

Research Article

The Role of National Civil Capital in Improving Underprivileged Women's Businesses: An Islamic Economic Analysis

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Abstract: This study discusses the role and financing mechanism of PT Permodalan Nasional Madani (PNM) through the Membina Ekonomi Keluarga Sejahtera (Mekaar) program in improving the businesses and welfare of underprivileged women in Polewali Mandar Regency. The issues raised focus on how the financing program not only increases women's economic capacity but also reflects the core values of Islamic economics. The purpose of this study is to analyze the role of PNM Mekaar in empowering underprivileged women and to assess the extent to which the principles of justice (al-'adl), benefit (al-ma ṣ la ḥ ah), and mutual assistance (at-ta'āwun) are applied in its financing mechanism. The study uses a descriptive qualitative method with a field study approach through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation of program facilitators and active clients. The results show that unsecured financing, group mentoring, and entrepreneurship training are effective strategies in strengthening capital access, business capacity, and social solidarity among underprivileged women. This practice aligns with the principles of maqā ṣ id al-sharī ' ah, particularly in safeguarding and developing wealth (*ḥ iḏ ṣ al-māl*). However, the implementation of Islamic economic values in the Mekaar program is more substantive social than formal contractual, considering that PNM still operates within a conventional system. The conclusion of this study confirms that the Mekaar program is an economic empowerment model that integrates Islamic values practically and contextually, and contributes to strengthening women's economics based on justice and welfare.

Keywords: Islamic Economics; Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'ah; Microfinance; PNM Mekaar; Women's Empowerment.

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1. Background

Poverty in Indonesia is a structural issue that remains a major concern in national development. This phenomenon reflects the inability of some communities to meet basic living needs due to multidimensional factors such as high population growth, low education levels, limited employment opportunities, and unequal income distribution (Ekaputri et al., 2025). In the context of underprivileged women, the problem of poverty is further complicated by the dual challenges they face, both economic and social. Women often have more limited access to resources, education, and economic participation than men (Widiyanti et al., 2018).

Poverty alleviation efforts in Indonesia require both direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies include providing business capital assistance and stimulus funds to increase productive economic activity, while indirect strategies include entrepreneurship development, financial inclusion, and the establishment of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) as a means of community economic empowerment (Suryani et al., 2024). One institution actively participating in this strategy is PT Permodalan Nasional Madani (PNM) through its Mekaar (Fostering a Prosperous Family Economy) program, which provides collateral-free

microfinance services to underprivileged women's groups, along with business training and mentoring (Welfare, 2024).

The Mekaar program is a concrete form of women's economic empowerment based on state institutions. The approach used focuses on increasing business capacity through microfinance, entrepreneurship training, and ongoing group mentoring. Research shows that women receiving the Mekaar program experience increased household income and economic independence (Rahmavita, 2022; Rozalinda et al., 2024). However, most studies still focus on the economic and social aspects, while the dimension of sharia values in program implementation has not been studied in depth (Nawawi et al., 2022; Widiastuti et al., 2024).

From an Islamic economic perspective, women's empowerment through microfinance programs such as Mekaar can be seen as an implementation of the principles of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, particularly in safeguarding wealth (*ḥifz al-māl*) and safeguarding lives (*ḥifz al-nafs*). The purpose of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* is to create benefits (*maslahah*) and prevent harm (*mafsadah*) in socio-economic life (Zailani et al., 2023). The economic empowerment of underprivileged women carried out with the principles of justice, trustworthiness, and sustainability aligns with the main goals of Islamic economics, namely reducing social inequality and realizing shared prosperity (Sarwath et al., 2022).

Previous research by Nawawi, Soemitra, and Dalimunthe (2022) emphasized the importance of Islamic microfinance institutions as a means of empowering women to achieve economic independence, but did not explicitly examine the application of the *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* values in practice. Thus, there is a research gap to further examine the extent to which Islamic economic principles are implemented in the Mekaar program, particularly in the areas of financing, group mentoring, and fostering women's community-based businesses.

Based on this, this study attempts to present a new perspective by integrating Islamic economic analysis and the principles of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* in the practice of state-based micro-empowerment through the Mekaar program, focusing on underprivileged women in Polewali Mandar Regency. This study aims to answer two main questions: (1) what is the role of PNM in increasing the business capacity of underprivileged women through Mekaar financing, and (2) how are Islamic economic values applied in the empowerment approach taken.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Women's Economic Empowerment

Economic empowerment of unbanked women through financial inclusion in Indonesia by Yenti Afrida Rozalinda et al. (2024) shows that financial inclusion through financing and training for unbanked women in Indonesia has a positive impact on increasing their income and savings. This study used qualitative and descriptive methodologies in groups of women running home businesses in West Sumatra and Riau and found that with financial literacy training and easy access to capital, women's economic empowerment became more evident. Similar findings have been echoed in broader financial-inclusion literature, which highlights that access to microfinance and capacity-building programs significantly strengthens women's agency, business resilience, and household economic stability (Demirgüç-Kunt et al., 2022; Hashemi, Schuler, & Riley, 1996).

