

Social Justice *Fiqh* and Decent Living Needs: Reinterpreting Minimum Wage Policy in Indonesia

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Abstract

Minimum-wage determination remains a contested issue situated at the nexus of legal compliance, economic feasibility, and workers' rights to an adequate standard of living. This study offers a socio-legal reinterpretation of minimum-wage policy in Sukoharjo, Indonesia, focusing on how decent living needs (*kebutuhan hidup layak*) are operationalized within wage regulation and institutional decision-making processes. The findings indicate a persistent disparity between the normative commitment to ensuring a decent living and the substantive outcomes of wage-setting practices. This disparity is exacerbated by asymmetrical bargaining power within the Wage Council, where considerations related to business capacity, employment stability, and the risk of layoffs tend to outweigh workers' demands for adequate wages. Although empirical data on food and non-food expenditures provide a foundation for assessing decent living needs, their incorporation into the final wage is mediated by the α parameter alongside broader economic factors such as inflation, unemployment, productivity, and regional business capacity. Within this context, the study advances social justice *fiqh* (*fiqh al-'adālah al-ijtimā'īyah*) as a critical framework within Islamic legal thought, grounded in principles of human dignity, collective social responsibility, protection of vulnerable groups, and public welfare. This research contributes to contemporary Islamic socio-legal and labor governance scholarship by reframing minimum-wage adequacy beyond mere formal regulatory compliance, emphasizing substantive justice, worker dignity, and equitable social welfare.

[Penetapan upah minimum masih menjadi isu yang diperdebatkan karena berada pada persinggungan antara kepatuhan hukum, kelayakan ekonomi, dan hak pekerja atas standar hidup yang layak. Penelitian ini menawarkan reinterpretasi sosio-legal terhadap kebijakan upah minimum di Sukoharjo, Indonesia, dengan menelisik bagaimana kebutuhan hidup layak dioperasionalisasikan dalam regulasi pengupahan dan proses pengambilan keputusan kelembagaan. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan adanya kesenjangan yang persisten antara komitmen normatif untuk menjamin kehidupan yang layak dan hasil substantif dari praktik kebijakan penetapan upah. Kesenjangan tersebut menjadi jauh lebih kompleks karena terjadi ketimpangan daya tawar dalam proses determinasi yang diiniasi oleh Dewan Pengupahan, di mana pertimbangan mengenai kapasitas usaha, stabilitas ketenagakerjaan, dan risiko pemutusan hubungan kerja cenderung lebih dominan dibandingkan tuntutan pekerja atas upah yang memadai. Meskipun data empiris mengenai pengeluaran pangan dan non pangan menjadi dasar dalam penilaian kebutuhan hidup layak, proses

integrasi ke dalam besaran upah akhir dimediasi oleh parameter α serta berbagai faktor ekonomi yang lebih luas, seperti inflasi, pengangguran, produktivitas, dan kapasitas usaha regional. Dalam konteks tersebut, penelitian ini mengembangkan wacana fikih keadilan sosial (fiqh al-‘adālah al-ijtimā‘iyyah) sebagai kerangka analitis kritis dalam pemikiran hukum Islam yang berlandaskan pada prinsip martabat manusia, tanggung jawab sosial kolektif, perlindungan kelompok rentan, dan kemaslabatan publik. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada perkembangan studi Islam melalui pengayaan dimensi sosio-legal dan tata kelola ketenagakerjaan kontemporer, melampaui dari sekadar kepatuhan formal terhadap regulasi dalam kecukupan upah minimum menuju penguatan keadilan substantif, martabat pekerja, dan kesejahteraan sosial yang berkelanjutan.]

Keywords: Decent Living Needs, Indonesia, Labor Governance, Minimum Wage Policy, Social Justice *Fiqh*.

Introduction

Minimum wage regulation occupies a pivotal yet persistently contested position within contemporary labor governance because it embodies competing conceptions of economic rationality, legal legitimacy, and social justice.¹ Across jurisdictions, governments increasingly justify wage-setting mechanisms through macroeconomic indicators intended to preserve investment competitiveness, employment stability, and fiscal sustainability.² Such approaches, however, have attracted sustained criticism for reducing workers' welfare to measurable economic variables while overlooking the normative foundations upon which labor rights are constructed.³ International labor scholarship has consequently shifted from viewing wages solely as market outcomes toward recognizing them as instruments for safeguarding human dignity, reducing structural inequality, and fulfilling the state's social obligations.⁴ Within this broader discourse, Indonesia presents a particularly significant case. The incorporation of decent living needs (*kebutuhan hidup layak*, KHL) into the institutional framework of minimum wage determination reflects an explicit commitment to ensuring that

¹ Hani Ofek-Ghendler, "Globalization and Social Justice: The Right to Minimum Wage," *Law & Ethics of Human Rights* 3, no. 2 (July 2009): 267–300; Jenny Jansson and Camille Pellerin, "Minimum Wages in Global Perspective: Histories, Struggles and Contested Functions," *Notebooks: The Journal for Studies on Power* 5, no. 1 (December 2025): 1–15; Zoe Adams, "Understanding the Minimum Wage: Political Economy and Legal Form," *The Cambridge Law Journal* 78, no. 1 (March 2019): 42–69.

² Simon Deakin, "Employment and Wage Policies in a Post-Neoliberal World," in *Economic Policies for a Post-Neoliberal World*, ed. Philip Arestis and Malcolm Sawyer (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 345–88; Athanasios Nazos et al., "Evolution of the Minimum and Average Wage in the Countries of the European Union," pt. 331, *Economies* 14, no. 8 (August 2026): 1–44; Mohd Razek et al., "Minimum Wage Implementation in ASEAN Countries: A Comparative Study of Policy Effectiveness and Challenges," *International Business Education Journal* 19, no. 1 (April 2026): 47–61.

³ S. Deakin and F. Wilkinson, "Right vs Efficiency? The Economic Case for Transnational Labour Standards," *Industrial Law Journal* 23, no. 4 (December 1994): 289–310; William E. Forbath, "Constitutional Welfare Rights: A History, Critique and Reconstruction," *Fordham Law Review* 69, no. 5 (2001): 1821–91; Aoife Nolan and Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky, "Human Rights and Economic Policy Reforms," *The International Journal of Human Rights* 24, no. 9 (October 2020): 1247–67.

⁴ Diane F. Frey and Gillian MacNaughton, "A Human Rights Lens on Full Employment and Decent Work in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda," *Sage Open* 6, no. 2 (April 2016): 1–13; Syamsuri et al., "Connecting ISF to ISEs for Decent Work (SDG 8): A Conceptual Framework," *Al-Muamalat* 13, no. 1 (March 2026): 1–26.

labor remuneration corresponds to socially acceptable living standards.⁵ Nevertheless, the recurring contestation surrounding annual minimum wage decisions—including labor mobilization, employer resistance, and regulatory disputes—reveals that formal reliance on KHL has not resolved deeper questions concerning distributive justice, normative legitimacy, and the substantive realization of workers' rights.

Within the Indonesian context, existing scholarship has generated extensive debates on minimum wage regulation from economic, legal, and ethical perspectives, yet these discussions remain largely compartmentalized and therefore insufficient to explain the normative complexity of wage justice. Economic studies predominantly conceptualize minimum wages as instruments for balancing productivity,⁶ inflation,⁷ employment,⁸ and business competitiveness,⁹ producing sophisticated empirical models but often treating justice as an external policy objective rather than an intrinsic legal principle. Socio-legal research has broadened this perspective by examining institutional bargaining,¹⁰ regulatory implementation,¹¹ and the political economy of workers' governance;¹² however, its analytical focus frequently privileges procedural legitimacy over substantive conceptions of fairness. Within Islamic legal scholarship, discussions concerning workers' rights have generally revolved around equitable remuneration,¹³ religious principles,¹⁴ and distributive ethics,¹⁵ yet

⁵ Wiwik Afifah et al., "From Legal Gaps to Decent Wages: Ensuring Domestic Workers' Rights in Indonesia," *Jurnal Hukum Bisnis Bonum Commune* 8, no. 2 (August 2025): 336–59; Siti Kunarti et al., "Reformulation of Minimum Wage Policy and Its Implications Concerning Justice and Workers' Welfare in the Context Indonesian Law," *Volksgeist: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum dan Konstitusi* 8, no. 1 (June 2025): 213–30.

⁶ Imam Safei Muslim, "Economic Impacts of Minimum Wage Policy Adjustments in Indonesia: A Panel Analysis of Provincial Data," *Journal of Applied Econometric* 2, no. 1 (February 2026): 45–64.

⁷ Asriati Asriati, Ismail Rasulong, and Arfinayanti Syam, "The Dynamics of Minimum Wages and Inflation: Implications for Employment Opportunities in the Manufacturing Sector," *Income Journal of Economics Development* 4, no. 2 (July 2024): 104–13.

⁸ L. Suparto and R. Nenry Kusumadewi, "Labor Dynamics: The Influence of District Minimum Wage and Inflation on Employee Turnover in West Java's Manufacturing Sector," *Finance and Business Management Journal* 3, no. 2 (December 2025): 63–74.

⁹ Padang Wicaksono et al., "Minimum Wages and Labour-Intensive Industry: Experience from Indonesia," *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics* 68, no. 1 (March 2025): 119–40.

¹⁰ Intan Meitasari, Suratno Suratno, and Yuniwati Yuniwati, "Normative Approach to Law and Economics in Developing Countries: Challenges in Establishing Efficient and Just Market Regulations," *Journal of Law and Economics* 4, no. 2 (November 2025): 237–49.

¹¹ Yeti Kurniati and Wiwit Julianasari, "Precarious Work and Legal Protection: Insights into the Implementation of Labor Standards," *Khazanah Hukum* 8, no. 1 (March 2026): 57–70; Ahmad Muchlis, Pujiyono Pujiyono, and Nabitatus Sa'adah, "Reconstructing the Legal Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers Facing the Death Penalty (Jinayat) in Saudi Arabia: National and International Legal Perspectives," *Syariah: Jurnal Hukum dan Pemikiran* 25, no. 2 (October 2025): 230–56.

¹² Inaya Rakhmani and Zulfa Sakhiyya, "The Cultural Political Economy of Knowledge in Neo-Liberal Indonesia," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 55, no. 3 (January 2024): 1–17.

¹³ Siti Kunarti et al., "Perspective of Employment Relations and Wages in Labor Law and Islamic Law," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam* 8, no. 1 (March 2024): 386–402.

¹⁴ Kausar Yasmeen, "Justice in the Workplace: Islamic Principles for Wage Determination," *Islamic Economic Studies* 31, no. 1/2 (December 2023): 43–87; Sri Nurcahyani, Dey Ravena, and Rini Irianti Sundari, "Islamic Fiqh Principles for Worker Protection: Wage Determination and Payment," *KARSA: Journal of Social and Islamic Culture* 33, no. 1 (June 2025): 193–214.

