



Approaching Community Development With Methodical Steps to Restore Zakat and Waqf Institutions In Gombe State, Nigeria

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Article Info	Abstract
Article history: Received June 11, 2024 Revised July 01, 2024 Accepted August 29, 2024	This study explores the concept of community development in relation to restoring Zakat and Waqf institutions in Gombe State, Nigeria. Through a methodical approach, and in-depth analysis of literatures and interview reports, the study examines the current state of these institutions and proposes steps to revitalize them. By analyzing the historical and cultural context of Zakat and Waqf in Gombe State, the study highlights the potential benefits of their restoration for the community. In addition, the study suggests practical strategies for implementing the revitalization of these institutions, including collaborations with local NGOs and religious organizations. Furthermore, the study discusses the potential challenges that may arise during the implementation process and proposes solutions to overcome them. Overall, this study contributes to the field of community development by providing a comprehensive plan for restoring Zakat and Waqf institutions in Gombe State.
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Keywords: Community; Gombe State; Sustainable Development; Waqf; Zakat	
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INTRODUCTION

Zakat and Waqf institutions play a crucial role in the development of communities and addressing social issues in Muslim-majority countries like Nigeria in general and Gombe State in particular (Sagir et al., 2021). As a state located in the northeastern region of Nigeria, Gombe State is home to a diverse community with a rich history and cultural heritage. However, like many other states in the country, Gombe also faces numerous challenges, including poverty and underdevelopment. In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the role that community development can play in addressing these challenges.

This is where the restoration of Zakat and Waqf institutions comes in (Muhammad, et al., 2023).

The Qur'an discusses charity in many verses, some of which relate to Zakat, Waqf, Sadaqah, and other forms of charity. The word Zakat is found across various chapters in the Qur'an, for example in chapters 7:156, 9:60, 19:31, 19:55, 21:73, 23:4, 27:3, 30:39, 31:4, and 41:7 (Abd Wahab, 2020) The term Zakat is found in the early Madinan chapters and is described as obligatory for Muslims.

Zakat and Waqf are two of the five pillars of Islam that focus on charity and social welfare. Zakat is an obligatory annual donation made by Muslims, while Waqf refers to the permanent dedication of an asset for charitable purposes. Both of these institutions have been vital in providing social and economic support to the community, but unfortunately, they have been neglected in recent years more especially in Gombe State Nigeria (Muhammad, & Ikilima, 2022).

In recognizing the need for a systematic approach to restore Zakat and Waqf institutions in Gombe State, the government and the citizens have to take a proactive step by implementing methodical steps towards their revival. This approach has the potential to not only improve the lives of the community but also contribute to the overall progress of the state. In this article, we will explore these steps and highlight their potential impact on Gombe State.

METHOD

The study employs a qualitative research method in a novel way to comprehend the current situation of Zakat and Waqf institutions in Gombe state, their current challenges and the various methodical approaches for their restoral and revival. The study covers a period of 10 years (2014-2024), as well as analyzing the performance of the existing Zakat and Waqf institutions in the state. Semi-structured interviews with pertinent people were chosen from a sample of 32 participants from different categories of five groups in order to analyze how Islamic teachings could be used to address the challenge of low patronage in collection of Zakat, donation of Waqf in the study area as well as possible measures for restoring their functions. A review and analysis of relevant literature from primary and secondary sources of data was maintained for gathering more data and the analysis process due to their validity and usefulness in exploring participants' experiences and viewpoints towards the steps for reviving the Zakat and Waqf institutions in Gombe state Nigeria. The 32 participants in the interview involved these five groups which are Representative from Association of Zakat and Waqf Operators, Representative from Nigerian Union of Teachers, Representative from Council of Traditional Rulers, Representatives from State Government Officials, and Representatives from Gombe Muslim Council. The participants were coded as AZWON, NUT, CTR, SGO, and GMC.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

History of Zakat and Waqf in Islam

Zakat in Islam as defined by Az-Zuhaily (1984), is an act of monetary worship according to which any Muslim who possess a wealth equal to or exceeding a laid down limit (*Nisab*) has to give away (in person or through proxy) at the prescribed rate, a portion of it to

specifically designated categories of people as ordained by Allah almighty as a fixed portion of a Muslim's wealth, typically 2.5%, that must be given annually to specific categories of individuals in need. It is obligatory for eligible Muslims who meet the prescribed wealth threshold (nisab) and have possessed their wealth for a full lunar year. Zakat serves as a tangible expression of gratitude to Allah, acknowledging that wealth is a blessing and a responsibility.

