

Inequality of Rights in Verstek Divorce: Islamic Law Perspective and Practices in Religious Courts

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Abstract

Verstek divorce rulings, where one party does not attend court proceedings, often result in inequalities in fulfilling the rights of ex-wives. This study explores the legal obligations of husbands toward their former spouses in verstek divorce cases, analyzing both Islamic legal principles and judicial practices in Indonesian Religious Courts. Using an empirical juridical approach, this research was conducted at the Watampone Religious Court Class IA through legal document analysis and interviews with judges and other key stakeholders. The findings indicate that while Islamic law mandates husbands to provide financial support to their ex-wives, including *nafkah iddah* (maintenance during the waiting period) and *nafkah mut'ah* (consolation gifts), these provisions are often not enforced effectively in verstek decisions. The absence of the husband in court proceedings significantly affects the judicial process, limiting the court's ability to ensure compliance. Additionally, many women lack legal awareness, leading to challenges in claiming their rights. Even when courts rule in favor of ex-wives, enforcing financial obligations remains a major issue due to weak legal execution mechanisms. This study highlights the urgent need for improved legal frameworks and enforcement strategies to protect women's rights in verstek divorce cases. Strengthening legal aid services, increasing judicial oversight, and enhancing post-divorce monitoring mechanisms are essential steps to ensure the equitable implementation of Islamic family law.

Keywords: verstek divorce, husband's obligations, islamic law, judicial enforcement, religious courts

1. Introduction

Marriage is a fundamental institution that serves as the foundation of family life and social stability (Omar, 2014; Sani, 2020). In Islamic law, marriage is regarded as a *mithaqan ghalidzan* (a solemn covenant), binding a husband and wife in a relationship based on mutual rights and obligations. The institution of marriage is intended to foster harmony, affection, and responsibility between spouses (Azizah, 2020; Yassari, 2002). However, when conflicts arise and reconciliation is no longer possible, divorce becomes an inevitable legal process to dissolve the marital union.

Divorce is a legally recognized mechanism to end a marriage, and in Indonesia, it falls under the jurisdiction of the Religious Courts (*Pengadilan Agama*) for Muslim couples. Divorce proceedings in these courts follow the principles of Islamic family law, as codified in the *Compilation of Islamic Law (Kompilasi Hukum Islam, KHI)* and national legal frameworks, including *Law No. 1 of 1974 on Marriage*. Among the various types of divorce handled by Religious Courts, one of the most controversial is verstek divorce, where one party—often the husband—fails to appear in court despite being legally summoned (Insani et al., 2023).

A verstek decision occurs when the defendant does not respond to the summons or fails to attend court proceedings (Barnwell & Stone, 2016; Sudirman L et al., 2023). According to procedural law, if the absent party does not provide a valid reason for their absence, the judge has the authority to proceed with the trial and issue a ruling based solely on the evidence presented by the plaintiff. While this legal provision ensures that divorce cases can still be resolved despite the absence of one party, it also raises significant concerns about the unequal protection of rights, especially for women.

In cases of *verstek* divorce, women often face difficulties in securing their post-divorce financial rights, including *nafkah iddah* (maintenance during the waiting period), *nafkah mut'ah* (compensation or consolation payment), and *nafkah anak* (child support). Even though Islamic law and the *KHI* explicitly state that a husband is financially responsible for his ex-wife under specific conditions, the enforcement of these obligations remains weak. The absence of the husband in court makes it difficult for the judiciary to ensure compliance with court rulings, leaving many divorced women financially vulnerable. Additionally, many women who go through a *verstek* divorce are unaware of their legal rights. A lack of legal literacy and financial independence prevents them from pursuing their rights through legal channels. Even when a court ruling grants them financial compensation, enforcing the decision is another challenge, as there are limited mechanisms to compel non-compliant ex-husbands to fulfill their obligations.

The *Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI)* and *Law No. 7 of 1989 on Religious Courts* provide a legal foundation for ensuring that divorced women receive proper financial support. Article 149 of the *KHI* stipulates that after a divorce, the husband is obligated to provide maintenance for his ex-wife, unless she is deemed disobedient (*nusyuz*) or remarries. Similarly, child support is mandated by law, yet many divorced women struggle to enforce these provisions. In practice, the execution of court decisions in *verstek* divorce cases is often ineffective due to several factors. The absence of the husband during court proceedings significantly affects the judicial process, limiting the court's ability to ensure compliance. Weak enforcement mechanisms contribute to the problem, as Religious Courts have limited power to track and enforce financial obligations once the ruling has been issued. Socioeconomic barriers also play a role, as many divorced women lack the financial resources to pursue further legal action against their former husbands (Sunyoto, 2021). Additionally, legal awareness remains a crucial issue, as many women do not fully understand their rights and hesitate to challenge non-compliant ex-husbands.

