

Quota in the Shadow of Corruption: A Public Administration Study of Alleged Misappropriation of the 2024 Hajj Quota at the Ministry of Religious Affairs

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze corrupt practices in quota management and their implications for ethics and good governance. Using a qualitative descriptive method, data were obtained through literature review in the form of news reports, reports from anti-corruption agencies, government documents, and academic journals. The analysis was conducted using the approaches of Good Governance, Public Administration Ethics, and Public Accountability. The results indicate that quota corruption arises from weak accountability and transparency, as well as low integrity among public officials. This practice reflects a gap between ethical administrative norms and the implementation of public policy. Enforcing ethical values, good governance principles, and accountability mechanisms is necessary to prevent similar deviations.

INTRODUCTION

The implementation of the Hajj is the responsibility of the state as a facilitator of the spiritual needs of Muslims in Indonesia. Its administration, including registration, sponsorship, and quota allocation, is regulated by the government and must be carried out transparently. With millions of pilgrims departing each year, Indonesia only receives quotas from Saudi Arabia, so equitable distribution is highly sensitive and requires clean, efficient, and corruption-free governance.

However, in reality, the distribution of Hajj quotas has proven problematic due to anti-Jewish sentiment. Fraud, confusion, corruption, and a lack of transparency have been reported. Evidence of weak internal oversight and bureaucratic credibility within the Ministry of Religious Affairs is evident in the alleged chaos surrounding the 2024 Hajj quota, which only came to light in 2025.

The ICW report to the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) regarding indications of corruption in Hajj funding and quota allocation indicates weaknesses in policy and oversight within the public bureaucracy that have not been adequately addressed. These irregularities include the setting aside of quotas for individuals not officially registered as Hajj pilgrims, data falsification, and the improper use of additional quotas for political or personal gain. These practices violate public administration regulations and undermine public trust in the state.

From a public administration perspective, these failures demonstrate an inability to implement the principles of good governance, particularly transparency, accountability, participation, and the rule of law. Transparency is crucial for relevant parties to identify corrupt practices when public policies are implemented without public oversight. Furthermore, cultural elements within bureaucratic organizations exacerbate the problem. Strong patronage relationships and hierarchical seniority often limit administrative authority and personal interests. Civil servants no longer operate based on the value of public service but instead follow political, economic, or personal pressures. This is where public administration ethics lose their relevance.

The ethics of public officials should be the moral foundation for avoiding wrongdoing. However, in practice, ethics such as integrity and honesty are often neglected, while administrative discretion is abused. This indicates a moral hazard, where officials use their positions for personal gain or to expand their networks of power. This phenomenon is a clear example of the decline in morality within the bureaucracy.

Public accountability, which should be the primary control system, has apparently not been functioning properly. Internal oversight at the Ministry of Religious Affairs is ineffective, and external oversight from institutions like the Supreme Audit Agency (BPK) or the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) is merely reactive, not preventive.

According to Romzek & Dubnick (1987), public accountability is theoretically divided into four dimensions: hierarchical, legal, professional, and political. The weakest dimensions are political and professional, namely,

accountability failures; the political dimension is responsibility to the public and is embodied in professional values.

Law Number 8 of 2019 concerning the Implementation of the Hajj and Umrah emphasizes the importance of transparency and professionalism in the Hajj. However, the reality on the ground is still far from expectations. The chaotic phenomenon surrounding the 2024 Hajj quota illustrates a bureaucracy that has lost its moral compass. This is not simply a procedural issue, but a systemic failure of morality and accountability that requires major reform. Therefore, this research is crucial for analyzing the forms of public policy deviations in Hajj quota management, identifying the factors causing weak apparatus integrity, and formulating strategies for implementing good governance and effective public administration ethics.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research applies a qualitative approach with a normative public policy analysis design. Methodologically, this research is a document study, not an empirical field study involving surveys or interviews. The data is completely sourced from secondary data, including policy documents, official government reports, legal decisions, and publications from relevant international institutions. Academic validity is strengthened by using official reports and regulations as the main source, supported by literature reviews from reputable international journals for a solid theoretical foundation.

