

# Exploring the Role of Cash Waqf Crowdfunding in Economic Development: A Qualitative Study in Northern Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examined the role of cash waqf crowdfunding in economic development in Northern Nigeria. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six Nigerian scholars and experts, including Shari'ah scholars, social finance officials, and crowdfunding regulators, to explore the challenges, benefits, and impacts of cash waqf crowdfunding. Thematic analysis revealed four primary themes: challenges in implementation, benefits to community development, empowerment of marginalized groups, and promotion of ethical investing. While cash waqf crowdfunding showed promise as a sustainable funding model for community development and poverty alleviation, its practical implementation was constrained by a lack of awareness, trust deficits, and insufficient regulatory frameworks. The findings underscored the potential of cash waqf crowdfunding to empower marginalized groups, particularly women and youth, and foster community ownership of development projects. This study contributes to the literature on Islamic finance by providing actionable insights for policymakers and practitioners aiming to harness the potential of cash waqf crowdfunding in similar socio-economic contexts.

**Keywords:** Cash Waqf Crowdfunding, Economic Development, Northern Nigeria, Qualitative Study, Semi-structured Interviews

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### **Article History:**

*Received: 30 October 2024*

*Accepted: 29 December 2024*

*Available online: 31 December 2024*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Poverty remains a pervasive challenge in Northern Nigeria, where the region consistently reports higher poverty rates than other parts of the country (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). This multidimensional issue is characterized by limited access to education, inadequate healthcare, high unemployment, and a lack of basic amenities (Aiyedogbon & Ohwofasa, 2012). Compounding these challenges are insecurity, political instability, and vulnerability to climate change, all of which exacerbate the region's economic difficulties (Yahaya & Bello, 2020). Despite numerous interventions, including government programs and foreign aid, these traditional approaches have often failed to address the root causes of poverty effectively (Olomola, 2017). This situation underscores the urgent need for innovative and sustainable funding models to tackle poverty and foster long-term economic development in the region.

Cash waqf crowdfunding is an innovative approach that has garnered attention recently. Waqf, an Islamic charitable endowment, historically involves dedicating assets for the benefit of society, such as funding education, healthcare, or infrastructure projects (Ambrose et al., 2018). The modern adaptation—cash waqf crowdfunding—combines this concept with contemporary crowdfunding mechanisms. This model allows individuals to contribute small amounts of money to a collective fund, which is then invested in income-generating ventures compliant with Sharia principles. The returns from these investments are used to support social and economic initiatives, such as education, entrepreneurship, and poverty alleviation (Mohd Thas Thaker et al., 2020).

Although cash waqf crowdfunding offers significant potential, there is limited empirical research on its application in contexts like Northern Nigeria. Previous studies have highlighted its benefits in other regions, such as sustainable funding, community empowerment, and ethical investing (Shukor et al., 2019; Abdullah, 2020). However, its specific impact and challenges in addressing the unique socio-economic dynamics of Northern Nigeria remain underexplored. Notably, issues such as low public awareness, trust deficits, and inadequate regulatory frameworks could hinder its implementation and scalability in the region.

This study addressed these gaps by investigating the potential of cash waqf crowdfunding as a sustainable funding model for economic development in Northern Nigeria. It explored this model's challenges, opportunities, and socio-economic impact, particularly on marginalized groups such as women and youth. By leveraging insights from scholars and experts in Islamic finance and social development, this study aimed to contribute to the growing body of literature on Islamic finance while providing practical recommendations for policymakers and practitioners. The findings of this research are expected to offer a nuanced understanding of cash waqf crowdfunding's role in poverty alleviation and economic development, emphasizing its relevance to the Northern Nigerian context. In doing so, the study sought to inform strategies for creating a supportive ecosystem that addresses barriers and maximizes the potential of this innovative funding mechanism.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Overview of Cash Waqf Crowdfunding**

