# Doll Claw Machine Phenomenon in Rural Areas: A Review of Gharar Transactions, Socio-Economic Implications, and Compliance with Islamic Economic Principles

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Doll claw machine games have become an increasingly popular phenomenon in Indonesia, including in Poyowa Besar Village, Kotamobagu. Although appearing as entertainment, the presence of doll claw machines raises concerns from an Islamic economic perspective due to containing elements of *gharar*. This research aims to evaluate the practice of doll claw machine games from an Islamic economic perspective, focusing on three aspects: review of *gharar* transactions, socio-economic implications, and compliance with Islamic economic principles. Using a qualitative approach with case study methods, this research conducted semi-structured interviews with shop owners and parents, participatory observation, and document study. The results show that doll claw machine games contain significant *gharar* elements in their transaction procedures and business model. The identified socio-economic implications include increased family expenditure burden, changes in children's consumption patterns, and addiction risks. From an Islamic economic perspective, this practice contradicts fundamental principles such as the prohibition of *gharar* and protection of wealth (*hifz al-mal*). In conclusion, doll claw machine games in Poyowa Besar Village require reevaluation and stricter regulation to protect the community from economic practices that do not comply with sharia.

**Keywords:** *Gharar*; Islamic Economics; Doll Claw Machine; *Maqashid sharia*; Socio-economic Implications.

#### INTRODUCTION

Doll claw machine games have become an increasingly popular phenomenon in Indonesia, including in Poyowa Besar Village, Kotamobagu City, Indonesia. These machines can now be easily found in small shops and community gathering places in the village. Although appearing as enjoyable entertainment, especially for children, the presence of doll claw machines raises concerns from an Islamic economic perspective. This game contains elements of *gharar*, which is uncertainty or ambiguity in transactions, which is prohibited in Islam. Alam et al. (2017) and Farikhin & Mulyasari (2022) emphasize that *gharar* is one of the elements not permitted in transactions according to sharia. Additionally, Said & Elangkovan (2014) argues that this phenomenon also has significant social and economic implications for rural communities.

Previous studies have examined the legal aspects of doll claw machine games. Kifly & Shamsuddin (2023) highlight that this game contains elements of maysir (gambling) because prize-giving depends solely on chance factors. However, Previous studies, as investigated by Kasri & Ahmed (2015) and Muhammad Nooraiman Zailani et al. (2022), have predominantly focused on general Islamic legal reviews without specifically considering the socio-economic context of rural communities. Meanwhile, Hassan (2014) emphasizes that the characteristics of village communities, which tend to have lower levels of Islamic economic literacy and more limited economic conditions, make this phenomenon more crucial to study in depth.

This study extends previous research conducted by Hassan (2014), Kautsar (2023) and Richter et al. (2023) on Islamic economic issues. The earlier studies were limited to discussing socio-economic contexts and Islamic economic perspectives separately. To address this research gap, this study integrates the perspective of Islamic economics with an analysis of the socio-economic context of the community in Poyowa Besar Village regarding the practice of claw machine games. Using the concept of *maqashid sharia* (the objectives of Islamic law) as an analytical framework, this research evaluates the alignment of this phenomenon with the objectives of Islamic law in safeguarding five fundamental aspects: hifz al-din (religion), *hifz al-nafz* (life), *hifz al-aql* (intellect), *hifz al-nasl* (lineage) and *hifz almal* (wealth).

This research aims to complement the limitations of previous studies by conducting a comprehensive analysis of the doll claw machine phenomenon in Poyowa Besar Village. The main objective of this study is to evaluate the practice of doll claw machine games from an Islamic economic perspective, focusing on three main aspects: (1) review of *gharar* transactions in this game, (2) socioeconomic implications for the Poyowa Besar Village community, and (3) compliance with Islamic economic principles. Through a qualitative approach using observation, interviews, and literature study methods, this research will provide a deep and holistic understanding of the phenomenon in the local context of Poyowa Besar Village.

