

IIUM Journal of Religion and Civilisational Studies

Volume 6

Issue 2

2023



International Islamic University Malaysia

IUM JOURNAL OF RELIGION AND CIVILISATIONAL STUDIES
(E-ISSN: 2637-112X)

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E-ISSN: 2637-112X

Published by:

IIUM Press, International Islamic University Malaysia

P.O. Box 10, 50728 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Phone (+603) 6421-5018/5014, Fax: (+603) 6421-6298

Website: <https://www.iium.edu.my/office/iiumpress>

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CONTENTS

Editorial	89
<i>Fauziah Fathil</i>	

Articles

Major Trends in the Study of Malay Statecraft since 1900	93
<i>Mohamad Hazizie bin Sulkafla</i>	

The Transformation of Islamic Studies: An Ethical and Methodological Analysis	120
<i>Muhammad Mumtaz Ali</i>	

Emerging Social <i>Waqf</i> Model for the Welfare of Pandemic Orphans	139
<i>Saheed Busari</i>	

In Awe of the Holy City: Mecca in the Eyes of Five Medieval Travellers	159
<i>Aditya Pratama Widodo and Alwi Alatas</i>	

Unveiling Historical Trajectory and Civilisational Evolution: A Comparative Examination through the Lenses of Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler	184
<i>Zhilwan Tahir and Abdulwahed Jalal Nori</i>	

The Power Struggle between the Military Junta and Democracy in Myanmar	213
<i>Amirah Syuhada binti Shahrudin and Fauziah Fathil</i>	

Book Review

Idris Zakaria, <i>The Summary of Islamic Political Thought (Ikhtisar Pemikiran Politik Islam)</i>	233
<i>Makmor Tumin</i>	

Emerging Social *Waqf* Model for the Welfare of Pandemic Orphans

Saheed Busari ¹

Abstract: The increasing number of COVID-19 orphans in Malaysia poses an alarming threat to the socio-economic fabric of the nation. Hence, policymakers are confronted with this escalating dilemma, as the surging population of COVID-19 orphans could lead to a rise in problems, such as child sexual abuse, children dropping out of school and suicide. The pandemic of orphans as one of the hidden tragedies of COVID-19 has triggered the need for a sustainable social intervention that can guarantee the socio-economic protection and psycho-emotional care of orphans, especially in Muslim societies. Moreover, the reported number of orphans in the world is over 140 million children, with almost six million pandemic orphans arising from COVID-19 deaths across the globe. Recent studies also suggest that some of the children in orphanages in Malaysia are malnourished from skipping breakfast, lack dental care and even basic needs because of limited funding. Nevertheless, social *waqf* has been receiving significant attention as an Islamic social intervention to cater to vulnerable members of society. Studies have shown that Islamic religious institutions and organisations have been sustained through the *waqf* system. The enormity of the challenge posed by the COVID-19 orphans is such that some activists have been calling on the government to adopt the children into its social scheme. Overwhelmed by the socio-economic challenges arising from the pandemic, the government has also been appealing to private stakeholders to extend their social mission to the care of pandemic orphans. It also requires funding for individual families willing to provide care and protection for orphans. Hence, this highlights the need for an appropriate intervention to take care of the pandemic orphans.

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This study conducts a qualitative analysis of the potential of social *waqf* interventions for the pandemic orphans' care. Extensive desk research on the classical evidence of the socio-economic protection of orphans in Islam are detailed. The study explores the Islamic guidelines for fostering orphans through *kafala* (custody) and the current challenges in their implementation. From the findings, the study proposes a *waqf* model useful for providing social welfare intervention and adequate financial support for the sustainable care of orphans' needs through social workers, orphanages and foster care families, in addition to further empowerment of orphans with needy single parents.

Keywords: *Waqf*, Orphans, COVID-19, Sustainable social intervention, family protection

Introduction

Achieving a sustainable social intervention for orphans has been a challenge in modern times because of the associated dimensions requirements, such as human capital, education and socio-economic empowerment related to financing ("Financing an inclusive recovery for children," 2021). However, classical evidence argues that *waqf* (Islamic endowment) has been a form of socio-economic protection and empowerment since the period of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his companions (ASW). Comprehensive social finance and sustainable endowment are potential panaceas to the incessant challenges of achieving sustainable social intervention for vulnerable members of society.

