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Integrating Maqasid al-Shariah into Poverty Alleviation Strategies for Sustainable Development Goal Achievement: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

This study employs a systematic literature review (SLR) synthesising 30 empirical studies to examine the relationship between multidimensional poverty and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with particular focus on obstacles including inadequate funding, political instability, and environmental challenges. Using maqasid al-Shariah as a primary analytical framework rather than treating Islamic principles as peripheral variables, the review maps the operational alignment between each of the five maqasid objectives and specific SDG targets, and foregrounds zakat and waqf as central development instruments capable of independently addressing poverty-related SDG indicators in Muslim-majority contexts. Findings underscore the critical role of multidimensional poverty in restricting access to education, healthcare, and financial services, and establish the necessity of integrated economic, social, and environmental strategies underpinned by Islamic ethical principles. Relative to prior systematic reviews, this study's novelty resides in three distinct contributions, namely the explicit application of an Islamic normative lens as the primary analytical framework, a structured SDG–maqasid mapping exercise, and the repositioning of zakat and waqf as core rather than complementary development mechanisms. Grounded in secondary data, the study acknowledges inherent scope limitations and recommends future primary data collection across diverse sociocultural and geographic contexts. These findings offer actionable guidance for policymakers and development practitioners seeking holistic, ethically informed poverty reduction strategies that prioritise marginalised populations and sustainable growth imperatives.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Poverty remains one of the most persistent and complex challenges confronting global development efforts, continuing to afflict billions of individuals and obstructing pathways toward sustainable progress. As defined by the United Nations, poverty denotes a condition in which individuals lack sufficient financial resources to meet the most basic living standards, encompassing fundamental necessities such as food, shelter, and healthcare (Nussbaum, 2011). This multifaceted and multidimensional phenomenon manifests across a wide spectrum of forms and intensities, with approximately 689 million people residing in conditions of extreme poverty as of 2023, with the heaviest burden concentrated in regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia (World Bank, 2023).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), formally adopted by the United Nations in 2015, constitute a comprehensive global agenda directed toward addressing critical and interrelated issues, including poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation, by the year 2030. Among these goals, SDG 1 explicitly targets the eradication of poverty in all its manifestations, serving as a foundational objective that intersects with numerous other SDGs, notably SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 4 (Quality Education), and SDG 5 (Gender Equality). The achievement of these interlinked goals is widely regarded as indispensable for the cultivation of inclusive and sustainable societies worldwide.

Existing scholarly literature consistently affirms that poverty exacerbates human vulnerability, limits access to essential services, and obstructs economic growth. Impoverished populations, for instance, are frequently unable to invest in education, thereby perpetuating an intergenerational cycle of deprivation that proves exceedingly difficult to break (Hossain, 2021). Furthermore, the gendered dimension of poverty reveals that women and marginalised groups disproportionately bear the weight of poverty's adverse impacts, thereby reinforcing structural inequalities and impeding progress toward gender equity (Martinez, 2021).

Despite the considerable body of research addressing poverty and its wide-ranging implications, significant gaps persist in scholarly understanding of how poverty influences the broader SDG framework. Many prior studies have examined poverty in isolation, concentrating predominantly on its economic dimensions, while comparatively few have offered holistic analyses that incorporate the social, environmental, and ethical facets of the problem. The interplay between poverty, climate change, and food security, for example, remains insufficiently explored, thereby limiting the effectiveness of policy interventions designed to address them concurrently (Miller and Wong, 2022). Moreover, the potential of ethical frameworks such as maqasid al-Shariah (the higher objectives of Islamic law) in the domain of poverty alleviation has not been adequately integrated into sustainable development discourse, notwithstanding its significant potential to provide value-based solutions (Lamido, 2020). Bridging these gaps is considered essential for developing more effective and inclusive strategies for poverty eradication. A critical knowledge gap identified through preliminary scoping concerns the absence of comparative empirical research that systematically measures the relative effectiveness of Islamic financial models versus conventional aid-based or market-driven strategies in addressing poverty within SDG-aligned frameworks. This gap is explicitly addressed in the present review and constitutes one of its primary contributions to the existing scholarly literature.

To address these identified gaps, the present study undertakes a systematic review of the existing literature to explore the relationship between poverty and the SDGs, with particular emphasis on the contribution of Islamic ethical principles in shaping sustainable development strategies. Three principal research questions guide this investigation.

1. In what ways does poverty impede the achievement of the SDGs, particularly SDG 1 (No Poverty) and its intersections with other SDGs?

2. What are the principal economic, social, and environmental barriers that constrain poverty alleviation within the SDG framework?
3. In what manner can maqasid al-Shariah contribute to the formulation of more effective poverty alleviation strategies that are aligned with the SDGs?

The remainder of this paper is organised as follows. The subsequent section presents a review of the pertinent literature, followed by a description of the methodological approach adopted in conducting the SLR. The findings section then synthesises key insights from the reviewed studies, emphasising the multidimensional nature of poverty and its implications for the SDGs. A discussion of the findings ensues, highlighting research gaps and prospective policy interventions. The paper concludes by summarising key insights and offering recommendations for future research and policy development.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Ethical Foundations of Maqasid al-Shariah in Addressing Poverty

The concept of maqasid al-Shariah, which refers to the higher objectives and overarching purposes of Islamic law, constitutes an ethical and jurisprudential framework designed to preserve and promote five essential human values, namely religion (din), life (nafs), intellect (aql), lineage (nasl), and wealth (mal) (Abdullah, 2018). These foundational principles underpin a holistic vision of societal welfare that extends beyond material well-being to encompass social justice, spiritual integrity, and human dignity. In the context of poverty alleviation, this framework offers a multidimensional perspective that aligns substantively with the objectives of the SDGs, particularly those concerned with the eradication of poverty and the promotion of equity (Aziz et al., 2024).

