

When Law Touches Worship: A Study on Mosque Loudspeaker Regulations from the Perspective of Legal Sociology

Kustana

UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung

kustana@uinsgd.ac.id

Abstract

This research examines the social dynamics and public reactions to mosque loudspeaker regulations in Indonesia, both on social media and in mosques in Bandung, West Java. Data were collected using a qualitative method through online observation and interviews with religious leaders and interfaith community members in Bandung, West Java. The findings reveal that many people on social media oppose the regulation, citing emotional concerns and fears that it may disrupt religious traditions. However, in reality, its implementation has garnered widespread support. Several mosques, such as Masjid Al-Hasanah, Masjid Kifayatul Akhyar, and Masjid Raya Bandung, back the policy to foster tolerance and maintain good interfaith relations. Even in predominantly Muslim areas, the regulation is seen as important for respecting the needs of residents who require peace, such as those resting, working, or ill. This research concludes that the implementation of the regulation should consider diverse social contexts and be sensitive to religious pluralism. Additionally, further dialogue is needed to preserve social harmony in a pluralistic society.

Keywords: loudspeaker regulation; religious freedom; tolerance; Indonesian mosques.

Ketika Hukum Menyentuh Ibadah: Kajian tentang Aturan Pengeras Suara di Masjid Perspektif Sosiologi Hukum

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji dinamika sosial dan reaksi masyarakat terhadap regulasi pengeras suara masjid di Indonesia, baik di media sosial maupun secara langsung di masjid-masjid di Kota Bandung, Jawa Barat. Dengan metode kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi online dan wawancara dengan tokoh agama dan masyarakat lintas agama di Kota Bandung, Jawa Barat. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa reaksi masyarakat beragam. Di media sosial, banyak pihak menolak regulasi ini, dengan alasan emosional dan kekhawatiran bahwa tradisi keagamaan akan terganggu. Namun, di dunia nyata, penerapannya banyak didukung. Beberapa masjid, seperti Masjid Al-Hasanah, Masjid Kifayatul Akhyar, dan Masjid Raya Bandung, mendukung kebijakan ini untuk menjaga toleransi dan hubungan baik antaragama. Bahkan di wilayah mayoritas Muslim, regulasi ini dianggap penting untuk menghormati warga yang membutuhkan ketenangan, istirahat, bekerja, dan sakit. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa penerapan regulasi harus mempertimbangkan konteks sosial yang beragam dan memperhatikan sensitivitas terhadap keragaman agama, serta perlu adanya dialog lebih lanjut untuk menjaga harmoni sosial di masyarakat plural.

Kata kunci: regulasi pengeras suara; kebebasan beragama; toleransi; masjid Indonesia.

Author correspondence

Email: kustana@uinsgd.ac.id

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A. Introduction

The use of loudspeakers in mosques has become an integral part of religious practices in Indonesia.¹ However, in recent years, there has been increasing attention to the regulation of this practice and its impact on society. In 2024, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia issued Circular Letter No. 1 of 2024 regarding Guidelines for Organizing Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr 1445 Hijri/2024 CE. This letter includes regulations on the use of loudspeakers in mosques and prayer rooms, considering the challenges posed by technological advancements and urbanization.² The growing number of mosques and prayer rooms across Indonesia, which now exceeds 800,000, adds urgency to the enforcement of these regulations.³ In the context of Indonesia's demographic and cultural diversity, these regulations aim to maintain social harmony and prevent potential conflicts among residents caused by noise from loudspeakers. Although authorities intend the regulations to balance the freedom of worship with public order, some members of the public have resisted their implementation, creating various challenges. The findings highlight the need for an in-depth study to understand how the law regulates religious practices and how society responds to these regulatory efforts, particularly from the perspective of legal sociology.

Studies on the use of loudspeakers in mosques have been a focal point in various research exploring the interaction between law, technology, and religious practices. Riyanto⁴ compared regulations on the use of loudspeakers in mosques between Indonesia and other Muslim countries, finding that moderation in rules related to time, volume, and sound quality can serve as a model for regulations in

¹ Siti Aliyuna Pratisti, "Negotiating Soundscape: Practice and Regulation of Adzan in Indonesia," *Journal of Indonesian Social Sciences and Humanities* 10, no. 2 (2020): 75–84; Fadilatun Nur Latifah et al., "An Analysis of Prayer Room Acoustics in the Pusdai Mosque in West Java," *Engineering Proceedings* 53, no. 1 (2023): 4.

