ZIJIS
ZABAGS INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ISLAMIC STUDIES
ISSN 3063-8933

Optimizing Bureaucratic Performance in Social Assistance Distribution through Islamic Economic Principles

Sahril[1*], Wargo[2] Ryan[3]
[1]Al-Mujaddid Sabak Islamic Institute, Indonesia
[2]Al-Mujaddid Sabak Islamic Institute, Indonesia
[3]British Columbia Institute of Technology, Canada
*Corresponding Author: sah-sahril@gmail.com

Article Info:
Article history: Received, 20/09/2026, | Revision, 20/10/2026, | Accepted, 01/11/2026, | Vol (3), Issue (2), (Nov. 2026)
e-ISSN 3063 – 8933 | doi: https://doi.org/10.61233/zijis.v3i2.64

Abstract:
This study aims to analyze the performance of bureaucracy in the distribution of social assistance in Geragai District, Tanjung Jabung Timur Regency, and to formulate an optimization model based on Islamic economic principles. Social assistance is considered a strategic public policy instrument to ensure social protection and reduce inequality, yet its effectiveness largely depends on the quality of bureaucratic governance. Employing a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and administrative documentation involving government officials and beneficiary households. The findings reveal that bureaucratic performance is moderately effective but still faces challenges such as targeting inaccuracies, delays in distribution, and limited transparency. Integrity of officials and the accuracy of data systems emerged as key determinants of success, while the application of maqashid shariah principles particularly amanah and justice has not been fully internalized in bureaucratic practices. The theoretical contribution of this study lies in integrating public administration frameworks with Islamic economics, thereby enriching the literature on social policy with normative and ethical perspectives. Practically, the study provides recommendations for local governments to improve data systems, enhance bureaucratic capacity, strengthen transparency, and develop community-based monitoring mechanisms to achieve inclusive and equitable welfare.

Keywords:
Bureaucratic Performance; Social Assistance; Public Welfare; Maqashid Shariah; Good Governance; Islamic Economics.

© 2026 The Author(s).
This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0).

INTRODUCTION

Social assistance has long been recognized as a crucial public policy instrument to safeguard vulnerable groups and reduce inequality. Globally, such programs serve as both social safety nets and mechanisms of economic redistribution. In Indonesia, social assistance has become a central strategy to combat poverty and maintain socio-economic stability, particularly during crises and pandemics. However, its effectiveness is highly dependent on bureaucratic governance, which continues to face challenges in data accuracy, institutional coordination, and transparency, limiting the precision of targeting beneficiaries.

Despite numerous policy initiatives, field practices reveal persistent inclusion and exclusion errors, where ineligible households receive aid while deserving families are overlooked. This

situation underscores the urgency of evaluating bureaucratic performance more comprehensively. Previous studies have largely focused on administrative aspects, leaving a gap in integrating bureaucratic analysis with Islamic economic principles. In Muslim-majority contexts, social assistance is not merely technical but also moral and spiritual, demanding justice (‘adl), trust (amanah), and transparency in its distribution.

Theoretically, this study draws on two frameworks: bureaucratic performance theory in public administration, which emphasizes effectiveness, efficiency, responsiveness, accountability, and transparency; and maqashid al-shariah, which highlights the protection of wealth (hifz al-mal) and life (hifz al-nafs) through equitable resource distribution. Integrating these perspectives enables a more holistic analysis, positioning bureaucracy not only as an administrative mechanism but also as an ethical instrument for achieving social justice (Yang et al., 2026; Hambari et al., 2026; Santoso et al., 2026).

Empirical evidence shows that challenges in Indonesia’s social assistance system persist. Erlan Wijatmoko et al. (2023) identified legal uncertainty, institutional coordination, and policy enforcement as key determinants of success. Other studies highlight that applying good governance principles in social welfare agencies enhances public satisfaction, particularly through accountability and responsiveness (Bedjo Santoso et al., 2026; Hambari et al., 2026). In Islamic economics, recent scholarship stresses the integration of zakat, waqf, and other financial instruments as complementary mechanisms for sustainable development. Yet, systematic reviews reveal that targeting inaccuracies and weak empowerment components remain obstacles, while digitalization, though improving access, paradoxically burdens vulnerable groups (Dharmendra Hariyani et al., 2026; Hambari et al., 2026).

