

## **The rationality of rukhshah in social activities: Reviewing the ability of jama' prayer for carnival participants in the perspective of ulama 4 madzhab**

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**Abstract:** This study analyzes the combination of prayer (jama' sholat) for carnival participants and workers in the framework of classical and contemporary fiqh. The purpose of the study was to evaluate whether carnival activities meet the criteria of masyaqqah syadidah (severe difficulty) that justify the application of rukhshah (legal concessions) in the perspective of the four main schools (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali) as well as the views of contemporary scholars. This research offers novelty by examining the incorporation of prayer in the context of carnival, which is a contemporary social phenomenon that has not been widely discussed in fiqh literature. Previously, most fiqh studies on rukhshah focused more on travel or emergency conditions, while this study explored the application of rukhshah in the context of recreational and professional activities, such as carnivals. Using qualitative research methods, this study analyzed classical fiqh texts, scientific articles, and related academic literature. The main findings show that carnival, as a voluntary recreational activity, does not meet the criteria of udzur syar'i to incorporate prayer. The majority of scholars prohibit the combination of prayers without a valid reason such as travel or emergency conditions. However, exceptions may apply to carnival workers who are professionally bound and risk economic harm if they leave duty, provided that this practice does not become the norm. In conclusion, although rukhshah is acceptable in limited cases, carnival activities do not justify the incorporation of prayers in general. This study highlights the need for good time management to fulfill prayer obligations without sacrificing work or social activities.

**Keywords:** Jama' Prayer, Rukhshah, Carnival, Social Fiqh

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### **Introduction**

Prayer is an obligatory act of worship in Islam that must be performed within its prescribed times as stipulated in the Qur'an. However, Islamic law also recognizes legal concessions (rukhsah) under certain conditions, such as travel (safar), heavy rain, or illness, which allow the implementation of jama' and qashar prayers. These concessions reflect the adaptive nature of Islamic law in responding to genuine hardship without diminishing the substance of worship itself (Sabiq, 1985) (Sabiq, 1996). In contemporary society, Muslims increasingly participate in large-scale social and cultural activities that were not explicitly discussed in classical fiqh literature, one of which is carnival events. Carnivals often involve long durations, public performances, fixed schedules, and large numbers of participants, which may lead to practical tensions between the obligation to perform prayers on time and active participation in such activities. This situation raises an important legal question: can carnival activities be equated with recognized shar'i excuses (udzur syar'i) that justify the application of jama' prayer?

Previous studies consistently emphasize that *jama'* prayer is only permissible under conditions of real and compelling hardship (*masyaqqah syadidah*), such as travel, illness, or extreme weather, and cannot be justified merely by worldly busyness, including work schedules or traffic congestion. Other studies also restrict the permissibility of *jama'* in social events, such as wedding ceremonies, allowing it only under specific and unavoidable circumstances (Ibadurrohman, 2023). These findings indicate that the prevailing discourse on *jama'* prayer remains largely confined to classical contexts, particularly safar and emergency conditions. Meanwhile, modern collective social phenomena such as carnivals, cultural festivals, and other contemporary public events have received limited attention in fiqh studies, despite their increasing prominence in Muslim societies. This gap highlights the need for further scholarly examination of how Islamic legal concessions operate within the realities of modern social life.

The novelty of this research lies in its effort to re-examine the concept of *rukhsah* within the context of modern cultural activities, specifically carnival events, which combine voluntary participation and, in some cases, professional obligations. Unlike previous studies that focus primarily on traditional forms of hardship, this study explores whether the difficulties encountered in carnival settings constitute legally relevant *masyaqqah* or merely manageable social inconvenience. Through this approach, the research contributes to the development of social fiqh discourse that remains grounded in classical legal principles while engaging contemporary realities.

