

f_Islamic_Sharia_Laws_in_West _Aceh_Indonesia_13_April_2020 .docx *by* Manan A

Submission date: 20-Apr-2020 05:05PM (UTC+0700)

Submission ID: 1302489935

File name: f_Islamic_Sharia_Laws_in_West_Aceh_Indonesia_13_April_2020.docx (34.38K)

Word count: 5566

Character count: 29802

Acceptance of the Implementation of Islamic Sharia Laws in West Aceh, Indonesia

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Abstract

Aceh is the only Province in Indonesia that is authorized by the Indonesian central government to implement Islamic sharia laws. The basic legal framework that made this possible was provided after the Peace Treaty concluded on 15th August 2005 following the Tsunami disaster of 26 December 2004, which built on the Special Autonomy Laws for Aceh of 1999 and 2001. This study describes and critically analyses the social reality of implementation of Islamic sharia in West Aceh using an ethnographic approach. The latter is a research form that focuses on the meaning of socio-cultural phenomena through meticulous observations. The study used three different ways of data collection, viz; interviews, observations and documents. Thus, the data used was in the form of quotes, descriptions and documents. The results showed that the implementation has evoked many perceptions. The current implementation of Islamic sharia in West Aceh is running well considering the essential role of local government. Furthermore, the government itself has done various programs related to the implementation of Islamic sharia laws. However, a number of people still believe that the current condition of sharia in West Aceh has not yet provided the expected results since there is still much unislamic behavior observable in public and many teenagers' attitudes are not yet in line with Islamic values and teachings. The public perceptions, responses, and values are that the implementation of Islamic sharia laws in West Aceh has still not met expectations due to various problems.

Keywords: social facts, implementation of Islamic sharia laws, West Aceh District

1. Introduction

Islamic Sharia is a concept or term that connotes a "straight path" [1]. Historically, Islamic sharia, for the Acehnese, is not something new, as the book *Modernisasi Syariat Islam di Aceh* has explained that Islamic sharia had been run in the Sultanate of Aceh (Sultan Iskandar Muda, 1607-1636) long before Indonesia's first Independence Day [2, 3, 4, 5]. According to records and historical analysis, it says that at the time of Independence Day of Indonesia, the leader of Aceh requested permission from the first Indonesia government to implement Islamic Sharia in Aceh, and even the first President, Ir. Soekarno, promised to the scholars and leaders of Aceh that Aceh would be able to implement Islamic sharia in the province. Some books mention that President Sukarno gave his consent verbally when he visited Aceh in 1948. Then he also asked in return for help from the Acehnese to buy an aircraft as a gift for the central government [6]. This Dakota plane which became Air Force No 1 and then later the first plane in the Garuda fleet can still be seen, on display, in the Blang Padang park in the centre of Banda Aceh. So Aceh in a way paid for the right to have autonomy and to be able to implement sharia law in Aceh.

Meanwhile, Wilmut [7] has stated, "After the fall of President Suharto's regime, political leaders in Jakarta believed that offering Islamic sharia to Aceh may reduce the influence of the Acehnese Liberation Front (GAM)." It was also expected to improve public confidence in Aceh with the central government. However, when President Abdurrahman Wahid offered to resolve the issue of Islamic sharia in Aceh, many people suspected that it was as a political game and GAM leaders said that this action was a part of government efforts to portray GAM as a fundamentalist movement. A

representative of GAM interviewed by Reuters in 2000, Amni Marzuki, said, "The Indonesian government wants us to be like Afghanistan". Other leaders also said that they 43 not want Islamic sharia as it was offered by Jakarta. However, the Republic of Indonesia passed 141 No. 44 of 1999 relating to the implementation of a special status for Aceh which authorised the implementation of 3 Islamic sharia in Aceh, by giving the authority to the Acehnese government to make policy in terms of religious 3 life, customs, education, and the role of Muslim scholars. Regulation No. 5 of 2000 relating to the implementation of Islamic sharia stipulated that all aspects of Islamic sharia would be applied. In 2001, the government of Aceh established a new department called the Office of Islamic Sharia (Dinas Syariat Islam). In the same year, the special autonomy regulations for Aceh (No. 18 of 2001) provided permission for the establishment of a sharia court, with power not only in family matters and inheritances but also in criminal cases (*jinayah*). Wilmot [7] has also said, "When Islamic sharia was declared in 2001, the pros and cons started popping up until now. The involvement of the central government was deemed a political move to blockade non-Muslim countries' support against the power of GAM".

