



Ṣadaqah (Charity) Attitudes of Muslims During COVID-19 Pandemic Lockdown: An Interpretative Phenomenology

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic triggered global disruption, with many casualties recorded across different socio-economic groups. The surge seems to have affected vulnerable people more with the closure of most businesses and socio-economic activities. Despite significant government efforts to maintain lockdown order, vulnerable people from the B-40 community appear to have found it challenging to comply because of their inability to cater to their basic needs. The majority of the B-40 community with livelihood activities that require regular physical presence have difficulties accessing work and stores. Despite the government and non-governmental intervention packages for the vulnerable people, certain individuals have also volunteered in charity donations and distribution of basic socio-economic needs and health relief packages during the lockdown, but little is known about the Ṣadaqah attitude of Malaysians during the lockdown. This study explores the Ṣadaqah (charity) attitudes of Muslims during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown to cater to the basic needs of the vulnerable members of society. This study employs the interpretative phenomenology approach of the qualitative method to analyze the semi-structured interview data. This study found that despite the anecdotal evidence suggesting that many people may be discouraged from giving Ṣadaqah due to socio-economic challenges during the COVID-19 lockdown, religiosity and psychological motivations have propelled many Ṣadaqah givers towards alleviating the socio-economic challenges of the vulnerable people. The analysis shows that the challenges of limited income and restricted socio-economic activities do not prevent some Malaysians from donating Ṣadaqah during the pandemic lockdown. The study recommends overarching government policy for an effective and transparent standard operation of the Ṣadaqah activities during emergencies.

Keywords: Ṣadaqah, Attitudes, Muslims, COVID-19 Lockdown, Phenomenology.

مواقف المسلمين من الصدقة خلال الإغلاق الوبائي لفيروس كورونا المستجد COVID-19: ظاهرة تفسيرية

ملخص البحث

جائحة كوفيد-19 سببت حدوث اضطراب عالمي، حيث تم تسجيل العديد من الضحايا عبر مجموعات اجتماعية واقتصادية مختلفة. يظهر أن هذه الزيادة أثرت على الأشخاص المعرضين للخطر أكثر مع إغلاق العديد من الأعمال والأنشطة الاجتماعية والاقتصادية. على الرغم من الجهود الحكومية العديدة للحفاظ على نظام الإغلاق، يبدو أن الأشخاص المعرضين للخطر في مجتمع B-40 وجدوا صعوبة في الامتثال لأمر التحكم في الحركة بسبب احتياجاتهم اليومية الأساسية. تواجه غالبية مجتمع B-40 الذي لديه أنشطة معيشية تتطلب وجوداً مادياً منتظماً صعوبات في الوصول إلى العمل والمتاجر. وعلى الرغم من حزم التدخل الحكومية وغير الحكومية لمساعدة الأشخاص المعرضين للخطر، فقد تطوع بعض الأفراد أيضاً في التبرعات الخيرية وتوزيع الاحتياجات الاجتماعية والاقتصادية الأساسية وحزم الإغاثة الصحية خلال فترة الإغلاق. ولكن قلة ما يُعرف عن رغبة الماليزيين في الصدقة سوى أثناء الإغلاق. تستكشف هذه الدراسة مواقف المسلمين من الصدقة خلال إغلاق جائحة كوفيد-19. واستخدمت هذه الدراسة أسلوب الظواهر التفسيرية في المنهج النوعي لتحليل بيانات المقابلة شبه المنظمة. وجدت هذه الدراسة أنه على الرغم من الأدلة الخيرية التي تشير إلى قلة رغبة الناس في إعطاء الصدقة بسبب التحدي الاجتماعي والاقتصادي أثناء إغلاق كوفيد-19، إلا أن العوامل الدينية والنفسية قد أدت إلى زيادة مواقف الصدقة بين الماليزيين لحد من التحديات الاجتماعية والاقتصادية خاصة بين الأشخاص المعرضين للخطر. يظهر التحليل أن تحديات الدخل المحدود والأنشطة الاجتماعية والاقتصادية المقيدة لا تمنع بعض الماليزيين من التبرع بالصدقة أثناء الإغلاق الوبائي، وأوصت الدراسة بالحاجة الماسة إلى سياسة حكومية شاملة للتشغيل المعياري الفعال والشفاف للأنشطة الخيرية في حالات الطوارئ.

