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Food Insecurity amid COVID-19 Lockdowns: The Phenomenology of Prophet Yūsuf 's Food Security Model

Saheed Abdullahi Busari¹

Abstract: Food insecurity has been on the rise since the emergence of the first COVID-19 lockdown due to low income, unemployment, sickness and disability. This situation may snowball into a perpetual socio-economic crisis, triggering insecurity in health care and political instability in the society. For instance, the COVID-19 lockdown has affected access to food kitchens, food banks, school lunch programmes and other social food initiatives for the needy and poor in the society. Food insecurity deeply affects people without a stable job, single mothers with limited income and unemployed heads of households with young children. Against these backdrops, this study explores the phenomenological interpretation of Quranic exegeses on Prophet Yūsuf's food security strategy and action plan. The study has found that modern Islamic socio-economic principles are congruent with the food security model of Yūsuf (a.s.) in terms of even distribution of wealth and avoiding wastage and hoarding of essentials, except for protecting the interests of the people and the market. The study extracts and interpolates Prophet Yūsuf's food security model to modern Muslim societies.

Keywords: Food insecurity, COVID-19 lockdown, Yūsuf model, phenomenology interpretation.

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Introduction

Food insecurity is deeply rooted in poverty due to decreases in agricultural markets and economies. It is not always limited to poverty but encapsulates challenges of accessing nutritious food and a balanced diet for human survival and wellbeing. Temporary food insecurity may be influenced by income, employment, race/ethnicity and disability. The risk of food insecurity increases when money to buy food is limited or not available. This situation may accelerate into perpetual food shortage, generating socio-economic imbalance and political instability in the society (Maxwell, 2012). Food insecurity increases social inequalities in health care through diseases such as obesity and malnutrition. Sustainable food security must address the entire interest of supply chain elements, including the production, transportation, storage and accessibility of consumers to essential needs (Govindan, 2018).

However, the COVID-19 pandemic is the latest disruptive event that has influenced a major aspect of human endeavours in the present time. One of the immediate measures that was introduced by policymakers and governments across the globe is lockdown and movement control order. Public health experts have suggested that reducing social interaction and maintaining physical distancing are the most effective mechanisms to prevent the spread of the virus. As such, the implementation of lockdowns has affected the socio-economic survival of the people. An average household will have to resort to other options for the supply methods of basic needs, such as food, clothing, medical needs and access to education (Falcato, 2021). On the other hand, stakeholder individuals, businesses and government agencies are significantly challenged in addressing the supply chain of basic household needs, especially food. The status quo in the production, storage and supply of basic needs has been disrupted and there is a dire need for a sustainable emergency mechanism to cater for the production, storage and supply of basic needs to combat any socio-economic threat of food insecurity (Chakraborty et.al., 2020). The study will interpolate the food security model of Prophet Yūsuf (a.s.) to the King of Egypt to the contemporary food insecurity situation across the globe. According to a UN report, surges in COVID-19 cases have led to the loss of over 24 million jobs and the global GDP dropped to 1.5%, triggering a significant effect on basic amenities on the poorest and most vulnerable segments of the society. Partial and total lockdowns of manufacturing and business

sectors have disrupted the food supply and increased panic buying and hoarding. The UN report suggests the need for governments to create short-term social protection mechanisms to address the challenges of food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic (High-Level Panel of Expert on Food Security and Nutrition, 2020).

This study aims to extract the food security model of Prophet Yūsuf (a.s.) and its application to modern Muslim societies. The remaining sections of the study encapsulate the causes of food insecurity during COVID-19 lockdowns, Islamic macro-economic principles on supply chain, phenomenological interpretation of Quranic verses on Prophet Yūsuf's food security model and the proposed model of Yūsuf's food security model to modern Muslim societies.

Food Insecurity during COVID-19 Lockdowns

Food insecurity is mainly caused by the socio-economic inability of accessing food resulting from challenges in income, employment, race/ethnicity and disability. An average household's accessibility to food depends on the level of income against food prices in the market. Studies have shown that the level of poverty is proportionate to food access when other things are constant (Warr, 2014). However, policymakers across the globe have realised the importance of short-term financial assistance to citizens to mitigate the effect of COVID-19 and lockdown of economic activities. The majority of households experiencing food insecurity during COVID-19 was a result of disruption in employment income, unavailable food assistance and challenges of panic buying (Men & Tarasuk, 2021).