Cash waqf crowdfunding is an innovative Islamic financial instrument that combines the traditional concept of waqf with modern crowdfunding technology. Waqf is an Islamic charitable endowment where an asset is donated, and its benefits are used for the welfare of society (Ambrose et al., 2018). In the case of cash waqf, the donated asset is in the form of money, which is then invested in various Sharia-compliant ventures to generate income (Mohsin, 2013). The revenue generated from these investments is used to fund various charitable and social welfare projects, such as poverty alleviation, education, healthcare, and community development (Suhaili & Palil, 2016). The concept of cash waqf has existed for centuries, with evidence of its practice dating back to the Ottoman Empire (Cizakca, 2000). However, cash waqf has been combined with crowdfunding technology in recent years to create a new model of Islamic finance known as cash waqf crowdfunding (Mohd Thas Thaker et al., 2020). Crowdfunding is raising funds from many people through online platforms (Mollick, 2014). In the case of cash waqf crowdfunding, individuals contribute small amounts of money to a collective fund, which is then invested in various Sharia-compliant ventures (Abdullah, 2020).

One of the main advantages of cash waqf crowdfunding is its ability to mobilize funds from many people, including those with limited financial resources (Mohd Thas Thaker et al., 2021). This is particularly important in poverty alleviation, as it allows for a broader range of individuals to participate in charitable giving (Hassan & Salma, 2017). Additionally, cash waqf crowdfunding provides a sustainable source of funding for social welfare projects, as the income generated from investments is used to fund these projects on an ongoing basis (Shukor et al., 2019). Despite its potential benefits, cash waqf crowdfunding also faces several challenges. One of the main challenges is the lack of a clear regulatory framework for this type of financial instrument (Muhammad et al., 2018). Additionally, the general public needs greater awareness and understanding of cash waqf crowdfunding and a solid ecosystem to support its growth and development (Mohd Thas Thaker et al., 2020).

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study was underpinned by several theories that provided a foundation for understanding the role of cash waqf crowdfunding in poverty alleviation. One of the critical theories was the Islamic Theory of Wealth Distribution, which emphasized the importance of redistributing wealth from the rich to the poor to achieve social justice and equality (Chapra, 1992). According to this theory, the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few individuals is considered unjust and contrary to the principles of Islam (Choudhury, 2013). Cash waqf crowdfunding can be seen as a mechanism for redistributing wealth in a way consistent with Islamic principles, as it involves individuals' voluntary donation of money to benefit society (Abdullah, 2020). Another relevant theory was the Social Capital Theory, which suggested that social networks and relationships are crucial in facilitating collective action and achieving common goals (Putnam, 2000). In cash waqf crowdfunding, social capital can be seen as the trust and cooperation among individuals who contribute to the collective fund (Mohd Thas Thaker et al., 2021). This social capital can facilitate the mobilization of resources and the implementation of poverty alleviation projects, as individuals are more likely to contribute to a cause they believe in and trust (Hassan & Salma, 2017).

The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) was also relevant to this study, as it suggested that an individual's intention to engage in a particular behavior is influenced by their attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In the context of cash waqf crowdfunding, an individual's intention to contribute to the collective fund may be influenced by their attitudes towards charitable giving, their perception of social norms regarding philanthropy, and their perceived ability to make a meaningful contribution (Mohd Thas Thaker et al., 2020). Finally, the Institutional Theory (North, 1990) was also relevant to this study, as it suggested that the success of cash waqf crowdfunding may be influenced by the institutional environment in which it operates. This includes the legal and regulatory framework and the cultural and religious norms that shape attitudes towards charitable giving (Muhammad et al., 2018). The Institutional Theory suggests that the success of cash waqf crowdfunding may depend on developing a supportive ecosystem that includes effective governance mechanisms, transparency, and accountability (Mohd Thas Thaker et al., 2021).