كلمات مفتاحية: الصدقة، مواقف، المسلمون، إغلاق كوفيد-19، علم الظواهر.

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1. Introduction

Ṣadaqah (charity) is voluntary alms donations to enhance relief for the creatures to seek the pleasure of Allah. *Ṣadaqah* is one of the important Islamic social finance mechanisms that have a wide scope of charitable items a donor can spend to alleviate the socio-economic challenges of vulnerable people. During the COVID-19 lockdown, there was a widespread understanding of sharing needs and taking care of others to prevent the spread of the virus. Although Malaysian religious institutions, corporate bodies, and individuals are very familiar with *Ṣadaqah* as a religious obligation and as a socio-economic intervention (Khatun & Alautiyat, 2012), little is known about the significant impact of *Ṣadaqah* attitudes of Muslim donors towards alleviating the socio-economic challenges of the B-40 community during the COVID-19 lockdown. Sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic is possible through *Ṣadaqah* by individuals and corporate institutions (Digest, 2020). The majority of those in the B-40 community rely mainly on *Ṣadaqah* for survival during the COVID-19 lockdown and recovery stages. *Ṣadaqah* channels have provided relief for the poor and financial interventions for economically distressed persons during the COVID-19 pandemic (Nungsari, 2020). COVID-19 has a profound negative impact on income-generating charity organizations, for reasons including a decline in their investment assets and a subsequent increase in the demand for grants by beneficiaries. The pandemic triggered increased global demand for charity organization services, with many religious institutions converted into medical relief and social relief package centers (Ben Russell, 2020).

Studies have suggested a significant relationship between government financial moratorium and reduction in socio-economic inequality during COVID-19. Ben Russell (2020) suggests that COVID-19 stimulated the appetite of people to donate palliatives for patients and to provide relief for economically challenged persons. Another study also shows that one-tenth of the world population will donate *Ṣadaqah* for socio-economic intervention during COVID-19 lesser than pre-COVID-19, and that one-quarter is likely to donate more than before the outbreak of the pandemic (Khalidi, 2020). Therefore, *Ṣadaqah* attitudes of Malaysians during the COVID-19 lockdown remained underexplored. This underscores a need for an empirical investigation of the interplay of charity intent and influences towards reducing inequality during the COVID-19 lockdown, a gap that this study proposes to bridge. This study explores the extent of charity distribution impact on the B-40 group during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Malaysia's income classification, the bottom 40 (B-40) categories are the low-income households that earn income less than RM4850 monthly (Rebecca Hani Romeni, 2022).

The recent exploratory study by Chetioui et al. (2022) suggests that past behavior and subjective norms have a significant influence on the attitude of Moroccans toward giving donations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, Islamic religiosity triggers an increase in the propensity to donate more despite the economic situation during the lockdown. Despite the effect of the movement control order in Malaysia on socio-economic activities, the *Infāq* and *Ṣadaqah* among Malaysian middle-class Muslims have gained a contemporary approach whereby many people adopt online platforms to share relief material and palliatives with the needy and poor during the COVID-19 lockdown (Embong et al., 2021). According to the theory of planned theory behaviour (TPB), employed to examine the charity intent of Indonesian Muslims, the study by Fithor et al., (2021) found that a sustainable environment is a perceived behavioral control on factors like religious beliefs, attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control towards giving *Ṣadaqah*.

The remaining parts of the research entail five sections: the first section delves into the background of the study, while the second section highlights the methodology used in the study. The third section is on findings and analysis, fourth section is on discussion, while the fifth section is on conclusion.

