karaman et al., "Pembangunan Menara Masjid Al Musnawiyatul Islam Dukuh Sidowayah Sebagai Pengeras Suara dan Upaya Pembangunan Fasilitas Keagamaan," *Jurnal Masyarakat Merdeka* 6, no. 2 (2023): 132–42, <https://doi.org/10.51213/jmm.v6i2.144>.

Furthermore, proactive policies addressing the welfare of mosque imams in the field will significantly impact the quality of religious services they provide and their impact on society, particularly in the context of strengthening a sense of social justice within communities. In this regard, a shared responsibility between the government, the community, and religious leaders is necessary to create a sustainable framework for supporting the welfare of mosque imams as a crucial pillar of religious and social life in Indonesia.²²

Impact of and Barriers to Policy Implementation Affecting Mosque Imams

Research on public policy often covers not only the formulation and implementation stages but also the impacts and obstacles encountered during implementation. A policy can be considered successful when it brings about tangible changes that are felt by the target group, in this case, the mosque imams in Barru Regency, who play a crucial role in the religious and social context of the community.²³ The provision of incentives and guidance by the Ministry of Religion to mosque imams does have consequences that need to be considered.

From an impact perspective, this policy can be divided into two sides: positive and negative. The positive impact is evident in the formal recognition that imams receive from the state, which is expected to strengthen their position in society. This is supported by research showing that incentives, even small ones, provide economic assistance that can help stabilize imams' daily lives. The training provided also serves to broaden the imams' horizons and knowledge, enabling them to function more effectively as role models in their communities. On the one hand, this creates space for imams to

take a more active role in society, which may have previously been marginalized.²⁴

The negative impact of this policy cannot be ignored. Many imams find that the incentives provided are often perceived as too small to significantly impact their well-being. Several studies indicate that obstacles such as late disbursement and inequity in the distribution of incentives are the source of dissatisfaction among imams. This creates a situation where many imams must continue to seek additional income, given that the incentives received cannot be relied upon as their primary source of income. In this context, the policy's impact should be measured not only by the formal recognition received but also by the actual economic well-being experienced by mosque imams.²⁵

This situation reflects the complexity of public policy implementation. The dissatisfaction felt by mosque imams can stem from many factors, including a lack of transparency in the incentive management process, low community involvement in policy-related decision-making, and policies that are unresponsive to local needs. For example, case studies in other sectors show that low policy socialization and community participation negatively impact policy implementation and lead to the continuation of problems that could be addressed through more inclusive and transparent policies.²⁶

Mosques, as social institutions, play a crucial role in supporting positive change in society. Extensive research has found that mosques can play a central role in supporting the social and economic well-being of surrounding communities through da'wah and community service programs. Strengthening the position of imams as spiritual leaders equipped with adequate knowledge and capacity, along with appropriate incentives and guidance, is expected to create a positive impact on society. Inclusive treatment of mosque imams will also support broader social stability, given their role

²² Muwaffiq Jufri and Mukhlis, "Akibat Hukum Pemisahan Hak Beragama Dengan Hak Berkepercayaan Dalam Undang-Undang Dasar Negara Republik Indonesia Tahun 1945," *Jurnal Konstitusi* 16, no. 2 (2019): 274–95, <https://doi.org/10.31078/jk1624>.

²³ Ahmad Faiz Khudlari Thoha, Shobikhul Qisom, and Fatih Al-Qarni, "Optimalisasi Masjid Perumahan Sebagai Ruang Publik dan Poros Kegiatan Masyarakat," *Masjiduna: Jurnal Ilmiah Stidki Ar-Rahmah* 4, no. 1 (2021): 29–36.

²⁴ Ahmad Nawawi, "Arah Kebijakan Perlindungan Sosial ke Depan Untuk Meningkatkan Kesejahteraan Masyarakat," *Jurnal Syntax Admiration* 2, no. 10 (2021): 1824–38.

²⁵ Nawawi.

²⁶ Nawawi.

in spreading national values and unity in a multi-religious society.²⁷

The Islamic legal perspective adopted in this study consequently examines not only whether a government policy has a formal legal basis, but also its objectives, benefits, fairness, and social impact. The principle of *maṣlaḥah* serves as an important parameter for determining whether a policy is consistent with the objectives of Islamic law. When a government policy provides tangible benefits, reduces hardship, improves welfare, and supports the continuity of religious functions performed by mosque imams, such a policy can be considered consistent with the principles of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* and *siyāsah shar'īyyah*.

Accordingly, Islamic legal theory in this study functions as a normative framework for analyzing government policies concerning the welfare of mosque imams. *Maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* is employed to identify the fundamental objectives and welfare values that should be achieved, while *siyāsah shar'īyyah* is used to examine how governmental authority and public policy can be exercised to realize those objectives. Together, these concepts demonstrate that improving the welfare of mosque imams constitutes not merely a social or economic policy, but also an integral component of establishing a sustainable, just, and beneficial religious life within the community.