This study examines how *verstek* divorce contributes to legal inequality and explores ways to improve the enforcement of post-divorce financial obligations in Indonesia's Religious Courts. Using an empirical juridical approach, the research focuses on case studies at the Watampone Religious Court Class IA, involving interviews with judges, legal experts, and court officials. The study also reviews legal documents and previous rulings to assess how the judiciary handles *verstek* divorce cases and whether ex-wives' rights are adequately protected.

By highlighting the challenges faced by women in securing their legal rights, this research aims to contribute to ongoing discussions on judicial reform, legal enforcement, and women's access to justice in Indonesia. Addressing these issues requires strengthening legal frameworks, improving enforcement mechanisms, and increasing legal awareness among women. Ensuring fair and just divorce rulings is crucial to upholding gender equality and Islamic justice principles. By addressing the legal and procedural gaps in *verstek* divorce cases, Indonesia's Religious Courts can enhance the protection of women's rights and promote greater accountability in family law practices.

2. Method

This study employs an empirical juridical approach to examine the legal inequalities in *verstek* divorce cases, focusing on how Islamic law and judicial practices influence the fulfillment of women's post-divorce rights. The research is conducted at the Watampone Religious Court Class IA, a judicial institution responsible for handling divorce cases within its jurisdiction. The study integrates both legal doctrinal analysis and field research, allowing for a comprehensive assessment of both legal provisions and their practical implementation.

The primary data collection methods include interviews, document analysis, and case study evaluation. Interviews are conducted with judges, legal practitioners, court officials, and former litigants to gain insights into the challenges of enforcing financial obligations in *verstek* divorce cases. These interviews aim to understand the judicial reasoning behind rulings, obstacles in legal enforcement, and the experiences of women who have undergone *verstek* divorce proceedings. The interviews are semi-structured, allowing respondents to elaborate on their perspectives while maintaining a clear focus on the research objectives.

Legal document analysis involves reviewing court decisions, procedural laws, and regulatory frameworks related to *verstek* divorce, including the Compilation of Islamic Law (Kompilasi Hukum Islam, KHI), Law No. 1 of 1974 on Marriage, and Law No. 7 of 1989 on Religious Courts. This method helps assess the legal basis for judicial decisions and the extent to which existing laws provide adequate protection for women in *verstek* divorce cases. Court rulings are examined to identify patterns in judicial decisions, the application of Islamic legal principles, and inconsistencies in the enforcement of post-divorce financial rights.

Case study evaluation focuses on specific *verstek* divorce cases handled by the Watampone Religious Court. Selected cases involve instances where ex-wives have struggled to obtain their legally mandated financial rights, such as *nafkah iddah* (maintenance during the waiting period), *nafkah mut'ah* (compensation following divorce), and child support. These cases provide empirical evidence of the enforcement challenges faced by divorced women and illustrate the gap between legal rulings and their practical implementation.

Secondary data are collected from academic literature, journal articles, and government reports related to Islamic family law, judicial practices, and gender rights in Indonesia. This helps contextualize the findings within broader discussions on legal reform and women's rights in Islamic law. Relevant international legal instruments, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), are also reviewed to assess how Indonesia's legal framework aligns with global standards on gender equality and post-divorce financial rights.

The data analysis process involves qualitative legal analysis, which integrates doctrinal and empirical findings. Thematic coding is used to categorize data into key themes, including judicial reasoning in *verstek* divorce cases, barriers to enforcement, women's legal awareness, and potential reforms. A comparative analysis is conducted between Islamic legal principles and their implementation in Indonesian courts, highlighting discrepancies between theoretical frameworks and real-world practices. Ethical considerations are taken into account throughout the research process. Confidentiality is maintained for all interview respondents, and informed consent is obtained before conducting interviews. The study adheres to ethical guidelines for socio-legal research, ensuring that participants' rights and privacy are protected.

By employing a multi-method approach, this research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the legal challenges surrounding *verstek* divorce cases and propose solutions to enhance the enforcement of post-divorce financial rights. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to judicial reform discussions and improve legal mechanisms that protect women's rights in Indonesia's Religious Courts.

