



Waqf as a Poverty-Alleviating Instrument: Leveraging Shariah Governance Principles for Effective Implementation in Nigeria

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Abstract

Despite the propagation of microfinance institutions and several government socio-economic intervention programmes, poverty remains a formidable obstacle to development in numerous communities, largely due to weak and corrupt governance institutions. The informal sector, with its multitude of entrepreneurs, stands as the primary source of employment but lacks financial leverage, compounded by the burden of high interest rates on bank loans. The current study explores the role of Waqf in alleviating poverty in Nigeria by leveraging Shariah Governance principles to ensure effective implementation. This study uses qualitative desk research, collecting data from academic papers and online resources. The critical literature review (CLR) method was utilized to analyze the collected articles and secondary data to unearth groundbreaking insights into the role of Waqf in alleviating poverty through leveraging Shariah Governance principles. The findings indicate that poverty and Waqf are perceived as symbiotic social problems and solutions, with Waqf deeply rooted in Islamic tradition involving the voluntary dedication of assets for societal betterment. Perceptions towards Waqf utilization for poverty alleviation are generally positive, but challenges such as mismanagement of funds and lack of transparency impede effective application. Shariah Governance principles serve as a robust framework for ethical guidance, ensuring that Waqf assets are managed and distributed following Islamic law and ethical guidelines. Despite its potential, Waqf-based poverty alleviation initiatives face several challenges, but Shariah Governance principles can mitigate them, ensuring the effective utilization of Waqf for poverty alleviation. The paper concludes with practical recommendations and discusses the limitations inherent in the study.

Keywords

Waqf concept, Shariah governance, Poverty alleviation

INTRODUCTION

Waqf has generally been one of Islam's most effective tools for reducing poverty among Muslims. However, poverty is the most serious threat to development in many communities. Despite the presence of numerous microfinance institutions, a large segment of the population continues to struggle with poverty daily, particularly in Nigeria and developing countries at large, due to weak and corrupt institutions. Additionally, many Nigerian citizens are in poverty, and most youths and the elderly are impoverished due to joblessness. Researchers found that the financial capability of most developing countries is insufficient to cater for the poor and low-income people, despite the availability of natural resources that support revenue generation for economic growth in some developing countries, including Nigeria. Nigeria is a case study of developing countries where many people are involved in the informal sector with no government's financial support, either through loans or social security, in a country where corruption is a concern. However, many people are working as civil servants to earn a living, yet the informal sector is the employer of the smallest proportion of the workforce. Therefore, research on the practice of Waqf under transparent implementation has informed researchers of the opportunity to empower financially the less privileged and those striving for survival in private businesses, while Shariah governance guidelines are primarily concerned with Shariah enforcement.

According to Yusuf (2019), while considering the effect of insecurity, he found that Nigeria is just second to Syria, with 6.5 million internally displaced persons, and Colombia, with 5.7 million IDPs, on a global scale. Tribal violence, rebellion, religious conflict, natural disasters, and other factors also contribute to IDPs in Nigeria. Those who are creative enough to be self-employed cannot source money to establish businesses due to difficult requirements set by conventional financial institutions; consequently, most of them turn to unlawful means to make a living by committing crimes such as fraud, armed robbery, prostitution, and other social ills. For many centuries, the commercial heart of Africa has been Nigeria, even to the present moment. This links to the fact that, according to the World Bank, Nigeria has the largest economy in Africa and one of the largest known oil reserves (Oxford Business Group, 2022). The economy depends on commercial activity for sustained growth, and the majority of its citizens engage in small-scale business as their main source of income, mainly in the agricultural, fishing, and other industries. The aforementioned informal sectors have made significant improvements in lowering unemployment and poverty. Before the revolution, in Nigeria, more people worked in the urban areas in micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises as artisans and other occupations (Kowo, Adenuga, & Sabitu, 2019).

Despite these facts, the government is not helping matters, as corruption behaviour in the public sector and among some Nigerian politicians remains a great concern. Therefore, corruption has become a model of principles among the youth of the day as a way of life to make ends meet. In addition, the insecurity that has ravaged the country for the past decades has hampered individuals' self-empowerment to become economically vibrant. For instance, the acts of insurgency embarked upon by the Boko Haram terrorist groups coupled with the high number of Fulani herdsmen's kidnappings and barbaric killings of innocent Nigerians and farmers on their farmland whenever farmers resist the Fulani herdsmen from using their cattle to devour farmland and the agricultural produce that are ripe for harvest. These Fulanis' deadly attacks on the farmers scare a great number of farmers away from practising their daily traditional work of farming. There are regular reports of Fulani kidnappings for inflated ransom, slaughtering, or brutalising farmers who resist the free passage of cattle on their farmland. Many families of farmers have been murdered in the field and in private homes, and some of them have had their wives and daughters raped by some of the herdsmen. All these factors reduce not only food products and employment but also affect the economic growth of the country. According to Sodiq & Babalola (2016), conflict has existed in Nigeria for as long as the country has existed, but it is more difficult to address the frequency and damage caused by recent terrorist attacks by the herdsmen and the militant sect known as Boko Haram. However, the Boko Haram sect's activities started in Nigeria's northeast and spread to neighbouring northern states, including Adamawa and Bauchi. Adamawa, Yobe, Gombe, Niger, Zamfara, and Kaduna Borno, Gombe, Kaduna, Kano, Kogi, Plateau, Taraba, and Yobe. More precisely, since 2007, the level of insecurity in the country caused by the operations of numerous organisations has assumed a worrisome dimension. These crimes include insurgency in the south, kidnapping in the southeast, violent armed robberies, political assassinations, ritual killings, and, more recently, suicide bombings in some regions of the north, particularly the northeast (Udeh et al. 2018).