A distinguishing strength of maqasid al-Shariah lies in its inherent emphasis on redistributive justice, operationalised through instruments such as zakat, the obligatory annual levy on wealth in Islam. Zakat functions as both a financial mechanism for supporting the impoverished and a moral imperative that reinforces collective accountability in wealth distribution (Syarifah, 2024). The ethical foundation underlying this instrument is particularly significant, as it conceptualises poverty alleviation not merely as a state-led intervention but as a societal duty grounded in religious obligation and moral commitment. Furthermore, the prohibition of riba (usury) within Islamic finance challenges exploitative financial systems by promoting greater equity in credit access and discouraging debt arrangements that disproportionately burden the poor (Rosman et al., 2022). Such ethical constraints serve to temper market excesses and infuse justice into economic transactions.

The practical dimension of maqasid al-Shariah is further embodied in Islamic financial instruments such as waqf (charitable endowments) and sukuk (Shariah-compliant bonds). These mechanisms provide a sustainable economic infrastructure for development initiatives, particularly in sectors such as health, education, and housing, which correspond directly to SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 4 (Quality Education) (Abdurrehman et al., 2021). While waqf has historically played a pivotal role in community-led development, its potential remains significantly underutilised in contemporary policymaking frameworks. The integration of such instruments within modern Islamic finance demonstrates the enduring relevance of maqasid al-Shariah not only as a moral guide but also as a viable alternative framework for economic planning and public policy formulation (Aziz et al., 2024).

Critically, maqasid al-Shariah reframes poverty not merely as an economic deficit but as a fundamental violation of justice and human dignity. This reconceptualisation adds considerable ethical depth to the discourse on poverty alleviation, rendering it more culturally grounded and spiritually resonant, particularly within Muslim-majority societies. Scholars have argued that development strategies that lack such normative frameworks tend to be technocratic in orientation and limited in their cultural relevance, thereby reducing their long-term effectiveness in achieving sustainable social transformation (Isman et al., 2023).

The value of maqasid al-Shariah, therefore, resides in its capacity to bridge moral imperatives with pragmatic development solutions. Its ethical orientation complements the SDG agenda by embedding the principles of justice and equity into the design of poverty alleviation strategies. As the global development community increasingly seeks context-sensitive and locally responsive approaches, this framework provides both theoretical coherence and practical mechanisms for achieving sustainable and inclusive growth.

2.2. Maqasid al-Shariah and the Sustainable Development Goals

The SDGs, established through the United Nations process, are aimed at fostering inclusive, equitable, and sustainable societies by addressing a broad array of multidimensional challenges, including poverty, inequality, hunger, and inadequate access to basic services. Among these, SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) form the core of the economic justice agenda, while SDGs 3, 4, and 5 extend the development mandate to encompass healthcare, education, and gender equity, respectively (Alami and Mohammad, 2024). Despite the comprehensive nature of these goals, many development frameworks have attracted criticism for prioritising technocratic and growth-centred approaches that insufficiently engage with ethical, spiritual, and cultural dimensions (Mohd Noh, 2022). It is within this context that maqasid al-Shariah offers an enriched normative framework for embedding value-driven decision-making into the architecture of sustainable development.

Islamic ethical principles, as embodied in maqasid al-Shariah, make a meaningful contribution to the SDG discourse by reinforcing the understanding of development as a moral and social responsibility. Rather than treating poverty and inequality as purely economic phenomena, the Islamic perspective construes them as structural injustices that fundamentally compromise human dignity. This ethical framing has the potential to enhance the SDG model by grounding it in value systems that resonate authentically with local populations in Muslim-majority societies (Aziz et al., 2024). Furthermore, maqasid al-Shariah mandates the equitable distribution of resources and the preservation of communal welfare, objectives that align directly with the redistributive aims of SDG 10 and the inclusivity targets of SDG 5.

While instruments such as zakat and waqf are widely discussed in Islamic economics literature, their relevance to the SDGs lies principally in their scalability and potential for institutionalisation. Contemporary models of waqf have been applied to finance healthcare, education, and emergency relief, activities that align closely with SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 4 (Quality Education) (Shaiq Ahmad et al., 2021; Al-Daihani and Che Abdullah, 2023). What distinguishes these instruments is not only their functional utility but also their embedded ethical framework, which prohibits speculative risk and prioritises long-term communal benefit over short-term gain. These mechanisms have been commended for sustaining development funding while simultaneously preserving social cohesion (Djafri and Soualhi, 2021).

The conceptual alignment between maqasid al-Shariah and the SDGs is illustrated in Table 1, which maps selected SDGs to the corresponding objectives of maqasid al-Shariah and associated Islamic ethical instruments. The table highlights the compatibility between global development goals and Islamic value systems, thereby reinforcing the case for faith-integrated development models in Muslim-majority societies.

Ultimately, maqasid al-Shariah has the potential to substantially enhance the SDG framework by providing a more comprehensive understanding of development, one that is ethical, inclusive, and firmly rooted in lived values (Karimullah, 2023). The synergy between the two frameworks emerges from their overlapping objectives and the shared potential to redirect global development toward justice-centred and context-sensitive paradigms.

Table 2.1. Alignment between Selected SDGs and Maqasid al-Shariah Objectives

SDG Goal	Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah Objective	Islamic Instruments / Ethical Principles
SDG 1: No Poverty	Protection of wealth (māl)	Zakat; redistribution of wealth
SDG 2: Zero Hunger	Protection of life (nafṣ)	Zakat; waqf (food aid, agricultural development)
SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being	Protection of life (nafṣ)	Waqf for healthcare; ethical obligation to preserve life
SDG 4: Quality Education	Protection of intellect (ʿaql)	Waqf for education; knowledge as a spiritual and social duty
SDG 5: Gender Equality	Protection of lineage (naṣl)	Family and social justice; women's dignity; empowerment through zakat
SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities	Equity across all five objectives	Anti-discrimination; inclusive governance; ethical redistribution models

Source: Authors' own compilation.