² Kementerian Agama RI, *Surat Edaran No. 1 2024 Tentang Panduan Penyelenggaraan Ibadah Ramadan Dan Hari Raya Idul Fitri Tahun 1445 Hijriah/2024 Masehi* (Jakarta: Kementerian Agama RI, 2024).

³ Aprionis, "Ketum DMI Jusuf Kalla: Jumlah Masjid Indonesia Terbanyak Di Dunia," *Antaranews.Com*, 2020, <https://www.antaranews.com/berita/1323622/ketum-dmi-jusuf-kalla-jumlah-masjid-indonesia-terbanyak-di-dunia>.

⁴ W F Riyanto, "Moderation between Religious Freedom and Harmony Concerning the Regulation on Mosque Loudspeaker: Comparison between Indonesia and Other Muslim Countries," *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights* 20, no. 1 (2023): 69–96, <https://doi.org/10.1515/mwjhr-2022-0029>.

different Muslim countries. El-Saghir's⁵ research introduced new technology in the form of two-dimensional speaker array systems with beamforming capabilities, which can enhance sound quality in mosques without compromising architectural integrity. Meanwhile, Eldien and Mujeebu's⁶ study highlighted the importance of dome shape in influencing mosque acoustics, showing that architectural design and technology must align to achieve optimal acoustic performance. Riyanto also discussed the pros and cons of the Indonesian government's policies on the use of loudspeakers in mosques, concluding that sound moderation could offer a solution to differing views on noise and the freedom of worship.⁷

These studies reveal that research on loudspeaker regulations in mosques has extensively explored technical aspects and cross-country regulatory comparisons. However, researchers have yet to conduct an in-depth analysis of how authorities implement these regulations and how Indonesia's diverse citizens respond to them. Therefore, this research aims to fill that gap by analyzing public reception and response to loudspeaker regulations in mosques from the perspective of legal sociology.

In the study of legal sociology, researchers can analyze this phenomenon using Niklas Luhmann's theory of law as a social system, as discussed in his book *Law as a Social System*.⁸ Luhmann views law as part of a social system that possesses autonomy and functions to regulate interactions within society. In this view, law is not merely a set of formal rules established by the state but rather a communication system that interacts with other social systems, such as religion, economy, and politics. The law remains autonomous, but it influences other social systems and is influenced by them through communication processes.

In the context of the mosque loudspeaker regulations, Luhmann's theory can be applied by understanding how legal regulations (the Minister of Religious Affairs'

⁵ Emad El-Saghir, "Deployment of Two-Dimensional Loudspeaker Arrays in Worship Spaces-New Application Concepts and a Real-World Case Study," in *Audio Engineering Society Conference: AES 2024 International Acoustics & Sound Reinforcement Conference* (Audio Engineering Society, 2024).

⁶ Hany Hossam Eldien and M Abdul Mujeebu, "The Impact of Dome-Shape on the Acoustic Performance-A Case Study of a Mosque in Saudi Arabia" (Technical Report, 2020).

⁷ Waryani Fajar Riyanto, "Escaping Islamic Religious Noise: The Pros and Cons of the Use of Mosque Loudspeakers in Indonesia," *Ulumuna* 28, no. 1 (2024): 81–107.

⁸ Niklas Luhmann, *Law as a Social System* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

Circular Letter) function as a system that interacts with other social systems, such as religious practices and local community dynamics. Researchers can use this theory to examine how the law affects and is affected by social dynamics, such as public resistance or acceptance of the regulation.⁹ Furthermore, this approach can explain how conflict or harmony arises from the interaction between law and religion as two distinct social systems.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the social dynamics and public responses to mosque loudspeaker regulations in Indonesia based on the Minister of Religious Affairs' Circular Letter No. 1 of 2024, which provides guidelines for the use of mosque loudspeakers during Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr 1445 H/2024 CE. Through this aim, the research can provide a more comprehensive understanding of how mosque loudspeaker regulations function not only as administrative policies but also as social phenomena involving interactions between law, technology, and religious practices within the Indonesian context.

