MUFTIS' VIEWS AND FATWA AUTHORITIES' ON *IHDAD*: IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES AMONG WORKING WOMEN

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Abstract

Ihdad is a religious obligation imposed on Muslim women whose husbands have passed away, requiring a mourning period of four months and ten days that includes prohibitions against adornment, the use of fragrance, and the requirement to remain in the marital home. However, the enforcement of fatwas on ihdad presents significant challenges for working women who face the demands of employment, family responsibilities, and the realities of modern life. This study aims to analyze ihdad-related fatwas in Malaysia in terms of their legal provisions and the lived experiences of working women. A qualitative design was employed, combining document analysis, focus group discussions (FGD), and semi-structured interviews with widows undergoing ihdad as well as representatives of employers. The data were thematically analyzed using atlas.ti. The findings reveal a gap between fatwa prescriptions and the realities of working women, particularly regarding the necessity of leaving the home for work, fulfilling professional commitments, and sustaining household finances. The study proposes the development of an Ihdad Support Model encompassing policy, financial, emotional, social, and educational dimensions, ensuring that religious obligations are upheld without neglecting the contemporary needs of working women. This article contributes to strengthening fatwa-related

policymaking and employment regulations, offering a more inclusive and holistic framework to support widows in the aftermath of their husbands' death.

Keywords: *Ihdad, fatwa, working women, Islamic family law, support model*

1. INTRODUCTION

Ihdad is a religious obligation imposed on Muslim women whose husbands have passed away, as stated in the words of Allah SWT:

"As for those of you who die and leave widows behind, let them observe a waiting period of four months and ten days..." (al-Baqarah, 2:234).

The prescription of *ihdad* carries its own inherent wisdom, including the preservation of dignity, the safeguarding of honour, and allowing women the necessary time and space to navigate the phase of loss with spiritual awareness (al-Nawawi, 1992; Ibn Qudamah, 1968). However, in today's modern reality, the implementation of *ihdad* faces new challenges, particularly for career women who must balance religious obligations with professional commitments, family responsibilities, and economic survival.

In Malaysia, state fatwas and guidelines issued by JAKIM (2015) emphasize the main prohibitions during *ihdad*, including the requirement to stay at home throughout the iddah period except in cases of emergency. Although these guidelines are based on the dominant Shafi'i fiqh school, they give limited consideration to the context of women who are active in the labour market. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2023), the female labour force participation rate has increased to 56.2%, with the majority engaged in the service, education and public administration sectors. This reality makes the issue of ihdad not only a matter of religious law but also closely related to labour laws, government policies and social welfare.

Previous studies have primarily focused on the normative legal dimensions or descriptive analyses of ihdad fatwas (Mohamad, 2018; Kamali, 2021) but have paid less attention to the actual experiences of working women in practicing them. This gap calls for research that combines doctrinal analysis of fatwas with empirical field data to produce a more comprehensive understanding. Therefore, this article aims to evaluate the ihdad fatwas in Malaysia, analyze the challenges of their implementation for working women and propose the development of a more practical and context-friendly Ihdad Support Model.

This study is significant as it offers practical implications for various stakeholders: fatwa institutions can develop guidelines that are more

responsive to contemporary realities; the government and employers can consider supportive policies such as special ihdad leave; and the academic community can acquire a new framework that integrates Shariah analysis with social theory. Therefore, this article not only fills a gap in the literature but also contributes to the development of more inclusive policies that address the needs of Muslim women within the context of a progressive and harmonious Malaysia.

2.   LITERATURE REVIEW

Ihdad linguistically means abandoning adornment (al-Fayruzabadi, 1993), while from the perspective of Islamic law, it refers to the prohibition imposed on a woman whose husband has passed away from beautifying herself, wearing perfume, and leaving the house without urgent necessity throughout the iddah period of four months and ten days (al-Baqarah, 2:234). The Shafi'i school of thought, which is the official madhhab in Malaysia, asserts that a woman observing ihdad must remain in the marital home until the iddah period is completed (al-Nawawi, 1992). The wisdom behind prescribing ihdad includes preserving the woman's dignity, preventing slander, clarifying the status of any pregnancy and providing time for the psychological process of adapting to the loss of her husband (Ibn Qudamah, 1968).

