

Islamic Faith-Based Organizations and Poverty Reduction in Bangladesh: A Social Work Perception

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1 Introduction

The development studies have traditionally neglected the role of religious faith and its role in the lives of the poor throughout the developing world. Recently, however, there has been greater recognition and value given to the contributions of faith-based organizations (FBOs) in providing social services and poverty reduction. With the mainstream religions' temple, churches, synagogues and mosques have been the significant FBOs in these endeavours. The FBOs are important agents in the welfare process because of its direct and strong connection with the local society as well as donor agency (Clarke, Charnley, & Lumbers, 2011). These FBOs have been providing community services based on their particular spiritual beliefs. Their community services include assisting various populations, including the elderly, poor, orphans, shelters, people who are physically or mentally disabled, women, and victims of disaster (Ali & Hatta, 2014). Bangladesh is an emerging country in South Asia, with an estimated 170 million population for the year 2018. The poverty rate is also the highest in rural areas, at 36%, compared with 28% in the urban area (BBS, 2016). Nearly 1.5 million people of Bangladesh are ultra-poor, and more than 30 million people are living below the national poverty line (Rezvi, 2017). The World Bank data estimated that Bangladesh ranked the 5th for extreme poverty after India, Nigeria, Congo and Ethiopia (UCAN Daily, 2019). Poor people unable to meet their basic needs due to unequal distribution of income, particularly the margin in income between the rich and the poor.

2 Background of the Problem

The concepts of welfare and pension are put into practice in the early Islamic law as form of *zakat* (charity) in the seventh century. The taxes including *zakat* and *jizya* (tax from non-Muslim) collected in the treasury of an Islamic government are used to provide income for the needy, including the poor, elderly, orphans, widows, and the disabled since a long time (Samad & Hossain, 2016). Many FBOs utilized funds for *Zakat* (almsgiving) and *waqf* (public charity) to alleviate poverty initiatives in several underprivileged Muslim nations. Also, *zakat* and *waqf* play an essential role in creating capital among Muslim nations (Kirmani, 2012). These organizations hold on to the Muslim faith value and practice in dealing with human needs at all levels, including individuals, family, group and community institutions (Ali & Hatta, 2011; Ali, Azman, Singh, Drani, Hatta, Ahmed, & Akhter, 2019).

The FBOs practices of charity or financial worship play critical financial assistance and generosity at the individual and institutional levels in South Asia. Similarly, there is also a significant development among the Muslim FBOs in making a meaningful impact on societal development and interventions in Bangladesh. It is therefore crucial for Bangladesh to also review its poverty reduction policies where *zakat* and *waqf* can be the essential components. The faith and principles of FBOs can serve as a significant element for motivating social work practitioners and development policymakers to assist emergency needs and providing community services as targeted by the government (Kirmani, 2012).

This paper investigates the role of *zakat* and *waqf* in poverty reduction and community development, and to further sustain or change the lives of the poor communities. The presentation of the paper will include the literature context of *zakat*, *sadaqah* and *waqf* globally, and in Bangladesh. Section 3 will cover the material and methods of data analysis used. Section 4 analysis and discusses the role of the social work profession concerning *zakat*, *waqf* and poverty reduction initiatives in Bangladesh. Finally, section 5 will emphasize on possible policy recommendation about the poverty reduction in Bangladesh and conclusion.

2.1 The Principal of *Zakat* and *Waqf*

Zakat is compulsory for the Muslim male and female who has reached adolescence, healthy, and for those who own surplus assets for a consecutive year. *Zakat* is an Arabic word which brings the meaning of “purity” and “cleanliness”, and it is obligatory transfer to the basic rate 2.5% of one's wealth to be given away to the poor to purify wealth and soul from greediness (Shirazi, 2014). Also, *waqf* means detention or stoppage. In a broader understanding, *waqf* emphasizes on doing charitable purpose under religious belief and thoughts to enhance assistance and wellbeing of a community, the wealth transfer in the name of God (Supreme Creator) (NAFSA, 2010). *Zakat* is an economic right of the poor, needy, in-debtors, wayfarer, to free slaves, to win hearts, way of Allah and *zakat* workers (Surah at-Taubah, 9: 60) which have fulfilled the Islamic pillar¹.

2.2 Charity, *Sadaqah* and *Zakat* in the Quran and *Hadith*

The Holy Quran and the *Hadith* are the primary sources of reference in Islam. The Quran is the dialogue of the Supreme Creator (Allah) revealed to Prophet Muhammad (*SAW-Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam* (peace be upon him). *Hadith* is the collection of traditions containing sayings of the prophet Muhammad which, with accounts of his daily practice (the *Sunnah*), constitute the primary source of guidance for Muslims apart from the Holy Book Quran. Many verses in the Quran and *Hadith* recorded the contribution of charity, *sadaqah* and *zakat*. Below are several verses on charity, *sadaqah* and *zakat* in the Quran and *Hadith*:

You shall give the due alms to the relatives; the needy, the poor and the travelling alien, but do not be excessive, extravagant. The extravagant are brethren of the devils, and the devil is unappreciative of his Lord, you shall treat them in the nicest manner. You shall not keep your hand stingily tied to your neck, nor shall you foolishly open it up, lest you end up blamed and destitute (Holy Quran, 17: 26-29).