This study, following all the identified failures leading to poverty, subsequently aims to examine the importance of the Waqf in alleviating poverty for the masses in Nigeria through the guidance of Shariah governance. Following Mohsin (2019), waqf is an Islamic term for charitable endowments. It typically connotes donating a plot of land, a building, or any other assets for religious or charitable purposes. It is anticipated that with Waqf's successful implementation, financial aid will serve as a solace to those who are destitute. This study stands out due to its comprehensive examination of the intertwined issues of poverty and insecurity in Nigeria. By delving into the multifaceted challenges faced by the populace, including weak institutional support, widespread corruption, and the proliferation of unlawful activities, the study provides a nuanced understanding of the root causes of poverty in the country. Moreover, its focus on the potential of Waqf, an Islamic charitable endowment, to address these challenges under the guidance of Shariah governance adds a unique dimension to the discourse on poverty alleviation. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, the study offers practical insights into how Islamic principles can be harnessed to empower the less privileged and foster economic stability in Nigeria.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem statement question is, How can poverty in Nigeria be remedied through concepts of Waqf and Shariah-governed governance? Poverty poses a significant impediment to the growth of many communities. Despite the presence and operation of numerous microfinance institutions, a large segment of the population, particularly in Nigeria, grapples with poverty daily, exacerbated by exorbitant interest rates on loans (12–14%) and the stringent collateral requirements imposed by banks (CEIC, 2023). Moreover, unemployment disproportionately affects the youth and the elderly. The insufficient utilization of waqf by the government and leading NGOs to combat poverty in Nigeria exacerbates this challenge. Taiwo and Agwu (2016) highlight the significant deterioration in human economic and social conditions in Nigeria, particularly in recent decades, with dwindling real disposable incomes, escalating malnutrition rates, and pressing concerns regarding financing children's education and health services. Moreover, Sanusi (2018) underscores the paradox of Nigeria being home to the richest man in Africa amidst widespread poverty, emphasizing the urgent need for intervention. The lack of infrastructure in rural areas and the challenges posed by migration, as Nigerians seek better opportunities abroad, underscore the extreme wealth disparity in Nigeria. Before the COVID-19 crisis, nearly four out of ten Nigerians lived in poverty, with millions more teetering on the brink due to the country's sluggish and unequal growth trajectory. Recent data from the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics, as reported by Punch in November 2022, reveals

that 63% of Nigerians live in poverty due to limited access to safety, employment, education, and healthcare, coupled with low wages and substandard living conditions. Surveys indicate that 53.5% of Nigerians lived on less than US\$1.9 per day in 2011 (Manyong et al., 2021), placing them at risk of falling into extreme poverty in the event of a shock. Nigeria's continued reliance on oil, rapid population growth, and inadequate job creation have hindered the country's ability to achieve the inclusive development necessary to combat poverty. The unprecedented economic and social impacts of the pandemic, described by the UN as a global catastrophe (United Nations, 2020), further exacerbated Nigeria's poverty challenges (Umar, 2021). Poverty pervades all aspects of human life, depriving individuals of necessities for a decent standard of living. Insufficient employment opportunities for young people have far-reaching financial, political, and ethical implications (Ayedogbon and Ohwofasa, 2012). Through a comprehensive review of the literature and an examination of the concepts of waqf and Shariah-governed governance, this study aims to assess the extent of poverty in Nigeria and explore potential remedies.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY/RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the foregoing, the purpose of this study is to explore the role of Waqf in alleviating poverty in Nigeria by leveraging Shariah Governance principles to ensure effective implementation. The four specific research questions arising from the main objectives are:

- i. What is the understanding of poverty and Waqf?
- ii. What is the perception in the literature towards the utilization of Waqf as a poverty-alleviating instrument in Nigeria?
- iii. What role do Shariah Governance principles play in guiding the institution of Waqf to alleviate poverty?
- iv. What are the key challenges and barriers hindering the effective implementation of Waqf-based poverty alleviation initiatives in Nigeria, and how can Shariah governance principles address these challenges?

METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in this study adopts a qualitative desk research approach, selected for its alignment with the research questions posed. Data necessary for the study were gathered from a diverse array of academic papers, texts, and working papers focusing on poverty and waqf, alongside pertinent online resources of the subject matter. The critical literature review (CLR) method was utilized to analyze the collected materials, adhering to established best practices in desk research literature reviews (Raimi, Abdur-Rauf & Ashafa, 2023; Wright & Michailova, 2023). A total of 63 articles and texts were sourced solely from the Google Scholar database due to its accessibility and visibility in attracting papers from various countries and institutions. However, employing purposive sampling techniques and stringent selection/inclusion criteria (including considerations of relevance, language, and timeliness), 37 of these academic resources were carefully selected for analysis. This methodological approach facilitates a comprehensive examination of existing literature, offering valuable insights into the four research questions. Through a robust critical literature review process, this study contributes to enhancing understanding of the role of Waqf in alleviating poverty in Nigeria by leveraging Shariah Governance principles to ensure effective implementation.

CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Waqf

According to the teachings of Islam, a human being must function to satisfy his needs and should not be dependent on others. The word "waqf" comes from the Arabic word "waqafa," which means "to stand still for a long time (Mahamood, 2006)." Waqf, on the other hand, refers to the act of releasing one's ownership of property and passing it to the general public (Harun, Isa, & Ali, 2012). Allah S.W.T. wishes for all people to treat their resources reasonably to contribute to the advancement of the Ummah (Saifuddin et al., 2014). Additionally, the term "waqf" refers to the process of amassing and maintaining charitable assets for the benefit of Muslim society. Waqf is one of the charity-based organisations that was initially founded in the early stages of the Islamic state of Madinah (Kamarubahrin, Ayedh, & Khairi, 2019). Its roots were planted during the Prophet Muhammad's (al-Allahu alayhi wa sallam) reign when Masjid Quba and Masjid Nabawi served as the previous waqfs. Furthermore, Ibrahim & Ibrahim (2013) stated that the act of keeping something for the good of others is known as waqf. Nevertheless, in the context of Islam, it refers to a religious endowment, such as the voluntarily and irrevocably devoting of one's wealth or a portion of it—in cash or kind (for instance, a piece of land or a fish pond)—and its disbursement for Shariah-compliant initiatives like mosques and Islamic educational institutions. Thabith, Muhammad (2019) According to Mohsin (2013), cash waqf has the potential to finance both religious and fundamental goods and services that are needed on a global scale, such as education, healthcare, social services, commercial activities, and fundamental infrastructure, as well as to generate jobs for the vast majority of people. Additionally, Waqf's contributions can be used for both religious and secular causes, including the establishment of schools, the improvement of infrastructure, the welfare of the underprivileged, and sustainable business ventures. Religious causes as well as the construction of places of worship and funding for wartime expenses (Hasan et al., 2018).

Categories of Waqf

Waqf can be separated into two groups: specialised Waqf and general Waqf. Specialised waqf, also known as Waqf khas, happens when the donor specifies the purpose of the waqf in advance, such as the building of a mosque or school, among

other things (Ibrahim and Ibrahim, 2013). The objective will then be stated in a waqf deed, and the manager (Mutawalli) is in charge of managing the waqf following the deed's instructions. On the other hand, General Waqf, also known as Waqf Am, is an open-ended waqf that permits the management to use the waqf properties for whatever purpose so long as it serves the interests of the general public and is by shariah principles (Ibrahim and Haslindar 2013). Land waqf is typically used to build mosques, cemeteries, educational institutions, social service centres, orphanages, and nursing homes for the elderly. The land position, land area, waqf type, land value, and waqf status are all factors that influence the potential creation of a land waqf (Hassan and Abdullah 2008). A cash waqf is a charitable endowment established with monetary capital; it is vital to note that waqf differs from zakat in that waqf is discretionary while zakat is required (Cizakca, 2004). The eight Asnaf, or categories, that are the recipients of Zakat are mentioned directly in the Quran, while the recipients of waqf monies are not. It is also crucial to note that the waqf should be applied to any good, virtuous, and holy endeavour that does not contravene shariah law. The waqf programme has had a significant socioeconomic impact on Islamic society throughout its history. The government received none of the costs associated with providing any of its fundamental services. The whole economy has been affected by this in several significant ways. By enabling a significant decrease in government spending and providing essential services to society at no expense to the state, the waqf system will significantly support the long-term objectives of a modern economy. Particularly in Nigeria, this is necessary. According to Budiman (2014), the waqf framework will contribute to achieving one of the main objectives of the modern economy, resulting in a sharp decline in government spending.