Once the autonomy status was granted to Aceh in 2001, the Aceh Government announced that Islamic sharia would be *kaffah* (plenary) in its territory. The word *kaffah* means that the local governments will implement the Islamic sharia perfectly and completely. Therefore, several institutions 2 were created in order to support the implementation of Islamic sharia such as Dinas Syariat Islam (the Office of Islamic sharia), Majelis Permusyawaratan Ulama (the Board of Islamic Scholars), Wilayatul Hisbah or WH (the sharia law enforcement authority), and Mahkamah Syariat (the Court of Sharia). Although the implementation of Islamic sharia officially came into effect in 2003, the pros and cons have kept coming until now. Indeed since Islamic sharia was introduced, there have been many problems in upholding it.

2. Methods

This ethnographic research study focussed on social meaning through closed field observations of sociocultural phenomena. It employs a descriptive method with a qualitative approach to view the overall situation and process from the observations of the participants which 1 are described inductively. The researcher analysed and interpreted the facts, indications, and events related to the implementation of Islamic sharia in the context of space, time, and experience. The descriptive method was also used to search for problems at the time this study was conducted. The selection of informants was based on choosing persons who 5 had perspectives or opinions on a variety of community activities in a snowball approach hence early informants were asked to identify other informants who could represent the community. Informants were interviewed repeatedly by using the information from the previous informants to get deeper clarification and understanding. This process was intended to acquire understanding about common cultural views associated with the phenomena being studied. Three different ways of data collection were used viz: in-depth interviews, observations and document searches. Thus, the data was gathered in the form of quotes, descriptions, and material from documents. The final product from all the data is presented herewith as narrative description.

3. Result

4
Current condition of the implementation of Islamic sharia in West Aceh according to the local government

Aceh is different from the other provinces in Indonesia because it has been given special autonomy by the Indonesian go2 nment. By this autonomy, Aceh is allowed to implement local regulation of Islamic 6 ariah, which is based on the sources of Islam such as the Al-Qur'an and the Hadits. Ideally, Islamic sharia is a complete system of guidance on all aspects of life in order to promote harmony of life, social welfare and charities. It is now 15 years since the implementation was first declared in 2003. However, during the implementation, there have been many problems, either at the level of the province or at the level of the district. Therefore, two kinds of opinion have appeared about the implementation of Islamic sharia. Some Acehnese agree with the notion that the implementation has run well, while others disagree with that in particular some who have experienced it in West Aceh.

Associated with the Dinas Syariat Islam or Division for Islamic Sharia, the government of West Aceh, represented by its Bupati, has continued to encourage the local people to be aware of the implementation of Islamic sharia. This encouragement has been done through a socialization program to make a prosperous, healthy, and intelligent community in West Aceh. Besides, the government itself has also done various things to make the implementation of Islamic sharia to be more effective. The full support of all parties in government for the implementation of Islamic sharia in West Aceh has led to positive conditions for its implementation.

Furthermore, the government has issued some prohibitions to prevent potential violations of Islamic sharia in West Aceh like prohibiting open-air rock music concerts. The regent of West Aceh district said that the prohibitions were based on the opinions of Muslim scholars and parliament board considering that such occasions would cause more harm than benefits. He said, “*Jadi dari pada ribut-ribut, ya kita ambil kesimpulan, tidak boleh ada konser musik*” (To avoid kicking up a row (later), so we take a decision (now) that we ban the music concerts). In addition, he also said that the government had strong commitments to the enforcement of Islamic sharia in this district and appealed to all parties, specifically to the local youth, to give its’ full support to the Islamic sharia programs. To achieve this, he said that they ought to be in the frontline of positive activities such as praying at the mosques, learning Islamic teachings, and dressing in accordance with the Islamic sharia regulations.

