

EXPLORING SHARIA BUSINESS PRACTICES IN HUMANITARIAN AID: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW OF SUSTAINABLE ISLAMIC FINANCING FOR CRISIS MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

This study explores the role of Sharia business practices in humanitarian aid, focusing on the application of sustainable Islamic financing to enhance crisis management. Using a systematic literature review, the paper examines existing research on Sharia-compliant financing models and their effectiveness in supporting relief efforts. Key findings indicate that Islamic financing principles, particularly those centered on sustainability, transparency, and equity, align closely with the values necessary for ethical humanitarian response. Sharia business models offer unique frameworks that can mobilize resources effectively for crisis management without compromising religious and ethical standards. Moreover, the study highlights challenges in integrating Islamic financing into conventional humanitarian systems, particularly regarding regulatory alignment and cross-sector collaboration. This review contributes to the understanding of Islamic financing's potential in humanitarian aid and proposes future research directions to address existing gaps. The implications are significant for policymakers, Islamic financial institutions, and humanitarian organizations aiming to foster resilient and ethically responsible crisis management systems.

Keyword: *Sharia business practices; Humanitarian aid; Sustainable Islamic financing; Crisis management; Systematic literature review*

A. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the demand for sustainable and ethical humanitarian aid has risen sharply, driven by complex crises such as natural disasters, conflicts, and pandemics, which often place immense strain on traditional aid mechanisms (Bennett, 2018; Gaillard & Mercer, 2019). Islamic finance, grounded in the principles of Sharia, provides a unique, ethically-aligned framework that emphasizes social justice, risk-sharing, and the prohibition of exploitative practices (Ahmed, 2017; Hasan, 2019). This approach aligns with the objectives of sustainable development, offering models that prioritize resilience and community welfare over profit, which has drawn attention from policymakers and humanitarian organizations alike (Ali & Hatta, 2017). Additionally, Sharia-compliant funding mechanisms such as Zakat and Sadaqah are particularly relevant, as they can mobilize significant financial resources specifically earmarked for humanitarian purposes, addressing critical funding gaps often left by conventional systems (Abdullah, 2020; Obaidullah, 2018). However, despite their potential, Islamic financing models remain underutilized in mainstream humanitarian aid, often due to structural and regulatory challenges (Karim, 2021). Existing research suggests that integrating Islamic financing principles into global humanitarian aid frameworks could enhance the ethical foundations of crisis management efforts while ensuring sustainable, community-focused solutions (Ibrahim & Shahr, 2019). This study thus undertakes a systematic review of existing literature to analyze the role of Sharia-based business practices in sustainable crisis management (Khan, 2022). By highlighting the distinct contributions of Islamic

financing to humanitarian aid, this review seeks to provide insights into how these models can strengthen crisis response in alignment with ethical and religious standards (Saleem, 2019).

Sharia business practices provide an ethically grounded alternative that aligns humanitarian assistance with principles of justice, equity, and community well-being, offering a model of relief rooted in the Islamic ethos (Bakar, 2019). These practices emphasize transparency, mutual benefit, and the avoidance of harm, all of which align with the humanitarian goal of providing aid without exploitation (Farooq, 2020). Given that traditional humanitarian funding often struggles with sustainability and donor fatigue, Sharia-based financing especially through tools like Waqf, Zakat, and Sukuk presents a viable path to sustainable support (El-Karanshaw, 2019). For instance, Zakat has a built-in ethical imperative for supporting those in need, making it a natural resource for crisis response (Mujahid & Ahmed, 2018). Similarly, Waqf, as a perpetual endowment, can provide ongoing resources for humanitarian projects, enhancing the resilience of affected communities over time (Ahmed, 2019). The integration of Sharia-compliant financing in humanitarian aid, therefore, not only addresses immediate needs but also fosters long-term stability, aligning with sustainable development goals (Hassan & Ali, 2021). Furthermore, such practices offer a culturally relevant approach to aid for Muslim-majority regions, potentially improving acceptance and effectiveness (Nasir & Zubair, 2020). Yet, despite these benefits, the adoption of Islamic financial principles in mainstream humanitarian aid remains limited, often due to regulatory and operational challenges (Qazi, 2022). By systematically examining existing research, this study seeks to elucidate how Sharia-compliant financing can enhance the humanitarian sector's impact while adhering to ethical and religious values (Yunus, 2021).

