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The Mourning Period (*Iḥdād*) for Widowers: A Gender and Sociological Perspectives

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Abstract: Despite extensive scholarship on female mourning practices (*iḥdād*), male mourning within Islamic legal and gender studies is largely overlooked, creating a significant gap in understanding how widowers manage grief culturally and religiously. This study focuses on the neglected male mourning practices in Islamic contexts and how widowers navigate their grief. Through a qualitative method involving in-depth interviews with five widowers, alongside observations and document analysis (in the form of local prayer books, memorial schedules, and religious guidance texts), the data was thematically analyzed using the Braun and Clarke framework, combined with phenomeno-logical insights to uncover emotional and ethical patterns. The findings indicate that widowers engage in ethical negotiations—such as postponing remarriage and avoiding social gatherings—that reflect an interplay between Islamic teachings and Javanese cultural norms. This research suggests that the *Qira'ah Mubādalah* perspective offers a valuable interpretive framework that situates these mourning practices within a context of reciprocal ethics rooted in spirituality, which has broader implications for gender ethics in contemporary Islamic discourse.

Keywords: gender reciprocity; *iḥdād*; *mubādalah*; widower mourning

Abstrak: Meskipun terdapat banyak penelitian tentang praktik berkabung perempuan (*iḥdād*), praktik berkabung laki-laki dalam studi hukum Islam dan gender sering diabaikan, sehingga menciptakan kesenjangan yang signifikan dalam pemahaman tentang bagaimana duda mengelola kesedihan secara budaya dan agama. Penelitian ini berfokus pada praktik berkabung duda yang terabaikan dalam konteks Islam dan bagaimana duda menghadapi kesedihan mereka. Melalui metode kualitatif yang melibatkan wawancara mendalam dengan lima orang duda, disertai pengamatan dan analisis dokumen (berupa buku doa lokal, jadwal peringatan, dan teks-teks bimbingan keagamaan), data dianalisis secara tematis menggunakan kerangka kerja Braun dan Clarke, dikombinasikan dengan wawasan fenomenologis untuk mengungkap pola emosional dan etis. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa duda terlibat dalam negosiasi etis—seperti menunda pernikahan kembali dan menghindari pertemuan sosial—yang mencerminkan interaksi antara ajaran Islam dan norma budaya Jawa. Penelitian ini menyarankan bahwa perspektif *Qira'ah Mubādalah* menawarkan kerangka interpretatif yang

berharga untuk menempatkan praktik berkabung ini dalam konteks etika timbal balik yang berakar pada spiritualitas, yang memiliki implikasi yang lebih luas bagi etika gender dalam diskursus Islam kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: resiprositas gender; *iḥdād;; mubādalah;* duda berkabung

A. Introduction

In classical Islamic jurisprudence, the concept of *iḥdād* (mourning period) reveals a significant gender disparity: while widows are legally required to observe a mourning period of four months and ten days, no such obligation exists for widowers.[1] This asymmetry has generated widespread critique, particularly among feminist scholars who argue that such legal constructions reflect patriarchal interpretations of sacred texts. Customary legal traditions, however, present a more nuanced picture. In some communities, such as among the Banjar people of Indonesia, mourning obligations are imposed on both spouses,[2] demonstrating that local cultural practices often supplement or contest formal religious prescriptions. The variation in the application of *iḥdād* across Muslim-majority countries—Indonesia's Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI) applying it to both genders, while Malaysia's Islamic Family Law Enactment applies it only to wives—exemplifies the evolving nature of Islamic jurisprudence and its responsiveness to socio-cultural conditions.[3]

As Islamic legal thought continues to engage with issues of gender equity, modern reformist interpretations have emerged to challenge rigid, patriarchal norms. Iranian family law, for example, has oscillated between secular and religious influences, reflecting broader tensions between tradition and human rights.[4] Scholars such as Bakhshizadeh argue that Islamic feminism has opened pathways for egalitarian readings of the Qur'an, which contest male-centric

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[1] Yusna Zaidah and Raihanah Abdullah, "The Relevance of Ihdad Regulations as a Sign of Mourning and Human Rights Restriction," *Journal of Human Rights, Culture and Legal System* 4, no. 2 (2024): 422–48, https://doi.org/10.53955/jhcls.v4i2.229.

[2] Zaidah and Abdullah.

[3] Ayse Elmali-Karakaya, "Interfaith Marriage in Islam: Classical Islamic Resources and Contemporary Debates on Muslim Women's Interfaith Marriages," *Religions* 13, no. 8 (2022): 726, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13080726.

[4] Fathonah K Daud and Aden Rosadi, "Dinamika Hukum Keluarga Islam dan Isu Gender di Iran: Antara Pemikiran Elit Sekuler dan Ulama Islam," *Volksgeist: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum dan Konstitusi* 4, no. 2 (2021): 205–2020, https://doi.org/10.24090/volksgeist.v4i2.5258.

interpretations.[5] Within this framework, caregiving and mourning are no longer seen merely as female responsibilities but as shared moral and spiritual obligations.[6] The ethical basis for such reinterpretations lies not only in scriptural exegesis but also in lived experiences and cultural practices that highlight mutual care and responsibility within Muslim families.

Despite these developments, mainstream Islamic jurisprudence still lacks an integrated model for male mourning obligations. Traditional legal frameworks tend to remain silent on whether widowed husbands should engage in practices of *iḥdād*, perpetuating a normative vacuum that implicitly favors men. However, in various cultural contexts—including Javanese Muslim communities—widowers have been observed to voluntarily abstain from public events, delay remarriage, and engage in other mourning-related behaviors. These practices suggest that cultural norms, or "urf, often operate as ethical correctives to the limitations of classical fiqh, reflecting communal expectations and emotional sincerity. Yet, scholarly engagement with such phenomena remains limited and often anecdotal.