The fatwa institutions in Malaysia have issued rulings on ihdad based on the Shāfiʿī school of thought. To date, numerous fatwas have been decided by Malaysian fatwa institutions (Rosidi, 2021), reflecting the continuous attention given to issues concerning Muslim women, including ihdad, in order to ensure alignment with the objectives of the Sharīʿah (maqāṣid al-sharīʿah) and contemporary societal needs.The Guidelines for the Management of Ihdad and Iddah by JAKIM (2015) specify prohibitions for women observing ihdad, including beautifying themselves, accepting marriage proposals and leaving the house except for urgent matters. However, in the context of working women, the implementation of this fatwa poses challenges, as most employers do not provide special ihdad leave. Previous studies have found differences in interpretation among Malaysian states regarding women's mobility during ihdad, but overall, fatwas tend to maintain a literal Shafi'i fiqh approach (Mohamad, 2018). Comparisons with other Muslim countries such as Egypt and Jordan reveal greater flexibility, for example allowing women to work outside the home provided they observe Islamic decorum (al-Qaradawi, 1999).

Meanwhile, women's participation in the Malaysian labor market has been steadily increasing, with the female labor force participation rate reaching 56.2% in 2023 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2023). Hashim et al. (2019)

emphasize that Muslim women in Malaysia face dual pressures in managing their careers, family responsibilities, and religious obligations. For widows observing ihdad, this situation is even more complex, as work demands often conflict with religious duties. Noor (2014) states that the absence of institutional policies related to ihdad causes many women to face a dilemma between complying with Shariah and meeting job requirements.

Several theoretical frameworks can be used to explain the issue of ihdad among working women. The Social Support Theory by House (1981) emphasizes that emotional, informational, and instrumental support are crucial in helping individuals cope with life stressors. The Social Ecological Theory introduced by Bronfenbrenner (1979) highlights the interaction of individuals with various layers of systems, ranging from the micro-level such as family, to the meso-level such as the work environment and up to the macro-level involving national policies and governance. Furthermore, the Women's Empowerment Theory by Kabeer (1999) asserts that women need access to resources, decision-making power, and achievements that enable them to strategically determine their life direction. All these theories can be integrated with the principles of maqāṣid al-sharīʿah, which emphasize the preservation of religion (*hifẓ al-dīn*), life (*hifẓ al-nafs*), intellect (*hifẓ al-ʿaql),* lineage (*hifẓ al-nasl*) and property (*hifẓ al-māl*) (Dusuki & Abdullah, 2007).

The implementation of *ihdad* among working women often presents practical dilemmas when religious obligations directly conflict with the demands of modern careers. A recent study by Daud (2025) shows that working women observing ihdad face various challenges, including restrictions imposed by employer policies, the absence of clear guidelines and prolonged financial pressures. This situation highlights the need to reassess policies and implementation guidelines to ensure that religious duties are fulfilled without compromising women's livelihood.

Therefore, this study focuses on identifying the primary needs of Muslim women who have lost their husbands while observing *ihdad*, paying particular attention to emotional, financial, career, religious knowledge and social support dimensions. This holistic approach is expected to contribute to the formulation of more inclusive, balanced policies that align with the principles of maqāṣid al-sharīʿah.

Although previous studies have explored *ihdad* from a legal perspective (Kamali, 2021; al-Qurtubi, 2003), there is still a lack of empirical research examining the experiences of working women in observing *ihdad*. Additionally, no systematically designed *ihdad* support model has been developed based on field findings and expert consensus. This highlights the importance of this

study to fill the gap by proposing a more practical and integrated Ihdad Support Model.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design. Two main data collection methods are utilized: document analysis and semi-structured interviews. Document analysis is conducted for literature review purposes, encompassing academic writings, previous studies, legal documents, official circulars, employment policies and institutional guidelines related to *ihdad* issues (Bowen, 2009). To achieve the objective of analysing the *fatwas* on *ihdad* issued within the Malaysian context, document analysis involved the collection of data in the form of *fatwas* and guidelines related to *ihdād* in Malaysia.