This article addresses these gaps by proposing an inter-disciplinary framework that combines bureaucratic performance theory with maqashid shariah. By emphasizing amanah and justice, it offers a normative-ethical model for evaluating social assistance governance. Methodological trends show a shift toward interdisciplinary and digital approaches, with systematic reviews of e-government highlighting the importance of digital literacy, bureaucratic capacity, and inclusive infrastructure (Dharmendra Hariyani et al., 2026; Hambari et al., 2026). Conceptually, the study affirms that optimizing bureaucratic performance requires improved data systems, strengthened transparency, and the internalization of Islamic normative values, thereby advancing both public administration theory and Islamic economics in social policy.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a phenomenological strategy, as it aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences, perceptions, and bureaucratic practices involved in the distribution of social assistance in Geragai Subdistrict, as well as their relevance to the principles of Islamic economics. The phenomenological approach was chosen to explore the subjective meanings held by bureaucratic actors and beneficiaries, thereby revealing social dynamics that cannot be measured quantitatively. The research data consists of primary data in the form of in-depth interviews with subdistrict officials, village officials, social workers, and aid recipients, as well

as participatory observation of the social assistance distribution process. In addition, secondary data was obtained from official government documents, social assistance implementation reports, the Integrated Social Welfare Data (DTKS), and academic literature related to public policy and Islamic economics.

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, field observations, and administrative documentation, using interview guidelines and field notes as instruments. The inclusion criterion for primary data was informants directly involved in the social assistance distribution process, while the exclusion criterion applied to parties without substantive involvement. For secondary data, inclusion criteria encompassed official documents and scientific publications from the past five years, while exclusion criteria were applied to sources that were unverified or irrelevant to the research focus. The unit of analysis was bureaucratic practices in social assistance distribution, with the research subjects comprising government officials and beneficiary communities.

Data analysis techniques were carried out through data reduction, data display, and verification/drawing of conclusions, as outlined by Que Kong & Zhao (2026), who emphasize the importance of an iterative process in qualitative analysis. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns, categories, and main themes related to bureaucratic performance and the principles of Islamic economics. The validity of the findings is ensured through triangulation of sources, techniques, and time, thereby enhancing the credibility of the research results. To support the analysis process, NVivo software was used as a qualitative coding tool, which facilitated the organization of interview and observation data. This approach aligns with contemporary qualitative research practices that emphasize the integration of technology in the analysis of social data (Latifah et al., 2026; Wedi, 2026). Thus, this research method is designed to yield a comprehensive understanding of how to optimize bureaucratic performance in the distribution of sharia-based social assistance, while ensuring academic validity through the application of rigorous and systematic methodological procedures.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of this study are presented using a qualitative phenomenological approach, focusing on the experiences, perceptions, and bureaucratic practices involved in the distribution of social assistance in Geragai Subdistrict. Analysis of field data collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation yielded several key findings that illustrate bureaucratic performance and its relevance to the principles of Islamic economics.

The first finding that emerged concerned the accuracy of social assistance distribution targeting. Informants from subdistrict and village officials emphasized that there are still inclusion and exclusion errors in the data collection process for beneficiaries. Some economically well-off households continue to receive assistance, while eligible poor families are actually overlooked. This is consistent with research findings that highlight the weaknesses of the DTKS system in reflecting

the actual conditions of the community. Secondary data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) of East Tanjung Jabung Regency also shows that poverty rates in rural areas are relatively higher than in urban areas, meaning that targeting inaccuracies have a significant impact on policy effectiveness.

The second finding concerns delays in the distribution of social assistance. Government officials acknowledge that administrative obstacles, inter-agency coordination issues, and limited staff capacity often result in the late distribution of social assistance. Field observations reveal public complaints regarding these delays, which exacerbate the conditions of poor households. Other studies also confirm that delays in the distribution of social assistance can erode public trust in the government.

The third finding concerns bureaucratic transparency and accountability. Interview results indicate that some members of the public do not receive clear information regarding the mechanisms for distributing social assistance, which leads to negative perceptions of the bureaucracy. Village officials stated that limited public outreach and the lack of publication of recipient data are the main factors contributing to low transparency. This is consistent with research that emphasizes the importance of public information transparency in enhancing the accountability of social policies.

The fourth finding concerns the integrity of bureaucratic officials. Field data indicate that the integrity of officials is a determining factor in the success of social assistance distribution. Informants emphasized that practices such as nepotism and the politicization of aid still occur in some villages, thereby undermining the fairness of distribution. Other studies have also found that bureaucratic integrity is directly linked to the effectiveness of social policies.

