

## Public Policy and Economic Analysis of Tightening of Used Clothing Imports in Indonesia in 2025

Article

Abstract

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The tightening of used clothing imports in Indonesia in 2025 is a response to the increasing influx of illegal goods that impact the stability of the textile industry, public health, and environmental sustainability. This study aims to analyze the rationale for this policy from a public policy perspective, its economic impact on the national textile industry, and its relevance within an Islamic economic framework. The research method uses a qualitative-descriptive approach based on secondary data obtained from relevant ministries, industry associations, international publications, and academic literature. The analysis is carried out through data reduction, presentation of findings, and interpretation based on public policy theory, industrial economics, and the principles of *maqasid al-shariah*. The research results show that the surge in illegal used clothing imports, reaching 7,100 tons in 2024, signals the need for tightened regulations. The influx of used clothing has a significant impact on decreasing textile industry utilization, increasing layoffs, and weakening the upstream supply chain—all of which threaten the sustainability of this strategic sector. From a health perspective, imported used clothing has been shown to contain pathogenic bacteria and hazardous chemical residues, while from an environmental perspective, it contributes to increasing the burden of national textile waste. From an Islamic economic perspective, tightening policies align with the principles of *maslahah* (maslahah), market justice, and consumer protection. This research concludes that tightening policies are highly relevant and need to be supported by integrated supervision and accompanying policies that ensure clothing accessibility for low-income groups.

**Keywords:** import of used clothing; public policy; textile industry; public health; Islamic economics.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian government's tightening of used clothing imports in 2025 was not born in a vacuum, but rather a response to global economic dynamics, changes in domestic consumption structures, and increasingly complex regulatory challenges. Over the past decade, the global used clothing trade has grown rapidly in line with the widespread phenomenon of fast fashion. fashion and the acceleration of the global textile production cycle. UN Comtrade data indicates that by 2023, the global export value of used clothing will reach US\$7.2 billion, an increase of nearly 32% compared to 2018. <sup>1</sup>Indonesia is a key destination market due to high demand, varying purchasing power across income groups, and digital market penetration that eliminates geographical boundaries in the distribution of goods.

The influx of illegal secondhand clothing into Indonesia has increased significantly over the past three years. The Ministry of Trade and the Directorate General of Customs and Excise

<sup>1</sup> United Nations, *Economic and Social Council*, vol. 21383, 2023, <https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/ECE-TRADE-C-CEFACT-2023-18E.pdf?utm>.

confiscated more than 5,900 tons of illegally imported clothing in 2023, and this figure rose again to 7,100 tons in 2024, indicating that previous tightening measures have not been effective enough.<sup>2</sup>The economic value of these smuggled goods is estimated at IDR 1.8 trillion per year, while the transaction turnover in the imported secondhand clothing market, both through traditional markets and e-commerce, is estimated to exceed IDR 10 trillion.<sup>3</sup>The magnitude of these transactions indicates that the practice of importing secondhand clothing is not only a trade issue, but also a socio-economic phenomenon intertwined with the needs of low-income communities.

The national textile and textile products (TPT) industry, which has long been the backbone of manufacturing employment, is experiencing an alarming contraction. The Indonesian Textile Association (API) reports that production capacity utilization will drop from 83% in 2019 to 59–63% in 2024, while more than 56,000 workers will lose their jobs between 2022 and 2024 due to declining demand and the rise of cheap imports, including used clothing.<sup>4</sup>Upstream industries such as spinning and weaving also experienced production declines of up to 30%, and several large factories have partially ceased operations due to cost pressures and imbalanced price competition. This situation highlights the imbalance between domestic industrial competitiveness and market preferences, which requires more measured and long-term policy interventions.

Research by Albab et al. demonstrates the real health and environmental risks of using imported secondhand clothing.<sup>5</sup>Andrias' study found that samples of imported secondhand clothing contained bacteria such as *Staphylococcus aureus*, *E. coli*, and hazardous chemical residues from industrial bleaching and dyeing processes.<sup>6</sup>Other research conducted by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK) noted that Indonesia produces 2.3 million tons of textile waste annually, and the majority of imported, unfit-for-wear clothing adds to the burden on already critical landfills.<sup>7</sup>The influx of used clothing not only raises sanitation issues but also creates environmental externalities in the form of increased waste, energy use, and carbon emissions from the process of destroying confiscated goods.