To address these gaps, some scholars have proposed reinterpretations grounded in the *Mubādalah* framework, which conceptualizes mutual ethical responsibility between men and women in Islamic thought.[7] Derived from the Arabic word *mubādalah*, meaning reciprocity or mutual exchange, this approach re-reads Islamic texts to affirm equality and cooperation between genders in all domains of life, including grief and mourning. It has been applied to discussions of shared domestic and emotional labor, as well as decision-making within marital relationships.[8] As a principle of interpretive justice, *Mubādalah* enables scholars

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[5] Marziyeh Bakhshizadeh, "A Social Psychological Critique on Islamic Feminism," *Religions* 14, no. 2 (2023): 202, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14020202.

[6] Martyarini Budi Setyawati et al., "The Family Caregiving: A Rogerian Concept Analysis of Muslim Perspective Islamic Sources," *Heliyon* 10, no. 3 (2024): e25415, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e25415.

[7] Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, *Qira'ah Mubadalah: Tafsir Progresif Untuk Keadilan Gender dalam Islam* (Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, 2019), 210–19; Faqiuddin Abdul Kodir et al., "Maqāṣid Cum-Mubādalah Methodology of KUPI: Centering Women's Experiences in Islamic Law for Gender-Just Fiqh," *Al-Ihkam: Jurnal Hukum & Pranata Sosial* 19, no. 2 (2025): 519–45, https://doi.org/10.19105/al-lhkam.v19i2.16617; Nikmatullah Nikmatullah, "Male Ulama Reinterpretation of the Gender Hadith in Indonesian Socio Cultural Contexts," *Pharos Journal of Theology*, no. 105(2) (2024), https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.105.213.

[8] Supriyadi Supriyadi et al., "Building Husband and Wife Partnership Patterns among Regional Parliament (DPRD) Members from the Mubādalah Perspective," *Al-Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 8, no. 2 (2023): 445, https://doi.org/10.29240/jhi.v8i2.6972.

to challenge gender-specific obligations that no longer align with contemporary ethical sensibilities.

The *Mubādalah* perspective is particularly useful for analyzing cases in which widowers voluntarily adopt mourning practices akin to *iḥdād*. Existing literature on *iḥdād* and *'iddah* has been largely centered on women's experiences, leaving male mourning practices largely absent from scholarly attention. To date, no empirical studies in Indonesia—or even in broader Asian contexts—have systematically examined the *iḥdād* or *'iddah* of men from either a socio-legal or phenomenological perspective. Most available works, such as Zaidah and Abdullah,[9] and Sunuwati, Yunus, and Rahmawati,[10] focus on women's obligations or legal reform in gendered mourning, without extending analysis to men's emotional or ethical participation in bereavement rituals. This research, therefore, positions itself within this empirical gap by offering grounded evidence of male mourning experiences through the *Mubādalah* lens. It provides a theoretical justification for these acts as not merely cultural concessions but as ethically grounded behaviors consistent with Islamic moral teachings. In this regard, the works of Topkara[11] and Dutta[12] extend the application of *Mubādalah* to broader discourses on ethical responsibility and spiritual equality. Nonetheless, the application of *Mubādalah* to *iḥdād* remains underexplored, particularly in Southeast Asian contexts where cultural norms strongly shape religious expression.

The present study examines *iḥdād* practices among widowed husbands in Ngunut District, Tulungagung Regency, East Java, where cultural mourning customs reveal a pattern of voluntary male observance. Preliminary observations indicate that widowers in this area often engage in periods of social withdrawal, delayed remarriage, and ritual abstinence following their wives' deaths. These practices reflect deeply embedded cultural values that combine

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[9] Zaidah and Abdullah, "The Relevance of Ihdad Regulations as a Sign of Mourning and Human Rights Restriction."

[10] Sunuwati Sunuwati, Siti Irham Yunus, and Rahmawati Rahmawati, "Gender Equality in Islamic Family Law: Should Men Take Iddah (Waiting Period after Divorce)?," *Russian Law Journal* 11, no. 3 (2023): 1132–38, https://doi.org/10.52783/rlj.v11i3.1504.

[11] Ufuk Topkara, "On Responsibility: Islamic Ethical Thought Engages with Jewish Ethical Thought," *Religions* 16, no. 3 (2025): 274, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16030274.

[12] Sagnik Dutta, "Divorce, Kinship, and Errant Wives: Islamic Feminism in India, and the Everyday Life of Divorce and Maintenance," *Ethnicities* 21, no. 3 (2021): 454–76, https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796821999904.

Javanese, Islamic, and even pre-Islamic elements.[13] Ngunut's social context offers a unique opportunity to examine how ethical mourning behavior by men may function as an expression of *Mubādalah*, thus challenging the gendered assumptions of traditional Islamic law.

While literature on *iḥdād* predominantly focuses on widows, there is a paucity of scholarly work that systematically explores male mourning from either legal, anthropological, or comparative religious perspectives. Classic anthropo-logical studies of death, such as those by Hertz,[14] Hugh-Jones,[15] and Metcalf and Huntington,[16] emphasize that mourning is a socially constructed process through which communities negotiate moral order and emotional expression. However, these insights have rarely been applied to Muslim men's experiences of bereavement. Likewise, gendered grief studies demonstrate that men's mourning practices are often shaped by cultural expectations of restraint and stoicism, which parallels the normative silence surrounding male *iḥdād* in Islamic contexts.[17] Comparative research on mourning rituals across faith traditions[18] further reveals how religious ethics frame emotional expression as both a social and spiritual act. Despite these cross-disciplinary advances, Islamic feminist and family law literature—such as that of Zaidah and Abdullah,[19] Moussa,[20] and Ma'mun and Maliki[21] —continues to focus predominantly on women's experiences and legal obligations, leaving the

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[13] Fawaizul Umam and Mohamad Barmawi, "Indigenous Islamic Multiculturalism: Interreligious Relations in Rural East Java, Indonesia," *Ulumuna* 27, no. 2 (2023): 649–91, https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v27i2.752.

[14] Robert Hertz, "A Contribution to a Study of the Collective Representation of Death," in *Saints, Heroes, Myths, and Rites* (London: Routledge, 2016), 109–80, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315632292-6.

