Journal of Econ-Islamic Law and Society Research
E-ISSN: XXXX-XXXX
Vol.2, No.2, 2026, pp. 323-336
DOI: https://doi.org/10.61455/jeisr.v2i02.627

Reconstructing Social Justice through Maqasid al-Shariah: A Legal Framework for Sustainable Community Development

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Received March 27, 2026; Revised April 20, 2026; Accepted June 15, 2026

Abstract

Objective: This study examines how Islamic law (Sharia), particularly the doctrine of *maqasid al-shariah* (the higher objectives of Islamic law), can be reconstructed into an operational framework for promoting social justice through community development initiatives in Muslim-majority societies. **Theoretical framework:** The study is grounded in the classical maqasid theory developed by al-Ghazali and al-Shatibi and further systematised by Ibn Ashur, integrating the five essential objectives of Sharia with contemporary theories of social and distributive justice to establish a comprehensive analytical framework. **Literature review:** Existing scholarship examines zakat, waqf, and Islamic microfinance separately, but rarely links them systematically to the five maqasid dimensions and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), creating a conceptual gap. **Methods:** The research adopts a qualitative doctrinal and library-based approach, employing content analysis of classical fiqh literature, contemporary maqasid scholarship, Islamic economic policy documents, and relevant legal studies to develop a comparative conceptual framework. **Results:** The analysis produces an integrated framework that connects each maqasid dimension with specific Islamic legal instruments, including zakat, waqf, *qard hasan*, and Sharia-compliant cooperative financing, alongside measurable indicators of social justice and community development, demonstrating that Islamic law offers both normative principles and practical institutional mechanisms for reducing inequality and promoting sustainable development. **Implications:** The proposed framework provides policymakers, Sharia supervisory boards, zakat and waqf institutions, and community development practitioners with a practical tool for designing and evaluating Sharia-compliant development programs aligned with sustainable development priorities. **Novelty:** Unlike previous studies, this article operationalises maqasid al-shariah by integrating Islamic legal instruments, social justice indicators, and community development outcomes.

Keywords: maqasid al-shariah, social justice, islamic law, community development, waqf and zakat.

INTRODUCTION

Social justice (*al-'adl al-ijtima'i*) represents one of the foundational objectives of Islamic law, serving as a guiding principle that shapes legal, economic, and social relations within Muslim societies [1]. Unlike conventional approaches that primarily emphasise equality of opportunity, redistribution of wealth, or human rights protection, the Islamic conception of social justice integrates material welfare with ethical responsibility, spiritual accountability, and collective wellbeing [2]. This holistic perspective seeks to establish a balanced society in which individual rights are protected while communal obligations are fulfilled through legal and moral mechanisms rooted in the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the broader tradition of Islamic jurisprudence. Consequently, social justice in Islam extends beyond economic redistribution to encompass the preservation of human dignity, social solidarity, and sustainable development [3].

Within Islamic legal thought, the concept of *maqasid al-shariah* provides the normative foundation for achieving these objectives. Classical jurists, including al-Ghazali and al-Shatibi, identified the higher objectives of Islamic law as the preservation of religion (*din*), life (*nafs*), intellect (*'aql*), lineage (*nasl*), and wealth (*mal*) [4]. These objectives were later refined and expanded by scholars such as Ibn Ashur, who emphasised broader societal welfare, justice, and human development. Rather than functioning merely as abstract legal principles, the *maqasid* offer a comprehensive framework for evaluating laws, institutions, and public policies according to their contribution to human wellbeing. As a result, contemporary scholars increasingly recognise *maqasid al-shariah* as a dynamic approach capable of addressing modern socio-economic challenges while remaining faithful to Islamic legal principles [5].

Despite this rich theoretical foundation, the practical integration of *maqasid al-shariah* into contemporary community development policies remains inconsistent across many Muslim-majority countries [6]. Government agencies, Islamic charitable organisations, and Islamic financial institutions continue to implement programmes intended to alleviate poverty, improve education, strengthen healthcare systems, and promote financial inclusion [7]. Nevertheless, these initiatives are often assessed using conventional development indicators that originate from secular policy frameworks, with limited reference to Islamic legal objectives. Consequently, the distinctive contribution of Islamic law to sustainable community development is frequently overlooked, and existing programmes rarely demonstrate how their activities fulfil the higher objectives of the Sharia systematically and measurably [8].