Using a social fiqh approach combined with the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, this study analyzes the permissibility of *jama'* prayer in carnival contexts. This approach is employed because it allows a balanced assessment between the normative dimension of worship (*ta'abbudī*) and rational consideration of social conditions (*ta'aqqulī*), while maintaining the primary objectives of Islamic law (Al-Qaradhawi, 2001). The main research question addressed in this study is whether carnival activities can be categorized as *shar'ī* excuses (*udzur syar'ī*) that permit the application of *jama'* prayer. Rather than assuming a definitive legal conclusion from the outset, this study examines the extent to which carnival-related difficulties meet the criteria of objective, real, and unavoidable *masyaqqah* as defined in fiqh discourse.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the legal basis of *jama'* prayer in relation to carnival activities by examining the views of classical scholars from the four Sunni schools of law, contemporary scholarly perspectives, and relevant previous studies. This research seeks to clarify the legal boundaries of *rukhsah* and to strengthen awareness of maintaining prayer discipline within modern social life, in line with the principle of *al-dīn yusr* (religion is ease) without compromising obedience in worship (Al-Nawawi, 1997) (al-Zuhaili, 1989).

## **Method**

This study employs a qualitative normative research design using a library research method. This method is chosen because the object of this research concerns normative Islamic law, which is derived from authoritative legal texts rather than empirical social behavior. Therefore, library research is considered the most appropriate approach to examine the legal validity of *jama'* prayer in the context of carnival activities that require in-depth textual and doctrinal analysis (Lexy, 2018). Accordingly, the research focuses on authoritative sources, including classical fiqh books and relevant academic literature. The object of this study is not field-based subjects or individuals, but legal concepts, doctrinal arguments, and fiqh propositions articulated by Muslim jurists (*fuqahā'*). The materials analyzed include the views of scholars from the four Sunni schools of law (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali), as well as perspectives from contemporary scholars such as Yusuf al-Qaradhawi and Wahbah al-Zuhaili.

In the data collection process, the researcher functions as the main research instrument (*human instrument*). This role goes beyond a formal designation, as the researcher actively selects relevant legal texts, interprets complex juridical arguments, and systematically organizes data using textual analysis

and documentation techniques. Such intellectual engagement is essential to ensure valid interpretation of normative legal sources (Sugiyono, 2019). Data analysis was conducted using a descriptive-analytical and comparative approach, implemented through three systematic stages. First, the study describes and maps the various scholarly opinions related to *rukhsah* and *jama'* prayer. Second, these legal arguments are analyzed using the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* to assess their underlying objectives and benefits. Third, the classical legal doctrines are compared with the contemporary social reality of carnival activities in order to formulate adaptive and contextually relevant legal conclusions.

### Results and Discussion

This study finds that the permissibility of *jama'* prayer in carnival activities differs fundamentally between carnival participants and professional carnival workers. Through a comparative reading of *the fiqh* literature across sects, this study reveals that carnival as a single phenomenon does not necessarily give birth to uniform legal implications. There is a sharp differentiation in legal status between carnival participants (recreational subjects) and professional workers (professional subjects). This analysis is based on the evaluation of *the criteria of masyaqqah* (difficulty) and *hajah* (need) which are *the 'illat* (logical reason) of the determination of *rukhsah* law. The findings indicate that carnival activities do not justify *jama'* prayer for participants, but may allow limited *rukhsah* for professional workers facing objective hardship.

### The Theoretical Construction of Jama' and the Divergence of the Four Schools

Classical *fiqh* literature agrees that *jama'* prayer is a form of *rukhsah* permitted only under specific conditions of hardship. The normative basis of this practice refers to the hadith of Mu'adz bin Jabal narrated by Imam Muslim (Al-Nawawi, 1996):

عن معاذ قال خرجنا مع رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم في غزوة تبوك فكان يصلي الظهر والعصر جميعا والمغرب والعشاء جميعا

*"From Mu'adz he said: We went out with the Prophet PBUH at the battle of Tabuk, so he performed the Zuhur and Asar prayers in the plural, as well as Maghrib and Isha in the plural."*

Although the legal basis is clear, the jurists have different interpretations of the limits of *the masyaqqah* that legalize this practice. The Hanafi school applies the most restrictive standards (Al-Kasani, 2002). In this view, the absolute merging of time (*jama' haqiqi*) is only valid at two loci *manasik* hajj, namely in Arafah and Muzdalifah. Outside of these conditions, the term "*jama'*" in the hadith is interpreted as *jama' shuri*, which is to postpone the implementation of the first prayer until the end of time and hasten the second prayer at the beginning of time, without the essential union of time. This is affirmed by Imam Al-Kasani in *Bada'i Al-Shana'i*:

لا يجوز الجمع بين صلاتين في وقت واحد الا بعرفة ومزدلفة

*"It is not permissible to multiply between two prayers at the same time except in Arafah and Muzdalifah."*