3. Results

The findings of this study reveal significant legal and procedural challenges in enforcing post-divorce financial rights in *verstek* divorce cases at the Watampone Religious Court Class IA. Despite the legal framework provided by the Compilation of Islamic Law (Kompilasi Hukum Islam, KHI) and Law No. 1 of 1974 on Marriage, the implementation of husbands' financial obligations toward their ex-wives remains inconsistent. This study identifies three key areas of concern: the judicial approach to *verstek* divorce, enforcement challenges, and the socio-economic impact on divorced women.

Judicial Approach to *Verstek* Divorce

An analysis of *verstek* divorce rulings at the Watampone Religious Court shows that judges generally follow Islamic legal principles when deciding on financial obligations, including *nafkah iddah* (maintenance during the waiting period), *nafkah mut'ah* (compensation), and child support. However, the absence of the husband during court proceedings significantly affects the court's ability to ensure compliance. Judges rely solely on the plaintiff's claims and available documentary evidence, which sometimes leads to rulings that lack effective enforcement mechanisms.

Court rulings typically acknowledge the ex-wife's right to financial maintenance, but the execution of these decisions is left largely to the plaintiff. In many cases, ex-wives are required to file additional legal requests or enforcement actions to compel their former husbands to comply. This places an additional burden on women who may lack the legal knowledge, financial resources, or emotional capacity to pursue enforcement. The procedural complexity of filing for enforcement often discourages

women from taking further legal action, allowing their former husbands to evade their financial obligations without facing significant consequences (Humphreys & Thiara, 2003; Laakso, 2002). Although Islamic legal principles emphasize justice and balance in family law matters, the practical application of these principles in *verstek* divorce cases appears to be inconsistent. Judges, constrained by procedural limitations, often issue rulings that reflect the legal requirements but fail to ensure effective implementation. The absence of the husband in court makes it difficult for judges to fully assess the financial capacity of the defendant, leading to rulings that may not be enforceable in reality. Another critical issue in the judicial process is the limited use of *ex officio* powers by judges. While judges theoretically have the authority to order financial support without a specific request from the plaintiff, this power is rarely exercised. Many rulings still require the plaintiff (ex-wife) to formally petition the court for enforcement, adding further legal and financial burdens. Additionally, some judges express reluctance to impose strict financial obligations on absent defendants, fearing that enforcement may be difficult or that the husband's economic situation is unclear.

Challenges in Enforcement

One of the most pressing issues in *verstek* divorce cases is the weak enforcement of financial obligations imposed on ex-husbands. Although Indonesian law mandates that husbands provide financial support following divorce, the execution of these rulings remains problematic due to several factors. The first challenge is the absence of a direct enforcement mechanism within the Religious Court system. Unlike civil or criminal cases, where enforcement measures such as asset seizure or salary deductions can be applied, Religious Courts have limited power to compel compliance in family law cases. This results in a situation where ex-husbands can easily avoid their financial responsibilities without facing significant legal consequences.

The second challenge is the lack of coordination between legal institutions. While the Religious Court issues rulings, enforcement often requires collaboration with other legal bodies such as civil enforcement agencies or law enforcement authorities. In practice, these institutions rarely intervene in family law disputes, leaving ex-wives with little recourse when their former husbands fail to comply with court orders. This disconnect between judicial decisions and enforcement mechanisms weakens the effectiveness of legal protections for divorced women.

The third challenge is women's legal awareness and access to legal resources. Many divorced women lack sufficient knowledge about their legal rights and the processes required to enforce them. Some women do not even realize that they are entitled to *nafkah iddah*, *nafkah mut'ah*, and other post-divorce benefits. Others are discouraged from pursuing enforcement due to social stigma, economic constraints, or fear of confrontation with their former husbands. Financial constraints further exacerbate the problem. Many divorced women do not have the means to hire legal representatives or initiate additional legal action to enforce their rights. The cost of legal proceedings, including court fees and administrative expenses, can be prohibitive for women who have already lost financial support from their former husbands. As a result, many ex-wives choose not to pursue their rightful claims, effectively forfeiting the financial maintenance that they are legally entitled to receive.

A further complication is the lack of social and governmental support systems to assist divorced women in navigating legal enforcement procedures. While legal aid services exist, their reach is limited, particularly in rural areas where women may have little access to legal assistance. Without external support, women are often left to handle legal complexities on their own, further diminishing their chances of securing the financial support mandated by the court (Logan et al., 2005; Shepard & Hagemester, 2013).