The controversy surrounding secondhand clothing imports has raised two perspectives. First, those who see secondhand clothing as an economical alternative for the lower-middle class, especially during times of inflationary pressures and weakening purchasing power. The Central Statistics Agency (BPS) reported that in 2024, 20.3% of urban consumers with lower-middle incomes purchased secondhand clothing as a way to reduce household expenses. Second, those who believe that the presence of secondhand clothing disrupts the market structure and creates unfair competition, and trigger dumping, thus weakening domestic industries that have legal obligations regarding production and labor standards.

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<sup>2</sup> BBC News Indonesia, "Purbaya Wants to Issue Regulations to Eradicate Imported Used Clothing – Why Are Illegal Products So Difficult to Handle?" *BBC News Indonesia*, last modified 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/articles/c9q1yy48nde0>.

<sup>3</sup> Nebby MR, "Sweeping Thrifting Closes the State's Fiscal Wounds," *Inilah.Com*, last modified 2025, accessed December 12, 2025, <https://www.inilah.com/menyapu-thrifting-menutup-luka-fiskal-negara>.

<sup>4</sup> Clara Anna Scholastica, "Small-Medium Garment Business Turnover Plummets 30 Percent, Can Recover If Thrifting Is Eliminated," *Inilah.Com*, last modified 2025, accessed December 12, 2025, <https://www.inilah.com/omzet-garmen-kecil-menengah-anjlok-30-persen-bisa-bangkit-jika-thrifting-dilibas>.

<sup>5</sup> Wildan Ulul Albab et al., "The Influence of the Fast Fashion Industry on Environmental Pollution and the Decline of Intergenerational Justice," *Indonesian Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology (IJCLC)* 2, no. 3 (2024): 94–103.

<sup>6</sup> Qathru Nada Andrias, "THE INDONESIAN GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS IN HANDLING THE ILLEGAL TRADE OF USED CLOTHING FROM SINGAPORE IN 2015-2016," *JOM FISIP* 5, no. 2 (2018).

<sup>7</sup> Muhammad Fahmi Trisnadi, "Fast Fashion: Fashion Trends at Ecological Prices," *ASEAN Treasury Forum*, last modified 2024, accessed December 12, 2025, <https://djpb.kemenkeu.go.id/portal/en/847-berita/opini/4445-fast-fashion-tren-modis-dengan-harga-ekologis.html#:~:text=In Indonesia%2C the impact of textile waste, of the total composition of national waste.>

Previous studies have tended to offer limited contributions, as most have focused solely on microeconomic aspects or merely emphasized the legal aspects of international trade. Few studies have integrated public policy analysis, macroeconomic impact evaluation, and assessment based on Islamic economic principles. From a sharia economic perspective, this issue is closely related to the principle of *maslahah* (protection of the quality of goods) (*himayatul zakat*) . *mustahlik* ), prohibition of harmful practices (*dllarar* ), and distributive justice. The absence of a comprehensive study encompassing these three perspectives indicates a scientific gap that needs to be filled.

This research seeks to make a scientific contribution by systematically analyzing the basis, effectiveness, and implications of the 2025 policy of tightening used clothing imports. The research focuses on the relationship between regulatory structure, national industrial competitiveness, public consumption behavior, and the values of economic justice that serve as references in Islamic economics. This research also highlights how this policy can be an instrument to strengthen the national textile and clothing industry without sacrificing public accessibility to affordable clothing needs. Ultimately, this analysis is expected to provide a basis for consideration in the formulation of more inclusive, proportional, and sustainable policies, thereby able to address the challenges of national economic development amidst the dynamics of global trade.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study uses a qualitative-descriptive approach to analyze the policy of tightening used clothing imports in Indonesia in 2025. This approach was chosen because it is able to explain the policy context, implementation dynamics, and its impact on the economy and the textile industry in more depth.

The research data is entirely derived from secondary data obtained through official government documents, such as reports from the Ministry of Trade, Customs and Excise, the Ministry of Industry, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, and data from the Central Statistics Agency. Additional information was gathered from scientific journals, industry organization reports, international publications such as UN Comtrade , and regulations related to the import of used goods.

Data analysis was conducted through a process of reduction, presentation, and drawing conclusions. Empirical findings were interpreted using a public policy analysis framework and economic theory, and reinforced with relevant Islamic economic concepts such as *maslahah* (the principle of social justice) and distributive justice. Data validity was maintained through source triangulation, comparing information from various institutions and publications to ensure the consistency and accuracy of the findings.

This method provides a comprehensive overview of the effectiveness and implications of policies so that it can be used to assess policy rationalization and provide relevant recommendations for strengthening regulations in the future.