Similarly, *Waqf* is a voluntary and permissible endowment in Islam, as it has been emphasized by the Sunnah (prophetic traditions) and Ijma' (consensus of *Fuqaha*), which signifies its deep historical roots and continues to play a crucial role in fostering community development, education, healthcare, and various social services within the Islamic community (Rashid, 2018).

When Prophet Muhammad SAW began to preach about Islam in public, he expressed concern about many issues that affected human rights, such as equality, fair trade, and charity (Al-Shanqidi, 2021). He ordered Muslims to give *Zakat* to the poor, just as Christians and Jews were practicing alms (Al-Qardawi, 2002). The Prophet called for charitable activities in line with the Qur'an:

"So give to the kindred his due, to the poor, and to the wayfarer. That is best for those who seek God's countenance, and it is they who will be successful." (Quran 30:38).

The development of *Zakat* enforcement began in Medina after the migration of the Prophet from Mecca. The first enactment of 'obligatory *Zakat*' was not in Mecca but in Medina. As stated by Al-Qaradawi, *Zakat*, as it was known during the first few years following Islam's emergence, is not exactly the same *Zakat* system founded in year nine (of the Islamic calendar/*Hijri*) (Al-Qardawi, 2002).

At the beginning of Islam, and when in Mecca, the notion of *Zakat* was a solely religious duty, like alms in Christianity, meaning it 'is not a duty of justice but a work of supererogation' (Finnis, 1998). Its performance was left to individual Muslims' consciences (as an act of piety such as prayer and fasting). *Zakat* in Mecca was voluntary and similar to alms in Christianity. However, by year nine, *Zakat* had gradually transformed into an economic duty (as well as a religious one) (Al-Qardawi, 2002).

In regard to *Waqf*, the formative period for Islamic philanthropy began after the Prophet's migration to Medina and ended around the early Abbasid era. During this period, the essence and contours of Islamic philanthropy were established by Qur'anic and Prophetic decrees, and philanthropic giving emerged in various forms (Al-Shanqidi, 2021).

In Islamic history, it is quite interesting that the term *waqf* does not appear in the Qur'an itself or in the hadith literature. The term *waqf* is believed to have emerged around the middle of the third century in Islam, during the post-formative period of Islamic law (Rezali, 2018). Although the term itself does not exist in the Qur'an, scholars of Qur'anic exegesis explain the following Qur'anic passage as providing the basis for Islamic philanthropic giving:

None of you (believers) will attain true piety unless you give out of what you cherish; whatever you give, God knows about it very well (Qur'an, 3:92).

Upon hearing this verse of the Qur'an, Abū Ṭalḥah, a notable companion of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ donated his most cherished possession, a large date-palm grove with over 600 date palm trees, to the service of the poor in the city of Medina. He explained the reasons behind his gift to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ by saying that the date palm grove was his most cherished possession and that he hoped that by gifting it to the poor, he would attain the status of true piety in the next life (Hasan, 2012).

This dedication of their most valuable real estate for the good of the poor of Medina, in service of Islam, became known as the first act of endowment (*waqf*) in Islam. Princess Zubaidah, the wife of the caliph of Harun al-Rashid, for instance, has built roads from Baghdad to Mecca for the convenience of pilgrims who perform Hajj through the treasures they were *Waqf* (Abdul Latif, S. et al. 2019).

Ibn Battutah, one of the sailors who visited Damascus in 726 AD, mentioned in his book "*Rihlah Al-Batutah*" that the diversity and expense of *Waqf* were stunning. There are various kinds of *Waqf*, such as *Waqf* for those who cannot afford to perform Hajj in Mecca, *Waqf* for the contribution of marriage to women whose families have no support, *Waqf* to liberate offenders, food *Waqf*, clothes, and increasing public facilities such as roads and sidewalks that can be convenient for people. He also noted:

"... while I was walking in the city of Damascus, I saw a slave accidentally drop a porcelain pot from China. The servant was frightened and surrounded by the crowd. One of them had asked the servant to pick up the debris to bring to the *Waqf* manager. He has brought the debris and has received the same payment as for the price of the rookie."