This paper argues that the mosque loudspeaker regulations, based on the Minister of Religious Affairs' Circular Letter No. 1 of 2024, respond to the need to balance religious freedom with public order in a plural society. While many voices on social media oppose these regulations, fearing disruption to religious traditions, in practice, their implementation has garnered significant support, especially from mosques that view the policy as an effort to maintain tolerance and respect for the community's need for peace. By using Niklas Luhmann's legal theory, this study shows that regulators must carefully consider how regulation is not merely an administrative policy but part of the social interaction between law, religion, and society, which is essential to preserve social harmony.

B. Research Methods

This research focuses on the implementation of the Minister of Religious Affairs' Circular Letter No. 1 of 2024, which includes regulations on the use of loudspeakers in mosques. The researcher focuses on the application of these regulations in mosques across the city of Bandung, West Java. Bandung was chosen

⁹ Rodrigo Cordero, "The Negative Dialectics of Law: Luhmann and the Sociology of Juridical Concepts," *Social & Legal Studies* 29, no. 1 (2020): 3–18.

as the research location not only because it is one of the largest cities in Indonesia but also due to its high religious diversity. In addition to Islam, Bandung has many adherents of other religions, such as Christianity, Catholicism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, and indigenous beliefs.¹⁰ According to data from the SETARA Institute in 2024, Bandung is among the most tolerant cities in West Java, along with Bekasi.¹¹ The existence of several “Tolerance Villages,” such as Paledang Tolerance Village, Ruhana Alley Tolerance Village, Dian Permai Tolerance Village, Balonggede Tolerance Village, and Kebon Jeruk Tolerance Village, provides concrete evidence that Bandung serves as an example of religious diversity and tolerance in Indonesia.¹² Understanding how authorities implement mosque loudspeaker regulations within a diverse religious and social community is essential to recognizing the relevance of Bandung as a tolerant city.

This research uses a qualitative approach with both primary and secondary data.¹³ The researcher obtained primary data through online observation and direct interviews, while they gathered secondary data from various news articles, comments, and social media posts related to the loudspeaker regulations. The online observation focused on the Instagram account of a major Indonesian media outlet, tvOne, specifically @tvonenews. The researcher concentrated on content titled Controversy Surrounding the Circular on the Use of Loudspeakers in Places of Worship. The researcher chose this content due to its viral status, with 9,674 likes, 3,738 comments, 540 shares, and 532,000 views.

The research employs two main data collection techniques: in-depth interviews and online observation. Interviews were conducted purposively with two groups: religious scholars (*kiai*) in Bandung and community members from

¹⁰ D Lengauer, “#peacemaker: Cultivating Pluralist Dispositions among Bandung’s Peace Communities Online and Offline,” *Asiascape: Digital Asia* 9, no. 1 (2022): 175–200, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22142312-bja10024>.

¹¹ Rifat Alhamidi, “Menengok Indeks Kota Toleran 9 Daerah Di Jabar: Cirebon Paling Merosot,” *Detiknews.Com*, 2024, <https://www.detik.com/jabar/berita/d-7170150/menengok-indeks-kota-toleran-9-daerah-di-jabar-cirebon-paling-merosot>.

¹² CNN Indonesia, “BNPT Ungkap Lima Provinsi Rawan Penyebaran Ideologi Terorisme,” *CNN Indonesia.Com*, 2022, <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20220128122556-12-752421/bnpt-ungkap-lima-provinsi-rawan-penyebaran-ideologi-terorisme>.

¹³ Howard Lune and Bruce L Berg, “Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences” (Boston: Pearson, 2017).

various religious backgrounds. The *kiai* were selected due to their significant role in local religious life, while interviews with residents aimed to gather broader views on the implementation of mosque loudspeaker regulations. Additionally, the researcher conducted systematic online observation on the @tvonenews social media account to monitor public discussions on this regulation. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews lasting 30 to 60 minutes and meticulously recorded them to analyze public reactions and opinions on the regulation.

Next, the researcher analyzed the collected data through several stages. First, the researcher conducted data reduction to filter relevant information from the online observation and interviews. The researcher eliminated irrelevant or repetitive data at this stage. Second, the researcher presented the reduced data thematically, such as support and opposition to the loudspeaker regulations and the social impacts felt by the pluralistic Bandung community. Lastly, the researcher interpreted the data using a legal sociology approach, analyzing the social factors influencing public responses to the regulations.