[15] Stephen Hugh-Jones, Maurice Bloch, and Jonathan Parry, "Death and the Regeneration of Life," *Man* 21, no. 1 (1986): 147–48, https://doi.org/10.2307/2802663.

[16] Peter Metcalf and Richard Huntington, *Celebrations of Death: The Anthropology of Mortuary Ritual*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 34–48, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511803178.

[17] Kenneth J. Doka and Terry L. Martin, *Grieving beyond Gender* (London: Routledge, 2011), 60–70, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203886069.

[18] Christine Valentine, *Bereavement Narratives: Continuing Bonds in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Routledge, 2008), 85, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203893364.

[19] Zaidah and Abdullah, "The Relevance of Ihdad Regulations as a Sign of Mourning and Human Rights Restriction."

[20] Mohammed Moussa, "Gendering a Critical Islamic Idiom," *Orient* 56 (2021): 47–67, https://doi.org/10.5356/orient.56.47.

[21] Sukron Ma'mun and Ibnu Akbar Maliki, "A Socio-Historical Study of Women's Rights Advocacy in Islamic Legal Construction," *Journal of Southeast Asian Human Rights* 7, no. 1 (2023): 1, https://doi.org/10.19184/jseahr.v7i1.39156.

ethical and affective dimensions of male mourning underexplored. This study fills that gap by combining fieldwork with normative analysis to investigate *iḥdād* for widowed husbands in Ngunut from both empirical and theoretical perspectives, positioning male mourning within the broader discourse of *Mubādalah*-based gender reciprocity and Islamic ethics.

Therefore, this research seeks to fill the scholarly gap in Islamic gender studies, where discussions of *iḥdād* have predominantly focused on widows, leaving male mourning practices underexplored both empirically and normatively. By examining how widowed men in Ngunut observe mourning and how these practices align with the principles of *Mubādalah*, this study contributes to addressing the absence of a gender-equitable framework in existing Islamic legal and ethical discourse. The study's novelty lies in its reinterpretation of male *iḥdād* not merely as a cultural manifestation but as a legitimate form of Islamic ethical practice grounded in reciprocity and mutual responsibility. Theoretically, it advances the discourse of Islamic gender ethics by integrating lived male experiences into the *Mubādalah* paradigm, thus expanding the scope of gender justice in Islamic jurisprudence. Practically, it offers insights for religious leaders, educators, and policymakers in developing more inclusive ethical guidelines that acknowledge both men's and women's emotional and spiritual responsibilities in bereavement. The research employs field observations, interviews with widowers and religious leaders, and a normative analysis rooted in *Mubādalah* to substantiate these contributions.

This study seeks to explore how widowed husbands in Ngunut District observe and internalize mourning after the death of their spouses, particularly in ways that reflect local cultural expectations and religious sensibilities. It further investigates the sociocultural and ethical values that shape these mourning practices, asking how communal norms, family influence, and religious guidance contribute to men's expressions of grief. Central to this inquiry is an examination of how the *Mubādalah* framework can be applied to interpret and legitimize male *iḥdād* as part of a broader Islamic ethical reform. Through this analytical trajectory, the research aims to uncover how reciprocal ethics between men and women can redefine the moral and spiritual dimensions of bereavement within contemporary Muslim communities.

B. Method

This study employed a qualitative field research design with a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of mourning

among widowed husbands in Ngunut District, Tulungagung Regency, East Java, through the interpretive lens of the *Qirā'ah Mubādalah* framework. The phenomenological approach was selected because it allows the researcher to capture the essence of individual experiences and emotional meanings associated with male bereavement, aligning with the study's aim to understand grief as both a personal and ethical phenomenon. The use of *Qirā'ah Mubādalah* was operationalized by interpreting participants' narratives through principles of reciprocity (*mubādalah*) and mutual ethical responsibility (*taḥammul mas'üliyyah mushtarakah*), examining how these values are reflected in mourning conduct and spiritual attitudes.

The main data in this research were obtained through in-depth interviews with widowed men, supported by participant observations and document analysis. The supporting data included information from family members, neighbors, and religious leaders (*kiai kampung*) who provided contextual insight into community expectations and cultural norms surrounding mourning. This triangulation of sources strengthened the credibility of findings and ensured a balanced interpretation between individual emotion and social ethics.

Purposive sampling was used to identify informants who met specific inclusion criteria: 1) widowed Muslim men who had lost their wives within the last three years, 2) had not remarried, and 3) were emotionally stable and willing to discuss their experiences. Five primary informants participated as the main subjects, supplemented by three additional secondary informants—two family members and one religious leader—to provide corroborative perspectives. The number of participants was justified by the principle of data saturation, reached after repeated patterns of meaning and experience were identified during the fifth interview. Informant identities (e.g., G, H, I, S, and Sup) were disclosed with explicit written consent from each participant, following ethical research protocols.

Data were collected between March and April 2024 through: 1) semi-structured, in-depth interviews to capture personal reflections on mourning, 2) participant observation in domestic and community spaces to observe behavioral expressions of grief, and 3) document analysis of local materials such as prayer booklets, commemorative event schedules, and guidance pamphlets distributed by local mosques. The combination of these methods allowed a holistic understanding of mourning as both an individual experience and a communal practice.

The data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's thematic framework[22] while incorporating phenomenological reflection. The process involved six steps: data familiarization, coding, theme generation, theme review, theme definition, and synthesis. Within this process, the researcher applied the logic of *Qirā'ah Mubādalah* by identifying reciprocal ethical meanings within the participants' narratives—for example, mutual care, restraint, and remembrance as acts of spiritual responsibility. This interpretive integration ensured that the phenomenological insights (subjective meaning of grief) were examined in conversation with Islamic ethical concepts derived from *Mubādalah* readings. Member checking and peer debriefing were conducted to validate thematic coherence and minimize researcher bias.