The results of this research are expected to make a significant contribution to the development of Islamic economic discourse, particularly in the context of rural communities in North Sulawesi. The findings from this study can become a foundation for formulating more comprehensive policies and regulations regarding the control of doll claw machine games in Poyowa Besar Village and surrounding areas. Additionally, this research can serve as a reference for the Poyowa Besar Village community in understanding the Islamic economic review of this phenomenon, enabling them to make wiser decisions aligned with Islamic values.

More broadly, this study also has significance in demonstrating the relevance of Islamic economics in addressing contemporary issues in rural communities. By applying sharia principles in analyzing socio-economic phenomena in Poyowa Besar Village, this research can enrich Islamic economic scholarship and encourage the development of a more holistic approach in understanding and addressing rural community problems. This aligns with the spirit of Islamic economics, which is not only oriented toward compliance with legal-formal rules but also considers public benefit and social justice.

In the context of the Poyowa Besar Village community as part of the rural area, this research also has importance in giving attention to issues faced by this community group. By raising the doll claw machine phenomenon as a study object, this research can help increase awareness of the importance of considering the socio-economic impact of practices occurring in Poyowa Besar Village. The findings from this research are expected to encourage efforts to empower the Poyowa Besar Village community and improve their welfare more broadly.

Thus, research on the doll claw machine phenomenon in Poyowa Besar Village is not only relevant from an Islamic economic perspective but also has broad social significance for the local community. Through deep and comprehensive analysis, this study is expected to contribute to academic development, policy formulation, and increased public awareness regarding Islamic economic issues in the local context of Poyowa Besar Village and surrounding areas. Ultimately, this research aims to encourage the realization of economic practices that are more just, beneficial, and aligned with Islamic values in the Poyowa Besar Village community.

## **METHODS**

This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study method to examine in depth the phenomenon of doll claw machine games in Poyowa Besar Village from an Islamic economic perspective. The qualitative approach was chosen because this research aims to understand the perspectives, experiences, and meanings of the parties involved in this phenomenon, such as shop owners providing doll claw machines, parents of children who frequently play, and the children themselves (Creswell, 2013). The case study method enables holistic and contextual exploration of a specific and limited phenomenon, thus producing rich and deep understanding (Yin & Hollweck, 2015).

Data collection techniques used in this research include semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, and document study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with shop owners providing doll claw machines to gather information about transaction procedures, profits obtained, and their experiences in running the business. Interviews were also conducted with parents of children who frequently play doll claw machines to understand their perspectives regarding the impact of this game on children's spending patterns and behavior, as well as their future expectations. Informant selection was done purposively by considering their intensity of involvement in the studied phenomenon (Patton, 2002).

Participatory observation was conducted by the researcher being directly involved in doll claw machine game activities in shops that provide them. The researcher carefully observed the ongoing transaction process, children's expressions and behavior while playing, and interactions between shop owners, children, and parents. This observation aims to obtain a more authentic and contextual understanding of the studied phenomenon (Spradley, 2016; Wilson, 2004). The observation focus was directed at three main aspects: (1) review of *gharar* transactions in doll claw machine games, (2) socio-economic implications for the Poyowa Besar Village community, and (3) compliance with Islamic economic principles.

Document study was conducted by reviewing various literature, regulations, and other documents relevant to this research topic, such as ulama fatwas on the law of doll claw machine games, government regulations regarding entertainment business operations, and media articles reporting this phenomenon. This document study serves as triangulation to strengthen and complement data obtained through interviews and observation (Bowen et al., 2017). Additionally, document study was also used to understand Islamic economic perspectives on *gharar* transactions, maysir, and other matters related to the studied phenomenon.