Socio-Economic Impact on Divorced Women

The failure to enforce financial obligations in *verstek* divorce cases has significant socio-economic consequences for divorced women. Without financial support, many women struggle to meet their basic needs, especially if they have dependent children. In several cases examined in this study, divorced women faced severe financial hardship, forcing them to seek informal support from family members or engage in precarious employment.

The economic vulnerability of divorced women also affects their ability to seek legal redress. Many women lack the financial resources to hire legal representatives or initiate additional legal actions against their former husbands. As a result, they often choose to accept their circumstances rather than engage in lengthy and uncertain legal battles.

Furthermore, the study finds that child support enforcement is particularly weak. In many cases, ex-husbands fail to provide the legally mandated financial support for their children, placing additional strain on single mothers. While child support is a recognized legal obligation, there are no systematic tracking mechanisms to ensure that fathers fulfill their responsibilities. Many fathers simply refuse to provide financial assistance, leaving single mothers to shoulder the burden of raising children alone.

The lack of financial security often forces women to return to their parental homes or seek alternative means of survival, including informal labor or low-paying jobs. This economic instability not only affects the well-being of divorced women but also impacts the future prospects of their children. Children from financially unstable households often face difficulties in accessing quality education, healthcare, and other essential services, perpetuating cycles of poverty and economic hardship (Singh & Maseko, 2006).

Implications and the Need for Reform

The findings of this study underscore the urgent need for judicial and legal reforms to strengthen the enforcement of financial obligations in *verstek* divorce cases. Strengthening legal awareness among women, improving enforcement mechanisms, and enhancing judicial oversight are essential steps to addressing these issues (Shpuza, 2015; Sunyoto, 2021). The research suggests that Religious Courts should adopt stronger enforcement measures, such as direct salary deductions or asset freezes, to ensure compliance with financial rulings.

Additionally, integrating legal aid services into the Religious Court system could help women navigate the legal process more effectively. Providing post-divorce support programs could also help mitigate the economic hardship faced by divorced women, ensuring that they are not left financially vulnerable after divorce. By addressing the gaps in enforcement, Indonesia's judicial system can move towards a more equitable framework that upholds the principles of justice in Islamic law while ensuring the protection of women's rights in divorce proceedings. Strengthening coordination between the Religious Courts and civil enforcement agencies could also improve the execution of rulings, ensuring that court decisions are not merely symbolic but are actively implemented.

Finally, increasing public awareness and education about women's legal rights in divorce cases can empower women to assert their claims more effectively. Legal literacy programs, social campaigns, and policy reforms can contribute to a more just and equitable system that safeguards the rights of women and children in divorce cases.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal critical challenges in the enforcement of post-divorce financial rights in *verstek* divorce cases, particularly concerning the obligations of ex-husbands towards their former wives. While Islamic law and Indonesian legal frameworks provide clear guidelines on these obligations, the practical implementation remains weak. This discussion explores the legal foundations of *verstek* divorce, the obstacles in enforcing financial obligations, and potential strategies to strengthen legal protections for divorced women.

Legal Foundations and Principles of *Verstek* Divorce

Islamic family law upholds the principle of fairness in marriage and divorce, ensuring that both parties maintain their rights and responsibilities even after the dissolution of the marital union. The Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI) and Law No. 1 of 1974 on Marriage outline a husband's financial obligations following divorce, including *nafkah iddah* (maintenance for the wife during the waiting period), *nafkah mut'ah* (compensation for emotional and economic loss), and child support. These provisions are intended to provide economic security to women after divorce, particularly those who have been financially dependent on their husbands (Abdullah & Zin, 2009).

In cases of *verstek* divorce, where the husband fails to appear in court, the legal system allows the judge to proceed with a ruling based solely on the claims and evidence provided by the wife. Ideally, this mechanism should ensure that a wife's financial rights are not compromised due to her husband's absence. However, in practice, the enforcement of these obligations remains inconsistent, leading to legal inequalities that disproportionately affect women.

Challenges in Enforcing Financial Obligations in *Verstek* Divorce

A key issue identified in this study is the lack of effective enforcement mechanisms for financial rulings in *verstek* divorce cases (Claessens & Mortelmans, 2021; Mortelmans, 2020). Although court decisions often acknowledge a wife's right to financial maintenance, ensuring compliance from ex-husbands remains difficult. Several factors contribute to this challenge, including judicial limitations, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and socioeconomic constraints.