The researcher, a Muslim female academic, acknowledges that her gender, faith, and scholarly background may have influenced the dynamics of data collection and interpretation. Being a woman provided both opportunities and challenges in accessing the emotional narratives of male participants: some expressed their grief more openly due to perceived maternal empathy, while others maintained modest restraint in accordance with cultural norms. To address these dynamics, the researcher maintained detailed reflexive field notes and engaged in continuous self-reflection on positionality, power relations, and interpretation throughout the fieldwork. Regular discussions with male academic peers familiar with Islamic gender ethics served as intercoder reliability checks to minimize gendered bias. This reflexive practice aimed to ensure that the participants' experiences were interpreted authentically and ethically, balancing empathy with analytical rigor.

The findings of this research are context-specific and limited to the socio-cultural environment of Ngunut District, Tulungagung. While they offer conceptual insights into reciprocal ethics and gender-equitable mourning, the interpretations do not claim to represent broader Islamic mourning practices. Instead, they contribute to an emerging discourse on how *Mubādalah*-based ethics can illuminate the lived moral experiences of Muslim men navigating grief within particular cultural contexts.

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[22] Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77–101, https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.

C. Results and Discussion

Male Mourning Observances in Ngunut: Duration, Rituals, and Social Conduct

Field data from Ngunut District in Tulungagung Regency demonstrate that grieving husbands express mourning in varied, culturally embedded ways. Based on interviews with five bereaved male informants, mourning durations typically range from 40 to 100 days, with some extending their observance up to six months or even a year. H (59), a retired civil servant, explained, "I refrained from social activities and religious gatherings for exactly 100 days to honor my wife and uphold my family's tradition."[23] I, another informant, stated, "Even after a year, I had no plans to remarry. People would question my sincerity if I did." [24]

These practices mirror those documented in Banjar communities by Zaidah and Abdullah,[25] where male mourners observe a 100-day period of withdrawal. In Ngunut, mourning included not only abstention from events but also ritual reticence, such as delaying inheritance proceedings. G, a 63-year-old farmer, remarked, "We postponed any discussion of inheritance until the 40th day had passed. It didn't feel right to bring it up earlier."[26] These delays reflect both emotional readiness and social norms tied to ethical mourning.

Observations revealed that male mourners wore modest clothing, avoided entertainment venues, and engaged in solitary acts of remembrance, such as cemetery visits on the 7th, 40th, and 100th days after the wife's passing. Community members recognized these behaviors as meaningful. D, a female neighbor, noted, "A man who mourns like this is seen as sincere. We appreciate that he doesn't immediately look for someone new."[27]

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[23] H, "Interview," March 8, 2024.

[24] I, "Interview," March 10, 2024.

[25] Zaidah and Abdullah, "The Relevance of Ihdad Regulations as a Sign of Mourning and Human Rights Restriction."

[26] G, "Interview," March 3, 2024.

[27] D, "Interview," March 17, 2024.

typically range from 40 to 100 days, with some extending their observance up to six months or even a year. In Ngunut, mourning included not only abstention from events but also ritual restraint, such as delaying inheritance proceedings, wearing modest clothing, and performing commemorative rituals on the 7th, 40th, and 100th days after the wife's passing. Community members perceived these actions as meaningful demonstrations of sincerity and respect for the deceased (see Table 1).

As summarized in Table 1, male mourning practices in Ngunut show diverse expressions that, while not legally prescribed, are socially reinforced through local adat and ethical expectations. These behaviors illustrate how emotional restraint and public withdrawal serve as culturally intelligible forms of piety and moral integrity. The table provides an empirical overview that complements the phenomenological narrative, demonstrating the intersection between individual emotion, communal ethics, and reciprocal moral responsibility within the *Mubādalah* framework.

These expressions challenge monolithic depictions of Muslim masculinity. As Peletz [28] and Mohd Faizal Musa [29] argue, Southeast Asian Muslim masculinities are shaped by a confluence of historical, colonial, and cultural influences that encourage emotional expressiveness. In this context, mourning becomes both a personal and social performance, signifying integrity and loyalty.

Furthermore, the voluntary nature of male *iḥdād* in Ngunut reflects the powerful influence of '*urf* (local custom). Though classical Islamic jurisprudence does not impose mourning on men, cultural norms have developed parallel expectations. These findings correspond with the observations of Umam & Barmawi [30] on Javanese Islamic multiculturalism, where Islamic practice is filtered through deeply rooted traditions.

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[28] Michael G Peletz, "Hegemonic Muslim Masculinities and Their Others: Perspectives from South and Southeast Asia," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 63, no. 3 (2021): 534–65, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417521000141.

[29] Mohd Faizal Musa, "Transcripts of Gender, Intimacy, and Islam in Southeast Asia: The 'Outrageous' Texts of Raja Ali Haji and Khatijah Terung," *Religions* 12, no. 3 (2021): 219, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12030219.

[30] Umam and Barmawi, "Indigenous Islamic Multiculturalism: Interreligious Relations in Rural East Java, Indonesia."

Table 1
Summary of Mourning Practices among Widowed Husbands in Ngunut District, Tulungagung

No.	Informant	Duration of Mourning	Main Practices	Social or Ethical Motivation	Additional Notes
1	H (59, retired civil servant)	100 days	Refrained from social and religious gatherings	To honor his late wife and uphold family tradition	Saw mourning as a moral obligation
2	I (55, shopkeeper)	1 year	Avoided remarriage; wore plain, modest clothing	To maintain sincerity and avoid community judgment	Expressed emotional attachment to his wife
3	G (63, farmer)	40 days	Postponed inheritance discussion until after the 40th day	Emotional readiness; adherence to *adat*	Reflected balance between custom and faith
4	S (60, laborer)	6 months	Withdrew from public celebrations; delayed remarriage	Religious ethics and respect for communal mourning norms	Advised by *kiai* to maintain emotional discipline
5	Sup (58, teacher)	40 days	Avoided entertainment; wore white *koko* shirt and black cap	Personal discipline rooted in *pesantren* values	Practiced ritual remembrance (*tahlil*)

From a sociological lens, abstaining from remarriage and public engagement serves as a form of social withdrawal that facilitates grief and eventual reintegration.[31] This aligns with Mahdi et al.,[32] who note that post-loss decisions around remarriage are shaped by complex factors including emotional readiness, childcare responsibilities, and social perceptions.