¹⁵ Abdul Ghani, Arif Hussain, and Ali Raza Abdi, "Islamic Principles on Labor Rights: Ethical Treatment and Employer Responsibilities," *Journal of Religion and Society* 2, no. 4 (December 2024): 762–70; Muhammad Miftahul Ikhsan, Neni Nuraeni, and Deffa Meiriyanti, "Integrating Islamic Business Ethics in Labor Protection and Minimum Wage Determination in Indonesia," *Mu'amalah: Jurnal Hukum Ekonomi Syariah* 3, no. 1 (June 2024): 105–14.

these normative explorations rarely engage with the institutional realities through which modern states formulate and enforce wage policies. Consequently, the relationship between Islamic legal reasoning and contemporary wage governance remains theoretically underdeveloped, particularly regarding how the principle of KHL should be interpreted not merely as an administrative benchmark but as a normative expression of social justice. This fragmentation reveals a critical research gap: the absence of empirically grounded socio-legal analyses capable of integrating Islamic jurisprudential thought with the legal, institutional, and social dynamics that shape minimum wage policies in contemporary Indonesia.

The foregoing gap necessitates a conceptual framework capable of transcending the conventional dichotomy between doctrinal Islamic jurisprudence and positive labor regulation. This article advances *fiqh al-‘adālah al-ijtimā‘iyyah* (social justice *fiqh*, SJF) as such a framework by repositioning *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) from a predominantly rule-oriented discipline toward a normative jurisprudence concerned with the realization of justice through legal institutions and public governance. Rather than treating justice as an abstract moral aspiration or merely an outcome of statutory compliance, SJF conceptualizes justice as a dynamic process through which legal norms, state authority, and social practices collectively shape the protection of human dignity and socioeconomic welfare.¹⁶ From this perspective, the determination of minimum wages cannot be reduced to a technocratic exercise based on macroeconomic indicators or administrative formulas alone; it must also be evaluated according to its capacity to secure workers’ substantive entitlement to a decent standard of living. The concept of KHL therefore assumes a significance extending beyond its regulatory function, serving instead as a normative indicator of whether labor governance fulfills the ethical objectives embedded within Islamic legal thought. By integrating empirical realities with jurisprudential reasoning, SJF enables a socio-legal interrogation of wage governance that simultaneously examines institutional practice, distributive legitimacy, and the state’s responsibility to transform legal guarantees into tangible social protection.

This article critically examines the relationship between SJF and minimum wage governance by investigating how the principle of KHL is articulated, institutionalized, and contested within the socio-legal context of Sukoharjo, Indonesia. Rather than approaching wage regulation merely as a technical instrument of economic management or a formal mechanism of labor protection, this study argues that minimum wage policies represent a broader normative struggle over the meaning of justice, dignity, and social responsibility within contemporary legal systems. By bringing Islamic jurisprudential reasoning into dialogue with empirical realities of labor governance, this article contributes to the development of Islamic socio-legal scholarship in two significant ways. First, it expands the analytical scope of *fiqh* by demonstrating its relevance as a critical framework for evaluating public policies beyond traditional domains of personal religious obligations and private

¹⁶ Ade Setiadi, Heriyono, and Rohadin, “Islamic Perspectives on Poverty Reduction Policies in Indonesia: Revisiting Al-Ghazali’s Socioeconomic Thought,” *International Journal of Islamic Khazanah* 16, no. 1 (June 2026): 92–104; Anis Mashdurohatun et al., “Trademark Protection Regulations for MSMEs in Advancing an Equitable Creative Economy,” *Journal of Human Rights, Culture and Legal System* 6, no. 2 (August 2026): 135–69; Naufatti Aufa et al., “Al-Syaibānī Conception of Work in Kitāb al-Kasb and the Relevance to Gig Economy,” *Al-Muamalat* 13, no. 1 (March 2026): 27–49.

transactions. Second, it enriches socio-legal debates on labor regulation by offering an alternative normative perspective that interrogates whether existing wage institutions effectively transform legal commitments into substantive social protection. Through this approach, the article proposes that SJF provides a meaningful framework for rethinking minimum wage governance as a mechanism for advancing distributive justice, human dignity, and equitable welfare in contemporary Indonesia.

Research Methodology

Study Area

Sukoharjo Regency was selected as the study area because its geographical, demographic, and economic characteristics provide a particularly relevant context for examining the relationship between the regency minimum wage (*Upah Minimum Kabupaten*, UMK) and KHL. Located in Central Java (see Figure 1) and strategically positioned within the broader Joglosemar economic region,¹⁷ Sukoharjo is one of the province's relatively compact regencies but has a substantial and economically diverse population distributed across 12 districts. Its demographic structure is closely connected to an increasingly urbanized and industrialized economy, particularly around the Kartasura and Grogol areas, while other districts retain significant agricultural and informal-sector activities. Official statistics indicate that Sukoharjo's economy is dominated by manufacturing, followed by wholesale and retail trade, agriculture, and construction, demonstrating the coexistence of formal wage employment and less-secure forms of livelihood.¹⁸

Figure 1
Location of the Study Area



Source: Authors' elaboration, 2026.

¹⁷ The Joglosemar area is a "golden triangle" and a major economic growth center in Central Java and the Special Region of Yogyakarta, encompassing three major cities: Yogyakarta (Jogja), Surakarta (Solo), and Semarang. The area serves as a key driver of regional economic growth through tourism, industry, and cultural sectors. Kementerian Pariwisata Republik Indonesia, June 5, 2024, <https://kemenpar.go.id/ragam-pariwisata/potensi-kawasan-joglosemar-jelajah-wisata-sejarah-dan-budaya>.

¹⁸ Kabupaten Sukoharjo, "Profil Kependudukan Kabupaten Sukoharjo 2024," Portal Sukoharjo, July 28, 2025, <https://portal.sukoharjokab.go.id/blog/pengumuman/profil-kependudukan-kabupaten-sukoharjo-2024/>.

This economic diversity makes Sukoharjo particularly suitable for investigating whether the UMK adequately reflects workers' actual living requirements. The 2025 labor-force data record 507,385 employed persons, including 265,575 employees and 26,988 casual workers, alongside substantial numbers of own-account and family workers.¹⁹ Such occupational heterogeneity is important because minimum-wage policy formally targets wage employment, whereas the broader social reality of living costs extends beyond workers in conventional employment relationships. The central issue, therefore, is not merely whether the legally prescribed UMK is complied with, but whether its determination corresponds to the material conditions necessary for a decent standard of living. This makes Sukoharjo a valuable empirical setting for examining the tension between regulatory wage adequacy and lived economic needs. Moreover, the availability of detailed official data on population, employment, expenditure, industry, and regional economic conditions strengthens the methodological justification for selecting the regency as a case study.

Data Collection

This study employed three complementary data collection techniques: observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentary analysis. The combination of these sources enables the research to examine minimum wage governance not only as a legal framework but also as an institutional and social practice. Field observations were conducted for two months, from January to February 2026. The observation focused on understanding the institutional context surrounding wage governance, including interactions among relevant stakeholders, administrative practices related to wage determination, and the socioeconomic conditions shaping workers' perceptions of decent living standards (*kebutuhan hidup layak*, KHL). The observational process was used to complement interview data by identifying contextual factors that cannot be fully captured through verbal accounts. This approach is consistent with socio-legal research traditions that emphasize the importance of examining "law in action" rather than relying exclusively on "law in books."

Table 1
Summary of Interview Data

Code	Position/Representation	Interview Date	Duration (min.)	Location
WM	Representative of Sukoharjo Department of Industry and Manpower	January 7, 2025	54	Office
SK	Representative of Wage Council	January 12, 2026	60	Office
PW	Academic expert in labor and socio-legal studies	February 12, 2026	58	Café
LQ	Representative of Central Statistics Agency (BPS) within Wage Council	February 13, 2026	51	Office
MS	Worker/Labor representative	February 20, 2026	49	Home
MK	Employer/Business representative	February 27, 2026	60	Home

Source: Authors' elaboration, 2026.

¹⁹ Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Sukoharjo, *Kabupaten Sukoharjo dalam Angka 2026*, Volume 47 (BPS Kabupaten Sukoharjo, 2026), 55.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six key stakeholders representing different institutional positions within the wage governance system (see Table 1). Participants were selected purposively based on their knowledge, authority, and direct involvement in minimum wage formulation, implementation, or experience. The selection of participants follows the principle of actor diversity, ensuring that wage justice is examined from multiple perspectives: regulatory authorities, technical experts, employers, and workers. Such variation is essential because minimum wage policies are not produced by a single legal institution but emerge through negotiations among actors with different interests and interpretations of fairness.

Table 2
Documentary Evidence on Wage Regulation

Document	Legal Authority	Main Focus
Law No. 13 of 2003 on Manpower	National Law	Establishes the fundamental legal framework governing employment relations, workers' rights, employers' obligations, and state responsibilities in labor protection. ²⁰
Government Regulation No. 51 of 2023	Government Regulation	Regulates wage policies, including minimum wage determination mechanisms, wage components, and procedures for wage adjustment.
Government Regulation No. 49 of 2025	Government Regulation	Revises provisions concerning wage calculation, adjustment mechanisms, and the regulatory framework governing minimum wage determination.
Sukoharjo Regent Regulation No. 37 of 2025	Regency Government	Regulates local government facilitation of employment social security protection programs for informal workers in Sukoharjo.
BPS Sukoharjo Report of 2026	Official Statistical Authority-Regency Level	Produces empirical data on household expenditure patterns, food consumption, non-food expenditure, poverty, inflation, employment, and regional economic conditions.

Source: Authors' elaboration, 2026.

The representative from the Department of Industry and Manpower (WM) was interviewed because the institution holds administrative authority in implementing labor regulations and facilitating regional wage governance. The Wage Council representative (SK) was selected due to their involvement in deliberative processes surrounding minimum wage recommendations. The Central Statistics Agency (*Badan Pusat Statistik*, BPS) representative (LQ) was included because statistical indicators constitute an important basis for calculating

²⁰ Employment law in Indonesia is primarily governed by Law No. 13 of 2003 on Manpower, as most recently amended by Law No. 6 of 2023 on ratification of Government Regulation in Lieu of Law No. 2 of 2022 on Job Creation ("Manpower Law") and its implementing regulations (i.e., Government Regulations and Ministry of Manpower Regulations). This regulation establishes the fundamental principles of employment relations, including the one that requires every employment to be based on an employment contract, equality of opportunity, prohibition of discrimination, fair wages, and protection of worker welfare. See: "Labour and Employment Law in Indonesia," L&E Global, October 21, 2025, <https://leglobal.law/countries/indonesia/employment-law/employment-law-overview-indonesia/>; Abdul Basid et al., "Adalah Maqāshidi Resolution and Gen-Z Perspective on Human Rights Discrimination of Indonesian Migrant Workers in Malaysia," *Al-'Adalah* 23, no. 1 (July 2026): 147–86.

economic conditions relevant to wage determination. The academic participant (PW) was selected to provide an independent analytical perspective regarding labor regulation and social justice. Meanwhile, the inclusion of a worker representative (MS) and an employer representative (MK) was essential to capture competing experiences and interests within wage negotiations. Their perspectives allow this research to examine whether minimum wage policies achieve substantive justice from the viewpoints of those directly affected.