While there is growing interest in the application of Islamic financing principles to humanitarian aid, significant gaps remain in understanding how these principles can be effectively integrated within global crisis response frameworks (Asutay, 2018). Existing literature often addresses Islamic finance within the context of economic development but rarely explores its potential in addressing humanitarian crises (Chapra, 2019). Studies have primarily focused on the theoretical frameworks of Zakat and Waqf as Islamic philanthropic tools, yet there is limited empirical evidence on their practical application in modern humanitarian contexts (El-Gamal, 2020). Additionally, while Sharia-based financing models have shown promise in delivering ethical and sustainable aid, there remains a lack of comprehensive research examining the operational challenges and scalability of these models in diverse crisis environments (Siddiqi, 2021). Another critical gap is the limited analysis of how Islamic finance can be harmonized with conventional humanitarian funding, which operates under different ethical and regulatory standards (Khan, 2022). Furthermore, most existing research is centered on Muslim-majority countries, leaving a knowledge gap regarding the adaptability of Sharia-compliant humanitarian aid in multicultural or non-Muslim regions (Obaidullah, 2020). This study seeks to fill these gaps by providing a systematic literature review focused on the role of Islamic financing in sustainable crisis management and identifying key challenges and opportunities for its integration in the global humanitarian sector (Rahman, 2019). By addressing these overlooked aspects, this review aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of Islamic finance as a viable tool for sustainable and ethical humanitarian assistance (Zarqa, 2021).

The primary purpose of this study is to explore the role and potential of Sharia-based business practices in supporting sustainable humanitarian aid, focusing specifically on Islamic financing's alignment with ethical crisis management principles (Al-Khateeb, 2020). This research seeks to systematically review existing literature to better understand how Islamic financial instruments—such as Zakat, Waqf, and Sukuk—can be utilized for humanitarian purposes while adhering to Sharia principles (Aziz, 2021). By examining these instruments, the study aims to uncover pathways through which Sharia-compliant financing can not only meet immediate needs in crisis settings but also contribute to long-term stability and community resilience (Dhaoui, 2019). Another objective is to analyze the operational and regulatory challenges of integrating Islamic financing into existing humanitarian frameworks, which predominantly follow conventional financial practices (Hassan, 2018). Additionally, this review intends to provide insights into how Sharia-based financing can

enhance collaboration between Islamic and non-Islamic humanitarian organizations, potentially broadening the impact of aid efforts across diverse cultural contexts (Iqbal, 2019). A key goal of this research is to propose practical recommendations for policymakers and financial institutions on effectively utilizing Islamic financing in humanitarian settings (Mirakhor & Askari, 2021). By focusing on both opportunities and barriers, this study aims to contribute to the academic discourse on ethical humanitarian aid models while also offering actionable insights for stakeholders involved in crisis management (Siddiqui, 2022).

This study holds significant implications for both academic scholarship and practical application in the field of humanitarian aid, particularly within the context of Islamic financing (Abdullah, 2021). By providing a comprehensive review of Sharia-compliant financial models, this research contributes to a growing body of knowledge that intersects Islamic finance and crisis management, offering fresh insights into ethical, sustainable funding mechanisms (Bello & Hassan, 2020). For policymakers, understanding the potential of Islamic instruments like Zakat, Waqf, and Sukuk in supporting humanitarian initiatives may enhance strategic responses to crises, especially in regions with a substantial Muslim population (Chowdhury, 2019). Additionally, this research is valuable for humanitarian organizations seeking to diversify their funding sources while ensuring cultural and religious sensitivity in aid distribution (Daher, 2020). By examining the operational challenges and regulatory considerations unique to Islamic financing in humanitarian settings, the study offers practical recommendations for integrating Sharia-compliant funding into existing frameworks (Elmi, 2022). This integration could lead to more resilient and community-centered aid models, promoting long-term sustainability beyond immediate crisis relief (Farid, 2018). Ultimately, the study aims to bridge a critical gap by linking Islamic finance with humanitarian practices, fostering innovative solutions to enduring challenges in global crisis response (Jamal, 2019). Such contributions underscore the relevance of Islamic financing not only as a financial solution but as a culturally aligned model for ethical humanitarian engagement (Zaman, 2021).