Meanwhile, the semi-structured interview method involves the use of an interview protocol that has been validated by subject matter experts and language specialists to ensure content validity. The respondents consist of 10 Muslim women who have lost their husbands, from the states of Selangor, Kelantan, and Terengganu. The selection of these three states is significant because each has specific policies that provide a 30-day *ihdad* leave entitlement for female public servants who have lost their husbands. These policies are outlined in the State Secretary Circular of Selangor No. 1 of 2009, Kelantan No. 5 of 2013, and Terengganu No. 5 of 2019. This policy provision offers an important context for assessing the realities of *ihdad* implementation among working women.

Respondents were selected through purposive sampling based on the following inclusive criteria: (i) Muslim women whose husbands have passed away; (ii) the husband's death occurred between one and five years prior; (iii) currently employed; (iv) not remarried; and (v) have children. These criteria were designed to obtain an accurate understanding of the level of compliance, implementation challenges and the types of welfare support needed during the iddah period following the husband's death (Patton, 2015). As explained by Kamal Azmi et al. (2015), purposive sampling is appropriate for collecting in-depth data because participants are selected based on their close relevance to the study's objectives.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the qualitative data, two approaches were employed: expert validation and respondent validation (member

checking). First, expert validation was conducted on the interview instruments, focusing on the accuracy of content, appropriateness of format, comprehensiveness of variables, and clarity of the items presented to the respondents. Second, respondent validation was carried out through the member checking process by providing interview transcripts to the respondents for review. This process allowed them to confirm the accuracy of the information, correct any errors, and sign the transcript documents as final confirmation (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

The interview data were recorded using voice recording devices with the respondents' permission, and then transcribed verbatim (Ghazali & Sufean, 2016). The complete transcripts were analyzed using ATLAS.ti software version 8.4.15. The analysis process was conducted through thematic analysis, involving three stages of coding: (i) open coding to identify initial themes; (ii) axial coding to link codes with subthemes; and (iii) selective coding to form main themes in line with the research objectives (Saldaña, 2021). This process ensures that the study findings are obtained systematically and structurally, consistent with high-quality qualitative research practices.

4.   FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1   *Analysis of Views of Muftis and Fatwa Authorities on Ihdad*

Analysis of views of Muftis and fatwas related to *ihdad* in Malaysia shows that the fundamental principles outlined by nearly all states are based on the Shafi'i school of thought. These principles include the obligation for women to observe the iddah period of four months and ten days, with prohibitions on beautifying themselves, using perfume, accepting marriage proposals and the requirement to remain at home throughout this period (al-Nawawi, 1992). Although there is uniformity in principle, minor differences exist in the implementation aspects, particularly concerning the interpretation of "urgent necessity" that permits women to leave the house.

For example, the Federal Territory Mufti Office in the Irsyad al-Fatwa series (2016) emphasized the prohibition for women in their iddah period to perform Umrah, as this act of worship can be postponed until the completion of the iddah. In other explanatory series such as Bayan Linnas (2023) and Al-Kafi (2022), more detailed guidelines were provided, including prohibitions on beautification, use of perfumes and the etiquette of leaving the house, which is

only allowed for certain necessities. Similarly, the Negeri Sembilan Mufti Office stressed that leaving the house is only permissible for important matters such as work, seeking medical treatment, or purchasing daily necessities, provided it is done during daylight hours and the woman observes the boundaries of Islamic decorum (Negeri Sembilan Mufti Office, 2021). In the context of Selangor, views of Mufti allow widowed women to leave the house for work and livelihood purposes, but they are still required to observe modesty, social boundaries and the prohibition of beautification (Tawdih al-Hukmi, 2023).

The findings indicate that views of Mufti in Malaysia function as normative guidelines in clarifying the status of *ihdad*, while simultaneously attempting to adapt the rulings to current realities. The *Ihdad* and *Iddah* Management Guidelines issued by JAKIM (2015) also emphasize fundamental aspects such as prohibitions on beautification, remaining at home, and maintaining proper conduct during the *ihdad* period, but they do not provide detailed practical mechanisms for working women. This situation creates a gap between the views of Muftis which tend to stress a literal interpretation and the social realities of career women who must fulfill both professional demands and family economic responsibilities (Mohamad, 2018).