Documentary analysis examined the normative foundations governing wage regulation and workers' social protection in Indonesia and Sukoharjo. As presented in Table 2, the documents were purposively selected because they represent complementary dimensions of labor governance. Law No. 13 of 2003 on Manpower provides the foundational framework for workers' rights, wage protection, and state responsibilities. Government Regulation No. 51 of 2023 establishes the regulatory mechanisms for minimum-wage determination and implementation, while Government Regulation No. 49 of 2025 captures recent developments in wage-setting and adjustment mechanisms. Sukoharjo Regent Regulation No. 37 of 2025 and the BPS Sukoharjo Report of 2025 extend the analysis beyond formal employment by addressing social protection for vulnerable informal workers. Collectively, these documents encompass different levels of legal authority and regulatory functions, enabling the study to trace how statutory principles, implementing rules, recent policy changes, and local protection measures interact to construct the meaning of worker protection, decent living, and distributive justice within Indonesia's contemporary labor governance.

Research Approach

This study adopts a socio-legal research approach to examine minimum wage governance as an interaction between legal norms, institutional practices, and social realities. Unlike doctrinal legal research that primarily analyses legal texts and formal rules, socio-legal inquiry investigates how law operates within specific social contexts and how legal institutions negotiate competing interests.²¹ This approach is particularly appropriate for analyzing wage policies because minimum wage determination involves not only statutory provisions but also economic considerations, administrative processes, and social struggles among workers, employers, and government authorities. The research employs SJF as an analytical perspective to critically evaluate whether wage governance reflects substantive justice, human dignity, and social welfare. Rather than treating Islamic jurisprudence as a fixed body of normative rules, this study understands *fiqh* as an evolving ethical-legal framework capable of engaging contemporary social issues. Through this approach, minimum wage policies are examined not merely according to their procedural legality but also according to their capacity to fulfill workers' legitimate needs and protect vulnerable groups. Accordingly, the socio-legal approach enables this research to bridge normative Islamic legal reasoning with empirical observations of wage governance, producing a more comprehensive understanding of how justice is constructed and contested within contemporary labor regulation.

²¹ See: Matthias Baier, ed., *Social and Legal Norms: Towards a Socio-Legal Understanding of Normativity* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Roger Cotterrell, "A Socio-legal Quest: From Jurisprudence to Sociology of Law and Back Again," *Journal of Law and Society* 50, no. 1 (March 2023): 3–16.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed through qualitative thematic analysis involving three interconnected stages: data organization, thematic coding, and interpretative analysis. The analysis was conducted through a process of triangulation among different sources of evidence. Interview data from government officials, wage council representatives, employers, workers, and academic experts were compared with documentary materials to identify areas of convergence, contradiction, and negotiation. This process allowed the research to examine discrepancies between formal legal commitments and practical experiences within wage governance. Finally, the identified themes were interpreted through the conceptual framework of SJF. The analysis focused on evaluating whether existing minimum wage mechanisms reflect principles of distributive justice, protection of human dignity, and social welfare. Through this interpretative process, the study moves beyond descriptive analysis toward a critical examination of how legal institutions can better accommodate the normative aspirations of equitable wage governance.

Social Justice *Fiqh*: Bridging Islamic Normativity and Labor Governance

The relationship between Islamic jurisprudence and contemporary social realities has long been shaped by a persistent epistemological tension between normative preservation and contextual transformation. Classical *fiqh* has historically demonstrated a remarkable capacity to respond to changing social circumstances by developing legal reasoning (*ijtihad*) that accommodates diverse economic, political, and social conditions.²² However, much of contemporary Islamic legal scholarship continues to approach *fiqh* primarily as a corpus of normative prescriptions governing individual conduct, contractual relations, and religious obligations. While such approaches remain essential for maintaining the continuity of Islamic legal traditions, they often provide limited analytical tools for addressing complex structural problems generated by modern governance systems, including labor inequality, economic vulnerability, and distributive injustice. Questions surrounding minimum wage policies, for instance, cannot be adequately understood merely through the classical framework of contractual exchange between employer and employee. They involve broader concerns regarding the social responsibilities of the state, the protection of human dignity, and the equitable distribution of economic resources. Therefore, a renewed engagement between Islamic legal reasoning and contemporary social realities requires an interpretive framework capable of moving beyond individual obligations toward the evaluation of social institutions and public policies.

The conceptual construction of *fiqh al-‘adālah al-ijtimā‘iyyah* can be traced through the interrelationship of the terms *fiqh*, *‘adālah*, and *ijtimā‘iyyah*. First, *fiqh* is understood not merely as a corpus of individual legal prescriptions but as a mode of normative legal reasoning capable of interpreting changing social conditions and evaluating institutional

²² Daud A. Mustafa, Hashir A. Abdulsalam, and Jibrail B. Yusuf, “Islamic Economics and the Relevance of *Al-Qawā'id Al-Fiqhiyyah*,” *Sage Open* 6, no. 4 (2016): 1–11; Hasan Bisri, “Paradigm Shifts in Islamic Law and Governance: From Formalism to Justice, Ethical Politics, Contextual Fiqh, and Dialogical Authority,” *Religious Studies: An International Journal* 14, no. 2 (July 2026): 1–38.

arrangements.²³ This understanding preserves the dynamic character of jurisprudence while allowing *fiqh* to engage with contemporary forms of social organization and governance.²⁴ Second, *‘adālah* provides the substantive evaluative orientation, requiring legal norms to be assessed not only according to procedural validity but also according to their capacity to produce equitable outcomes.²⁵ Justice, therefore, becomes a criterion for examining the consequences of legal arrangements rather than merely their formal conformity with established rules.²⁶ Third, *ijtimā‘iyyah* expands the scope of jurisprudential inquiry from individual conduct and interpersonal relations to social structures, public policies, and collective welfare.²⁷ Their integration therefore produces SJF as more than a combination of *fiqh* and social justice (see Figure 2). In this study, SJF is conceptualized as a contemporary analytical orientation within Islamic legal thought that evaluates laws, institutions, and public policies according to their capacity to realize substantive justice, protect human dignity and vulnerable groups, promote collective welfare, and address structural inequality. This conceptualization enables SJF to connect Islamic normative commitments with empirical social realities.

SJF does not constitute a new *madhhab* or an independent branch of Islamic jurisprudence. Rather, it represents a critical orientation within Islamic legal thought that emphasizes the transformative potential of *fiqh* in addressing questions of social order, collective welfare, and institutional justice. Its intellectual foundation is rooted in the broader objectives of Islamic law (*maqāsid al-sharī‘ah*), particularly the principles of the protection of human dignity (*ḥifẓ al-karāmah al-insāniyyah*),²⁸ collective social responsibility (*takāful ijtimā‘ī*),²⁹ the protection of vulnerable groups (*ḥimāyat al-mustaḍ‘afīn*), and public welfare (*maṣlaḥah ‘āmmah*).³⁰ Unlike approaches that restrict *fiqh* to determining the legal validity of individual

²³ Ahmed Gad Makhlof, “The Doctrinal Development of Contemporary Islamic Law: Fiqh Academies as an Institutional Framework,” *Oxford Journal of Law and Religion* 10, no. 3 (April 2022): 464–86; Ahmad Yani Anshori and Landy Trisna Abdurrahman, “History of the Development of Mazhab, Fiqh and Uṣūl Al-Fiqh: Reasoning Methodology in Islamic Law,” *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam* 9, no. 1 (March 2025): 273–98; Suud Sarim Karimullah, “From Divine Revelation to Legal Practice: Contextualizing Islamic Law in the Contemporary Era,” *Asy-Syir‘ab: Jurnal Ilmu Syari‘ah dan Hukum* 59, no. 1 (June 2025): 36–47.

²⁴ Zelfeni Wimra et al., “The Living Fiqh: Anatomy, Philosophical Formulation, and Scope of Study,” *JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah Syaria)* 22, no. 1 (June 2023): 185–98; M. Arfan Ahwady et al., “Fiqh of Bureaucracy and Public Governance in Indonesia: A New Paradigm Based on Maqasid al-Shariah,” *Islamic Review: Jurnal Riset dan Kajian Keislaman* 14, no. 2 (October 2025): 197–222.

²⁵ John Makdisi, “Legal Logic and Equity in Islamic Law,” *The American Journal of Comparative Law* 33, no. 1 (1985): 63–92; Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Al-‘Anqariy, “Al-‘Adālah ‘inda al-Uṣūliyyīn,” *Majallah Al-‘Adl* 18 (2004): 1–66.

²⁶ Suud Sarim Karimullah, “The Relevance of the Concept of Justice in Islamic Law to Contemporary Humanitarian Issues,” *Al-Abkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syari‘ah dan Hukum* 8, no. 1 (November 2023): 77–91; Aksin Wijaya, Ibnu Muchlis, and Dawam Multazam Rohmatulloh, “Rethinking Gender Justice in the Quran: A Critical Exploration of Muslim Feminist Perspectives,” *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur‘an dan Hadis* 26, no. 1 (March 2025): 77–98.

²⁷ See: Al-Sayyid Muḥammad al-Ṣadr, *Fiqh al-Mujtama‘* (Bairut: Dār Maktabat al-Bashā‘ir, 2010); Basma I. Abdelgafar, *Public Policy Beyond Traditional Jurisprudence: A Maqasid Approach* (London: IIIT, 2018); Arbanur Rasyid, “Social Fiqh and Its Implications for Community Life in Society 5.0,” *Al-Abkam* 31, no. 2 (October 2021): 141–60.

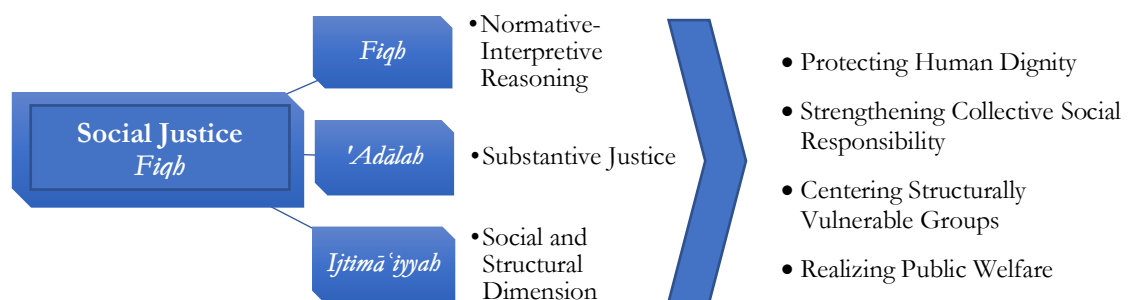
²⁸ See: Fākhir ‘Abbās ‘Isā, *Al-Karāmah al-Insāniyyah fī al-Sharī‘ah al-Islāmiyyah* (Damascus: Dār al-‘Aṣāmah, 2020).