## **Previous Studies on Cash *Waqf* and Crowdfunding**

Existing literature on cash *waqf* and crowdfunding has explored various aspects of these Islamic financial instruments, including their potential for poverty alleviation, legal and regulatory frameworks, and challenges and opportunities. One of the key findings from previous studies is that cash *waqf* has the potential to be a sustainable source of funding for various social welfare projects, including poverty alleviation (Shukor et al., 2019). For example, a study by Mohd Thas Thaker et al. (2020) found that cash *waqf* can finance micro-enterprises in Malaysia, providing a viable alternative to conventional financing options. Another important finding from previous research is that the success of cash *waqf* and crowdfunding depends on a supportive legal and regulatory framework (Abdullah, 2020). A study by Muhammad et al. (2018) highlighted the need for a comprehensive legal framework to facilitate the development of cash waqf and crowdfunding in Nigeria while ensuring transparency and accountability. Similarly, a study by Suhaili and Palil (2016) emphasized the importance of effective governance mechanisms in ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of cash *waqf* and crowdfunding initiatives.

The findings from previous studies on cash *waqf* and crowdfunding have significant relevance to the Northern Nigerian context, where poverty and social inequality remain significant challenges (Aiyedogbon & Ohwofasa, 2012). Northern Nigeria has a sizeable Muslim population, and cash *waqf* and crowdfunding can potentially mobilize resources from this population for poverty alleviation and social welfare projects (Bello, 2022). Additionally, the Northern Nigerian economy's informal nature, characterized by many micro and small enterprises, makes cash *waqf* and crowdfunding particularly relevant as alternative financing options (Muhammad et al., 2018). However, the application of cash *waqf* and crowdfunding in Northern Nigeria also faces several challenges, including the lack of a supportive legal and regulatory framework, limited awareness and understanding of these financial instruments, and greater collaboration and coordination among stakeholders (Bello, 2022). These challenges highlight the need for further research and policy interventions to create an enabling environment for cash *waqf* and crowdfunding in Northern Nigeria.

Previous studies have identified several challenges and opportunities associated with cash *waqf* and crowdfunding. One of the main challenges was the lack of awareness and understanding of these financial instruments among the general public (Hassan & Salma, 2017). Additionally, there is a need for greater collaboration and coordination among various stakeholders, including government agencies, financial institutions, and civil society organizations, to create a supportive ecosystem for cash *waqf* and crowdfunding (Mohd Thas Thaker et al., 2021). Despite the growing body of literature on cash *waqf* and crowdfunding, there are still several areas that previous studies have not adequately covered. One of the main gaps is the lack of empirical research on the impact of cash *waqf* and crowdfunding on poverty alleviation in specific contexts, such as Northern Nigeria (Mohd Thas Thaker et al., 2021).

Recent empirical studies highlight innovative approaches to leveraging Islamic crowdfunding and *waqf* for socio-economic development. Lahuri and Lutfiah (2024) proposed optimizing cash *waqf*-based crowdfunding as an alternative financing model to address education challenges in Indonesia, particularly for low-income students. Their findings emphasized the need for improved fundraising strategies under Shariah-compliant frameworks like *wakalah bil istismar* and *shirkah* contracts. Similarly, Ishak and

Nasir (2024) investigated the applicability of Islamic crowdfunding for micro-entrepreneurs in Malaysia. They identified challenges in practical implementation, including skill gaps among entrepreneurs, but suggest Shariah-based contracts as a promising solution for financial inclusion.

Moreover, Al-Daihani et al. (2024) advocated for temporary waqfs, such as Salam and Muzāra'ah-Waqf schemes, to enhance agricultural sector support and poverty alleviation. Lastly, Anwar et al. (2024) proposed blockchain technology for cash waqf systems, highlighting its potential to improve transparency, accountability, and efficiency in managing funds. These studies collectively emphasize innovative, Shariah-compliant mechanisms for sustainable development. While previous studies have highlighted the potential of these financial instruments for poverty alleviation, there was a need for more evidence-based research to assess their effectiveness in practice.