Food supply is derived from agricultural products, but the increasing modern society has given rise to the need to improve the supply chain of agricultural products, such as food products. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the food supply chain has been partly affected and the agricultural workforce, production and processing firms as well as the transportation system that are categorised as essential workers are also affected. Imported food supplies became less stocked, while the medical supplies and other essentials triggered panic buying (Mead et al., 2020). The situation of the pandemic lockdown has threatened sectors that rely on import and export goods. As such, the emergency of food supply

shortage has engulfed the vulnerable categories of society with hunger, health concerns and poverty. During the food insecurity scourge, the unemployed households have been mostly affected in building emergency reserves for the lockdown due to poor health and diseases. Moreover, irregular income earners such as factory workers, labourers and petty traders have been equally severely impacted (Tiutiunykova & Skochko, 2020).

The study of the British Society of Immunology (2021) suggests that most health casualties of the COVID-19 pandemic are categories of people with low immunity who were unable to adapt and fight the virus in their body. It is interesting to note that a balanced diet with organic food is one of the means of building a sustainable immune system. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, over four million lives have been exposed to the said virus due to deficiency in the immune system caused by global food insecurity and poor nutrition (Suri, 2021). According to the World Health Organisation, the unprecedented threat of COVID-19 to lives, health and food security across the globe cannot be over-emphasised. The majority of the agricultural workers and immigrant farm labourers have abandoned farming due to lack of social support, unsafe working conditions in transportation and limited government support measures to adhere to government standard operating procedure (SOP) (World Health Organization, 2020).

Islamic Macro-economic Principles on Supply Chain

Moving goods from farm and manufacturing sites to the end-users is the basic process of the supply chain. Dawei Lu (2011, p. 9) contends that “supply chain is defined as a group of inter-connected participating companies that add value to a stream of transformed inputs from their sources of origin to the end products and services that are demanded by the designated end-consumers.”

Supply chain management is the effective interaction of stakeholder elements in the transfer of goods and services. This interaction provides a strategic and operational framework for the movement of products from the manufacturers to the end-users (Croxtton et al., 2001).

The supply chain is faced with several management issues in modern times. The study by Bala (2014) explicates that sustainable supply chain

management needs to address the issue of integration between sections of the supply chain. There is also the need to address the information sharing process and designed network between the stakeholder elements in the supply chain management. For instance, the farmer, wholesaler, retailers and end-users cannot work in silos and expect the effective transfer of products from the farm to end-users. Islam, as a way of life, portrays socio-economic, political and spiritual solutions to every challenge in society. It promotes an economic cooperative and prohibits the unnatural hoarding of essential goods and services in the society (Busari et.al., 2021).

Ta'āwanu is an act of cooperation and an Islamic fundamental principle that encapsulates goodness (*birr*) and piety (*taqwā*). However, the exegeses of al-Qurṭubī explain that the command of Allah (S.W.T.) in the following verse on cooperation relates to the socio-economic, political and spiritual relationship among the people: “Cooperate with one another in goodness and righteousness, and do not cooperate in sin and transgression” (al-Maidah: 2). Islam encourages togetherness among people and activities of preaching cooperation to others. Cooperation in *birr* is expected among all creations, such as humans, animals and the environment, while inculcating *taqwā* towards Allah (S.W.T.) as the Creator of all (Olanrewaju & Busari, 2019).

Islam prohibits the hoarding (*iktināz*) of goods and products that inconvenience elements of the supply chain, but permits provident (*iddikhār*) storing of unused or undemanded items for future use. The concept of hoarding in economics is the process of purchasing and warehousing a large number of goods to sell at a higher price in the future. Hoarding is usually triggered by intent speculation to benefit from a future price hike. The prohibition of hoarding in Islam stems from the principle of prohibiting the consequences of misrepresentation in market information, fraud, cheating and forgery, as well as to enhance transparency between the stakeholders in the supply chain (Abdul-Rahman, 2003).