The significance of *waqf* in Islam made it attractive in history such that many people hearken towards participating in its understanding and application by various means. *Waqf* is a means of serving humanity to seek the pleasure of Allah (SWT) (Sadique et al., 2016). It is an effective Islamic social instrument for preserving humanity by protecting society from the dangers of malice, envy and hatred, as well as from the spread of chaos, theft and forced robbery. It caters to the basic needs of the vulnerable members of society and promotes healthy living, peace and harmony (Baqutayan et al., 2018).

One of the Islamic intents of the endowment is to protect society from danger and facilitate cohesion and cooperation among its

members. Just as every other Islamic social finance, *waqf* can benefit both the donors and beneficiaries. On the one hand, it is a means of voluntary purification for the wealth, soul and family of the donor and, on the other hand, it is a means for providing socio-economic support and empowerment for the vulnerable members of society (Fa-Yusuf et al., 2021).

There are many types of charitable deeds and spending that can be categorised under *waqf* based on the intention and satisfaction of the conditions of Islamic endowment. The rich, philanthropies and corporate donors can contribute their desired share to benefit people, such as the vulnerable and needy, the poor, students of knowledge, widows, orphans and wayfarers, as well as public services, such as the construction of mosques, schools, housing units, canals, wells and roads (Hamber & Haneef, 2017). The concept of *waqf* has been practiced since the era of the Prophet (PBUH) and his companions (ASW), as history records that the virtual majority of the companions (ASW) left *waqf* property behind either for family or charity purposes. However, *waqf* in contemporary times can be traced to efforts in the establishment of schools, medical centres and social facilities in selected Muslim countries (Ahmed, 2004). This study comprises four main sections. The first section highlights recent literature on social *waqf* intervention and the need to cater to orphans. The second section describes the potential contributions of *waqf* to social sustainability. The third section presents the finding proposed on the social *waqf* model. The fourth section presents the conclusion and recommendation.

Literature Review

Pandemic Orphans

Pandemic orphans are one of the hidden consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic that every society will have to deal with in the long run (He & Harris, 2020). COVID-19 has a hidden impact on the family structure due to factors such as the deaths of heads of the family and breadwinners. Pandemic orphans are children who have lost either one or both parents due to the COVID-19 virus attack (Hillis et al., 2021). According to Michaud et al. (2022), COVID-19 deaths pose a

significant threat to the lives of children who have lost either one or both parents. This may result in mental health problems, school dropout, low self-esteem, child exploitation, sexual risk behaviours, suicide and excessive violence against children. Over 5,000 children have lost their parents to the COVID-19 infection, thereby signalling a rising need for social intervention in the education, emotional and economic support for victim families (Hillis et al., 2021).

Studies have suggested the need to explore the situation of the pandemic orphans concerning their social and emotional development and perceived social support to enhance their welfare, care and safety amidst and after COVID-19 (Azman et al., 2020; He & Harris, 2020). Rashed Mustafa Sarwar, the UNICEF representative for Malaysia and Brunei, also contends that considering the situation of the pandemic in the region, there is the possibility of exposing the pandemic orphans to danger and child abuse, hence, suggesting the need for research into this circumstances for an appropriate intervention for the COVID-19 orphans in Malaysia and Brunei (CNA, 2021). As reported in *The Borneo Post*, Lim Kit Siang expressed concern over pandemic orphans in Malaysia being the highest in the whole of ASEAN region and suggested that the government should consider the adoption of over 5,000 orphans into its social schemes (Edward, 2021).

Since early 2020, Malaysia has witnessed political uncertainty amid the continued influence of COVID-19. Since the pandemic's onset in January 2020, Malaysia has reported five million confirmed COVID-19 cases and 36,700 fatalities. The COVID-19 case fatality rate among individuals under 18 in Malaysia is 0.02 percent, with 15 deaths reported out of 82,341 cases in this age group. It is crucial to recognise that the virus poses a much higher risk to older individuals, especially those aged 60 and above who are more prone to severe illness and fatalities ("Country Office Annual Report 2022: Malaysia," 2022). Hence, the impact of COVID-19 deaths on children in Malaysia is wide-ranging and substantial. It includes emotional and psychological distress, disrupted family dynamics, financial hardship, educational disruption, increased vulnerability to exploitation, social isolation, mental health challenges and potential stigmatisation. To address these effects, the government, communities and support organisations need to provide access to mental health services, social support and financial assistance

to help children cope with their loss and navigate these challenges effectively (A Concerned Nationalist, 2021).