C. Results and Discussion

The Public's Digital Response to Mosque Loudspeaker Regulations

The Director General of Islamic Guidance established the rules regarding the use of loudspeakers in mosques in 1978 through an instruction. The regulation aimed to prevent disturbances to the surrounding community and ensure that the call to prayer (*azan*) and other religious activities did not disrupt public order.¹⁴ The Ministry of Religious Affairs later updated this regulation through Circular Letter No. 05 of 2022 concerning Guidelines for the Use of Loudspeakers in Mosques and Prayer Rooms. Most recently, the Minister of Religious Affairs' Circular Letter No. 1 of 2024 addressed this issue with a focus on balancing religious freedom with public comfort, setting volume limits and operational hours for loudspeakers to reduce the negative impact on non-Muslims and the surrounding environment. According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Circular Letter No. 1 of 2024 aims to create a

¹⁴ Dirjen Bimas Islam Kemenag RI, *Tuntunan Penggunaan Pengeras Suara Di Masjid Dan Mushala* (Jakarta: Dirjen Bimas Islam Kemenag RI, 1978).

balance between the right to religious freedom and public comfort, as well as minimize disturbances that the use of mosque loudspeakers may cause.¹⁵

The issue of loudspeaker regulations became a hot topic when actress Zaskia Adya Mecca criticized the use of mosque loudspeakers to wake people for *sahur* (pre-dawn meal) in 2021. Zaskia Adya Mecca reacted to a viral TikTok video showing a mosque loudspeaker being used to wake people for *sahur*. She expressed her frustration on her social media account:

"Just wanted to ask, is this style of waking people up a HIT now?!

Then, is it ethical to use a mosque loudspeaker to wake people up like this??

Is this really not disturbing others who aren't observing sahur?!"



Figure 1. News of Zaskia Mecca criticizing the use of loudspeakers to wake people for sahur¹⁶

Zaskia felt that this behavior could disturb other residents, especially given Indonesia's diversity. She mentioned that small infants, in particular, would be greatly affected by such actions. Following this incident, Zaskia received widespread

¹⁵ Kementerian Agama RI, *Surat Edaran No. 1 2024 Tentang Panduan Penyelenggaraan Ibadah Ramadan Dan Hari Raya Idul Fitri Tahun 1445 Hijriah/2024 Masehi*.

¹⁶ Cornel Dimas Satrio, "Zaskia Adya Mecca Viral Protes Penyalahgunaan Pengeras Suara Masjid Saat Sahur, Muhammadiyah Sepakat," *Tribun News*, 2021, <https://kaltara.tribunnews.com/2021/04/24/zaskia-adya-mecca-viral-protes-penyalahgunaan-pengeras-suara-masjid-saat-sahur-muhammadiyah-sepakat>.

support from the public. Ultimately, the issuance of Surat Edaran No. 05 of 2022 and Surat Edaran No. 1 of 2024 followed.

The public response to these regulations was substantial, especially on social media. This response was particularly evident on the Instagram account @tvonenews, managed by the major Indonesian media outlet, tvOne. One of the posts analyzed was a content piece titled *“Debate Over the Circular on the Use of Loudspeakers in Places of Worship.”* This post went viral, receiving 9,674 likes, 3,738 comments, 540 shares, and 532,000 views.¹⁷ The post generated numerous reactions from netizens regarding the policy, with comments largely focused on either supporting or rejecting the regulation.



Figure 2. Viral Content on the Use of Mosque Loudspeakers¹⁸

Comments opposing the policy came from accounts such as @awang_danes, who wrote, *“Turn up the volume. Add more loudspeakers. Let the whole village hear.”*

¹⁷ tvonenews, “Ramai Surat Edaran Tentang Penggunaan Pengeras Suara Ibadah,” *Tvonenews*, 2024, https://www.instagram.com/reel/C4NAyBhKE_G/?igsh=NGYxZXhhcmI0amth.

¹⁸ tvonenews.

Another comment from @aby_madridista89 stated, *"Concerts and dangdut shows aren't banned from using loudspeakers."* Similarly, @aprizal_ical commented, *"The more you ban it, the louder the call to prayer and the celebration of the holy month of Ramadan will be."* Another comment from @encuss1112 said, *"REPLACE the Minister of Religion."*

The writer observed that, among the thousands of comments, the majority opposed the policy. Of the more than three thousand comments, 97% expressed opposition. However, this opposition was generally not based on logical reasoning but more on emotional sentiments, insults, and dislike toward the Minister of Religion at that time, Yaquut Cholil Qoumas.