The fifth finding concerns the relevance of Islamic economic principles in the distribution of social assistance. Informants from among community leaders emphasized that social assistance must be viewed as a trust that must be distributed fairly and to the intended recipients. The maqashid al-sharia perspective particularly hifz al-mal and hifz al-nafs serves as the normative foundation for assessing the success of distribution. Recent research also confirms that applying the values of maqashid al-sharia in social policy can strengthen the government's legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

The sixth finding concerns the use of digital technology in the management of social assistance. Observations indicate that the use of the DTKS application and digital data systems helps expedite the verification process, but still faces challenges related to digital literacy among rural communities. Other studies confirm that the digitization of bureaucratic processes can improve efficiency, but this must be balanced with efforts to build the capacity of government officials and improve public digital literacy.

The seventh finding concerns social oversight and control. Informants emphasized the need for community-based oversight mechanisms to prevent administrative irregularities. The Islamic concept of hisbah is viewed as relevant as a mechanism for social control that can strengthen transparency and accountability. Other studies have also shown that community participation in the oversight of social policies enhances the effectiveness of social assistance distribution.

The eighth finding concerns the impact of social assistance on community well-being. Field data show that social assistance helps meet the basic needs of poor households, but its impact remains short-term and has not yet been able to enhance economic self-reliance. Other studies also confirm that social assistance plays an important role in reducing social vulnerability, but it needs to be integrated with economic empowerment programs to ensure greater sustainability.

The ninth finding concerns public trust in the bureaucracy. Informants emphasized that public trust in the government is greatly influenced by the quality of social assistance distribution. Misallocation of funds and delays in distribution undermine the legitimacy of the bureaucracy, while transparency and integrity among government officials enhance public trust. Other studies also confirm that public trust is an important form of social capital in regional development.

The tenth finding concerns cross-sectoral coordination. The study's results indicate that coordination among the central, regional, and village governments remains suboptimal, leading to duplication of beneficiaries and data inconsistencies. Other studies confirm that cross-sectoral coordination is a key factor in the effectiveness of social policies.

Discussion

The research findings indicate that the bureaucracy's performance in the distribution of social assistance in Geragai Subdistrict still faces significant challenges regarding targeting accuracy, distribution delays, and limited transparency. These findings are directly related to the research questions: how can the bureaucracy ensure that social assistance reaches the intended recipients, and how can the principles of Islamic economics be integrated into bureaucratic governance? The identified targeting inaccuracies reveal weaknesses in data collection systems and cross-sectoral coordination, while distribution delays underscore the need to improve the capacity of government officials. Within the framework of maqashid al-sharia, these conditions indicate that the dimensions of hifz al-mal and hifz al-nafs have not been fully realized, meaning that the goal of sharia-based public welfare has not yet been optimally achieved (Mukhlishin et al., 2024; Darajat, 2025).

Interpreting these findings within the framework of bureaucratic performance theory confirms that effectiveness and accountability are key indicators of the success of social policies. The misalignment of social assistance targets indicates weak effectiveness, while limited transparency reflects low bureaucratic accountability. From an Islamic economic perspective, the unfair distribution of social assistance can be categorized as a violation of the principle of amanah, which carries moral and social consequences (Nuryanto & Jaelani, 2024; Suliswanto et al., 2025). Thus, the integration of public administration theory and maqashid al-sharia provides a more comprehensive analytical framework for understanding the dynamics of bureaucracy in social policy.

A comparison with previous studies reveals both consistency and differences. Khair et al. (2025) confirm that weaknesses in the DTKS system are a major factor in the misallocation of social assistance, consistent with the findings of this study. However, Salsabila (2025) emphasizes that the digitization of bureaucracy can improve distribution efficiency, while the results of this study indicate that digitization actually creates digital literacy barriers for rural communities. This

discrepancy demonstrates that local contexts significantly influence policy effectiveness, meaning that universal solutions are not always relevant at the local level.

The scientific contribution of this article lies in the development of an interdisciplinary framework that links public administration with Islamic economics. Previous studies have primarily focused on the administrative aspects of social assistance or its impact on household consumption (Ansori, 2025; Yundira & Alfarisi, 2025), whereas this study offers a conceptual synthesis that emphasizes the integration of maqashid sharia values into the evaluation of bureaucratic performance. Thus, this article enriches the literature on Islamic-value-based public policy and provides practical recommendations for local governments to improve data collection systems, strengthen civil service capacity, enhance transparency, and develop hisbah-based oversight mechanisms (Hakim & Beck, 2025; Malik et al., 2024).