Social Waqf

Waqf literarily means to prevent or to protect from possession of the third party. *Waqf* is interchangeably used with the term *habs* in literary Arabic (Ibn Manzūr, 2010). *Waqf* is anything that is kept by the founder to appreciate such that the founder enjoys sustainable and continuous charity (Burhānu ad-Din, 1981). According to Imam al-Zarqa, Abū Hanīfah opined that the *waqf* contract includes the sustainable benefit of the *waqf* property but excludes *waqf* asset (Al-Zarqa, 1997). Abu Yusuf and Muhammad Shaybānī, the foremost students of Abū Hanīfah and other jurists, however, argued for the retention of ownership to the underlining asset of the *waqf* property, which no longer belongs to the donor after the declaration of *waqf* (Al-Zarqa, 1997). Moreover, other scholars viewed the donor of the *waqf* property seized to be the owner after declaration or promise to make it *waqf*. Therefore, the property belongs to Allah (SWT) and the authority is the custodian of the property of Allah (SWT). Abu Zahra (1971) viewed *waqf* as “the prevention of a benefit-generating estate from corporal disposal but using its usufruct and benefit in charity, intended so at the time of creation and thereafter.” This means that *waqf* should be an immovable property that gives beneficial perpetuity to the beneficiaries. However, contemporary scholars have argued that in order to relevantise the philosophy of *waqf*, immovability and perpetuity may not be strict conditions to permit other forms of socio-economic, environmental and religious benefits of *waqf* in the contemporary time. Therefore, to expand the scope of *waqf* from stagnation by including movable, immovable, usufruct and liquid assets, Laluddin et al., (2021) describe modern *waqf* as the holding of certain property and preserving it for the confined benefit of certain philanthropy and prohibiting any use or disposition of it outside that specific objective. It is interesting to note that *waqf* is a kind of *sadaqah* (voluntary charity) based on sustainable continuity for socio-economic empowerment. However, *waqf* differs from general *sadaqah* because the underlying asset in *waqf* is neither transferable nor transmittable to other parties—rather, the asset is retained to enhance continuous and recurrent charitable utilisation by the beneficiaries (Laluddin et al.,

2021). In the context of the following *hadith*, for example, *sadaqah jariyah* refers to *waqf* property donated by the donor for his personal benefit, his family and the poor and needy.

When the son of Adam dies, his deeds come to an end except for three things: Sadaqah Jariyah (continuous charity); A knowledge which gives benefit, or a righteous child who prays for him (the deceased). (Al-Naisābūrī, 2006, no. 1631)

There are three main types of *waqf*—property *waqf*, corporate *waqf* and cash *waqf*—that are common in contemporary society and depict a dimension in *waqf*. First, property *waqf* is an endowment that is based on immovable assets such as land, mosque, hospital, school and other public properties that are dedicated to the benefit of the public in order to seek the pleasure of Allah (SWT) (Ambrose et al., 2018). Secondly, corporate *waqf* is a form of *waqf* that is managed by corporate organisations such as banks, takaful operators and Islamic financial institutions that manage *waqf* asset as an issued share in the corporate ownership. Thirdly, cash *waqf* differs in its approach but has wider diversification such that its initial proceeds are in cash form and can further be diversified into socio-economic benefits and empowerment for the public interest. Another significant dimension of *waqf* is its categories of beneficiaries (Rahmalan & Abu Hussin, 2021). *Waqf* property is for public use and benefit, meaning that it provides welfare support and empowerment for the needy, poor and vulnerable members of society. Family *waqf* is dedicated to relatives and specific members of the family of the donor, and the *waqf* will be transferred to the public upon the deaths of the dedicated beneficiaries. However, joint *waqf* combines beneficiaries from the relatives of the donor and other specific individuals from the public (Suruhanjaya Sekuriti, 2014).