2.3. Positioning the Present Review against Prior Systematic Literature Reviews

Over the past decade, the proliferation of systematic literature reviews has enabled scholars to map the breadth and depth of global poverty research and evaluate its alignment with the SDG framework. However, a closer examination reveals a recurring methodological limitation: most SLRs emphasise economic or technocratic solutions, with limited attention directed toward ethical, cultural, or religious frameworks. For example, many reviews evaluating SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) concentrate predominantly on income inequality, employment generation, and fiscal transfers, grounded largely in Western economic theories and policy models (Yasmeen et al., 2024). While this analytical orientation has facilitated the identification of macroeconomic levers, it frequently fails to engage with how moral worldviews shape development priorities, particularly in non-Western societal contexts.

Many SLRs have explored poverty from a multidimensional perspective, incorporating themes such as education, health, and gender equity. Yet these reviews tend to rely on data from secular governance institutions and rarely consider how religiously informed ethical values may influence the design and effectiveness of poverty alleviation strategies (Harahap et al., 2023). Aziz et al. (2024) observe that while SDG implementation frequently calls for "local ownership" and "cultural sensitivity," relatively few systematic reviews meaningfully engage with Islamic economic thought or frameworks such as maqasid al-Shariah. Consequently, the potential contributions of zakat, waqf, and other Islamic mechanisms remain substantially underexplored within the global poverty discourse.

A further limitation of prior SLRs is their tendency to neglect the ways in which value systems influence the efficacy and sustainability of poverty reduction programmes. The implicit assumption that development is normatively neutral leads to recommendations that may overlook or conflict with deeply held beliefs and institutional norms, particularly in Muslim-majority regions. This epistemological blind spot diminishes the capacity of international development frameworks to gain traction among culturally diverse communities (Cummings et al., 2023). Without the incorporation of faith-based economic principles, previous reviews risk advancing solutions that are either culturally irrelevant or socially unsustainable in specific societal contexts.

What distinguishes the present review is its integrated and explicitly normative approach. Rather than analysing poverty or SDG policies in isolation, this study draws explicitly on Islamic ethical frameworks to evaluate their compatibility and complementarity with global development goals.

This perspective enables a reassessment of poverty not merely as material deprivation but as a disruption of human dignity, justice, and communal balance, concepts that are central to both the SDGs and maqasid al-Shariah. Unlike earlier reviews, this study foregrounds the institutional relevance of Islamic instruments such as zakat for income redistribution and waqf for public service financing, treating them not as peripheral traditions but as viable institutional tools capable of directly supporting key SDG targets (Aziz et al., 2024).

The review further identifies an important knowledge gap in the absence of comparative empirical research systematically measuring the relative effectiveness of Islamic financial models versus conventional aid-based or market-based strategies in addressing poverty. Bridging this gap would enable scholars and policymakers to move beyond anecdotal evidence and engage in substantive assessments of how value-driven development models perform under varying socio-economic conditions. By incorporating Islamic ethics into the overarching framework of poverty discourse, this review lays the groundwork for future research that is both contextually grounded and globally relevant.

2.4. Challenges and Future Directions for Maqasid al-Shariah and SDG Integration

The application of maqasid al-Shariah within SDG frameworks presents both considerable conceptual promise and significant practical difficulty. A persistent challenge resides in the gap between normative alignment and operational readiness. While the philosophical congruence between Islamic ethical goals and the SDGs is increasingly acknowledged, development actors often lack the clear institutional mechanisms necessary to translate these principles into concrete policy, programming, and financing structures. The absence of integrated development models that combine Islamic ethics with global development indicators continues to limit meaningful application, particularly within national planning and budgetary systems (Cahyono and Hidayat, 2022).

A major structural obstacle is the inconsistency in regulatory environments governing Islamic finance and social institutions across different jurisdictions. The decentralised and frequently informal governance of zakat, waqf, and Islamic social finance instruments leads to fragmented implementation and variable developmental impact. Many Muslim-majority countries continue to operate with dual systems, encompassing both modern financial regulation and traditional religious administration, which can generate policy contradictions or institutional inertia. Without harmonised legal frameworks that formally incorporate Islamic ethical considerations into development governance, the application of maqasid al-Shariah risks remaining peripheral rather than becoming mainstreamed within development practice (Abdullah, 2018).

The conceptual richness of maqasid al-Shariah has not always translated into operational clarity. While its principles enjoy broad acceptance among Islamic scholars, insufficient empirical research exists to demonstrate how they perform when applied to contemporary development contexts. This evidentiary gap has contributed to scepticism among policymakers and international development agencies, who generally prioritise measurable and quantifiable outcomes over value-based frameworks. The limited availability of impact assessments, policy evaluations, and cross-national comparative data further constrains the credibility and influence of Islamic development models within the broader SDG discourse (Jaiyeoba et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the environmental dimension of Islamic ethical frameworks remains significantly underexplored in development practice. While maqasid al-Shariah encompasses the preservation of life and the welfare of future generations, its application in ecological planning and climate-resilient development remains largely theoretical in most policy contexts. This is particularly consequential given that environmental degradation and climate-related risks disproportionately affect the most vulnerable populations, who are central to the SDG poverty alleviation agenda (Klongrua, 2024). Integrating Islamic environmental ethics into national adaptation strategies could enhance legitimacy and local community engagement, but this will require considerable conceptual, legal, and institutional development.

Looking ahead, there is a compelling case for advancing a dual research agenda. The first strand should focus on refining theoretical models of Islamic development ethics to achieve greater alignment with global policy instruments. The second strand should seek to test these models across diverse socio-political contexts using robust empirical methodologies (Yasmeen et al., 2024). Interdisciplinary research that bridges Islamic jurisprudence, political economy, and public policy can help identify viable integration pathways and strengthen coherence between Islamic values and SDG frameworks. Strategic partnerships among universities, Islamic finance institutions, and development agencies could also support the design and evaluation of pilot programmes that assess integrated poverty alleviation models, environmental sustainability initiatives, and ethical governance systems.