The above research has shown that women's economic empowerment programs through financial access and business training have a positive impact on increasing the income and economic independence of underprivileged women, but there are still limited studies that specifically examine the implementation of Islamic economic values as part of the empowerment framework. Within the theoretical framework of women's economic empowerment that emphasizes aspects of access, agency and achievement, there is still a gap in connecting microfinance activities institutionally with sharia principles such as justice, responsibility and welfare, which are central to *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* (Kamali, 2019; Chapra, 2008). Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by examining in an integrated manner the role of state institutions (namely microfinance institutions) in improving the economic enterprises of underprivileged women while examining the application of Islamic economic values in the empowerment process.

2.2 Group-Based Microfinance Model

Previous research by Suryani (2024) showed that group financing management, coupled with guidance and group discipline, can increase the economic independence of female beneficiaries. However, this research did not examine how Islamic economic values (such as justice, mutual assistance, and welfare) are applied in the mentoring and financing mechanisms. This study aims to fill this gap by analyzing the application of the Mekaar group financing model from an Islamic economic perspective and its relationship to the empowerment of underprivileged women.

based microfinance model is an approach in which a group of people, generally from lower-income backgrounds, is formed into a business unit or joint financing unit, with collective responsibility for managing and repaying capital. This concept has several key elements: the formation of small groups (e.g., 7-10 people), a joint liability mechanism, regular meetings, business training, and mentoring.

Suryani's (2024) research shows that group-based microfinance management can increase women's economic independence through group discipline, mentoring, and strengthening social capital. However, this research has not yet examined how state-owned financial institutions like PT Permodalan Nasional Madani (PNM) implement group-based financing models specifically in the context of empowering underprivileged women.

Furthermore, it has not been studied how Islamic economic values, such as justice, trustworthiness, mutual assistance (ta'awun), and welfare (maslahah), are integrated into the economic empowerment process. Therefore, this study examines the role of PNM in improving the businesses of underprivileged women through the Mekaar program and assesses its application from an Islamic economic perspective using the Group-Based Microfinance Model as an analytical framework.

2.3 Principles of Islamic Economics and Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah

Research by Zuhri M. Nawawi, Andri Soemitra, & Mahfuzah Dalimunthe (2022) entitled "Women's Economic Empowerment Through Sharia Micro Finance Institutions in Indonesia" shows that sharia microfinance institutions are an important alternative for women micro-entrepreneurs in obtaining capital and business training, but are still limited in reach, financial skills, and integration of sharia values in practice.

Islamic economics places economic activity as part of worship that is oriented towards justice (al-'adl), balance, welfare (al-maṣlaḥah), and mutual assistance (at-ta'awun). These values are regulated through the framework of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah which aims to safeguard religion (ḥifẓ ad-dīn), soul (ḥifẓ an-nafs), intellect (ḥifẓ al-'aql), descendants (ḥifẓ an-nasl), and property (ḥifẓ al-māl).¹ In the context of modern economics, maqāṣid serves not only as a normative guide, but also as an ethical framework to ensure that financing and economic empowerment practices are in accordance with the values of social justice and sustainability.

Based on these findings, this study places the National Civil Capital (Mekaar) program as an object of study to fill this gap by analyzing how Islamic economic principles and maqāṣid al-sharī'ah are implemented in the economic empowerment of underprivileged women through a group-based microfinance model.

3. Materials and Method

Types of research

This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type, namely research that aims to describe and analyze phenomena in depth according to the context that occurs in the field.

Research Location and Subjects

The research was conducted at PT Permodalan Nasional Madani (PNM) Mekaar Unit in Polewali Mandar Regency. Subjects included Mekaar program support staff and underprivileged women who are active customers of the program.

Data collection technique

Data was obtained through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with key informants directly involved in program implementation. Observations were conducted to understand the mentoring process and group meetings.

Documentation was used to obtain administrative data related to the number of clients, business development, and activity reports.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis uses the Miles and Huberman model, which includes three stages: Data reduction, namely the selection and simplification of important data; Data presentation, namely organizing information in the form of narrative descriptions; Conclusion drawing, namely formulating the meaning of the results of the analysis as a whole.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. The Role of PNM Mekaar in Improving the Businesses of Underprivileged Women

The research findings indicate that PNM Mekaar plays a strategic role in improving the businesses of underprivileged women through a group-based microfinance model and regular mentoring. The empowerment process involves several key stages: program outreach, customer feasibility testing, field verification, capital disbursement, weekly group meetings, surprise visits, and gradual repayment. This financing program does not require collateral, thus providing easier access to capital for women with limited financial resources. In addition to capital, PNM Mekaar also provides business mentoring and entrepreneurial motivation, which helps clients build confidence and business management skills. Many underprivileged women stated that the Mekaar program helped them develop their small businesses, increase their inventory, and expand their customer network. Thus, PNM Mekaar serves not only as a financing institution but also as an agent of family economic empowerment by increasing women's business capacity.