¹ There are five pillars in Islam, namely, Declaring one's complete faith that Allah (God) is the only Supreme Being and Muhammad (SAW) is the messenger of Allah; performing five prayers a day; donating 2.5% of annual income through *zakat* (a charity tax to help the needy); fasting (which includes no eating, drinking, nor intimacy) during the daytime in Ramadan; and making a pilgrimage to Mecca (Muhammad's birthplace) at least once in a person's life if one is able.

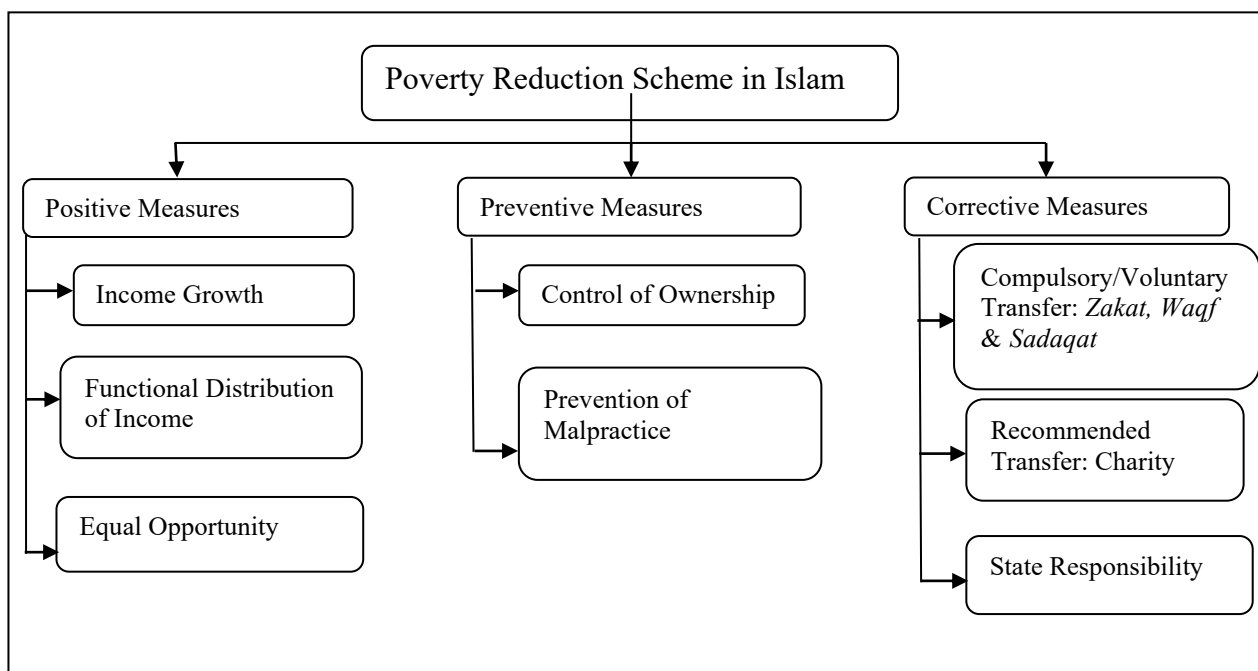
So he who gives (in charity) and fears (Allah), and (in all sincerity) testifies to the Best, We will indeed make smooth for him the path to Bliss. But he who is a greedy miser and thinks himself self-sufficient, and gives the lie to the Best, We will indeed make smooth for him the Path to Misery; nor will his wealth profit him when he falls headlong (into the hell fire) (Holy Qur'an, 92: 5-11).

Take sadaqah from their amwal (wealth and income) in order to purify them, and sanctify them with it (Holy Quran, 9:103).

From the Hadith, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said, "Allah has made obligatory for them (Muslims) in their wealth, sadaqah (charity) to be taken from their rich and handed over to the poor" (Al-Bukhari, 870 AD).

From the above excerpts, it indicates that charity, *sadaqah* and *zakat* is the primary Islamic faith and obligation that enhance human wellbeing. Charity, *sadaqah*, *waqf* and *zakat* can be relevant sources that can add value to the poverty reduction initiatives or programmes in the Muslim countries, including in Bangladesh. Poverty reduction scheme in Islam depends on positive measures, preventive measure and corrective measures. Based on the below diagram as proposed by Hassan (2010), positive measures associate with income growth, functional distribution of income and equal opportunity. “Social workers have a responsibility to further the principle of social justice by challenging discrimination on all levels, including discrimination based on one’s socio-economic status” (Ali & Hatta, 2010, p. 132). Preventive measures are the control of ownership and prevention of malpractice. “Social workers must collaborate to abolish the social conditions that contribute to economic inequalities by challenging unjust policies and practices at every level” (Ali & Hatta, 2010, p. 132). While, corrective measures are voluntary transfer, charity and a state of responsibility. Social workers are to work closely with NGOs, government and policy makers to ensure income support for poor and vulnerable and create policies directed toward reducing poverty (Ali & Hatta, 2010, p. 132).