While maqasid al-Shariah offers a compelling moral architecture for advancing SDG achievement, its broader application depends critically on overcoming regulatory fragmentation, evidentiary gaps, and operational uncertainties. Future efforts must prioritise empirical grounding and legal harmonisation to unlock the full transformative potential of Islamic ethical contributions to sustainable development.

3. METHODOLOGY

A comprehensive and structured literature search was conducted across major academic databases, primarily Scopus and Google Scholar. The search was conducted in two complementary phases to ensure comprehensive capture of both the SDG-poverty nexus and the Islamic ethical dimension central to this review. The first phase focused on the poverty-SDG relationship, employing Boolean search strings combining terms such as poverty, Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs, multidimensional poverty, poverty alleviation, and poverty and development. The second phase targeted the Islamic ethical framework, incorporating terms such as maqasid al-Shariah, maqasid al-Shariah and poverty, Islamic finance and SDGs, zakat and poverty alleviation, waqf and sustainable development, and Islamic poverty alleviation. Both phases employed Boolean AND and OR operators to broaden and refine retrieval. All searches were restricted to articles published between 2014 and 2024 to ensure the currency and contextual relevance of the retrieved literature.

An initial search yielded a total of 250 articles. Following a structured screening process based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, 30 studies were selected for inclusion in the final review. The review incorporated peer-reviewed articles addressing the relationship between poverty and one or more SDGs, provided that these studies offered empirical evidence or theoretical insights relevant to the impact of poverty on SDG achievement. Studies excluded from consideration included non-English publications, opinion pieces, and research that did not specifically engage with the effects of poverty on the SDGs. Table 2 summarises the inclusion and exclusion criteria adopted in this study, while Figure 1 illustrates the article selection process employed in the SLR.

Three significant methodological observations are noteworthy in relation to the SLR process.

1. The SLR enables authors to select the most relevant studies to address the research questions, thereby reducing the risk of interpretive errors.
2. The predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria systematically guide the recognition, selection, and critical evaluation of existing empirical studies pertinent to the review objectives. This structured process ensures transparency and minimises the risks of bias and duplication.
3. The growing volume of research on poverty has produced contradictory findings regarding

its conceptualisation, measurement, causes, and potential solutions, presenting a challenge in achieving a comprehensive and cohesive understanding of the subject.

Data from the selected studies were extracted using a standardised data extraction form, capturing key information including authors, year of publication, country context, methodological approach, sample characteristics, principal findings, and conclusions. This structured approach ensured consistency and comparability across the data collection process. The quality of included studies was assessed using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) qualitative checklist, which evaluates studies on the basis of methodological rigour, credibility of findings, and relevance to the review questions. The PRISMA 2020 checklist guided the reporting and presentation of the review process, in accordance with its intended function as a reporting guideline. Findings from the included studies were synthesised qualitatively, with common themes and insights identified in relation to the impact of poverty on the SDGs. A complete list of all 30 included studies, documenting author, year, country context, study design, and principal findings relevant to the three research questions, is provided in Table A1 (Appendix A).

Table 3.1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Publication type	Peer-reviewed journal articles	Non-peer-reviewed publications, opinion pieces
Language	English; Arabic and Malay for foundational jurisprudential texts	Non-English publications (except foundational Islamic jurisprudential texts in Arabic and Malay)
Time frame	Articles published between 2014 and 2024	Articles published before 2014 or after 2024
Focus	Studies addressing the relationship between poverty and one or more SDGs	Studies not specifically addressing poverty and SDGs
Empirical evidence	Studies providing empirical data or theoretical insights related to poverty and SDGs	Conceptual papers without empirical data or clear insights
Methodology	Quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods approaches	Reviews or meta-analyses without primary data

Source: Authors' own compilation.

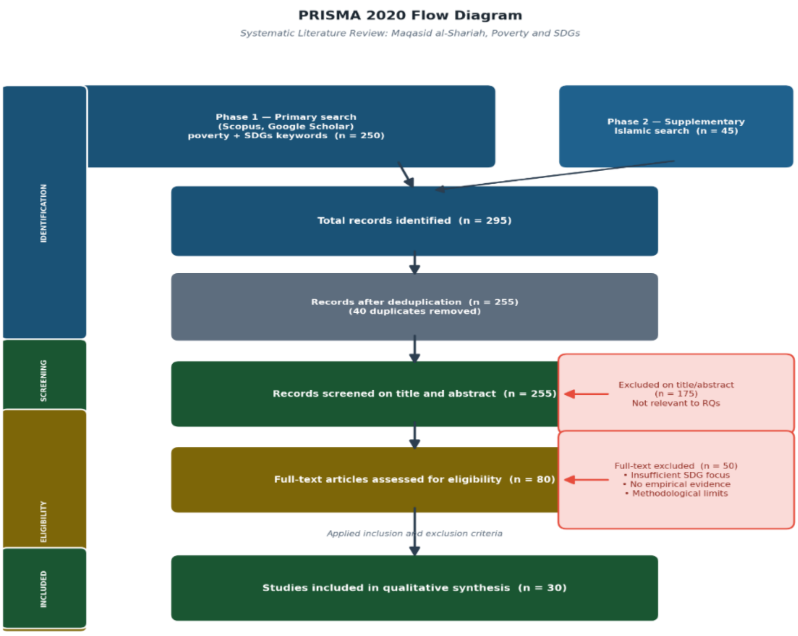

Figure 3.1. PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram for Article Selection Process

Source: Authors' own compilation.

