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Constructing Fair Compensation for Pesantren Educators: An Ijarah Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Compensation for educators in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) involves a complex relationship between religious devotion (khidmah) and professional economic rights. This study examines teacher remuneration at Pondok Pesantren Al-Hasanah from the perspective of the ijārah 'alā al-a'māl (lease of services) contract. Using a qualitative empirical case study, the research involved teachers and pesantren administrators responsible for educational and financial management. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and analysis of employment and remuneration records. The findings reveal a significant discrepancy between agreed remuneration and its implementation. At recruitment, teachers agreed to receive IDR 400,000 per month during a three-month probationary period, followed by IDR 700,000 per month from the fourth month and an annual increment of IDR 100,000. Field data indicate that teachers instead received IDR 600,000 per month during months four to twelve, creating a monthly shortfall of IDR 100,000, while the promised annual increment was not implemented. Interviews and document analysis also identified recurrent payment delays, which institutional management attributed primarily to student-fee arrears and budget constraints. However, educators reported limited access to financial information concerning the institution's budgetary condition and the basis for remuneration adjustments. These conditions complicate the assumption of genuine an-tarāḍin (mutual consent), because teachers' acceptance of reduced or delayed payments occurred within economic dependence and strong expectations of religious khidmah. The study therefore conceptualizes ikrah ma'nawi as a form of psychological and structural pressure that may constrain meaningful consent without involving explicit physical coercion. The findings further indicate that remuneration was not consistently aligned with ajr al-mitsl, or fair compensation corresponding to the value of services performed. From a Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah perspective, these practices raise concerns regarding ḥifẓ al-māl (protection of wealth) and ḥifẓ al-nafs (protection of well-being). A fair compensation model requires financial transparency, enforceable remuneration agreements, timely payment, and reasonable ajr al-mitsl benchmarks.

Introduction

Muamalah constitutes a fundamental dimension of Islamic law governing interpersonal economic relations, including employment and service transactions. One of its principal contractual instruments is ijārah ‘alā al-a‘māl, through which one party obtains the benefit of another party’s services in exchange for agreed remuneration (ujrah). The validity and ethical legitimacy of such a contract depend not only on the existence of the contractual pillars (arkān) but also on clarity concerning the type of work, duration, remuneration, and mutual consent (an-tarāḍin). In this framework, justice (‘adl) requires that compensation correspond reasonably to the services performed and that neither party exploit the vulnerability of the other. Contemporary discussions of Islamic wage systems similarly emphasize clarity of contractual terms, fairness of remuneration, mutual consent, and protection of workers’ economic rights. Empirical research on ijārah al-a‘māl, for example, demonstrates that uncertainty concerning the amount or timing of wages may undermine contractual fairness and become problematic when payment is deferred or altered without a clear agreement (Yuniartik, 2023).

The issue of educator compensation in Islamic educational institutions has received attention from a different but related perspective. Previous studies have generally examined compensation in relation to teacher performance, job satisfaction, loyalty, motivation, and institutional human-resource management. Research at Mafazah Modern Boarding School, for instance, identified complaints concerning the compensation system and demonstrated its relevance to teacher performance. Similarly, studies of madrasah teachers have shown that compensation contributes to job satisfaction, while research on pesantren-based educational institutions emphasizes the importance of compensation and professional development in sustaining educator performance. More recent research has begun to examine the distinctive role of spiritual and non-financial compensation in pesantren, including barakah, khidmah, spiritual development, and belonging to the pesantren community. Such studies explain why educators may maintain strong loyalty despite receiving relatively limited financial compensation. These findings are important because they demonstrate that pesantren employment relationships cannot be understood exclusively through conventional human-resource management models.

Nevertheless, an important analytical gap remains. Existing studies on pesantren educator compensation predominantly examine compensation as a managerial variable associated with motivation, satisfaction, loyalty, or performance, whereas studies of ijārah al-a‘māl generally focus on the validity of wages, contractual requirements, and payment practices among agricultural or informal workers. Consequently, insufficient attention has been given to the intersection between actual compensation practices in pesantren and the substantive freedom of consent within an Islamic employment contract. In particular, the literature has not sufficiently examined what happens when an educator formally accepts a wage arrangement but subsequently experiences unilateral wage reductions, delayed payments, or limited financial disclosure while remaining in the employment relationship because of economic dependence, limited alternative employment, and religious expectations of khidmah. This distinction is important because formal acceptance does not necessarily demonstrate substantive an-tarāḍin when the employee’s practical capacity to reject unfavorable conditions is severely constrained.

