

Prophet Muhammad SAW as a Blessing for Widows and the Poor: A Study of the Book *Rahmatan lil-'Ālamīn* by Sa'īd bin 'Alī al-Qaḥṭānī

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ABSTRACT

The vulnerability of widows (*al-armalah*) and the poor (*al-masākīn*) remains a significant challenge in contemporary social welfare, while the concept of *Rahmatan lil Armalati wal Masākīn* has received limited scholarly attention as an Islamic social protection paradigm. This study examines the conceptual framework of protecting widows and the poor in *Rahmatan lil-'Ālamīn* by Sa'īd bin 'Alī al-Qaḥṭānī and its relevance to contemporary social welfare. Using a qualitative library research approach, data were collected from primary and supporting literature and analyzed through Krippendorff's qualitative content analysis with source triangulation. The findings reveal that *al-armalah* represents not merely a demographic category but a vulnerable group requiring integrated economic, social, and psychological protection. The practices of Prophet Muhammad SAW and the policies of Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb demonstrate a social protection model grounded in theological values, social ethics, empowerment, and public responsibility. The study's novelty lies in reconstructing *Rahmatan lil Armalati wal Masākīn* as a conceptual framework that bridges prophetic values with contemporary social protection, providing a foundation for more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable welfare policies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Social welfare, particularly the protection of widows, is a multidimensional issue that continues to receive attention in contemporary socio-religious debates (Sayuti et al., 2024). In several developing countries, including Indonesia, structural poverty, unequal economic access for the poor [5], and weak social security remain serious challenges in national development. Widows, especially those with limited options for obtaining meaningful and protective employment, are vulnerable to various risks due to economic marginalization, the challenges of single parenthood, and stigma. These vulnerabilities are further complicated by urbanization and the disruptive nature of the digital economy (Manik & Nst, 2025). This indicates that social welfare encompasses not only economic aspects but also public ethical standards and collective accountability (<https://Media.Neliti.Com>). When market systems and public policies fail to realize social justice, religious values can provide a normative context and impetus for social solidarity (<https://unair.ac.id/kepemimpinan>). Social justice (*al-'adl al-ijtima'iyyah*) and the protection of vulnerable groups in society are intrinsic parts of the objectives of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*) (Ritonga & Ichsan, 2025). Therefore, concern for widows and the poor is not merely a good moral recommendation but a theological demand with social and structural implications (Nugraheni, 2025). The suboptimal attention and protection for widows (*al-armalah*) and the poor (*al-masākīn*) creates multidimensional consequences that not only affect individual well-being but also disrupt the stability of social life in society (UNICEF, 2022). From a social perspective, this condition widens social inequality due to the weakening of collective concern and empathy, thereby deepening the gap between groups with access to resources and vulnerable groups (Herdiana, 2023).

In the long term, this situation has the potential to trigger various social problems, such as increased crime rates, horizontal conflicts, low social solidarity, and the erosion of social capital needed to build an inclusive and just society (Ali et al., 2025). Based on the literature review and previous research findings, one of the main solutions to address poverty among widowed communities is to rehabilitate a more humane caregiving paradigm based on the example of Prophet Muhammad SAW as *Rahmatan lil Armalati wal Masakini*. In the book *Rahmatan lil-'Ālamīn*, Sa'īd bin 'Alī Al-Qaḥṭānī states that the Prophet's mercy is not abstract but is manifested in gentleness, empathy, and protection for the poor. Prophet Muhammad SAW, through his example, honored the poor and established a caregiving foundation based on compassion, tenderness, patience, and respect for the dignity of widowed communities. Through improved education, non-violent caregiving, and synergy among all relevant components, the principle of *raḥmatan lil armalati wal masakini* can serve as a foundation for social transformation to embrace widows and the poor away from a culture of violence. Based on the previous explanation, this article presents an in-depth study of the representation of Prophet Muhammad SAW as *raḥmatan lil Armalati wal Masakin* (a mercy to widows and the poor) in the book *Rahmatan lil-'Ālamīn* by Sa'īd bin 'Alī al-Qaḥṭānī. This study aims to analyze how al-Qaḥṭānī reconstructs the dimension of the Prophet's *rahmah* in interacting with widows and the poor, as well as to assess the level of its representation as an ethical and pedagogical framework in relation to the issue of contemporary child violence.