Sustainable Social Intervention

Governments have traditionally been primarily responsible for tackling challenges such as substandard living conditions, exploitation, poverty and unemployment by promoting human development through initiatives such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, corporations are increasingly getting involved in community assistance through charitable efforts (Cibrario & Ciambra, 2019). Despite the

various backgrounds and investments of these organisations engaged in supporting projects, the author contends that their overarching aim, irrespective of their geographical presence, should be to strive for sustainable philanthropic endeavours (Ab Samad & Ahmad, 2022; Hopkins, 2019). The empirical study of Jiang et al. (2021) found that combining stringent social distancing measures with comprehensive income support programmes was particularly effective in reducing COVID-19 cases and deaths, especially in countries with limited socio-economic resources and healthcare infrastructure. This underscores the importance of customising government responses to address the unique socio-economic conditions of each country in the fight against the pandemic. For instance, in September 2021, the then-Deputy Minister Datuk Siti Zailah Mohd Yusoff from the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development revealed that the government identified 4,696 children who have lost their parents due to COVID-19. Her ministry took proactive measures to protect their wellbeing and ensure they continue to receive uninterrupted education to prevent them from facing educational setbacks (“Deputy minister,” 2021).

Inadequate funding, constraints in resources and the emergence of challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic directly affect the long-term sustainability of non-profit organisations (NPOs). The inability of these organisations to navigate these limitations effectively can have detrimental effects on society, given their crucial role in providing social services and contributing to sustainable development efforts. If progress towards achieving the United Nations’ SDG 2030 goals is hindered, it is the marginalised groups, including children, the elderly, women, immigrants, ethnic minorities, the homeless and the disabled, who are likely to bear a disproportionate impact (Santos & Laureano, 2022; Van Steenburg et al., 2022).

The socio-ecological structure of society is a significant challenge to the role of social workers towards providing sustainable intervention for vulnerable members of society. Social work satisfaction requires providing necessary socio-economy and material support for the social workers towards achieving sustainable development goals. Hence, the essence of sustainable social work is to provide empowerment for the vulnerable members of society (Peeters, 2012). A recent empirical study on the future challenges of social work suggests that a committed and well-sponsored social work intervention can help in achieving

the sustainable development goals from the three main dimensions of eradicating poverty, protecting the planet and ensuring peace and prosperity for all. Social work-related disciplines in modern society need complete integration with the study of sustainability science to achieve a robust framework for the empowerment of the vulnerable members of society, such as orphans, the needy and the poor (Picado-Valverde et al., 2022). Despite the achievement of social care in the empowerment of vulnerable people, there is still an incessant and urgent need to address funding the reform of social work for a sustainable society. When the social need is provided at the time of acute need from orphans, the poor and needy are considered unsustainable social intervention. The reality of unsustainable social intervention is spurred by the fact that many societies are not prepared to provide sustainable social assistance for vulnerable groups of society when they need it most (Fa-Yusuf et al., 2021). Sustainable social interventions are better achieved in a cohesive society when the community comes together to address the social challenges of the society. Sustainable social intervention for the vulnerable leverages the cooperation between the government and non-governmental and religious bodies to prevent harm by keeping people safe and healthy, connecting social infrastructure to enable socioeconomic values and sustainable empowerment for all (Bedford & Harper, 2018). A stack data on the “Impact Evaluation of the project ‘*Strengthening Sustainable Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Care and Support in Côte d’Ivoire*’ in the urban context of Abidjan” suggests that funding orphanage activities, beneficiaries and caregivers is the main challenge facing the achievement of sustainable social intervention for orphans in the modern society. Hence, collaborating with necessary local and international agencies is a significant approach to addressing the challenges of orphan care in society (Balestri & Meda, 2014).

Kafālah of Orphans in Shariah

Considering the increasing number of orphans after the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic across the globe, there is a dire need for Islamic social assistance to support government initiatives to enhance effective and sufficient care for orphans. Alwani (2020) contends that the responsibility of orphans is considered in Shariah as the moral and

legal obligation of society (*fard kifāyah*). Both the Qur'an and Sunnah emphasise on social intervention for orphans, suggesting its importance in Islam because Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was raised as an orphan and eventually became the leader of mankind.