This gap becomes particularly visible at Pondok Pesantren Al-Hasanah in Simpang Tuan, a rural, community-based Islamic boarding school where educators' remuneration is closely connected to the institution's financial capacity. Preliminary field observations indicate a discrepancy between the remuneration promised during recruitment and its subsequent implementation. Teachers were initially informed of a remuneration structure consisting of IDR 400,000 per month during a three-month probationary period, followed by IDR 700,000 from the fourth month and a further annual increment. However, the field evidence indicates that the fourth-month increase was not fully implemented, with teachers receiving IDR 600,000 rather than IDR 700,000 per month, while the subsequent annual increment was also not realized. Interviews further indicate that payment delays and remuneration adjustments were associated by management with student-fee arrears and institutional budget constraints. At the same time, educators reported limited access to detailed information concerning the institution's financial condition and the basis for remuneration changes. These empirical conditions transform the issue from a simple question of whether a contract exists into a question of whether contractual consent remains meaningful throughout the employment relationship.

The concept of ikrah maʻnawi provides an important analytical lens for understanding this phenomenon. In classical Islamic jurisprudence, ikrah concerns coercion that compromises genuine volition, while contemporary Islamic legal scholarship has increasingly explored non-physical or psychological forms of coercion that can affect autonomous decision-making. In the present study, ikrah maʻnawi is not used to claim that educators are physically forced to remain employed. Rather, it is employed as an analytical concept for interpreting the combination of economic dependence, limited employment alternatives, institutional authority, and religious expectations that may make educators reluctant to reject reduced or delayed remuneration. Thus, the empirical question is not simply whether teachers say "yes" to the institution, but whether their acceptance reflects genuine an-tarāḍin or constrained accommodation to circumstances they perceive as difficult to challenge. This approach extends the discussion of consent from formal contractual agreement toward the substantive conditions under which agreement is maintained.

The study further incorporates ḥifẓ al-māl and ajr al-mithl to evaluate the economic dimension of the employment relationship. Within the Maqāṣid al-Sharīʻah framework, ḥifẓ al-māl requires protection of legitimate economic interests and therefore provides a relevant basis for examining whether workers' earned remuneration is adequately protected. Recent Islamic legal research similarly links wage deductions, delayed payments, and unclear employment agreements to concerns regarding ḥifẓ al-māl, ḥifẓ al-nafs, and distributive justice. Meanwhile, ajr al-mithl refers to a fair or prevailing level of remuneration corresponding to the service performed and provides a benchmark beyond the mere existence of an agreed nominal wage. Accordingly, this study does not treat ajr al-mithl simply as a predetermined wage figure; rather, it uses the principle to assess whether the compensation received remains proportionate to the educators' work and whether institutional financial difficulties are being transferred disproportionately to workers.

Against this background, the present study addresses a research gap by empirically examining teacher remuneration at a rural pesantren through an integrated Islamic legal framework. Its novelty lies in connecting three dimensions that have generally been examined separately: first, the empirical reality of wage reductions, delayed payments, and financial transparency; second, the contractual principles of ijārah ʻalā al-aʻmāl and an-tarāḍin; and third, the substantive ethical and maqāṣid dimensions represented by ikrah maʻnawi, ḥifẓ al-māl, and ajr al-mithl. Rather than treating educators' religious devotion as evidence that they voluntarily accept unfavorable compensation, the study critically examines how khidmah and barakah narratives interact with economic vulnerability and institutional financial constraints. This perspective allows the study to distinguish between voluntary religious service and contractual labor, thereby avoiding the assumption that spiritual commitment can legitimately substitute for agreed economic rights.

The study therefore aims to analyze how compensation practices at Pondok Pesantren Al-Hasanah correspond to the requirements of ijārah ʻalā al-aʻmāl, particularly concerning remuneration certainty, mutual consent, and contractual fairness; to examine whether wage reductions and payment delays can be understood as manifestations of constrained consent or ikrah maʻnawi; and to evaluate these practices through the principles of ḥifẓ al-māl and ajr al-mithl. The study ultimately seeks to contribute an empirically grounded framework for pesantren compensation governance that reconciles financial sustainability with contractual certainty, educator dignity, transparency, and substantive justice under Islamic economic law.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach within an empirical socio-legal research framework, integrating normative analysis of Sharia Economic Law specifically ijarah bi al-a'mal (service contracts) with the empirical reality of payroll practices in the field. The researcher acted as the primary instrument (human instrument) to observe social interactions and contractual negotiations directly at the Al-Hasanah Islamic Boarding School in Simpang Tuan Village, Mendahara Ulu District, Tanjung Jabung Timur Regency. Informants were selected through purposive sampling based on their primary roles in executing the compensation agreement. Key informants included the boarding school leadership and treasurer (representing the mu'jir or employer) as well as active teachers (representing the musta'jir or service providers) affected by unilateral wage adjustments.