The collected data was then analyzed using thematic analysis techniques (Clarke & Braun, 2017; Terry et al., 2017). Analysis steps include: (1) Familiarization with data through interview transcription, observation note typing, and repeated reading; (2) Systematic and comprehensive data coding; (3) Searching for themes emerging from the data; (4) Reviewing themes to ensure coherence and conceptual density; (5) Defining and naming themes; and (6) Writing reports by presenting themes accompanied by relevant verbatim quotes. In this analysis process, the researcher specifically paid attention to themes related to *gharar* transaction review, socio-economic implications, and compliance with Islamic economic principles.

To ensure the validity and credibility of research results, techniques such as data source triangulation, member checking, and researcher reflexivity were used (Cypress, 2017). Triangulation was done by comparing and cross-checking data obtained from interviews, observation, and document study. Member checking involved confirming analysis results with informants to ensure the accuracy of researcher interpretation. Meanwhile, researcher reflexivity was conducted by

continuously examining and being aware of positions, assumptions, and biases that might influence the research process.

This research was conducted following ethical principles including informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and protection of informant security and comfort (Beauchamp, 2016). Before interviews, informants were given explanations about the purpose, procedures, and implications of their involvement in this research. Written consent was obtained as evidence of their willingness to participate voluntarily. Informants' identities were kept confidential by using pseudonyms in the research report. Raw data such as interview recordings and observation notes were stored securely and could only be accessed by the researcher.

With a qualitative approach and case study method, and focus on *gharar* transaction review, socio-economic implications, and compliance with Islamic economic principles, this research is expected to produce rich, deep, and contextual understanding of the doll claw machine game phenomenon in Poyowa Besar Village. The findings from this research can contribute to the development of knowledge about Islamic economic practices in rural community contexts, and provide empirical foundation for formulating more just and beneficial policies regarding the existence of this game.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### **Analysis of Gharar Transactions in Doll Claw Machine Games**

Gharar transactions in doll claw machine games in Poyowa Besar Village can be identified through several aspects based on the research results. Alam et al. (2017) and Farikhin & Mulyasari (2022) in their research emphasize that *gharar* is one of the elements not permitted in transactions according to sharia, especially when such uncertainty becomes a dominant character in a transaction.

First, in terms of transaction procedures explained by shop owners, there is a significant element of uncertainty. As expressed by Mrs. Sarpia Bangol (Shop owner interview, February 2, 2024) that "by exchanging money with coins provided by the seller, with just Rp. 1,000 one can get 1 coin." A similar statement was made by Mrs. Yuli Nafsiatin (Shop owner interview, February 2, 2024) who emphasized that after inserting the coin, "if lucky then they will get a doll, if not then they will get nothing."

Bai et al. (2015) in research reveals that uncertainty of results in buying and selling transactions can have significant social and economic implications for society. This is confirmed through testimonies from parents whose children frequently play doll claw machines. Mr. Noval Batalipu (Interview with parent of child who frequently plays claw machine, February 3, 2024) explains that "sometimes the child only pays Rp. 2,000 to play the doll claw machine and with luck can get 2 dolls at once," but on the other hand he also experienced "his child paying up to Rp.7000 and getting nothing."

Tarmizi (2017) highlight that such games not only contain elements of *gharar* but also potentially contain elements of maysir (gambling) because prizegiving depends solely on chance factors. Another aspect of *gharar* can be seen from the business model applied in managing these doll claw machines. Based on explanations from Mrs. Sarpia Bangol and Mrs. Yuli Nafsiatin, they operate with a consignment system where they act as consignees from the doll claw machine owner as consignor.

The previous research tends to focus on general Islamic law reviews without considering the specific socio-economic context of rural communities. This imbalance is evident in the applied profit-sharing system, where shop owners receive only 5% of the total revenue. According to both informants, profits are calculated and distributed every 10 days.

Khasanah et al. (2022) emphasizes that characteristics of village communities, which tend to have lower levels of Islamic economic literacy and more limited economic conditions, make this phenomenon more crucial to study in depth. This is reflected in the testimony of Mrs. Umeng (Interview with parent of child who frequently plays claw machine, February 3, 2024) who states that "claw machines have attractions like dolls that make children interested in playing even though there is no certainty whether the child will actually get that doll or not so many feel disadvantaged."