Did He not find you an orphan, and give you shelter? (Ad-Duḥā: 6)

Similarly, it is compulsory to protect orphans from all forms of child abuse.

So as for the orphan, do not oppress. (Ad-Duḥā: 8)

Moreover, the Qur'an emphasises on the process of empowerment and the significance of fair dealings with the properties of orphans and their independence.

Test the orphans until they reach the age of marriage, and then if you find them mature of mind hand over to them their property, and do not eat it up by either spending extravagantly or in haste, fearing that they would grow up (and claim it). If the guardian of the orphan is rich let him abstain entirely (from his ward's property); and if he is poor, let him partake of it in a fair measure, when you hand over their property to them let there be witnesses on their behalf. Allah is sufficient to take account (of your deeds). (An-Nisa: 6)

Islam also sets strict consequences for violating the rights of orphans, both collectively and individually: "Behold, those who wrongfully devour the properties of orphans only fill their bellies with fire. Soon they will burn in the Blazing Flame" (An-Nisa: 10).

It is interesting to note that Islam has guidelines for fostering orphans through *kafālah* (custody), which entails Islamic rulings and practices for fostering orphans and children without biological parents. Despite the roles of the Department of Social Welfare Malaysia, orphanage homes and foster families in catering to orphans and vulnerable children, the situation of COVID-19 orphans requires specific intervention, such as social *waqf*, which can guarantee their essentials (*darūriyyah*) and needs (*ḥājjiyyah*).

(Their bearings) on this life and the Hereafter. They ask thee concerning orphans. Say: “The best thing to do is what is for their good; if ye mix their affairs with yours, they are your brethren; but Allah knows the man who means mischief from the man who means good. And if Allah had wished, He could have put you into difficulties: He is indeed Exalted in Power, Wise.” (Al-Baqarah: 220)

According to the exegeses of Ibn Kathir, after the rules of punishment for those who mismanage the affairs of orphans by divulging their wealth and affairs, many people began to create a strict distinction between their wealth and that of the orphans such that it was getting lack of proper attention and care. It was then that Allah (SWT) revealed: “if ye mix their affairs with yours, they are your brethren” (Al-Baqarah: 220). This Qur’anic verse suggests an improved approach to caring for orphans, emphasising on the integration of their essential requirements, such as food, shelter, clothing and socio-economic needs, instead of isolating them out of fear or harm, which may lead to wastage and loss. Hence, orphans occupy a prominent position among the beneficiaries of Islamic charitable initiatives and social expenditure, particularly among the marginalised, impoverished and needy. Another verse in the Qur’an emphasises on the essence of charity to categories of deserving people, especially orphans.

They ask thee what they should spend (In charity). Say: Whatever ye spend that is good, is for parents and kindred and orphans and those in want and for wayfarers. And whatever ye do that is good, Allah knoweth it well. (Al-Baqarah: 215)

The Qur’an also emphasises that orphans should be one of the beneficiaries of worldly gains and incomes earned as a way of seeking the pleasure of Allah (SWT).

As for gains granted by Allah to His Messenger from the people of ‘other’ lands, they are for Allah and the Messenger, his close relatives, orphans, the poor, and ‘needy’ travelers so that wealth may not merely circulate among your rich. Whatever Messenger gives you, take it. And whatever he forbids you from, leave it. And fear Allah. Surely Allah is severe in punishment. (Hashr: 7)

Potential Contributions of *Waqf* to Social Sustainability

Charitable *waqf*, whether in the form of cash or goods, is intended to support vulnerable individuals in need among the impoverished population. In accordance with the broader goals of Shariah, charitable *waqf* strives to promote the ongoing spiritual and economic progress of society. This entails preserving the original assets or funds to generate benefits that can be utilised for the wellbeing of those who are vulnerable within the community (Laluddin et al., 2021). According to Abdur-Rashid (2021), in the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), his companions (ASW) acquired knowledge on setting up *waqf* (charitable endowment) through direct teachings from the Prophet (PBUH) himself. It is documented in Sahih Bukhari that the Prophet (PBUH) allocated a piece of land for charitable purposes (*sadaqah*), setting an example for his companions (ASW). Specifically, he provided instructions to Umar (ASW) on how to establish properties for Islamic philanthropic objectives, which subsequently served as a blueprint for many notable companions (ASW) of the Prophet (PBUH) to establish their *waqf* (Abdur-Rashid, 2021).