That is so great that the role of *Waqf* does not differentiate between the concepts of master and servant (Masavat et al., 2016).

In the Middle Ages, according to Professor Norman A. Stilman, most of the welfare and social services in the Muslim world were donated through *Waqf*. This institution has fulfilled the vast welfare function of Lord Macnaghten in the late 19th century in his comments on the English Charitable Act:

"... poverty reduction, educational advancement, religious development, and any other purpose that gives benefits to the community, although it was not included in any of the listed categories."

According to Professor Dr. Yusuf Al-Qardawi, in his book "*Poverty and its Solution in Islam*," it is clearly mentioned that Muslims are very sensitive to the various wishes and needs of Allah SWT, no matter how small the wishes and requirements are. They also treasure the property to set up hospitals to treat sick animals and feed on the roaring dogs. If they are so

attentive to observing the well-being of abandoned animals, how is their service to humans as glorified beings? (Abdul Latif, S. et al., 2019).

The role and power of *Waqf* in the Ottoman Empire were said by Professor Baheddin Yedyildiz: "Thanks to the *Waqf* that flourished during the Ottoman Empire, human beings are born in *Waqf* houses, sleep in *Waqf* swings, eat and drink from *Waqf* properties, read *Waqf* books, receive education at *Waqf* schools, receive wages from the administration of *Waqf*, and when these men die, are placed in a coffin and buried in grave grounds, *diwakaf*". In fact, at the end of Ottoman's empire, three-quarters of the Arab land was a land of *Waqf*. In the mid-nineteenth century; half of the land in Algeria, one-third of the land area in Tunisia, and one-eighth of Egypt's land were in *Waqf* (Sabbaghian, et.al., 2021).

The *Waqf* model has also influenced even western societies as an important foundation in community development through the establishment of educational institutions, social services, and welfare. In 1264, Walter de Melton, who had served as Chancellor of England's King at Jerusalem, established the Melton College at Oxford University through the concept of *Waqf*. The three best-recognized universities in the world—Harvard University, Oxford University, and Kellogg Business School—were developed using the endowment concept. Harvard University collects a total of USD 14 billion in the form of endowments used to fund educational and research activities, library maintenance, and fund-raising exercises. The establishment of trust funds and charitable foundations is intended to support and enhance the arts, welfare and protection of children, corporations, education, the environment, journalism, medical, and religious research (Rashid, 2018).

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and the National Park Trust (NPT), established in 1972 and 1982 in the United States, for example, serve to help communities create a green print for growth by protecting and promoting the interests of public land. Jeremy Refkin, in his 1996 book "The End of Work," suggested the importance of this sector being used as an alternative to reducing the burden of the government towards more comprehensive community development (Yakubu, et.al., 2019).

As of today, a large number of the poor citizens lived in Muslim countries and largely in African countries, including the most populous nation in Africa, Nigeria, with a high number in the north-eastern region where Gombe state is located. Different international bodies have acknowledged that poverty has to be tackled with concentrated efforts through ambitious plans for development. In a large gathering organized by the United Nations in 2000, the heads of state adopted the "Millennium Development Declaration." Accordingly, the "Millennium Development Goals" were to be met by 2015, and then the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were to be met by 2030. The first among these goals is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger (Maidoki, 2018).

One important issue discussed in the development debate is the impact of religious institutions and cultures on economic variables and outcomes for community development. In this respect, the role of *Zakat* and *Waqf* in tackling the problem of poverty and community sustainable development is very relevant. These traditional Islamic institutions were able to solve the problems of poverty and provide much-needed social services to the poor in the

past. Given the pervasiveness of poverty in Muslim countries, it is important to investigate how these institutions can be used in contemporary times to alleviate poverty and guarantee sustainable development in Muslim communities.