Thus, it can be concluded that transactions in doll claw machine games in Poyowa Besar Village contain significant elements of *gharar*, both in terms of transaction procedures, uncertainty of results, and the applied business model. As suggested by Lamido (2016), evaluation of economic practices in rural areas needs to use the concept of maqasid sharia as an analytical framework to assess whether a phenomenon aligns with sharia objectives in protecting religion, life, intellect, lineage, and community wealth.

## Socio-Economic Implications for the Poyowa Besar Village Community

Vidal-Legaz et al. (2013) in research reveals that the existence of games containing elements of uncertainty can have complex socio-economic impacts on communities, especially in rural areas. This is confirmed in this research which found various implications from the presence of doll claw machines in Poyowa Besar Village.

From the economic aspect, this research found a noticeable increase in family expenditure burden. This is reflected in the statement of Mrs. Anita Lauma (Interview with parent of child who frequently plays claw machine, February 3, 2024) who revealed that this game "just adds to expenses." Jochimsen (2013) in study emphasizes that repeated expenditure for non-productive activities can significantly erode family economics in the long term.

Changes in children's consumption patterns are also an interesting finding in this research. As expressed by Mrs. Marsella Lantong (Interview with parent of

child who frequently plays claw machine, February 3, 2024), "school pocket money given by parents to children, that money is not spent on buying snacks at school because it is saved to play claw machines after returning from school." Jackson (2004) identifies that such shifts in consumption priorities can impact children's long-term consumption patterns.

Potential financial loss is also a serious concern, as experienced by Mr. Noval Batalipu (Interview with parent of child who frequently plays claw machine, February 3, 2024). Hanushek & Woessmann (2020) in research shows that financial losses in games containing elements of uncertainty can have a greater psychological impact on middle to lower-income communities.

From the social impact side, Abbott (2019) underlines the importance of paying attention to changes in children's behavior as an impact of luck-based games. This is evident from Mrs. Marsella Lantong's observation of her child's behavior changes during school holidays. More worryingly, Mrs. Anita Lauma states that the claw machine "is very disturbing because children cry asking for money if not given."

Cabot & Csoka (2003) in research identifies the potential for addiction to prize-based games, especially in children. This is confirmed through Mrs. Umeng's observation (Interview with parent of child who frequently plays claw machine, February 3, 2024) who warns that "if children too often use money for doll claw machines, this can become a concern."

More worryingly, according to Berg (2015) research, is children's tendency to ignore their basic needs priorities. Mrs. Umeng notes that "when going to the shop and there is a claw machine in the shop, children prefer to play claw machines rather than buying food or drinks." Mrs. Marsella also highlights that children "forget to buy food that makes them full, while the claw machine itself does not make children full."

These socio-economic implications have prompted some parents to propose stopping the operation of doll claw machines. As conveyed by Mrs. Marsella and Mrs. Umeng who both suggested stopping claw machine operations. This aligns with Hopkins & Weisberg (2017) and Ward (2017) recommendation emphasizing the importance of stricter regulation of prize-based games, especially those targeting children.

## **Evaluation of Compliance with Islamic Economic Principles**

Farikhin & Mulyasari (2022) in her study of Islamic economics emphasizes that every economic transaction must be free from elements prohibited in Islam. This research found that doll claw machine games in Poyowa Besar Village require deep evaluation regarding their compliance with Islamic economic principles.

From the transaction aspect, Said & Elangkovan (2014) identifies that *gharar* (uncertainty) becomes one of the elements that must be avoided in Islamic economic transactions. This is confirmed through interviews with Mrs. Sarpia

Bangol and Mrs. Yuli Nafsiatin (Shop owner interview, February 2, 2024) who explain that "if lucky then they will get a doll, if not then they will get nothing." Kifly & Shamsuddin (2023) emphasizes that such uncertainty contradicts the principle of justice in Islamic economics.