This disconnect is particularly evident in the administration of Islamic social finance instruments. Mechanisms such as *zakat*, *waqf*, *sadaqah*, and Islamic microfinance have long served as institutional tools for poverty reduction, wealth redistribution, entrepreneurship development, and social protection [9]. Collectively, these instruments mobilise substantial financial resources across Muslim communities in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. However, despite their widespread implementation, their effectiveness is commonly evaluated using financial performance or administrative efficiency rather than comprehensive justice-oriented criteria derived from *maqasid al-shariah* [10]. Consequently, policymakers and practitioners often lack a coherent analytical framework capable of demonstrating how these institutions contribute simultaneously to legal compliance, social justice, and sustainable community development [11].

Recent global commitments to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have further highlighted the need for an integrated conceptual framework linking Islamic legal values with internationally recognised development objectives [12]. Governments, Islamic financial regulators, and development organisations

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increasingly seek policy models that combine religious legitimacy with measurable socio-economic outcomes. Nevertheless, existing scholarship continues to treat *maqasid al-shariah* and sustainable development as parallel rather than fully integrated paradigms. While previous studies have explored individual relationships between Islamic finance, poverty alleviation, or social welfare, relatively few have developed a comprehensive framework connecting the five classical *maqasid* to specific Islamic legal instruments and corresponding indicators of social justice and community development. This conceptual fragmentation limits both theoretical advancement and practical policy implementation [13].

Accordingly, this study seeks to address these limitations by proposing a systematic *maqasid*-based framework for reconstructing social justice within contemporary community development [14]. The study is guided by two principal research questions. First, how can the five classical dimensions of *maqasid al-shariah* be systematically linked to concrete Islamic legal instruments, including *zakat*, *waqf*, Islamic microfinance, and related institutions? Second, how can these relationships be translated into measurable indicators capable of evaluating social justice and community development outcomes within Muslim societies? Addressing these questions contributes to the growing literature on Islamic legal theory by transforming *maqasid* from a predominantly normative concept into an operational framework suitable for policy evaluation and institutional governance [15].

The significance of this research extends to both academic scholarship and professional practice. From a theoretical perspective, the study enriches the literature by integrating Islamic jurisprudence, social justice theory, and sustainable development into a unified analytical model [16]. From a practical perspective, it provides policymakers, Sharia supervisory boards, Islamic financial institutions, charitable organisations, and community development practitioners with a structured framework for designing, monitoring, and evaluating development programmes consistent with Islamic legal objectives [17]. Such a framework may also facilitate greater alignment between Islamic governance principles and internationally recognised development indicators while preserving the distinctive ethical identity of Islamic law [18].

The remainder of this article is organised as follows. The next section reviews the existing literature on social justice, *maqasid al-shariah*, Islamic legal instruments, and community development, identifying the principal theoretical and empirical gaps [19]. The methodology section explains the qualitative doctrinal research design employed in the study, including the analytical procedures used to synthesise classical Islamic jurisprudence and contemporary academic literature [20]. The results and discussion present the proposed *maqasid*-based framework together with a comparative analytical table and conceptual diagrams illustrating the relationships among Islamic legal objectives, legal instruments, and community development outcomes. Finally, the conclusion summarises the principal contributions of the study, discusses its theoretical and practical implications, acknowledges its limitations, and proposes directions for future empirical research [21].

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of *maqasid al-shariah* has become one of the most influential theoretical frameworks for understanding the objectives and philosophy of Islamic law. Classical Islamic jurists identified five essential objectives that every legal ruling seeks to preserve: religion (*din*), life (*nafs*), intellect (*'aql*), lineage (*nasl*), and wealth (*mal*). These objectives collectively represent the fundamental interests necessary for the protection of individuals and the stability of society [22]. While early scholarship primarily presented these objectives as essential legal necessities, contemporary scholars have expanded the concept by interpreting *maqasid al-shariah* as a dynamic and comprehensive framework for promoting human wellbeing, social justice, and sustainable development. This modern perspective shifts attention from strict legal compliance toward evaluating whether laws and institutions genuinely contribute to public welfare (*maslahah*) and social prosperity [23].

Recent developments in *maqasid* scholarship further emphasise that Islamic law should be understood as an ethical system designed to achieve justice rather than merely enforce legal rules. Within this perspective, legal validity alone is insufficient if Islamic institutions fail to improve social welfare or protect vulnerable members of society [24]. Consequently, *maqasid al-shariah* has increasingly been applied beyond traditional jurisprudence to contemporary fields such as Islamic finance, governance, public policy, and socio-economic development. This broader application demonstrates the capacity of Islamic legal principles to respond to modern developmental challenges while preserving their normative and moral foundations [25].