²⁹ See: Muḥammad Abū Zahrah, *Al-Takāful al-Ijtimā‘ī fī al-Islām* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī, n.d.).

³⁰ See: Fauzī Khalīl, *Al-Maṣlaḥah al-‘Āmmah min Manẓūr Islāmī* (Beirut: Dar Ibn Hazm, 2006).

actions or contractual relationships, SJF examines how legal norms function within wider social structures and whether they contribute to the realization of equitable human flourishing. This perspective acknowledges that injustice may emerge not only from violations of explicit legal rules but also from institutional arrangements that reproduce economic disparities and social exclusion.³¹ Accordingly, legal evaluation must extend beyond formal compliance toward an examination of substantive outcomes. In the context of labor governance, this framework shifts the analytical question from whether wage regulations merely satisfy procedural requirements to whether such regulations effectively secure workers' legitimate needs, preserve human dignity, and advance social welfare. Thus, SJF provides a normative vocabulary for evaluating the ethical and sociopolitical consequences of contemporary legal policies.

Figure 2
Conceptual Framework of Social Justice *Fiqh*



Source: Authors' elaboration, 2026.

Within the context of labor regulation, SJF also provides a critical framework for rethinking the relationship between state authority and economic justice. Classical Islamic legal thought has long recognized the responsibility of public authorities (*wilāyat al-amr*) to maintain social order, prevent exploitation, and protect public welfare.³² However, in contemporary governance systems, such responsibilities are exercised through complex regulatory institutions, administrative procedures, and policy instruments, including minimum wage mechanisms.³³ Consequently, the legitimacy of wage regulation should not be assessed solely through the legality of its formulation but also through its capacity to respond to the social conditions of workers. In this study, a socio-legal application of SJF therefore interrogates the entire regulatory process: how wage standards are constructed,

³¹ John Amis, Kamal A. Munir, and Johanna Mair, "Institutions and Economic Inequality," in *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism*, ed. C. Oliver, T. Lawrence, and RE Meyer (SAGE Publications, 2017), 705–36; Madison Powers and Ruth Faden, *Structural Injustice: Power, Advantage, and Human Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

³² Gerhard Böwering, ed., *Islamic Political Thought: An Introduction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015); Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Classical Islamic Political Thought and Its Contemporary Relevance," *ICR Journal* 9, no. 4 (October 2018): 19–46.

³³ Beth Ahlering and Simon Deakin, "Labor Regulation, Corporate Governance, and Legal Origin: A Case of Institutional Complementarity?," *Law & Society Review* 41, no. 4 (December 2007): 865–908; Bruce E. Kaufman, "Institutional Economics and the Minimum Wage: Broadening the Theoretical and Policy Debate," *ILR Review* 63, no. 3 (April 2010): 427–53.

whose interests are represented in policy deliberations, and whether the resulting outcomes correspond with broader objectives of justice and welfare. This perspective challenges a purely technocratic understanding of wage determination by emphasizing that economic indicators, legal formulas, and administrative decisions are embedded within ethical and social choices. Accordingly, minimum wage policy becomes a site where Islamic normative commitments, state governance, and workers' lived realities intersect. Through this lens, SJF enables a critical assessment of whether labor regulation functions as an instrument of substantive justice or merely as a mechanism of formal governance.

Results

The empirical findings, as presented in Table 3, reveal three interconnected patterns in the determination of the Sukoharjo UMK. First, the established minimum wage remained substantially below the statutory KHL benchmark, indicating a measurable gap between the normative standard of decent living and the wage ultimately determined. Second, the deliberative process within the Wage Council revealed a relative dominance of employers, particularly because considerations of business capacity, employment sustainability, and regional economic stability shaped the negotiation of the minimum-wage level.³⁴ Third, the determination of the UMK incorporated empirical data on both food and non-food expenditure obtained from BPS Sukoharjo, while the final calculation was mediated by the α parameter prescribed under Government Regulation No. 49 of 2025.

Table 3
Summary of Empirical Findings

Key Finding	Core Evidence	Normative/Regulatory Basis	Main Result
UMK remained below KHL	KHL: Rp3,512,997; UMK: Rp2,500,000	Government Regulation No. 49 of 2025, particularly the provision concerning the α parameter and the use of statistical data from the authorized institution/BPS in wage determination.	Gap: Rp1,012,997 (28.84%)
Employer dominance in wage deliberations	Employer concerns over business capacity and employment stability	Law No. 13 of 2003, particularly Article 90(2), concerning postponement of minimum-wage payment	Substantive bargaining power favored employers
Food and non-food need informed UMK	Food: Rp643,085; non-food: Rp819,893; $\alpha = 0.6$	Government Regulation No. 49 of 2025, including the α parameter and BPS Sukoharjo of 2025 data	Consumption data informed the process, but α and economic conditions mediated the final UMK

Source: Authors' elaboration, 2026.

³⁴ Aybek Bakhramovich Yakubov et al., "Legal Protection for Individual Entrepreneurs Through Regulatory Reform in Uzbekistan," *Journal of Human Rights, Culture and Legal System* 6, no. 2 (July 2026): 106–34.

The Minimum Wage Remained Below the Decent Living Standard

The first finding concerns the persistent gap between the minimum wage established for Sukoharjo and the KHL used as a benchmark in the wage-setting process. In Indonesia, the regulation on minimum wage determination is stipulated in Article 23(1) of Government Regulation No. 51 of 2023, which recognizes provincial and regency/city minimum wages. The regulation also assigns governors the authority to determine these minimum wage levels. WM explained that UMK are formulated through the district wage council, which brings together representatives of employers, workers' unions, relevant government agencies, and academia. The council deliberates on the proposed wage level before submitting its recommendation to the regent. For the 2026 wage-setting cycle, the calculation was governed by Government Regulation No. 49 of 2025, which introduced a formula incorporating the parameter α (alpha) to balance workers' and employers' interests while relating the minimum wage to the prevailing KHL.³⁵

The regulatory framework, however, did not translate the KHL benchmark directly into the final minimum wage. Article 10 of Government Regulation No. 49 of 2025 provides that the α parameter represents a balancing mechanism between workers' interests, employers' capacity, and the relationship between the minimum wage and the KHL.³⁶ The regulation further requires the relevant statistical data to be obtained from the authorized statistical institution, namely the BPS. Within this framework, statistical information provided by BPS constitutes an important empirical reference for assessing local living conditions and informing the wage-setting process.³⁷ In practice, therefore, the KHL figure functions as one component within a broader wage-setting formula rather than as a binding wage floor. This distinction became particularly evident in Sukoharjo. According to PW:

“The KHL figure used as a benchmark for determining the Sukoharjo UMK is based on data obtained from the Central Java Provincial Government, amounting to Rp3,512,997. In practice, however, the Wage Council also uses survey data collected by BPS Sukoharjo to assess the actual needs of the local community, particularly in the food and service sectors. With regard to the KHL figure, Sukoharjo Regency uses this amount as one of the considerations in calculating the UMK, which is then combined with other considerations, including employment conditions, the balance of interests, and worker productivity.”

The deliberations of the Sukoharjo Wage Council consequently produced a substantially lower proposed minimum wage. Following three rounds of discussion, the council agreed to recommend an UMK of Rp2,500,000 to the Regent of Sukoharjo. The resulting figure represented only approximately 71.2% of the KHL benchmark of Rp3,512,997, leaving a nominal gap of Rp1,012,997 between the two figures. This gap indicates that the KHL benchmark was not reproduced in the final minimum-wage

³⁵ Kunarti et al., “Reformulation of Minimum Wage Policy and Its Implications Concerning Justice and Workers' Welfare in the Context Indonesian Law,” 213–30.

³⁶ Fathul Laili Khoirun Nisa, Chandra Dewi Puspitasari, and Eny Kusdarini, “Aktualisasi Keadilan Sosial melalui Peranan Akademisi pada Dewan Pengupahan DIY dalam Penentuan Upah Minimum,” *AGORA* 14, no. 3 (July 2025): 888–99.

³⁷ “BPS RI's Support in Guiding Minimum Wage Policy,” BPS-Statistics Indonesia, November 19, 2025, <https://www.bps.go.id/en/news/2025/11/19/810/bps-ri-s-support-in-guiding-minimum-wage-policy.html>.

recommendation (see Figure 2), despite its formal recognition as a relevant component of the calculation. The divergence was principally associated with the application of the α parameter and the council's assessment of local economic conditions. In the Sukoharjo case, the council considered the substantial concentration of textile and garment industries and the financial pressures facing firms in the sector. These pressures were intensified by the bankruptcy and cessation of operations of PT Sri Rejeki Isman Tbk (Sritex),³⁸ which had broader economic repercussions for Sukoharjo beyond the company itself. The deteriorating economic conditions were therefore treated as a constraint on employers' capacity to absorb a higher wage increase. The observation evidence further shows that the α parameter became the principal mechanism through which this economic constraint was incorporated into the wage calculation. Rather than maximizing the parameter at 0.9, the Sukoharjo Wage Council proposed an α value of 0.6. This lower value contributed directly to the resulting UMK of Rp2,500,000.³⁹

Figure 3
Gap between UMK and KHL

$$\text{UMK-KHL Gap} = \text{Rp}3,512,997 - \text{Rp}2,500,000 = \text{Rp}1,012,997$$

The percentage gap is:

$$\frac{\text{Rp}1,012,997}{\text{Rp}3,512,997} \times 100 = 28.84\%$$

Consequently, the wage-setting process produced a trade-off between maintaining the purchasing capacity of workers and accommodating the economic capacity of local enterprises. Although the council continued to refer to the KHL as an important orientation of minimum-wage policy, the final figure remained below the formally recognized KHL benchmark. The finding therefore demonstrates a structural discrepancy between the normative benchmark of decent living and its operative incorporation into minimum-wage determination: KHL remained an explicit reference point, but the α parameter and local economic considerations substantially mediated the extent to which that benchmark was reflected in the final UMK.