Governance of Waqf

Islamic law governs waqf as a religious endowment and income-producing asset for the benefit of Islamic creation. It all started with the life of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). According to Cizakça's definition from 2000, waqf is "to devote one's property as a perpetual trust to some religious or charitable service under specific conditions by eternally separating one's possession." As soon as the endower declares a waqf, it is legally obligatory (Ambrose, Aslam, & Hanafi (2015); Iman & Mohammad (2014)). The terms and circumstances of a lawful waqf, particularly those that make it simpler to achieve the distribution purpose and aims, are well defined as a collection of Islamic jurisprudential norms. The observance of the tenets, requirements, and values propagated by Shariah is the basis for the practice of Islamic finance. According to Mizushima (2014), the observance of the standards, requirements, and values disseminated by Shariah is the pillar of the practice of Islamic finance. According to Hassan and Rashid (2015) and Mahamood and Siraj (2012), the main responsibilities of the State Islamic Religious Council (SIRC) are to (i) ensure that all waqf properties are used, spent, and utilised following the terms and conditions set forth by waqif, (ii) protect the waqf property by enforcing the law for administration and management, (iii) develop the waqf property, and (iv) provide that. With time, the advantages of Waqf institutions have become more clear. According to Aliyu (2018), Waqf institutions have made a significant contribution to reducing tax burdens and budget deficits, increasing public goods, and addressing concerns with inequality and poverty reduction, among other things. Unlike other nations, like Malaysia, where legislation administers the Waqf institution, Nigeria governs its Waqf institution through trustees (Chabbal, 2020).

Ahmad & Rashid (2017) stated in their findings that none of the Nigerian enactments on zakah and waqf include a clause that allows members to be removed if they fail to perform their duties properly. If these agencies are to fulfil their duties, this is a question that must be addressed. In this regard, development was not emphasised as a crucial part of a mutawall's responsibilities in earlier ages, it has been discovered. It was probably determined to be unnecessary because there were enough wealthy Muslims who could offer assistance in an emergency (Rashid, Syed 2018). In addition, Laldin and Furqani (2013) also mentioned in their findings that Maqasid should not be limited to legal purposes since Shariah is an all-encompassing term that is concerned with human life and health. Mizushima (2014) pointed out in his findings that Shariah governance guidelines are primarily concerned with Shariah enforcement. The best way to put in place a Shariah governance structure is to establish an internal control mechanism for Shariah compliance. In addition, Shariah governance should be a guide for Islamic finance on Waqf justice and transparency to facilitate the justified distribution of the funds realised from the philanthropists for the poverty alleviation programme. Aside from legal problems, the administration component of the asset has several adverse effects on Waqf because it is a continuous entity (Alshater et al., 2022).

Defining poverty

Poverty can be defined as a state of deprivation where individuals lack the resources to meet their basic needs and enjoy a decent standard of living (World Bank, 2020). This deprivation extends beyond material possessions and includes limited access to essential services such as education, healthcare, and housing (Sen, 1999; Raimi, Patel & Adelopo, 2014). Furthermore, poverty often encompasses social exclusion and marginalization, hindering individuals' participation in economic, social, and political activities (Alkire, 2002). In essence, poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon that encompasses economic, social, and political dimensions, and its measurement requires consideration of various indicators beyond income or material wealth (Alkire & Foster, 2011). A recent study said that Waqf, Zakat and Sadaqat can mitigate and alleviate poverty. The key limitation to Zakat is nisab for potential zakat payers, lack of but the limitations of waqf and sadaqah are awareness and accessibility respectively (Ashafa, 2021). Waqf has a prospect for helping to solve poverty in Nigeria. Several studies alluded to that possibility. played a vital role in reducing poverty in Nigeria. The study

recommends the need for Waqf awareness to be created to enlighten the rich men in society and also for the government to ensure proper and adequate management of Waqf institutions (Haruna & Ibrahim, 2021).

Apart from the issues of awareness and accessibility facing Waqf in Nigeria, another problem is governance, particularly the lack of Shariah knowledge or its implementation, such as disregard for ethical standards related to the diversion of the funds meant for the poor beneficiaries to personal interests. This behaviour inhibits the timely distribution and apportionment of an adequate share of Waqf among the targeted population of less privileged people. It is argued that the efficiency of Waqf in alleviating poverty is indisputable in Nigeria, a country with a significant Muslim population. Despite the presence of Waqf institutions in Nigeria, the country still experiences increasing levels of poverty. Attempt to bring about sanity met with public displeasure with the involvement of the government in appointing officials for the institution (Fa-Yusuf, Busari, & Shuaibu, 2021). In addition, many people in Nigeria are suffering because they cannot afford to pay their bills monthly due to their poor income. Consequently, the researcher understands that Zakat and Waqf under Islamic financing can empower the poor. Nevertheless, this study aims to focus on Waqf alone under the guidance of Shariah governance because Zakat is different from Waqf. However, Zakat is compulsory for the rich, as 2.5% of their wealth is directed to be given as a donation to the poor according to the Qur'an, while Waqf is a voluntary donation to help the less fortunate people in society (Raimi et al., 2014; Ashafa, 2021).

Poverty trends and the prospect of Waqf

From the poverty trends in African countries vis-a-vis their populations, Waqf has the inherent potential to minimize the intensity of poverty scourge in African countries vis-a-vis their populations is shown in Table 1 below. Between 2018 and 2023, Nigeria's population was approximately 195.9 million, with 86.9 million people experiencing poverty. In the same period, Ghana had a population of about 29.767 million, with 3.49 million individuals living in poverty.