Overall, the analysis of views of Mufti in Malaysia shows a balance between the need to uphold Shariah and the efforts to address contemporary challenges. However, the lack of specific guidelines for working women creates a need for the development of a more comprehensive *ihdad* support model, so that the implementation of the Shariah can be adapted to modern life contexts without neglecting the fundamental principles that have been established.

4.2   *The Reality of Working Women*

The reality faced by working women dealing with the demands of iḥdād reveals challenges across multiple dimensions, particularly in terms of employment, finances, emotions, and social support. Firstly, regarding job demands, most of the women interviewed reported difficulties in complying with the obligation to attend the office, participate in official meetings and perform external duties throughout the iḥdād period. This creates a dilemma because the requirement to remain at home during iḥdād, as emphasized by the fuqaha, especially within the Shafi'i school of thought (al-Nawawi, 1992), often conflicts with professional demands in the modern era. This situation aligns with the report by the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2023), which shows that the female labor force participation rate reached 56.2%, with the

majority engaged in the services, education, health and public administration sectors. Physical presence at the workplace is a key requirement in most organizations, thus limiting women's ability to comply literally with the fatwa on iḥḍād.

Secondly, financial commitments also pose a significant challenge for widows undergoing *ihdad*. The death of a husband often results in the loss of the primary source of family income, forcing women to bear full responsibility for their children, loan repayments, and the increasing cost of living (Hashim, Yusof, & Noor, 2019). For women who still have housing, vehicle, and children's education loans, the need to continue working becomes unavoidable. From the perspective of maqāṣid al-sharīʿah, this aligns with the principle of *hifz al-mal* (preservation of wealth), which allows women to earn a livelihood for the survival of the family (Dusuki & Abdullah, 2007). However, the absence of specific iḥdād leave in Malaysian employment law adds to the pressure, as many women have to use annual leave or unpaid leave (Noor, 2014).

Thirdly, from the emotional and social support perspective, career women undergoing iḥḍād experience profound psychological pressure. The loss of a life partner not only brings about grief but also leads to feelings of loneliness, depression and the burden of increased responsibilities (Kamali, 2021). Among the respondents, many reported a lack of social support from both the community and the workplace. Societal stigma that views widows working during the iḥḍād period as violating religious norms further exacerbates their stress. According to House's (1981) Social Support Theory, individuals who have lost a spouse are in critical need of emotional, informational and instrumental support from family members, colleagues, and institutions. However, the findings of this study indicate that such support remains limited and unstructured. This situation strengthens the need for a more comprehensive support model that encompasses psychosocial, financial, social and policy dimensions to address the realities faced by career women observing iḥḍād.

4.3   *The Needs of Working Women Observing Iḥḍād*

In this study, empirical data were collected through semi-structured interviews involving two groups of informants, namely ten (10) Muslim career women who are currently undergoing or have previously undergone iḥḍād.

The interviews were conducted using the Round Table Discussion (RTD) approach to allow for more dynamic interaction between participants and the researchers. The data collected were analyzed qualitatively using thematic coding methods with the assistance of ATLAS.ti software, where each informant's response was assigned specific codes according to identified themes. This approach enabled the systematic categorization of issues and the identification of patterns and trends within participant responses. Subsequently, the coded data were re-analyzed and presented in narrative form to provide a clear and accessible depiction of the phenomenon under study.

Based on the analysis conducted, three main thematic categories were identified:

1. Challenges faced by working women during the iḥdād period.
2. Needs arising among working women during iḥdād.
3. Forms of support received or required by women observing iḥdād.

Nevertheless, this article focuses exclusively on the second theme, namely the needs of working women during the *ihdad* period, as this theme is considered more critical for the formulation of a practical and policy-oriented *Ihdad* Support Model. The following section presents the demographic profile of the study informants.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Women Observing Iḥdād