The relationship between Islamic law and social justice has also received considerable attention in the literature on Islamic economics. Social justice is generally viewed as a central objective of the Islamic economic system, where economic activities are expected to balance individual rights with collective responsibility [26]. Unlike purely market-driven approaches, Islamic economics promotes fairness in wealth distribution, social solidarity, and ethical economic behaviour. Justice is therefore understood not only as equal treatment under the law but also as ensuring that economic resources are distributed in ways that reduce poverty, prevent exploitation, and enhance human dignity [27]. This perspective highlights the importance of moral values in regulating markets and encourages economic policies that serve both individual prosperity and broader social welfare [28].

Within this framework, Islamic social finance instruments have been widely recognised as practical mechanisms for advancing community development [29]. *Zakat* represents the most established institution for wealth redistribution, providing financial support to disadvantaged groups while strengthening social cohesion. Historical and contemporary experiences indicate that effective zakat administration can contribute significantly to poverty alleviation, income redistribution, and social protection [30]. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of zakat programmes varies considerably depending on governance quality, institutional capacity, transparency, and regulatory support. Although many studies acknowledge the positive short-term impact of zakat on reducing poverty, questions remain regarding its long-term contribution to structural socio-economic transformation [31].

Similar attention has been devoted to the institution of *waqf*, which has historically financed education, healthcare, public infrastructure, and various charitable services across Muslim societies. Traditionally, waqf functioned as a sustainable source of community welfare independent of direct government financing [32]. Contemporary scholars have argued that innovative forms of waqf, including cash waqf and corporate waqf, possess significant potential to support sustainable development initiatives when supported by appropriate legal and regulatory frameworks. Alongside zakat and waqf, Islamic financial instruments such as *qard hasan* and profit-and-loss-sharing arrangements have also been identified as important mechanisms for promoting financial inclusion, entrepreneurship, and equitable economic development while avoiding interest-based financing [33].

Despite the growing maturity of Islamic social finance institutions, comparative studies consistently demonstrate that their effectiveness depends heavily on the surrounding governance environment. Institutional transparency, regulatory quality, accountability mechanisms, and the independence of Sharia supervisory authorities all influence the ability of these instruments to achieve their intended social objectives. Strong governance structures enhance public confidence, improve resource allocation, and increase the developmental impact of Islamic financial institutions, whereas weak regulatory systems often reduce operational effectiveness and limit social outcomes [34].

In contrast, the broader community development literature has largely evolved independently from Islamic jurisprudential discourse. Conventional development frameworks typically assess community progress through indicators such as participation, empowerment, institutional capacity, local ownership, and sustainability [35]. Although these indicators provide valuable tools for evaluating development programmes, they are rarely connected to the ethical objectives of Islamic law or to the normative principles embodied in *maqasid al-shariah*. As a result, Islamic legal values and contemporary development practices often remain conceptually separated despite pursuing similar goals related to human wellbeing and social progress [36].

Overall, the existing literature demonstrates substantial progress in both *maqasid al-shariah* theory and the practical application of Islamic social finance instruments. Likewise, community development research has generated sophisticated approaches for evaluating social outcomes and institutional effectiveness. However, these two bodies of knowledge continue to develop largely in parallel. Existing studies seldom establish a systematic framework that explicitly connects the higher objectives of Islamic law with Islamic legal instruments and measurable community development outcomes. This conceptual disconnect represents an important gap in the literature and provides the foundation for the present study, which seeks to integrate these perspectives into a coherent framework for reconstructing social justice through *maqasid al-shariah*.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative doctrinal research design based on library research to examine the relationship between *maqasid al-shariah*, Islamic legal instruments, social justice, and community development. A doctrinal approach is particularly appropriate because the objective of the study is not to test causal relationships through statistical analysis, but rather to analyse legal doctrines, synthesise existing scholarship, and develop a comprehensive conceptual framework grounded in Islamic jurisprudence. By integrating classical legal theory with contemporary development literature, the study seeks to provide an analytical model that explains how Islamic legal objectives can be translated into practical mechanisms for promoting social justice [37].