The traditions of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) emphasised that “no one hoards except one in error” (Muslim, 2006, p.1228, no. 130). Islam does not prohibit the act of purchasing and warehousing for future use or sale based on needs. For instance, someone can purchase real estate with the intent of selling in the future at profit. However, the act of

hoarding essential products, such as food, with the intent of stockpiling based on unnatural speculation in order to benefit from a future price hike is prohibited (Arafah, 2016).

Moreover, the higher objective of the lawgiver on the protection of wealth entails permissibility of all lawful businesses and prohibition of unlawful transactions and their mechanisms. The *maqāsid* (higher objectives) in the protection of public wealth and interest includes the prohibition of trading of alcohol, swine, usury and hoarding against public interest to benefit future price hikes (Zughaibah, 2014). According to Ibn Ashur (2013), the *maqāsid* of wealth is to ensure even circulation among the people in cash and kind as commodity or investment because wealth is a general right of the nation in the management, distribution and preservation of public wealth (Ibn Ashur, 2013).

The significance of wealth in classical and modern times remains as the means of human survival whereby people exchange wealth in the form of goods and services to satisfy their needs. In essence, one of the significant intents of the lawgiver on wealth is to allow open and even circulation among the people in a society. Therefore, Islam prohibits the act of hoarding essential wealth and the creation of artificial bottlenecks for the flow of resources among the people (Zughaibah, 2014).

And those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in the Way of Allah, give tidings unto them of a painful torment. (al-Tawbah: 35)

The exegeses of Ibn Kathīr (774 H) illustrate that wealthy people are the third category of leadership in a society after scholars and spiritualists. In essence, the wealthy are a significant segment in the leadership of a society because they can dictate the flow of wealth and economic activities. Nevertheless, the Quran emphasises the punishment of Allah (S.W.T.) upon those who acquire wealth and hoard them at the expense of the poor by refusing to contribute to *zakāt*, *sadaqa* and other *infāq fī sabīl-Allāh* (spending on the path of Allah) (Ibn Kathīr, 1997).

An intentional stockpiling of wealth at the expense of public needs and the socio-economic survival of the society is prohibited in Islam. Allah (S.W.T.) says in the Quran:

And let not those who [greedily] withhold what Allah has given them of His bounty ever think that it is better for them. Rather, it is worse for them. Their necks will be encircled by what they withheld on the Day of Resurrection. And to Allah belongs the heritage of the heavens and the earth. And Allah, with what you do, is [fully] Acquainted. (Al-Imran: 180)

Besides the evidence of the prohibition of hoarding found in the primary sources of sharia, scholars have discussed rules of exception for stocking up to maintain socio-economic structural adjustment on one hand and political stability and security on the other. According to the interpretative analysis on the jurisprudence of Imam Aḥmad (780 H), the prohibition of hoarding is mainly for food items because they represent the essentials needs for human survival (al-Rabbāṭ & ʿĪd, 2009). Another piece of evidence to further clarify that stocking up on personal food for future use is not hoarding is based on the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.), who “was selling the palm trees of Banu an-Nadhir and withholding for his family the food of their year” (al-Bukhārī, 2002, p. 1364, no.5357).

In supply chain management, there are certain policy measures in the transfer of goods and services from the manufacturer to the end-users. Government agencies and policymakers in charge of product supply management might need to control, reduce and regulate the flow of goods and services to protect the economy and the people. Scholars of Islamic economics have distinguished between unlawful hoarding and permissible stocking up of essentials for rainy days ahead. Under normal circumstances, some seasonal agricultural products might be in surplus and to avoid wastage, a preservative measure is required to stockpile for future use of export to other places for economic exchange (al-Qāsim, 2020). Business strategists have also contended that there is a difference between stock keeping for use and stockpiling for retail sale. In essence, storing products for personal use is permissible because it neither disrupts the market supply nor leads to price increases, and therefore does not harm people. Another relative dimension of hoarding in the contemporary market is warehousing imported goods. There is a need to ascertain the nature and purpose of the business in order to distinguish between warehousing imported goods and intentional withdrawal of goods from the market because the dynamics of importation goods from distant markets may not cause harm to the market (al-Qāsim, 2020).