Another gap in the existing literature was the limited attention given to the role of technology in facilitating cash *waqf* and crowdfunding initiatives (Abdullah, 2020). With the increasing use of digital platforms and mobile technologies, there is a need for more research on how these technologies can be leveraged to enhance the reach and impact of cash *waqf* and crowdfunding initiatives, particularly in underserved communities. Additionally, there was a need for more research on the governance and management of cash *waqf* and crowdfunding initiatives, including the role of different stakeholders, such as donors, beneficiaries, and intermediaries (Suhaili & Palil, 2016). Understanding these stakeholders' dynamics and power relations is crucial for ensuring transparency, accountability, and effectiveness of cash waqf and crowdfunding initiatives.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the role of cash waqf crowdfunding in economic development in Northern Nigeria. The qualitative approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of Nigerian scholars' and experts' perspectives and experiences regarding

the implementation and potential impact of cash waqf crowdfunding in the region (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The study utilized semi-structured interviews to collect rich, descriptive data from the participants (Lune & Berg, 2017). The study used purposive sampling to select a sample of six Nigerian scholars and experts, including Shari'ah scholars, officials in social finance institutions, officials in crowdfunding, regulators, and other related expert groups in the northern part of Nigeria. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique commonly used in qualitative research, where participants are selected based on their knowledge and expertise related to the research topic (Isaac, 2023). The selection criteria for the participants included their expertise in Islamic finance, waqf, and crowdfunding, as well as their understanding of the socio-economic context of Northern Nigeria.

Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and themes within the data, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach: familiarization, coding, theme generation, theme review, theme definition, and reporting. To ensure the validity of the themes, the analysis involved triangulation, with themes cross-checked against participants' responses and existing literature. To address potential biases in participant selection, purposive sampling was employed, targeting individuals with demonstrated expertise in cash waqf, crowdfunding, and the socio-economic context of Northern Nigeria. Efforts were made to include diverse perspectives by selecting participants from various professional backgrounds and regions within Northern Nigeria. Moreover, open-ended questions were used during interviews to minimize researcher influence and allow participants to express their views freely. Acknowledging potential limitations, such as reliance on self-reported data, the study incorporated follow-up questions and clarifications during interviews to enhance data accuracy. These measures ensured a comprehensive and unbiased exploration of the research topic, strengthening the reliability of the findings.

## **Data Collection Methods**

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with the selected participants. The interviews were conducted between June and December 2022. The interview questions addressed different aspects of cash waqf crowdfunding, including the motivations behind donating,



perceived benefits, challenges, and concerns related to the practice. The interviews were conducted in person or via video conferencing, depending on the availability and preference of the participants. All interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants and later transcribed for analysis (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

## **Data Analysis Techniques**

The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a widely used method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2021b). The study followed the six phases of thematic analysis outlined by Braun & Clarke, (2021a), which included familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. The analysis was conducted using ATLAS.ti software (version 7.5), which facilitated the organization and management of the qualitative data (Friese, 2019). The study employed an inductive approach to identify themes from the participants' responses rather than imposing predetermined categories or themes (Nowell et al., 2017).

The study adhered to ethical principles throughout the research process. Before data collection, the study obtained ethical approval from the relevant institutional review board (IRB). All participants were provided with an information sheet outlining the purpose of the study, the nature of their participation, and their rights as research participants. Informed consent was obtained from each participant before the interviews were conducted. The participants' identities were kept confidential, and pseudonyms were used to report the findings to protect their anonymity. The audio recordings and transcripts were securely stored and were accessible only to the research team (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Presentation of Data Collected**

The study conducted semi-structured interviews with 15 Nigerian scholars and experts, including *Shari'ah* scholars, officials in social finance institutions, officials in crowdfunding, regulators, and other related expert

groups in the northern part of Nigeria. The interviews were conducted between June and December 2022, and the participants were asked questions regarding the challenges, benefits, impact on marginalized groups, and community empowerment related to cash *waqf* crowdfunding in Northern Nigeria. The interviews yielded rich qualitative data, providing insights into the perspectives and experiences of the participants. The data collected from the interviews were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021b). The analysis was conducted using ATLAS.ti software (version 7.5), which facilitated the organization and management of the qualitative data (Friese, 2019).

## Empirical Findings

Based on the thematic analysis of the interview data, the empirical findings of this study provide valuable insights into the role of cash *waqf* crowdfunding in economic development in Northern Nigeria. The findings were organized around four main themes: challenges in implementing cash *waqf* crowdfunding, benefits of cash *waqf* crowdfunding, impact on marginalized groups, and community empowerment.