Antiek Firdausi Putri (2024) underline that games relying on luck potentially contain elements of maysir (gambling). This is evident from Mr. Noval Batalipu's experience (Interview with parent of child who frequently plays claw machine, February 3, 2024) which shows inconsistency in results obtained from this game. Said & Elangkovan (2014) adds that unclear ratio between cost and benefit in a transaction can threaten the principle of economic justice.

Viewed from the maslahah (benefit) aspect, Farikhin & Mulyasari (2022) emphasizes the importance of considering long-term impacts of an economic practice. Mrs. Anita Lauma (Interview with parent of child who frequently plays claw machine, February 3, 2024) confirms negative impacts on family economics. Meanwhile, Mrs. Marsella Lantong (Interview with parent of child who frequently plays claw machine, February 3, 2024) observes worrying changes in children's consumption patterns.

Antiek Firdausi Putri (2024) in another study highlights that economic practices contradicting *maqashid sharia* can threaten community welfare in the long term. Mrs. Umeng (Interview with parent of child who frequently plays claw machine, February 3, 2024) warns about the risk of wealth waste, which contradicts the principle of wealth protection (*hifz al-mal*) in *maqashid sharia*.

From the social aspect, Kifly & Shamsuddin (2023) warns that economic practices not complying with sharia can influence young generation character formation. This is reflected in Mrs. Marsella's observation revealing addiction in children. Muhammad Nooraiman Zailani et al. (2022) adds that protection of lineage (*hifz al-nasl*) must be a main consideration in evaluating economic practices in society.

Based on this comprehensive evaluation, it can be concluded that doll claw machine game practices in Poyowa Besar Village have many aspects that contradict Islamic economic principles. Kifly & Shamsuddin (2023) suggests that evaluation of economic practices in rural areas needs to consider local socio-cultural context while still adhering to sharia principles. Recommendations from informants like Mrs. Marsella and Mrs. Umeng to stop claw machine operations align with efforts to protect the community from economic practices that do not comply with sharia.

## 1. Ulama Views and Religious Evidence on Gharar in Transactions

The discourse on *gharar* in economic transactions has received deep attention from scholars since classical to contemporary times. Imam An-Nawawi in Al-Majmu' Syarh Al-Muhadzdzab provides a comprehensive definition of *gharar* as a transaction containing ambiguity or uncertainty that potentially causes loss to one party (Nawawi, 2009). The fundamental basis for prohibiting *gharar* is rooted

in hadith narrated by Muslim, Abu Dawud, At-Tirmidzi, An-Nasa'i, and Ibn Majah, where the Prophet Muhammad SAW explicitly forbids sales containing *gharar*. This prohibition is also enshrined in the Quran surah An-Nisa verse 29, which strictly prohibits consuming wealth in vanity, except through trade based on mutual consent (Bentuknya & Masa, 2021).

In an effort to provide a more structured analytical framework, Imam Al-Qarafi in Al-Furuq has classified *gharar* into three levels (Rosadi, 2024). First, *gharar* katsir which is prohibited by consensus (ijma'), such as selling birds in the air or fish in the sea. Second, *gharar* yasir which is allowed based on consensus, such as uncertainty of house foundation in house sales. Third, *gharar* mutawassith which remains an object of discussion among scholars, such as selling unripe fruit.

#### 2. Contemporary Scholars' Analysis of Luck-Based Games

Yusuf Al-Qaradhawi in Al-Halal wal Haram fil Islam provides an in-depth analysis of luck-based games (Nawawi, 2009). He affirms that any activity solely dependent on luck and involving wealth exchange potentially categorizes as maysir, which is strictly prohibited in the Quran surah Al-Maidah verse 90. Allah SWT says which means: "O believers! Indeed, intoxicants, gambling, sacrificing to idols, and drawing lots for decisions are all evil of Satan's handiwork. So shun them so that you may be successful."

