



RECONCEPTUALIZATION OF MASLAHAH IN ISLAMIC WORSHIP: PUBLIC INTEREST, STATE POLICY, AND MAQASID AL-SYARI'AH

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Abstract

Human welfare encompasses personal well-being, social and communal interests, as well as national benefit. When a government aspires to build a strong nation and ensure a safe, peaceful, and orderly society, it must prioritize public interest over individual benefit. Likewise, individuals and communities seeking a harmonious and tranquil life should emphasize actions that generate greater collective benefit. Sharia, as a divinely ordered system of law, functions as a comprehensive guide for human life, aiming to realize welfare at both personal and social levels. In relation to the values of maslahah embedded in the commands of worship, Islamic law affirms that all divine prescriptions are inherently beneficial and free from harm, even when they may appear unfavorable from a human perspective. Furthermore, the pursuit of benefit in safeguarding religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property constitutes a fundamental obligation within Islamic legal thought. These essentials, classified by Islamic scholars as indispensable necessities (darūriyyāt), if neglected, would result in severe harm to worldly and spiritual life, ultimately undermining human happiness, peace, and social stability.

Keywords: *Maslahah; Islamic Worship; Maqasid al-Shari'ah; Public Interest*

I. INTRODUCTION

The benefit of human life is the fundamental goal of Allah Ta'ala's law. All provisions in Islamic law were revealed not merely as normative obligations, but as comprehensive guidelines that guarantee the realization of human goodness and welfare, both in this world and in the afterlife. This goal is clearly reflected in maqāsid al-syarī'ah which prioritizes five main elements of benefit, namely protection of religion (ḥifẓ al-dīn), soul (ḥifẓ al-nafs), reason (ḥifẓ al-'aql), descendants (ḥifẓ al-nasl), and property (ḥifẓ al-māl). These five aspects are the main foundation in every determination of Islamic law and become a benchmark in assessing the benefits and harms of an action (Kaddase, 2014).

In essence, all Islamic law is imbued with the values of public welfare, even though they sometimes appear to be at odds with desires, interests, or short-term rational considerations. Therefore, in the implementation of Islamic law, the principle of public welfare occupies a very central position and is the primary choice in responding to various life issues (Rusfi, 2018). Adherence to the guidance of sharia not only creates order in the

performance of worship, but also provides peace of mind and a sense of openness in facing the ever-evolving dynamics of life, including new problems that have never occurred before.

In today's modern era, humanity is faced with rapid social change, accompanied by a series of disasters, calamities, and humanitarian crises. These conditions demand a solid guide to life oriented toward long-term well-being. In this context, Islamic law presents a path of salvation for those who adhere firmly to its values (Ngulwiyah, Rohimah, & Suaidi, 2021). On the other hand, people's departure from the guidance of the Shari'a has the potential to lead to corruption and destruction, as hinted at in the words of Allah Ta'ala in QS al-An'ām/6: 122 which means: "And is a person who was dead and then We revived him and We gave him a bright light, with which he can walk in the midst of human society, similar to a person whose situation is in complete darkness from which he can never get out?" Thus We made those who disbelieved see good what they had done"(Suma, 2021).

In the command to worship, it will always be in harmony with the welfare of human life, personal welfare, social welfare, and the welfare of the nation. If a government wants its nation to be strong, its people safe, peaceful, and secure, it should always prioritize the public welfare over personal welfare. Likewise, if a society and individuals desire a calm, peaceful, and tranquil life, they should prioritize matters that bring greater benefits. Kalsom Awang and Ahmad Fauzee Abdullah, 'Sustainable Appreciation of Al-Awlawiyyāt Fiqh to Build a Harmonious Life', 2012. Usman and Aswar added that Islamic life in social institutions, namely the people of a region properly implementing Islamic law, was found to have implications for a safe, peaceful, prosperous and tranquil life in the village (Usman & Aswar, 2020). Of course, this is born from efforts to prioritize the public interest and/or prioritize matters that bring greater benefits, so that everything will be in line with sharia, and has also been approved or recommended by religious scholars (SriWahyuni, 2025).

In relation to the value of human welfare, especially concerning the safety and well-being of many people, the role of the government as the person responsible for the wheel of life in all its aspects, is obliged to uphold the welfare. (Ismail, 2016), especially in the command of worship or religious activities which are the door to guidance, knowledge and good deeds, as well as the sharia's view of human welfare and its relevance to the values of welfare.