Figure 1. Poverty reduction scheme in Islam



Source: Hassan, 2010

3 Literature Review

There are some significant researches on the contribution of *zakat*, *waqf* to poverty reduction globally, and particularly in Bangladesh. The following discussion explains the contribution of these researches to poverty reduction in Bangladesh.

3.1 The Potential of *Zakat* for Poverty Mitigation in Bangladesh

The primary objective of all Islamic Economic System is to ensure food, lodging, education, clothing and health care for all citizens in the country. The Islamic State also should ensure the basic needs of those whose source of income is affected by their health, disability and unemployment. Another primary objective of the Islamic Economy is to establish socio-economic justice for citizens (Mian & Muhammad, 2014). There is no doubt that many Muslim countries have been adopting different strategies and policies for poverty reduction in the past. However, poverty still exists. The Muslim communities inherited important FBOs like *zakat*, *waqf* and *sadaqat* for combating against poverty (Shirazi, 2014). With the world economic breakdown, the robust development of FBOs is essential to decrease the economic and social hardship in the Muslims countries (Amuda & Embi, 2013). Unfortunately, very few Muslim communities like Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Malaysia, Libya, Pakistan and Sudan have introduced FBOs, while others may have neglected it (Zamir, 2019). In the practice level, there is no Muslim countries have a functioning system of automatic redistribution of *zakat* (Benthall, 1999). The distribution of *zakat* and *sadaqat* to the needy and various charitable organizations, at times, it is not through proper channels and planning.

Consequently, it is difficult to examine the effectiveness of *zakat* and *sadaqat* for poverty reduction. Similarly, in the case of *waqf*, many of the existing FBOs need to be organized so that proper planning and management can encourage more funding and further provide additional sources of revenue to the governments for the wellbeing of the community at large (Norazlina & Rahim, 2011). Studies have identified that funding through *zakat* money is often used for general and vocational education, as well as funding a small business. Also, *zakat* should fund can be used of low-cost housing and medical care for the poor (Norazlina & Rahim, 2011). Hence, there is a great need to incorporate FBOs in any form of poverty reduction strategies and policies in the Muslim counties, particularly in Bangladesh (Shirazi, 2014). The administrations of Muslim countries are liable to collect and distribute *zakat*, *waqf* and *sadaqat* that will confirm the wellbeing of the disadvantaged and underprivileged people (Ali & Hatta, 2014). Numerous evidence has shown that *zakat* will be able to reduce poverty among Muslim countries (Ali et al., 2019; Mian & Muhammad, 2014; Shirazi, 2014; Zamir, 2019). The *zakat* and *waqf* are used as generous assistance to the ultra-poor for their education and health care (Zamir, 2019). In an Islamic state, the *zakat* ensures the human wellbeing and contributes towards problems solving like poverty, debts, unemployment and inequality of wealth distribution. While *zakat* cannot minimize all the socio-economic problems in the Muslim society, yet *zakat* is playing a significant role for equal distribution of assets and poverty alleviation in the Muslims society (Dogarawa, 2010). *Zakat* beneficiaries are also well-defined in the Quran (Surah at-Taubah, 9: 60) that is specifically to be used for the: (a) the poor - who live below the poverty line and do not have enough means to live a healthy life like others. They deserve of *zakat* in order to meet the daily necessities of their lives; (b) the needy - they are impoverished and needy people. These people do not have any possessions or income. In this situation, with *zakat* money will help to improve their living conditions; (c) the people who are appointed to administer the *zakat* and negotiate with outlying groups. Only an authorized person can collect and distribute *zakat* among the needy and poor; (d) those who reconciled their hearts - those who converted to Islam newly are eligible to receive

zakat (if they are needy) and friends of the Muslim community; (e) those in bondage (slaves, prisoners and captives - Muslims captured by enemies who requires ransomed). Also, (f) indicated that those in debt – in which *zakat* can be given to pay off debts of someone who cannot repay on his own; (g) in the cause of Allah - those who are striving in the path of Allah are entitled to receive your zakat; and (h) the wayfarers/travellers - *zakat* can be given to a traveller who lives alone in a foreign land and is in need of money to get back to his destination or to fulfil his objective of travelling (Surah at-Taubah, 9: 60).