Despite widespread criticism of the Ministry of Religious Affairs' policy to improve the welfare of mosque imams in Barru Regency, it cannot be denied that the policy has had a number of positive impacts. While these impacts may not quite match the imams' high hopes, their existence is still noteworthy because it demonstrates the state's efforts, however small, to recognize the role of imams as religious servants. The two most prominent aspects of this are the economic and social impacts.

From an economic perspective, the incentives provided by the Ministry of Religious Affairs to mosque imams in Barru are relatively small, ranging from Rp 200,000 to Rp 500,000 per month, depending on the district. This amount is clearly insufficient to meet the living expenses of an

imam and his family. However, for most imams, the incentives remain significant. The incentives, received monthly or every few months, can be used to cover basic household needs, such as buying rice, cooking oil, or other essentials. Some imams even described the incentives as "extra income" that somewhat eased their families' economic burden.

Furthermore, imam incentives also have symbolic meaning in the economic realm. For many imams, the money they receive is not just a mere dollar amount, but a recognition that the state cares about them. Imams in Soppeng Riaja stated that even though the incentives are small, they feel "remembered" by the state. This sense of appreciation motivates them to continue carrying out their religious duties with full dedication. From a social psychology perspective, these symbolic rewards have a value that cannot be measured solely in rupiah.

Another positive impact of the Ministry of Religious Affairs' policy is in the social sphere. Through incentives and development programs, mosque imams gain formal status as state-recognized religious servants. This status enhances their social legitimacy within the community. Congregants increasingly view imams not only as local figures but also as part of a system that receives government attention. This formal recognition strengthens the imam's social standing, especially in a religious community like Barru, where religious figures are highly respected.

The social impact is also evident in the increased participation of imams in religious activities outside the mosque. The Ministry of Religious Affairs' development programs often serve as a forum for gatherings between imams from various sub-districts. These meetings expand the imams' social networks, allowing them to share experiences and strengthen solidarity among fellow religious ministers. While the frequency of these programs varies, they remain an important social space for imams to feel part of a broader community.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Religious Affairs' policy also adds moral weight to imams' roles in resolving social conflicts in the community. In an interview, an imam in Balusu recounted that when asked to mediate a family dispute, the government incentives made him feel more confident in carrying

²⁷ Thoha, Qisom, and Al-Qarni, "Optimalisasi Masjid Perumahan Sebagai Ruang Publik dan Poros Kegiatan Masyarakat."

out the role. He believes that even though the incentives are insufficient to support his family, the policy's existence is a sign that the state recognizes his social authority. This strengthens the imam's position in fulfilling his social role as a mediator, teacher, and moral role model.

From the description above, it is clear that although the incentives for mosque imams in Barru are small and limited, they still have a positive impact, both economically and socially. These incentives help alleviate the burden of basic needs for imams and give them a sense of appreciation. Socially, this policy strengthens the imams' legitimacy in the eyes of the congregation, increases their self-confidence, expands their social networks, and strengthens their role as religious leaders. All of this demonstrates that the Ministry of Religious Affairs' policy, despite its simplicity, still has significant significance in the lives of mosque imams in Barru, Sulawesi.

In addition to its economic and social impacts, the Ministry of Religious Affairs' policies in the form of incentives and guidance also have a positive impact on the religious dimension. The role of mosque imams as worship leaders is inextricably linked to their scholarly qualities and capacity to understand and teach Islamic teachings. The presence of the Ministry of Religious Affairs' guidance programs, although not yet evenly distributed, has helped some imams strengthen their religious competence. Imams who participate in the guidance gain additional insight into religious moderation, current Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and more communicative preaching methods. This impacts the quality of religious services they provide to their congregations.

In addition to enhancing individual capacity, the Ministry of Religious Affairs' policy also strengthens the position of imams within the religious network in Barru. The training program, which brings together imams from various sub-districts, creates a forum for shared learning and strengthens solidarity among them. Imams from the interior, who rarely meet with their colleagues from the city center, have the opportunity to discuss, share experiences, and learn from one another. This social bond influences their enthusiasm for carrying out their religious duties, as they feel part of a broader community.

In addition to its religious impact, the Ministry of Religious Affairs' policy also has a significant psychological impact on mosque imams. Many imams stated that, despite the small incentives they receive, they feel valued by the state. This sense of appreciation motivates them to continue serving. An imam in Tanete Riaja said he often felt exhausted from juggling his time between working in the fields and managing the mosque. However, when he received an incentive from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, even though the amount was small, he felt a sense of recognition from the government. This recognition engendered a sense of pride that motivated him to remain consistent in leading the five daily prayers.

While the previous section discussed the various positive impacts of the Ministry of Religious Affairs' policy on mosque imams in Barru Regency, it is also important to examine the downside. Undeniably, the existing policy is far from ideal and has actually given rise to a number of serious negative impacts, particularly in the economic and bureaucratic dimensions. These negative impacts highlight that, despite symbolic recognition from the state, mosque imams remain vulnerable and are sometimes even further burdened by the bureaucratic mechanisms that accompany the policy.