In contrast, the Maliki and Shafi'i schools open up a wider space of flexibility by recognizing *safar* (travel), heavy rain, and sickness as legal validation. Imam Ad-Dardir from the Malikiyah community stated (Ad-Dardir, 1992):

ويجمع بين الظهر والعصر وبين المغرب والعشاء في السفر وفي المطر الذي يبلل الثياب وفي المرض الشديد

*"And it is protected between Zuhr and Asar and between Maghrib and Isha at the time of safar, the rain that wets the clothes, and the sickness is very severe."*

Meanwhile, the Hanbali School is present as the most accommodating entity in responding to social dynamics. This school extends the scope of *rukhsah* not only to physical or natural conditions, but also to psychological and sociological aspects, such as fear (*khauf*) and urgent need (*hajah*), as long as they are not made a permanent habit. Ibn Qudamah in *Al-Mughni* asserts (Ibn Qudamah, 1983):

ويجمع بين الصلاتين في السفر والمرض والمطر والخوف والحاجة اذا لم يتخذ ذلك عادة

*"And it is permissible to multiply two prayers because of safar, sickness, rain, fear, and hajah (need) if it is not made a habit."*

This spectrum of opinion affirms that the validity of *rukhsah* is highly dependent on the *istidlal* methodology of each school in defining "difficulty". This finding became the main analytical knife to dissect the carnival case.

### **Rejecting the Legitimacy of Jama' for Carnival Participants: Dominance of the Recreational Aspect**

An in-depth analysis of the structure of the activities of carnival participants shows the absence of objective *elements of dharurah* (emergency) and *masyaqqah syadidah* (severe difficulties). Carnival participants participate on the basis of *ikhtiyar* (voluntary choice) for the purpose of recreation and joy, not because of the coercion of the situation (Al-Qaradhawi, 2005). Frequently complained of difficulties, such as the hassle of removing thick makeup, marching lines, or the use of elaborate costumes, are classified as artificial difficulties that can be mitigated through disciplined time management.

A proposition that is often used as a basis for permissiveness by laypeople is the hadith of Ibn Abbas which states that the Prophet prayed in Medina "without fear and without rain":

جمع رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم بين الظهر والعصر والمغرب والعشاء بالمدينة من غير خوف ولا مطر... أراد ان لا يخرج امته

*"The Prophet PBUH prayed Zuhur with Asar and Maghrib with Isha in Madinah without fear and rain... He intended not to burden his people."*

However, the critical analysis of scholars rejects the use of this hadith as a legitimacy for entertainment. Imam An-Nawawi emphasized that the majority of scholars (Jumhur) do not allow jama' in their residence (*hadhar*) without strong sharia reasons such as illness. He outlined the majority position in *Al-Majmu' Syarh Al-Muhadzdzab* (Al-Nawawi, 1996):

في مذاهبهم في الجمع في الحضر بلا خوف ولا سفر ولا مطر ولا مرض مذهبنا ومذهب أبي حنيفة ومالك وأحمد والجمهور أنه لا يجوز

*"Regarding their madhhab about jama' in the condition of mukim without fear, without safar, without rain, and without pain: our madhhab (Shafi'i), Abu Hanifah, Malik, Ahmad, and Jumhur are of the opinion that it is not permissible."*

Thus, for carnival participants, the law of origin (*azimah*) remains absolute. Delaying prayer or combining it with the excuse of “costume dear” or “taking responsibility for the event” is a form of *tahawun* (underestimation) that cannot be justified in *fiqh*. Carnival activities in the perspective of *ushul fiqh* do not qualify as *'illat* law, because the difficulties that arise are subjective and can be avoided.

### Affirmation of Jama's Validity for Carnival Workers: Hajah Perspective and Professionalism

The main finding of this study is that professional carnival workers may be granted limited jama' rukhshah due to objective hajah arising from contractual and economic obligations. In contrast to the participants, this group is bound by *ijarah* (rental of services) and professional responsibilities that create an objective difficulty dimension. In specific scenarios for example, an audio operator who has to monitor the device in *real-time* when the peak of the event coincides with Maghrib time leaving a job post has the potential to cause *mafasid* (damage). These risks can be in the form of technical failures of events, termination sanctions, and financial losses that threaten the family's economic resilience. This situation puts workers in a position sandwiched between ritual obligations and professional obligations related to *hifz al-mal* (safeguarding property).