Several previous studies have been conducted by academics on government policy and public welfare during the COVID-19 pandemic. Regarding the government's policy of implementing a lockdown, the study concluded that a 14-day lockdown is in the public interest and is intended to break the chain of COVID-19 transmission (Yunus & Rezki, 2020). The study conducted by Zulkarnain, Nurdin and Gojali regarding the MUI fatwa supported by the government in suspending Friday prayers during the Covid-19 pandemic (Anshori, 2022), based on considerations of emergency and public interest, the results of its study state that MUI fatwa No. 14 of 2020 concerning the implementation of worship during the Covid-19 outbreak can be used as a guide and must be followed by all Muslims in Indonesia (Ni'am Sholeh, 2020).

Thus, this study is expected to complement the treasury and dialectics of knowledge in Islamic studies, regarding the close relationship with the Values of Benefit in the Commandments of Worship.

II. PROBLEM FORMULATION

1. How is the concept of *maslahah* in the Islamic order of worship understood and formulated from the perspective of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* as a basis for personal and social benefit?
2. How can the legitimacy of state policies in regulating or limiting the implementation of worship be justified according to Islamic law based on the principles of *maslahah* and public interest?
3. How can recontextualizing the concept of *maslahah* in the command to worship bridge the interests of individuals, society, and the state in realizing the welfare and protection of human souls?

III. RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs a qualitative method with a normative–doctrinal legal approach (normative legal research). The study is intended to examine and formulate the concept of *maṣlaḥah* in acts of worship (*ʿibādāt*) by referring to authoritative sources of Islamic law, namely the Qur'an, Hadith, and the intellectual contributions of classical and contemporary scholars in the fields of *uṣūl al-fiqh* and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. This approach emphasizes textual, conceptual, and philosophical analysis to understand how the principle of public benefit is constructed and justified within Islamic legal theory. (Rijadi 2022)

Data collection is conducted through library research by systematically reviewing classical *turāth* works, contemporary Islamic legal literature, peer-reviewed academic journals, as well as relevant policy documents and religious fatwas that relate to the regulation of worship in public and state contexts. The data are analyzed using descriptive-analytical techniques, involving the stages of interpretation, comparison, and conceptual reconstruction of the notion of *maṣlaḥah* in the implementation of worship and its interaction with state policy. The analysis is further aligned with the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* to evaluate the extent to which public policies reflect the objectives of Islamic law. Through this method, the research seeks to produce a comprehensive and systematic understanding of the sharia legitimacy of public-interest-oriented policies in contemporary Islamic worship practices. (Adiyanta 2019)

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

a. The Importance of the Concept of Benefit in a Rule

The root word *maṣlaḥat* is a loanword from Arabic, namely "Al-Maṣlaḥatu," which according to scholars is derived from the word "Al-Sholah," meaning goodness, and "Al-Islah," which is the opposite of "Al-Fasad," meaning damage. Terminologically, *maṣlaḥat* is understood as the taking of benefits, which is the goal of Islamic law for the benefit of humanity in terms of religion, life, mind, descendants, and property (Rusdi, 2017).

From the perspective of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, *maṣlaḥah* is not merely interpreted as pragmatic benefit or momentary gain, but rather as a comprehensive effort to achieve worldly goodness and eternal happiness. Therefore, the benefits

referred to in the concept of *maslahah* are not only material but also encompass moral, spiritual, and social dimensions. Any form of policy, regulation, or action that undermines these five main goals is seen as *mafsadah* and must be avoided, even if it appears to be beneficial in the short term. This view aligns with the analysis of contemporary Islamic legal scholars who emphasize that *maslahah* is both a normative and methodological principle in assessing the legitimacy of a law or policy in Islam (F. M. M. Opwis, 2010).

Furthermore, the scholars agree that maintaining the five main objectives of *sharia* is a primary *maslahah* (Adinugraha & Mashudi, 2018), so its existence is non-negotiable. If any of these elements is ignored or violated, damage will occur that will not only impact individual lives but also threaten the broader social order, both in this world and the hereafter.

Al-Shātibī asserted that failure to uphold *maslahah daruriyyah* will eliminate the stability of human life and lead to social chaos and the loss of inner peace (Al-Shātibī, *al-Muwāfaqāt*). This finding is also supported by empirical studies in modern Islamic law journals which show that the application of the *maslahah* principle contributes significantly to the creation of substantive justice and the protection of human rights within the framework of Islamic law (Dusuki & Abdullah, 2007).

The concept of *maslahat* is very important in all forms of rules that humans implement due to several things, including: First: The source of the concept of *maslahat* in Islamic law is sourced from the Qur'an and the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him); Second: *Maslahat* in Islamic law does not only look at the worldly benefits obtained, but combines the benefits of the world and the hereafter at the same time; Third: *Maslahat* in Islamic law combines the benefits of the soul and the body (Usman, Aswar, & Irawan, 2020).