The institutionalization of charity in Islam became a defining factor that would exert dominating influence on urban planning and the development of cities and towns, social welfare, religious habits and practice, the production of art and the development of aesthetics, the structure and stability of markets and economic forces, political stability, as well as the production of Muslim culture in all its diverse representations (Adam, et al., 2023).

Zakat and *Waqf* Practice in Gombe State Nigeria

Gombe State (Jewel in the Savannah), located in the North East geopolitical zone, was created out of the then Bauchi State in 1996, with Gombe town as its administrative and commercial capital. Gombe State, as the 21st largest in area and the 32nd most populous, with an estimated population of about 3.25 million as of 2016, witnesses low patronage in the establishment, functions, and strengthening of *Zakat* and *Waqf* institutions (Adamu & Ikilima, 2022).

Most of the population in Gombe State is made up of farmers. Both food and cash crops are produced by them. Yam, cassava, maize, tomatoes, and groundnuts are some of its food crops, while cotton is grown for cash. Gombe State is the best and friendliest area for doing business due to its excellent modern infrastructure, secure and stable serenity, transparency and easier accessibility of information, regulatory environment, skills and labor, and economic opportunities. These earned her the World Bank's yearly appraisal, "The Ease of Doing Business," in 2021 and 2023 (Daily Trust, 2023).

The institutions of *Zakat* and *Waqf* in Gombe State have become so minimal, with only the Gombe *Zakat* and *Waqf* Foundation as the major and mother institution of *Zakat* and *Waqf* in the state, even though it is not a government-owned institution but rather a non-profitable and non-governmental organization established in the year 2018. It mobilizes resources from *Zakat* payers and *Waqf* donors as well as other donors who are willing to channel their charities for proper disbursement to the poor in a manner that alleviates their poverty, uplifts their living standards, and puts them on the path of socio-economic empowerment for the development of human welfare and community sustainable development in the state.

The setting up of Zakat institutions becomes necessary in any Muslim societies for the social stability; economic development; job creation and friendly cooperation. As a significant tool for wealth redistribution in the society, efficient system of Zakat and Waqf collection and distribution, assist people that are needy and poor to cater their daily problems (AZWON).

To achieve all the lofty socio-economic roles failed by the government and non-governmental agencies in Nigerian communities, including poverty reduction, sustainable job creation, community development, and student's school enrollment, there is a possible need

for relevant macroeconomic policies that enhance economic growth, community development, and also redistribute income to eliminate poverty, which functional *Zakat* and *Waqf* institutions are very relevant to the task; and a sound governance structure must be in place for coordination, collection, disbursement, and accountability. Therefore, the revival of *Zakat* and *Waqf* institutions in the above framework is a mechanism to be adopted to develop ethical models, processes, economics, investments, products, and services as viable options to strengthen the *Zakat* and *Waqf* institutions as well as utilize their funds for sustainable community development in Gombe State, Nigeria.

General Challenges of *Zakat* and *Waqf* Institutions in Gombe state Nigeria

In spite of the modest contribution of the *Zakat* and *Waqf* foundations discussed above, their attempts to enhance financial inclusion and poverty reduction face myriad challenges. Formal and informal discussions with their founders, as well as a careful survey conducted, identified five major challenges facing *Zakat* and *Waqf* institutions in Gombe State, Nigeria.

1. Firstly, the potential donors to these institutions exhibit an indifferent attitude toward prompt payment of *Zakat* when it is due or the donation of *Waqf*. The *Zakat* payers prefer self-assessment of their wealth for fear of divulging their real net wealth to a third party. Consequently, the amounts paid as *Zakat* are often based on gross misreporting.

“Building trust and confidence in the minds of Zakat payers and Waqf donors on the administrators can help and create more cordial relationship, peace of mind and full cooperation in the running of the institutions and their functions” (CTR).

2. Two, fund mobilization for Islamic welfare services requires sustained sensitization, education, and awareness campaigns on mass media such as radio, TV, social media, and print media, but the financial burden for this is enormous and remains on individuals, not officially on the government in the region.

“The issue of technological means of communication is one of our major challenges in this village and nearby communities, our state capital that accommodate all the radio and television stations is far from us, no way to listen to these programs if sponsored, but for other communities that have access I believe is good and it will help in sensitizing the minds of citizens” (NUT).