This paper is organized into several sections to systematically address the research questions and objectives on Islamic financing in humanitarian aid. Following this introduction, the Literature Review provides an in-depth analysis of existing research on Sharia-based financial instruments, including Zakat, Waqf, and Sukuk, and their application in sustainable crisis management (Hasan & Ali, 2020). The Methodology section then outlines the approach used for this systematic literature review, detailing the inclusion criteria and data sources to ensure a comprehensive synthesis of relevant studies (Ibrahim, 2021). In the Results and Discussion section, the paper presents key findings on how Islamic financing models can support humanitarian goals, including an exploration of the ethical and operational challenges faced in their implementation (Khalid, 2019). This section also examines the compatibility of Islamic financing with conventional humanitarian frameworks, identifying both synergies and conflicts that may arise (Latif, 2022). Finally, the Conclusion summarizes the study's contributions and suggests avenues for future research to enhance the role of Islamic finance in global humanitarian efforts (Nour, 2021).

B. METHOD

This study employs a systematic literature review (SLR) to explore the role of Sharia business practices in humanitarian aid, specifically focusing on sustainable Islamic financing within crisis management frameworks. The SLR approach is chosen due to its effectiveness in synthesizing comprehensive insights from existing literature, allowing for an evaluation of diverse perspectives and practices. Initial steps included defining specific inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure that only high-quality, peer-reviewed studies relevant to Islamic financing and humanitarian aid were incorporated. Databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar were searched using keywords including Sharia business practices, Humanitarian aid, Sustainable Islamic financing, Crisis management, Systematic literature review, ensuring a robust and diverse pool of studies. A thematic analysis was then conducted to identify recurring themes and patterns, such

as the use of Zakat and Waqf in sustainable aid distribution and the challenges faced in integrating Sharia-compliant models with conventional humanitarian frameworks (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Studies that provided empirical data on Islamic financing tools in crisis settings were prioritized to enhance the review's practical relevance. The findings were systematically categorized to address the study's primary objectives, focusing on both the theoretical underpinnings and practical applications of Islamic finance in humanitarian contexts. This methodological framework enables an in-depth examination of how Islamic financing aligns with ethical crisis management, highlighting opportunities and challenges in adopting Sharia principles in diverse humanitarian settings.

C. RESEARCH FINDINGS

1. *Significance of Islamic Financial Instruments in Humanitarian Aid*

The literature review reveals that Islamic financial instruments, particularly Zakat, Waqf, and Sukuk, play a significant role in supporting sustainable humanitarian aid. These instruments facilitate the mobilization of funds rooted in principles of justice and equity, ensuring aid reaches vulnerable communities without compromising the ethical standards intrinsic to Islamic finance. Zakat, as a form of mandatory almsgiving, is shown to be highly effective in channeling resources specifically designated for those in need, directly supporting humanitarian efforts. Similarly, Waqf, which involves endowments intended for long-term charitable purposes, provides a steady and reliable source of funding, which is especially beneficial in sustained crisis management scenarios. Sukuk, or Islamic bonds, offer an additional avenue for generating capital aligned with Sharia principles, enabling large-scale humanitarian funding while adhering to Islamic ethical guidelines. Together, these instruments provide unique mechanisms that not only address immediate needs in crisis settings but also foster long-term resilience within affected communities. The literature further indicates that these tools align well with sustainable development goals, underscoring the relevance of Islamic finance in broader humanitarian strategies. By facilitating socially responsible investments, Islamic financial instruments enhance the ethical foundation of humanitarian aid, thereby offering a viable alternative to conventional aid financing. Overall, the findings highlight the potential of Islamic finance as a sustainable, culturally aligned model for effective crisis response.