2. METHOD

This study employs a library research method with a qualitative-descriptive approach to examine the concept of Prophet Muhammad SAW as *raḥmatan lil armalati wal masākīn* in the book *Rahmatan lil-'Ālamīn* by Sa'īd bin 'Alī al-Qaḥṭānī (2006). This approach was chosen because the study aims to interpret the meaning, values, and intellectual constructs contained in the text, particularly regarding the Prophet Muhammad SAW's protection and care for vulnerable groups, namely widows (*al-armalah*) and the poor (*al-masākīn*). The data sources consist of primary data, namely the book *Rahmatan lil-'Ālamīn* by Sa'īd bin 'Alī al-Qaḥṭānī, and secondary data in the form of reputable journal articles, scholarly books, academic works, and previous studies discussing *raḥmatan lil-'ālamīn*, Islamic social welfare, *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, and the protection of vulnerable groups. Data were collected through documentation study by identifying, selecting, and classifying text segments relevant to the research focus. Data analysis utilized qualitative content analysis as per Krippendorff (2016). The stages of analysis include: (1) determining units of analysis related to the concepts of *al-armalah* and *al-masākīn*; (2) coding main themes; (3) grouping data into conceptual categories, namely the concept of widows and the poor in Islam, forms of Prophet Muhammad SAW's compassion, socio-humanitarian values, and their relevance to strengthening social welfare; and (4) interpreting findings using the perspective of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, Islamic social welfare theory, and the concept of *raḥmatan lil-'ālamīn*. The final stage was conducted through contextualization to explain the relevance of al-Qaḥṭānī's thoughts to the challenges of social protection for vulnerable groups in contemporary society. To enhance the credibility and validity of the findings, the research applied source triangulation by comparing the content of primary books with the hadiths referenced, classical and contemporary literature, as well as relevant previous research findings. In addition, data interpretation was consistently carried out based on the context of the text and the theoretical framework used, resulting in an academically accountable analysis.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Terminology and Social Construction of Al-Armalah

A widow is a term used to refer to a woman who no longer has a husband, either due to divorce or the death of her husband. (Indonesian Dictionary) In the Qur'an, a widow is understood

as an individual in a certain condition resulting from separation from her spouse. One form of such separation is *ṭalāq*, which in general definitions refers to the dissolution of the marriage bond between a husband and wife who had previously lived a married life. (Siregar, 2017) As stated by the Prophet Muhammad regarding widows.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - « السَّاعِي عَلَى الْأَرْمَلَةِ وَالْمِسْكِينِ كَالْمُجَاهِدِ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ - وَأَحْسِبُهُ قَالَ ، يَشْكُ الْقَعْنَبِيُّ - كَالْقَائِمِ لَا يَغْتَرُ ، وَكَالصَّائِمِ لَا يُطْعَرُ ُ

From Abu Hurairah *radhiyallahu ‘anhu*, he said that the Rasulullah *shallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam* said, “The one who strives to support widows and the poor is like the one who strives in the cause of Allah. Al-Qa’nabi—the teacher of Imam Bukhari and Muslim—said, I think it is like the one who prays at night without ever feeling tired, and the one who fasts without ever breaking his fast.” (Narrated by Bukhari, no. 5353 and Muslim, no. 2982) (Kausyaz, 2021). From a sociological perspective, the difference in the use of these terms is not merely linguistic, but rather reflects the historical reality of society, where economic and social structures tend to place men as the primary breadwinners. (Musthofa, 2020) When a woman loses her husband, she not only faces emotional loss but also the potential loss of economic access and social protection. Thus, the term *al-armalah* contains a socio-economic dimension that emphasizes the urgency of protection for widows.