To respond to this problem, the study adopts the minority view validated by Imam An-Nawawi and Ibn Al-Mundzir, who allow jama' due to the presence of hajah (urgent need) even if it is not in a state of *safar* (al-Nawawi, n.d.). Imam An-Nawawi in *Syarh Saheeh Muslim* quotes the opinion of Ibn Sirin and Al-Qaffal:

وذهب جماعة من الأئمة الى جواز الجمع في الحاضر للحاجة لمن لا يتخذها عادة وهو قول ابن سيرين... واختاره ابن المنذر

“And a group of imams are of the opinion that it is permissible to perform jama' in a residential place because there is a desire (need) for people who do not make it a habit. This is the opinion of Ibn Sirin... and was chosen by Ibn Al-Mundzir.”

Using the *method of qiyas* (analogy), carnival workers who are obstructed by a critical operational situation can be equated with the condition of “urgent busyness” referred to in the opinion. However, the validity of *this rukhshah* is bound by strict conditions (*dawabit*) so that there are no legal irregularities:

Objective Emergency, the situation is truly urgent and does not allow prayers to be performed on a reasonable time without incurring real harm. Incidental, his practice is haram to be used as *'adah* (daily routine), but only as an “emergency exit” when conditions are compelling. Compliance with Legal Conditions, it is still mandatory to fulfill the pillars of jama' such as intention, order (in jama' *taqdim*), and *muwalah*.

### Maqashid Al-Sharia'ah and Practical Implications

Philosophically, the provision of *rukhsah* space for carnival workers is in line with the principle of *raf' al-haraj* (eliminating difficulties) and efforts to balance *hifz al-din* (safeguarding religion) with *hifz al-nafs/al-mal* (safeguarding souls/property). The rule of *al-din yusr* (religion is easy) does not work as a justification to underestimate the sharia for entertainment, but as a mechanism of protection for the sharia for its people who are in the squeeze of the inevitable situation. This research emphasizes that the best solution remains in the preventive-institutional realm. Carnival organizers and public policy makers have an ethical responsibility to design a schedule of events that respect prayer times. The provision of *break time* and portable worship facilities at the event venue will drastically reduce the need for *rukhsah* jama', returning the worship to its original original law.

This study confirms that in the carnival phenomenon, *rukhsah* is not a right inherent in the activity itself (“because carnival is permissible”), but a right inherent in the specific conditions of the individual (“because it is squeezed by tasks that threaten livelihood, it is permissible to jama”). Participants who only pursue pleasure do not have the shari'a legitimacy to access this dispensation, while workers who are bound by professional contracts are given limited leeway for the greater good.

### **Conclusion**

This study concludes that carnival activities, as a form of *mubāḥ* entertainment, do not in themselves constitute a valid *shar'i* excuse for performing *jama'* prayer. Normatively, *jama'* prayer is only permitted under conditions of real and objective hardship (*masyaqqah*), such as travel or illness, as agreed upon by the majority of classical scholars. In this regard, carnival participants who engage voluntarily in recreational activities do not meet the criteria of legally recognized hardship, and therefore remain bound by the original obligation (*'azimah*) to perform prayers within their prescribed times. The main contribution and novelty of this research lies in its distinction between carnival participants and professional carnival workers. While participation in carnivals does not justify *jama'* prayer, this study finds that professional workers who are contractually bound and face a real risk of economic loss may experience a form of objective *ḥājah* that allows limited application of *rukhsah*. This conclusion aligns with the minority but authoritative opinions of scholars such as Imam al-Nawawi and Ibn al-Mundhir, who permit *jama'* prayer in non-travel contexts when urgent need is present, provided that such practice is incidental and not habitual. Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of social fiqh by demonstrating how classical legal principles of *rukhsah*, *masyaqqah*, and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* can be applied to contemporary social phenomena without undermining the discipline of obligatory worship. Practically, the findings of this study offer guidance for Muslim communities, carnival workers, and event organizers to manage social activities in a manner that respects prayer times, while providing a limited legal framework for addressing unavoidable professional constraints. In this way, the study reinforces the balance between religious commitment and the realities of modern social life within the boundaries of Islamic law.

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