The data for this study comprise both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were gathered through participatory observation of institutional dynamics and in-depth semi-structured interviews using a flexible interview guide to explore the chronology of verbal agreements, honorarium schemes, and underlying causes of compensation disparities. Secondary data included written documents such as institutional financial administration records, teacher attendance logs, relevant labor regulations (e.g., Government Regulation No. 36 of 2021), and classical and contemporary jurisprudence (Fiqh Muamalah) literature regarding conditions, requirements, and breach of contract in ijarah.

Data analysis was conducted systematically following the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, which encompasses three core phases: data reduction (filtering, categorizing, and focusing interview findings on wage disparities and perceptions of fairness), data display (constructing narrative text complemented by comparative matrices between verbal agreements and actual disbursements), and conclusion drawing/verification (synthesizing empirical findings with theoretical constructs of breach of contract and public interest in Sharia Economic Law).

To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the findings (data trustworthiness), three qualitative verification strategies were applied: persistent observation to examine internal institutional dynamics; triangulation of sources and techniques, comparing teacher narratives with administrative explanations and operational documentation; and prolonged engagement in the field to eliminate response bias and guarantee data authenticity.

Results and Discussion

1. Initial Compensation Agreement and Contractual Arrangement

The field investigation identified a predominantly informal recruitment and remuneration system at Pondok Pesantren Al-Hasanah. Teacher recruitment was generally conducted through direct communication between institutional management and prospective teachers, with the employment relationship established through an oral agreement (aqd shafawi). The management functioned as the employer (mu'jir), while teachers occupied the position of service providers (musta'jir). Although the agreement was not comprehensively documented in a written employment contract, the initial verbal arrangement contained relatively specific provisions concerning the amount of remuneration and its progression according to the teacher’s length of service.

The compensation arrangement consisted of three principal stages. During the first three months, newly recruited teachers received IDR 400,000 per month as a probationary or institutional orientation honorarium. Field findings indicate that the payment during this initial period corresponded to the amount communicated at recruitment. The agreement subsequently provided for an increase to IDR 700,000 per month beginning in the fourth month. However, the actual remuneration received by teachers during this period was IDR 600,000 per month. Consequently, the difference between the agreed and realized amount was IDR 100,000 per month. This discrepancy continued throughout the remainder of the first academic year rather than occurring as an isolated payment error.

A second discrepancy occurred when teachers entered their second year of service. According to the initial compensation arrangement, the monthly honorarium was expected to increase by another IDR 100,000, resulting in IDR 800,000 per month. The actual payment, however, remained at IDR 700,000 per month. The empirical evidence therefore identifies two recurring points of divergence: the transition from the three-month probationary period to regular employment and the transition from the first to the second year of service.

2. Comparison Between Agreed and Actual Compensation

The discrepancy between the initial agreement and actual implementation can be summarized as follows:

Table 1 Comparison Between Agreed and Actual Compensation

Employment Stage	**Initial Compensation Agreement**	**Actual Compensation**	**Difference**
Months 1–3	IDR 400,000/month	IDR 400,000/month	IDR 0
Months 4–12	IDR 700,000/month	IDR 600,000/month	-IDR 100,000/month
Second year onward	IDR 800,000/month	IDR 700,000/month	-IDR 100,000/month

The comparison demonstrates that the compensation system was initially implemented according to the verbal agreement but subsequently diverged from the agreed progression. Thus, the empirical problem was not the complete absence of remuneration but the failure to implement previously communicated increases. The findings indicate that the discrepancy became a recurring characteristic of the remuneration system rather than a single administrative irregularity.

The absence of comprehensive written employment documentation further complicated the relationship between the agreed terms and their implementation. Although the oral agreement was socially recognized by the parties, teachers lacked a formal administrative document specifying the remuneration trajectory and providing an institutional mechanism for enforcing the promised increases. Consequently, when the actual payment differed from the initial agreement, teachers had limited documentary evidence through which to formally challenge the discrepancy.