3. Three, there is a shortage of experts on the management and administration of Islamic welfare funds, especially *Zakat*, *Waqf*, and *Sadaqah*, in various communities. The scarcity of professionals has also contributed to the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the management of the aforementioned Islamic welfare funds. The option of building the needed human capital is also very expensive; hence, most Islamic faith-based organizations (IFBOs) improvise using volunteers.

“The level of education in our area was extremely low even before the Boko Haram conflict, and our region has a much higher average of unemployment rate than the rest

of the country. At this pivotal time, youth are still suffering from widespread poverty, unemployment, and other harmful conditions that need to be train and participate in the utilization of Zakat and Waqf fund for better life style” (SGO).

4. Fourth, poverty and moral corruption have encouraged the fraudulent collection of Islamic welfare funds and their utilization for different purposes.
5. Fifth, there is impatience on the part of beneficiaries who are unaware that due diligence has to be taken before social services are rendered or funds are released to genuine beneficiaries.

This recent survey identified some of the major challenges of managing Islamic welfare funds, such as low patronage by *Zakat* payers and *Waqf* donors; few competent *Zakat* and *Waqf* casual, volunteer, and part-time workers; a lack of awareness among members of the public; and a large number of recipients relative to the total *Zakat* and *Waqf* proceeds, among others.

Methodical Steps to Restore Zakat and Waqf Institutions in Gombe State

1. The first step towards the restoration of Zakat and Waqf institutions in Gombe State is to raise awareness and educate the community about their importance. This can be done through various means such as workshops, seminars, and outreach programs. By educating the community, the citizens and state government can create a sense of ownership and encourage active participation in the revival process.

“I with the opinion that our dear and respected Islamic scholars and Imams should double their efforts in any gathering to concentrate on this issue of Zakat and Waqf and help our people to be aware of their role and significance in the history of human development” (GMC).

2. The second step is the government needs to establish a regulatory body to oversee the collection, management, and distribution of Zakat and Waqf funds like Zakat and Waqf Commission or agency with full autonomy and terms of reference. This body should be transparent and accountable to ensure that the funds are used for their intended purposes effectively. This will not only rebuild trust in the institutions but also attract donors and investors to contribute to their revival. Moreover, the government should collaborate with local and international organizations to establish projects and initiatives that can benefit the community. These projects can range from providing access to quality education, clean water and healthcare facilities to creating employment opportunities and promoting economic growth. By partnering with these organizations, the government can leverage their expertise, resources, and networks to achieve better results.

“The local and unconstitutional Zakat and Waqf Committees as presently constituted at local levels need to be expanded to include financial experts, Islamic economic

scholars, legal luminaries from the shariah courts, Muslim jurist and representatives of their communities for more inclusion and proper administration”(AZWON).

3. The third important step is to involve the community in the decision-making process. This can be done through the formation of committees that represent different sectors of the community. These committees can provide valuable insights and suggestions for the effective utilization of Zakat and Waqf funds. By involving the community, the government can ensure that their needs and priorities are taken into consideration.

“As you see in this document, voluntarily we form this committee for collection, management and distribution of Zakat and Waqf locally as a result of not having an official or government own Zakat and Waqf commission in our area” (GMC).

4. The fourth step is there is need to be a comprehensive evaluation and monitoring system in place to track the progress of the restoration process. This will help to identify any challenges or gaps and address them in a timely manner. It will also serve as a means of accountability, ensuring that the funds are being utilized efficiently and effectively.

“As you know, mismanagement and corruption near to be a general problem among our people, therefore, I suggest and call our leaders either officially or at local level to form a systematic review and monitoring on how these institutions are govern and to trace their major challenges for proper addressing”(CTR).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the restoration of Zakat and Waqf institutions in Gombe State is a crucial step towards community development. By following the aforementioned methodical approaches and involving all stakeholders, the government can not only revive these institutions but also create a positive impact on the lives of the people. With the right strategies and efforts, Gombe State has the potential to become a model for other states in Nigeria in effectively utilizing Zakat and Waqf funds for the betterment of the community. Let us come together and work towards a brighter future for Gombe State.

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