[31] Paul K Maciejewski et al., "A Micro-Sociological Theory of Adjustment to Loss," *Current Opinion in Psychology* 43 (2022): 96–101, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2021.06.016.

[32] Saiful Mahdi et al., "Remarriage Strategies for Post-Disaster Widows and Widowers Following the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami in Aceh, Indonesia," *Progress in Disaster Science* 19 (2023): 100289, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pdisas.2023.100289.

Of the five informants, three followed a 100-day mourning period, and two continued mourning for over six months. Their differing mourning practices, outlined in Table 2, highlight the duration, specific rituals, and underlying sociocultural motivations. Male mourning behaviors, while informal and not dictated by Islamic law, are shaped by local customs and moral expectations, reflecting how emotional restraint and public withdrawal serve as culturally significant expressions of piety and respect. Although these findings are not broadly generalizable, they provide valuable qualitative insights. The informants were driven by communal expectations, personal beliefs, and a perceived spiritual duty, indicating that their mourning transcended mere ritual, representing an ethical expression of grief.

Table 2
Key Mourning Practices among Bereaved Husbands in Ngunut, Tulungagung

No.	Informant Name	Time Since Wife's Death	Observed Mourning Practices	Duration of Practice	Cultural or Religious Justification
1	G	2 years	Refrained from attending public and religious events; wore black shirt and sarong	40 days	Local adat and family encouragement
2	H	1.5 years	Avoided pengajian and weddings; delayed inheritance talks; did not accept marriage proposals	100 days	Ethical obligation to honor the deceased; advice from religious elders
3	I	1 year	Performed tahlil on day 3, 7, 40, and 100; wore plain batik shirt; refrained from travel	4 commemorative events	Cultural rites supported by mosque leadership and family traditions
4	S	8 months	Did not remarry despite pressure; abstained from major social activities; did not host family celebrations	Ongoing (past 8 months)	Belief in modest mourning as spiritual respect; informal Islamic ethics
5	Sup	6 months	Participated only in obligatory prayers; wore white koko shirt and black cap as mourning attire	First 40 days intensively	Self-discipline based on pesantren values and family advice

The mourning practices of widowed husbands in Ngunut signal a broader need for scholarly engagement with gender-equitable models of grief that integrate both Islamic ethics and local philosophy. Through the lens of *Mubādalah*, these voluntary acts of *iḥdād* can be interpreted as expressions of reciprocal devotion and ethical accountability. Rather than viewing mourning as a gendered obligation limited to women, *Mubādalah* reframes it as a shared moral duty grounded in compassion (*raḥmah*), justice (*'adl*), and mutual care (*mas'üliyyah mushtarakah*). Within this framework, men's voluntary restraint—such as delaying remarriage, avoiding festivities, and wearing modest attire—reflects a conscious enactment of ethical reciprocity toward their deceased spouses. Philosophically, these actions resonate with Javanese notions of *tepa selira* (empathic consideration) and *eling lan waspada* (spiritual mindfulness), emphasizing inner balance, emotional sincerity, and respect for the sacred bond of marriage even after death. Thus, mourning becomes both a spiritual practice and a moral philosophy that embodies *Mubādalah*'s call for mutual ethical responsibility between men and women, revealing how local traditions can serve as vehicles for realizing Islamic gender justice in everyday life. [33]

Religious Guidance, Social Expectations, and Community Influence

The expressions of grief among bereaved men in Ngunut are deeply shaped by religious guidance and communal norms, mediated through the authority of local religious leaders (*kiai*) and family elders. Data gathered from field interviews and participant observation revealed that religious figures, particularly *kiai kampung* and mosque leaders, did not impose formal *iḥdād* (mourning) obligations upon men. However, their informal advice strongly influenced the behavior of grieving husbands. For instance, one informant, I (64), a devout Muslim and community member, noted, "The kiai did not say I must not remarry, but he advised me to wait at least three months to reflect and heal. I took it seriously."[34]

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[33] Abdul Kodir et al., "Maqāṣid Cum-Mubādalah Methodology of KUPI: Centering Women's Experiences in Islamic Law for Gender-Just Fiqh"; Akhmad Arif Junaidi, "Kongres Ulama Perempuan Indonesia (KUPI) and Mubādalah Approach in Interpreting the Gender Biased-Qur'anic Verses," *Sawwa: Jurnal Studi Gender* 18, no. 1 (2023): 1–24, https://doi.org/10.21580/sa.v18i1.17269.

[34] I, "Interview," March 10, 2024.

This type of advisory guidance exemplifies the subtle influence of religious authority in shaping male mourning without resorting to juridical mandates. As seen in other Muslim contexts, religious leaders' words carry weight even in the absence of legal prescriptions.[35] Field observations confirmed that men who followed the advice of kiai often received greater community respect, suggesting that conformity to these informal expectations reinforces one's moral standing.

In several cases, grieving husbands delayed not only remarriage but also active participation in community rituals such as selametan (communal prayer meals) and Friday prayers. This was especially common when such withdrawal was publicly interpreted as a sign of sincerity. S, aged 60, remarked, "I did not attend pengajian for a while. People say it shows that I'm really mourning and not just pretending." [36]

Family dynamics also played a vital role. Adult children and in-laws were often vocal about appropriate mourning conduct. For instance, Sup (58) explained, "My children said, 'Father, don't remarry too quickly. It's too painful for us.' Their feelings mattered a lot in my decision to wait."[37] These pressures are consistent with Yehene et al.,[38] who argue that family expectations and masculine norms often contribute to suppressed male grief.

Observations revealed that households in mourning were marked by subdued environments. Televisions remained off during mourning weeks, celebratory music was avoided, and homes often displayed signs, such as black flags or condolence banners, for up to 40 days. Neighbors respected these signals, refraining from playing loud music nearby or inviting the bereaved husband to festivities. These collective actions mirror findings in Habaasa,[39] where communal responses to death are both emotional and regulatory.