Majma' Al-Fiqh Al-Islami in its resolution No. 238 (9/24) has established comprehensive criteria for permissible games in Islam. These criteria include freedom from gambling elements, absence of excessive *gharar*, not causing harm (dharar), not distracting from obligations, and not containing exploitation elements. Wahbah Az-Zuhaili in Al-Fiqh Al-Islami wa Adillatuhu emphasizes that any game containing substantial *gharar* and potentially causing disputes or losses to one party is legally forbidden (Shifa & Muthoam, 2021).

## 3. Evaluation of Compliance with Islamic Economic Principles

Evaluating the compliance of doll claw machine games with Islamic economic principles requires deep analysis covering various fundamental aspects in Islamic law. Farikhin & Mulyasari (2022) emphasizes that every economic transaction in Islam must be free from prohibited elements, while observations in Poyowa Besar Village show several aspects requiring comprehensive sharia review.

Imam Asy-Syatibi in Al-Muwafaqat underlines the importance of aligning economic practices with five main objectives of sharia (*maqashid sharia*h) (Kurniawan & Hudafi, 2021). First, hifdz ad-din (protection of religion) requires every economic activity not to contradict principles of faith. Second, hifdz an-nafs (protection of life) emphasizes that economic practices must ensure physical and mental well-being of participants. Third, hifdz al-'aql (protection of intellect) requires economic activities not to interfere with rational thinking ability. Fourth, hifdz an-nasl (protection of lineage) emphasizes the importance of considering

long-term impacts on future generations. Fifth, hifdz al-mal (protection of wealth) requires responsible wealth management and avoiding waste.

## 4. Principle of Justice in Economic Transactions

Justice becomes a fundamental principle in Islamic economics, as affirmed in the Quran surah An-Nahl verse 90. Imam Al-Ghazali in Ihya' Ulumuddin elaborates that justice in economic transactions must include clarity of transaction objects, certainty of value exchange, balance of rights and obligations, and absence of harmed parties. This principle becomes increasingly relevant in the context of doll claw machine games, given the potential imbalance and losses experienced by players (Kurniawan & Hudafi, 2021).

Based on comprehensive analysis from various ulama perspectives and sharia evidence, it can be concluded that doll claw machine game practices in Poyowa Besar Village require review to align with Islamic economic principles. Improvement recommendations must consider implementation of 'adam al-gharar, 'adam al-dharar principles, and protection of community wealth, in line with hadiths narrated by Bukhari, Muslim, and Ahmad about the importance of clarity in transactions and protection of Muslim wealth.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Based on research results about the doll claw machine phenomenon in Poyowa Besar Village, several conclusions can be drawn that answer the research objectives: First, from the aspect of *gharar* transaction review, this research finds that doll claw machine games contain significant elements of uncertainty. This is evident from transaction procedures that depend solely on luck factors, where players can pay Rp1,000 but there is no guarantee of getting a doll. The consignment system and profit sharing applied also shows imbalance, with shop owners only getting 5% of total revenue.

Second, regarding socio-economic implications, the research identifies several negative impacts on the Poyowa Besar Village community. These impacts include increased family expenditure burden, changes in children's consumption patterns who tend to save pocket money to play claw machines, and addiction risks that can affect children's behavior. This change in consumption priorities potentially interferes with fulfillment of children's basic needs.

Third, in terms of compliance with Islamic economic principles, doll claw machine game practices contradict several fundamental principles. Based on *maqashid sharia* analysis, this game threatens protection of wealth (hifz al-mal) through potential waste and financial loss. This practice also does not align with Islamic economic justice principles due to unclear ratio between costs and benefits in transactions.

These findings underline the importance of re-evaluation and stricter regulation of doll claw machine operations in Poyowa Besar Village. Comprehensive policies are needed to protect the community, especially children,

from economic practices that do not comply with sharia principles, while still considering local socio-cultural context.

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