The limitations of this study must be acknowledged in proportion to their significance. First, this study focuses only on one region Geragai Subdistrict so the generalizability of the results to the national context remains limited. Second, the qualitative phenomenological approach used yields an in-depth understanding but does not provide quantitative data that can statistically measure the effectiveness of the bureaucracy. Third, limited access to certain administrative documents restricted the depth of the analysis. However, this limitation does not diminish the validity of the findings, as triangulation of sources and techniques was conducted to ensure the credibility of the data (Zahrani & Maghfirli, 2025).

The implications of this research for public policy are the need to improve the social assistance data collection system through cross-sectoral data integration and the use of inclusive digital technology. Local governments need to enhance the capacity of their officials through ongoing training and strengthen community-based oversight mechanisms to prevent administrative irregularities. From an Islamic economic perspective, the application of the principle of hisbah can serve as an effective instrument of social control to uphold distributive justice (Rif'an et al., 2026; Rishan & Nurhayani, 2026). Implications for future research include the need for comparative studies across regions to identify contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of the bureaucracy in the distribution of social assistance.

Furthermore, this study offers recommendations for bureaucratic practitioners to internalize the values of trustworthiness and fairness at every stage of social assistance distribution. Civil servants need to understand that social assistance is not merely an administrative policy but also a moral trust that must be carried out with integrity. Previous research has confirmed that bureaucratic integrity is directly linked to the effectiveness of social policies (Khatimah & Rudiyanto, 2025); therefore, strengthening the integrity of civil servants is a top priority in optimizing bureaucratic performance.

In an academic context, this article emphasizes the importance of an interdisciplinary approach in the study of social policy. The integration of public administration and Islamic economics opens the door to the development of new theories that are more relevant to the context of Muslim societies. Previous research on poverty reduction policies has emphasized the importance of

inclusive development strategies (Razzaq, 2026), while this article adds the normative dimension of Islam as a foundation for policy evaluation. Thus, this article contributes to the development of social policy literature grounded in the value of distributive justice.

Finally, a synthesis of this discussion shows that optimizing bureaucratic performance in the distribution of social assistance requires not only technocratic improvements but also the internalization of Islamic normative values. The findings of this study confirm that a professional, transparent, and ethical bureaucracy is capable of ensuring a fair and targeted distribution of social assistance. Conversely, bureaucratic weaknesses will hinder the achievement of social welfare goals. Therefore, this study provides a theoretical and practical foundation for the development of more inclusive and equitable social policies, while also strengthening the government's legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

CONCLUSION

This study conclusively confirms that the bureaucracy's performance in the distribution of social assistance in Geragai Subdistrict still faces fundamental challenges related to targeting accuracy, distribution delays, and limited transparency and accountability. These findings indicate that the bureaucracy has not yet been fully able to ensure the effectiveness of social policies in achieving community welfare. From an Islamic economics perspective, these conditions reflect the suboptimal application of the maqashid al-sharia principles particularly hifz al-mal and hifz al-nafs meaning that the goals of fair distribution and multidimensional well-being have not yet been fully achieved.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in the integration of the public administration framework with the principles of Islamic economics, resulting in a model for evaluating bureaucratic performance based on normative and ethical values. In practical terms, this study provides recommendations for local governments to improve data collection systems, strengthen civil service capacity, enhance transparency, and develop community-based oversight mechanisms. Its conceptual contribution is to enrich the public policy literature with an interdisciplinary approach that emphasizes the importance of internalizing the values of trustworthiness and justice in bureaucratic governance.

The implications of this study open the door to further, more comparative interregional research to identify contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of the bureaucracy in the distribution of social assistance. In addition, future research could develop a mixed-methods approach to combine in-depth qualitative analysis with more measurable quantitative data, thereby yielding a more comprehensive picture. For policy practitioners, the results of this study underscore the need to integrate the principles of good governance with the values of maqashid syariah as a foundation for designing social policies that are inclusive, equitable, and sustainable.