CODE	State	Age	Occupation	Number of Child	Period of Husband's Death	Cause of Husband's D
W1	Selangor	49	Head of Security Unit	5	3 Year	Covid- 19
W2	Selangor	50	JAIS Teacher	7	3 Year	Covid-19
W3	Selangor	41	Finance Unit Officer, MAHB	5	5 Year	Heart Disease
W4	Terengganu	48	MTT Teacher	8	1 Year	Heart Failure
W5	Terengganu	54	SK Teacher	2	4 Year	Diabetes
W6	Terengganu	54	General Cleaning Staff	5	4 Year	High Fever

| W9	Kelantan	52	SK Teacher	4	5 Year	High Blood Pressure
W7	Kelantan	52	MRSM Teacher	5	1 Year	Diabetes, Kidney Failure & Heart Disease
W8	Kelantan	45	Polytechnic Lecturer	4	1 Year	Kidney Failure
W10	Kelantan	48	SK Teacher	11	2 Year	Lung Failure

Source: Interview transcripts

The respondents in this study comprised ten Muslim career women who had observed *ihdad* following the death of their husbands within a period ranging from one to five years. Their average age was 49.3 years, with an age range between 41 and 54 years. The majority of respondents were in middle adulthood, a life stage that often demands a balance between career demands and family responsibilities, as explained by Lachman et al. (2015). Geographically, four respondents were from Kelantan, three from Terengganu, and another three from Selangor, indicating participation representing both the east and west coastal zones of Peninsular Malaysia.

The majority of respondents come from the education sector, including primary and secondary school teachers, polytechnic lecturers, as well as officers in technical and security units and support sectors such as general cleaning staff. In terms of family, the number of children per respondent ranged from two to eleven, with an average of 5.6 children per respondent. This indicates that most working widows bear a high family dependency burden, which in turn demands stronger institutional and familial support. This aligns with the findings of Talib et al. (2020), who noted that most working single mothers, including widows, belong to the B40 group and carry significant economic and family responsibilities.

From the perspective of the time elapsed since the loss, three respondents reported that their husbands had passed away within one year, while the remaining respondents fell within the range of three to five years. The causes of death varied, including two cases due to COVID-19 infection, while the others were attributed to non-communicable chronic diseases such as heart failure, diabetes, hypertension, kidney failure and lung disease. These findings indicate that the majority of respondents faced the loss of their spouses due to

serious health factors, whether from a pandemic or chronic illnesses, which necessitates adjustment in emotional, financial and social aspects. Overall, this demographic profile provides a rich and representative picture of diverse backgrounds, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the realities and challenges faced by career women observing *ihdad* in Malaysia.
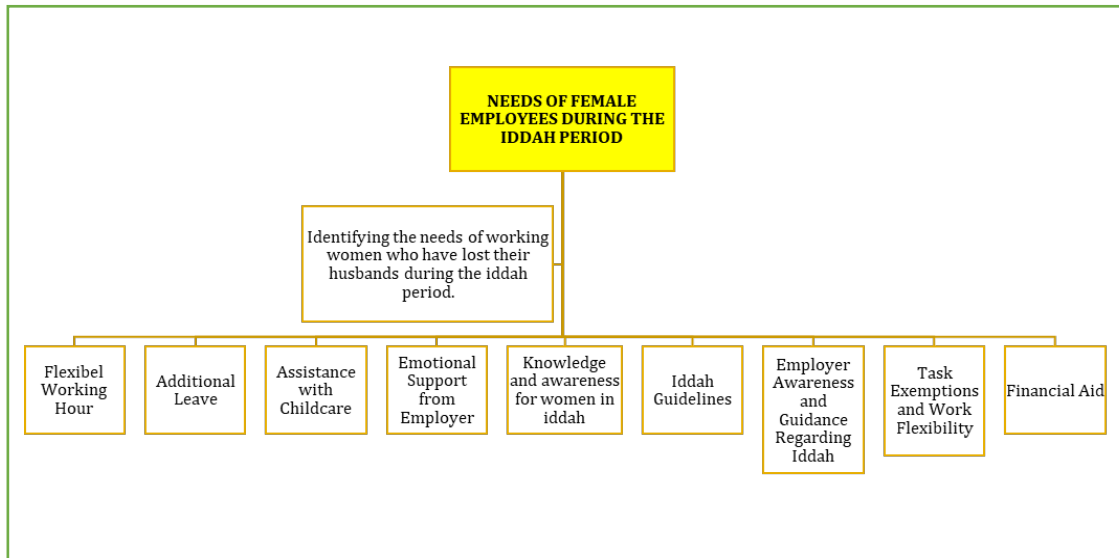
Figure 1. Needs of female employees who have lost their husbands during the iddah period.