### Challenges in Implementing Cash Waqf Crowdfunding

The participants identified several challenges that hinder the effective implementation of cash *waqf* crowdfunding in Northern Nigeria. One of the most significant challenges was the lack of awareness and understanding of cash *waqf* crowdfunding among the general public and some Islamic finance practitioners.

Participant 1, a lecturer at the International Institute of Islamic Banking and Finance, Bayero University Kano, emphasized this point, stating:

*“The concept of cash waqf crowdfunding is still relatively new in Northern Nigeria, and many people are unfamiliar with it. This lack of awareness is a major obstacle in mobilizing funds and gaining public trust in cash waqf crowdfunding initiatives.”*

Another challenge highlighted by the participants was the limited regulatory framework governing cash *waqf* crowdfunding in Nigeria. Participant 2, from Yobe State University Nigeria, explained:

*“The absence of a comprehensive regulatory framework for cash waqf crowdfunding creates uncertainty and hinders the growth of this sector. Without clear guidelines and oversight, it becomes difficult to ensure transparency, accountability, and proper funds management.”*

Trust issues also emerged as a significant challenge during the interviews. Participant 3, Dean of the School of Postgraduate Studies at Yobe State University Nigeria, shared his insights:

*“Building trust is crucial for the success of cash waqf crowdfunding initiatives. However, due to past experiences with mismanagement of funds and lack of transparency in some charitable organizations, people are hesitant to contribute. Overcoming this trust deficit is a major challenge that needs to be addressed.”*

## **Benefits of Cash Waqf Crowdfunding**

Despite the challenges, the participants highlighted numerous benefits of cash waqf crowdfunding. One of the key benefits was its potential to provide a sustainable funding source for development projects. Participant 4, Provost/CEO of the College of Education and Legal Studies, Nguru, Yobe State, Nigeria, elaborated on this point:

*“Cash waqf crowdfunding has the unique advantage of creating a perpetual fund. Unlike one-time donations or grants, the principal amount of cash waqf remains intact. At the same time, the returns generated from its investment are used to support various social and economic development initiatives. This ensures a continuous flow of funds for projects over the long term.”*

The flexibility and adaptability of cash waqf crowdfunding to local contexts were also highlighted as significant benefits. Participant 5, an Assistant Professor at the IIUM Gombak Campus Institute of Islamic Banking and Finance Malaysia, explained:

*“Cash waqf crowdfunding allows for the customization of projects based on communities’ specific needs and priorities. This adaptability ensures that the funds are directed towards initiatives that have the greatest impact on the ground and address the most pressing issues the local population faces.”*

Another benefit mentioned by the participants was the potential of cash waqf crowdfunding to promote ethical and socially responsible investing practices. Participant 6, a lecturer at Yobe State University, Nigeria, stated:

*“By channeling funds into projects that align with Islamic principles and values, cash waqf crowdfunding encourages ethical investing. It provides an opportunity for individuals to invest their money in a way that generates returns and contributes to the greater good of society.”*

## **Impact on Marginalized Groups**

The participants emphasized the potential of cash waqf crowdfunding to engage and empower marginalized groups, particularly women and youth. Participant 1 shared his observations:

*“Cash waqf crowdfunding can potentially be a game-changer for women and youth in Northern Nigeria. By actively participating in these initiatives, they can have a greater say in the development projects that directly impact their lives. It gives them a platform to voice their needs and priorities and ensures that the projects implemented are tailored to their specific circumstances.”*

Participant 3 added:

*“Engaging women and youth in cash waqf crowdfunding initiatives empowers them financially and helps build their capacity and skills. Through their involvement in these projects, they gain valuable experience in project management, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship, which can open up new opportunities for them in the future.”*

## Community Empowerment

The findings also highlighted the role of cash waqf crowdfunding in empowering communities. Participant 2 explained:

*“Cash waqf crowdfunding has the potential to foster a sense of ownership and responsibility among community members for their development. When people contribute their resources towards a common goal, they become more invested in the project’s success. They are more likely to participate actively in its implementation and sustainability.”*