3. Teachers’ Responses to Compensation Discrepancies

Interview findings demonstrate that teachers were generally aware that the amount they received differed from the remuneration communicated during recruitment. Nevertheless, the interviewed teachers did not pursue formal grievances or demand institutional enforcement of the original compensation terms. This finding is important because the teachers’ continued service should not automatically be interpreted as evidence that they considered the reduced remuneration fully acceptable. Rather, their response was shaped by the absence of written contracts, their relatively weak bargaining position, and the socio-religious environment of the pesantren.

The field findings further indicate that teachers understood their work not solely as an economic activity but also as a form of religious and educational service. Values of ikhlas, barakah, and khidmah contributed to teachers' willingness to tolerate institutional financial limitations. These values helped maintain the continuity of the educational relationship despite compensation discrepancies. At the same time, they potentially reduced teachers' willingness to formally contest the difference between the agreed and actual remuneration

4. Institutional Financial Conditions and the Basis for Compensation Adjustments

Interviews with institutional administrators indicate that the discrepancy in remuneration was closely associated with the pesantren's financial vulnerability. The institution relies substantially on student tuition fees (SPP) and other limited internal sources of revenue. Consequently, fluctuations in tuition collection directly affect the institution's monthly cash flow and its capacity to meet operational expenditures.

Administrators identified student-fee arrears as one of the principal financial pressures. According to the interview findings, many parents or guardians experience unstable household incomes, particularly because of seasonal economic conditions and fluctuations in agricultural commodity prices. When household income declines, tuition payments are delayed and accumulated arrears reduce the institution's available monthly revenue.

The resulting cash-flow pressure affected the institution's ability to implement the progressive remuneration increases communicated during teacher recruitment. The findings suggest that the institution remained able to provide monthly payments but experienced difficulty sustaining the originally planned compensation trajectory. In addition, limited institutional cash reserves made the pesantren vulnerable to temporary reductions in tuition revenue and unexpected operational expenditures.

Limited new student enrollment constituted another financial pressure. Stagnant or declining enrollment constrained the potential for additional tuition revenue while core educational expenditures continued. Under these circumstances, institutional management prioritized the continuity of essential educational operations, making the implementation of planned teacher remuneration increases more difficult

5. Payment Delays and Financial Transparency

In addition to discrepancies in remuneration amounts, the field evidence identified problems concerning the punctuality of payment. The financial records reviewed in the study indicate that salary disbursements were delayed on five occasions during the first year of employment. Thus, the empirical problem involved not only the amount of remuneration but also the timing of payment. The repeated occurrence of delays indicates that payment punctuality constituted a recurring operational issue within the compensation system.

The interviews and institutional financial findings indicate that payment difficulties were associated with the pesantren's unstable cash flow, particularly tuition-fee arrears. However, the available evidence also indicates that teachers had limited access to detailed information concerning the institution's internal financial condition. The absence of comprehensive written employment arrangements and limited disclosure concerning the basis for remuneration adjustments reduced teachers' ability to evaluate whether changes in compensation were temporary financial accommodations, institutional policy decisions, or modifications of the original employment agreement.

Accordingly, financial transparency emerged as an important empirical dimension of the compensation problem. The issue was not simply that the institution experienced financial difficulties, but that teachers' contractual expectations were not accompanied by a clearly documented mechanism for communicating financial constraints, renegotiating remuneration, or obtaining mutual agreement when the original compensation structure could not be maintained.

6. Triangulation of Empirical Findings

The findings from interviews, observations, and documentary evidence converge around a consistent pattern of divergence between the initial compensation arrangement and its operational implementation. Interview data establish that teachers were aware of the agreed remuneration and subsequently received lower amounts than those initially communicated. Observational findings demonstrate that the compensation relationship operated predominantly through informal and trust-based arrangements without comprehensive written employment documentation. Documentary evidence, particularly remuneration and financial records, supports the existence of repeated differences in payment and identifies five instances of delayed salary disbursement during the first year.

The three sources therefore demonstrate that the compensation problem cannot be reduced to an isolated disagreement between individual teachers and management. Rather, it represents a structural interaction between an informal contractual mechanism, institutional financial vulnerability, and teachers' willingness to accommodate financial limitations because of the religious and communal character of pesantren education. The institution continued to provide remuneration, but the promised progression of remuneration and the punctuality of payment were not consistently maintained.