The analysis technique used is systematic qualitative document analysis. The stages include identification of relevant documents, categorization of policy themes for focus mapping, in-depth content analysis to decipher policy substance, and normative interpretation. Normative interpretation aims to critically evaluate policy implications for public governance standards and anti-corruption efforts, producing a comprehensive synthesis of policy effectiveness and conformity with normative principles

CONTENT/DISCUSSION

1. Maladministration in Hajj Quota Distribution: Reflection of Systemic

Failure The case of irregularities in the 2024 Hajj quota is not merely an administrative issue, but rather demonstrates the failure of the system as a whole to uphold the principles of good governance. The maladministration that occurred resulted from the inconsistent application of regulations that should prioritize transparency, accountability, and justice. According to Caiden (1991), maladministration is more than just a violation of bureaucratic procedures; it reflects a lack of bureaucratic ethics and morals in carrying out its public function, which is supposed to ensure social justice. At the Ministry of Religious Affairs level, indications of maladministration are very evident, with the discovery of practices of manipulating Hajj pilgrim data, the allocation of irregular quotas preferentially to certain groups, and weak internal oversight through inadequate documentation and audits. This situation illustrates the erosion of the principles of legality and rationality that underpin Weberian bureaucracy – namely, governance based on clear rules and logical procedures –

and the shift of administrative decisions to the realm of informal power. This has led to a fragility in the structural integrity of the bureaucracy managing the Hajj, resulting in biased public performance and a lack of focus on the interests of the wider community. Furthermore, this phenomenon has sparked a crisis of public trust in public institutions, which should be the primary servants of the people. When the distribution of Hajj quotas, a Muslim right, becomes a tool for politics and corruption, the government's legitimacy in the eyes of the people will continue to decline. This maladministration also opens up opportunities for collusion and nepotism, which in turn leads to widening inequality and social injustice. These systemic consequences threaten not only the continuity of the Hajj pilgrimage but also social stability and trust in state institutions in general. Handling this case demands comprehensive reform that focuses not only on procedural improvements but also on strengthening bureaucratic ethics, developing strict oversight mechanisms, and implementing transparent and accountable information technology. Furthermore, public involvement in public oversight and the empowerment of whistleblowers must be strengthened to prevent a recurrence of maladministration. Thus, restoring governance of the distribution of Hajj quotas can be an important stepping stone in building a healthy and integrated public administration system.

2. Culture of Patronage and Nepotism in the Public Bureaucracy

The culture of patronage and nepotism inherent in the Indonesian public bureaucracy is one of the main roots of irregularities in the distribution of Hajj quotas. The often dominant patron-client relationship system directs administrative decision-making processes not toward competence and meritocracy, but rather toward personal loyalty to superiors or specific groups. Hofstede (1991) highlighted that in a bureaucratic culture with high power distance like Indonesia, subordinate employees tend to normalize abuse of power due to fear of disobeying superiors, making the practice of nepotism and patronage difficult to eradicate. Within the Ministry of Religious Affairs, this phenomenon manifests itself in practices such as "official quotas," "honorary quotas," and "family quotas," which concretely demonstrate how the Hajj quota is allocated based on informal power networks, rather than on the basis of need and fairness. This practice not only undermines bureaucratic professionalism but also degrades the quality of public services, which should be based on the principles of transparency and fairness. Furthermore, this patronage culture reinforces the power network system that hinders bureaucratic reform and reinforces a cycle of dependency and false loyalty. As a result, the bureaucracy becomes a vehicle for fulfilling personal and group interests, rather than an objective and efficient public servant. This situation creates systemic injustice and deepens the unequal access of the public to government services, particularly regarding the distribution of Hajj quotas, which have crucial social and religious significance. Improvement efforts must begin with strengthening the meritocratic system through transparent, competency-oriented selection and promotion, accompanied by strict enforcement of a bureaucratic code of ethics. Furthermore, independent oversight mechanisms and public participation in public oversight need to be strengthened to minimize patronage and nepotism,

allowing the bureaucracy to return to performing its functions professionally and fairly.

3. Public Administration Ethics Crisis and Abuse of Discretion

Public administration ethics should serve as the moral foundation for officials in making decisions and carrying out their duties, prioritizing humanitarian values and social justice. However, in reality, many officials abuse administrative discretion for personal or group interests, without regard to the principles of transparency and accountability. In the context of the Hajj quota case, this discretion is used in a confidential manner, for example in determining recipients of additional quotas or the allocation of irregular quotas. This practice creates the opportunity for moral hazard, where officials believe that ethical violations will not incur serious consequences due to the lack of oversight and sanctions. Furthermore, this abuse of discretion can damage the bureaucracy's image and foster public distrust. Officials who abuse their power tend to view such violations as normal, due to the culture of impunity that permeates the administrative and bureaucratic system. Ethical reform must be implemented by establishing a system that reinforces the principles of clean, transparent, and accountable governance. Internal and external oversight mechanisms must be strengthened, including the implementation of strict sanctions for ethical violations. Furthermore, it is necessary to instill moral and ethical values in every official from the beginning of bureaucratic education and training so that a commitment to the public interest becomes an ingrained culture and is not influenced by short-term interests.