3.2 Exemplary Leadership and the State's Commitment to Widows

The statement of Amirul Mukminin Umar bin al-Khatthab *r.a.*—“If Allah grants me a long life, I will strive so that the widows in Iraq will no longer need men after me forever”—reflects a leadership vision oriented towards the independence and welfare of vulnerable groups. Substantively, this expression contains two important messages (Sa’id bin ‘Alī Al-Qaḥṭānī, 2006). Umar bin al-Khatthab believed that there must be clear steps to protect widows. First, there is state recognition of the structural vulnerability faced by widows. (Sa’id bin ‘Alī Al-Qaḥṭānī, 2006) Umar bin al-Khatthab did not view the protection of widows as a private family matter, but as a public responsibility that must be guaranteed by governmental authority. (Anisah, 2020) Second, the policy orientation hinted at is not merely consumptive assistance, but empowerment that makes widows economically and socially independent. (Kasim et al., 2022) This statement shows that in the classical Islamic governance paradigm, social protection is an integral part of a just state administration. In the context of modern welfare theory, (Nendissa, 2022) this approach aligns with the concept of a social safety net, namely a minimum guarantee that ensures vulnerable groups have access to basic needs without permanent dependency. (Irwan et al., 2025) Thus, Umar's policy legacy can be interpreted as an early model of a progressive and visionary social protection system rooted in religious values. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the concept of *al-armalah* in Islamic tradition represents not only a demographic category but also an ethical and policy category (Sa’id bin ‘Alī Al-Qaḥṭānī, 2006). Protection for widows and the poor reflects the integration of theological values, social responsibility, and the role of the state (Ramadhani, 2026). The leadership of Prophet Muhammad SAW, along with the policies of his companions and followers, provides a strong conceptual foundation for developing an inclusive, just, and independent social welfare model (Setiawan, 2007). Islam offers not only moral norms but also an ethical and institutional framework that can be adapted within a sustainable modern social protection system.

From Abu Hurairah *r.a.*, he said: The Messenger of Allah SAW said: "The one who strives (to help) widows and the poor is like the one who fights in the way of Allah, or like the one who performs night prayers and fasts during the day." In a narration by Muslim, it is stated: "The one who strives to help widows and the poor is like a mujahid in the way of Allah, and like the one who constantly performs night prayers without ceasing and fasts without breaking." (Sa’id bin ‘Alī Al-Qaḥṭānī, 2006)). The hadith above demonstrates that the protection of widows and the poor in Islam

has a strong and systematic theological foundation. The concept of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy to all creation) inherent in the Prophet Muhammad is not merely symbolic-spiritual but is articulated concretely in social policies and the praxis of community life. In the historical context of the Medinan society, the Prophet established a system of social solidarity that positioned vulnerable groups as subjects of protection, not merely objects of pity. Concern for widows and the poor is not merely an individual act but part of a shared responsibility to manage the earth's resources and their contents, which carries social and institutional implications (Ramadhan, 2022). Widows often face multiple vulnerabilities—economic, social, and psychological—that are not adequately resolved through one-time assistance approaches. Therefore, an empowerment paradigm oriented toward economic independence and strengthening social capacity is necessary. The meaning of care in Islam contains a transformative dimension, namely encouraging structural changes that enable vulnerable groups to gain equitable access to resources (Nugraha et al., 2023). Within this framework, instruments of zakat, infaq, and waqf can be repositioned as community-based economic empowerment tools. Integrating theological values with modern welfare approaches—such as adaptive social protection and community-based development—constitutes a strategic step in addressing contemporary challenges.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the concept of *Rahmatan lil Armalati wal Masākīn* in the book *Rahmatan lil-'Ālamīn* by Sa'īd bin 'Alī al-Qaḥṭānī represents an Islamic social protection paradigm grounded in the values of compassion, justice, and respect for human dignity. The term *al-armalah* is understood not merely as the status of a woman who has lost her husband, but also as a vulnerable group requiring economic, social, and psychological protection. The example set by Prophet Muhammad SAW in providing care for widows and the poor, later implemented in the policies of Caliph Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb, demonstrates that protecting vulnerable groups is a collective responsibility integrating theological dimensions, social ethics, and public governance. Therefore, the values of *Rahmatan lil Armalati wal Masākīn* remain relevant as a conceptual foundation for developing an inclusive, just, and empowerment-oriented social welfare system through the optimization of zakat, infaq, sadaqah, waqf instruments, and community-based social protection policies.

This study is limited to a literature analysis focusing on the book *Rahmatan lil-'Ālamīn* by Sa'īd bin 'Alī al-Qaḥṭānī, and thus has not examined the implementation of this concept in institutional practices or social protection policies in contemporary society. Furthermore, this study has not conducted a comparative analysis with the works of other scholars or empirical data on the effectiveness of protection models for widows and the poor. Therefore, future research is recommended to use empirical or mixed methods approaches to examine the implementation of the values of *Rahmatan lil Armalati wal Masākīn* in zakat institutions, Islamic philanthropic organizations, and government social welfare programs. Comparative studies on the thoughts of classical and contemporary scholars are also necessary to enrich the development of an Islamic social protection model that is more adaptive to the challenges of modern society and to provide a broader contribution to the development of social welfare theory and practice based on prophetic values.

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