In Bangladesh, *zakat* funds have contributed up to 21% of the Annual Development Plan (ADP) in 1983/1984, and up to 43% of ADP in 2012/2013, and this has amounted to US\$438.33 million in 1983/1984 and US\$3142.28 million in 2012/2013 (Shaikh, 2016). In developing countries such as Bangladesh, foreign aid from donors contributes a significant portion of the development budget. *Zakat* funds, when adequately managed, can replace foreign aid, which will significantly reduce the debt burden (Hassan & Khan, 2007). For example, Gross Domestic Products (GDP) of Bangladesh was US\$163,728 million (at purchasing power parity - PPP) in 2015, and the Muslim population was 88%. Therefore, adjusted GDP for the purpose of *zakat* estimation will be $163,728 * 0.88 = US\$144081$ million (Shirazi & Amin 2009).

The government of Bangladesh has introduced various poverty reduction programmes. However, the integrated of *zakat* and *waqf* in its domestic policy for mitigation of poverty was never being considered. As an example, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) do not include *zakat* as poverty reduction initiatives during the financial budget in 2019-2020 (Ministry of Finance of Bangladesh, 2019). Microfinance is seen as having to help reduced inequality and poverty in society. However, microfinance has some challenges that lead to its failure, namely, conflicting interest between financial viability and outreach, multiple borrowing and exorbitant interest rates (Ali, Hatta, Azman, & Islam, 2017; Ullah, Khawaja, & Iqbal, 2019). Currently, the *zakat* is not considered as part of the development policies and Poverty Reduction Strategies Paper (PRSP) in Bangladesh (Ahmed, 2008; Hassan & Khan, 2007). Hence, this paper is suggesting that the reduction of poverty can be relooked in a more significant manner by giving some consideration in the proper utilization of zakat. This is relevant as the zakat has been prescribed as one of the potential instrument for poverty alleviation by the Holy Quran and *Hadith*. The government of Bangladesh clearly do not include *zakat* as part of the possible instrument in the existing poverty reduction plans and programmes, when around 85% of the people are following the religion of Islam (Shirazi, 2014). A predictable 7.5 million adults (representing 5% of the population) in Bangladesh would fall in the minimum prosperity bracket to pay *zakat*. Assuming a minimum annual *zakat* payment of US\$3.58 person/year sums up to an annual *zakat* fund will be US\$ 27 Million (Laila, 2008).

More than 90% of microcredit clients in Bangladesh are women (Ali, Hatta, Azman, & Islam, 2017). Microfinance refers to a system of providing small-scale loans to the poor, is a significant policy intervention in combating poverty. It was expected that microcredit programmes would positively affect the living standard in terms of income, expenditure, saving and employment generation. Although microcredit programme has shown some positive signs of progress, its impact wasn't felt in Bangladesh even after four decades of operation due to many inherent weaknesses (Ali & Hatta, 2012). Microcredit programme could not even reach the poorest of the poor of the society (Ali, Hatta, Azman, & Islam, 2017). On the contrary, *zakat* is the unique system which provides financial assistance to the poor community without any collateral and interest (Debnath, Islam, & Mahmud, 2013).

The safety-nets programmes in Bangladesh have been assisting to reduce poverty and vulnerability by covering small segments of the population through various forms of cash allowances, public works, and education and health incentives. These include the poor, elderly, widows, disables, to generate temporary employment for men and women (The World Bank, 2019). In Bangladesh, social safety nets have been considered as an essential component in the fight against poverty and social empowerment and vulnerabilities. However, some of the issues raised with regards to social safety nets, which include the issue of politically expedient, lack of proper implementation policy, stigmatizing and highly inadequate to prime concerns of the poor (Khan, 2010). A very small portion around 4 to 5 million (total population of 170 million=people in Bangladesh get of assistance under the government-sponsored safety net programs (Rahman, Choudhury, & Ali, 2011). In addition, the budget for most programmes are small and the average benefit per individual (US\$5.43 per month) is low that affects almost all of Bangladesh's social security schemes (GED, 2015).

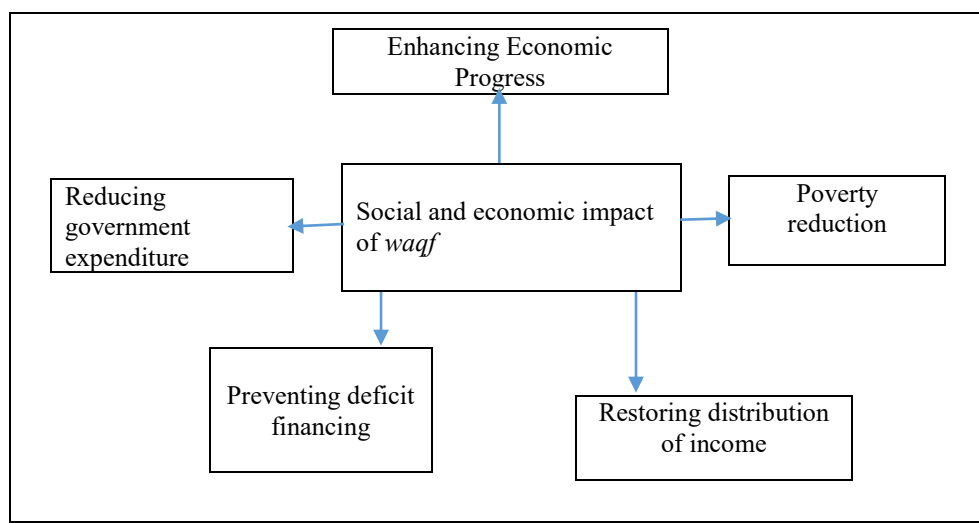
3.2 The Potential of *Waqf* for Poverty Reduction in Bangladesh