On the other hand, there were very few comments supporting the policy, but they presented clear reasons. For example, the use of loudspeakers in mosques and prayer rooms often causes disturbance, especially outside prayer times and during working hours. Some netizens commented, *"We don't live in a society of only one religion, so this rule is actually good. If the loudspeaker is used outside the set times, it bothers those who are working; it seems disruptive and selfish"* (@devi16). Another netizen supported the policy, saying, *"Hearing the mosque's loudspeaker up to five times a day is understandable during Ramadan, but the frequency is often excessive, especially during long tadarus or early morning wake-up calls"* (@revalina). *"In my opinion, activities like recitation should be conducted without external loudspeakers to maintain peace"* (@feb1541).

A similar sentiment was shared by @sari_7876, *"I just hope there is more consideration for religious diversity in this area so that we can be more mindful of the non-Muslim minority."* Additionally, support came from @puang_tobacco, *"In Bali, this is quite normal because the majority here is Hindu."* Another comment from @suharnnatullah said, *"If the intention is to revitalize the mosque, it shouldn't be disturbed by this policy. Enliven the mosque by performing five daily prayers in the congregation, by holding lessons, recitation, etc. The mosque will still be lively even without loudspeakers, and the people, God willing, will prosper..."*

These contrasting responses from netizens illustrate the importance of adjusting the implementation of loudspeaker regulations to maintain social

harmony in religiously diverse environments. This policy underscores the need to consider the comfort of all parties to create a conducive and peaceful environment for all religious communities.

The majority of reactions opposing this policy show that many people do not understand its purpose, and a persuasive approach is necessary. PBNU Chairman Ahmad Fahrur Rozi stated that authorities can adjust the use of loudspeakers according to the conditions around the mosque. The adjustment of loudspeaker use aims to maintain tolerance in a diverse environment. However, he noted that they cannot apply the implementation of this directive uniformly in every mosque. He gave an example of situations in pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) and rural areas with predominantly Muslim populations.¹⁹

Muhammadiyah took a similar stance. Former General Secretary of PP Muhammadiyah, Abdul Mu'ti, appreciated the regulation, stating that Ramadan preaching is not measured by loud sound but by the sincerity of worship. On the other hand, Mu'ti believed that the implementation of this circular should also consider the local situation and enforce time restrictions. He also hoped that Islamic organizations would communicate the circular.²⁰

The Indonesian Mosque Council (DMI), through its Secretary-General Imam Addaruqutni, asked Minister of Religious Affairs Yaqut Cholil Qoumas to clarify his directive regarding the use of loudspeakers in mosques during *tadarus* (read Al-Qur'an) and *tarawih* was not meant to impose limits. The policy aimed to preserve the serenity of urban life, which is highly heterogeneous in terms of religious beliefs and shaped by a technocratic socio-economic lifestyle with work schedules and quality rest periods.²¹ Imam hoped that the public would not misinterpret this directive, noting that it did not apply to mosques in rural areas.

Support for the loudspeaker regulation also came from peace activist and head of the Indonesian Center for Religion and Peace Studies (ICRP), Ahmad Nurcholish.

¹⁹ Lisye Sri Rahayu, "Kata PBNU Hingga Muhammadiyah Soal Aturan Speaker Masjid Dari Kemenag," *Detiknews.Com*, 2024, <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-7238482/kata-pbnu-hingga-muhammadiyah-soal-aturan-speaker-masjid-dari-kemenag/3>.

²⁰ CNN Indonesia, "DMI-Muhammadiyah Respons Edaran Menag Soal Speaker Masjid Saat Puasa," *CNN Indonesia*, 2024, <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20240310210056-20-1072833/dmi-muhammadiyah-respons-edaran-menag-soal-speaker-masjid-saat-puasa>.

²¹ Rahayu, "Kata PBNU Hingga Muhammadiyah Soal Aturan Speaker Masjid Dari Kemenag."