The first major challenge lies in the limited authority of Religious Courts in enforcement matters. Unlike civil and criminal courts, which have the power to enforce rulings through asset seizures or salary deductions, Religious Courts primarily rely on voluntary compliance from ex-husbands. When a husband refuses to fulfill his obligations, the court has few tools to compel payment, leaving the burden of enforcement on the ex-wife. The second challenge is the absence of a structured follow-up system to monitor compliance with financial rulings. Many ex-husbands simply ignore court orders, knowing that there are few consequences for non-compliance. This is particularly problematic in cases where husbands deliberately avoid their financial responsibilities by changing addresses, quitting their jobs, or engaging in informal employment that makes income tracking difficult.

The third challenge relates to women's lack of legal awareness and access to legal aid. Many divorced women are unaware of their rights under Islamic law and Indonesian legislation, leading them to accept financial neglect without pursuing legal action. Those who attempt to claim their rights often face bureaucratic hurdles, legal costs, and lengthy court procedures, which discourage them from taking further steps. The stigma surrounding divorced women further complicates their willingness to seek legal assistance, as societal norms often pressure them to remain silent rather than fight for their entitlements.

The fourth challenge involves cultural and social expectations that influence judicial decisions and enforcement practices. Some judges hesitate to impose strict financial penalties on absent husbands, particularly if they are perceived to be economically disadvantaged. This leniency can lead to rulings that, while legally sound, lack strong enforcement provisions. Furthermore, societal expectations often place the responsibility of economic survival on women, reinforcing the idea that they should be self-sufficient rather than relying on financial support from their former spouses.

The Impact of Weak Enforcement on Divorced Women

The failure to enforce financial obligations in *verstek* divorce cases has profound social and economic implications for divorced women. Many ex-wives find themselves in precarious financial situations, struggling to meet basic needs such as housing, food, and healthcare. Without reliable financial support from their ex-husbands, women are often forced to rely on extended family members or take on low-paying jobs to survive.

The lack of financial security also affects the well-being of children from divorced families. In many cases, ex-husbands fail to provide adequate child support, shifting the full burden of childcare expenses onto single mothers. This economic strain can negatively impact children's education, health, and overall quality of life, creating long-term disadvantages for them. Additionally, financial instability can trap women in cycles of poverty and dependence. Many women who do not receive financial support from their ex-husbands are unable to invest in their future through education, skills training, or business opportunities (Ahmed, 2018; Fawole, 2008; Stylianou, 2018). As a result, they become more vulnerable to exploitation, discrimination, and further economic marginalization.

The psychological impact of financial neglect in divorce cases is also significant. Many divorced women experience stress, anxiety, and emotional distress due to the uncertainty of their financial situation. The feeling of injustice—knowing that they are legally entitled to financial support but unable to obtain it—can lead to frustration and a lack of trust in the legal system.

Strategies for Strengthening Legal Protections in Verstek Divorce Cases

Given the challenges identified in this study, several key reforms are necessary to improve the enforcement of financial obligations in verstek divorce cases. Strengthening legal mechanisms, enhancing judicial oversight, and increasing awareness among women are essential steps toward ensuring fair outcomes in divorce proceedings. One crucial reform is enhancing enforcement mechanisms within Religious Courts. Courts should have greater authority to impose financial penalties on non-compliant ex-husbands, including automatic salary deductions, asset seizures, and travel restrictions for those who fail to fulfill their obligations (Bernadtua Simanjuntak et al., 2023; Htun & Weldon, 2013). Strengthening collaboration between Religious Courts and civil enforcement agencies could also improve the effectiveness of financial rulings.

Another important measure is establishing a monitoring system for compliance with financial obligations. Courts should implement structured follow-up procedures to track whether ex-husbands are making payments as ordered. This could include requiring periodic financial disclosures from ex-husbands and setting up legal consequences for those who evade their responsibilities. Increasing legal aid services and awareness programs for divorced women is also critical. Many women do not pursue their legal rights due to a lack of knowledge or resources. Providing free legal assistance, simplifying enforcement procedures, and offering financial literacy programs could empower women to claim their rights more effectively.