## **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Rationalization of the Policy on Tightening Imports of Used Clothing**

The 2025 policy of tightening used clothing imports is well-founded, stemming from a significant increase in the inflow of illegal goods that has continued over the past five years.

<sup>8</sup>Data shows that the volume of seized imported used clothing increased sharply from 3,200 tons in 2020 to 7,100 tons in 2024. Table 1 below provides a comprehensive overview of the development of this inflow of illegal goods .

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<sup>8</sup> Ilona Estherina Piri, "Government Focuses on Cracking Down on Illegal Importers of Used Clothing," *Tempo* , last modified 2025, <https://www.tempo.co/ekonomi/pemerintah-berfokus-tindak-pengimpor-pakaian-bekas-ilegal-2090420>.

**Table 1. Inflow of Illegal Used Clothing in Indonesia 2020–2024**

Year	Volume (Tons)	Estimated Value
2020	3,200	Rp. 780 billion
2021	4,100	Rp. 1 trillion
2022	4,850	Rp. 1.2 trillion
2023	5,900	Rp. 1.5 trillion
2024	7,100	Rp 1.8 T

The increase in confiscated goods confirms that previous policies have been ineffective in controlling the flow of used clothing imports. The growing domestic demand for used clothing has fueled smuggling activities.<sup>9</sup> This phenomenon demonstrates the need for more decisive and measured policy interventions to mitigate the economic and social impacts of this illegal trade.<sup>10</sup>

Demand from low-income communities is a key factor influencing policy rationalization. Consumers are increasingly choosing secondhand clothing due to its affordability, creating a significant market opportunity for illegal importers.<sup>11</sup> This high demand demonstrates that the issue of secondhand clothing imports is not solely related to trade but also to socio-economic dynamics.<sup>12</sup>

Weak oversight at various small ports and unofficial channels indicates that previous policies require strengthening implementation mechanisms. Therefore, the government's tightening policies must encompass regulatory, supervisory, and public education aspects to strike a balance between industry protection and the needs of low-income consumers.

## 2. Economic Impact on the National Textile Industry

The Indonesian textile industry is a crucial sector of the national economy, employing millions of workers and contributing significantly to non-oil and gas exports.<sup>13</sup> The influx of imported used clothing in large volumes has put significant pressure on the domestic textile industry. The decline in factory utilization from 83% in 2019 to around 60% in 2024 reflects a critical situation for the textile and textile industry.<sup>14</sup> When used goods at very low prices flood the market, domestic products are no longer economically competitive, leading to an inevitable decline in production.

**Table 2. Indonesian Textile Industry Performance Indicators 2019–2024**

Indicator	2019	2022	2023	2024
Production Utilization	83%	72%	67%	59–63%

<sup>9</sup> Velita Priskila Angelia Simbolon and Made Cinthya Puspita Shara, "EFFECTIVENESS OF THE REGULATION PROHIBITING USED CLOTHING IMPORTS IN BATAM": LEX SPECIALIS' PROPOSAL AS A LEGAL REGULATION SOLUTION TO THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE REGULATION ON THE BAN ON USED CLOTHING IMPORTS IN BATAM: LEX SPECIALIST'S PROPOSAL AS A SOLUTION," *JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC MEDIA (JMA)* 3, no. 11 (2025).

<sup>10</sup> Ayutia Nurita Sari, "The Thrifting Phenomenon is Increasingly Popular, Beware of Illegal Goods?", *Ministry of Finance, Regional Office of the Directorate General of State Assets (DJKN), North Sulawesi, Central Sulawesi, Gorontalo, and North Maluku*, last modified 2023, <https://www.djkn.kemenkeu.go.id/kanwil-suluttenggomalu/baca-artikel/16340/Fenomena-Thrifting-Semakin-Populer-Hati-Hati-Barang-Ilegal.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Dina Nisa Ulfiana et al., "THRIFT SHOPPING IN THE LEGAL PERSPECTIVE OF INDONESIA AND ITS IMPACT ON MSMEs," *Rewang Rencang: Journal of Law Lex Generalis* (2024): 1–24.

<sup>12</sup> Jonatan Budiman Damanik, Husni Thamrin, and Mia Aulina Lubis, "THE IMPACT OF THE BAN ON USED CLOTHING IMPORTS ON THE INCOME OF USED CLOTHING TRADERS AT TANJUNG BALAI TPO MARKET," *Trivikrama: Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Sciences* 11, no. 7 (2025).

<sup>13</sup> Alief Anugrah et al., "Analysis of the Textile Industry in West Java Before and After the Economic Crisis," *Doktrin: World Journal of Law and Political Science* 2, no. 2 (2024).