He welcomed the government's initiative to issue the circular from the Ministry of Religious Affairs. He viewed this regulation as a positive step toward reducing noise disturbances caused by the uncontrolled use of loudspeakers. However, he also emphasized that the regulation would become as ineffective as the 1978 Instruction from the Director General of Islamic Community Development if authorities did not enforce it properly and impose strict sanctions. Nurcholish urged the Ministry of Religious Affairs to educate mosque administrators to ensure the proper implementation of the regulation. Additionally, he advocated for penalties for places of worship that violate the rules, such as a week-long ban on using external loudspeakers or formal warnings.²²

The Ministry of Religious Affairs' policy on regulating mosque loudspeakers is not without reason. Loudspeaker restrictions in mosques also exist in other countries, such as Malaysia, where mosques are only allowed to use external loudspeakers for the call to prayer (*azan*). In Saudi Arabia, mosque authorities can use speakers for the call to prayer, Friday prayers, Eid, and prayers for rain. In Egypt, loudspeakers are banned during Ramadan to ensure peaceful worship. Meanwhile, in India, mosque loudspeakers are illegal and monitored by the high courts.²³

Thus, this study shows that policies regarding the use of loudspeakers in places of worship, particularly mosques, reflect the tension between religious freedom and social order in a pluralistic society. The public's reaction, especially from netizens, demonstrates how the policy has sparked emotional responses, which in many cases are based more on sentiment and subjective perception rather than logical arguments. This reaction aligns with Niklas Luhmann's view in his social systems theory, which states that the law operates as an autonomous system but remains connected to other social systems, such as religion and politics. In this context, although the law aims to balance religious freedom and public comfort, it

²² BBC News, "Warga Keluhkan Penggunaan Speaker Masjid Yang 'terlalu Lama Dan Berulang' - Mengapa Imbauan Kemenag Tidak Digubris?," *BBC News.Com*, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/articles/cgl5gkn7djpo>.

²³ Yantina Debora, "Aturan Main Pengeras Suara Di Masjid," *Tirto.Id*, 2017, <https://tirto.id/aturan-main-pengeras-suara-di-masjid-cqbV>.

often clashes with strong religious values in society, which regard the freedom of religious expression as an integral part of collective identity.²⁴

The opposition to this policy, as revealed through negative comments on social media, reflects resistance to changes that are perceived to threaten long-standing religious traditions. This resistance also shows how the law, though designed to maintain social harmony, can become a source of conflict if it is not effectively communicated or understood by the public. From Luhmann's perspective, ineffective communication between the legal system and society can cause tensions, where society no longer views the law as an instrument of justice or order but as a threat to the autonomy of other social systems, such as religion.

On the other hand, support for this policy, though in the minority, reveals an awareness among some segments of society that the uncontrolled use of loudspeakers can disrupt public tranquility, particularly in areas with religious and social diversity. Supporters of this policy emphasize the importance of balancing the practice of worship with maintaining peace in the environment, especially in densely populated and heterogeneous urban areas. This emphasis reinforces Luhmann's view that the law functions to regulate interactions between social systems to achieve stability.

This study also reflects how public policies sensitive to religious values and diversity must be carefully considered and effectively communicated. Good policies should involve a process of dialogue with various religious groups and communities to achieve the goal of maintaining harmony without causing conflict or widespread rejection. In the context of a pluralistic society like Indonesia, the balance between the right to religious freedom and public order must be maintained through open and inclusive communication between the state and the public,²⁵ as proposed by Luhmann's social systems theory.

²⁴ Luhmann, *Law as a Social System*, 56.

²⁵ Mastang Ambo Baba, Nur Fitriani Zainal, and Syahrul Mubarak Subeitan, "Religious Moderation: Concept and Implementation in State Islamic Religious Universities," *Al-Ulum* 23, no. 2 (2023): 426–41.

Implementation and Public Response to the Loudspeaker Regulation in Mosques in Bandung City

One of the cities where several mosques have implemented the Minister of Religious Affairs Circular No. 1 is Bandung, West Java Province. As a city with a pluralistic religious population, many mosques have supported and enforced this regulation. The researcher conducted fieldwork and selected three mosques that have implemented the regulation.

One of the mosques that applied the regulation on the use of loudspeakers is Masjid Raya Bandung City—this mosque, located at Jl. Dalem Kaum No.14, Balonggede, Regol District, Bandung City, has enforced this policy since 2022, following the issuance of Circular No. 5 of 2022 by Minister of Religious Affairs Yaquut Cholil Qoumas. Muchtar Gandaatmaja, head of the DKM (Mosque Management Council) of Masjid Raya Bandung, stated that regulating the use of loudspeakers is an appropriate step, considering the frequent issues arising in the community related to this matter.