2. Background of the Study

2.1 Ṣadaqah (Charity)

Ṣadaqah (Charity) refers to voluntary alms given to the needy and the poor to seek the pleasure of Allah in this world and hereafter. One of the reasons why Ṣadaqah is different from Zakāh is because the former is voluntary while the latter is obligatory in Islamic law (Joseph A Islam, 2009). Several kinds of Ṣadaqah in Islam can be better understood from the tradition of the Prophet (PBUH) when some companions asked: *the people of al-duthūr (owners of high amount of wealth) went with rewards, they pray as we pray, they fast as we fast, and they give alms with their surplus money. He said: (Has not God made for you what you give in charity? For every tasbiḥah (praise to Allah) is a charity, every takbīrah (magnification of Allah) is a charity, every taḥmīdah (glorification to Allah) is a charity, and every tahlīlah (declaration of the oneness of Allah) is a charity, and enjoining what is right is a charity, and forbidding what is wrong is a charity...* (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 2006, no. 1006). This ḥadīth suggests that Ṣadaqah can be given from material wealth, moral charity, or ongoing charity. Although Ṣadaqah literally means charity, it is rewarding in this world and hereafter when it is done for the sake of Allah. Ṣadaqah can be done openly or secretly depending on the situation and circumstance. However, Islamic ethics promote secret Ṣadaqah for two reasons: the act of secret Ṣadaqah will establish the intent of Ṣadaqah to seek the pleasure of Allah on one hand and it protects the emotional feelings and reactions of beneficiaries on the other. But it is not necessarily compulsory to do Ṣadaqah in secret (Bensaid et al., 2013; Busari et al., 2021; M Dasar & Sujimon, 2018).

2.2 Attitudes to Charity

Attitude is a kind of perspective, opinion, or interest to respond in a particular direction. The human predisposition to act for a set of purposes and behavior is called attitude. This concept of attitude is common to humanity and social science-related fields of study (Altmann, 2008). The nature of human attitude influences the reaction towards the donation. The study by Massetti et al. (2019) surveyed the customers' attitudes to donating to charity and suggests that a positive attitude toward donors is a factor that influences many customers to donate to charity at the retail checkout charity box. However, many people who decline to participate did hold negative attitudes toward such practices and not the goodwill of the retail outlet (Massetti et al., 2019). A recent study has suggested operational tools such as actual behavior, self-rated helping intentions, or expressed attitudes toward the organization as an effective strategy to distinguish between negative charity appeals and positive charity appeals to help the needy and the poor, although the positive attitudes towards the donation of charity seem more effective (Erlandsson et al., 2018).

2.3 COVID-19 Pandemic lockdown

COVID-19 lockdown has triggered several mental health challenges among persons with psychotic- and/or bipolar disorders. The study by Mork et al. (2022) found that during the COVID-19 lockdown, one-third of participants in the survey had reported increasing deterioration in the mental health of their family members with worries about socio-economic and environmental implications of the loneliness and isolation during the lockdown resulting in domestic violence, self-harm, and suicide attempts. A recent finding posits COVID-19 pandemic lockdown is a significant factor responsible for the increase in internal psychopathology among young adults (Panteli et al., 2022).

Lockdown of socio-economic activities and movement of the people was a major control measure introduced across the globe to mitigate the effect and spread of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. The world

health organization (WHO) does not have a specific definition for the lockdown and its implementation differs from one nation to another because of other socio-political reasons such as the extent of COVID-19 impacts, the level of compliance, and the government's political will to enforce movement control order. For instance, the implementation of the COVID-19 lockdown is similar among sub-Saharan African countries but differs from southeast Asian countries and western nations (Haider et al., 2020).