Qualitative analysis using ATLAS.ti identified nine main themes representing the needs of Muslim female employees during the iddah period. Each theme is supported by interview excerpts that reflect the respondents' actual experiences, thereby strengthening the understanding of the field realities.

1. Financial Assistance

This theme emerged as the primary need, with 22 coded excerpts. Respondents emphasized the urgent need for financial aid from individuals, the community, or institutions. This assistance is deemed essential to ensure survival following the death of the husband, who was the main breadwinner.

"Those who came to visit were the ones who offered contributions. I received about 8,000. That was from individuals. I am employed and not a single mother. That's correct. Alhamdulillah, the sustenance is still there." (W5)

2. Flexible Working Hours

Nine coded excerpts supported the need for flexible working arrangements. Respondents suggested that employers should provide leniency in working hours or workload to help women in the iddah period manage their children

and family responsibilities.

"In my opinion, employers should provide support to women who have lost their husbands, such as financial assistance and work flexibility… if they have school-going children, some help should be given." (W6)

3. Additional Leave

Seventeen coded excerpts emphasized the importance of additional leave specifically for the iddah period to provide women with emotional and psychological space to adjust.

"For others, I think they should be given 5 days leave. Because the emotional burden is quite heavy. On my first day back to work, it was quite tough, but maybe there was some consideration from management in terms of…" (W7)

4. Assistance with Childcare

Ten coded excerpts highlighted the need for help in managing childcare during the iddah period. The restriction on leaving the house makes it difficult for mothers to send and pick up their children.

"During the iddah period… indeed, we were not allowed to go out. There are children who are going to PASTI, school-going children. So, my employer took care of this. Every morning, they would send a school van to pick up my three children and take them to PASTI and Taqwa…" (W4)

5. Emotional Support from Employers

This theme appeared with high frequency (22 coded excerpts). Many respondents stressed the need for empathy and understanding from employers regarding the emotional burden experienced after the loss of a spouse.

"He didn't understand. He said to me, 'Other people also lost their husbands but they're not like you.' During those 40 days, I was still trying to follow instructions. I could take them in, but more slowly… like I had to think a lot. It wasn't that I was being difficult." (W1)

6. Knowledge and Awareness for Women in *Iddah*

Eight coded excerpts highlighted the importance of access to clear information regarding rights and procedures following a spouse's death, such as savings, death benefits and investments.

"I needed knowledge, you know… to be informed about what can be done when someone passes away. For example, if they had savings in Bank Rakyat, or if there are death benefits, or investments." (W1)

7. *Iddah* Guidelines

Eight coded excerpts highlighted the need for employers to provide clear guidelines on the iddah period so that the entire organization understands the situation faced by female employees.

"The employer needs to have knowledge about this matter. It should be formalized — like we establish a clear guideline… stating that when a woman is in her iddah period, everyone knows and understands that she is currently observing it." (W7)

8. Employer Awareness and Guidance Regarding *Iddah*

This theme appeared in 16 coded excerpts, indicating that women undergoing iddah have a strong need for recognition and understanding from their employers.

"When I met with the principal, she understood. She said, 'Actually, I was waiting for you to come.' That was her exact phrase — meaning I had to be the one to initiate the conversation." (W7)

9. Task Exemptions and Work Flexibility

Although only three excerpts were coded, this theme highlights a clear need for women in the iddah period to be granted exemptions from certain tasks or permission to work from home.

"About a month before… basically, during that final month, I had to speak up and ask. If they said I needed a letter, I would write one… I said I wanted to request an exemption. So they allowed it, but at some point, I still had to go offline and be present at school." (W2)

Overall, the needs of working women during the iddah period encompass financial, emotional, social, organizational and informational dimensions. The most prominent themes were financial assistance and emotional support from employers (22 excerpts each), followed by the need for additional leave (17), employer awareness (16), childcare support (10), as well as flexible working hours, knowledge access, and clear iddah guidelines (8 each). Although task exemptions were recorded with lower frequency (3), they still highlight the

importance of workload flexibility. These findings demonstrate that women in iddah require comprehensive and systematic support from employers and organizations to ensure a balance between religious obligations and professional responsibilities.