Although Islam strongly prohibits hoarding to protect the rights of the people and the market, there are situations where stocking up on goods and essentials is necessary and in line with the basic principles of preventing wastage, protecting the market and structural adjustment to provide for future needs. Firstly, economic and provident stockpiling of goods and services for a certain long or short period might be necessary when many people do not need them at the moment so as to avoid wastage. Some seasonal products and services are in high demand at a particular time of every year. The intent of stocking up in this context is not hoarding for the advantage of a future price hike—rather, it is meant to lessen the burden of the people in their future demands (al-Şan‘ānī, 2009). For example, school materials and student writing materials are essential and in high demand from the beginning to the end of the school year and in low demand during holidays, such as the summer holiday.

Secondly, stocking up on goods with low demand and following future market prices, especially at a higher profit, is permissible if it is based on market regulation of demand and supply. According to the fatwa of Lajnah al-Daimah (1999), safekeeping for the future is permissible if there is low demand at a particular time in order to avoid economic loss from damage wastage. For example, winter clothing is cheaper in summer because of low demand versus market supply. Some wholesalers and retailers might have to stock up on low demand until winter, during which several people will have to do shopping and are in most need of it. Nevertheless, it is required that every producer, wholesaler and retailer in the supply chain should follow the price rule on the market, rather than take advantage of desperate buyers. Finally, the intent of stocking up on goods and services is a significant determinant of sharia compliance and permissibility. This means that stocking up on essential goods for personal and family use in the future is permissible and not categorised as prohibited hoarding (Arafah, 2016).

Perceived Lessons from Quranic Verses on Prophet Yūsuf’s Food Security Model

The blessing of Allah (S.W.T.) that gave Prophet Yūsuf (a.s.) the knowledge and wisdom to interpret dreams serve as a means of victory throughout his predicament. An entire chapter in the Quran is dedicated to the story and events of Prophet Yūsuf (a.s.), suggesting how important

the lessons and reflection are in every time period and situation of human endeavour. Allah (S.W.T.) says in the Quran at the end of the chapter:

There was certainly in their stories a lesson for those of understanding. Never was the Qur'an a narration invented, but a confirmation of what was before it and a detailed explanation of all things and guidance and mercy for a people who believe. (Yūsuf: 111)

The beginning of the scene in the chapter is centered around the mercy of Allah (S.W.T.) on Prophet Yūsuf (a.s.), which is depicted in his knowledge, wisdom and ability to interpret the dreams and situations of the people and society. Despite the previous calamities of being thrown in the well by his brothers and the plot of seduction that led him to imprisonment, Prophet Yūsuf (a.s.) meets two other men who had dreams. Here, he does not hide the gift and blessing of Allah (S.W.T.) and, instead, tells them the meaning of their dreams. Consequently, one of the two prisoners with him gains his freedom and becomes a bartender at the palace. The freed prisoner does not forget that Prophet Yūsuf (a.s.) has the knowledge to interpret dreams, even in the presence of the King. After the interpretation of the dreams and the plot of seduction is made obvious, the King honours him with a high position, but Prophet Yūsuf (a.s.) prefers to be in charge of the storehouse (Haider, 2015).

The Importance of Knowledge and Wisdom in Leadership and Addressing Universal Socio-economic, Political and Environmental Challenges

Allah (S.W.T.) gave Prophet Yūsuf (a.s.) two things upon maturity: wisdom (*ḥikma*) and knowledge (*'ilman*). According to the exegesis of Imam al-Baghawī, *ḥikma* means prophethood, which includes the ability to interpret dreams and make a precise statement. On the other hand, *'ilman* means religious jurisprudence and understanding several things and situations of the human relationship with other creatures, such as animals and the environment. Imam al-Ṭabarī explicates that *ḥikmah* means understanding matters and situations, while *'ilman* means knowledge of things and creatures (al-Baghawī, 1997).