3. Methodology

This study qualitatively employs an interpretative phenomenological (IP) analysis of interview data. The study conducts interviews with selected individuals that are involved in *Ṣadaqah* donation, disbursement, and administration in Malaysia during the COVID-19 lockdown. The researchers use a poster to call for willing *Ṣadaqah* donors during the COVID-19 lockdown. 25 volunteers were identified and only 15 participants were available during the scheduled semi-interviews. The researchers did not further increase the number of participants as soon as the saturation of data was researched (Saunders et al., 2018). Narratives were recorded from participants using the google meet online platform and the recorded information was transcribed verbatim and translated from Malay to English language where applicable. Each participant was interviewed for 30 min to 45 mins. The IPA approach entails two (hermeneutics) processes: the interpretative expression of participants' perspectives and, the researcher's re-interpretation of respondents' perspectives (Choudhry & Bokharey, 2013). All identifiable informants in the data sets were represented with pseudonyms to ensure anonymous participation as agreed in the interview consent form. Purposive sampling will be used to select participants for the semi-structured interviews which is suitable for it allows face to face, online, and in-depth data gathering (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

4. Findings and Analysis

The study inquiries about the Malaysian perception of the *Ṣadaqah* donation to the vulnerable B-40 categories during the covid-19 lockdown. The effect of the COVID-19 lockdown in Malaysia was an isolated case because situational poverty affects the B-40 category that relies on daily petty incomes from market stalls, working assistance, laborers, and artisans. The effect of the lockdown has also influenced the education programs of children from the B-40 family members. The majority of the respondents opined that *Ṣadaqah* played a significant role in improving the situational poverty of the B-40 during the covid-19 lockdown. The findings and analysis have five main themes: (1) attitudes of the donors in giving *Ṣadaqah*; (2) perceived impact of *Ṣadaqah* on recipients; (3) motivating factors towards the attitude of giving *Ṣadaqah*; (4) attitudes towards kinds of *Ṣadaqah*; (5) challenges of giving *Ṣadaqah*.

4.1 Attitudes of the Donors in Giving *Ṣadaqah*

The study found that the attitudes of participants toward assisting others during the lockdown vary between self-satisfaction, happiness, gratefulness, and empathy towards the needy, poor, and other vulnerable members of society. Some also reported an increased sense of responsibility to assist others: "*Giving Ṣadaqah makes me feel happy and satisfied*"[44years female]; "*Giving Ṣadaqah makes me see how people feel in difficulties*"[46 years male]; "*Donating makes me feel grateful*"[60 years female]. The respondents were concerned that many people were severely impacted by COVID-19. In turn, the respondents became empathetic and motivated to offer *Ṣadaqah* to help relieve the difficulties of the vulnerable during the COVID-19 lockdown. In doing this, the respondents understood the importance of giving *Ṣadaqah* as a means of showing appreciation to Allah. There was a strong belief that *Ṣadaqah* from wealth is from Allah but held in their trust to cater to the needs of the needy and the poor. A participant opined that helping others is reciprocal because others might help you while in need tomorrow: "*Giving Ṣadaqah makes me feel touched and positive about*

Allah in every situation of life"; "During the pandemic, many people lost their jobs, income, and even their beloved one. Those people are in need to be assisted emotionally and economically otherwise their condition will be more severe and lead to hopelessness" [30 years male]. The participants also claimed that the love of caring for others has been imbibed before the COVID-19 lockdown and helped to decide to donate to relieve the difficulties of the recipients. Also, the attitude of the participants toward caring for others was grounded in their empathetic feelings. A participant said "Many people as we know have lost jobs, having nothing to fall back on. I know that it is naturally not easy for people to ask for help, so I feel touched to do quick response to people in need" [60 years female]. Some respondents indicate that giving Ṣadaqah increased their sense of responsibility towards others.

4.2 Perceived Impact of Ṣadaqah on Recipients

Some participants assert that Ṣadaqah donors and NGO volunteers can see the direct impact of their effort on the recipients and get motivated to do more: "Giving Ṣadaqah makes me feel a high sense of responsibility in doing more for the needy and poor" [41 years female].