7. Dicussion

Overall, the empirical results reveal four principal findings. First, the initial teacher remuneration arrangement was established orally and contained identifiable provisions regarding probationary remuneration and subsequent increases. Second, actual implementation diverged from these provisions, particularly through the failure to implement the IDR 700,000 post-probation rate and the subsequent IDR 100,000 annual increment. Third, payment delays occurred repeatedly, with financial records indicating five delayed disbursements during the first year. Fourth, institutional financial constraints—including student-fee arrears, limited cash reserves, and stagnant enrollment—were identified as major contextual factors, while the absence of comprehensive written agreements and limited financial transparency weakened teachers' ability to negotiate or enforce the original compensation arrangement.

These findings establish the empirical basis for the subsequent discussion of ijārah ʻalā al-aʻmāl, an-tarāḍin, ikrah maʻnawi, ḥifẓ al-māl, and ajr al-mithl. Rather than assuming that teachers' continued service represents unconditional consent, the results demonstrate the need to examine how informal contracting, financial dependency, religious commitment, and institutional financial constraints interact in shaping the actual exercise of teachers' economic rights..

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the teacher compensation scheme at Al-Hasanah Islamic Boarding School is shaped by the interaction of three principal dimensions: contractual, economic, and socio-religious. The contractual dimension is characterized by the predominance of verbal agreements and the absence of comprehensive written employment documentation. The economic dimension is reflected in substantial tuition arrears, limited institutional cash reserves, and unstable enrollment levels. Meanwhile, the socio-religious dimension is manifested through the strong presence of ikhlas, barakah, and khidmah as cultural values shaping teachers' perceptions of their professional responsibilities. The interaction among these three dimensions produces a compensation system that is relatively flexible and adaptive but simultaneously vulnerable to discrepancies between initial commitments and actual implementation.

From an institutional perspective, the findings therefore highlight the need to establish a compensation governance model that balances institutional financial sustainability with the protection of teachers' economic rights. Such a model should not seek to replace the religious and communal ethos of the pesantren with a purely commercial employment framework. Instead, it should integrate formal contractual mechanisms with the ethical principles of Islamic educational management. In this way, the values of religious devotion and institutional service can be preserved while ensuring greater fairness, transparency, predictability, and accountability in the management of teacher compensation.

The compensation mechanisms for educators in Islamic boarding school (pesantren) environments often operate at a critical intersection between spiritual principles of devotion (khidmah) and the fulfillment of professional economic rights (As'ad & Hidayat, 2022). In the case of Pondok Pesantren Al-Hasanah, the institutional working relationship between the management (musta'jir) and the teaching staff (mu'jir) is formally governed through an oral agreement grounded in the ijarah 'ala al-'amal framework (leasing of services or labor). From a normative standpoint, this arrangement satisfies the baseline legal capacity requirements (ahliyyah al-ada') of both contracting parties and is initiated through a valid offer and acceptance (shighat ijab-qabul). However, empirical analysis reveals a substantial divergence between these normative contractual foundations and the actual realization of educators' financial rights in daily operational practices.

This contractual strain is most evident in the dynamics surrounding the determination and disbursement of consideration (ujrah), which serves as an essential element (ma'qud 'alaih) validating an ijarah contract within Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh Muamalah) and the Compilation of Islamic Economic Law (KHES) (Hosen & Hasan, 2021). While an initial monthly wage of IDR 700,000 post-probation—supplemented by housing benefits—was mutually agreed upon, a critical discrepancy emerged when actual disbursements were unilaterally reduced to IDR 600,000 without prior notification or formal contractual amendment. The reduction of wage values to offset internal budgetary deficits—driven by unpaid tuition fees (SPP) from students' guardians—demonstrates a structural mechanism of institutional risk-shifting onto educators. The management's lack of transparency (al-shafafiyyah) regarding internal liquidity constraints introduces an element of ambiguity (gharar) that compromises legal certainty and generates systemic injustice (zhulm), thereby breaching the principles of mutual consent enshrined in Article 307 of the KHES (Syamsuri & Rosyadi, 2023).

This structural shortcoming is further exacerbated by a persistent lack of institutional commitment (al-mas'uliyyah) regarding payment punctuality. Financial records indicate that salary disbursements were delayed five times within the first year of employment. Such operational delays directly contradict the prophetic mandate recorded in the Hadith of Ibn Majah, which dictates that a worker's compensation must be settled before their "sweat dries." The normalization of delayed payments by the administration highlights a pervasive socio-cultural bias, wherein the bargaining position of educators is rendered subordinate to institutional convenience. Consequently, the failure to candidly communicate financial fluctuations to teaching personnel reflects a broader failure to institutionalize transparency within the governance structure.