4. Structural and Personal Corruption in Hajj Governance

Corruption in Hajj quota management is not only caused by the actions of a few individuals, but also by a system that allows for fraud. According to Klitgaard (1988), corruption occurs due to the existence of significant power without clear oversight. In this case, the Ministry of Religious Affairs holds complete control over the distribution of Hajj quotas and their implementation costs. Because public oversight remains weak, this creates conditions that are highly conducive to systemic corruption.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs' monopoly gives them free rein in decision-making, while the public or Hajj pilgrims lack complete information. This allows certain parties to exploit the opportunity to engage in detrimental practices, such as a lack of transparency in quota distribution and excessively high fees. Examples include public reports and audit results that indicate the misuse of quotas for personal gain.

5. Systemic Impact on Public Trust and Bureaucratic Reform

Irregularities in the distribution of Hajj quotas have had a very serious impact on the moral and political legitimacy of the Hajj organizing bureaucracy in Indonesia. The corruption case surrounding the 2024 Hajj quota, which resulted in the cancellation of the departure of approximately 8,400 regular

pilgrims who had been waiting for 14 years, is not simply an administrative or financial violation, but a betrayal of the spiritual rights of Muslims (Sapraji, 2025).

This case undermines the foundation of public trust, which is crucial for the ongoing relationship between society and the state. Frederickson (1997) in his theory asserts that public trust is the primary social capital that underpins the sustainability of administrative democracy. When this trust erodes, the government's legitimacy as a public service provider will also weaken, potentially hindering the bureaucratic reforms needed to improve service quality and governance. Recent studies show that corruption in matters of worship that have a sacred psychological meaning also causes deep trauma for the community, which has implications for declining trust in the integrity of government institutions, especially the Ministry of Religion and the Hajj Financial Management Agency (BPKH) (Tempo, 2025).

In this context, bureaucratic reform must prioritize integrity and transparency as the core principles of modern governance. Urgent systemic improvements include transparent quota management based on digital technology, directly accessible and supervised by the public, and firm and impartial law enforcement against corruptors at all levels of the bureaucracy (Sapraji, 2025).

These reforms are crucial for restoring public trust. Failure to do so will lead to stagnation in improving the quality of government and a decline in the overall legitimacy of the state. Bureaucratic integrity, through clear accountability, transparency in decision-making, and a strengthened anti-corruption culture, is an absolute prerequisite for the Hajj pilgrimage to regain public trust and support. Without these measures, the potential for social conflict and public disillusionment will continue to grow, threatening long-term social and political stability. Therefore, the Hajj quota irregularities should serve as an impetus for the government to promote real and sustainable bureaucratic reform to uphold moral values, justice, and the legitimacy of administrative democracy in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that corruption in Hajj quota management is not merely an incidental administrative problem, but a manifestation of systemic failures in ethics, accountability, and governance within the public bureaucracy. The findings indicate that weak transparency, ineffective oversight mechanisms, abuse of administrative discretion, and an entrenched culture of patronage and nepotism have collectively created conditions that enable quota corruption to persist. These practices reveal a substantial gap between the normative principles of good governance and their actual implementation in public policy.

From the perspective of public administration ethics, the misuse of authority and discretion reflects a moral crisis among public officials, in which integrity, honesty, and commitment to the public interest are subordinated to personal or political interests. Structurally, the concentration of authority within the Ministry of Religious Affairs in managing Hajj quotas – without adequate transparency and public oversight – has significantly increased corruption risks

and weakened public accountability. Consequently, irregularities in quota distribution have eroded public trust, undermined the moral legitimacy of state institutions, and obstructed broader efforts at bureaucratic reform.

Therefore, strengthening ethical values, consistently enforcing the principles of good governance, and enhancing public accountability mechanisms are imperative to prevent similar deviations in the future. Comprehensive reforms should include the implementation of transparent, technology-based quota management systems; the reinforcement of internal and external oversight; firm, impartial law enforcement against corrupt practices; and the institutionalization of ethics education within the bureaucracy. Although this study is limited by its normative, document-based methodology, it provides a rigorous analytical foundation for understanding policy deviations in Hajj quota management. Future research employing empirical approaches—such as elite interviews, in-depth case studies, and cross-national comparative analyses—is essential to capture the perspectives of key actors, examine informal power relations, and assess variations in quota policy design in order to reduce corruption risks and improve the overall quality of public governance.

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