Participant 4 further elaborated on the impact of cash waqf crowdfunding on community development:

*“By pooling resources through cash waqf crowdfunding, communities can undertake projects that they may not have been able to achieve individually. This collective effort strengthens social bonds, builds trust, and promotes cooperation and mutual support within the community.”*

Participant 5 also highlighted the long-term impact of cash waqf crowdfunding on community empowerment:

*“The perpetual nature of cash waqf funds means that generations can enjoy the benefits of these initiatives. It creates a lasting legacy of community development and empowerment, ensuring that the positive impact of these projects continues long into the future.”*

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study shed light on the potential role of cash waqf crowdfunding in promoting economic development and alleviating poverty in Northern Nigeria. The themes from the interview data, including the challenges, benefits, impact on marginalized groups, and community empowerment, provided valuable insights into the implementation and

potential effects of cash waqf crowdfunding in the region. Identifying challenges, such as lack of awareness, limited regulatory framework, and trust issues, highlighted the need for a supportive ecosystem to facilitate the growth and development of cash waqf crowdfunding in Northern Nigeria (Muhammad et al., 2018). Addressing these challenges through targeted interventions, such as awareness campaigns, regulatory reforms, and stakeholder collaborative efforts, can create an enabling environment for successfully implementing cash waqf crowdfunding initiatives.

The benefits of cash waqf crowdfunding, as identified by the participants, underscored its potential as a sustainable and flexible tool for financing development projects and promoting ethical and socially responsible investing practices (Abdullah, 2020; Mohd Thas Thaker et al., 2021). These findings suggested that cash waqf crowdfunding can play a significant role in addressing the long-term development needs of Northern Nigeria and reducing dependence on external aid, which can be unpredictable and subject to political and economic conditions. The potential impact of cash waqf crowdfunding on marginalized groups, such as women and youth, was particularly noteworthy. The findings indicated that cash waqf crowdfunding can engage and empower these groups by increasing their participation in philanthropy and community development initiatives, tailoring projects to their specific needs and priorities, and helping to build their capacity through self-sustaining income generation (Bello, 2022; Muhammad et al., 2018). This suggested that cash waqf crowdfunding can be a powerful tool for promoting social inclusion and reducing inequality in Northern Nigeria.

The findings also highlighted the potential of cash waqf crowdfunding to empower communities by giving them a sense of ownership and responsibility over their development, building social capital, and fostering community development by supporting local initiatives and projects (Hassan & Salma, 2017). This implied that cash waqf crowdfunding can contribute to developing resilient and self-reliant communities in Northern Nigeria, essential for sustainable economic growth and poverty alleviation. The findings of this study are consistent with previous research on the potential of cash waqf and crowdfunding in promoting economic development and poverty alleviation. For example, a study by Mohd Thas Thaker et al. (2021) found that cash waqf crowdfunding can effectively finance micro-

enterprises and promote human capital development in Malaysia. Similarly, a study by Shukor et al. (2019) highlighted the potential of cash waqf in providing a sustainable source of funding for social welfare projects and poverty alleviation initiatives.

The challenges identified in this study, such as lack of awareness and limited regulatory framework, have also been reported in previous studies. For instance, Muhammad et al. (2018) emphasized the need for a comprehensive legal framework to facilitate the development of cash waqf and crowdfunding in Nigeria, while Suhaili and Palil (2016) highlighted the importance of effective governance mechanisms in ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of cash waqf and crowdfunding initiatives. The potential impact of cash waqf crowdfunding on marginalized groups, particularly women and youth, has also been documented in previous studies. Bello (2022) found that the cash waqf model has enabled women in Northern Nigeria to become more involved in community development and take on leadership roles, while Muhammad et al. (2018) noted that the cash waqf model has been used to fund projects that address the specific needs of women and youth, such as education and skill development programs.

The findings of this study highlighted the significant potential of cash waqf crowdfunding to alleviate poverty and drive economic development in Northern Nigeria. The proposed solutions, such as raising public awareness, implementing robust regulatory frameworks, and fostering trust through transparent governance, are feasible steps towards addressing key challenges. However, their practical implementation requires critical consideration of potential trade-offs and unintended consequences.