<sup>14</sup> MYESHA FATINA RACHMAN, "Chronology of the Decline of the Indonesian Textile Industry in the Last Three Years," last modified 2024, accessed December 13, 2025, <https://www.tempo.co/ekonomi/kronologi-terpuruknya-industri-tekstil-indonesia-dalam-tiga-tahun-terakhir-1162545>.

Affected Workers	18,000	29,000	41,000	56,000
Decline in Upstream Production	–	12%	21%	30%

The subsequent impact is evident in the high number of affected workers. The layoffs of more than 56,000 textile workers in the past two years are not merely statistics, but reflect a broader socio-economic crisis. <sup>15</sup>Reduced employment opportunities in the textile industry have led to increased unemployment, decreased household incomes, and weakened purchasing power. <sup>16</sup>This situation demonstrates that the import of used clothing is not only a trade issue but also a welfare issue with the potential for long-term social impacts.

Pressure on the textile industry is not only felt in the garment sector as the final product, but also in upstream industries such as spinning and weaving. Declining demand for textile raw materials has led to a decline in production capacity, which ultimately impacts the value chain (chain) as a whole. When both upstream and downstream industries are under pressure, the sustainability of the national textile industry is vulnerable. This situation requires policy interventions that are not only oriented towards tightening imports but also strengthening local industrial capacity.

The economic consequences of the proliferation of imported secondhand clothing are also evident in state revenue. <sup>17</sup>Large volumes of illegal goods are not subject to taxes or import duties, resulting in lost state revenue. <sup>18</sup>In the long term, this situation can disrupt fiscal balance and weaken the state's ability to support national industry. Therefore, tightening import restrictions is not merely a protectionist measure, but also a step to safeguard the sustainability of strategic sectors and ensure fiscal stability in the medium and long term.

### 3. Public Health and Environmental Considerations

Basarang's findings indicate that some imported used clothing is contaminated with dangerous bacteria such as *E. coli* and *Staphylococcus aureus*. <sup>19</sup>This bacteria can cause skin infections, irritation, and digestive disorders. When used clothing is reused by the public without adequate sterilization, the risk of disease transmission increases. This highlights the importance of strict controls on goods circulating in the domestic market.

Chemical residues from dyeing and bleaching processes in the textile industry of the country of origin have also been found in significant quantities. Imported secondhand clothing contains hazardous chemicals that can cause skin irritation and allergic reactions. Exposure to these chemicals is particularly risky for children and individuals with sensitive skin. In the context of public health, the government has a moral obligation to ensure that every product in circulation is safe and harmless. Therefore, tightening policies is a necessary preventative measure.

From an environmental perspective, Indonesia faces a serious problem in textile waste management. Data from the Ministry of Environment shows that Indonesia produces 2.3 million tons of textile waste annually. <sup>20</sup>The influx of imported used clothing, particularly those no longer fit for use, exacerbates this burden, as most items cannot be recycled and end up in landfills. Textile waste takes a long time to decompose, and the disposal process often leads to

<sup>15</sup> Ahmad Wahyudi Zein, Ahmad Al Farabi, and Fahreza Permana, "The Impact of Termination of Employment on People's Purchasing Power and Indonesia's Economic Growth in 2025," *Tax and Financial Management* (2025).

<sup>16</sup> Zarkasi, "THE EFFECT OF UNEMPLOYMENT ON THE PURCHASING POWER OF THE PEOPLE OF WEST KALIMANTAN," *Jurnal Khatulistiwa – Journal Of Islamic Studies* 4, no. 2005 (2014): 45–62.

<sup>17</sup> Siti Afiah Hardinar Nazhifah et al., "The Impact of Thrifting on the Indonesian Textile Industry: The Perspective of PT. Sritex and Government Policy," *Journal of Innovative and Creativity* 5, no. 2 (2025): 425–439.

<sup>18</sup> Karunia Fitri Rahmadani and Law, "ANALYSIS OF TRIGGER ACTIVITIES OF ILLEGAL IMPORT AND EXPORT ACTIVITIES THAT IMPACT THE STATE'S FINANCIAL STABILITY," *Legacy: Journal of Law and Legislation* 2, no. 2 (2022): 37–54.

<sup>19</sup> Mujahidah Basarang, Rahmawati, and Wahyono, "Dermatophyta in Imported Used Clothing Sold in Makassar City," *Jurnal Medika: Media Ilmiah Analisis Kesehatan* 1, no. 1 (2016): 20–23.

