

Syibhul 'Iddah for Men: An Analysis of the Madhāhib al-Arba'ah within the Framework of Justice in Islamic Law

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Keywords: syibhul 'iddah, madhāhib al-arba'ah, mani' shar'i, maqāṣid al-sharī'ah

Article Information			
Received	5 th Jul 2025	Accepted	30 th Aug 2025
Published	30 th Sep 2025		

Abstract

This study explores the application of syibhul 'iddah for men from the perspective of the four major Sunni schools of thought (madhāhib al-arba'ah) and its relevance to Islamic family law in Indonesia. Triggered by regulatory disparities that impose the waiting period ('iddah) solely on women after divorce, this research investigates the possibility of a waiting period for men. Using a qualitative-normative approach and a literature-based method, the study analyzes the views of the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali schools regarding mani' shar'i as a basis for the implementation of syibhul 'iddah. The findings reveal that although men are not obligated to undergo 'iddah, certain shar'i conditions restrict immediate remarriage. This study underscores the significance of syibhul 'iddah in upholding the principles of justice, lineage protection, and dignity in accordance with maqāṣid al-sharī'ah.

Introduction

Marriage is a deeply rooted social and religious institution in the lives of Muslims. In Islamic teachings, marriage is not merely regarded as a social contract between two individuals, but also as an act of worship ('ibādah) that carries broad legal, moral, and social implications. However, like any other social institution, marriage is not immune to conflict and divorce. Within the context of divorce, Islamic law (sharī'ah) establishes various regulations to safeguard public welfare (maṣlaḥah), preserve dignity, and ensure legal clarity for the parties involved one of which is the obligation to observe a waiting period, or 'iddah.

Normatively, 'iddah refers to the mandated waiting period imposed on women following divorce or the death of a husband. This provision is explicitly stipulated in the Qur'an, such as in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:228):

وَالْمَطْلُوعَاتُ يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ ثَلَاثَةَ قُرُوءٍ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَهُنَّ أَنْ يَكْتُمْنَ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ فِي أَرْحَامِهِنَّ إِنْ كُنَّ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَبُعُولَتُهُنَّ أَحَقُّ بِرَدِّهِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ إِنْ أَرَادُوا إِصْلَاحًا وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

QS. Ath-Thalaq ayat 4:

وَالَّذِي يَبْسُتُ مِنَ الْمَحِيضِ مِنْ نِسَابِكُمْ إِنْ أَرْتَبْتُمْ فَعِدَّتُهُنَّ ثَلَاثَةَ أَشْهُرٍ وَالَّذِي لَمْ يَحْضَنْ وَأُولَتْ الْأَحْمَالِ أَجَلُهُنَّ أَنْ يَضَعْنَ حَمْلَهُنَّ وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ يُسْرًا

This regulation is further reinforced by various ḥadīths of the Prophet:

أَنَّ أُمَّ حَبِيبَةَ كَانَتْ تُسْتَخَاضُ فَسَأَلَتْ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَأَمَرَهَا أَنْ تَدَعَ الصَّلَاةَ أَيَّامَ أَقْرَانِهَا

The 'iddah serves multiple purposes: to ensure uterine purity, maintain the clarity of lineage (nasab), provide space for potential reconciliation in the case of ṭalāq raj'ī, and uphold the dignity and honor of women in the eyes of society. Socially, 'iddah also functions as a preventive instrument to avert hasty remarriages and potential future conflicts.

However, in both classical Islamic jurisprudence and contemporary Islamic family law in Indonesia, the application of 'iddah has been limited exclusively to women. Article 153 of the Compilation of Islamic Law (Kompilasi Hukum Islam, KHI), for instance, explicitly states that 'iddah applies only to a wife whose marriage has ended, except in specific cases such as qobla al-dukhūl (before consummation). The absence of an equivalent waiting period for men raises fundamental questions regarding legal justice and gender equality within the practice of Islamic family law. In reality, a man who has divorced his wife may remarry at any time without any temporal restrictions, whereas a woman is required to wait until the completion of her 'iddah.

This disparity gives rise to several issues. First, from the perspective of justice, the enforcement of 'iddah exclusively on women is perceived as a form of discrimination and gender-based inequality. Women are not only restricted in their social interactions during the 'iddah period, but are also frequently subjected to stigma and social pressure. Meanwhile, men face no such limitations and, in some cases, may remarry swiftly, potentially causing emotional harm, injustice, and new conflicts. Second, from a legal standpoint, this loophole may be exploited to engage in covert polygamous practices, whereby a man marries another woman while his former wife is still undergoing her 'iddah, thus leading to legal confusion and uncertainty regarding the lineage of children.