Thus, the concept of *maslahat* is understood as a consideration in policy choices in regulating social life. Naturally, these considerations must be based on *sharia* principles, derived from the Qur'an, Hadith, *Ijma'* (consensus), and *Qiyas* (equality). This includes policy choices regarding activity restrictions, particularly those related to the values of *maslahah* in religious orders.

b. The Dialectic of Maslahah and Obedience to Worship in Emergency Situations

The principle of emergency in Islamic law provides normative legitimacy for flexibility in the implementation of worship through the concept of *rukhsah* (legal leniency). *Rukhsah* is not a weakening of *sharia*, but rather a manifestation of the grace and wisdom of Islamic law in responding to changing social realities.

Al-Qaradawi emphasized that an understanding of Islamic law that only focuses on the external form of worship without considering its *maqāṣid* has the potential to give rise to religious practices that are counterproductive and even damage the public interest (Mohadi & Tarshany, 2023). In this context, adjusting worship to prevent collective harm is not a denial of religion, but a concrete form of purpose-based obedience.

The dialectic between *maslahah* (benefit) and obedience to worship confirms that the conflict between individual interests in worship and the public interest is essentially superficial. Islam does not position worship as an individual activity separate from social responsibility. Rather, worship has a strong social

dimension, so its implementation must not cause harm to others. The fiqh principle of *lā ḍarar wa lā ḍirār* serves as the primary foundation for ensuring that every religious practice must be free from potential harm, both to the worshipper and the wider community. In emergency situations, prioritizing the prevention of harm (*dar'u al-mafāsīd*) over the attainment of individual benefit (*jalb al-maṣāliḥ*) is a principle agreed upon by the majority of scholars of *ushul fiqh*.

Contemporary studies in Islamic law also emphasize that obedience in Islam is contextual and rational, not dogmatic. Ghaly, in his research on Islamic ethics during the pandemic, demonstrates that adapting to collective worship is a form of moral responsibility for Muslims to safeguard human life, the highest value in Islamic law (Ghaly & al-Khatib, 2023). This is in line with Rahman's view, which emphasizes that the moral objectives of the Qur'an must be the main foundation in understanding and applying Islamic law in the modern era, including in matters of worship (Rahman, 2024).

Thus, the dialectic between *maslahah* (community welfare) and religious observance demonstrates that the flexibility of Islamic law is not a sign of weakness, but rather a normative strength that allows sharia to remain relevant in the face of crises and changing times. Obedience based on *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* (observance of the principles of sharia) actually results in religious practices that are more humanistic, rational, and oriented toward long-term welfare. Therefore, adapting worship in emergency situations must be understood as a form of substantive obedience that aligns with the spirit of Islamic sharia, not as a disregard for religious commands.

c. The Government's Obligation to Implement the Concept of Human Welfare

From an Islamic legal and political perspective, government is understood as an authority structure with the authority to regulate, command, and prohibit citizens for the sake of achieving social order and general welfare. This power is exercised through normative instruments in the form of laws, public policies, and administrative decisions, as well as through factual power in the form of law enforcement and concrete actions on the ground (Kamali, 2017).

Within the framework of Islamic law, power is not an end in itself, but rather a trust that must be used to serve (*khidmah*), protect, and nurture the people. Therefore, the legitimacy of government power is largely determined by the extent to which its policies achieve the public good and prevent social harm (*al-mafṣadah*) (W. Hallaq, 2012).

In the theory of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, the government has a primary obligation to uphold the five main objectives of sharia (*al-ḍarūriyyāt al-khams*), namely the protection of religion, life, intellect, descendants, and property. Among these five objectives, the protection of the soul (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*) occupies a very central position, because the continuation of human life is a prerequisite for the implementation of other objectives of sharia (Hayat, 2020).

Scholars of Islamic jurisprudence (*ushul fiqh*) emphasize that when life is threatened, the state is obligated to actively intervene through preventive and repressive policies to prevent further damage. This view aligns with contemporary Islamic legal studies, which state that state intervention in emergency situations constitutes a moral and legal responsibility to protect citizens' rights to life (Auda, 2008).

In the context of a humanitarian crisis such as an infectious disease outbreak, the government has the sharia legitimacy to establish strict regulations to limit the potential spread of disease that could threaten public safety. The principle of prevention (*sadd al-dharā'i'*) in Islamic law emphasizes that any means that have the potential to cause harm must be prevented, even if they are inherently permissible. This principle is reinforced by various hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), which recommend avoiding contact with sources of infectious disease and prohibiting entry to areas affected by an outbreak. From a *maqāṣid* perspective, these provisions demonstrate that Islamic law places a strong emphasis on the precautionary principle to safeguard human life (F. Opwis, 2010).