Employer Dominance in Minimum-Wage Deliberations

The second finding concerns the relatively dominant position of employers in the deliberation process for determining the UMK. Formally, the determination of UMK involves a tripartite deliberative structure through the Wage Council, bringing together representatives of employers, workers' unions, government agencies, and academia. The institutional arrangement is intended to accommodate competing interests and produce a wage level that balances workers' welfare with employers' capacity to sustain their

³⁸ Vitria Farish Mayasari and Rusdianto Sesung, "Analisis Kepailitan PT Sritex Berdasarkan Faktor Penyebab Dampak dan Mitigasi Hukum," *Journal Evidence of Law* 4, no. 2 (August 2025): 689–98.

³⁹ "Field Notes on Observations," February 2026.

businesses.⁴⁰ In practice, however, the empirical evidence from Sukoharjo indicates that employers possess greater bargaining leverage in the deliberations. This dominance does not necessarily appear through formal procedural control but is reflected in the greater weight given to employers' concerns regarding business capacity, production costs, and employment sustainability.⁴¹

The normative framework historically governing minimum wages also provides an important context for understanding this bargaining position. Article 89 of Law No. 13 of 2003 on Manpower stipulated that minimum wages were directed toward achieving a KHL and were determined by the Governor with consideration of recommendations from the Wage Council and/or the Regent/Mayor. At the same time, Article 90(1) prohibited employers from paying wages below the applicable minimum wage, while Article 90(2) provided that employers unable to pay the minimum wage could obtain a postponement of its implementation.⁴² Against this normative background, the interviews reveal why employers occupy a comparatively stronger position in the Sukoharjo deliberations. According to MK, employers are not only the parties required to implement the UMK but are also regarded as essential actors in maintaining regional employment and economic stability. Their representatives therefore enter the deliberations with arguments concerning business sustainability, production costs, productivity, and the potential employment consequences of a higher minimum wage. MS, such as workers' representatives, by contrast, tends to advocate a wage level that approaches the KHL but must simultaneously consider the possibility that a wage increase perceived as excessive by employers could generate resistance, including reductions in employment. This dynamic was explicitly acknowledged by SK:

“There is indeed a degree of employer dominance in the UMK determination meetings, although it is not particularly visible. This dominance takes the form of workers’ unions being concerned that employers may fail to pay the prescribed UMK or take more drastic measures, such as terminating employment. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that employers play an important role in maintaining regional economic stability. Therefore, in order to maintain economic stability and sound industrial relations, the Wage Council provides employers’ associations with an open space to present minimum-wage proposals that do not impose an excessive burden on businesses. Likewise, workers’ unions put forward proposals for a minimum wage that corresponds to KHL.”

SK's testimony indicates that employer dominance operates primarily through anticipatory economic pressure rather than overt institutional exclusion. Workers' representatives are aware that employers may regard a substantial increase in UMK as incompatible with business capacity and may respond through measures affecting employment. Consequently, workers' bargaining position is shaped not only by their normative claim to a decent wage but also by the need to preserve existing employment

⁴⁰ Muhamad Irayadi, “Putusan Mahkamah Konstitusi tentang Upah Layak: Harapan Baru bagi Dunia Ketenagakerjaan Indonesia,” *Humaniorum* 2, no. 4 (October 2024): 1–8.

⁴¹ “Field Notes on Observations.”

⁴² Bambang Hermanto and Maherul Hidayat Iqbal Ramadhan, “Kepastian Hukum bagi Tenaga Kerja atas Penangguhan Upah dalam Undang-Undang Nomor 13 Tahun 2003 Tentang Ketenagakerjaan,” *Kultura: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum, Sosial, dan Humaniora* 2, no. 9 (July 2024): 247–57.

relationships.⁴³ The deliberative process thus produces a form of negotiated restraint: employers emphasize their capacity to sustain production and employment, while workers moderate their demands in consideration of the potential consequences for job security.⁴⁴ In the Sukoharjo deliberations, this tension is reflected in the greater practical influence of employers' assessments of business sustainability. Their position becomes particularly consequential when the Wage Council evaluates whether a proposed increase can be absorbed by local industries without adversely affecting employment.⁴⁵

The empirical findings therefore reveal a distinction between formal equality of representation and substantive asymmetry of bargaining power. Employers and workers are institutionally represented within the same Wage Council, yet employers possess greater practical leverage because their position is connected to business continuity, employment preservation, and regional economic stability. The result is a deliberative process in which workers' demands for wages approaching KHL are continuously negotiated against employers' claims concerning economic capacity.⁴⁶ Employer dominance consequently emerges not from the absence of workers' participation, but from the structural economic consequences attached to the outcome of the wage-setting process.

Minimum-Wage Determination Based on Food and Non-Food Living Needs

The third finding concerns the extent to which the determination of Sukoharjo's minimum wage incorporates workers' food and non-food living needs. BPS Sukoharjo data indicate that household expenditure patterns during 2023–2025 were divided between food and non-food consumption. In 2025, average monthly food expenditure reached approximately Rp643,085 per capita. At the same time, non-food expenditure was higher, reaching Rp819,893 per capita per month. Consequently, total average monthly expenditure reached Rp1,462,978.⁴⁷ For MS, these figures demonstrate that decent living cannot be reduced to food consumption alone. In global discourse, non-food expenditures encompass essential needs such as housing, education, transportation, healthcare, clothing, insurance, and other household necessities, all of which are integral to maintaining a dignified and adequate standard of living.⁴⁸

The Wage Council considered these consumption data when assessing the adequacy of the UMK. However, the council did not treat current consumption expenditure as a fixed equivalent of the minimum wage. Food prices, inflation, poverty, unemployment, and economic growth were also considered because current expenditure data did not automatically incorporate future price changes. LQ explained:

⁴³ Judy Fudge, "The Future of the Standard Employment Relationship: Labour Law, New Institutional Economics and Old Power Resource Theory," *Journal of Industrial Relations* 59, no. 3 (June 2017): 374–92.

⁴⁴ See: Susan Hayter, ed., *The Role of Collective Bargaining in the Global Economy: Negotiating for Social Justice* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2011).

⁴⁵ "Field Notes on Observations."

⁴⁶ Teri L. Caraway, Michele Ford, and Oanh K. Nguyen, "Politicizing the Minimum Wage: Wage Councils, Worker Mobilization, and Local Elections in Indonesia," *Politics & Society* 47, no. 2 (March 2019): 251–76.

⁴⁷ Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Sukoharjo, *Kabupaten Sukoharjo dalam Angka 2026*, 255.

⁴⁸ Savant Nzayiramy, Andrew Muhammad, and Anthony Baffoe-Bonnie, "A Global Assessment of Food and Non-Food Spending: Evidence from 173 Countries and Implications for Food Security," *Agriculture & Food Security* 14:20, no. 1 (August 2025): 1–12.

“When discussing the minimum wage, almost everyone prioritizes expenditure on consumption needs. In determining the Sukoharjo UMK, however, the considerations extend beyond per capita consumption expenditure used by the Wage Council in proposing the UMK. Other factors must also be taken into account, including economic growth, poverty, the open unemployment rate, and inflation, particularly inflation affecting staple goods, food, and beverages. Although BPS Sukoharjo regularly adjusts its estimates of monthly per capita expenditure, the determination of the UMK also requires consideration of other factors that may affect its final amount.”

The non-food component was similarly incorporated into the deliberations. WM emphasized that non-food needs are relatively adjustable according to workers’ income:

“When formulating the UMK, non-food needs are indeed considered as part of meeting individual living requirements. However, it should be recognized that nonfood needs can be met and adjusted relatively according to an individual’s circumstances. When a worker has a relatively low income, they can choose more affordable facilities or limit their non-food expenditures so as not to impose an excessive burden. People also tend to meet their non-food needs after their food needs have been fulfilled. Thus, individuals can generally adjust their non-food expenditures according to their available income. Moreover, the local government has made efforts to provide solutions for meeting both food and non-food needs.”

Normatively, the wage-setting process followed Government Regulation No. 49 of 2025, under which the UMK calculation incorporates inflation, economic growth, and the α parameter. The α value ranges from 0.5 to 0.9 and is determined through the Wage Council’s plenary deliberation using statistical data supplied by BPS. The existence of this formula does not eliminate the government’s obligation to orient minimum-wage policy toward KHL. For Sukoharjo’s 2026 UMK, the Wage Council agreed on an α value of 0.6, considering the dominant industrial structure, worker productivity, and the regional government’s industrial strategy. This resulted in an UMK of Rp2,500,000, compared with the provincial KHL benchmark of Rp3,512,997. The difference was therefore Rp1,012,997 (see Figure 3), meaning that the UMK represented approximately 71.16% of the KHL benchmark (see Figure 4):

Figure 4
UMK-to-KHL Ratio

$$\text{UMK-to-KHL Ratio} = \frac{\text{UMK}}{\text{KHL}} = \frac{\text{Rp}2,500,000}{\text{Rp}3,512,997} = 0.71$$

Or, expressed as a percentage:

$$\frac{\text{Rp. } 2,500,000}{\text{Rp. } 3,512,997} \times 100 = 71.16\%$$

Thus, the UMK represents 71.16% of the KHL, leaving a gap of Rp1,012,997, equivalent to 28.84% of the KHL. The finding therefore demonstrates that the 2026 UMK was formally calculated within the regulatory framework while incorporating empirical expenditure data on both food and non-food needs. Nevertheless, the final wage remained substantially below the KHL benchmark. The resulting gap reflects the operation of the α parameter and the Wage Council’s attempt to reconcile decent-living requirements with regional economic capacity and employment sustainability.

Discussion

Minimum Wage as the Protection of Human Dignity

The empirical findings demonstrate that minimum wage determination in Sukoharjo extends beyond a technical exercise of calculating labor costs. Rather, it represents a normative process through which the state defines the minimum threshold of a dignified human life.⁴⁹ The distinction made by the Wage Council between food and non-food expenditures, the incorporation of statistical evidence from the BPS, and the consideration of inflation, productivity, and regional economic conditions collectively indicate that wage-setting is conceived as an instrument for safeguarding workers' welfare rather than merely regulating labor markets. Nevertheless, the findings simultaneously reveal a fundamental contradiction. While the institutional process explicitly adopts the principle of KHL, the final minimum wage remains substantially below the officially recognized living-cost benchmark.⁵⁰ This disparity illustrates that procedural compliance with statutory requirements does not necessarily translate into substantive protection of workers' dignity.