Third, from the perspective of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah (the overarching objectives of Islamic law), the regulation of 'iddah should not be solely oriented toward the protection of women, but must also aim to preserve family harmony, ensure the clarity of lineage (nasab), and uphold social justice. In the modern context—where issues of gender equality and the protection of women's rights are increasingly prominent—Islamic family law faces the challenge of undertaking reform in order to be more responsive to contemporary social dynamics and the evolving needs of society.

In Islamic law, 'iddah refers to the obligatory waiting period imposed upon women following divorce or the death of a husband. Its purpose is to ensure uterine purity, protect dignity, and provide time for potential reconciliation. However, this obligation applies exclusively to women, while men are permitted to remarry without any waiting period. This imbalance raises significant questions concerning gender justice and opens the door to legal misuse, such as covert polygamy or manipulation of marital status.

In Indonesia, the Compilation of Islamic Law (Kompilasi Hukum Islam, KHI) regulates 'iddah only for women (Article 153), without specifying a waiting period for men. This creates a legal vacuum that has the potential to produce normative injustice and social conflict. Circular Letter of the Directorate of Islamic Guidance No. P-005/DJ.III/HK.00.7/10/2021 highlights the issue of covert polygamy occurring while a wife is still undergoing her 'iddah; however, the letter lacks legal enforceability or normative sanctions.

Gender disparity in the regulation of Islamic family law in Indonesia is clearly reflected in the 'iddah obligation imposed solely on women. While men may remarry immediately after divorce, women are bound by a waiting period ('iddah) to ensure uterine purity and the possibility of reconciliation. Nonetheless, the emergence of covert polygamy, manipulation of marital status, and normative injustice has sparked a new discourse on gender equality: the necessity of a waiting period for men as well—though possibly with different forms and justifications.

Syibhul 'iddah refers to an informal waiting period applicable to men due to the presence of mani' shar'i (legal prohibitions), such as the restriction against marrying more than four wives, the prohibition of marrying two women who are maḥram to each other, and the context of ṭalāq raj'ī in which the possibility of reconciliation remains. Although not explicitly mentioned in the textual sources (naṣṣ), various scholarly opinions from the madhāhib al-arba'ah suggest a recommended interval before a man remarries.

Previous studies have examined 'iddah primarily in the context of women, or have explored the broader theme of legal equality between men and women. However, there is a noticeable lack of comprehensive scholarship that specifically addresses the concept of syibhul 'iddah through the lens of the four major Sunni

schools of thought: Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali. This theoretical gap is what the present article seeks to address. By examining classical juristic opinions and linking them with the maqāṣid al-sharī'ah framework, the author aims to contribute to the reform of Islamic family law in Indonesia.

This article has two primary objectives: (1) to explore legal derivations (*istinbāṭ al-ḥukm*) regarding *syibhul 'iddah* for men according to the *madhāhib al-arba'ah*, and (2) to analyze its potential implementation within Indonesia's Islamic legal system based on the core principles of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, such as justice, the protection of lineage (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*), and the protection of honor (*ḥifẓ al-'ird*).

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach with a normative legal research design. The primary data sources consist of both primary and secondary literature relevant to classical and contemporary Islamic law, including *fiqh* texts from the four Sunni schools of thought (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali), works on *uṣūl al-fiqh*, as well as positive legal documents from Indonesia such as the Compilation of Islamic Law (*Kompilasi Hukum Islam*, KHI) and related statutory regulations.

Data were collected through library research, which involved an in-depth examination of classical and modern Islamic legal texts, scholarly articles, academic journals, and authoritative fatwas or official policy documents—such as the Circular Letter issued by the Directorate of Islamic Guidance. The data were analyzed using a descriptive-analytical method to illustrate the concept of *syibhul 'iddah* and compare the juristic arguments across the four schools. Furthermore, the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* framework was applied to assess the urgency and potential benefits (*maṣlaḥah*) of introducing a waiting period for men within the context of modern Islamic family law.

Results and Discussion

The concept of *'iddah* in Islam is not merely a waiting period following divorce or the death of a husband; rather, it embodies the principle of legal and moral prudence within the *sharī'ah* in safeguarding lineage, protecting honor, and maintaining social stability. Historically, the institution of *'iddah* emerged as a response to pre-Islamic practices that offered no legal or social protection for women who experienced divorce or the loss of a spouse. Islam introduced a more systematic and just framework, although in practice, the obligation of *'iddah* has primarily been placed upon women.