Participants from NGOs can assess the perceived impacts of Ṣadaqah on the recipients during the COVID-19 lockdown. Accordingly, the participants believed the increase in the number of beneficiaries of Ṣadaqah during the lockdown was a result of unprecedented job loss and reduced income whereby many could not afford to cater to the basic needs of food, house rent, and medical relief. Therefore, the respondents felt that their Ṣadaqah assisted those in the B-40 categories to cater to their socio-economic needs: "We have a food kitchen where a thousand meals are given out each day including lunch, breakfast, and dinner for males and females who need food and those who lost their jobs that cannot afford food. We also give small income to the family of the handicapped persons" [60 years female].

Participants affirm that Ṣadaqah donation has eased the burden of the vulnerable members of society during the COVID-19 lockdown and has improved their

standard of living. A donor said: "I give donation cash to the neighbors that are B-40 petty traders who could not open their store because of the lockdown" [27 years female].

Other Participants state that Ṣadaqah fosters social solidarity among the B-40 category through an increased sense of helping one another. There were cases where recipients referred donors to other needy and vulnerable persons, especially during the COVID-19 lockdown. To this effect, a participant noted: "as an NGO representative, it was interesting to us that we got many of the contacts of the needy through referral of other beneficiaries" [42 years female]. Moreover, the beneficiaries of Ṣadaqah felt respected and honored by the givers for tending to their needs during the COVID-19 lockdown. In turn, the respondents reported that the beneficiaries of their Ṣadaqah developed an increased understanding that many people care and were willing to help them: "I think they feel they are respected as they connect donors with other needy and vulnerable persons in their contact" [34 years male]. The respondents also felt that their Ṣadaqah positively impacted recipients' mental and physical well-being: "I hope the donation of cash transfer through online and direct delivery of relief items to alleviate the financial burden of the needy and vulnerable during the lockdown has helped in the mental wellbeing and physical fitness of many recipients" [46 years male]; "before COVID-19 everything was normal, now it is hard to even survive so the donations that were made will hopefully ease their burden a little bit." [60 years female]. The participants also contend that Ṣadaqah donations have created a continuous educational intervention for students to continue their studies during the COVID-19 lockdown: "Charity assists many families to make their children continue online classes during the lockdown" [44 years female].

4.3 Motivating Factors towards the Attitude of Giving Ṣadaqah

The respondents identify Islam as the main motivation for giving Ṣadaqah among Malaysian Muslims. This was probably because most of the respondents were immersed

in Islamic teachings and practices of sharing wealth. As to this, a respondent explicates the impact of a verse from the Holy Qur'an on her life: when we die we wish to come back to life so we can do more *Ṣadaqah* [60 years female]: *And spend [in the way of Allah] from what We have provided you before death approaches one of you and he says, "My Lord, if only You would delay me for a brief term so I would give charity and be among the righteous."* [Al-Munāfiqūn:10].

Family influence was another motivation factor among the participants. For instance, a respondent was motivated by her parent to give *Ṣadaqah* as he sought to practice what his parents did and taught about charity: *"I usually follow my father when he wants to donate to the poor and that motivated me to also help others by giving Ṣadaqah"* [30 years male]. The plethora of information in public spaces depicting the socio-economic difficulties that many people were experiencing during the lockdown is an important motivation factor for some participants to give *Ṣadaqah*, thus: *"I read the survey data online and research findings and I got to know that people feel difficulties and got motivated to do Ṣadaqah for the needy"* [44 years male]. Similarly, some respondents were motivated by the dear socio-economic situation of the people around them during the COVID-19 lockdown: *"Perceiving the worst situation of people around my neighborhood during lockdown motivated me to donate Ṣadaqah"* [36 years male]. *"Although lockdown restricts movement, but I got to know through a phone call that many people are in need and become motivated to help them with food stuff"* [55 years male].