One key issue is the resource intensity of awareness campaigns and the need for continuous engagement with stakeholders. Mobilizing funds for such initiatives may divert resources from other critical areas, such as direct poverty alleviation projects (Abdullah, 2020). Additionally, implementing comprehensive regulatory frameworks could introduce bureaucratic complexities, potentially deterring smaller contributors or local operators from participating in cash waqf crowdfunding (Shukor et al., 2019). These consequences must be weighed against the long-term benefits of building a sustainable and accountable system.

Building trust through transparency and governance is essential, but it may involve significant costs for technology and administrative infrastructure. Such expenses could burden small-scale waqf initiatives, limiting their scalability in rural or underserved areas (Mohd Thas Thaker et al., 2020). Furthermore, there is a risk that focusing predominantly on cash waqf crowdfunding could overshadow other complementary development approaches, creating a narrow focus on this singular model.

Empowering marginalized groups, such as women and youth, is a promising outcome. However, empowering these groups requires careful monitoring to ensure equitable distribution of benefits and prevent elite capture within communities (Yahaya & Bello, 2020). Without addressing these nuances, the intended benefits could inadvertently reinforce existing inequalities.

## CONCLUSION

This qualitative study explored the role of cash *waqf* crowdfunding in economic development in Northern Nigeria, focusing on the challenges, benefits, impact on marginalized groups, and community empowerment. The study conducted semi-structured interviews with 15 Nigerian scholars and experts, including *Shari'ah* scholars, officials in social finance institutions, officials in crowdfunding, regulators, and other related expert groups in the northern part of Nigeria. The thematic analysis of the interview data revealed several key findings. Firstly, the study identified challenges hindering the effective implementation of cash *waqf* crowdfunding in the region, such as lack of awareness, limited regulatory framework, and trust issues (Muhammad et al., 2018). Secondly, the participants highlighted the benefits of cash *waqf* crowdfunding, including its potential to provide a sustainable source of funding for development projects, its flexibility and adaptability to local contexts, and its ability to promote ethical and socially responsible investing practices (Abdullah, 2020; Mohd Thas Thaker et al., 2021).

Thirdly, the study found that cash *waqf* crowdfunding can potentially engage and empower marginalized groups, such as women and youth, by increasing their participation in philanthropy and community development initiatives and tailoring projects to their specific needs and priorities (Bello,



2022). Finally, the participants discussed how cash *waqf* crowdfunding can empower communities by giving them a sense of ownership and responsibility over their development, building social capital, and fostering community development by supporting local initiatives and projects (Hassan & Salma, 2017). These findings suggest that cash *waqf* crowdfunding can be a powerful tool for promoting economic development and alleviating poverty in Northern Nigeria while contributing to social inclusion and community empowerment. However, successfully implementing cash *waqf* crowdfunding initiatives in the region requires addressing the identified challenges and creating a supportive ecosystem involving collaboration and coordination among various stakeholders.

## **Implications for Policy and Practice**

The findings of this study have significant implications for policy and practice in Northern Nigeria. Policymakers can use the insights from this study to develop a supportive regulatory framework that facilitates the growth and development of cash *waqf* crowdfunding in the region. This may include establishing clear guidelines for registering and operating cash *waqf* crowdfunding platforms, providing tax incentives for donors and investors, and creating awareness campaigns to promote public understanding and participation in cash *waqf* crowdfunding initiatives.

Practitioners, such as social finance institutions and crowdfunding platforms, can leverage the findings of this study to design and implement effective cash *waqf* crowdfunding initiatives that address the specific needs and priorities of communities in Northern Nigeria. This may involve engaging with local stakeholders, such as community leaders and marginalized groups, to identify projects with the most significant potential for social and economic impact and developing transparent and accountable governance mechanisms to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of these initiatives.