From the perspective of SJF, these contradictions reflect a deeper epistemological problem in contemporary wage governance. Existing regulatory frameworks tend to conceptualize wages primarily as an economic variable balancing productivity, inflation, and business sustainability. Such an approach undoubtedly serves important macroeconomic objectives; however, it risks reducing workers to factors of production whose value is determined predominantly by market rationality.⁵¹ SJF challenges this reductionist understanding by repositioning labor within a broader ethical framework in which every worker possesses inherent dignity that cannot be subordinated entirely to economic efficiency. Consequently, the legitimacy of minimum wage policies should not be assessed solely through their conformity with statutory formulas but also through their capacity to secure the minimum conditions necessary for human flourishing.⁵² This interpretation expands the classical objectives of Islamic law by treating the protection of human dignity (*ḥifẓ al-karāmah insāniyyah*) as the normative foundation upon which wage governance should operate. Unlike conventional *maqāṣid* discourse that often emphasizes the preservation of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property,⁵³ SJF argues that dignity functions as the

⁴⁹ Ravi Danendra, Lego Karjoko, and Hilaire Tegnau, "How to Resolve Land Ownership Conflicts Involving Government Assets in Indonesia," *Journal of Sustainable Development and Regulatory Issues (JSDERI)* 4, no. 2 (July 2026): 877–914.

⁵⁰ Sarvar Zafarovich Tojiboyev et al., "Beyond Personal Data Protection: Constructing a Legal Framework for Big Data Governance in Uzbekistan," *Journal of Sustainable Development and Regulatory Issues (JSDERI)* 4, no. 2 (June 2026): 774–804.

⁵¹ Elizabeth Anderson, "Values in Economics," in *The Routledge Handbook of Values and Science*, ed. Kevin C. Elliott and Ted Richards (New York: Routledge, 2026), 501–10; Myrtati Dyah Artaria et al., "Risk and Protective Factors of Indonesian Women Migrant Workers in Malaysia," *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 13, no. 3 (September 2025): 1859–80.

⁵² See: Oren M. Levin-Waldman, *The Case of the Minimum Wage: Competing Policy Models* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001).

⁵³ Triyono Adi Saputro et al., "Geographical Indications and Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'ah: Realizing Intellectual Property as an Instrument of Economic Justice," *Al-Muamalat* 12, no. 2 (November 2025): 339–58; Nina Nurani, Apriwandi Apriwandi, and Hafied Noor Bagja, "Intellectual Property Rights Law Reform Based on Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'ah as a Model for Green Business-Based Creative Industry Protection to Support Sustainable Development," *De Jure: Jurnal Hukum dan Syar'iah* 18, no. 1 (February 2026): 1–32; Maya Ruhtiani

integrating principle connecting these objectives within contemporary socioeconomic institutions.⁵⁴ Adequate income enables individuals to sustain life through proper nutrition, maintain physical and mental health, access education and healthcare, fulfill family obligations, and engage actively in social life.⁵⁵

The empirical distinction between food and non-food expenditures observed in Sukoharjo therefore represents more than a statistical classification; it reflects the multidimensional nature of human dignity itself. Food expenditures preserve biological survival, whereas non-food expenditures on housing, education, transportation, communication, and healthcare sustain the social conditions through which individuals experience dignified citizenship.⁵⁶ The substantial gap identified between Sukoharjo's minimum wage and the provincial living-wage benchmark further illustrates the limitations of a procedural approach to wage regulation. Although the Wage Council relied upon legally prescribed indicators and followed the institutional mechanism established under Government Regulation No. 49 of 2025, the negotiated value of the adjustment coefficient (alpha) ultimately prioritized industrial sustainability over the complete fulfillment of KHL. This outcome should not be interpreted simply as institutional failure. Rather, it reflects the persistent tension inherent in labor governance between economic competitiveness and social protection. Nevertheless, SJF argues that when such tensions arise, the protection of human dignity should function as the primary normative benchmark against which policy choices are evaluated. Economic sustainability remains important, yet it cannot become an independent justification for maintaining wages below the threshold required for a dignified standard of living.⁵⁷

The empirical evidence also suggests that dignity cannot be reduced to material consumption alone. Interview data reveal that wage deliberations increasingly consider inflation, future purchasing power, and broader economic uncertainty. These considerations acknowledge that workers require not only sufficient income for present consumption but also protection against future vulnerabilities.⁵⁸ Such an orientation aligns with SJF's understanding that dignity encompasses security, predictability, and the capacity to plan one's life without persistent fear of economic deprivation. Consequently, minimum wage policies should be evaluated according to their ability to provide sustainable social security rather

et al., "Legal Protection of Architectural Works as Copyright: An Epistemological and Islamic Law Perspective," *El-Mashlahab* 14, no. 1 (June 2024): 43–70.

⁵⁴ See: Toseef Azid et al., *Labor Economics in an Islamic Framework: Theory and Practice* (London; New York: Routledge, 2022); Amada Talikoa, "Religious Extremism as Symbolic Domination: Mosque Communities and Socio-Economic Reconstruction in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Religious: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama dan Lintas Budaya* 10, no. 1 (March 2026): 1–18.

⁵⁵ Maude Choko and Isabelle Martin, "The Minimum Wage as a Matter of Tangible Human Dignity: A Comparative Constitutional Law Analysis," *International Journal of Comparative Labour Law and Industrial Relations* 34, no. 3 (September 2018): 231–55.

⁵⁶ Botirov Zafar Saydullayevich, "The Role of the Social State Principle in Ensuring Human Interests and Enhancing Human Dignity," *American Journal of Social Sciences and Humanity Research* 5, no. 5 (2025): 364–69.

⁵⁷ Christian Seubert, Lisa Hopfgartner, and Jürgen Glaser, "Living Wages, Decent Work, and Need Satisfaction: An Integrated Perspective," *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* 30, no. 6 (2021): 808–23.

⁵⁸ Yeti Kurniati and Abdillah Abdillah, "Comparative Labor Law Studies in Indonesia and Malaysia: Social-Economic Inequality and Governance of Migrant Workers," *Laws* 14:79, no. 6 (October 2025): 1–25.

than merely satisfying immediate consumption needs.⁵⁹ These findings support a broader theoretical proposition. Minimum wage governance should no longer be conceptualized solely as a regulatory instrument balancing labor-market efficiency and business competitiveness. Instead, it should be understood as a public institution responsible for safeguarding the moral status of workers within the political economy and economic citizenship.⁶⁰ By introducing *ḥifẓ al-karāmah insāniyyah* as the central normative principle, SJF reframes wage determination from a question of economic optimization into one of human dignity and social justice. This reinterpretation does not reject economic considerations; rather, it reorders them within an ethical framework in which economic policies derive their legitimacy from their capacity to protect the inherent worth of every worker.⁶¹ Accordingly, the contribution of this study extends beyond the Indonesian context by offering a normative framework through which minimum wage governance may be reassessed in societies seeking to reconcile economic development with substantive social justice.

Wage Determination as Collective Social Responsibility

The findings reveal that minimum wage determination in Sukoharjo is fundamentally a collaborative governance process rather than a unilateral governmental decision. The institutional architecture established under Government Regulation No. 49 of 2025 distributes responsibility among multiple actors, including the regional government, the BPS, employers' associations, labor unions, and academic representatives. Each institution contributes distinct forms of expertise, empirical evidence, and normative considerations to the deliberative process.⁶² This multi-actor arrangement demonstrates that wage determination is not merely a legal procedure but a negotiated institutional practice through which competing economic interests are translated into public policy.⁶³ However, the findings also demonstrate that participation alone does not necessarily guarantee equal influence. Despite the formal inclusiveness of the Wage Council, negotiations continue to reflect asymmetrical power relations in which employers possess greater structural leverage because of their capacity to influence employment stability and regional investment. Consequently, the challenge confronting wage governance is not the absence of participation but the unequal distribution of deliberative power within formally participatory institutions.

Discourse of labor governance frequently treats wage determination as an arena of bargaining between two opposing interests: workers demanding higher wages and employers

⁵⁹ Made Sinthia Sukmayanti and AAA. Ngurah Tini Rusmini Gorda, "Implementation of Substantive Justice in Juvenile Serious Crime Cases in Indonesia," *Journal of Sustainable Development and Regulatory Issues (JSDERI)* 4, no. 2 (June 2026): 715–44.

⁶⁰ Christian Schemmel and Georg Picot, "Why We Need Minimum Wages: Pay, Recognition, and Economic Citizenship," *American Political Science Review* 119, no. 3 (August 2025): 1258–71.

⁶¹ Alben Abimayu, Anas Malik, and Rosyidalina Putri, "Implementation of the Green Economy in Achieving Sustainable Development from the Perspective of Maqashid Syariah," *Li Falah: Journal of Islamic Economics and Business* 10, no. 2 (December 2025): 142–56.

⁶² R. Hendral R. Hendral et al., "Regulatory Reform of Evidence Confiscation in Forestry Crimes for Sustainable Environmental Governance," *Journal of Sustainable Development and Regulatory Issues (JSDERI)* 4, no. 2 (June 2026): 833–76.

⁶³ Ghary Delia Handojo and Ariawan Gunadi, "Legal Certainty in Underground Space Utilization: Lessons from Selected Jurisdictions," *Journal of Sustainable Development and Regulatory Issues (JSDERI)* 4, no. 2 (June 2026): 745–73.

seeking lower labor costs.⁶⁴ Such a binary perspective assumes that labor relations are inherently adversarial and that public institutions merely facilitate compromise between conflicting claims.⁶⁵ SJF departs from this contractual understanding by proposing *takaful ijtimā'ī* (collective social responsibility) as the ethical foundation of wage governance. Within this framework, decent wages are not solely the responsibility of employers, nor exclusively an obligation of the state.⁶⁶ Rather, they constitute a shared social commitment in which every institution participating in wage determination bears moral responsibility for protecting workers from structural vulnerability while simultaneously sustaining the productive capacity of the regional economy.⁶⁷ *Takaful ijtimā'ī* does not imply that all stakeholders must pursue identical interests; rather, it requires that each actor recognize responsibility for the welfare of others alongside their own institutional objectives.⁶⁸ Employers remain entitled to pursue business sustainability, labor unions legitimately defend workers' rights, and governments continue to promote regional economic development.⁶⁹ However, these objectives cease to be ethically legitimate when pursued in isolation from their broader social consequences. Collective responsibility therefore demands that institutional actors transcend sectoral interests and deliberate from the standpoint of shared public welfare rather than organizational advantage.⁷⁰

This interpretation substantially broadens the conventional understanding of tripartite labor governance: government, employers, and workers. Existing governance models generally evaluate institutional effectiveness according to procedural indicators, including representation, transparency, consultation, and legal compliance. While these principles remain indispensable, the Sukoharjo findings suggest that procedural inclusiveness alone cannot ensure substantively equitable outcomes. Institutions may satisfy every procedural requirement while continuing to reproduce structural inequalities through unequal bargaining capacities.⁷¹ SJF therefore introduces an additional evaluative dimension by asking whether institutional arrangements genuinely distribute responsibility for protecting human dignity across all participating actors. In this sense, governance legitimacy derives not merely from

⁶⁴ See: Ian M. McDonald and Robert M. Solow, "Wage Bargaining and Employment," in *Economic Models of Trade Unions*, ed. P. Garonna, P. Mori, and P. Tedeschi (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 1992), 85–104; Torben Iversen, *Contested Economic Institutions: The Politics of Macroeconomics and Wage Bargaining in Advanced Democracies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁶⁵ Joshua Cova, "State Intervention in Low-Wage Work: Politics, Social Actors, and Increased Governmental Control in the Setting of the Minimum Wage," *European Journal of Industrial Relations* 31, no. 3 (September 2025): 345–68; Ethan Kaplan and Suresh Naidu, "Between Government and Market: The Political Economics of Labor Unions," *Annual Review of Economics* 17, no. 1 (August 2025): 367–96.