Classical and contemporary scholars assert that the legislation of *'iddah* is not a form of discrimination against women, but rather a mechanism for protecting reproductive rights, securing the legitimacy of lineage (*nasab*), and preserving the dignity of the family. However, in light of modern social developments, critiques have emerged suggesting that limiting the obligation of *'iddah* to women may lead to gender-based injustice particularly when men are not subject to similar restrictions on remarriage following divorce.

Syibhul 'iddah, literally meaning “a form of *'iddah*,” refers to a waiting period that is not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an or *ḥadīths*, yet is recognized by *fuqahā'* (Islamic jurists) under specific circumstances. The notion of *syibhul 'iddah* for men arises in situations where there exists a *mani' shar'i* (legal impediment) that prevents immediate remarriage following divorce or the death of a wife.

Examples of *mani' shar'i* frequently cited by Islamic jurists include:

- a. The prohibition against marrying the sister of a recently divorced wife before the completion of the wife's *'iddah* period. This is based on Qur'an Surah al-Nisā' (4:23), which forbids the union of two sisters within a single marriage.
- b. The prohibition against marrying a fifth wife before the *'iddah* of the fourth wife has ended. In polygamous practice, a man is not permitted to have more than four wives simultaneously. If he

divorces one of his wives, he must wait until her ‘iddah is completed before marrying another woman as his fourth wife.

The evidences (dalil) used by scholars in establishing the concept of syibhul ‘iddah are generally derived from qiyās (analogical reasoning) and istihsān (juristic preference based on public interest), while also taking into account the objectives of Islamic law (maqāsid al-sharī‘ah).

Although the concept of syibhul ‘iddah is not explicitly mentioned in classical fiqh literature, the four major Islamic schools of thought provide indications of legal restrictions imposed on men from remarrying in specific contexts. This is grounded in the principle of mani‘ shar‘i—a legal impediment in Islamic law that restricts one’s ability to perform certain legal acts, such as marriage.

❖ **Madzhab Hanafi**

The Hanafi school emphasizes the principle of legal prudence (iḥtiyāt) in matters of remarriage. According to Wahbah al-Zuḥaylī, a man is prohibited from marrying another woman if there remains the possibility of reconciliation (rujū‘) with his first wife during the ‘iddah period of a ṭalāq raj‘ī. Moreover, a new marriage is also prohibited if it would result in a violation of polygamy regulations or involve a maḥram relationship. In this context, a waiting period for men is recommended in order to prevent potential legal and social conflicts arising from concealed polygamous unions.

The Hanafi school explicitly states that ‘iddah, by definition, is a legal obligation imposed upon women, not men. However, it acknowledges the existence of mani‘ shar‘i (legal impediments) that restrict a man’s freedom to remarry immediately following divorce or the death of a spouse. In *Badā’i‘ al-Ṣanā’i‘*, a renowned work by al-Kāsānī, one such form of mani‘ shar‘i is the prohibition against marrying the sister of a recently divorced wife before the completion of her ‘iddah. This is based on Qur’an Surah al-Nisā’ (4:23), which prohibits the union of two sisters within a single marriage. Accordingly, a man who has divorced his wife must wait until her ‘iddah concludes before marrying her sister.

Furthermore, in the context of polygamy, a man who already has four wives and divorces one of them is not permitted to marry another woman as a fifth wife until the ‘iddah of the divorced wife has ended. This is a precautionary measure aimed at preserving the clarity of lineage (nasab) and avoiding social discord (fitnah). The Hanafi school underscores that the primary objective of these rulings is to safeguard the welfare (maṣlaḥah) of families and society, and to prevent ambiguity in marital status and the legitimacy of children.

❖ **Madzhab Maliki**

The Maliki school presents a slightly different perspective. Some Maliki scholars acknowledge a waiting period for men, although they refer to it as a metaphorical or figurative ‘iddah (‘iddah majāziyyah), rather than a legally mandated one. In *al-Mudawwanah al-Kubrā*, Imam Mālik asserts that a waiting period for men is necessary in certain cases, such as when intending to marry the sister of a former wife or to take a fifth wife. The Maliki approach places strong emphasis on the principle of maṣlaḥah mursalah (unrestricted public interest), which involves evaluating social benefit and preventing harm within the community.

According to the Maliki school, the enforcement of a waiting period for men aims to protect family structure, prevent conflicts, and uphold the dignity of women. In addition, Maliki jurists highlight the importance of social considerations, such as the need for time to reflect or reconcile before entering a new marriage. Thus, even though the naṣṣ does not explicitly mandate ‘iddah for men, the Maliki school still recognizes the significance of such a waiting period in maintaining public welfare (maṣlaḥah).