The *waqf* was established for the social assistance such as the property of Khyber as denoted by Umar (*Razi Allah Tala Anhu* (RTA) - may Allah be pleased with him) and the fruits were distributed to the needy, guest, wayfarer, free slaves and small quantity of its guardian (Shirazi, 2014). Schools, hospitals, mosques, *madrasha*, houses and food assistance for poor and needy, orphanages, land, bridges, public washrooms, pensions, guesthouses and library are managed by *waqf* money. In order to educate less privileged Muslims, *waqf* schools, colleges and universities are used. In Muslim countries, there are lots of programmes introduced by *waqf* such as housing for the poor, needy, water supply for the public, assisting disabled, constructing infrastructures, building the elderly home, helping orphanages, freeing of prisoners and economic assistance for marriage of poor girls (Khan, 2014). The *waqf* money is used for wages of the doctors and other staff, surgeons, purchase medicine and food, hospitals equipment and infrastructure (Khan, 2014). Clinics and hospital can be provided health care facilities for the poor people without entrance to health care due to the more expensive (Amuda & Embi, 2013). It is recognized that *waqf* has been significant support in the social, cultural, financial, religious, political life and Islamic communities (Shirazi, 2014). Although *waqf* is a Muslim FBOs, however taking into consideration of fulfilling the needs of people without based on their background, race and religion. This is a proof that non-Muslims also benefiting from *waqf* institutions such as school, colleges and hospital. This is in line with social work practice every individual is unique and should be treated equally regardless their background, gender, race and religion. A large number of unemployed adults would be able to be empowered throughout the Muslim world by *waqf* (Amuda & Embi, 2013).

The ultimate goal of the *waqf* is to fulfil the needs of the poor and to empower them in the community through proper education, health care, to improve capacity and easy access to finance. Currently, *waqf* is indeed useful in various aspects, including healthcare for poor, education and training to improve the skills, water supply and sanitation in the community (Khan, 2010). An example, the *Waqf* Board of Indonesia has identified 358,710 *waqf* locations, which totals 1.5 million square metres and it becomes the financial advantages of the *waqf* assets for the empowerment of poor people (Shirazi, 2014). This asset has been an important contribution in assisting the poor. In Indonesia, 0.301% of GDP is required to uplifting one who is under the poverty line to the level of non-poor and the *waqf* can produce income of 0.325% of GDP that is more than required for reduction of poverty. Hence, *waqf* can reduce poverty of the Muslim poor and vulnerable people (Shirazi, 2014). Khan (2014)

mentioned that the establishment of *waqf* business centres and shopping complex could further assist in income generation. As an example, The *Baitul Mokarram* Mosque (national mosque) in Dhaka city, Bangladesh finances for a multi-storied shopping complex, a large auditorium for sports, publication houses and assist for employment. The profits are spending on general welfare, poor, health, education, orphans that are important in the poverty-reduction programs. The study suggested that the Muslim world should organize for *zakat* collection and spending in the most active and well-organized manner (Yusoff, 2011). Another study mentioned that in order to increase the overall *zakat* collection, there is a need to institutionalize the *zakat* collection system in Bangladesh (Azam, Iqbal, & Tayyab, 2014). The assistance from *waqf* will substitute of public spending on poor and needy, development needs of the country, cut its budget, outcome better revenue sharing and financial development as illustrated in the diagram proposed by Budiman and Kusuma (2011) below:

Figure 2. Social and economic significances of waqf in human well-beings.



Source: Budiman & Kusuma, 2011

The *waqf* restoring distribution of income contributes to poverty reduction and reducing government expenditure. Also, *waqf* has a multidimensional impact on enhancing economic progress in society. A significant number of the wellbeing of the society and improvement of disadvantaged people depend on *waqf* wealth (Ali & Hatta, 2014). The Development of *Waqf* institutions in Bangladesh is experiencing various challenges. Amongst them are the lack of decentralization of *waqf* administration, lack of adequate staffing, lack of institutional and organizational skills and knowledge, lack of relevant laws and the issues of unregistered *waqf* assets (Ali & Hatta, 2014). Besides, there is also the lack of public awareness and knowledge, misappropriation of *waqf* assets and illegal occupation, lack of proper management, lack of Shariah and advisory board and lack of honesty and qualification of *Mutawalli* (manager or custodian of *waqf* (charitable endowment)). All these have somewhat impacted the trust of stakeholders and thus have inadequate of *waqf* contribution for poverty reduction in Bangladesh (Hasan & Siraj, 2016, p. 23).