In order to encourage the local community to engage in character building activities, the government of West Aceh has also carried out or sponsored other programs such as Islamic lecture tours, *dhikr* or communal chanting in praise of God, Islamic advice services, Islamic youth events, Islamic religious studies, Ramadan safari and alms-giving education involving delegations to *pesantren* (Islamic traditional schools) and Baitul Mal (Islamic Charity Fund). Moreover, based on the current conditions of Islamic sharia implementation, the government of West Aceh has also allocated funds for various activities related to the implementation of sharia law. Funds have been allocated for APBG *gampong* or village budgets) to pay for Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur’an or Islamic kindergartens, imams or Muslim preachers and *bilal* or muezzin, who call the believers to prayer, *fardhu kifayah jenazah* or Islamic funeral rites training, *wirid yasin* or training in reciting passages from the Qur’an and the Surah Yasin). These have been done in association in every village in West Aceh. In 2015, for instance, 350 Islamic preachers were given an incentive of about IDR 170.000 per month for a year (about Rp 2 million/annum), of which 5 months in total was transferred at the start of the year according to Mursalin, the head of the office of Islamic sharia of West Aceh. Besides, the government of West Aceh also provided Pendidikan Kader Ulama (training for cadre of Islamic scholars) to dozens of people in an attempt to increase the role of Islamic scholars upon the development of Islamic sharia in West Aceh.

Nowadays, the implementation of Islamic sharia is considered to be better than before. The government now is more serious in implementing Islamic sharia in West Aceh by involving various elements. In 2016, for instance, the government through Dinas Syariat Islam worked in cooperation with STAIN (State Institute for Islamic Studies) Teungku Dirundeng to perform a variety of programs for Islamic sharia in West Aceh. In addition, in September 2016, it conducted training programs about Islamic sharia to people in the district with the purpose that people in West Aceh could understand better how to implement Islamic sharia in their social and private lives. Considering the current conditions in West Aceh, the implementation of Islamic sharia appears to be running maxima¹¹. The government has been serious about it by involving all elements including Dinas Syariat Islam, Majelis Permusyawaratan Ulama, Majelis Adat Aceh (the Council of Acehnese Customs and Traditions), community leaders, Islamic institutions, and Wilayatul Hisbah, said Teuku Umar Ali M¹⁰, the head of Adat Aceh of West Aceh. As in 2016, a team which consisted of Wilayatul Hisbah, Satuan Polisi Pamong Praja (a civil service police unit), ulama (Islamic scholars), military and police officers’ conducted sweeping patrols against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) in beauty salons in Meulaboh, the capital city of West Aceh. The sweeping patrols were carried out in order to stop the spread of LGBT in West Aceh since they are prohibited in Islamic sharia *qanun* No. 6 of 2013 [8] setting out the law of Jinayah (Islamic penal provisions). The violators were educated by local ulama with the approach of Islamic values. Ika Suhanas Adli said, “When we did sweeping patrols to the salon, we found two men dressed as women. So, we directly educated them as it was the first time. However, the violators, when convicted, can be caned up to 30 times if they do it again”. The problems faced by the government of West Aceh toward to the implementation of Islamic sharia mainly related to those who accepted the law and those who did not. Despite the fact that the implementation was weak, the

government continued to rigorously improve the Dinas Syariat Islam and the WH so that they would much better than before. It can be seen that the current condition of implementation of Islamic sharia in West Aceh is running well. Through the aforementioned events, the local government allied with Dinas Syariat Islam stated that they had done a variety of efforts to realize the implementation of Islamic sharia.

Current attitude of people in West Aceh toward the implementation of Islamic sharia law

Related to implementation of Islamic sharia in West Aceh, there were many opinions telling the current condition in the community upon the laws of Islamic sharia implementation in the land of Teuku Umar. First opinions, according to most of the local community, the current condition of Islamic sharia implementation still focuses on a small part of it, such as the manner of dressing, the rituals of praying, and the stopping of *khalwat* (immoral activities). Yet, even those conditions cannot be implemented properly and completely and they do not have not had much impact on the community since there were no concrete sanctions for the violators, said Samsida, a housewife. Besides, it has also been said that the implementation of Islamic sharia was just a government image-building program to make a good impression because there was no strong attitude from the government and the policy makers in applying Islamic sharia.

Moreover, the implementation of Islamic sharia in West Aceh is still far and away from what some people think it should be. There are still a lot of people wearing clothes which violates the Islamic sharia. Furthermore, there are still many recalcitrant, especially teenagers wanting to dress and socialize in ways which are not acceptable with sharia, said one of the university students in West Aceh. The ineffective implementation of Islamic sharia contributes to the community's reactions. As in 2016, college students proposed their arguments to the government of West Aceh. They demanded that the government resolutely implement Islamic sharia as laid out in regulation No. 11 of 2006 [9] describing the government of Aceh and *qanun* No. 11 of 2002 describing Islamic sharia. Edi Saputra, one of the STAIN Teungku Dirundeng students, stated that the implementation of Islamic sharia in West Aceh was not effective. He said, "We notice that both Muslim and non-Muslim people in West Aceh are not following Undang-Undang Pemerintahan Aceh (the regulations of the Acehnese governance) or sharia *qanun*."