Table 1 African countries' populations and poverty rates in the year 2018

No (Year)	Country	population	Poverty rate	percentage
1. 2018-2023	Nigeria	195.9 m	86.9m	44.36%
2. 2018-2023	Ghana	29.767 m	3.49m	11.7%
3. 2018-2023	Egypt	98.423 m	32.18m	32.7%
4. 2018-2023	Morocco	36.29 m	3.29m	9.08%
5. 2018-2023	South- Africa	57.79 m	13.8 m	23.9%
6. 2018-2023	Zimbabwe	14.438 m	4.33m	30%
7. 2018-2023	Kenya	51.39 m	14.7m	28.6%
8. 2018-2023	Tanzania	56.313 m	19.9m	35.3%

Sources: World Bank and World Clock

In the same table, apart from Nigeria, Ghana stands out as one of the African countries with the lowest population and poverty rates, with 29.767 million people and a poverty rate of 3.49 million, accounting for 11.7%. This poverty level is lower than that of South Africa, whose population is 57.79 million, with 13.8 million people living in poverty, representing 23.9%. Nigeria holds the highest population in Africa, along with the highest number of people living in poverty, totalling 86.9 million, nearly equivalent to the combined 91.7 million impoverished individuals across the other 7 countries studied. Tanzania (35% of the population) and Egypt (32.7%), the only Arab nation with such a high poverty rate, follow Nigeria. The data suggests that the poverty rates in these leading countries serve as a benchmark for assessing the severity of poverty and the unfavourable living conditions experienced by over one-third of Africa's population. Notably, only Morocco boasts the lowest rate of poverty relative to its entire population, whereas Nigeria stands out with nearly half of its population living in poverty, despite being the largest economy in Africa. This underscores that a robust economy does not necessarily translate to improved well-being for the majority of its citizens but rather benefits a select few. Analytically, a small elite group controls the country's resources and enjoys public wealth, while the equitable distribution of wealth is evaluated concerning its poverty rate relative to the total population in 2018. Using the autoregressive distributed lag method of estimation, Nwosa and Ehinomen (2020) examined the relationship between income inequality, poverty, and economic growth in Nigeria from 1981 to 2018. Their findings revealed that while inequality has a significant positive impact on Nigerian economic growth, poverty has a negligible effect.

Table 2 African countries' population and Unemployment Rate in the 2018

No. (Year)	Country	Population	Percentage
1.	Nigeria	195.9 m	22.6%
2.	Ghana	29.767 m	4.16%
3.	Egypt	98.423 m	9.82%
4.	Morocco	36.29 m	9.08%
5.	South-Africa	57.79 m	26.91%
6.	Zimbabwe	14.438 m	5.07%
7.	Kenya	51.39 m	4.249% data.worldbank.org
8.	Tanzania	56.313 m	9.7%

Sources: Macro Trends and World Data Atlas (2018)

Unemployment is a significant challenge in Africa, yet effectively managed Waqf institutions in Nigeria hold promise for empowering the unemployed. Table 2 highlights Nigeria's higher unemployment rate compared to other countries, notably South Africa with a rate of 26.91%, followed closely by Nigeria at 22.6% in 2018. Conversely, Kenya, despite a poverty rate of 28.6%, maintains a relatively low unemployment rate at 4.249%, indicating efficient employment management relative to its population. However, it's worth noting that the purchasing power of income in Kenya may be weakened by inflation, impacting the ability to afford essential goods. Notably, Ghana stands out with the lowest unemployment rate at 4.16%, correlating with its low poverty rate of 11.7% in 2018.

Due to the higher number of unemployed workers in these countries, as depicted in Table 2, the crime rates are very high. Particularly in Nigeria, crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping, ritual killings for money, and fraud are frequent occurrences, often attributed to poverty. In South Africa, xenophobia motivated youths to murder a significant number of foreigners who settled in the country in 2015, partly due to unemployment (Olofinbiyi, 2022). These criminal acts have strained international relations, especially among African countries, fueled by grievances over job opportunities taken by foreigners. Instances of hate and violence against foreigners have been documented, despite government policies aimed at preventing future violence having little effect. More aggressive violence erupted in major cities after the 2008 attacks and in April 2015, resulting in the deaths of 350 foreigners due to perceived national origins (Hall, 2015). Crime has been commercialized in poverty-ridden communities, Usman (2017) notes based on interviews that selling human body parts, including sexual organs, female breasts, skulls, tongues, hearts, and bones, generates significant profits in ritualistic practices. Additionally, Nkrumah (2018) notes that certain human populations with specific genetic anomalies, such as albinos, dwarfs, and hunchbacks, are considered suitable for monetary ceremonial sacrifices.

From the literature explored it is justified that unemployment in most countries contributes to a higher crime rate. Invariably, the solution to poverty alleviation and unemployment lies in practising the concept of Waqf, as it aims to empower those facing financial hardship or joblessness, which hampers their ability to sustain a livelihood or meet their essential needs. The recipients of Zakat include the needy, the destitute, and those working to collect it, and it is also obligatory for those whose hearts are to be won over by Islam, slaves, debtors, those on the Way of Allah, and travellers. Additionally, Waqf is voluntary and not compulsory for the wealthy. It has been stated in the Qur'an, that the traditions of the Prophet (PBUH) have long established the principle of corporate governance in the administration of Zakah and Waqf, as evidenced by the verses and Hadith mentioned above. The study conceptualizes Shariah governance as illustrated in Figure 1.0 below.