The emergence of cash *waqf* in Bangladesh is an encouraging trend, and the degree of awareness on cash *waqf* in recent years in Bangladesh has been remarkable. A couple of private banks in Bangladesh have pioneered in introducing cash *waqf*. After the government of Bangladesh enacted the Private University Act of 1992, many private universities and

higher learning institutions have been established in the country some of which are financed by cash waqf (Thoarlim, Rahman, & Yanya, 2017).

4 Material and Methods

This paper reviews secondary sources for information and analysis. The secondary sources include academic journals, scientific articles, books, reviews reports on the print media and websites. The use of secondary sources would be an essential basis for analysing and a better understanding of the contribution of *zakat*, *waqf* in the context of poverty reduction efforts. This paper employs a constructivist approach (Robson, 2011) to explore the aspects of the role of *zakat* in poverty reduction and community development phases, and their initiatives to sustain or change the lives poor communities. Constructivism is an approach to learning that holds people actively construct or make their knowledge and that reality is determined by the experiences of the learner' (Elliott, Kratochwill, Littlefield, & Travers, 2000). Robson (2011) points out that a constructivist approach will enable to develop advanced skills such as critical thinking, analysis and evaluation in the role of *zakat* and *waqf* for poverty reduction in Bangladesh.

5 Analysis and Discussions

Most of the scholars, economist and policymakers around the world consider poverty is an economic problem; it is also a social problem (Ali & Hatta, 2010, p.131). Hence, the social work profession can contribute more to poverty reduction (Ali, Hatta, & Azman, 2014). Social work profession has always emphasized working with and on behalf of poor people and focusing on human wellbeing through remedial, preventive and promotive services (Ali & Hatta, 2010, p.131). This section analysed discusses the various form of social work practices, and the role of social workers to include *zakat* and *waqf* for the poverty reduction initiatives in Bangladesh.

5.1 Social Work Education and Practices in Bangladesh

The practise of social work profession in Bangladesh is not old. This profession has introduced during the partition of India and Pakistan in the 1950s due to unexpected refugees resettlement and severe problems from urbanization (Hossain & Mathbor, 2016). To minimize these problems, the Pakistani government appealed to the United Nations (UN) and in reaction to appeal, the UN sent a team to observe the situation. As a result, the community development services recommended by the team to tackle the urban problems (Islam, 2011). Therefore, an immediate training and workshop programme on social work was conducted in Dhaka in 1953 (Hossain & Mathbor, 2016). Finally, the College of Social Welfare and Research Centre (currently Institute of Social Work and Research) was introduced under the University of Dhaka in 1958-59. In Bangladesh, only six public universities and two private universities out of 44 public and 95 private offering Bachelors of Social Work (BSW) and Masters of Social Work (MSW) programs. In addition, few colleges offering for BSW and MSW programs (Hossain & Mathbor, 2016). Further, social workers are incapable of using social work knowledge in combating social problems due to no academic knowledge of social work (Hossain & Mathbor, 2016). Therefore, it is very challenging to integrate Islamic knowledge with local social work knowledge that have been more fitting in the local context in Bangladesh (Crabtree & Baba, 2001). Further, social workers seem to have insufficient knowledge of religious issues and values in Bangladesh. Bangladesh requires trained social workers to work with different social problems of poverty, public health issues, and malnutrition as well as migration issues to enhance human wellbeing (Prodhan & Faruque, 2012).

5.2 The Role of Social Work for Poverty Reduction

The duties and responsibilities of social workers, particularly those working directly with the community, are critical to understand and include *zakat* and *waqf* for alleviating poverty in Bangladesh. The prime goal of the social work profession is to enrich the welfare of human beings and fulfil the basic needs and empower the people who are living below poverty, in danger and oppressed. Social work profession clearly emphasizes the personal well-being in the societal aspect and welfare of the community. It is the principle of social work that always gives attention to find out the root causes that contribute to problems in society. Apart from human beings, social workers ensure social justice and planned social change and human beings refer to a person, family, groups, organizations, society and communities. Generally, social workers always consider ethnic and cultural diversity and tried to termination of social discernments, poverty, vulnerability and social injustice. These functions can be implemented by community organizing, consultation, supervision, advocacy, policy formulation and implementations, social and political actions, education, research and evaluation. Also, the social work profession strives to strengthen the ability of people in society. In addition, a social worker also encourages the role of communities, organizations and institution's needs and societal ills to reduce poverty (NASW, 2008). Besides, social workers helping people in the society to define their basic needs, community wealth and mutually enable persons to reduce poverty and extra control over their lives (Kenny, 1994). The origin of community social work in industrialized countries of Europe was to respond to the failure of the welfare state and to ensure human well-being of people in society (Payne, 2005). The community social work is the processes of self-help, enable and mutual problem solving (Schiele, 2005), and it uses numerous approaches to meet the needs of poor and vulnerable for poverty reduction. Social workers assist all the people in the society. They give priority that does not have sufficient wealth to ensure their basic needs such as food, shelter, sanitation, working opportunity and medical care. To explore the community resources and identification of social desires, community centred interference is more significant than individual's casework (Mendes, 2009). Bangladesh is a Muslim majority country; however, there is a lack of Islamic knowledge on *zakat* and *waqf*. Hence, Muslim social worker can inspire the society's people by providing proper Islamic knowledge on the importance of *zakat* and *waqf* for poverty reduction in Bangladesh. A social worker is also able to conduct meeting with policymakers at the government level to consider, develop new policy or review existing policy related to *zakat* and *waqf* towards its contribution to poverty reduction in Bangladesh (Hasan & Siraj, 2016). Almost in all cases, the collection of *zakat* collectively is absent in rural areas of Bangladesh. There is no particular organization, either government or non-government, which work for *zakat* management in rural Bangladesh. Individually a few people pay their *zakat* in accordance with very traditional ways. Moreover, most of the people who are eligible for paying *zakat* do not know that they must pay for. General people are also not concern about *zakat* and *waqf* (Obaidullah, 2015). Hence, social workers of Bangladesh can play a vital role to select the beneficiaries, awareness building and promoting policy agenda for proper collection and distribution of *zakat* and *waqf*.