Meanwhile, the implementation of Islamic sharia tends to be ineffective because the process of socialization has only been focused on a small part of society. Supposedly, the government should socialize the implementation of Islamic sharia to all school students, college students and teenagers, who will become the frontlines for the expected implementation. So far, many people do not know and/or understand the contents of the *qanun* such as the *jarimah* (the prohibitions in Islam) and the *uqubat* (the sanctions) for those who do things that violate Islamic sharia such as *khamar* (drinking alcohol), *maisir* (gambling), *khalwat* (sexual petting), *ikhtilath* (intermingling of the sexes), *zina* (fornication and adultery), sexual harassment, rape, *qadhaf* (making false witness about sexual improprieties of any person) and *liwath* (homosexual acts).

However, from the point of view of the government, the socialization of the *qanun* regarding the *kaffah* or implementation of Islamic sharia in West Aceh has been satisfactory. The *qanun* are considered to represent what the Acehnese need in general, said Hasbi, a trader in West Aceh. However, realistically, there are still those, particularly from the young generations, who do not understand the content of the *qanun*. Thus, the socialization done by the government of West Aceh just focused on the realization of the government program itself; however, the result of the implementation was still unclear.

Furthermore, the serious implementation of Islamic sharia instigated by the government is considered a mirage. The violations that occurred in West Aceh were done by the younger generation and by the community in general. Some people say the violations have increased. One of the factors is the way WH to implements Islamic sharia. They tend to try to educate the violators rather than to punish them, said Abdurrahman, a local leader in West Aceh. The same also happened to the implementation of *qanun* Nos. 13 and 14 of 2003 concerning *maisir* or fornication and *khalwat* or petting. The community fully supports the implementation of these two *qanun* which aims to make the perpetrators sorry for what they have done. Now, however, members of the community are not satisfied with the progress of the implementation.

Meanwhile, the Government of West Aceh has commendably implemented Islamic sharia in accordance with the Aceh provincial *qanun* No. 11 of 2002 describing the proper ways of dressing, the development of *aqidah* (Islamic faith) and prayer, and the promotion of Islamic *syiar* (teaching). The government believes that the community has changed as a result of the *qanun* that have been implemented. By the sweeping patrols done by the Satuan Polisi Pamung Praja and the WH, the Muslims in West Aceh who wore immodest dress were made aware of their errors. They were also taught about proper forms of dress and made to sign a written contract that they would not repeat their mistakes. Members of the community who accepted the implementation of Islamic sharia argued that such operations would increase the awareness of their society to follow the Islamic regulations of the government. Moreover, they felt that the enforcers had done their best to prevent future unislamic violations occurring. On the other hand, related to the implementation of Aceh provincial *qanun* No. 11 of 2002, the community felt discommoded toward the sweeping since their behaviours could be better, particularly in the way of Islamic dressing. Moreover, there was another negative response shown by the community.

Meanwhile, the implementation of *qanun* No. 8 of 2014, which is describing the Islamic sharia implementation in West Aceh, contributed to positive reactions from society. The purpose of this *qanun* is to increase the community's motivation to pray especially to do dawn prayers and to learn the *majlis taklim* and other Islamic teaching-learning involving the *santri* (Islamic students) and the *teungku dayah* (leaders of traditional Islamic school) in West Aceh. By working with the government program, they have done more *dakwah* (Islamic lectures), education, and sharia campaigns in every mosque through *mimbar kajian* (panel discussions) or *khatib jum'at* (Friday sermons), in the city, the towns and in the villages. They gave lectures about Islamic sharia even in the rural areas as part of the government program. The implementation in West Aceh has had a positive impact upon the behaviour of the community and has been seen to guide them to a better life, said Samsuar, the head of STAIN Teuku Dirundeng.

Despite the challenges found in the field, the government kept persevering to promote Islamic sharia since it is a part of a good Muslims' duties to invite people to do good deeds. Others said that there were communities in West Aceh who did not support the implementation of Islamic sharia and who did not know what Islamic sharia was, specifically the essence of the laws. Such trivial considerations were caused by lack of the knowledge about the implementation program. It can be concluded that there are two opinions on the current condition of the implementation of Islamic sharia in West Aceh. From the view of some West Aceh people, the application of Islamic sharia is still not maximally conducted, while the government says that it has been done well in West Aceh. Besides, the government claims that the community was pleased with the changes resulting from such implementation.