And when Joseph reached maturity, We gave him judgment and knowledge. And thus We reward the doers of good. (Yūsuf: 22)

Maturity (*rushda*) is one of the criteria required to attain the legal capacity to perform obligations (*ahliya al-adha*) in sharia (Busari et al., 2019). It can be inferred that the knowledge and wisdom that Allah (S.W.T.) bestowed on Prophet Yūsuf (a.s) eventually prepared him for future engagements and challenges. Maturity plays a significant role in his complete reliance on Allah (S.W.T.) during the tribulations from his siblings and the wife of the honoured person (*imra'a al-'azīz*). Moreover, Prophet Yūsuf (a.s.) demonstrated a high sense of maturity in knowledge and wisdom when interpreting the King's dream.

It can be stated that one of the significant events in the life of Prophet Yūsuf (a.s.) that manifested the blessing and favour of Allah (S.W.T.) in him through *hikma* and *'ilman* was when he was in prison while the King had a dream and there seemed to be no one among his emissaries and chiefs who could interpret its meaning and implication until someone suggested that a prisoner called Yūsuf can do it, after which the King ordered for him to be sent immediately (Ibn Kathīr, 1997).

And the king (of Egypt) said; "Verily, I saw (in a dream) seven fat cows, whom seven lean ones were devouring, and seven green ears of corn, and (seven) others dry. O notables! Explain to me my dream, if it be that you can interpret dreams." (Yūsuf: 43)

The exegesis of Imam al-Ṭabarī explains that the King initially gathered the witches, the priest and soothsayers to interpret the dream but they declined to offer any form of explanation because they felt that the dream narrative seemed intertwined and too complex for them to interpret (al-Ṭabarī, 2001).

They said, "[It is but] a mixture of false dreams, and we are not learned in the interpretation of dreams." (Yūsuf: 44)

The Permissibility of Dream Interpretation based on Revealed Knowledge and Wisdom

Even though Prophet Yūsuf (a.s.) was in jail while the King had a dream, he seized the opportunity to encourage the King and his subjects to embrace Islam and established his prophethood as a chosen and special personality. Imam al-Qurṭubī explains in his work that the freed prisoner now attending to palace services heard the announcement that the chiefs and soothsayers of the King could not interpret the dream and proclaimed that he could do that for the King (al-Qurṭubī, 1964).

But the one who was freed and remembered after a time said,
“I will inform you of its interpretation, so send me forth.”
(Yūsuf: 45)

The exegesis of Imam al-Baghawī illustrates that the bartender had leverage on his former relationship with Prophet Yūsuf (a.s.) for dream interpretation while they were in prison together. Therefore, the freed prisoner asked him to interpret the King’s dream and, perhaps, there may be an opportunity for the people and the King to know about him and his gift of knowledge and wisdom (al-Baghawī, 1997).

[He said], “Joseph, O man of truth, explain to us about seven fat cows eaten by seven [that were] lean, and seven green spikes [of grain] and others [that were] dry - that I may return to the people; perhaps they will know [about you].” (Yūsuf: 46)

Policy and Action Plan Preparation for Socio-economic Disruptions

Al-Ṭabarī explains that the seven fat cows (*sab’a simān min al-baqara*) and green crops (*sanābila al-khudur*) here refer to seven fertilised years, while seven lean cows (*sab’a ‘ijāf*) and dried crops (*sanābila yābisāt*) refer to seven barren years. This means that after seven fertile years, there will come seven barren years that will be calamitous, unless preparations are made beforehand for survival (al-Ṭabarī, 2001).

[Joseph] said, “You will plant for seven years consecutively; and what you harvest leave in its spikes, except a little from which you will eat.