The implementation of legislative strategies rooted in the *maqasid* (higher objectives) framework is intended to protect the fundamental nature of charitable *waqf* institutions. This was prompted by the ongoing struggle to maintain the essential assets that generate benefits for disadvantaged individuals and those in need (Yaakub & Abdullah, 2020). During the post-formative period of the early Abbasid era, *waqf* experienced a notable development and greater recognition in Islamic legal terminology. This was manifested in the establishment of physical structures, such as mosques, and educational institutions, such as madrassas (Abdur-Rashid, 2021). However, from the mid-19th century until World War I, *waqf* underwent a significant decline and deterioration. This decline was primarily a result of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, which fell under the control of colonial powers. Despite the potential of *waqf* as Islamic social finance to collect from the rich and benefit the poor, the efficiency of *waqf* can better be determined through the measurement of the efficiency scores of the indicators of *waqf* institution operation in the management of staff and resources as well as the social impact to the right beneficiaries in short- and long-term projects (Bakri et al., 2014).

An empirical study of Nur Atikah Atan & Fuadah Johari (2017) on the role of *waqf* between 2006 to 2016 found that the past success stories of *waqf*'s contributions to the socio-economic development of developing countries have called for its revival in modern times to protect the vulnerable in society. *Waqf* remains an alternative voluntary Islamic social financing that extends from *zakat*, which is obligatory based on strict conditions (Sulistiyowati et al., 2022; Aliyu, 2018). However, within the period explored in this study, the research focus was on issues related to cash *waqf* (19.4%), *waqf* property (13.8%) and *waqf* concept (12.5%). Although one-third of the studies addressed the issue of the role of *waqf* in poverty alleviation, two-thirds focused on corporate *waqf* and its governance, suggesting an important gap in other sectors, such as *waqf* for healthcare facilities.

Stack evidence suggests that there are numerous studies on the potential contributions of *waqf* to socio-economic development, yet few studies with diverse findings have been conducted on case study development on the real impact of *waqf* in modern society. Alshater et al. (2022) conducted a bibliometric study from 1914 to 2020 to explicate the most relevant scientific actors in *waqf* research and the extent of their impacts, especially cash *waqf* endowment, Islamic accountability of *waqf*, the government's role in *waqf* as well as *waqf* as Islamic social finance. Procuring sources of finance remain the main challenge for many non-government organisations in running *waqf* institutions. The study of Sulistiyowati et al. (2022) posits the dire need to provide a non-governmental budget for financing *waqf* institutions' activities. A sufficient budget can enhance human resources, social finance empowerment, collaboration and coordination of education and healthcare facilities. It is fair to mention that the concept of *waqf* is one of the Islamic philosophies of promoting mutual assistance and empowerment for vulnerable people and families. The history and juristic justification of *waqf* highlight the intention for the sake of Allah (SWT) as a condition for acceptable *waqf* in Islam towards championing socio-economic empowerment, environmental stability and spiritual intelligence of the society (Sani, 2016).

Findings

This study explores the potential of social *waqf* in activating sustainable welfare for pandemic orphans after the demise of their primary caregiver from the COVID-19 outbreak. The study found that despite the existing challenges of orphan care in orphanage homes and with foster parents, the unprecedented COVID-19 outbreak triggered an increase in the socio-economic challenges of children without parents across the globe.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a notable rise in the number of orphans who have lost their primary caregivers, especially in Muslim societies. This hidden consequence has spurred a growing demand for sustainable socio-economic interventions to support these orphans (Hashim, 2021; Andrade et al., 2022). Social *waqf*, an Islamic social finance mechanism, plays a crucial role in addressing this need. It involves the strategic investment of *waqf* funds and properties to meet the ongoing needs of vulnerable individuals, aiming to seek the pleasure of Allah (SWT). Social *waqf* functions as an enduring endowment, ensuring continuous education, accommodation, food, clothing and other essential support for the sustenance and wellbeing of those in need. Ultimately, *waqf* proves to be an effective tool for preserving social interventions that protect families and promote long-term family and societal welfare (Widiastuti et al., 2022; Lamido & Haneef, 2021).