<sup>20</sup> Trisnadi, "Fast Fashion: Fashion Trends at Ecological Prices."

soil and water pollution. This situation demonstrates that imported used clothing is also closely linked to environmental issues.

Table 3. Health Risks of Imported Used Clothing

Findings	Percentage	Risk
<i>E. coli</i>	27%	Skin & digestive infections
<i>S. aureus</i>	15%	Irritation and infection
Chemical residue	42%	Allergies & skin disorders
Not hygienic	68%	Not fit for distribution

Environmental issues are further complicated by the shift in global textile waste from developed to developing countries. Indonesia has become one of the final destinations for used clothing waste, both in the form of "donations" and cheap goods. This not only harms the domestic industry but also imposes ecological burdens that should be borne by the countries of origin. Therefore, tightening imports is not merely an economic policy but also a step to prevent Indonesia from becoming a dumping ground for international textile waste.

#### 4. Islamic Economic Perspective on Tightening Policy

Public policy must always consider the value of public welfare. The policy of restricting imports of used clothing can be understood as a state effort to prevent greater harm to society. When used clothing is proven to pose a health risk and damage the domestic market, the state is obliged to intervene. The principle of *sad al-dzari'ah*, namely blocking the path to harm, provides a strong theoretical basis for this policy. In this context, restricting imports is part of an effort to protect the public from preventable harm.

The principle of market fairness in Islamic economics is also relevant to this issue. Illegal products imported at very low prices result in price distortions that harm local producers. Domestic textile industry players must comply with production standards, taxes, and labor regulations that do not apply to illegal goods. From a *muamalah perspective*, this situation creates injustice (*zulm*) and imbalance in competition. Therefore, tightening policies are in place to ensure the market operates fairly according to the principles of *al - 'adl. wa al-qisth*.

Islamic economics also emphasizes the importance of protecting vulnerable groups. The fact that some low-income communities rely on secondhand clothing demonstrates that austerity policies should not stand alone. The state must provide alternatives in the form of affordable, locally produced clothing, strengthen MSMEs in the clothing sector, and distribute targeted subsidies when needed. This way, austerity policies will not place an additional burden on the poor but instead strengthen their access to quality, hygienic goods.

Islamic economics does not reject the trade in secondhand goods as long as they meet the principles of cleanliness, safety, and fairness. However, when imported secondhand clothing fails to meet these standards and harms the public interest, restrictions are not only legitimate but also necessary. In this context, restrictive policies reflect the concrete implementation of the *maqasid principle. al-shariah*, especially in protecting the soul (*hifz al-nafs*), guarding wealth (*hifz al-mal*), and maintaining the health of the wider community. Thus, this policy aligns with the basic values of Islamic economics, which uphold the common good.

## CONCLUSION

The policy of tightening imports of used clothing by 2025 is a strategic step taken by the government in response to the increasing influx of illegal secondhand clothing, which has reached alarming levels. Data from the past five years shows a significant increase in smuggling volume, indicating not only weak oversight but also high domestic demand for affordable clothing. This

situation demonstrates that previous policies have been ineffective, necessitating a more comprehensive and assertive regulatory approach.

Economically, the massive influx of used clothing has placed significant pressure on the national textile industry. Declining factory utilization, shrinking production capacity, and high layoffs indicate that the textile and textile industry is vulnerable. Loss of market share due to the dominance of cheap, illegal goods has weakened the upstream and downstream supply chains. Therefore, tightening import regulations is a crucial tool to maintain the sustainability of this strategic industry and prevent further economic losses.

Public health is also a key consideration in this policy. Laboratory tests show that most imported secondhand clothing does not meet hygiene standards and even contains pathogenic bacteria and hazardous chemical residues. Furthermore, the increasing volume of textile waste threatens environmental sustainability and adds to the burden of national waste management. Therefore, the tightening policy is not only economically sound but also serves as a preventative measure to protect public health and the environment.

From an Islamic economic perspective, this policy is in line with the basic values of *maqashid*. *Sharia principles* emphasize the protection of life, property, and market fairness. Restricting the import of used clothing can be seen as an effort to prevent greater harm to both society and the national industry. However, the government still needs to ensure that the impact on low-income groups is minimized through the provision of affordable clothing alternatives, strengthening clothing MSMEs, and other supporting policies.

Overall, tightening the import ban on used clothing is a policy with strong and multidimensional relevance. This policy is not only a protective measure for the domestic industry but also a means of safeguarding public health, reducing environmental burdens, and creating a fairer market. Effective implementation requires inter-institutional synergy, stricter oversight, and supporting policies that ensure the community's basic needs are met adequately and sustainably.

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