The article selection process followed a systematic two-phase approach. In Phase 1, an initial database search using poverty-SDG keywords retrieved 250 records from Scopus and Google Scholar. In Phase 2, a supplementary Islamic-specific search using maqasid al-Shariah, zakat, waqf, and Islamic poverty alleviation terms retrieved an additional 45 records, yielding a combined total of 295 records. Following the removal of 40 duplicate records, 255 unique records were subjected to title and abstract screening against the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Of these, 175 records were excluded due to irrelevance, leaving 80 articles eligible for full-text assessment. During the full-text screening phase, a further 50 articles were excluded due to insufficient focus on the poverty-SDG nexus, absence of empirical evidence or theoretical insight, or methodological limitations. Ultimately, 30 articles satisfied all inclusion criteria and were incorporated into the final qualitative synthesis. Figure 1 illustrates this stepwise selection process in a PRISMA 2020 flow diagram, and Table A1 (Appendix A) provides full details of all 30 included studies.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Impact of Poverty on the SDGs

4.1.1. Multidimensional Nature of Poverty

The persistence of poverty constitutes a critical global challenge, with approximately 689 million people currently living in conditions of extreme poverty, as documented by the World Bank (2023). This figure underscores the stark reality that 9.2 percent of the world's population is unable to meet even the most fundamental subsistence needs. The distribution of poverty is markedly uneven, with Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia bearing the most severe burdens. Data from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) indicate that more than 40 percent of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa survives on less than USD 1.90 per day (UNDP, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic significantly compounded this challenge, driving an estimated 100 million additional individuals into extreme poverty and reversing substantial gains achieved through prior poverty alleviation efforts (Chakrabarti et al., 2021). These deeply concerning trends underscore the urgency of targeted policy interventions and structural reforms aimed at addressing the root causes of poverty and their implications for sustainable development.

4.1.2. Economic Implications of Poverty

The economic implications of poverty extend far beyond individual households, exerting significant pressure on broader economic systems and national development trajectories. Estimates suggest that poverty imposes an annual cost on the global economy exceeding USD 7 trillion, attributable to reduced productivity, elevated healthcare expenditures, and social unrest (Nguyen, 2021). Research by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) indicates that every one-percent increase in poverty is associated with a 0.5 percent decline in economic growth (IMF, 2020). This relationship underscores how poverty not only constrains individual potential but also impedes overall economic development at the national and global levels. Poverty further disproportionately affects marginalised groups by restricting their access to quality education and healthcare, thereby perpetuating the intergenerational cycle of deprivation (Roberts, 2022). Addressing poverty is therefore not merely a moral imperative but an economic necessity for fostering sustainable and broadly shared economic growth.

4.1.3. Future Projections and Climate Change

Future projections indicate that, without substantial and coordinated intervention, poverty levels may remain alarmingly elevated, particularly in the context of accelerating climate change. The World Bank (2021) estimates that climate change could drive an additional 100 million people into poverty by 2030, thereby exacerbating pre-existing vulnerabilities. The impacts of climate change, including extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and increasing food insecurity, are anticipated to disproportionately affect low-income communities, further entrenching poverty. A study by Miller and Wong (2022) found that climate-related shocks could reduce agricultural productivity by as much as 30 percent in certain regions, with direct consequences for food security and income levels among the poorest populations. The interdependence between poverty and climate change highlights the necessity of integrated approaches that incorporate environmental sustainability considerations alongside efforts to address the structural causes of poverty. Collaborative engagement involving governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and local communities is essential for mitigating these overlapping risks and fostering resilience among impoverished populations.

4.2. Impact on Specific SDGs

4.2.1. SDG 1: No Poverty

Poverty constitutes a fundamental barrier to achieving SDG 1, which aims to eliminate poverty in all its forms and in all locations. The synthesised evidence from the reviewed corpus consistently highlights that individuals living in poverty face compounding challenges that entrench them in cycles of deprivation. Williams (2020) establishes that the absence of adequate financial resources restricts access to basic necessities, including food, healthcare, and education, thereby undermining capacities for socio-economic improvement. Smith and Johnson (2021) further indicate that targeted systemic interventions addressing structural inequalities are essential for meaningful poverty reduction, given that marginalised groups experience the most severe manifestations of poverty. This finding is corroborated by Roberts (2022), who identifies the multi-dimensionality of poverty as a key challenge for single-sector policy responses, and by Cummings et al. (2023), who emphasise that development frameworks must engage with the normative and cultural dimensions of deprivation to achieve sustainable outcomes. Across the reviewed studies, a consistent pattern emerges: effective SDG 1 interventions require integrated multi-sector strategies that simultaneously address income poverty, access to services, and structural inequality.

4.2.2. SDG 2: Zero Hunger

The relationship between poverty and food insecurity is a critical concern in the context of SDG 2. Khan and Lee (2022) demonstrate a direct correlation between poverty and inadequate access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food. Their research reveals that impoverished populations frequently depend on low-quality, calorie-dense foods that fail to meet adequate nutritional standards, resulting in malnutrition and associated health complications. Garcia and Valdez (2021) further established that food insecurity can itself perpetuate poverty, creating a self-reinforcing cycle in which the inability to secure adequate nutrition constrains the capacity of individuals to escape poverty.

4.2.3. SDG 4: Quality Education

Education is widely recognised as one of the most powerful tools for breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty, yet poverty severely limits access to quality educational opportunities. Patel-Campillo (2022) asserts that children from low-income households frequently attend underfunded schools with inadequate educational resources, which adversely affects their academic attainment and diminishes their future opportunities. This finding is corroborated by Hossain (2021), whose case studies conducted in Bangladesh demonstrate that poverty directly depresses school enrolment rates and educational achievement, thereby perpetuating cycles of intergenerational disadvantage.

4.2.4. SDG 5: Gender Equality

Poverty exerts a disproportionate burden on women and girls, generating significant obstacles to the achievement of SDG 5. The literature indicates that women living in poverty face multiple and compounding forms of discrimination, including restricted access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities (Chen et al., 2023). These constraints perpetuate gender gaps in education and employment, reinforcing the structural conditions that reproduce cycles of poverty. Research by Nguyen (2021) highlights the positive impact of targeted initiatives that empower women through education and microfinance access, demonstrating that addressing gender disparities generates broader developmental benefits for families and communities.