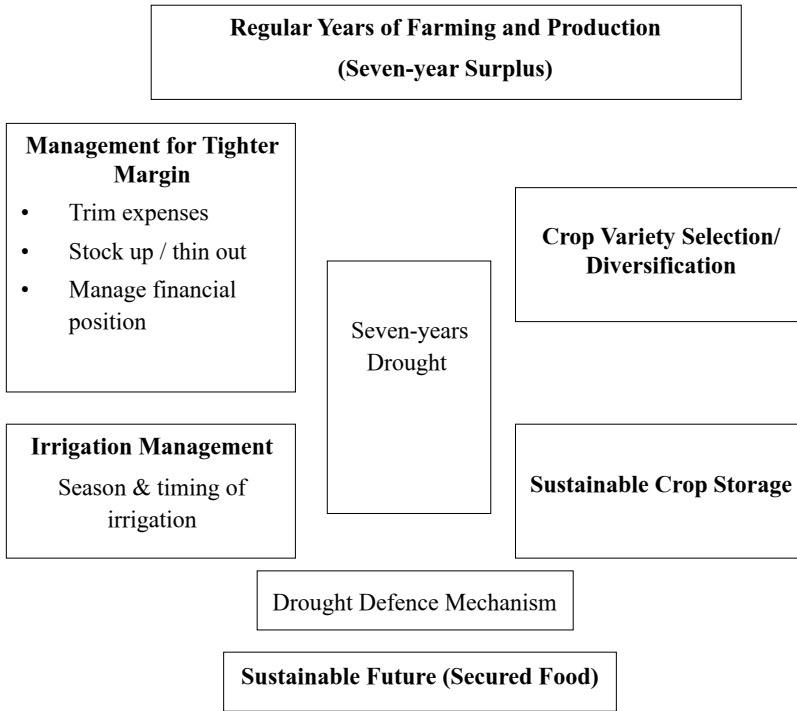
Then will come after that seven difficult [years] which will consume what you saved for them, except a little from which you will store.” (Yūsuf: 47-48)

Savings and Preparation for Hard Times based on Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Knowledge

The classical approach to farm produce preservation is that grain stored in its natural husk tend to last longer without any modern preservatives. However, in the modern context, the principles derived from the strategy of Prophet Yūsuf (a.s.) here is an applicable sustainable mechanism for preserving farm produce. Prophet Yūsuf (a.s.) explained to the King that the seven years of hardship will be followed by ease with sufficient rainfall for crops and animal farming. The exegesis of al-Ṭabarī mentions that the year of surplus after hardship is signified by the rainy season and availability of fruits, such as grapes, for beverages, and animals for dairy products (al-Ṭabarī, n.d.). Imam al-Baghawī explains that the rainfall is a symbol of safety and relief after the seven years of barren land and hardship. The rain is a source of production and the proceeds from that are olives and grapes, which represent abundance, food security, nutrition and good life (al-Baghawī, 1997).

Then will come after that a year in which the people will be given rain and in which they will press [olives and grapes]. (Yūsuf: 49)

Figure 1: Prophet Yūsuf’s Economic Recovery Strategic Plan: A Food Security Model



Discussion

Food insecurity was on a rise during the early COVID-19 lockdown as a result of reduced socio-economic activities. Apart from challenges in food production, the shortage of food during the COVID-19 lockdown triggered panic buying, which stressed the food supply chain. Even though governments across the globe have been responding to the challenges of food insecurity, this study explicates the relevance of Prophet Yūsuf’s food security model to modern realities. Prophet Yūsuf’s food security strategy and action plan, according to the interpretation of the King’s dream, delivers several Islamic economic recovery plans that are useful for contemporary society. Figure 1 depicts the policy and practical recommendations of Prophet Yūsuf (a.s.) to the King of Egypt. For the researcher, it seems that Prophet Yūsuf’s dream interpretations for one of the prisoners and the King showcase