The Maliki school adopts a more stringent view concerning the waiting period. It holds that remarrying while one’s former wife is still in her ‘iddah, though not explicitly forbidden for men, may lead to legal confusion—particularly in regard to the right of reconciliation (rujū‘) and the legitimacy of lineage (nasab). Therefore,

Maliki scholars recommend postponing remarriage until the wife's 'iddah concludes, in order to ensure legal and social order.

❖ **Madzhab Shafi'i**

The Shafi'i school generally rejects the notion of 'iddah for men, as 'iddah is defined as a waiting period mandated by the shari'ah for women in order to ensure uterine purity and confirm lineage (*nasab*). In *al-Umm*, the seminal work of Imam al-Shāfi'ī, it is emphasized that 'iddah is both a right and an obligation specific to women. Nonetheless, the Shafi'i school (*Shāfi'iyyah*) acknowledges the presence of *mani' shar'i*—legal impediments that, under certain circumstances, restrict a man's ability to remarry immediately.

For instance, in cases of *ṭalāq raj'i*, a man is advised not to hastily enter a new marriage, given the possibility of reconciliation (*rujū'*) during the wife's 'iddah period. Additionally, the Shafi'i school underscores the importance of preserving family honor and avoiding social discord (*fitnah*). In practice, the *Shāfi'iyyah* emphasize ethical and social considerations—such as allowing both parties time for reflection on the divorce decision and preventing rash remarriage.

The Shafi'i school strongly affirms the necessity of preserving lineage (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*) and family dignity (*ḥifẓ al-'ird*). While it does not mandate a formal waiting period for men, it rejects practices that may compromise the integrity of the lineage system or violate *maḥram* boundaries. Thus, although the term *syibhul 'iddah* is not explicitly used, the underlying principles effectively promote the ethical application of a temporal interval before a man remarries.

❖ **Madzhab Hanbali**

The Hanbali school adopts a comparatively stricter approach with regard to *mani' shar'i*. In *al-Mughnī* by Ibn Qudāmah, it is explained that a man who wishes to marry a fifth wife must wait until the 'iddah of the fourth wife has concluded. The *Ḥanābilah* also emphasize that during the 'iddah period, the former husband retains certain responsibilities toward his ex-wife, such as providing financial support (*nafaqah*) if the divorce occurs during pregnancy.

The Hanbali school views the waiting period for men as a form of legal precaution (*iḥtiyāt*) aimed at preserving the welfare (*maṣlaḥah*) of the family and society. It also affirms that violations of *mani' shar'i* may lead to legal consequences, such as the annulment of the marriage contract or the imposition of social sanctions. This approach is particularly relevant in the context of protecting women and children, and in maintaining the clarity of familial status.

Furthermore, the Hanbali school advises that men should refrain from remarrying while their former wife is still undergoing 'iddah, especially in the case of *ṭalāq raj'i*. This is seen as a means of safeguarding the rights of the wife and promoting household harmony. The Hanbali perspective underscores the importance of good intention (*niyyah ṣāliḥah*) and the consideration of *maṣlaḥah* in all legal actions, including remarriage.

When compared, the four Sunni legal schools agree that, by definition, 'iddah applies exclusively to women. However, they all acknowledge the existence of *mani' shar'i*—legal impediments—that restrict a man's freedom to remarry under certain conditions. The primary differences lie in terminology and the legal approaches employed:

- The Hanafi and Hanbali schools emphasize precaution and the protection of lineage.
- The Maliki school highlights social and moral welfare (*maṣlaḥah*).
- The Shafi'i school focuses more on social ethics and the preservation of dignity.

All four schools also concur that, although a waiting period for men is not recognized as ‘iddah in the strict legal sense, it remains essential for safeguarding familial welfare, ensuring lineage clarity, and preserving social honor.

The maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah framework adds a significant dimension to understanding the urgency of syibhul ‘iddah. The overarching objectives of Islamic law are to protect five fundamental elements: religion (ḥifẓ al-dīn), life (ḥifẓ al-nafs), intellect (ḥifẓ al-‘aql), lineage (ḥifẓ al-nasl), and property (ḥifẓ al-māl). In this context, syibhul ‘iddah serves to:

- Preserve Lineage (ḥifẓ al-nasl): by preventing overlapping marital statuses and disputes over child paternity.
- Preserve Honor (ḥifẓ al-‘ird): by protecting the dignity of women and families from social stigma associated with hasty remarriages.
- Ensure Justice: by promoting equitable treatment between men and women in the processes of divorce and remarriage.
- Maintain Social Stability: by averting family and societal conflicts arising from covert polygamy or manipulation of marital status.