OVERVIEW OF SHARIAH GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

Shariah governance entails the relationship between organizations and their stakeholders, encompassing workers, beneficiaries, the government, the community, and others. It diverges from traditional corporate governance by integrating Shariah law, or maqasid Shariah, into its frameworks (Kamaruddin, Hanefah, Shafii, & Salleh, 2020). Maqasid Shariah, which reflects the underlying purposes of Allah's laws, as articulated by Imam al-Ghazali, seeks to promote the welfare of all individuals, preserving their faith (din), self (nafs), intellect ('aql), posterity (nasl), and wealth (mal). The primary objectives of Shariah, as perceived by most Islamic scholars, are to promote the common good, establish justice, and prevent corruption (Chapra, 1996). According to Al-Shatibi, who followed al-Ghazali's taxonomy, there are three fundamental categories of maslahah: daruriyyat (necessities), hajjiyyat (needs), and tahsiniyyat (enhancements) (Arshad, Zain, Urus, & Chakir, 2018). Daruriyyat involves safeguarding the essential needs of society, such as life, faith, wealth, and intellect, which are indispensable for the social system's stability. Hajjiyyat, on the other hand, refers to supplementary elements that facilitate access to life's essentials, averting hardships and adverse circumstances. Tahsiniyyat entails pursuing interests that enhance societal norms and values.

The principles of hisbah (enjoining good and forbidding evil), shura (consultation), Amanah (trustworthiness), mas'uliyah (accountability), and taqwa (God-consciousness) should always derive from the sources of Shariah (Hassan, Alhabshi, & Yusoff, 2017). The overarching objective of Shariah is to simplify life and eliminate impediments for individuals, as emphasized by Abdullah (2018). Hence, effective governance entails robust reporting and regulation to influence governance structures and disclosures, fostering better governance practices. Understanding the disparities between Shariah governance and corporate governance is crucial, particularly in comprehending the principles and values articulated by Shariah, which form the basis of Islamic finance in Waqf institutions. Once these attributes are adequately addressed through policy guidance from authorities, the risks of individuals and families descending into poverty would significantly diminish in society.

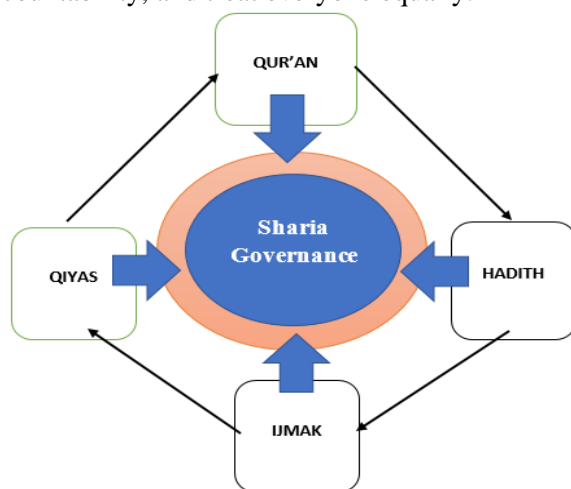
THE SOURCE OF SHARIAH GOVERNANCE

The Qur'an, comprising the following four elements, serves as the cornerstone of Shariah governance. It provides Muslims with a comprehensive guide to righteous living, delineating between lawful and forbidden acts, and is preserved by God without alteration or distortion for all humanity (Q5VS 15). Sunnah, the teachings and practices of the Prophet, serves as the second source of Islamic law, elucidating the meanings of Qur'anic verses and sections (Zain & Shafii, 2018; Beltrametti, 2009). Ijma'a, or consensus among reputable scholars, is another essential aspect of Shariah, contingent upon evidence from the Qur'an or Sunnah and the absence of dissenting opinions. Qiyas, or analogy, involves making decisions based on similarities between matters, particularly when one is explicitly addressed or prohibited, substituting the first decision for the second, as exemplified in Quranic verses (Q17:VS23). These pillars of Shariah governance collectively

and collaboratively guide Waqf institutions and donors in their efforts to alleviate poverty. However, effective poverty alleviation requires adherence to Shariah principles in the management and disbursement of funds. Challenges facing Waqf institutions in Nigeria, notably mismanagement and inadequate monitoring of donor funds, must be addressed through strict compliance with Shariah principles. Shariah governance must guide the management of Waqf institutions, as prescribed in the Qur'an and Sunnah, ensuring transparency, accountability, and the establishment of a Shariah advisory committee to uphold Islamic values in fund management and distribution. Figure 1 below summarizes Shariah governance and its functional tools (Instruments of Operation).