4.2.5. SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities

Poverty is inextricably linked to social and economic inequalities, which constitute a central concern of SDG 10. Research consistently reveals that marginalised groups, including ethnic minorities and individuals with disabilities, experience elevated rates of poverty and face systemic barriers to resource access (Martinez, 2021). The literature emphasises that addressing these entrenched inequalities is a prerequisite for meaningful poverty reduction and sustainable development. Policies oriented toward inclusivity and the equitable distribution of resources are considered essential for dismantling structural barriers and fostering social mobility among disadvantaged populations.

4.3. Barriers to Achieving the SDGs

4.3.1. Lack of Access to Resources

Access to essential resources, including education, healthcare, clean water, and financial services, is fundamental to SDG achievement. However, empirical research consistently reveals that individuals living in poverty encounter significant barriers to accessing these resources. Smith and Johnson (2021) highlight that impoverished communities frequently reside in areas with inadequate infrastructure, which directly constrains their access to educational and healthcare facilities. Similarly, Khan and Lee (2022) note that financial exclusion prevents low-income households from obtaining credit and loans, which are essential for entrepreneurial activity and economic mobility.

4.3.2. Inequality and Social Exclusion

Persistent inequality constitutes a formidable barrier to SDG achievement. Multiple studies identify that marginalised groups, including ethnic minorities, women, and persons with disabilities, encounter systemic obstacles that restrict their opportunities and participation (Martinez, 2021; Chen et al., 2023). Patel-Campillo (2022) discusses how gender-based discrimination limits women's access to education and productive employment, perpetuating cycles of poverty and constraining their contribution to economic development. The intersectionality of these inequalities considerably complicates efforts to achieve truly inclusive development outcomes.

4.3.3. Political Instability and Governance Challenges

Political instability and weak governance constitute critical barriers to SDG progress. Research by Nguyen (2021) demonstrates that conflict-affected regions consistently experience elevated poverty rates, as instability disrupts economic activity and undermines social service delivery. Poor governance further compounds these challenges by enabling corruption, facilitating the misallocation of public resources, and impeding the effective implementation of poverty reduction policies (Martinez, 2021). The literature suggests that countries characterised by stronger governance institutions are substantially more likely to make meaningful progress toward the SDGs (Garcia and Valdez, 2021).

4.3.4. Environmental Challenges

Environmental degradation presents a substantial and growing barrier to SDG achievement. As the impacts of climate change intensify, vulnerable populations bear a disproportionate share of the resulting hardship. Hossain (2021) observes that impoverished communities frequently depend heavily on natural resources for their livelihoods, rendering them particularly susceptible to environmental shocks such as droughts and floods. The literature underscores that sustainable resource management is essential for ensuring food security, health, and economic stability in the face of escalating environmental pressures (Khan and Lee, 2022).

4.3.5. Insufficient Funding and Investment

Financial constraints significantly impede progress toward the SDGs. Multiple studies identify inadequate funding for development programmes as a major limiting factor in poverty alleviation efforts (Taylor et al., 2023). Roberts (2022) contends that substantially increased investment in social services, infrastructure, and economic development is essential for addressing the structural causes of poverty. The current levels of international aid and domestic investment, however, frequently fall short of what is required to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

4.3.6. Inadequate Data and Monitoring Capacity

Effective monitoring and evaluation are essential for tracking SDG progress, yet many countries continue to lack reliable, timely, and disaggregated data. Studies highlight that data gaps undermine the capacity to accurately assess needs and design appropriately targeted interventions (Miller and Wong, 2022). This deficit makes it challenging to hold governments accountable and to implement evidence-based policies capable of effectively addressing poverty and inequality.

4.4. The Role of Maqasid al-Shariah in Poverty Alleviation

This section synthesises the role of maqasid al-Shariah in poverty alleviation, drawing on both the Islamic jurisprudential literature that provides the normative framework and the empirical and theoretical studies identified through the systematic review. Several of the 30 reviewed studies explicitly engage with maqasid al-Shariah principles in poverty and development contexts, including Aziz et al. (2024), Abdurrehman et al. (2021), Rosman et al. (2022), Jaiyeoba et al. (2025), and Harahap et al. (2023). These studies provide empirical and theoretical grounding for the conceptual claims advanced here. Foundational Islamic jurisprudential sources serve as the normative scaffolding within which contemporary empirical findings are situated, reflecting the dual character of maqasid al-Shariah scholarship as simultaneously normative and applied.

Maqasid al-Shariah has been described as the branch of Islamic knowledge that addresses fundamental questions about the purposes and wisdoms underlying the rulings of the Shariah (Auda, 2008). It encompasses the reasoning behind the prohibition of riba in financial transactions and the obligation of zakat upon eligible Muslims. Tarmizi (2019) further defines maqasid al-Shariah, drawing on the views of Muslim scholars, as the purposes and wisdoms embedded in the sanctioned rulings of the Shariah, together with the deeper rationale designed to protect human welfare. This framework categorises necessities into three hierarchical levels, namely daruiyyat (necessities), hajiyyat (needs), and tahsiniyyat (embellishments). Daruiyyat represents the highest priority category, requiring attention before the other two levels, as it addresses those needs most critical to ensuring the maslahah (public interest) of the ummah (Tarmizi, 2019).

Imam al-Ghazali articulates that the primary aim of the Shariah is to safeguard the essential needs of all humankind, which he identifies as five fundamental categories: din (faith), nafs (life), aql (intellect), nasl (posterity), and mal (wealth). Whatever serves to protect and preserve these five essentials is regarded as advancing the public interest and is accordingly encouraged (Sujimon, 2017). This framework is consonant with the overarching objective of Shariah, which is to remove hardship and difficulty from human life. Among the most acute forms of hardship is economic deprivation, which is frequently triggered by poverty and results in the inability to fulfil basic needs for health, education, and sustenance. Alleviating poverty has therefore become one of the essential necessities (daruiyyat) warranting urgent and sustained attention. According to Lamido (2020), poverty poses a threat to the actualisation of all five essential maqasid, underscoring the imperative for systemic action to address its root causes.