Ultimately, these combined practices result in a vitiated state of mutual consent (an-taradhin), a foundational principle explicitly mandated in Surah An-Nisa (4:29). The passive endurance and continued service of educators despite wage reductions cannot be interpreted as genuine voluntary acquiescence (sukut ikhtiyari). Rather, this phenomenon exemplifies ikrah ma'nawi—a form of psychological and structural coercion (Mansury & Zahra, 2023). Educators find themselves constrained by economic vulnerability due to limited local employment alternatives, compounded by the dominant religious narrative of altruistic service. Institutional management implicitly leverages this power asymmetry and the rhetoric of piety to suppress grievances. When an educator feels compelled to forgo legitimate financial claims to preserve their standing of spiritual devotion, the underlying contractual agreement suffers from a fundamental defect of consent.

From a Maqasid al-Shariah perspective, permitting unjust compensation under the guise of religious service conflicts directly with the imperatives of safeguarding wealth (hifz al-mal) and preserving individual well-being (hifz al-nafs). Constructing a genuinely fair compensation framework within pesantren institutions requires a threefold governance restructuring: first, the institutionalization of financial transparency that mandates formal contract re-negotiations during budgetary crises; second, a clear conceptual separation between spiritual devotion and the professional accountability inherent in ijarah as a bilateral commercial contract (mu'awadah); and third, the adoption of equitable wage benchmarks (ajr al-mitsl) that account for workload, qualifications, and local living standards to ensure sustainable welfare (al-maslahah) for religious educators (Rohman & Fauzi, 2024).

Conclusion

This study concludes that the implementation of ijārah 'alā al-a'māl in the compensation system for educators at Pondok Pesantren Al-Hasanah demonstrates a substantial gap between the initial contractual arrangement and its practical implementation. Although the employment relationship was established through an oral agreement containing relatively clear remuneration provisions, the agreed compensation trajectory was not consistently realized. Teachers received IDR 400,000 per month during the first three months as initially agreed, but subsequently received IDR 600,000 rather than the agreed IDR 700,000 from the fourth month, while the expected annual increment was also not fully implemented. In addition, financial records indicated five instances of delayed salary disbursement during the first year. These findings demonstrate that the principal problem concerns not the absence of remuneration but the inconsistency, predictability, and transparency of its implementation. Institutional financial constraints, particularly student-fee arrears, limited cash reserves, and unstable enrollment, contributed to these discrepancies, while the predominance of oral agreements provided limited mechanisms for formal renegotiation or enforcement.

The study further demonstrates that teachers' continued acceptance of reduced or delayed remuneration should not automatically be equated with fully voluntary an-tarāḍin. Interview findings indicate that educators were aware of the discrepancies but generally refrained from formal grievances, partly because of the absence of written contractual documentation, limited alternative employment opportunities, and the pesantren's socio-religious culture emphasizing ikhlas, khidmah, and barakah. Within this empirical context, ikrah ma'nawi provides a useful interpretive framework for understanding how economic dependence, institutional authority, and religious expectations may constrain the practical freedom to challenge unfavorable compensation conditions without implying physical coercion. The findings therefore extend the discussion of Islamic employment contracts from formal consent toward the substantive conditions under which consent is maintained. From a Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah perspective, the protection of educators' economic interests (ḥifẓ al-māl) and well-being (ḥifẓ al-nafs) requires that financial vulnerability and religious devotion should not become reasons for weakening legitimate contractual rights.

Accordingly, a fair compensation framework for pesantren educators should integrate the religious ethos of khidmah with enforceable principles of contractual justice. Pesantren administrations should establish written employment agreements specifying remuneration, payment schedules, mechanisms for salary increases, and procedures for renegotiation when genuine financial difficulties arise. Financial conditions affecting compensation should also be communicated transparently to educators so that any adjustment is based on meaningful mutual agreement rather than unilateral implementation. Furthermore, the principle of ajr al-mithl can provide a normative benchmark for assessing whether remuneration remains proportionate to educators' workload, qualifications, responsibilities, and relevant local economic conditions. The study is limited by its single-case qualitative design at Pondok Pesantren Al-Hasanah; therefore, its findings are analytically rather than statistically generalizable. Future research should employ comparative multi-site studies involving pesantren with different financial structures, governance models, and geographical contexts to examine how compensation systems can sustainably reconcile institutional financial capacity, educators' professional rights, and the ethical principles of Islamic economic law.

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