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY PRACTICES FOR WAQF

Accounting in Waqf institutions had been widely practised in managing Waqf institutions during the Ottoman Empire since they were specifically involved in administration and financial management (Iskandar, 2022). Furthermore, sustainability in waqf administration and practice is highly important and is meant to ensure that humanitarian activities are effectively distributed to society. The demand for accessibility and accountability becomes vital when contemplating the trend in waqf administration, which has shifted beyond land to monetary waqf and even to digital money. Furthermore, concerning the necessity for every human being to uphold, respect, and practically respect transparency, accountability, and honesty, All in the Glorious Qur'an has been reported to mention the following verse: "And say, 'Do as you please,' for Allah, His Messenger, and the believers will all see your deeds." You will also see the Unseen and Witnessed Knower again, who will remind you of your previous actions. (Q9: 105). Waqf management must therefore be transparent, uphold high norms of accountability, and treat everyone equally.



Source: Authors' Initiative

Fig. 1 Sharia Governance and Its Instruments of Operation

REPORT OF FINDINGS

The CRL produced insightful findings. The summary of these findings from the reviewed literature is presented sequentially below:

Research question 1: What is the understanding of poverty and Waqf?

Finding 1: In the reviewed literature both Poverty and Waqf as seen as symbiotic social problems and solutions. Poverty is a multidimensional issue, encompassing various economic, social, and cultural factors that result in a lack of resources and opportunities for individuals and communities. Waqf, rooted in Islamic tradition, involves the voluntary dedication of assets for the betterment of society. Understanding how poverty is perceived and addressed through the Waqf institution is essential for devising effective poverty-alleviating strategies. Understanding poverty through the lens of Waqf is crucial for formulating effective poverty-alleviating strategies.

Research question 2: What is the perception in the literature towards the utilization of Waqf as a poverty-alleviating instrument in Nigeria?

Finding 2: Perceptions in the literature towards Waqf utilization for poverty alleviation is positive and permissive. Existing literature provides insights into the perceptions surrounding the utilization of Waqf as a means to alleviate poverty, particularly in the context of Nigeria. Analyzing these perceptions can shed light on the effectiveness of Waqf-based initiatives and identify potential challenges or opportunities for improvement. Analyzing these perceptions provides insights into the effectiveness of Waqf-based initiatives and identifies potential challenges and opportunities for improvement.

Research question 3: What role do Shariah Governance principles play in guiding the institution of Waqf to alleviate poverty?

Finding 3: Insight from the literature suggests that Shariah Governance principles serve as a framework for ethical guidance, transparency tools and checks by ensuring that Waqf assets are managed and distributed following Islamic law and ethical guidelines. Examining the role of Shariah Governance in guiding Waqf practices can elucidate how these

principles contribute to poverty alleviation efforts and address any governance-related challenges. Examining this role elucidates how Shariah Governance contributes to poverty alleviation efforts.

Research questions 4: What are the key challenges and barriers hindering the effective implementation of Waqf-based poverty alleviation initiatives in Nigeria, and how can Shariah governance principles address these challenges?

Finding 4: Despite its potential, Waqf-based poverty alleviation initiatives face various challenges and barriers to effective implementation. Understanding these challenges, such as mismanagement of funds or lack of transparency, and exploring how Shariah Governance principles can mitigate them is crucial for enhancing the impact of Waqf in reducing poverty in Nigeria and beyond. Additionally, the literature discusses the potential of Waqf, Zakat, and Sadaqat in poverty mitigation. While Zakat has limitations such as nisab, Waqf shows promise in helping to alleviate poverty in Nigeria. However, issues of awareness, accessibility, and governance pose significant hurdles. Shariah Governance principles, with their emphasis on ethical standards and accountability, are vital in addressing these challenges and ensuring the effective utilization of Waqf for poverty alleviation.

DISCUSSION ON FINDING

The literature provides valuable insights into the understanding of poverty and Waqf, perceptions towards Waqf utilization for poverty alleviation, the role of Shariah Governance principles, and the challenges hindering the effective implementation of Waqf-based poverty alleviation initiatives in Nigeria. Finding 1 underscores the symbiotic relationship between poverty and Waqf. Poverty, defined as a multidimensional issue encompassing economic, social, and cultural factors, intersects with Waqf, an Islamic tradition involving the voluntary dedication of assets for societal betterment (World Bank, 2020). This understanding emphasizes the importance of analyzing poverty through the lens of Waqf to devise effective poverty-alleviating strategies (Sen, 1999).

In line with Finding 2, the literature reveals positive perceptions towards utilizing Waqf for poverty alleviation, particularly in Nigeria. Studies suggest that Waqf-based initiatives hold promise in addressing poverty and understanding these perceptions can illuminate the effectiveness of such endeavours (Ashafa, 2021). This positive outlook underscores the potential of Waqf as a tool for poverty reduction in Nigeria.

Moreover, finding 3 highlights the significant role of Shariah Governance principles in guiding Waqf practices to alleviate poverty. Shariah Governance serves as an ethical framework, ensuring transparency and adherence to Islamic law in managing Waqf assets (Kamaruddin et al., 2020). By examining this role, researchers can better understand how Shariah Governance contributes to poverty alleviation efforts and addresses governance-related challenges.