4. Discussion

There are significant differences regarding the implementation of Islamic sharia laws by the government of West Aceh through socialization, training, and supervision of the implementation of regulation No. 8 of 2014. Some people say that the implementation of Islamic sharia has been a great success especially the aspects of worshipping, proper behaviour and dress and so on. This can be seen with the public's enthusiasm and participation in preventing violations of Islamic sharia laws. According to the public perception of West Aceh citizens, there have been some significant improvements after the implementation of Islamic sharia laws. Similarly, violations like gambling, adultery and others have been reduced as well. Thanks to the WH and other related institutions who have worked so hard to give advice and go on patrols and conduct raids, and so on in order to raise the awareness of people to abide by the Islamic sharia laws.

There is also people who say that the implementation has failed. This perception emerges from the reality that there are still many miscreants, for instance there is a café in Johan Pahlawan sub-district which is said to harbour recalcitrant and presumably violates the Islamic sharia laws but it still carries on its business. In addition, lack of government commitment to the implementation of Islamic sharia laws can be found in the way that WH works. This is because the government only allocates limited funds for WH in order to perform their duties well. Moreover, the implementations of Islamic sharia laws does not cover all aspects such as economics, politics, education and so on. Additionally, based

on some observations, the government lacked commitment to the implementation of Islamic sharia. Thus, it found various violations committed by young people, but it processed the violators without any sanctions or punishments. Furthermore, the way that young people socialize now with the opposite sex is quite alarming. Moreover, the caning of *qanun* violators has only rarely been done. This too is perhaps caused by the lack of funds, the insufficient budget, as well as lack of training for the personnel of WH.

The condition of social intercourse for teenagers in this era is also cause for apprehension. Without strict enforcement of punishment, in this case caning, violation of the law will be common. Such a situation makes the believers disappointed. Various places of entertainment and cafés, which probably violate the law, openly operate within society since there is no strict actions by agents of the government. The development of cyber media also promotes such problems. Another perception of the society towards the implementation of Islamic Sharia in West Aceh today is that it does not cover all aspects of life such as economics, politics, education, etc. In addition, the Department of Islamic sharia is also seen to be ineffective in disseminating information about Islamic sharia both for students and for the community. Meanwhile, recent conditions in society required serious actions for the implementation of the Islamic sharia laws.

The public response towards the implementation of the Islamic sharia laws in West Aceh can be put into two different points of view, viz: Positive and negative. Some people in West Aceh society have positive responses toward the implementation of the sharia laws. They consider that the government has made sufficient efforts, by allocating budgets for various activities for socialization of the laws in the villages. The district government also allocated a special budget for Islamic education. This budget, which was included in the village budget allocations, covered some expenses for Islamic education institutions, fees for preachers, Islamic funerals, and uniforms for groups giving Islamic recitals. Training for Islamic preachers known as Pendidikan Kader Ulama, was also part of the implementation.

Despite the positive responses from some people, some other parties felt that the implementation was not yet optimum. The lack of strict enforcement, mainly for violations of sharia laws, made many people have doubts about its implementation. The former regent, Mr. Ramli MS was actually commended for his commitment to the implementation. During his era, when there was violation of Islamic law, strict punishment was taken immediately. However, nowadays such actions are never taken by the WH officials. Recent conditions have made people feel that the implementation has become stagnant. Since there is now no strict punishment for violators, people now feel no fear of breaking the sharia laws. Some people even think that the cases of violations are increasing recently. Furthermore, the most noticeable violators are teenagers.

Co-operation among stakeholders is also not maximal. There is no solid co-operation between the government and people in society for the implementation of Islamic laws. Many people hope that the government can manage the implementation well, especially policies concerning recreational sites, such as beaches. Socialization of the need to wear proper clothing is the most common demand from society. The decline in enforcement has become a noticeable issue in society. The recent government is considered too weak in giving out penalties and making policies. During the period of the former regent, his government announced the concept of a city of Tauhid and Tasawuf (a city of faith and theological thought). This program reflected the commitment of the previous government upon the implementation. Conversely, similar innovations have not happened recently. Furthermore, the former regent responded to the Islamic law by making related local policies. The announcement of Local Regulation No. 5 of 2010 was considered a response to similar regulations made by Aceh Province viz: No. 11 of 2002. The recent regent, Mr. Alaidinsyah has never taken similar steps and only focuses on the development of facilities and infrastructure.