⁶⁶ Akbar Zafar Oglı Tojiboev et al., "Strengthening Startup Regulation to Advance Sustainable Economic Development in Uzbekistan," *Journal of Sustainable Development and Regulatory Issues (JSDERI)* 4, no. 2 (June 2026): 805–32.

⁶⁷ See: Toseef Azid and Necmettin Kzlkaya, eds., *Labor in an Islamic Setting: Theory and Practice*, First edition (New York: Routledge, 2017).

⁶⁸ See: Abdullah Nasih Ulwan, *Al-Takaful al-Ijtimā'ī fi al-Islām* (Cairo: Dar Al-Salam, 2007).

⁶⁹ See: Susan L. Kang, *Human Rights and Labor Solidarity: Trade Unions in the Global Economy*, Pennsylvania Studies in Human Rights Ser (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

⁷⁰ Asif Iqbal and Maqsood Hayat, "Corporate Social Responsibility in The Era of Globalization: Balancing Profitability and Sustainable Practices," *Social Science Review Archives* 3, no. 3 (August 2025): 1206–20.

⁷¹ Andrew Hurrell, "Power, Institutions, and the Production of Inequality," in *Power in Global Governance*, 1st ed., ed. Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 33–58.

procedural participation but from the collective willingness of institutions to prevent one stakeholder from disproportionately bearing the social costs of economic adjustment.⁷² Within the framework of *takaful ijtimā'i*, statistical production is therefore not ethically neutral. The selection of indicators, survey timing, expenditure classifications, and methodological assumptions all shape institutional understandings of what constitutes a decent standard of living.⁷³ Consequently, statistical agencies participate indirectly in the moral construction of distributive justice. Their responsibility extends beyond methodological accuracy toward ensuring that empirical measurements adequately capture the evolving realities of workers' social existence.⁷⁴

This perspective also redefines the function of the state within wage governance. Rather than acting merely as an arbitrator balancing competing interests, the regional government assumes the role of ethical guarantor responsible for preserving equilibrium between economic development and social justice.⁷⁵ This responsibility extends beyond facilitating negotiations toward ensuring that deliberative outcomes remain consistent with constitutional commitments to decent work and human welfare. Accordingly, the Sukoharjo case demonstrates that minimum wage governance should be understood not as a sequence of isolated institutional functions but as a continuous process of shared social responsibility. By integrating *takaful ijtimā'i* into the analysis of labor governance, SJF reconceptualizes wage determination as an institutional covenant rather than a contractual negotiation.⁷⁶ The legitimacy of minimum wage policies therefore depends not only upon legal compliance or economic efficiency but also upon the extent to which all participating institutions collectively assume responsibility for safeguarding workers' dignity while preserving the long-term sustainability of productive economic life.⁷⁷ This formulation offers a broader theoretical contribution to contemporary labor governance by demonstrating that distributive justice is ultimately sustained through institutional solidarity and corporate social responsibility,⁷⁸ rather than market bargaining alone.

Centering Structurally Vulnerable Workers

The findings of this study reveal that the central challenge of minimum wage governance in Sukoharjo extends beyond the technical determination of wage levels or the procedural legitimacy of policy deliberation. More fundamentally, they expose a structural imbalance

⁷² See Stephan Haggard and Robert R. Kaufman, eds., *The Politics of Economic Adjustment: International Constraints, Distributive Conflicts, and the State* (Princeton (N.J.): Princeton university press, 1992).

⁷³ Daniel Mügge, "Economic Statistics as Political Artefacts," *Review of International Political Economy* 29, no. 1 (January 2022): 1–22.

⁷⁴ Daniel Kristanto Sitorus et al., "Reforming Supervision in State-Owned Insurance Enterprises: Lessons from South Korea," *Journal of Human Rights, Culture and Legal System* 6, no. 1 (May 2026): 360–91.

⁷⁵ Nopriyandi Nopriyandi, Amad Sudiro, and Hery Firmansyah, "Rethinking Criminal Liability of Beneficial Owners in Tax Crime Enforcement," *Journal of Sustainable Development and Regulatory Issues (JSDERI)* 4, no. 2 (May 2026): 339–67.

⁷⁶ See: Iftikhar Ahmad, "Religion and Labor: Perspective in Islam," *WorkingUSA* 14, no. 4 (January 2011): 589–620.

⁷⁷ See: Ozay Mehmet, *Economic Planning and Social Justice in Developing Countries* (London; New York: Routledge, 2011).

⁷⁸ Cynthia A. Williams, "Corporate Social Responsibility in an Era of Economic Globalization," *UC Davis Law Review* 35, no. 3 (2002): 705–77.

regarding who ultimately bears the consequences of policy compromise. While the Wage Council formally represents multiple stakeholders—including the regional government, employers’ associations, labor unions, academics, and the BPS—the empirical evidence demonstrates that workers remain the actors most directly affected when minimum wages fall below the standard required for a decent living. The negotiated adjustment coefficient (alpha), although legally justified and institutionally agreed upon, ultimately produces distributive consequences that disproportionately affect low-income workers, particularly those employed in labor-intensive industries. This finding suggests that contemporary wage governance continues to prioritize balancing institutional interests over protecting those who occupy the most vulnerable positions within industrial relations.⁷⁹

SJF offers a different normative starting point through the concept of *ḥimāyat al-mustadh’afīn*—the protection of vulnerable groups. Unlike conventional welfare approaches that identify vulnerability primarily through income or poverty indicators,⁸⁰ *mustadh’afīn* refers to individuals and communities whose vulnerability is produced and sustained by unequal social, economic, and institutional power relations.⁸¹ In the context of minimum wage governance, workers are not necessarily vulnerable because they are economically poor; rather, they become vulnerable because their capacity to influence distributive decisions remains substantially weaker than that of institutional actors whose economic resources and bargaining positions enable greater influence over policy outcomes. Vulnerability, therefore, should be understood as a structural condition embedded within governance arrangements rather than merely an individual economic status.⁸² From the perspective of SJF, public institutions should therefore evaluate wage policies according to the principle of normative priority. This principle maintains that public policy should first consider those who possess the least capacity to absorb economic shocks.⁸³ Such an approach does not reject the importance of business sustainability or regional investment; rather, it argues that economic adjustment should not be achieved by transferring disproportionate burdens onto structurally vulnerable workers.

This perspective also broadens contemporary understandings of labor protection. Existing regulatory frameworks often define protection through formal legal rights, including statutory minimum wages, employment contracts, dispute resolution mechanisms, and labor

⁷⁹ Agusmidah, Titik Triwulan Tutik, and Anna Maslova, “Artificial Intelligence and Wage Justice in Indonesian Labour Law: Balancing Living Wage Standards and Corporate Capacity,” *Nusantara: Journal of Law Studies* 5, no. 1 (April 2026): 436–52.

⁸⁰ Andualem Goshu Mekonnen, “Estimating Vulnerability to Income and Multidimensional Poverty: A New Methodological Approach,” *International Journal of Development Issues* 24, no. 1 (February 2025): 92–105.

⁸¹ Muhammad Alwi et al., “Al-Mustadh’afīn: Reflection of the Qur’an on Social Inequalities,” *FITRAH: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 8, no. 2 (December 2022): 327–44; Ellectrananda Anugerah Ash-shidiqqi et al., “Islamic Ethical Governance of Post-Disaster Recovery: Advancing Inclusive Education, Gender Equality, and Decent Work for Vulnerable Communities,” *Mawaddah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Islam* 4, no. 1 (June 2026): 810–27.

⁸² See: Martha Fineman and Laura Spitz, eds., *Law, Vulnerability, and the Responsive State: Beyond Equality and Liberty*, Gender in Law, Culture, and Society (London New York: Routledge, 2024).

⁸³ Maija Mustaniemi-Laakso, Hisayo Katsui, and Mikaela Heikkilä, “Vulnerability, Disability, and Agency: Exploring Structures for Inclusive Decision-Making and Participation in a Responsive State,” *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law* 36, no. 4 (August 2023): 1581–609.

inspections.⁸⁴ While these instruments remain indispensable, the findings suggest that legal protection becomes substantively limited when statutory wages remain insufficient to secure the conditions necessary for a dignified life. SJF therefore proposes that *ḥimāyat al-mustad‘afīn* should function as a substantive evaluative principle rather than merely a humanitarian aspiration. The effectiveness of labor policy should be measured not only by legal compliance but also by its capacity to reduce structural vulnerability through distributive arrangements that strengthen workers’ economic resilience and social security.⁸⁵ Importantly, centering vulnerable workers does not imply privileging one stakeholder at the expense of all others. Instead, it redefines institutional fairness by recognizing that equality in deliberative participation does not necessarily produce equality in lived consequences.⁸⁶ Workers, employers, and governments enter wage negotiations with fundamentally different capacities to withstand economic uncertainty. A temporary reduction in corporate profitability and the inability of workers to meet essential living needs do not constitute equivalent forms of social risk. In this sense, *ḥimāyat al-mustad‘afīn* complements rather than contradicts procedural fairness by ensuring that distributive decisions remain responsive to structural inequalities embedded within labor markets.

Accordingly, the Sukoharjo case demonstrates that minimum wage governance should move beyond balancing competing institutional interests toward actively prioritizing the protection of structurally vulnerable workers. Such a shift transforms minimum wages from a regulatory floor determined primarily through economic negotiation into an ethical commitment to reducing social vulnerability.⁸⁷ By placing *ḥimāyat al-mustad‘afīn* at the center of wage governance, SJF contributes a normative framework in which labor policies derive their legitimacy from their capacity to protect those whose voices carry the least structural power but whose livelihoods are most profoundly shaped by public decisions. Accordingly, what is required from statistical data extends beyond mere indicators of employment and income; it encompasses the inclusion of justice as a social indicator.⁸⁸ This reconceptualization extends beyond the Indonesian context, offering a broader contribution to contemporary debates on labor governance by demonstrating that the ultimate measure of justice lies not in the formal equality of institutional procedures but in the substantive protection afforded to society’s most vulnerable workers.

⁸⁴ Ali Masyhar et al., “The Protection Policies on Predatory Digital Credit Traps Students: Lessons from Indonesia,” *Journal of Human Rights, Culture and Legal System* 6, no. 1 (April 2026): 254–84.