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[35] Padraig Lyons et al., "Engaging Religious Leaders to Promote Safe Burial Practices during the 2014–2016 Ebola Virus Disease Outbreak, Sierra Leone," *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 99, no. 4 (2021): 271–79, https://doi.org/10.2471/BLT.20.263202; Nurhayati Nurhayati and Tri Bayu Purnama, "Funeral Processes during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Perceptions among Islamic Religious Leaders in Indonesia," *Journal of Religion and Health* 60, no. 5 (2021): 3418–33, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-021-01418-z.

[36] S, "Interview," March 15, 2024.

[37] Sup, "Interview," March 22, 2024.

[38] Einat Yehene, Yossi Martin, and Gil Goldzweig, "An Analysis of Factors Predicting Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Grief Following Comrade Loss," *Omega - Journal of Death and Dying* 90, no. 3 (2025): 971–89, https://doi.org/10.1177/00302228221113616.

[39] Gilbert Habaasa, "The Contribution of Social Norms and Religious Practices towards Low Death Registration in 3 HDSS Sites of Uganda," *BMC Health Services Research* 22, no. 1 (2022): 1219, https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-022-08589-9.

The findings reveal that widowers in Ngunut are not merely conforming to cultural convention but are motivated by complex moral, emotional, and social considerations in their mourning behavior. Their decisions to delay remarriage, withdraw from social gatherings, or adopt modest dress stem from intertwined motives of ethical responsibility, emotional sincerity, and communal expectation.

Importantly, while bereaved women often receive ritual and emotional support from neighbors—such as food preparation and Qur'anic recitations—male mourners tend to grieve in relative isolation. This solitude is partly voluntary and partly normative, reflecting a belief that visible restraint signals inner strength and moral integrity. Community members often regard excessive sympathy or assistance as undermining a man's perceived resilience, which reinforces the idea that emotional control constitutes virtue in masculine identity.[40]

For many widowers, maintaining restraint functions as both a personal discipline and a social statement: it communicates loyalty to the deceased spouse and affirms spiritual maturity before the community. Delaying remarriage symbolizes inner fidelity (*kesetiaan batin*), while avoiding public festivities expresses respect for the sanctity of death and the continuity of marital bonds in memory. Modest dress, meanwhile, serves as an outward embodiment of humility (*tawaḍu'*) and mourning ethics rooted in Javanese and Islamic sensibilities. Thus, the motives behind male *iḥdād* combine ethical, emotional, and cultural reasoning—transforming mourning into a practice of moral self-cultivation within the framework of *Mubādalah* and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah.*

Of the five informants, four explicitly mentioned the moral and emotional impact of their religious leaders' guidance, and all five stated that social expectations influenced their mourning behaviors more than doctrinal teachings. This suggests a shift from text-based prescriptions toward community-based interpretations of grief ethics. From the perspective of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, these voluntary mourning practices embody key ethical objectives of Islamic law. The widowers' restraint and social withdrawal serve the goal of *ḥifẓ al-nafs* (preservation of emotional and spiritual well-being) by

[40] Nurit Glaser Chodik and Nehami Baum, "The Experience of Men Following Stillbirth: The Case of Israeli Bereaved Fathers," *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology* 43, no. 2 (2025): 443–58, https://doi.org/10.1080/02646838.2023.2237541.

allowing time for inner healing and reflection. Their modest conduct and avoidance of premature remarriage align with *ḥifẓ al-'irḍ* (protection of dignity and honor), ensuring that the memory of the deceased is treated with respect. Postponing inheritance discussions until after the mourning period also resonates with *ḥifẓ al-māl* (preservation of property rights) by preventing disputes driven by grief. Through these practices, the widowers enact a form of ethical self-discipline that sustains both personal virtue and communal harmony. Hence, the findings demonstrate that male *iḥdād* in Ngunut can be interpreted as fulfilling the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* of compassion, justice, and balance—principles that complement the *Mubādalah* framework's call for mutual ethical responsibility between men and women.

This ethical dimension of mourning resonates with broader efforts in Islamic scholarship to reinterpret gendered responsibilities through a *maqāṣid*-based family ethics. As argued by Fadhilah et al.,[41] the maqasid al-usrah framework offers a holistic paradigm for balancing justice, compassion, and shared responsibility within Muslim households. Building on this reasoning, the present study extends the maqasid discourse to the domain of post-marital ethics, suggesting that voluntary *iḥdād* practices among widowers can also represent an expression of maslahah and mutual care consistent with *Mubādalah* principles.

Reciprocal Ethics and the Application of *Mubādalah* in Male Mourning

The application of the *Mubādalah* framework in Ngunut's male mourning practices illustrates an evolving ethical consciousness rooted in mutual responsibility. Though Islamic jurisprudence traditionally imposes the obligation of *iḥdād* solely on widows, several bereaved men in this study expressed a sense of reciprocal duty in response to their spouses' deaths. This adaptation reflects a community-level attempt to reimagine grief ethics in line with principles of justice (al-'adl) and compassion (rahmah), consistent with the framework proposed by Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir.[42]

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[41] Nur Fadhilah and Muhammad Nurravi Alamsyah, "Reinterpreting Financial Responsibilities in Islamic Marriage a Maqasid al-Usrah Perspective," *Al-Syakhsiyyah: Journal of Law and Family Studies* 7, no. 1 (2025): 1–26, https://doi.org/10.21154/syakhsiyyah.v7i1.

[42] Abdul Kodir et al., "Maqāṣid Cum-Mubādalah Methodology of KUPI: Centering Women's Experiences in Islamic Law for Gender-Just Fiqh"; Nikmatullah, "Male Ulama Reinterpretation of the Gender Hadith in Indonesian Socio Cultural Contexts."