This finding aligns with research by Sutiyo and Yenti (2024), which shows that group-based microfinance increases women's economic bargaining power through access to capital and simple business mentoring. This study confirms that consistent mentoring significantly increases business independence, not just the amount of capital provided. However, previous research focused more on increasing income, while this study expands the discussion to strengthening women's entrepreneurial capacity and self-confidence as family economic actors.

PNM Mekaar's role in empowering underprivileged women can be understood as a process of strengthening access, agency, and economic outcomes. Collateral-free financing provides access, business mentoring builds agency, and increased income and financial independence are the achievements. Thus, the empowerment process is transformational, not only meeting short-term economic needs but also fostering women's awareness and empowerment in carrying out their productive roles.

4.2. Analysis of Islamic Economic Values in Financing Mechanisms

The implementation of financing in the Mekaar program demonstrates alignment with the principles of justice (al-'adl), benefit (al-maṣ la ḥ ah), and mutual assistance (at-ta'āwun). This is evident through the collateral-free financing mechanism, allowing women with economic limitations to still have access to capital to run their businesses. This is in line with the objectives of maqā ṣ id al-sharī ' ah, especially in maintaining and developing assets (ḥ if ṣ al-māl) as part of efforts to improve family welfare. In addition, group mentoring and weekly meetings build solidarity among members through a system of shared responsibility (tanggung renteng). This system encourages women to strengthen each other in fulfilling financing repayment obligations and improving business management. Thus, financing is not only oriented towards financial capital, but also on developing an entrepreneurial mentality and economic independence, which are indicators of empowerment in Islamic economics.

The research found that although Sharia values are reflected in its social practices, the program has not fully utilized Sharia-based financing contracts, as PNM is a state-owned enterprise operating under a conventional financing system. Therefore, the implementation of Islamic economic values within the Mekaar program is more substantive socially than formally.

A study by Yunita and colleagues found that Islamic microfinance institutions play a significant role in empowering women and the family economy in Indonesia. Research examining the application of the maqā ṣ id al-sharī ' ah in economics and finance confirms that one of the main objectives of ḥ if ṣ al-māl is not only the preservation of wealth but also

its equitable distribution and economic development. The study examined the framework of the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* and its implementation in microfinance. - Finance shows how the principles of justice, welfare, and mutual assistance become the normative basis for inclusive financing.

Based on the findings and strengthening of the literature, here are several points of analysis: Fair access: The collateral-free financing mechanism allows underprivileged women to obtain business capital. This is important because in Islamic economics, access to economic resources is part of social justice. Therefore, this program practically leads to the value of *al-'adl*. Benefit and economic development: Group mentoring, entrepreneurship training, and a joint responsibility system enable the development of business capabilities and social solidarity. This aligns with the objectives of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* for the benefit of individuals and society. Mutual assistance (*at-ta'āwūn*): The joint responsibility group system shows that members support each other in repayment of financing and business management. This creates a collective effect that strengthens the economic independence of the community. Limited formality of sharia contracts: Although Islamic economic values are reflected, there are gaps in the formal aspects of sharia contracts because the program is still run through the mainstream system of conventional state-owned enterprises, not purely sharia financial institutions. This means that although the substance is sharia, the formality is not yet complete.

Implications of Islamic economic empowerment: By combining aspects of capital access, entrepreneurial capacity, and group solidarity, this program is not simply financing but also economic empowerment based on Islamic values. This demonstrates that "wealth" (*mal*) in Islamic economics is not merely an object of capital but also a tool for improving well-being and economic independence.

The findings of this study indicate that the PNM Mekaar program has implemented many Islamic economic values, particularly in terms of fair access, social welfare, and economic solidarity among members. However, there is still room for improvement in the formal aspects of sharia contracts to further align social practices and sharia financial structures. This is crucial for strengthening the economic empowerment of underprivileged women in order to achieve sustainable prosperity in accordance with the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that the PNM Mekaar program plays a significant role in improving the businesses and economic independence of underprivileged women through collateral-free financing, business mentoring, and entrepreneurship training. These practices align with the Islamic economic values of *al-'adl* (justice), *al-maṣlaḥah* (benefit), and *at-ta'āwūn* (mutual assistance) as well as the objectives of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* in maintaining and developing assets (*ḥifẓ al-māl*). Although not yet fully based on formal sharia contracts, this program substantively reflects the principles of justice and empowerment in Islam. This study contributes to the development of an Islamic-based micro-empowerment model in state financial institutions, with limitations in the scope of the research area. Future studies are recommended to expand the analysis on the implementation of sharia contracts and their impact on the sustainability of women's economic empowerment.

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