⁸⁵ Shahra Razavi, “Making the Right to Social Security a Reality for All Workers,” *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics* 65, no. 2 (June 2022): 269–94.

⁸⁶ Hamza Ateş, “Urban Justice, Vulnerable Groups, and Inclusive Governance: Local, National, and Global Perspectives,” in *Sustainable Public Administration and Urban Governance: Global Trends, Comparative Analyses, and Strategic Approaches* (Sakarya: Sakarya University Press, 2025), 22–47.

⁸⁷ Amir Firmansyah, Suparji, and Pujiono Suwandi, “Achieving Efficiency with Justice in the Reform of Anti-Corruption Law Enforcement in State-Owned Enterprises,” *Journal of Human Rights, Culture and Legal System* 6, no. 1 (March 2026): 84–115; Rahmatullah Ayu Hasmiati et al., “Indonesian Crimmigration Law: Critics of Immigration’s Law Enforcement Towards Illegal Expatriate Workers as the Impacts of Pro-Investment Policy,” *Nurani: Jurnal Kajian Syari’ah dan Masyarakat* 24, no. 1 (June 2024): 165–80.

⁸⁸ Sooraj Kumar Maurya, *Exploring Justice as a Social Indicator of Life: Philosophical Foundations and Empirical Approaches*, 1st ed. 2026, Social Indicators Research Series 92 (Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2026).

Beyond Procedural Fairness: Realizing Public Welfare

The preceding analysis demonstrates that the governance of minimum wage determination in Sukoharjo cannot be evaluated solely through the lens of procedural legality. The Wage Council fulfilled the institutional requirements prescribed by Government Regulation No. 49 of 2025, incorporated official statistical evidence produced by the BPS, facilitated deliberation among government officials, employers' associations, labor unions, and academic representatives, and ultimately adopted the adjustment coefficient (alpha) through formal consensus. From an administrative perspective, these procedures satisfy the fundamental requirements of legality, participation, and institutional accountability.⁸⁹ Yet the empirical findings simultaneously reveal that the resulting minimum wage remains considerably below the officially recognized decent living benchmark. This discrepancy reveals a fundamental limitation inherent in procedural approaches to labor governance: adherence to legal procedures does not necessarily yield distributive outcomes that sufficiently safeguard workers' welfare.

The Sukoharjo findings demonstrate that procedural legitimacy alone cannot resolve structural inequalities embedded within wage determination. Deliberative processes may operate transparently and inclusively while nevertheless producing distributive decisions that fail to secure the material conditions necessary for a dignified life. This perspective resonates with the concept of *maṣlaḥah 'āmmah*, understood not merely as abstract public interest but as the substantive realization of collective human welfare through public institutions.⁹⁰ Classical discussions of *maṣlaḥah* often focused on preserving social order and preventing public harm. In the context of contemporary labor governance, however, public welfare cannot be reduced to aggregate economic growth, investment attractiveness, or macroeconomic stability alone. Economic development undoubtedly contributes to social welfare, yet it becomes normatively incomplete when significant segments of the labor force remain unable to attain a decent standard of living despite full participation in productive employment.⁹¹ Accordingly, SJF reinterprets *maṣlaḥah 'āmmah* as an evaluative principle requiring public policies to balance economic sustainability with the effective protection of workers' dignity and social security.

The Sukoharjo case clearly illustrates this tension. Throughout the wage deliberation process, participants consistently considered industrial competitiveness, inflation, employment conditions, regional productivity, and the financial pressures confronting labor-intensive industries, particularly following the economic disruption associated with the decline of the regional textile sector. They reflected legitimate concerns regarding employment preservation and regional economic resilience. The Sukoharjo findings indicate

⁸⁹ Mamasiddikov Muzaffarkhon Musakhonovich et al., "The Protection of Labor Rights on the Court System," *Journal of Human Rights, Culture and Legal System* 4, no. 3 (December 2024): 742–64; Shohib Muslim et al., "ILO Conventions and Migrant Workers: Construction of Protection in National Labor Law," *Nurani: Jurnal Kajian Syari'ah dan Masyarakat* 24, no. 2 (October 2024): 297–316.

⁹⁰ Azid and Kzlkaya, *Labor in an Islamic Setting*; Azid et al., *Labor Economics in an Islamic Framework*; Enang Hidayat and Dadan Dadan, "Universal Legal Maxims on Mu'amalah Contracts from the Perspective of Sharia Economic Law," *Al-Hurriyah: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 11, no. 1 (June 2026): 74–96.

⁹¹ See: Toseef Azid and Lutfi Sunar, eds., *Social Justice and Islamic Economics: Theory, Issues and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

that Government Regulation No. 49 of 2025 provides a coherent procedural framework for wage determination, including the use of official statistical evidence and deliberative decision-making. However, the regulation offers limited normative guidance concerning the acceptable threshold separating economically feasible wages from socially adequate wages.⁹² As a result, legal compliance becomes possible even when substantial disparities persist between statutory wages and actual living costs. SJF addresses this normative gap by positioning *maṣlaḥah ‘āmmah* as the substantive benchmark against which legal implementation should be continuously evaluated.

The implications of this perspective extend beyond the Indonesian context. Many developing and emerging economies confront similar tensions between attracting investment, maintaining industrial competitiveness, and ensuring adequate labor protection.⁹³ Minimum wage policies are frequently negotiated within political environments characterized by fiscal constraints, unequal bargaining power, and concerns regarding employment losses.⁹⁴ Consequently, the dilemma observed in Sukoharjo reflects a broader challenge confronting contemporary labor governance rather than an isolated local phenomenon.⁹⁵ By introducing SJF as an interpretive framework, this study offers a normative vocabulary capable of bridging legal governance, Islamic social ethics, and public policy analysis. Rather than opposing economic development, the framework argues that sustainable development derives its legitimacy from its ability to expand human welfare in tangible and measurable ways. This shift from procedural fairness toward substantive public welfare represents the principal theoretical contribution of SJF. It reorients labor governance away from a narrow preoccupation with administrative correctness toward a broader conception of justice in which legal institutions, economic policies, and social ethics converge to realize public welfare. Within this framework, minimum wages cease to function merely as regulatory instruments for labor markets and instead become constitutional and ethical commitments to safeguarding the common good.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the minimum wage determined by the Sukoharjo Regency Wage Council has not yet fully reflected the standard of decent living needs (*kebutuhan hidup layak*, KHL), despite complying procedurally with Government Regulation No. 49 of 2025. The findings indicate that this gap is produced by three interconnected structural factors.

⁹² Compare with Christopher McCrudden, *Buying Social Justice: Equality, Government Procurement, and Legal Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁹³ Richard P. Appelbaum and Nelson Lichtenstein, eds., “Achieving Workers’ Rights in the Global Economy,” *Rights, Action, and Social Responsibility* (Ithaca London), 2016; Mahmoud Aleshoush and Omar Almakhoum, “The Role of the International Labor Organization in Protecting Workers’ Rights,” in *Frontiers of Human Centricity in the Artificial Intelligence-Driven Society 5.0*, vol. 226, ed. Azzam Hannon and Sameh Reyad, Studies in Systems, Decision and Control (Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2024), 805–16.

⁹⁴ Arindrajit Dube and Attila Lindner, *Minimum Wages in the 21st Century*, no. 32878 (Cambridge: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2024), 128; Jens Arnholtz and Bjarke Refslund, *Workers, Power and Society: Power Resource Theory in Contemporary Capitalism*, Routledge Research in Employment Relations 55 (New York: Routledge, 2024).

⁹⁵ Arpangi Arpangi and Tajudeen Sanni, “The State’s Injustice: Failing to Protect Fixed-Term Workers’ Rights,” *Journal of Human Rights, Culture and Legal System* 5, no. 1 (March 2025): 158–86.

First, the institutional mechanism responsible for generating empirical wage data—the Central Statistics Agency (*Badan Pusat Statistik*, BPS)—faces methodological limitations related to survey timing, respondent reliability, and the translation of household expenditure into normative living standards, reducing the responsiveness of wage calculations to rapidly changing economic conditions. Second, wage deliberations remain characterized by unequal bargaining power. Although representatives of workers and employers formally participate on equal terms, employer concerns over production costs and potential layoffs exert greater practical influence, encouraging worker representatives to moderate wage demands to avoid employment losses. Third, the concept of KHL is inherently dynamic rather than fixed. Living standards evolve alongside technological development, psychosocial well-being, emergency expenditures, household responsibilities, and changing social expectations, making standardized expenditure indicators insufficient to capture workers' actual needs. Consequently, the minimum wage represents a negotiated compromise between economic feasibility and social protection rather than an amount capable of fully guaranteeing a decent standard of living for workers.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in developing SJF as an analytical bridge between Islamic legal thought and contemporary labor governance. Rather than treating *fiqh* solely as a framework governing individual obligations, the study demonstrates its capacity to evaluate public institutions responsible for economic justice and social protection. Through four interconnected principles—*ḥifẓ al-karāmah insāniyyah* (protection of human dignity), *takaṭful ijtimā'ī* (collective social responsibility), *ḥimāyat al-mustaḍ'afīn* (protection of vulnerable workers), and *maṣlaḥah 'āmmah* (public welfare)—SJF reconceptualizes wage governance as both a legal mechanism and a moral project. This perspective expands socio-legal scholarship by showing that wage regulation cannot be assessed exclusively through legal compliance or economic efficiency but must also be evaluated according to its ability to protect vulnerable workers, distribute burdens fairly, strengthen institutional accountability, and translate normative commitments into substantive welfare. Accordingly, this study argues that minimum wage justice should be understood as a multidimensional process involving regulatory legitimacy, participatory governance, distributive fairness, and lived social outcomes. By integrating Islamic normative reasoning with empirical institutional analysis, SJF offers a theoretically robust framework for rethinking labor governance in Muslim-majority societies confronting persistent structural inequalities.

This study has several limitations that provide opportunities for future research. Empirically, it focuses on a single regency, meaning that the findings cannot automatically represent the diversity of labor markets, industrial structures, and institutional capacities across Indonesia. Moreover, the research primarily examines the wage formulation process rather than the long-term consequences of minimum wage implementation for worker welfare, employer adaptation, or regulatory compliance. Future studies should therefore undertake comparative research involving multiple provinces or sectors to identify how institutional arrangements, industrial characteristics, and regional economic conditions shape wage governance differently. Longitudinal analyses are equally necessary to assess whether minimum wage policies generate sustainable improvements in living standards, employment security, and social mobility over time. In addition, future scholarship should further develop

SJF by constructing empirical indicators for dignity, vulnerability, collective responsibility, and public welfare, allowing the framework to be tested quantitatively alongside qualitative inquiry. Such developments would strengthen its explanatory capacity while contributing to broader discussions on labor justice, Islamic legal reform, and socially responsive public policymaking.

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