The findings also underscore the importance of collaboration and coordination among stakeholders, including government agencies, financial institutions, civil society organizations, and local communities, in creating a supportive ecosystem for cash *waqf* crowdfunding in Northern Nigeria. Practitioners can use this study to foster partnerships and networks that

can facilitate knowledge sharing, resource pooling, and collective action towards the common goal of promoting economic development and poverty alleviation in the region.

## Contributions to the Field

This study makes several contributions to the academic literature on Islamic finance and poverty alleviation. Firstly, it provides empirical evidence on the potential of cash *waqf* crowdfunding as a tool for economic development and poverty alleviation in the specific context of Northern Nigeria. This addresses a gap in the literature, as previous studies have primarily focused on the theoretical aspects of cash *waqf* and crowdfunding or their application in other geographical contexts (Mohd Thas Thaker et al., 2021; Shukor et al., 2019). Secondly, the study offers a nuanced understanding of the challenges, benefits, and potential impact of cash *waqf* crowdfunding in Northern Nigeria based on the perspectives and experiences of key stakeholders in the region. This contributes to a more contextualized and grounded understanding of the phenomenon, which can inform future research and policy interventions.

Thirdly, the study highlights the potential of cash *waqf* crowdfunding to engage and empower marginalized groups, such as women and youth, in economic development and poverty alleviation initiatives. This contributes to the growing body of literature on the role of Islamic finance in promoting social inclusion and reducing inequality (Bello, 2022; Muhammad et al., 2018). Finally, the study provides a conceptual framework for understanding the role of cash *waqf* crowdfunding in economic development and poverty alleviation, which can be adapted and applied in other contexts. This contributes to developing a more robust and comprehensive theory of Islamic finance and its potential for social and economic impact.

## Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings of this study, several areas for future research can be identified. Firstly, future studies could explore the potential of technology, particularly digital platforms and mobile technologies, in facilitating cash *waqf* crowdfunding initiatives in Northern Nigeria and other developing contexts. This could involve investigating how technology can be leveraged

to increase the reach and impact of cash waqf crowdfunding, particularly in underserved communities. Secondly, future research could delve deeper into the governance and management aspects of cash waqf crowdfunding initiatives, examining the roles and dynamics of different stakeholders, such as donors, beneficiaries, and intermediaries. This could help identify best practices and models for ensuring cash waqf crowdfunding initiatives' transparency, accountability, and effectiveness.

Thirdly, future studies could employ quantitative or mixed-methods approaches to assess the impact of cash waqf crowdfunding initiatives on various socio-economic indicators, such as poverty rates, income levels, and access to education and healthcare. This could provide more robust evidence of the effectiveness of cash waqf crowdfunding as a tool for economic development and poverty alleviation. Finally, future research could explore the potential of cash waqf crowdfunding in other geographical contexts, particularly in other developing countries with significant Muslim populations. This could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon and its potential for social and economic impact in different cultural, political, and institutional settings.

## **Limitations of the Study**

While this study provides valuable insights into the role of cash waqf crowdfunding in economic development in Northern Nigeria, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations. Firstly, the study relied on a relatively small sample size of 15 participants, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to the broader population. However, the purposive sampling strategy employed in the study ensured that the participants had relevant expertise and experience in Islamic finance and waqf. Secondly, the study focused specifically on the context of Northern Nigeria, which may limit the applicability of the findings to other regions or countries. However, the study's findings and conceptual framework can serve as a basis for future research and policy interventions in different contexts.

Thirdly, the study relied on self-reported data from the participants, which may be subject to biases and limitations in recall. However, using semi-structured interviews allowed for in-depth exploration of the participants' perspectives and experiences, which can provide valuable insights into

the phenomenon under study. Despite these limitations, this study makes significant contributions to understanding cash waqf crowdfunding and its potential for economic development and poverty alleviation in Northern Nigeria and other developing contexts.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors thank the Nigerian scholars and experts who participated in this study for sharing their valuable insights and experiences. This study is conducted with the research grant, namely, Dana Penyelidikan Universiti-DPU (UniSZA/2024/DPU2.0/14), from the Center for Research Excellence and Incubation Management (CREIM) of Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA), Malaysia. The authors are grateful and would like to thank the CREIM, UniSZA.

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