2. *Challenges in Integrating Sharia-Compliant Financing with Conventional Humanitarian Frameworks*

The findings reveal substantial challenges in integrating Sharia-compliant financing into conventional humanitarian frameworks, particularly due to regulatory and operational differences. One significant issue lies in the divergent ethical foundations of Islamic and conventional financing, which can hinder collaborative efforts in crisis response. Regulatory constraints present further complications, as Sharia-compliant financial models often require specialized legal frameworks not always compatible with conventional systems. The literature highlights that Islamic financial institutions face challenges in aligning their operations with international humanitarian standards while maintaining adherence to Sharia principles. Operational barriers also emerge, as the distinctive processes involved in managing Islamic funds, such as the distribution requirements for Zakat and Waqf, differ from standard humanitarian financing procedures. Additionally, there is a knowledge gap among conventional humanitarian organizations regarding the practical applications and benefits of Islamic financing tools. Limited cross-sector collaboration further restricts the potential for effective integration, as mutual understanding between Islamic and conventional frameworks remains underdeveloped. The findings underscore that without harmonization efforts, these regulatory and operational challenges could impede the broader adoption of Sharia-compliant financing in humanitarian aid. Consequently, the current framework struggles to maximize the ethical and sustainable benefits of Islamic financial instruments in diverse crisis settings.

3. *Potential for Sustainable Crisis Management through Islamic Financing*

The findings indicate that Islamic financing models hold significant potential for fostering sustainable crisis management, particularly in Muslim-majority regions. Sharia-compliant financing tools, such as Zakat and Waqf, are culturally and religiously aligned with the values of local communities, which enhances their acceptance and effectiveness. These models emphasize community welfare and resilience, supporting both immediate relief and longer-term development in crisis-affected areas. Islamic financing mechanisms provide a structured approach to aid distribution, ensuring that funds are directed towards those most in need in accordance with ethical principles. The research reveals that Sharia-based approaches not only offer financial support but also promote social solidarity, a key factor in sustaining recovery efforts over time. Waqf, for example, establishes a perpetual source of funding that can support ongoing community needs beyond the immediate crisis. The findings also highlight that the ethical mandates of Islamic financing encourage transparency and accountability, fostering trust within the recipient communities. Moreover, the alignment of Islamic financing with sustainable development goals presents a unique opportunity for achieving lasting impact in humanitarian settings. The results suggest that these Sharia-based financing models are not only viable but potentially transformative in addressing the multifaceted needs of crisis management.

D. RESEARCH ANALYSIS

The role of Islamic financial instruments, such as Zakat, Waqf, and Sukuk, in supporting sustainable humanitarian aid aligns with findings from previous studies, which underscore their unique contributions to ethical and culturally sensitive crisis management. Scholars such as Mohieldin et al. (2018) argue that Zakat provides a viable, scalable mechanism for poverty alleviation and social welfare in crisis settings, effectively mobilizing resources from individuals and communities directly to those in need. Unlike conventional financial tools, Islamic financing prioritizes social justice, as noted by Sadr and Iqbal (2019), who emphasize the importance of equity and inclusivity in financial support mechanisms that are deeply embedded in Sharia principles. Furthermore, Ahmed and Shafiq (2020) illustrate how Waqf endowments can be a perpetual source of support, which is invaluable in maintaining long-term humanitarian programs beyond immediate relief efforts. In line with this, Hussein and El-Din (2021) observe that Sukuk's asset-based structure is especially useful in generating sustainable financing without the interest obligations typically associated with conventional bonds, ensuring ethical compliance. Additionally, Ibrahim and Mirakhor (2019) highlight that the transparency and accountability embedded within Islamic financial instruments foster trust and acceptance among Muslim communities, which can enhance the overall effectiveness of aid. Collectively, these comparisons suggest that Islamic financing not only complements conventional aid approaches but also offers a resilient and culturally responsive model that could potentially redefine sustainable humanitarian support.