In addition to that, many have noticed that Islamic law violators are often teenagers. To give an example, a café in Suak Ribee village which some people see as a place where teenagers can mix and be recalcitrant to sharia laws against dating has not been bothered by the WH apparently because the café has the backing of someone powerful. In this case, the role of the WH as the Islamic police force is questionable. It is unfair if such responsibility is only put on the WH's shoulders and not shared with other related institutions. Society and government must work together in good coordination and support each other for better Islamic sharia implementation to ensure that the government has full authority and hopefully it can improve the performance of WH to be more effective. Some say that if WH is supported

powerfully it will be able to do its duties easily, and otherwise if the Islamic sharia army is weak then the sharia violators will be in charge.

The implementation of Islamic sharia in West Aceh has improved since the first days of its declaration initiated by the Council of Ulama on December 17th, 2009. There were some legal bases for the declaration, namely *qanun* No. 4 of 1999 about the Aceh province special privileges, *qanun* No. 5 of 2000 about the Implementation of Islamic Sharia, Aceh Province *qanun* No. 11 of 2002 about the Implementation of Islamic Sharia in the field of *aqidah*, worship and symbols of Islam and UUPA No. 11 of 2006 [10]. The aforementioned policies, strategies, and programs of the former regent were also considered as a good basis for commitment of the implementation. Foreign researchers, such as J. R. Jones (London), B. Williams (Australia) [11], and Siti Fatimah (Malaysia), consider that the implementation was successful during the former Bupati's era. Then, various acts, policies and programs were implemented to ensure the enforcement of the law. In addition, Reed W. Taylor, who performed research during 2012, has stated that the implementation was a visionary concept, since Islamic sharia covered and managed all aspects of society.

Through the concept of a city of Tauhid and Tasawuf, the former Bupati implemented important Islamic policies. The first was the allocation of a budget for the lecture tour about Islam throughout the district (2010-2011: 2). Then, the government published policies relating to the act, such as Local Act No. 5 regarding proper dressing. Finally, it provided funds for sufficient personnel for WH which became a notable policy of the government. Such innovative actions made the implementation of Islamic sharia an interesting issue for researchers. Conversely, these good actions of the former Bupati were not continued by the present Bupati. Some people say that the present government only focuses on the development of facilities, and neglects other implementation. An example of this was the billboard with the motto of the city "Tauhid and Tasawuf" which was taken down for the sake of a new building. In addition, John Ker, a researcher of Islamic studies from the USA, has stated that the present district government only focuses on a limited scope for worship and attitude. Furthermore since the present District Government seems hesitant to implement strict penalties, violations of sharia are increasing nowadays. Such cases can give rise to disappointment and lack of support for the present District Government.

The existence of regulations regarding sharia actually ensure order within society. An example of this are the regulations about proper dressing which can actually become the foundation for parents to control the attitudes of their very own children. Several programs of the WH, such as sweeping patrols to catch people committing immoral acts, make sure that they are in order within society [12, 13]. Society, e.g. parents in turn have to support the enforcement of the law by counselling and controlling their teenage children's attitudes. Violations of the law are often actually caused by the lack of understanding and commitment to the law [14, 15]. The recent conditions for implementation lead to a division in perspective. The government, through its programs and policies, believes that the implementation has run well. Meanwhile, some people in society, based on the factual conditions seen by them, consider that the implementation and the enforcement are not yet optimal.

5. Conclusions

The West Aceh Government has an essential role in ensuring that Islamic sharia is implemented well in the soil of Teuku Umar. The government itself has done various things related to the implementation of Islamic sharia and has allocated various incentives related to the enforcement of Islamic sharia. However, the recent condition of the implementation has led to feelings of disappointment amongst the community. The people consider that the recent government has only focused on the development of facilities and infrastructure: Meanwhile, the enforcement of Islamic law has been neglected, as the implementation has only concentrated on general aspects of worship and attitudes. Of course, different perspectives will arise within society. While the government officials may consider that the implementation has been successful, researchers from outside and local people do not share similar thoughts. Many cases of turning a blind eye to violations, weak punishments for convictions and the uncertain commitment to the implementation have led people to believe that implementation is not yet optimum. By contrast, some academics in West Aceh say that the implementation has run well. It has been marked by programs undertaken by the government with the involvement of various elements

from society. In addition, socialization and coaching programs involving traditional Islamic institutions have also been vigorously carried out for the implementation of Islamic sharia in West Aceh.

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