Judicial training and capacity-building initiatives should also be introduced to ensure that judges and court officials adopt a more proactive approach to enforcing financial rulings. Religious Court judges should be encouraged to use their ex officio powers more frequently to ensure that financial obligations are imposed fairly, even when the husband is absent from court proceedings. Finally, broader social reforms are needed to challenge cultural norms that disadvantage women in divorce cases. Public campaigns and legal education initiatives should emphasize that financial maintenance is not a matter of charity but a legal right under Islamic law. Encouraging greater societal recognition of women's post-divorce financial rights could help reduce stigma and improve enforcement outcomes.

5. Conclusion

This study has highlighted the legal and procedural challenges in enforcing post-divorce financial rights in verstek divorce cases within Indonesia's Religious Court system, particularly at the Watampone Religious Court Class IA. Despite the legal framework provided by the Compilation of Islamic Law (Kompilasi Hukum Islam, KHI) and Law No. 1 of 1974 on Marriage, the implementation of financial obligations imposed on ex-husbands remains inconsistent and largely ineffective. The findings reveal that while judges typically rule in favor of ex-wives concerning nafkah iddah, nafkah mut'ah, and child support, the enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance remain weak. One of the major issues identified in this study is the lack of an effective enforcement system within Religious Courts. Unlike civil and criminal courts, which have stronger mechanisms to compel compliance, Religious Courts primarily rely on voluntary fulfillment of financial obligations. Many ex-husbands fail to comply with court orders, knowing that there are few legal consequences for non-payment. Additionally, the absence of a structured monitoring system means that courts rarely follow up on whether their rulings are being enforced. This results in a significant gap between legal rulings and their practical implementation.

The socio-economic impact of this legal gap is profound (Ansar et al., 2019; Nikmawati et al., 2021; Shin et al., 2022). Many divorced women, especially those who have been financially dependent on their husbands, face severe economic hardship due to the lack of financial support. Without nafkah iddah and nafkah mut'ah, they struggle to meet their basic needs, support their children, and secure stable employment. This economic vulnerability often forces women to rely on family support or engage in low-paying jobs, perpetuating cycles of financial instability. The situation is further exacerbated by the weak enforcement of child support, which places the full burden of raising children on single mothers. Additionally, cultural and societal barriers play a significant role in limiting women's ability to claim their financial rights. Many women lack legal awareness and do not know how to enforce their rights. Others are discouraged from pursuing legal action due to social stigma or fear of

confrontation with their former husbands. These factors contribute to a broader pattern of legal inequality, where women are systematically disadvantaged in verstek divorce cases.

To address these issues, this study underscores the urgent need for legal and judicial reforms to strengthen the enforcement of financial obligations in verstek divorce cases. One of the most critical reforms would be enhancing the enforcement powers of Religious Courts. Courts should have the authority to impose stricter penalties on non-compliant ex-husbands, including automatic salary deductions, asset seizures, and travel restrictions for those who fail to fulfill their obligations. Improved coordination between Religious Courts and civil enforcement agencies could also ensure that court rulings are actively enforced rather than remaining symbolic legal decisions. Furthermore, a structured monitoring system should be established to track compliance with financial rulings. Courts should follow up on whether ex-husbands are making payments as ordered and implement legal consequences for those who evade their responsibilities. Strengthening legal aid services and awareness programs is also essential to empower women to claim their rights more effectively. Many women do not pursue legal action due to a lack of knowledge or resources, and providing free legal assistance, simplifying enforcement procedures, and offering financial literacy programs could help address this gap.

Judicial training and capacity-building initiatives for judges and court officials should be introduced to ensure that they adopt a more proactive approach to enforcing financial rulings. Religious Court judges should be encouraged to use their ex officio powers more frequently to impose financial obligations fairly, even in the absence of the husband. Beyond legal reforms, broader social and cultural changes are needed to challenge deep-rooted gender norms that disadvantage women in divorce cases. Public campaigns and legal education initiatives should emphasize that financial maintenance is not an act of charity but a legal obligation under Islamic law. Encouraging greater societal recognition of women's post-divorce financial rights could help reduce stigma and improve enforcement outcomes.

In conclusion, ensuring fair and just divorce rulings is crucial to upholding gender equality and Islamic justice principles. By addressing the legal and procedural gaps in verstek divorce cases, Indonesia's Religious Court system can enhance the protection of women's rights and promote greater accountability in family law practices. Strengthening judicial enforcement, increasing legal awareness, and implementing structural legal reforms will help create a more equitable legal framework that safeguards the rights of women and children following divorce.

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