Furthermore, finding 4 discusses the challenges hindering the effective implementation of Waqf-based poverty alleviation initiatives in Nigeria, such as mismanagement of funds and lack of transparency. These challenges underscore the importance of Shariah Governance principles in mitigating issues related to governance and ensuring the impactful utilization of Waqf assets for poverty alleviation (Olofinbiyi, 2022).

Overall, the literature emphasizes the potential of Waqf, Zakat, and Sadaqat in poverty mitigation (Haruna & Ibrahim, 2021). While Waqf holds promise in reducing poverty, issues such as governance and awareness pose significant barriers. Shariah Governance principles, rooted in Islamic ethics and values, are crucial in addressing these challenges and maximizing the impact of Waqf in poverty reduction efforts. Overall, the literature provides comprehensive insights into the intersection of poverty and Waqf, perceptions towards Waqf utilization for poverty alleviation, the role of Shariah Governance principles, and the challenges hindering effective implementation of Waqf-based poverty alleviation initiatives in Nigeria. Understanding these findings is essential for devising robust strategies to combat poverty and leverage the potential of Waqf as a tool for socioeconomic development.

CONCLUSION, PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study illuminates the critical role of Waqf in addressing poverty in Nigeria, underscoring its potential as a powerful instrument for societal betterment. The findings unveil a symbiotic relationship between poverty and Waqf, deeply entrenched in Islamic tradition as a voluntary dedication of assets for the common good. While perceptions towards Waqf utilization for poverty alleviation are generally positive, challenges such as fund mismanagement and lack of transparency impede its effective implementation. However, Shariah Governance principles offer a robust framework for ethical guidance, ensuring that Waqf assets are managed following Islamic law and ethical guidelines.

Practical Contributions

Methodological Contribution

The qualitative desk research approach adopted in this study serves as a practical methodological contribution. By gathering data from academic papers, texts, and online resources, this approach allows for comprehensive insights into the role of Waqf in poverty alleviation. This methodology provides a robust foundation for understanding the complex dynamics between poverty, Waqf, and Shariah Governance principles.

Theoretical Contribution

The study contributes theoretically by highlighting the significance of Shariah Governance principles in guiding Waqf institutions. By integrating Shariah law into governance frameworks, organizations can uphold ethical standards and

ensure transparency and accountability in managing Waqf assets. The theoretical framework provided sheds light on the underlying principles of Shariah, such as promoting the common good, justice, and preventing corruption, which are essential for effective poverty alleviation through Waqf.

Policy Contribution

The exploration of Shariah Governance principles in this study offers practical implications for policymakers and stakeholders involved in poverty alleviation efforts. By understanding the fundamental objectives of Shariah, policymakers can design governance structures that align with Islamic principles and enhance the effectiveness of Waqf-based poverty alleviation initiatives. Additionally, recommendations for strengthening governance mechanisms, capacity-building, collaboration, and community involvement provide actionable insights for policymakers to formulate policies conducive to poverty alleviation through Waqf.

Overall, the study's practical contributions in methodology, theory, and policy offer valuable insights for stakeholders seeking to leverage Waqf as a poverty-alleviating instrument in Nigeria. By integrating Shariah Governance principles into governance frameworks and adopting robust methodologies, policymakers and stakeholders can work towards addressing the complex challenges of poverty and enhancing the impact of Waqf-based initiatives on societal betterment.

Recommendations

The study proposes practical recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of Waqf-based poverty alleviation initiatives in Nigeria:

- i. Implement robust governance structures and mechanisms within Waqf institutions to ensure transparency, accountability, and ethical management of funds. This includes establishing clear guidelines for the selection of trustees (Mutawallis) and conducting regular audits of Waqf assets.
- ii. Conduct training programs and awareness campaigns targeting Waqf stakeholders, including donors, beneficiaries, and administrators, to enhance their understanding of Waqf principles, Shariah Governance, and best practices in poverty alleviation.
- iii. Foster collaboration between Waqf institutions, government agencies, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to leverage resources, expertise, and networks for more impactful poverty alleviation efforts.
- iv. Involve local communities in the design, implementation, and monitoring of Waqf-based initiatives to ensure their relevance, ownership, and sustainability. This can include establishing community advisory boards or consultative forums.
- v. Encourage research and innovation in Waqf-based poverty alleviation strategies, exploring new models, technologies, and approaches that can address emerging challenges and opportunities.

Despite the insightful findings, several limitations of the study should be acknowledged. The findings are specific to the context of Nigeria and may not be directly applicable to other countries or regions with different socio-economic and cultural contexts. Moreover, reliance on secondary data sources may introduce limitations in terms of reliability, completeness, and representativeness. Future research could benefit from primary data collection methods to supplement the findings. Additionally, while Shariah Governance principles offer a framework for effective Waqf management, practical implementation may face challenges such as resistance to change, lack of institutional capacity, and competing interests among stakeholders. Finally, assessing the long-term impact of Waqf-based poverty alleviation initiatives requires sustained monitoring and evaluation, which may pose logistical and resource challenges. Overall, while this research provides valuable insights into the role of Waqf in poverty alleviation, addressing these limitations is crucial to ensure the validity and applicability of the findings.

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