Research by Lamido (2020) further proposes the need to investigate the socio-economic conditions of Muslim communities that most directly affect the poor, with a view to generating optimal policy recommendations grounded in Shariah perspectives and informed by the hierarchical classification of necessities. Within this framework, the present study highlights the approach of maqasid al-Shariah with specific reference to the protection of mal (wealth). According to Sujimon (2017), the preservation of property and assets in accordance with maqasid al-Shariah is achieved through the simultaneous application of positive and negative measures. The positive measure involves ensuring the sustained existence and productive development of property and assets, while the negative measure entails the protection of these assets against any element that might hinder or undermine their existence and beneficial use.

Sujimon (2017) further identifies five essential factors for preserving property in fulfilment of maqasid al-Shariah. The first pertains to the concept of legal property ownership. In Islamic jurisprudence, any property lawfully acquired by an individual is inviolable and cannot be appropriated by others. Without a clear societal understanding of this requirement for lawful acquisition, problems of illegal ownership and exploitation will persist. This principle is directly relevant to the impermissibility of riba in banking, which involves the wrongful accrual of benefits by one party at the expense of another through the imposition of excessive interest charges on loans. High interest rates in conventional banking systems effectively function as a barrier to financial access for low-income groups, thereby widening the gap between rich and poor. This principle of lawful acquisition is firmly grounded in Quranic injunction, as Allah (SWT) commands humanity to consume what is lawful and good, and to refrain from following the paths of wrongdoing (Quran 2:168).

The second factor underscores the importance of continuous circulation of financial resources within the community (Soualhi, 2015; Hassan et al., 2021). Given that a central objective of maqasid al-Shariah is the promotion of justice within society, it is essential that a broad and representative segment of the community participates actively in economic and financial activities. This is crucial to prevent the concentration of financial resources within a narrow elite. At present, individuals in the B40 income bracket (a Malaysia-specific income classification denoting the bottom 40 percent of household income earners under the national household income framework; for cross-national applicability, this group may be understood broadly as low-income households in the lowest income quintile) and those facing financial hardship frequently lack the access and opportunity to obtain loans and financing from commercial banking institutions, severely limiting their ability to engage in income-generating activities. Advocating for the financial inclusion of all societal strata therefore represents a viable and necessary strategy for fulfilling maqasid al-Shariah, achievable through proactive policy reform and the development of inclusive financial products by banking institutions.

Hassan et al. (2021) emphasise that Islamic finance principles, including the imperative to mobilise savings productively, constitute a core requirement of maqasid al-Shariah. Failing to invest available savings neglects the productive deployment of assets, rendering resources ineffective for the benefit of the community and nation. Productive investment is therefore strongly advocated within the Islamic framework as a means of advancing the preservation of wealth (hifz al-mal) and, by extension, broader communal welfare.

The fourth factor involves the promotion of prosperity for all community members, irrespective of individual income level (Laluddin et al., 2012). As a central tenet of maqasid al-Shariah is the satisfaction of the essential needs of every member of society, it is imperative that resources be accessible and equitably managed for collective benefit, rather than serving only the interests of privileged segments. This principle is practically exemplified by Islamic banking institutions that have implemented Islamic social finance mechanisms, particularly zakat and waqf, to address the needs of the underprivileged and reduce the disparities between affluent and impoverished community members. This approach reflects the Quranic imperative regarding the obligation to share and contribute wealth for the benefit of those in need (Quran 3:180).

The fifth and final factor emphasises transparency in economic and financial activities as a fundamental requirement for the preservation of property. Islam places strong emphasis on the maintenance of harmony and trust among people in order to prevent conflict and exploitation. In any transactional relationship involving two or more parties, including commercial transactions and contractual arrangements, transparency is an essential requirement. Zuhaili and Md. Akhir (1995) identify transparency as an indispensable element of valid contracts in Islamic jurisprudence, establishing that contracts concluded without transparency may be deemed null and void.

Through the consistent application of these five principles in economic and financial transactions, the conditions associated with poverty, including the inability to afford food and basic necessities and the inaccessibility of healthcare and quality education, can be substantively addressed. This establishes the indispensable role of maqasid al-Shariah in combating poverty and, by extension, in advancing the SDGs articulated by the United Nations.

5. CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review has elucidated the complex and multifaceted relationship between poverty and the SDGs. The findings collectively underscore that poverty serves not only as a major barrier to achieving SDG 1 (No Poverty) but also exerts profound adverse effects on a range of interconnected goals, including SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 4 (Quality Education), and SDG 5 (Gender Equality). The persistence of poverty impedes sustainable economic growth and perpetuates structural social inequities, thereby emphasising the urgent need for comprehensive, multi-sectoral strategies capable of addressing these deeply intertwined challenges.

The review establishes that an integrated approach is essential for effectively combating poverty. It is imperative that policy interventions aimed at achieving the SDGs account for the multiple dimensions of poverty, encompassing economic, social, and environmental factors simultaneously. As global challenges such as climate change increasingly threaten to deepen poverty levels, collaborative engagement involving governments, NGOs, and local communities is indispensable for building resilience and ensuring the sustainability of development outcomes.

The unique contribution of this study lies in its integration of the multiple dimensions of poverty with the ethical principles of maqasid al-Shariah, offering new and actionable insights for the design of poverty alleviation strategies that are simultaneously responsive to global development goals and grounded in Islamic values. The five foundational principles for the preservation of wealth within the maqasid al-Shariah framework, encompassing legal ownership, financial circulation, investment, equitable prosperity, and transparency, collectively provide a coherent and practically applicable ethical architecture for addressing poverty and advancing the SDGs.