The proximity of the *Ṣadaqah* donor to the beneficiaries played a factor in determining those that benefit from the *Ṣadaqah* during the lockdown because of the movement control order. However, other participants view that helping people within their proximity strengthens the socio-economic and environmental relationships among the people. This study found that close relatives are the first point of contact for help and assistance during the COVID-19 lockdown. Helping close relatives and neighbors is also considered a priority in social responsibility. A participant states that having the

interest and courage to help the people around is a salient motivation factor for giving *Ṣadaqah*: *"I prefer to give Ṣadaqah in my neighborhood because during the lockdown it is easy for me to locate the needy and easy to transfer food stuff and relief packages to them"* [42 years female]. The act of giving *Ṣadaqah* to relatives is in concord with the justification in the Qur'an: *(And give the relative his right, and [also] the poor and the traveler, and do not spend wastefully)* [Al-Isrā': 26].

Also, the channels through which individual respondents routed their *Ṣadaqah* were mediated by a few factors, including trust. Few participants expressed concern about the growing distrust among some charity managers/organizations. However, the respondents expressed a higher trust in mosque management, arguing that they manage and administer charity donations better, with transparency, and credibility, and that they were under the supervision of the state government. The respondents also donated to the non-governmental organizations with a good track record and high credibility, as well as Islamic institutions: *"I donated my Ṣadaqah to the NGO involved in the orphans care, education and orphanage homes"* [41 years female]; *"I donated my Ṣadaqah to Islamic boarding schools because the students were mainly from the B-40 communities"* [40 years female].

Several organizations have charity programs targeted at individuals that meet certain criteria. The study found that organizational affiliation influenced how a respondent routed his *Ṣadaqah*. Some participants considered the activities and selection of NGOs before using the channel for *Ṣadaqah* donation while others are following the *Ṣadaqah* program of the NGO to which they belong as active members. As a result, they developed a better appreciation of their organization's charity management process: *"The reason I helped the needy through the university charity box is that I am a part of the community and I trust the school distribution to the B-40 within the community and immediate environment"* [47 years female]. *"The reason I gave Ṣadaqah to the mosque is that I have no worries with its regulation"* [34 years male].

The self-satisfaction of helping others have a better living is another motivating factor that influences people's

attitude toward Ṣadaqah. An excitement in bringing joy to the life of other people is a motivation to do more: *"Donating makes me feel positive and excited in doing more"* [44 years female]; *"I think giving Ṣadaqah lowers my ego and help me prevent myself from arrogancy because of the opportunity of having to give others"* [31 years female]. Another participant contends that giving Ṣadaqah is religiously impactful on the donor. Ṣadaqah donors will be rewarded by Allah in this world and hereafter based on the evidence in the Qur'an: *"Take from their wealth 'O Prophet' charity to purify and bless them"* [Al-Tawbah:103]. A participant interprets this to mean giving Ṣadaqah may insulate them against poverty: *"I always have in mind that giving charity is rewarded by Allah in this world and hereafter"* [36 years male].

4.4 Attitudes Towards Kinds of Ṣadaqah

During the COVID-19 lockdown, people need basic items like food, drinks, and medical materials to survive at home. This study found that the respondents gave Ṣadaqah based on essentiality, flexibility, and pervasiveness. Most participants gave Ṣadaqah such as food, which they considered an essential need for people to survive during the pandemic: *"I gave food stuff because without food people cannot survive"* [44 years female]. Also, some participants gave money as Ṣadaqah because they felt that money was needed by those who severely impacted by COVID-19 to attend to their basic needs. Despite the lockdown, people can still order many things online and cash Ṣadaqah is flexible to attend to several essential needs. Whereas others gave what was pervasive in the areas where the recipients of their Ṣadaqah were living: *"I gave money because it is more pervasive, and people can buy whatever they need with it easily"* [30 years male].

Few respondents are concerned about charity abuse and conscious of preventing unnecessary dependency on charity but donating exactly what the beneficiary needs. To this effect, a participant gave exact materials like food items, clothes, and books to optimize their usefulness and avoid waste: *"I give clothes and books*

because I do not need them anymore" [26 years female]; *"I prefer to give food because giving money might make people lazy"* [44 years male].