However, there still remain issues with the *waqf* institutions, especially the lack of human resources, limited sources of finance, legal considerations in Malaysia and limited digital applications. These challenges require urgent implementation of capacity building programme, activating big data connectivity and establishing a sustainable legal framework for social *waqf* to cater to pandemic orphans' needs, protection and development, especially in the post-pandemic situations (Sulistyowati et al., 2022).

The socio-economic challenges of the pandemic orphans are also evidently experienced by their substitute caregiver from among their immediate family, foster parents, orphanage homes or even those opting for adoption. The reality shows that volunteers who cater to the socio-economic, mental and educational needs of the pandemic orphans might require sustainable financial support that one-off financial assistance might not be able to provide, except with the activation of sustainable

social invention mechanisms, such as social *waqf*. The study shows that *waqf* is one of the effective means of enhancing continuous and sustainable welfare and care for orphans who have lost either one or both parents to COVID-19.

Proposed Social Waqf Model

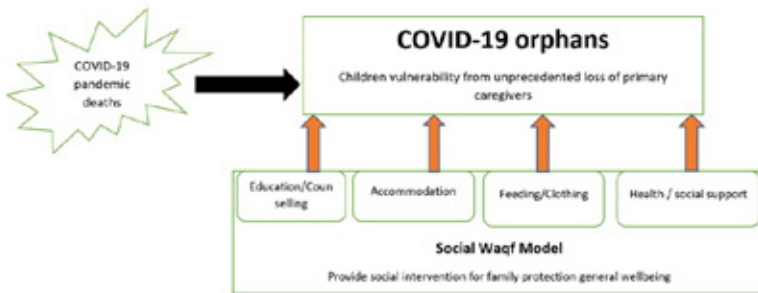


Figure 1: Social *Waqf* Model

Discussion

- I. The unprecedented outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact, leading to a significant increase in the number of orphans who have lost one or both of their primary caregivers.
- II. This surge in COVID-19 orphans has brought to light a hidden consequence of the pandemic, underscoring the urgent need for sustainable socio-economic interventions to ensure the wellbeing and survival of these orphans, particularly within Muslim societies.
- III. Social *waqf* emerges as a powerful Islamic social finance mechanism designed to address this pressing issue. It involves the strategic allocation and investment of *waqf* funds and properties, with the primary aim of meeting the ongoing needs of vulnerable individuals, all in pursuit of seeking the pleasure of Allah (SWT).

- IV. Social *waqf* functions as a unique form of endowment, capable of providing sustainable and continuous support, including education, housing, food, clothing and various health and social services, thereby ensuring the comprehensive wellbeing of those in need.
- V. In essence, *waqf* represents a highly effective tool for sustaining social interventions that safeguard families and promote the overall wellbeing of communities, thus contributing to the long-term welfare of society as a whole.

Conclusion

The challenges of providing primary care for orphaned children have significantly intensified in the past two years due to the unprecedented surge of COVID-19. Despite ongoing global discussions regarding sustainable social interventions to address the hidden impacts of COVID-19 on society, little attention has been given to the potential of social *waqf* as a means of offering long-term socio-economic support and assistance to meet the basic needs and safeguard the wellbeing of these pandemic orphans. Despite several fundraising and social economic intervention measures by Keluarga Malaysia, social *waqf* has viable potential for sustainable care for the pandemic orphans if properly explored. Implementing the Social *Waqf* Model would enable social welfare offices to establish a robust plan for the comprehensive development and protection of COVID-19 orphans after the loss of their primary caregivers. This intervention can also serve as an empowerment mechanism for various stakeholders involved in providing care, including orphanage homes, foster families, religious institutions and individual family members willing to take responsibility for the ongoing protection and care of these orphans. This study emphasises on the urgent need for comprehensive quantitative data on the demographic requirements of COVID-19 orphans and their anticipated social interventions to address their basic needs, in conjunction with the potential of social *waqf* to cater to their needs in orphanage homes, under foster care or with family members.

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