Thus, the application of syibhul ‘iddah for men aligns with the core aims of the maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah and reinforces the need for legal reform that is responsive to both ethical concerns and contemporary social realities.

Considering the social realities in Indonesia, the implementation of syibhul ‘iddah for men is highly relevant as a preventive measure against legal abuse—such as manipulation of marital status, unauthorized marriages, and covert polygamy. The Circular Letter of the Directorate of Islamic Guidance No. P-005/2021 marks an initial policy direction toward recognizing the need for a waiting period for men. However, this policy does not yet carry binding legal force under positive law.

Therefore, there is a pressing need for a more explicit and normative legal formulation regarding the waiting period for men after divorce. This would not only uphold the principles of justice and gender equality, but also ensure familial and societal stability in line with the spirit of maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the perspectives of the madhāhib al-arba‘ah and the maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah framework, it can be concluded that syibhul ‘iddah for men possesses a strong argumentative foundation within both classical and contemporary Islamic legal contexts. Although there is no formal obligation for men to undergo a waiting period, all four schools impose sharī restrictions that prevent immediate remarriage in specific circumstances—such as when the former wife is still in her ‘iddah, or in cases of polygamy conducted outside proper legal procedures.

The concept of syibhul ‘iddah for men is highly relevant to be developed within Indonesia’s Islamic family law, in order to realize justice, protect lineage, and uphold family honor in accordance with the principles of maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah. Although it is not yet formally regulated in statutory law, syibhul ‘iddah can be implemented through fatwas, regulatory revisions, and public legal education. In doing so, Islamic family law may become more adaptive to social dynamics and responsive to demands for gender justice in the modern era.

The Hanafi and Hanbali views, which prohibit a man from marrying his former wife’s sister during her ‘iddah period, as well as the Maliki emphasis on maṣlaḥah mursalah (unrestricted public interest), are particularly relevant to be adopted within Indonesia’s contemporary family law framework. Given the legal vacuum that currently regulates ‘iddah exclusively for women, these principles can serve as a normative basis for revising the Kompilasi Hukum Islam to include a waiting period for men in circumstances involving mani‘ shar‘i. In

doing so, Islamic family law would not only preserve lineage clarity and family dignity, but also promote justice and protection for women and children in line with maqāṣid al-sharī'ah. This integration can be pursued through fatwas, legislative reforms, and community education, thus enhancing the responsiveness of Islamic family law to contemporary social change and gender justice.

In the context of Indonesian law, the absence of a waiting period for men creates a legal loophole that is susceptible to misuse, such as covert polygamy and manipulation of civil registry data. This contradicts the principles of justice and legal equality, which are essential components of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah—particularly the protection of lineage (ḥifẓ al-nasl) and the preservation of family honor (ḥifẓ al-'ird).

The absence of a waiting period for men has the potential to create normative injustice, wherein women are legally and socially restricted while men are free to remarry without delay. This stands in contradiction to the spirit of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah, particularly in the domains of justice, the protection of lineage, and family honor. In modern society, demands for gender equality are growing stronger, making the reform of Islamic family law an urgent necessity.

The implementation of syibhul 'iddah for men may be carried out through several strategic measures, including:

- a. Fatwa by the Indonesian Council of Ulama (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, MUI): Issuing a fatwa that obligates a waiting period for men in situations involving mani' shar'i.
- b. Revision of the Compilation of Islamic Law: Integrating mani' shar'i norms into formal regulation to ensure legal enforceability.
- c. Public Awareness and Education Campaigns: Enhancing societal understanding of men's moral responsibilities following divorce.
- d. Administrative Reinforcement at the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA): Including waiting period status in marriage registration procedures to create legal certainty and equitable protection for all parties.

Therefore, a comprehensive reform of Islamic family law in Indonesia is needed, through regulations that formally recognize and establish syibhul 'iddah for men. This step is essential to prevent legal circumvention, ensure fair protection for both parties, and realize substantive justice within the national legal system.

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Declarations
Authors' Contribution:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ ^{a-b} Conceptualization, and intellectual revisions▪ ^c Data collection, interpretation, and drafting of manuscript▪ The authors agree to take responsibility for every facet of the work, making sure that any concerns about its integrity or veracity are thoroughly examined and addressed
Conflict of Interest: NIL
Funding Sources: NIL
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How to Cite: Syibhul 'Iddah for Men: An Analysis of the Madhāhib al-Arba'ah within the Framework of Justice in Islamic Law. (2025). Wah Academia Journal of Global Religions, 1(2), 1-8. https://doi.org/10.63954/p59w6d34
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