5.3 Zakat, Waqf and Community Social Work

The social worker can be significant in a traditional society like Bangladesh for combating social issue such as poverty. Although Bangladesh is a Muslim majority country in the world, still there is a lack of social and religious obligation of *waqf* and *zakat* for poverty reduction in Bangladesh. For example, *waqf* administration is centralized in which all decision making is undertaken at the head office of *waqf* Bangladesh in Dhaka. Many philanthropists spend their wealth in other directions due to their ignorance of FBOs. To establish of *waqf*, *zakat*,

sadaqat is a significant challenge for Bangladesh due to insufficient consciousness regarding Islam of Muslims and humanitarians in particular (Amuda & Embi, 2013). Consequently, Muslim Community Social Workers (MCSWs) can make coordination with the local religious leader to encourage of *waqf* and *zakat* based education program in the community centres and mosques.

The MCSWs can bring significant changes among the society people by easy access to information. The teaching and proficiency of social workers might be assisting in establishing and supporting social action alliances to provoke the native societies for *waqf* and to pay *zakat* (Lough, 2008). With proper dissemination knowledge of *waqf* and *zakat* will inspire people and making it easier to pay *waqf* and *zakat* duties in the community. People who are facing challenges in families and communities can get help from MCSWs. Poverty is a severe problem in Bangladesh, and the MCSWs are liable to mitigate the poverty in Bangladesh. Therefore, MCSWs should be familiarized with the contribution and significance of *waqf* and *zakat* to reduce poverty in Bangladesh. The additional aim of this project is to encourage the importance of *waqf* and to pay *zakat* in poverty alleviation.

To achieve the objectives, the MCSWs may conduct relevant training for religious leaders to enhance their competency and raising consciousness among Muslim people in the society to pay attention to *waqf* and *zakat*. The MCSWs should have proper skill regarding sacred and divine philosophies on religious aspects. Being Bangladesh is a Muslim majority country; Islamic sanctity has to be integrated with the social work profession. The pious belief is significant to reduce poverty, community development and spiritual belief inspire of social workers that reported by the MCSWs (Candland, 2000). Therefore, MCSWs can deliver the divine advantage of *waqf* and *zakat* to society and strengthen the self-consciousness in tackling poverty in Bangladesh. The majority of people in Bangladesh having faith in Islam and mosques are playing an important role to strengthen the faith. The illiteracy of Muslim donor of the significant of *waqf*, *zakat* and *sadaqat* can be ascribed to the failure of Muslim intellectuals because of they failed to address of *zakat*, *waqf* and *sadaqat* in the time of Friday prayers and religious functions (Amuda & Embi, 2013). Islam trusted that if the Imam (religious leader) of the mosques is properly trained about financial matters of their regular sacred role, they can contribute to making changes the society for socio-economic development in Bangladesh (Ali & Hatta, 2011). The Imam is a spiritual leader of Muslim and leads during the worship. The majority of the Muslim people joining the prayers of Friday and through Friday khutbas or congregational sermons can be an effective mechanism to disseminate information to the society concerning *waqf* and *zakat*, and it impacts for poverty reduction in Bangladesh. The MCSWs should work together with local Imam for actual involvement in the society's people to *waqf* and *zakat* to reduce poverty (Ali & Hatta, 2011).