From an economic perspective, the incentives offered to mosque imams are too small to be considered welfare. The monthly allowance of Rp 200,000 to Rp 500,000 received by imams in Barru is incomparable to the cost of a decent living in today's world. This amount is even less than the daily wage of construction workers or fishermen in the area. For some imams, the incentive is only enough to buy a sack of rice, while other needs such as children's school fees, healthcare, transportation, and housing must still be covered. As a result, mosque imams must seek additional work as farmers, fishermen, small traders, or casual laborers to support their families.

This situation has a double negative impact. First, mosque imams cannot fully focus on their religious duties because they have to divide their time and energy to earn extra income. An imam in Pujananting, for example, admitted that he often has to leave the congregation to go to the fields to work. This makes him feel guilty, but he also has no

choice because household needs are more pressing. Second, difficult economic conditions often diminish the imam's prestige in the eyes of some members of the congregation. Some members believe that the imam should not need to ask for assistance because he already receives incentives from the government, when in reality, these incentives are very minimal.

Furthermore, these limited incentives also create social inequality among imams. Imams serving in large mosques with established congregations typically receive additional allowances from the congregation, making their lives relatively better. In contrast, imams in villages with poor congregations rely almost entirely on small incentives from the Ministry of Religious Affairs. As a result, the welfare of imams in Barru is highly unequal. Some imams live quite comfortably, while others struggle to meet basic needs. This inequality actually weakens solidarity among imams, as some feel jealous of their more fortunate colleagues.

This bureaucratic red tape not only harms imams economically but also causes psychological stress. Many imams feel that the state is not taking them seriously. They have to wait long periods to receive what they should receive regularly. This frustration sometimes leads to apathy towards Ministry of Religious Affairs policies. Imams who feel neglected by the bureaucracy can lose motivation to carry out their religious duties. This is certainly dangerous, as the imam's spirit of devotion is crucial to the quality of worship services in the community.

Delays in disbursement also often create uncertainty. Imams are uncertain when the incentives will be disbursed. In some cases, incentives are only received after pressure from the imams to the District Ministry of Religious Affairs. This process creates the impression that the incentive policy is not being implemented as a right, but rather as a favor dependent on the kindness of the bureaucracy. This confusion further widens the gap between the policy's normative objectives and the empirical reality on the ground.

In the context of public policy theory, this situation indicates an implementation failure. Policies designed to provide support actually create new problems due to budget constraints and bureaucratic weaknesses. Mosque imams, who should feel supported, often feel burdened. Rather

than easing the burden, these policies sometimes increase psychological stress due to the uncertainty of disbursement.

The negative impact of the Ministry of Religious Affairs' policies on mosque imams in Barru, both economically and bureaucratically, is quite serious. Low incentives and complex bureaucracy keep imams vulnerable and even more frustrated. This demonstrates that existing policies remain partial and administrative in nature, failing to address the fundamental needs of imams as religious servants who should receive full attention from the state.²⁸

In addition to economic and bureaucratic issues, the Ministry of Religious Affairs' policy also has other negative impacts on mosque imams in Barru Regency, namely uneven guidance and the loss of the role of marrying congregants, which has long been a crucial part of the imam's socio-economic function. These two aspects further emphasize that the policy's implementation has not fully supported the imam as a servant of religion.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs' training for mosque imams is intended to improve their knowledge and skills in leading worship and guiding congregations. However, in practice, this training is not implemented evenly. Imams serving in urban areas or near district centers tend to receive more training opportunities. In contrast, imams in remote and coastal areas receive only one or two opportunities per year. This disparity creates a sense of injustice among imams.

Another significant negative impact is the loss of the role of the imam in performing marriage ceremonies. Prior to the enactment of Government Regulations No. 46 and No. 59, mosque imams in many villages often acted directly as registrars in wedding ceremonies. This role not only enhanced the imam's social prestige but also provided a significant source of additional income. With the enactment of the new regulations, the authority to officially perform marriages was centralized in the Office of Religious Affairs. As a result, mosque imams lost a role that had long been closely linked to their social function.

²⁸ Abd. Shomad, "Dinamisasi Penormaan Hukum Islam," *PERSPEKTIF: Kajian Masalah Hukum dan Pembangunan* 15, no. 2 (2010): 99–122, <https://doi.org/10.30742/perspektif.v15i2.47>.

CONCLUSION

The implementation policy of the Ministry of Religious Affairs' Function in improving the Welfare of Mosque Imams in Barru Regency, refers to a positive legal framework such as the 1945 Constitution, Law No. 39 of 2008 which has been amended by Law No. 61 of 2024 concerning the Ministry of State, Presidential Decree No. 140 of 2024 concerning the Function of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Decree of the Director General of Islamic Community Guidance no. 582 of 2017 concerning the requirements for prospective Mosque Imams who have not yet determined the status and institutions entitled to appoint them, resulting in the appointment of Mosque Imams in the region being unclear, and Government Regulation (PP) No. 59 of 2023 concerning Marriage and Reconciliation Fees which eliminates the function of Mosque Imams to marry off members of the congregation of the Mosque where they serve when someone gets married. The obstacles to the policy of the Ministry of Religious Affairs' Function in Improving the Welfare of Mosque Imams, cause an Increase and Consistency, focusing on carrying out the tasks of Guidance, Learning, and leading congregational prayers in the mosque.

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