Government are also obliged to restrict social activities that have the potential to cause collective harm, including religious activities, economic activities, education, and community social activities. These restrictions must be understood as a temporary measure that is proportionate and contextual, not as a form of denial of religious freedom. Several studies show that in Islamic law, freedom of worship is always framed by the principle of not causing harm to others (*lā ḍarar wa lā ḍirār*), so that public interests can take precedence over individual interests in emergency situations (Dusuki & Abdullah, 2007).

In modern countries, policies restricting religious activities often give rise to debates between protecting human rights and public safety. However, the *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* approach provides a balanced normative framework by emphasizing that the right to worship remains guaranteed and protected, as long as its implementation does not pose a serious threat to public benefit.

Islam views worship as having both spiritual and social purposes, so its implementation must be in harmony with the principles of protecting life and social order. Research in *Arab Law Quarterly* and *Islamic Law and Society* shows that state policies restricting religious activities during emergencies can be justified according to Islamic law if they are based on scientific considerations, proportionality, and the public interest (Dusuki & Abdullah, 2007).

In addition, the concept of *siyāsah shar'iyyah* provides additional legitimacy for the government to establish policies that are not explicitly mentioned in the texts, as long as the policy aims to realize the benefit and does not conflict with the basic principles of sharia (W. B. Hallaq, 2009).

Ibn Taymiyyah emphasized that the ruler's policies must always be oriented toward justice and the welfare of the people, even though the form of these policies can change according to the needs of the times and the conditions of society. This idea has been widely reviewed by contemporary scholars, who emphasize that the flexibility of Islamic law is a key strength in responding to global challenges and modern humanitarian crises (Ali, 2022).

Thus, the government's obligation to implement the concept of human welfare cannot be separated from its sharia and constitutional responsibilities to protect life, maintain social order, and ensure public welfare. Public policies that restrict or regulate certain activities, including religious ones, must be understood as part of a preventive effort to prevent greater harm. As long as these policies are based on *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, the principle of public benefit, and do not violate the values of justice and proportionality, they can be considered valid and legitimate from the perspective of Islamic law and modern law.

V. CONCLUSION

This study confirms that *maslahah* is a fundamental principle in Islamic law that serves as the primary basis for the formulation, implementation, and contextualization of worship, both in the personal and social spheres. From the perspective of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, *maslahah* is not interpreted solely as a pragmatic or material benefit, but rather as a comprehensive effort to maintain and realize the five main objectives of *sharia*: protection of religion, life, intellect, descendants, and property. These five objectives serve as normative benchmarks in assessing the validity and purpose of a religious practice, especially when the practice intersects with the interests of the wider community and state policy. The results of this study also show that obedience in worship cannot be understood merely in formalistic and ritualistic terms, but must be based on an understanding of the objectives of *sharia*. In emergencies or humanitarian crises, the application of the principle of legal leniency (*rukhsah*) and adjustments to the implementation of collective worship are integral parts of Islamic teachings that emphasize the protection of life and the prevention of harm. The principle of prioritizing the prevention of harm (*dar'u al-mafāṣid*) over the attainment of individual benefit (*jalb al-maṣāliḥ*) confirms that the flexibility of Islamic law is a manifestation of the wisdom and grace of *sharia*, not a form of weakening of religious teachings.

This study confirms that the state has the *sharia* legitimacy to regulate or restrict the practice of worship in certain situations to maintain public safety and social order. Based on the principles of *siyāsah shar'iyyah* and *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, state policies oriented towards the public good cannot be viewed as a violation of religious freedom, as long as they are proportional, based on scientific considerations, and do not conflict with the values of justice. Rather, these policies are a manifestation of the state's responsibility to protect the right to life and the welfare of society. Thus, reconceptualizing *maslahah* (benefit for the benefit of Allah) within Islamic worship mandates provides a normative framework capable of bridging the interests of the individual, society, and the state. This approach affirms the flexibility and relevance of Islamic law in addressing social dynamics and contemporary challenges, without losing sight of its fundamental principles. Ultimately, an understanding of worship oriented toward *maslahah* (benefit for the benefit of Allah) and *maqāṣid al-shari'ah* (objectives of the welfare of Allah) will foster more humanistic and rational religious practices, contributing significantly to the realization of human well-being and the protection of human life.

VI. REFERENCE

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