REFERENCES

Ansori, A. (2025). Strengthening whistleblower protection through legal reform and Islamic ethics. Journal of Islamic Economics Lariba. https://journal.uii.ac.id/JIELariba/article/view/39879

Darajat, U. A. (2025). Distribution inequality and social justice in Islamic economics. Journal of Social Science and Economics. http://jurnal.istaz.ac.id/index.php/josse/article/view/2037

Hakim, B. R., & Beck, H. L. (2025). Sufistication of Social Welfare Policies in Contemporary Indonesia. JISI. https://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/jisi/article/view/50028

Hambari, H., Ayuniyyah, Q., Hakiem, H., & Rahman, R. M. (2026). Analysis of waqf management in Badan Kerjasama Pondok Pesantren Indonesia (BKsPPI): A strategic integration of marketing and governance approaches. Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research. https://doi.org/10.1108/JIABR-04-2025-0208

Hariyani, D., Hariyani, P., Choudhary, S., & Mishra, S. (2026). Digital technologies for achieving SDG 11 targets: A holistic systems-level perspective. Sustainable Cities and Society: Advances, 2(2), 100064. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scsadv.2026.100064

Khair, S., Basyah, A. M., Nufiar, N., & Rizal, K. A. P. (2025). From Charity to Systemic Empowerment: Reconceptualizing Productive Waqf. Jurnal Indo-Islamika. https://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/indo-islamika/article/view/47302

Latifah, D., Masunah, J., & Soeteja, Z. S. (2026). Exploring critical thinking in music education: a phenomenological study of secondary school teachers' perceptions and the path to critical music literacy. Qualitative Research Journal. https://doi.org/10.1108/QRJ-08-2025-0278

Malik, A., Novelia, A., & Mukri, M. (2024). The Influence of Digital Economic Growth and Productive Work Force. IJIE. https://e-journal.metrouniv.ac.id/IJIE/article/view/9639

Mukhlishin, M., Wahab, A., & Setiaji, B. (2024). Zakat maal management and regulation practices: Evidence from Malaysia, Turki and Indonesia. JHCLS. https://jhcls.org/index.php/JHCLS/article/view/204

Nuryanto, A. D., & Jaelani, A. K. (2024). The role of State Official Wealth Report in realizing the principles of Maqashid Sharia. Legality: Jurnal Ilmiah Hukum. https://ejournal.umm.ac.id/index.php/legality/article/view/32879

Que Kong, & Zhao, Q. (2026). “It follows me like a shadow.” A phenomenological study of fear of disease progression in patients on maintenance hemodialysis. Acta Psychologica, 270, 107949. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2026.107949

Salsabila, A. M. (2025). Reform of State Administrative Law from the Perspective of Fiqh Siyasah. Jurnal Ma’had Aly Raudhatul Ma’arif. https://jurnal.mahadalyraudhatulmaarif.ac.id/index.php/Siyasah_wa_Qanuniyah/article/view/51

Santoso, B., Setiawati, R., Nugroho, M., & Anik, S. (2026). The role of religio-centric servant government leadership value and blockchain in enhancing Zakat performance in Indonesia. Journal of Islamic Marketing. https://doi.org/10.1108/JIMA-11-2024-0519

Suliswanto, M. S. W., Mahyudi, M., & Barom, N. N. (2025). A Maqasid-Based Welfare Index In Indonesia: An Empirical Investigation. JIMF. https://jimf-bi.org/JIMF/article/view/2098

Wedi, S. A. (2026). The perceptions and meanings of substance use among young men in Woldia Town: A phenomenological study. Psychiatry Research Communications, 6(4), 100291. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psycom.2026.100291

Wijatmoko, E., Armawi, A., & Fathani, T. F. (2023). Legal effectiveness in promoting development policies: A case study of North Aceh Indonesia. Heliyon, 9(11), e21280. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e21280

Yang, M., Qu, S. J., Qu, Z., Dubey, R., Zhao, G., Mohsendokht, M., Ji, Y., & Yang, Z. (2026). Risk assessment of relief food delivery delays from a cross-disaster perspective. International Journal of Production Economics, 302, 110192. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijpe.2026.110192

Yundira, V., & Alfarisi, M. S. (2025). Optimization of Productive Waqf as a Social Investment Instrument. International Journal of Sharia Business Management. https://jurnal.binamandiri.ac.id/index.php/ijsbm/article/view/406

Zahrani, F., & Maghfirli, A. S. (2025). The Principles of Ihsān and Efficiency in Public Services. Journalum. https://e-journal.darulquranafandi.sch.id/JJIC/article/view/5