Informants described how they voluntarily adopted behavioral codes associated with *iḥdād* to demonstrate spiritual accountability and respect toward their deceased wives. Heri shared, "I did not see this as something just for women. I chose to follow a period of silence and reflection because I loved her and because it felt right before God."[43] Similarly, Suprayitno explained, "It's not written in fiqh, but I felt it was my duty to show restraint, avoid marrying too soon, and be a role model for my children." [44]

This ethical shift is consistent with the *Mubādalah* approach, which emphasizes gender reciprocity in interpreting religious duties.[45] Field observations further revealed how male mourners engaged in acts typically associated with female *iḥdād*: avoiding celebratory events, reducing public visibility, and maintaining a subdued appearance. These practices were not dictated by formal religious edicts but emerged from evolving communal expectations rooted in local wisdom (*'urf*), which increasingly recognize the emotional depth of male grief. One informant, Heri remarked, "My neighbors told me they appreciated that I waited. It showed I honored my wife's memory."[46]

Theologically, this behavior aligns with the reciprocal reading of sacred texts advocated by Islamic feminist scholars.[47]Rather than viewing religious obligations as static or gender-exclusive, these men reinterpreted them through the lens of shared ethical responsibility. In this context, their grief became a space for expressing both vulnerability and integrity, reshaping societal norms about masculinity.

Documents obtained from local religious forums and khutbah texts reinforce this trend. A Friday sermon delivered by a local kyai in early 2023 emphasized that "men, too, should take time to mourn—not out of obligation,

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[43] H, "Interview," March 8, 2024

[44] Sup, "Interview," March 22, 2024

[45] Nikmatullah, "Male Ulama Reinterpretation of the Gender Hadith in Indonesian Socio Cultural Contexts"; Supriyadi et al., "Building Husband and Wife Partnership Patterns among Regional Parliament (DPRD) Members from the Mubādalah Perspective."

[46] H, "Interview," March 8, 2024

[47] Roshan Iqbal, "Nurturing Gender Justice: Qur'anic Interpretation and Muslim Feminist Thought," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 39, no. 2 (2023): 59–61, https://doi.org/10.2979/jfs.2023.a908296; Mulki al-Sharmani, "Islamic Feminist Hermeneutics: Between Scholarship and Lived Realities," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 39, no. 2 (2023): 95–97, https://doi.org/10.2979/jfs.2023.a908305.

but out of compassion and respect for the sacredness of marriage." This statement was widely circulated via WhatsApp and cited by several informants as motivation for their prolonged mourning conduct.

These findings contribute to a growing body of work on gender-equitable Islamic ethics, where reciprocal obligations foster a more inclusive moral framework.[48] By voluntarily adopting practices inspired by women's *iḥdād*, male mourners in Ngunut illustrate the transformative potential of *Mubādalah* in shaping contemporary Islamic mourning ethics. Their actions do not merely mirror tradition but reinterpret it, opening new possibilities for just, compassionate, and spiritually resonant expressions of grief.

This study offers an interpretive account of mourning obligations among bereaved Muslim men in Ngunut, East Java, examining how cultural customs, religious norms, and ethical reinterpretations converge in the lived experiences of grief. While classical Islamic jurisprudence does not obligate men to observe *iḥdād*, local practices in Ngunut reflect a more reciprocal ethic rooted in communal expectations, spiritual responsibility, and ethical mourning. These findings provide empirical support for calls within contemporary Islamic thought to rethink gendered religious obligations based on mutuality and justice.

The evidence collected in this study reinforces the proposition advanced by *Mubādalah*, which advocates reciprocal interpretation and partnership between genders based on religious texts and lived experiences.[49] Male mourners in Ngunut voluntarily adopt mourning practices typically prescribed for women, including social withdrawal, ritual reticence, and delayed remarriage. This ethical response, grounded in both *'urf* (custom) and moral reasoning, reflects an evolving Islamic masculinity that resonates with Shaikh's[50] notion of Islamic feminism as a friendship with/in tradition. Rather than rejecting tradition, these men reinterpret it through an ethical lens that emphasizes *raḥmah* (compassion), *iḥsān* (excellence), and '*adl* (justice).

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[48] Dian Mustika et al., "Wives with the Double Burden: Measuring Gender Justice in the Division of Joint Property of Suku Anak Dalam (SAD) Batin Sembilan Viewed from the Principle of al-Musāwah," *Al-Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 10, no. 1 (2025): 407–28, https://doi.org/10.29240/jhi.v10i1.11023.

[49] Abdul Kodir et al., "Maqāṣid Cum-Mubādalah Methodology of KUPI: Centering Women's Experiences in Islamic Law for Gender-Just Fiqh."

[50] Sa'diyya Shaikh, "Friendships, Fidelities and Sufi Imaginaries: Theorizing Islamic Feminism," *Religions* 14, no. 9 (2023): 1082, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14091082.

Furthermore, the integration of mourning into a broader framework of ethical Islamic thought parallels trends in Islamic education and epistemology, where thinkers such as Husni and Hayden[51] advocate reconstructing religious knowledge to reflect both divine principles and human dignity. These ethical frameworks encourage interpretations of Islamic norms that respond to contemporary realities, including gender equity and emotional well-being. In the context of mourning, the application of ethical reciprocity allows for a more inclusive practice that affirms both spiritual obligations and emotional needs of bereaved men. To further clarify the analytical trajectory of this study, the following table summarizes the major discussion themes, their core insights, and their interpretive implications within the broader context of Islamic ethical thought and gender-equitable mourning.

As Table 3 illustrates, mourning practices among grieving husbands in Ngunut represent more than isolated cultural rituals—they serve as an important site of ethical negotiation, religious reinterpretation, and gender justice in contemporary Muslim discourse. This study also contributes to scholarship on the indigenization of Islamic norms, or pribumization, wherein Islamic practices are harmonized with local cultural traditions.[52] In Ngunut, mourning practices have been shaped by Javanese sensibilities, including the 40th and 100th day commemorations and ritual inheritance postponement. These traditions operate within Islamic ethical paradigms, demonstrating that cultural expression can serve as a valid medium for religious adherence. As noted by Dasopang et al.,[53] local Islamic communities often adapt cultural norms to religious mandates, creating hybrid forms of observance that are both authentic and legitimate.

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[51] Husni Husni and Walter Hayden, "The Epistemology of Ta'dib in Islamic Civilizational Discourse: Reviving and Reconstructing Contemporary Muslim Scholars' Views," *Journal of al-Tamaddun* 19, no. 1 (2024): 181–97, https://doi.org/10.22452/JAT.vol19no1.14.