that Islam promotes the sharing of wealth, knowledge and wisdom with others in need. Figure 1 also depicts another implication of the interpretation of the King's dream, that is, the King offering Prophet Yūsuf (a.s.) a higher position, though the latter preferred the position of storehouse minister. By implication, Prophet Yūsuf (a.s.) was placed in a better position to implement a solution to the potential challenges based on the King's dream. The Quran emphasises that Allah (S.W.T.) blessed Prophet Yūsuf (a.s.) with the knowledge and wisdom needed to interpret dreams and address issues in society. In contemporary reality, the solution of Prophet Yūsuf (a.s.) represents the knowledge and wisdom needed to manage surplus and provide a sustainable mechanism for any challenging drought in the future. The interpretation suggests the need for a sustainable management of farm produce on one hand and applicable drought defense mechanism on the other hand. Considering the methodology of Prophet Yūsuf's interpretative approach of the King's dream, it showed the extent of his knowledge and scope of wisdom not only by offering a mere interpretation of the dream, but also by proffering a 14-year strategic plan in dealing with the meaning and consequences of the dream. The first seven years were the years of surplus while the following years depicted socio-economic hardship, especially from food security. Prophet Yūsuf's interpretation of the King's dream postulated the consequences of the future, for which he suggested a comprehensive panacea to address the food insecurity challenge. The encounter of Prophet Yūsuf (a.s.) with the King in this manner thereafter was the main reason for his release from prison. The dream interpretation suggested a dire need to enforce the saving and maintenance of plantation through tighter margin, crop diversification, irrigation management and sustainable storage system during the first seven years such that only harvested crops should be consumed. The second part of the seven years would be challenging and, thus, there was a structural adjustment strategy of managing and distributing the limited food resources among the people in the society. The interpretation suggested the need for Egypt at that time to be frugal in consumption in the second seven years to survive the drought, surely after which the subsequent years would yield surplus. The precise interpretation and explanation of the consequence of the dream suggest that Prophet Yūsuf (a.s.) was not just versed in dream interpretation, but also an expert in socio-economic strategy. The explanation of action outlined by him for food security was by rationing consumption, stockpiling

surplus products and preserving them for the future. He was not merely a bearer of revealed knowledge, but an expert in economic planning and management skills. This study recommends that Islamic institutions and scholars lead the way in proffering solutions to the socio-economic challenges of the people. Policymakers should always be prepared for emergencies like famine, earthquakes and floods through sustainable strategic action plans. When properly managed and controlled, threats and undesirable situations can be converted to opportunities, just as Prophet Yūsuf's interpretation of what seemed as threatening, for which he advised the government and was eventually hired to lead the economic recovery action plan in Egypt.

Prophet Yūsuf's economic recovery strategic plan for food security suggests the need for an average government and policymakers to focus on future and long-term planning for sustainable production and distribution of food, especially during an economic crisis. Although the dream came to the King, who was an unbeliever, it was later interpreted by a prophet of Allah (S.W.T.), thus suggesting the need for partnership to achieve socio-economic and environmental security and stability in the society.

Conclusion

Food insecurity during the COVID-19 lockdowns seems as a situational challenge, but experts have warned of subsequent waves. In the later part of 2021, studies have reported, the consequences of the Alpha, Beta, Delta and Gamma variants of the COVID-19 virus, which is threatening the vaccination agenda in several countries (Pereira & Oliveira, 2020; Piret & Boivin, 2021). This study has found that hoarding essential resources with the intent of exploiting the people and inflicting hardship is prohibited in Islam. The intentional withholding of basic needs, such as food, drink, clothing and medical materials, are the consequences of hoarding (*ihtikār*), which is prohibited in Islam, while savings (*iddikhār*) of personal needs is permissible. Nevertheless, there is a need for a robust framework to take care of the socio-economic and environmental needs of the people in every society. This study has found that the first wave of the COVID-19 outbreak in 2019 and its apparent impact across the globe have forced people, organisations and governments to think about the dire need to explore and uphold sustainable provisions of necessities

for the people. Since food is one of the most essential needs for the survival of life, developing a contemporary and applicable framework for food security seems essential (*darūriyya*) based on the principles of *maqāṣid sharī'a*. This study has found that the COVID-19 outbreak is one of the wills of Allah (S.W.T.) that has been decreed and, yet, there is a solution based on knowledge and wisdom. The development of COVID-19 vaccines and the global vaccination agenda championed by the United Nations and powerful countries is a laudable approach in health policy. However, the policymakers need to address the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on food production, storage and supply from the farms and producers to the end-users. The modern supply chain is more challenged in this trying time, but nevertheless, Muslim nations may borrow credence to the approach and methodology of Prophet Yūsuf 's food security strategy plan based on the interpretation of the dream of the King of Egypt during his time. This study is mainly a qualitative interpretative study of Prophet Yūsuf 's food security strategy and action plan. However, further studies can explore other Islamic principles and food security strategies based on the Quran and Sunnah.

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