The majority of voluntary based orphanages are involved with religious education in Bangladesh. Most of the time, the aim of raising fund is focused on the spiritual feeling of the general society, and ignored the potential of *zakat* and *waqf* to fund relevant programs to reduce poverty in Bangladesh (Ali & Hatta, 2011). People are not interested in paying *zakat* and *waqf* due to lack of liability and fairness to these organizations. These unsuccessful organizations will immensely affect the poor to access the basic needs such as food, shelter and health care that the privileged often take for granted. Therefore, the MCSWs can motivate these institutions to collect *zakat* and *waqf* so that funds can be utilized for education for the poor, health care and sanitation, employment, enhance skill for poverty reduction in Bangladesh. The policymakers and planners from non-government organizations (NGOs) and government sectors are also seen as not interested to include *waqf* and *zakat* in poverty

reduction strategies due to insufficient (Ali & Hatta, 2011). Besides, the MCSWs also can motivate the policymakers to reformulate the new policies and to adopt zakat and waqf to mitigate the issue of poverty in Bangladesh. Although the FBOs rendered substantive social work functions in the community for social development, many of the FBOs, however, do not employ trained social workers. Hence, professional social work practice was not systematically employed for effective social development.

On the other hand, social work is based on scientific knowledge, and it follows specific methods and techniques that may help to modernize and systematize the FBOs for social development (Samad & Hossain, 2016). There is a lack of proper knowledge among management personnel of FBOs and service providers in program planning as well as in executing plans and programs systematically. Social workers could learn from the religion the relative significance and how it could be integrated into a helping relationship for social development. Training on professional social workers can help to understand the nature and depth of the problems and to improve skills of rendering services for social development in Bangladesh (Damilola, Nassir, & Baba, 2015; Samad & Hossain, 2016).

6 Policy Recommendation

Multidimensional poverty cannot be easily solved. Thus, all Muslim should become forward and give due to the importance of *zakat*, *waqf* and *sadaqat* for poverty reduction and community welfare (Amuda & Embi, 2013). Donors and government should invite to FBOs to take part in formulating planning and policy for poverty reduction (Duff & Buckingham, 2015). If an administration fails to implement policies that incorporate the activities of FBOs the objectives of *waqf*, *zakat* and *sadaqat* would not be achieved (Clarke, Charnley, & Lumbers, 2011). If zakat can be established as institutions, it may develop a mutual social safety nets scheme for social development (Abdullah & Suhaib, 2011). With proper and functional administration can then help to achieve the target of *waqf*, *zakat* and *sadaqat* for poverty reduction. Hence, the administration should be qualified and aware of the rules and regulations to implementation of *waqf*, *zakat* and *sadaqat* (Clarke, Charnley, & Lumbers, 2011). Numerous Muslim countries have been implementing the social safety nets programs for the vulnerable and weak. However, no country has included Muslim FBOs (*zakat* and *waqf*) as their poverty reduction planning and policies. If the Muslim world properly utilizes *waqf* combine with *zakat*, then they do not need additional assets for poverty reduction. FBOs (*zakat* and *waqf*) should be updated and ensure maximum utilization. Yet, there is a robust requirement for authentic planning, policy and management. This *zakat* and *waqf* need to be added with PRSP in Bangladesh (Shirazi, 2014). There is a need to establish rules and regulations for FBOs to guide management across the Muslim world, and the management will act according to the rules and regulations (Amuda & Embi, 2013). The social work profession is significantly related to humanity and often be based on religious faith, which is essential for any form of social development. Thus, social work practitioners, particularly those in the Muslim world must be equipped with attitude, knowledge, skills, and abilities about *zakat* and *waqf* and the need for social work training to ensure the running of professionally based FBOs. It is also critical for social work professionals be involved in policy formulation, planning, monitoring and evaluating social development programmes continuously in order to achieve the ultimate goals of poverty reduction and eradication.

7 Conclusion

Many verses in the Quran and *Hadith* inspire assisting and helping other Muslims who are in emergency need of economically, health care, ethically and devotedly (Amuda & Embi, 2013). This paper suggested that if *zakāt* is implemented in a planned manner and spirit, then

enough resources can be generated, which will be enough for poverty alleviation. Government of Bangladesh (GoB) should take a holistic approach for the proper utilization of *waqf* assets by policy implication and implementation. Over the past years, GoB has ensured equality in alleviating poverty reduction. Hence, this study identified the importance of implementing this program. Poverty can be mitigated faster if all stakeholders work alongside each other with the same agenda, i.e. population equality. Also, by no means, this study has tried to suggest the replacement of the institution of *zakat*. Poverty can be mitigated faster if all stakeholders work alongside each other with the same agenda, i.e. population equality. Also, by no means, this study has tried to suggest the replacement of the institution of *zakat*. This paper can also help the GoB in formulating its future policies. It will contribute to poverty mitigation in Bangladesh. So if we integrate *zakat* and *waqf* in poverty mitigation and try to put into practice like the classical age of Islam, *zakat* and *waqf* can be an effective and becomes the strongest Islamic instrument of poverty alleviation. Still, now the emergence of social work for *zakat* and *waqf* management is low in Bangladesh. Social work education and activists should come forward for its effective management as it has potentiality for socio-economic development. Bangladesh can mitigate poverty and ensure mainstreaming development by utilization of social work practitioners and activists in this regard.

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