

The Principle Of “Public Benefit Prevails Over Individual Benefit” In Neonatal Surgical Nutrition: An Analytical Study On Its Role In Enhancing Food Security And Medical Care

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the Islamic legal maxim "Al-Muta'addi Afdal min Al-Qasir" (Public benefit prevails over individual benefit) and applies it to a sensitive medical field—surgical nutrition in neonates. It investigates the relevance of this jurisprudential principle in legitimizing early nutritional interventions for premature infants and those with congenital anomalies who cannot rely on natural feeding. Grounded in the higher objectives of Islamic law (Maqasid al-Shari'ah), especially the preservation of life, the study connects this principle to modern medical efforts aimed at saving the lives of newborns. Furthermore, it draws parallels from broader food security applications such as agricultural cooperatives and local food systems, to demonstrate how the principle's underlying ethos supports prioritizing public-benefit medical practices. The study concludes that applying this legal maxim offers a robust jurisprudential framework to support broader adoption of life-saving nutritional interventions, contributing to a holistic Islamic ethical vision for improving food security and neonatal care.

Keywords: *Islamic Jurisprudence – Legal Maxims – Public vs. Individual Benefit – Neonatal Care – Surgical Nutrition – Parenteral Nutrition – Food Security – Medical Ethics – Maqasid al-Shari'ah.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Neonatal intensive care units (NICUs) have witnessed significant advancements in recent years, particularly in surgical nutrition techniques, which are vital for saving the lives of premature infants and those with gastrointestinal malformations (Koletzko et al., 2019). These developments raise ethical and jurisprudential questions about the use of artificial nutrition, especially concerning cost, necessity, and legitimacy from an Islamic legal perspective. The legal maxim "public benefit outweighs individual benefit" emerges here as a guiding principle that can validate such interventions. Moreover, the study engages with the broader framework of food security—beyond individual needs—to include institutional and systemic care strategies.

2. RESEARCH PROBLEM

To what extent can the legal maxim "Al-Muta'addi Afdal min Al-Qasir" guide or justify therapeutic policies in the field of neonatal surgical nutrition? And how does this maxim contribute to building a healthcare system that addresses the nutritional needs of the most vulnerable?

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study aims to:

1. To establish the jurisprudential foundation of the maxim "Public benefit prevails over individual benefit."
2. To analyze the relationship between this maxim and medical practices in NICUs.
3. To explore how surgical nutrition contributes to food and health security through the lens of this maxim.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive methodology to explain the legal maxim and its textual basis. An inductive approach is used to gather relevant medical applications, while an analytical comparison between Islamic legal perspectives and modern

medical protocols forms the core of the research. The study also draws upon contemporary applied models in economic and food-related domains, such as cooperative agriculture and global aid, to support its conclusions.

5. JURISPRUDENTIAL FOUNDATION OF THE MAXIM

The maxim states that actions yielding public benefit should be prioritized over those limited to personal benefit—provided all other factors (such as intention, level of necessity, and religious ranking) are equal (Ibn Abd al-Salam, 1416 AH; Al-Qarafi, 1998). One of its main evidences is the saying of the Prophet: "The superiority of the scholar over the devout worshipper is like the superiority of the full moon over the stars" (al-Tirmidhi, 1975), illustrating how the benefit of a scholar extends to the community, unlike that of a solitary worshipper. Classical jurists applied this maxim in various fields, including prioritizing education, healthcare, and social services over individual rituals.

6. CONDITIONS FOR APPLICATION

The maxim must meet the following criteria for valid application:

1. Equal religious rank: Both actions must be from the same category (e.g., recommended acts or obligatory duties).
2. Type of benefit: The benefits compared should belong to essential needs (e.g., preserving life).
3. Sincerity and intent: An insincere public act does not override a sincere private one.

Scholars have noted that this maxim is not absolute and must be balanced against other principles, especially in cases involving fard 'ayn (individual obligations) (Al-Qaradawi, 1995).

7. IMPORTANCE OF SURGICAL NUTRITION IN NEONATES

Medical literature strongly supports early implementation of parenteral or enteral nutrition for premature or congenitally ill infants, as it significantly increases survival rates and reduces complications such as necrotizing enterocolitis (Cilieborg et al., 2012; WHO, 2021). Guidelines recommend intravenous nutrition as a critical necessity when the gastrointestinal system is undeveloped (Koletzko et al., 2019).

8. PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF THE MAXIM IN SURGICAL NUTRITION

1. Public Utility of Parenteral Nutrition

Providing intravenous solutions or donor breast milk in NICUs is a clear example of public benefit, as it serves a vulnerable population and aligns with the principle of saving lives—a central goal of Shari'ah.

2. Milk Banks

Milk banks exemplify public utility, especially for infants lacking access to maternal milk. Several contemporary jurists have allowed their use under strict conditions related to lineage and milk kinship (Shoaib et al., 2023).

3. Publicly Funded Health Initiatives

Government or charitable funding of NICU nutrition programs fulfills a communal obligation (fard kifayah) and carries broader utility than personal, isolated charity efforts.

9. FOOD SECURITY IN LIGHT OF THE MAXIM

A related jurisprudential study applied the same maxim to issues of global food security, prioritizing collective models such as agricultural cooperatives, local market development, and sustainable supply chains (Zayed Foundation, 2013). These findings parallel the medical sector's move toward institutionalized care systems and centralized nutrition units in hospitals, which provide sustained, collective benefit over individual efforts.

10. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The study reaffirms that surgical nutrition for neonates must be considered a public interest in Islamic ethics. It aligns with the maxim's spirit by preserving life on a systemic level. Rather than merely permitting artificial nutrition, the maxim actively encourages and prioritizes it, especially when it addresses a broader societal or communal need.

11. CONCLUSION

The maxim "public benefit prevails over individual benefit" presents a sound Islamic legal foundation for prioritizing surgical nutrition in NICUs. Applying this principle supports medical policies that aim to reduce neonatal mortality and reinforces food and health security from a jurisprudential and ethical standpoint.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Strengthen interdisciplinary cooperation between scholars and medical professionals to develop ethical care policies.
- Integrate Islamic legal maxims into medical ethics curricula.
- Support institutional neonatal nutrition programs as communal religious obligations (fard kifayah).

13. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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