4.5 Challenges of Giving Ṣadaqah

This study identifies limited financial resources as a constraint to giving Ṣadaqah. The participants that are working class are uncertain about the future of their job while some lost their jobs. Participants that are business owners are highly concerned about low income due to the lockdown and movement control order: *"Income from my personal business and co-owned school is lower but I still donate because we got other trusted donors that pass Ṣadaqah through us"* [60 years female]; *"My financial resources during COVID-19 were reduced and it was challenging for me to donate"* [26 years female].

There is a mixed perception about the duration of the perceived impact of the Ṣadaqah on the B-40 categories. Few participants believed that donations may not assist the needy and vulnerable except for a limited time, for reasons captured in the following quote: *"Although the assistance will not bring significant impact, it helped them a little as their basic needs for survival were supplied"* [34 years male]; *"I noticed that the Ṣadaqah cannot cater for all the basic needs of the family"* [55 years male].

Information about COVID-19 patients and positive cases stirred up stereotypical attitudes such as many infected people felt rejected (Kurita & Managi, 2020). This also physically constrained some participants from donating Ṣadaqah items to the needy and vulnerable members of society: *"For me, having a stereotype of poor people is a challenge in donating as I cannot recognize people who need money"* [31 years female]. Also, donors and NGO volunteers had difficulties identifying and differentiating those in need from others: *"I think categorizing the needy people was challenging as I did not know whether they need assistance or not"* [42 years female]. The scarcity of Ṣadaqah givers was another challenge faced particularly by charity organizations: *"I think that looking for those who want to donate was challenging as*

many philanthropists also experienced reduced income” [31 years female].

Movement restriction during the lockdown was also a challenge, as this hindered the donors and organization from reaching out to everyone in need: *“Restricted Movement is challenging for me to reach out to many distressed calls requesting for our Sadaqah relief, we only operate in our environment” [42 years female].*

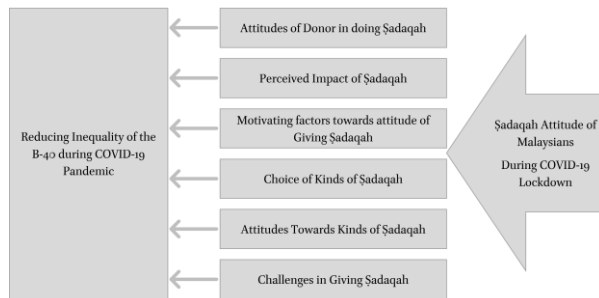


Figure 01: by the authors (Sadaqah Attitudes During COVID-19 Lockdown)

5. Discussion

This study focuses on the socio-economic effects of Malaysians' *Sadaqah* attitudes towards Malaysians during the COVID-19 lockdown. The data analysis captured five main sub-themes including: attitudes of donors in doing *Sadaqah*; perceived impact of *Sadaqah* on recipients; motivating factors towards the attitude of giving *Sadaqah*; attitudes towards kinds of *Sadaqah*; and challenges of giving *Sadaqah*.

This study suggests that many Malaysian *Sadaqah* donors have the attitude of feeling satisfied, happy, and grateful for being alive and having the opportunity to help others during COVID-19 challenges. Most respondents felt satisfied when they donate as they understand it can ease others' burdens. Many people were impacted severely by COVID-19 which created empathy in the givers. Respondents felt touched and positive that their sense of responsibility to help people had increased, leading them to donate to eradicate receivers' difficulties.

Secondly, the perceived effects of *Sadaqah* from the donor's perspective center around the potential of charity to improve the socio-economic standard of living of the B-40 Groups, especially in basic needs of feeding,

clothing, medical, and education. However, some perceived that charity could not help the B-40 group significantly as the amount is not sufficient to care for all socioeconomic and medical needs of the family.