“In my opinion, it indeed needs to be regulated. It’s not just about maintaining relations with people of different religions; sometimes, even among Muslims, it can be hard to manage. The public’s welfare must take priority, including in the regulation of loudspeaker use in mosques and prayer rooms” (Interview, July 14, 2024).



Figure 3. Grand Mosque of Bandung

Muchtar Gandaatmaja added that policymakers introduced this regulation after carefully considering the common good. *"We support this policy because the Minister of Religious Affairs did not issue the circular without careful thought. The welfare of the people must come first. Even among Muslims, we need regulation. For instance, if someone is sick or needs rest, they also have the right to peace."* Muchtar also mentioned that national figures, such as Jusuf Kalla, supported this initiative and suggested that authorities should manage the sound of the call to prayer and sermons to make them sound more pleasant. *"Mr. JK said it would be good if it's arranged with a soft and pleasant sound"* (Interview, July 14, 2024).

Additionally, Al-Hasanah Mosque, located in Kampung Toleransi Kebon Jeruk, Andir District, Bandung City, has also implemented the mosque loudspeaker regulation. According to Sugandi, the head of the DKM Al-Hasanah, it is necessary to maintain tolerance in the area because the residents are not only Muslims but also Christians and Buddhists. That's why authorities use the mosque loudspeakers only at specific times, just before the five daily prayers and for the call to prayer. He also explained that even during Ramadan, loudspeakers for religious activities like sermons and tarawih prayers use internal speakers (Interview, July 10, 2024).

The policy has been well-received by the non-Muslim residents of Kebon Jeruk. For instance, Mustika, a Christian, felt proud of the policy because it benefits all religious groups. As a Christian, she considered the mosque's management policy to be moderate and appropriate to avoid disturbing the worship of people of other faiths. Another response came from a Buddhist resident, Mrs. Asui. For her, even though Ramadan is a time when Muslim worship activities increase, they still respect others who need to worship by following the mosque's loudspeaker regulations. *“Even though Al-Hasanah Mosque is close to Vihara Tanda Bhakti, the speakers do not disturb us while we worship inside. This creates a very peaceful atmosphere”* (Interview, July 10, 2024).

The researcher also interviewed the administrators and congregants of Kifayatul Akhar Mosque on Jl. AH. Nasution, Cibiru, Bandung City have also implemented this regulation. Although the mosque is located in a predominantly Muslim area, the authorities enforced the policy to respect and honor the community's rest time.



Figure 4. Kifayatul Akhyar Mosque, Cibiru, Bandung City

According to Sopian, a mosque congregant, regulating mosque loudspeakers is necessary as a way to respect the differences in activities, even while living in religious homogeneity. *"Everyone has their own time to rest, work, and spend with family. So, mosques should regulate their loudspeakers, even though what is being recited are holy verses"* (Interview, July 16, 2024). Siti expressed similar support in her interview, mentioning that respecting others is very important in practicing religion, even among fellow Muslims. *"A good intention is not always good for everyone. Our intention might be to convey goodness through loudspeakers, but it could disturb someone who is sick, working, or resting"* (Interview, July 16, 2024).

Asep Sobari, the head of the DKM Kifayatul Akhar Mosque, stated that the implementation of mosque loudspeaker regulations has been going well. Despite the increased intensity of worship during Ramadan, no complaints have arisen from the congregants. *"We explained to the community that Ramadan activities such as tadarus (Qur'an recitation), sermons, and lectures would still be held, but the mosque would use only the internal speakers to avoid disturbing others. Everyone has accepted this"* (Interview, July 16, 2024).

The implementation of this regulation in the three mosques reflects efforts to respect tolerance and differences. The authorities at the Grand Mosque of Bandung applied the regulation to maintain good relations between different religious communities in the pluralistic city. The authorities at Al-Hasanah Mosque in Kebon Jeruk implemented the policy as a form of interfaith tolerance. In this area, known for its religious diversity, regulating loudspeakers became a symbol of harmony and mutual understanding among people of different faiths. Controlled use of loudspeakers helps maintain a peaceful environment and respects the religious activities of other faiths. Furthermore, at Kifayatul Akhar Mosque, where most congregants are Muslim, the policy is still implemented to respect the activities of others. Even in a homogeneous environment, respecting rest time and the needs of the community remains a priority.

Thus, this policy is not just about the majority and minority but about efforts to create a tolerant and peaceful life. The regulation of mosque loudspeakers has shown how this policy can be accepted by people from different backgrounds, supporting the creation of a harmonious atmosphere amidst diversity.