4.4 Challenges in Implementing the Iddah Fatwa

The implementation of the iddah fatwa among working women reveals several key challenges, which can be categorized into three dimensions: role conflict, legal and policy constraints and societal perceptions.

Role conflict between religious obligations and career demands emerged as the most dominant issue. State fatwas in Malaysia emphasize that women observing iddah are required to remain at home throughout the iddah period, except for emergency matters (JAKIM, 2015). This view aligns with the tradition of classical jurists, including al-Nawawi (1992), who stress the prohibition of leaving the house without urgent reason. However, in current reality, many women have no choice but to attend the office, participate in official meetings or perform field duties. The inability to meet career demands not only affects professional performance but also has serious financial implications for family livelihood. Noor's (2014) study found that Muslim women facing conflicts between career and religious obligations often experience prolonged psychological stress and moral dilemmas. This situation highlights the need to reconsider the level of flexibility in the fatwa to uphold shariah principles while accommodating the contemporary realities of working women.

Legal and policy constraints also constitute major barriers. The Employment Act 1955 and current public service regulations do not provide special leave for women observing iddah (Employment Act, 1955). As a result, most women have to take annual leave, unpaid leave, or emergency leave, which may negatively impact their monthly income (Hashim, Yusof, & Noor, 2019). The absence of clear institutional guidelines makes the implementation of the iddah fatwa highly dependent on individual initiative. In contrast, countries such as Jordan and Egypt have introduced husband's death leave recognized under labor laws as progressive support for women (al-Qaradawi, 1999). This policy gap in Malaysia highlights the need for reforms that are more shariah compliant and responsive to gender needs.

Societal perceptions further exacerbate the burdens faced by women observing iddah. Focus group discussions reveal that women who return to work during the iddah period are often perceived as violating religious law, despite their actions being motivated by economic necessity. Kamali (2021) emphasizes that societal misunderstandings of Shariah texts frequently lead to social discrimination, causing some widows to isolate themselves from social activities or limit their mobility. From the perspective of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Social Ecological Theory, the implementation of the iddah fatwa does not depend solely on the individual but is also influenced by mesosystem factors such as family and employers, as well as macrosystem factors like societal culture and national policies. Therefore, a more inclusive societal understanding based on the principles of maqāṣid al-sharīʿah is crucial to reduce stigma and ensure that women observing iddah receive appropriate support.

In summary, the findings reveal a significant gap between the normative provision of Shariah and the socio-economic realities experienced by working women. This gap arises not only from individual factors but is also compounded by policy deficiencies and societal perceptions. Therefore, an interdisciplinary approach that integrates fatwa rulings, labor legislation, community support and the maqāṣid al-sharīʿah framework is essential to develop a more practical, inclusive and responsive support model that aligns with the realities of contemporary Muslim women.

5.   CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the fatwa on iḥdād remains relevant as part of the Shariah obligations that must be obeyed by Muslim women. However, the current realities faced by working women highlight the need for a more adaptive and context-sensitive form of support. The gap between the normative fatwa texts and the lived experiences of women observing iḥdād must be bridged through the development of an Iḥdād Support Model that is practical, inclusive, and integrated.

This article contributes across three primary dimensions. First, for fatwa institutions, the study's findings provide opportunities to develop policies and guidelines that are more responsive to contemporary realities without compromising Shariah principles. Second, for government and employers, the results underscore the importance of formulating supportive policies, including proposals for special iḥdād leave, financial assistance and flexible work arrangements for women who have lost their spouses. Third, for

academic community, this article enriches the discourse by integrating fatwa analysis, social theory, and empirical data, thereby establishing a solid foundation for further research.

The practical implications of this study are clear: support for women undergoing iḥdād not only assists them in fulfilling their religious obligations peacefully but also ensures career continuity, psychological well-being and social harmony. Consequently, the proposed support model holds potential as a reference for the formulation of fatwas, employment policies and community programs. Future research could explore the effectiveness of implementing this model across various institutional contexts and compare it with practices in other countries, with the aim of generating a genuinely positive, sustainable, and global impact.

6.   ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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