Thirdly, the data set shows that religious belief and understanding is a motivating factor towards the attitude of giving *Sadaqah* among Malaysians during the COVID-19 lockdown. Religion, especially Islam, is a strong drive for doing charity as mentioned in its scripture, including its methods, types, and rewards as well. Also, family relation is another drive towards *Sadaqah* whereby seeing parents or influential family members doing *Sadaqah* have attracted others towards the act of helping others. Moreover, empirical data from a plethora of studies and news reports about the current conditions of the people amidst the pandemic triggers the concern and motives of donating *Sadaqah* to the needy and poor.

Fourthly, the choice of the kind of *Sadaqah* of donors mainly focuses on the essential, flexible and pervasive needs of the people during the COVID-19 lockdown. Most participants considered food donation as the basic need that every people must have while others prefer money as a kind of donation that can enhance flexibility to purchase other basic needs. The COVID-19 lockdown also increases the donation of unused goods such as clothes and books to optimize usage and avoid waste.

Finally, there are pockets of challenges such as reduced financial resources of donors due to restricted socio-economic activities. Also, the fear of stereotypes among beneficiaries affect easy contact between the donors and the beneficiaries because news channels and social media sometimes reveal the identity of donors and the beneficiaries, hindering the interest of those beneficiaries in situational poverty that prefer to hide and protect their identity. One of the significant challenges to *Sadaqah* attitudes during the COVID-19 lockdown is the movement control order in Malaysia. The restriction hinders the continuous transfer of socio-economic assistance among people especially because of distance and fear of COVID-19 spread among the people.

Ṣadaqah in Islam has several rewards based on the virtues mentioned in the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*. Firstly, Ṣadaqah is a means of the atonement of sins in this world: "If you do deeds of charity openly, it is well; but if you bestow it upon the needy in secret, it will be better for you, and it will atone for some of your bad deeds. And God is aware of all that you do" [Baqarah: 271].

Secondly, Ṣadaqah gives the donor tranquility and rest of mind: "Those who spend their wealth in charity day and night, secretly and openly their reward is with their Lord, and there will be no fear for them, nor will they grieve" [Baqarah: 274].

Thirdly, Ṣadaqah is a means of spiritual purification of wealth, soul, and family. "(O Prophet)! Take alms out of their riches and thereby cleanse them and bring about their growth (in righteousness) and pray for them. Indeed, your prayer is a source of tranquility for them." Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing" [Al-Tawbah: 103].

Fourthly, according to the exegeses of Al-Bagawī (1997), another feature of Ṣadaqah is that it may not necessarily be in cash because a good moral attitude, mercy in speech, and forgiveness are better than cash Ṣadaqah followed by injury and harm: "A kind word with forgiveness is better than almsgiving followed by injury. Allah is Absolute, Clement" [Baqarah: 263].

6. Conclusion

Although there are several recent studies on the COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic impact across the globe, there seems no significant study on the imperative impact of Ṣadaqah (charity) attitude, intent, and behavior toward reducing inequality among the B-40 community in Malaysia. This study explicates five main themes from the data set. The most important of them are that it identifies the prominent attitudes of the donors during Ṣadaqah distribution to beneficiaries and the perceived effect of Ṣadaqah on recipients. The study found that the donors perceive the socio-economic, mental, and psychological impact of the Ṣadaqah on the lives and situations of the beneficiaries, especially the B-40 categories. Despite the significant impacts of Ṣadaqah during the COVID-19

lockdown, the donors experienced some challenges that require attention for practical and policy recommendations among the NGO administrators and policymakers. This study found that Malaysians are more religiously and psychologically inclined toward giving Ṣadaqah, especially during emergencies like the COVID-19 lockdown. The study recommends overarching government policy for the standard operation of Ṣadaqah organizations especially during emergencies to enhance transparency and effectively reach out to the needy. The data set showed that some donors and volunteers involved in Ṣadaqah distribution have a perceived effect on themselves as much as they perceived its impact on the beneficiaries. The responses also highlighted the challenges and negative experiences of the donors during the Ṣadaqah distribution activities.

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