In the context of Niklas Luhmann's theory, we can interpret the implementation of mosque loudspeaker regulations in Bandung as an interaction between the legal system and the religious system. According to Luhmann, law is an autonomous social system that interacts with other systems, such as religion, politics, and society. The implementation of Surat Edaran No. 1 of 2024 reflects how the law as a system works to regulate social order in a plural society without diminishing the space for Islamic religious practices. Regulating loudspeakers is not an attempt to limit religious freedom but a response to the need to maintain public order and respect others' rights.²⁶

On the other hand, religion as a social system is not entirely separate from the legal system.²⁷ Mosque administrators like Muchtar Gandaatmaja and Asep Sobari demonstrated how religious leaders can support this regulation for the common good. Their actions show that religion can adapt to legal regulations without losing its essence or values. Implementing the loudspeaker policy does not diminish the spiritual significance of worship but instead strengthens the respect for values of tolerance and order.

Moreover, this regulation also interacts with other social systems, such as interreligious relations.²⁸ At Al-Hasanah Mosque, the loudspeaker regulation has become an important tool for maintaining harmony with non-Muslim residents, as expressed by the surrounding community. This effort shows that law can function as a mediator in a multicultural society, balancing the right to worship with the right to live peacefully without disruption.

Reflectively, the implementation of mosque loudspeaker regulations in Bandung illustrates a complex interaction between law, religion, and society. This regulation reflects the need for order amidst diversity while maintaining a balance

²⁶ Luhmann, *Law as a Social System*, 59–62.

²⁷ Thomas Luckmann, Tom Kaden, and Bernt Schnettler, *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society* (Routledge, 2022); Ram Proshad Barman, "Religion from Sociological Perspectives: An Overview," *Asian Journal of Social Sciences and Legal Studies* 4, no. 2 (2022): 24–31.

²⁸ Sarah L Markiewicz, "Preaching to the Converted? Interfaith Dialogue vs. Interfaith Realities," *Emergent Religious Pluralisms*, 2019, 251–78; Khoirun Niam, "Between Unity and Diversity: Resketching the Relation between Institutional-Affiliated Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals and the Government (1990–2001)," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 14, no. 2 (2020): 477–98; Benyamin F Intan, "Religious Pluralism, Public Religion, and Principled Pluralism in Indonesia," *Transformation* 40, no. 4 (2023): 334–49.

between individual and collective interests. In a pluralistic society like Bandung, the implementation of mosque loudspeaker regulations shows that law can serve as an effective tool to accommodate diversity without sacrificing the essence of religious freedom.

D. Conclusion

The research found that, despite widespread opposition on social media regarding mosque loudspeaker regulations, the implementation of these regulations in reality has gained significant support from various segments of society, especially in Bandung City, West Java. This finding contrasts with previous studies, which tended to focus solely on resistance or conflict. Several major mosques, such as Al-Hasanah Mosque and the Grand Mosque of Bandung, have shown good compliance with the regulations to maintain harmonious interfaith relations. These findings suggest that, even in predominantly Muslim areas, there is a strong appreciation for the importance of respecting social diversity and the need for peace. This dynamic is a novel aspect, as field realities reveal greater support compared to the perceptions reflected on social media.

This research provides a conceptual contribution to understanding the implementation of mosque loudspeaker policies as part of a broader interaction of social systems, particularly between legal, religious, and pluralistic societal systems. The use of Niklas Luhmann's theory to analyze this phenomenon adds a new perspective to public policy studies related to religion. This research demonstrates how the law not only functions as a formal regulator but also as a mediator that supports harmony between religious communities without diminishing spiritual significance. By employing a deep field study approach, this research successfully uncovers real societal responses and highlights the crucial role of religious leaders in supporting regulations for the common good.

However, this study is limited in its geographical scope, as the researcher conducted the research at only three mosques in Bandung, and the researcher cannot yet generalize the findings to other areas with different social conditions. Additionally, the researcher has not explored the long-term impact of these regulations on broader socio-religious dynamics. Future research should expand the

study to other regions with higher or lower religious diversity to determine whether researchers can find similar results. Furthermore, subsequent studies could focus more on quantitative analysis to measure the extent to which this policy affects the quality of interfaith relations and public perceptions of religious freedom in public spaces.

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