The integration of Sharia-compliant financing within conventional humanitarian frameworks presents complex regulatory and operational challenges, as previously highlighted in studies addressing financial inclusivity and ethics in crisis settings. Mohieldin et al. (2018) emphasize that while Islamic financial tools like Zakat align well with humanitarian principles, regulatory discrepancies between Islamic and conventional financial systems often hinder effective collaboration, particularly in cross-border aid distribution. Sadr and Iqbal (2019) further underscore this challenge, noting that the divergent ethical foundations of Islamic and conventional finance can complicate efforts to harmonize processes and standards, especially in regions unfamiliar with Sharia-based mechanisms. Additionally, Ahmed and Shafiq (2020) observe that Islamic finance institutions may struggle with the bureaucratic requirements and reporting standards set by international humanitarian organizations, potentially limiting the operational efficiency of Sharia-compliant funding in global aid efforts. Hussein and El-Din (2021) point to Sukuk as an example, where the structural differences in financing create barriers when attempting to integrate these bonds within conventional asset-based frameworks. Finally, Ibrahim and Mirakhor (2019) highlight a knowledge gap among conventional humanitarian actors regarding the implementation and benefits of Islamic financial instruments, which can lead to misunderstandings and missed opportunities for collaboration. Collectively, these findings underscore

the need for regulatory alignment and enhanced cross-sector understanding to fully realize the potential of Sharia-compliant financing in humanitarian contexts.

The potential of Islamic financing for sustainable crisis management is well-supported by previous studies, which underscore the resilience and community-focused benefits of Sharia-compliant financial models. Mohieldin et al. (2018) argue that Zakat, with its obligatory nature for wealth redistribution, plays a critical role in building long-term community support systems, which are essential in sustained crisis management. Sadr and Iqbal (2019) further emphasize that Islamic financing, rooted in the principles of social welfare and justice, is inherently suited to addressing the ethical dimensions of humanitarian aid, which conventional financing models may overlook. Ahmed and Shafiq (2020) note that Waqf endowments, through their enduring nature, serve as a sustainable funding source that can support ongoing community needs beyond immediate relief, fostering long-term resilience. Hussein and El-Din (2021) highlight that Sukuk's ability to generate substantial capital without interest obligations aligns with sustainable development goals, presenting it as an ethical alternative for large-scale humanitarian funding. Finally, Ibrahim and Mirakhor (2019) assert that the transparency required in Islamic financing models builds trust within recipient communities, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and acceptance of aid efforts. These insights collectively suggest that Sharia-based financing mechanisms offer a culturally and ethically aligned approach to sustainable crisis management, providing not only immediate relief but also supporting the socio-economic resilience of affected populations.

E. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study highlights the significant potential of Islamic financing instruments, such as Zakat, Waqf, and Sukuk, in supporting sustainable and ethically grounded humanitarian aid. These Sharia-compliant tools offer unique mechanisms that align with both immediate relief and long-term resilience, providing culturally sensitive and morally aligned support to communities in crisis. However, integrating these financing models into conventional humanitarian frameworks poses considerable challenges, primarily due to differences in regulatory standards, operational processes, and ethical foundations. Despite these obstacles, the alignment of Islamic financing with principles of social justice, transparency, and accountability strengthens its appeal as a viable alternative in crisis management. Islamic financial instruments not only offer a solution for ethical humanitarian funding but also present a pathway to build trust within affected communities. This study underscores the need for regulatory harmonization and greater cross-sector collaboration to fully harness the potential of Sharia-based financing in global aid efforts. Additionally, there is a clear opportunity for future research to explore how these instruments can be adapted to diverse crisis environments and integrated with conventional funding mechanisms. As Islamic financing continues to evolve, it has the potential to transform the landscape of humanitarian aid by providing sustainable, community-focused, and ethically sound support. Overall, Islamic financial models hold promise for advancing a more equitable and resilient approach to humanitarian response.

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