[52] Moh Ashif Fuadi et al., "Integration between Islamic Revelation and Local Culture: A Study of Theology and the Indigenisation of Islam in Indonesia," *Pharos Journal of Theology* 105, no. 1 (2023), https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.10527.

[53] Muhammad Darwis Dasopang, Hj Sammali bin Hj Adam, and Ismail Fahmi Arrauf Nasution, "Integration of Religion and Culture in Muslim Minority Communities through Islamic Education," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 8, no. 2 (2022): 221–38, https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v8i2.19445.

Table 3
Analytical Summary of Key Discussion Themes

Thematic Focus	Core Insight	Interpretive Implication
Gender-Equitable Reinterpretation	The study reveals that mourning obligations are not inherently gendered and can be meaningfully practiced by men.	Opens pathways for redefining traditional Islamic obligations in light of mutual ethical responsibility.
Cultural Embeddedness of *Iḥdād*	Local customs strongly influence how men observe mourning, including refraining from public life and delaying remarriage.	Demonstrates the role of *'urf* in shaping religious practices, legitimizing male mourning in community contexts.
Emotional Expression and Masculinity	Male mourners adopt socially acceptable forms of grief such as solitude, modest attire, and ritual withdrawal.	Challenges hegemonic ideals of masculinity by legitimizing emotional expression through religious and ethical norms.
Ethical Significance of Mourning Acts	Mourning practices are not merely ritual but embody ethical commitments to memory, loyalty, and social decency.	Repositions mourning as a moral act that aligns with principles of justice and compassion in Islamic ethics.
Normative Framework Expansion	The practices of male mourners align with reciprocal ethical interpretations rather than legalistic mandates.	Supports the integration of interpretive models that prioritize equity, context, and lived experiences.
Contribution to Islamic Gender Ethics	These findings highlight the lived experiences of grieving husbands as a legitimate part of Islamic ethical discourse.	Expands the field of Islamic gender ethics to include male emotional vulnerability as an ethical and spiritual concern.

Additionally, this research offers preliminary insights that may inform ongoing discussions in Islamic legal and ethical thought concerning gender and mourning. Scholars such as Zaidah and Abdullah[54] and Sunuwati, Yunus, and

[54] Zaidah and Abdullah, "The Relevance of Ihdad Regulations as a Sign of Mourning and Human Rights Restriction."

Rahmawati,[55] have proposed expanding the conceptual scope of *iḥdād* to include men, not as a fixed legal duty but as an ethical recommendation rooted in *maṣlaḥah* (public good) and human dignity. The voluntary practices observed among widowers in Ngunut resonate with these propositions by illustrating how local expressions of grief can embody values of justice and compassion. While this study does not claim to represent broader Islamic legal reform, its ethnographic findings provide a grounded example of how *maqāṣid*-based reasoning and *Mubādalah* ethics can be applied in everyday moral life within an Indonesian Muslim community.

Finally, this study indicates that the integration of *Mubādalah* and *maqāṣid al-sharīʻah* in understanding family mourning ethics should be approached not as an assertion of harmony but as a space of critical dialogue between theory and lived practice. The mourning behaviors of widowers in Ngunut reveal both the strengths and the limits of the *Mubādalah* framework. On one hand, their voluntary restraint and emotional sincerity reflect reciprocal ethics of care and compassion consistent with *Mubādalah*'s vision of mutual responsibility. On the other hand, the persistence of social expectations that valorize male emotional control also exposes tensions between ideal reciprocity and cultural constructions of masculinity. These findings therefore invite a more reflexive application of *Mubādalah*, one that recognizes how local traditions both embody and challenge its ethical ideals. While this study does not fully elaborate a *maqāṣid al-sharīʻah*-based model, it contributes preliminary insights into how values such as 'adl (justice), rahmah (compassion), and maslahah (public good) manifest in local mourning practices. Rather than concluding with conformity, the study opens a pathway for future inquiry into how *Mubādalah* ethics can engage more deeply with *maqāṣid*-oriented understandings of grief and moral responsibility.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that mourning practices among grieving Muslim husbands in Ngunut, Indonesia, reflect a locally rooted expression of ethical masculinity that transcends classical Islamic jurisprudence. While Islamic law does not mandate *iḥdād* for widowers, this research found that local

[55] Sunuwati, Yunus, and Rahmawati, "Gender Equality in Islamic Family Law: Should Men Take Iddah (Waiting Period after Divorce)?"

customs, communal expectations, and spiritual motivations shape men's mourning behaviors in meaningful and socially acknowledged ways. These include voluntary social withdrawal, delayed remarriage, inheritance deferral, and symbolic acts of remembrance. The findings indicate a dynamic synthesis between Islamic principles and Javanese traditions, demonstrating how 'urf functions not merely as a cultural background but as a medium through which *Mubādalah* values are expressed and localized. In Ngunut, communal expectations of modest mourning, delayed remarriage, and ritual restraint serve as cultural vehicles that embody the reciprocal ethics central to *Mubādalah*. These traditions transform abstract principles of mutual care and justice into lived social norms that guide moral behavior within the community. Through this interplay, 'urf becomes an interpretive bridge—translating the ethical spirit of *Mubādalah* into culturally resonant practices of compassion, loyalty, and emotional balance. By situating *Mubādalah* within the moral language of Javanese 'urf, this study highlights how local tradition can serve as both a medium of Islamic ethical expression and a source of gender-equitable religious meaning. It also reveals the emotional labor and ethical consciousness of bereaved men, often overlooked in discussions of grief. Methodologically, this research affirms the value of qualitative inquiry into lived religious practices and the importance of contextual theological engagement.

The study contributes to broader debates in Islamic family law, ethics, and gender studies by showing the potential of culturally embedded practices to foster mutual responsibility and spiritual integrity. Future research should further explore male mourning in other Muslim contexts to enrich our understanding of masculinity, grief, and cultural adaptation in Islamic rituals.[s]

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