5.1. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Notwithstanding the valuable insights offered by this review, several limitations warrant acknowledgement. The focus on empirical and theoretical studies published between 2014 and

2024 may exclude relevant research conducted outside this temporal boundary. The review prioritised English-language publications, with the exception of foundational Islamic jurisprudential texts available in Arabic and Malay, which were included given their irreplaceable role as normative sources for the maqasid al-Shariah framework. Notwithstanding this extension, a substantial proportion of contextually grounded empirical literature on zakat administration, waqf governance, and Islamic poverty alleviation published in Arabic, Bahasa Indonesia, and Bahasa Malaysia may have been inadvertently omitted, potentially limiting the geographic and institutional representativeness of the synthesis. The predominance of conceptual and qualitative methodologies in the reviewed studies also limits the extent to which quantitative causal effects of maqasid al-Shariah-based interventions can be established. Future research should prioritise multi-lingual searches and the development of robust empirical frameworks for measuring the impact of maqasid al-Shariah-based interventions on poverty outcomes across diverse contexts.

Future research should explore several key avenues to address these limitations. Longitudinal studies are needed to examine the long-term effects of integrated poverty alleviation programmes on SDG progress. Qualitative methodologies should be incorporated to generate richer understanding of the lived experiences of impoverished populations, particularly regarding how these experiences shape their access to resources and opportunities. Comparative cross-country studies examining the relative effectiveness of Islamic financial mechanisms versus conventional development models in addressing poverty would also be of substantial scholarly and policy value. Finally, the development of robust empirical frameworks for measuring the impact of maqasid al-Shariah-based interventions on poverty outcomes remains a critical priority for advancing this field.

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Appendix A. Characteristics of the 30 Studies Included in the Systematic Review

Table A1 summarises all 30 studies included in the final qualitative synthesis, providing details of author and year, country or region, study design, principal focus, and relevance to the three research questions (RQ1: poverty-SDG barriers; RQ2: economic, social and environmental barriers; RQ3: Maqasid al-Shariah contributions).

Table A1. Summary of 30 Included Studies

No.	Author(s) and Year	Country / Region	Study Design	Principal Focus	RQ
1	Williams (2020)	Global	Quantitative	Impact of poverty on basic needs and SDG 1	RQ1
2	Smith & Johnson (2021)	Global	Mixed methods	Systemic inequalities and poverty reduction strategies	RQ1/RQ2
3	Khan & Lee (2022)	Global	Systematic review	Poverty and food insecurity nexus — SDG 2	RQ1
4	Garcia & Valdez (2021)	Global	Systematic review	Food insecurity-poverty self-reinforcing cycle	RQ1
5	Hossain (2021)	Bangladesh	Case study	Poverty-education intergenerational cycle — SDG 4	RQ1
6	Patel-Campillo (2022)	Multi-country	Quantitative	Conditional cash transfers and educational outcomes	RQ1/RQ2
7	Martinez (2021)	Global	Systematic review	Gender-poverty nexus and SDG 5 achievement	RQ1
8	Nguyen (2021)	Global	Quantitative	Economic cost of poverty and GDP growth constraints	RQ2
9	Chen et al. (2023)	Global	Systematic review	Energy poverty and women's vulnerability	RQ1
10	Miller & Wong (2022)	Global	Literature review	Climate change-poverty interaction and SDG 13	RQ2
11	Roberts (2022)	Global	Critical review	Multi-dimensionality of poverty — conceptual critique	RQ1
12	Taylor et al. (2023)	Global	Quantitative	Poverty-health access-disease mortality nexus	RQ2
13	Chakrabarti et al. (2021)	Global	Longitudinal	COVID-19 impact on poverty reversal	RQ2
14	Harahap et al. (2023)	Global	SLR	Islamic law, finance and SDG alignment	RQ3
15	Aziz et al. (2024)	Global	Conceptual	SDGs and Maqasid al-Shariah synergies	RQ3
16	Abdullah (2018)	Global	Conceptual	Waqf, SDGs and Maqasid al-Shariah framework	RQ3
17	Abdurrehman et al. (2021)	Global	Conceptual	Compatibility of SDGs with Maqasid objectives	RQ3
18	Rosman et al. (2022)	Malaysia	Empirical	Islamic social finance and SDG implementation	RQ3
19	Cummings et al. (2023)	Global	Qualitative	Epistemic justice in sustainable development discourse	RQ1/RQ2
20	Yasmeen et al. (2024)	Global	Conceptual	Islamic ethical framework for sustainable development	RQ3
21	Lamido (2020)	Global	Conceptual	Maqasid al-Shariah for poverty alleviation policy	RQ3
22	Isman et al. (2023)	Global	Conceptual	SDGs-Maqasid relevance and structural	RQ3

No.	Author(s) and Year	Country / Region	Study Design	Principal Focus	RQ
				alignment	
23	Alami & Mohammad (2024)	Indonesia	Conceptual	Maqasid addressing poverty and hunger — SDG 1/2	RQ3
24	Jaiyeoba et al. (2025)	Malaysia	Qualitative	Maqasid implications for sustainability practices	RQ3
25	Syarifah (2024)	Indonesia	Case study	SDGs-Maqasid strategic framework for Islamic banks	RQ3
26	Mohd Noh (2022)	Malaysia	Conceptual	Maqasid and economic sustainability in IR 4.0 era	RQ3
27	Djafri & Soualhi (2021)	Global	Conceptual	Islamic finance, Shariah and SDG goal alignment	RQ3
28	Cahyono & Hidayat (2022)	Indonesia	Case study	Cash waqf linked sukuk for development financing	RQ3
29	Klongrua (2024)	Global	Conceptual	Maqasid and environmental sustainability	RQ2/RQ3
30	Karimullah (2023)	Global	Conceptual	Maqasid concepts in Islamic economic policymaking	RQ3

Source: Authors' own compilation from systematic review corpus.