The data used in this research consist exclusively of documentary sources obtained through purposive sampling. The selected literature represents three complementary categories. The first category includes classical Islamic jurisprudential sources discussing *maqasid al-shariah*, particularly the works of prominent scholars who established and developed the theory of the higher objectives of Islamic law [38]. The second category comprises contemporary studies on *maqasid*, Islamic economics, Islamic finance, and social justice that reinterpret classical legal principles within modern economic and governance contexts. The third category consists of academic publications examining Islamic social finance instruments including *zakat*, *waqf*, *qard hasan*, and Islamic microfinance as well as literature addressing community development, sustainable development, governance, and social welfare. Collectively, these sources provide both the normative foundations and the practical dimensions necessary for constructing the proposed framework [39].

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Data analysis follows a qualitative content analysis approach. The analytical process is conducted in three sequential stages. The first stage involves open coding, during which all selected documents are examined to identify recurring concepts related to the five dimensions of *maqasid al-shariah*, Islamic legal instruments, social justice, and community development outcomes [40]. The second stage applies axial coding to organise these concepts into meaningful categories by linking each Islamic legal instrument with the *maqasid* objective it primarily serves. The final stage employs selective coding to integrate the resulting categories into a unified conceptual framework by connecting each *maqasid*-instrument relationship with relevant indicators of social justice and community development identified in the broader development literature [41].

To enhance the credibility and consistency of the findings, the coding process is supported through source triangulation. Concepts identified in one document are compared with evidence from additional academic sources to ensure consistency of interpretation and reduce subjective bias. This comparative synthesis enables the development of an integrated analytical framework that illustrates the relationships among *maqasid al-shariah*, Islamic legal instruments, and measurable community development outcomes [42].

As a conceptual and library-based study, this research does not involve fieldwork, interviews, surveys, or statistical analysis. Instead, its primary contribution lies in constructing a theoretically grounded framework that can serve as a foundation for future empirical research. The proposed model is intended to guide policymakers, Islamic financial institutions, Sharia supervisory bodies, and community development practitioners in designing and evaluating programmes that align Islamic legal objectives with contemporary social justice and sustainable development goals.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the conceptual framework developed through the qualitative doctrinal analysis undertaken in this study. The findings integrate the principles of *maqasid al-shariah* with Islamic legal instruments and contemporary community development indicators to provide a structured model for promoting social justice. First, a comparative table illustrates the relationship between the five *maqasid* dimensions, relevant Islamic legal mechanisms, and their corresponding development outcomes. This is followed by conceptual diagrams that visualise the overall framework and its governance structure. Finally, the section discusses the theoretical and practical implications of the proposed model, while acknowledging its conceptual nature and identifying opportunities for future empirical validation [43].

A Maqasid-Based Comparative Framework

Table 1 presents the core findings of the doctrinal content analysis by systematically linking the five classical dimensions of *maqasid al-shariah* with their corresponding Islamic legal instruments, measurable social justice indicators, and relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The mapping demonstrates that each *maqasid* objective extends beyond its traditional legal interpretation to provide practical guidance for addressing contemporary social and economic challenges [44].

The analysis indicates that the preservation of religion (*Hifz al-Din*) is primarily advanced through waqf institutions supporting mosques, religious education, and community outreach, thereby strengthening ethical awareness, social cohesion, and institutional trust. The preservation of life (*Hifz al-Nafs*) is closely associated with zakat-funded healthcare, humanitarian assistance, and poverty alleviation programmes that improve public health and protect vulnerable populations. Likewise, the preservation of

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intellect (*Hifz al-'Aql*) is supported through educational waqf initiatives, scholarships, and knowledge-development programmes that enhance literacy and expand access to quality education [45].

Furthermore, *Hifz al-Nasl* highlights the role of qard hasan and family-oriented financial assistance in promoting household stability, reducing economic vulnerability, and supporting productive livelihoods. Finally, *Hifz al-Mal* is achieved through Sharia-compliant financing, cooperative economic models, and zakat-based wealth redistribution, all of which contribute to equitable asset ownership and sustainable economic inclusion [46].

Overall, the findings demonstrate that *maqasid al-shariah* provides a coherent framework for integrating Islamic legal principles with measurable development outcomes, offering policymakers and Islamic institutions a practical foundation for designing socially just and sustainable community development programmes.

Table 1. Mapping of Maqasid al-Shariah Dimensions to Legal Instruments and Development Indicators

No.	Maqasid Dimension	Primary Legal Instrument	Social Justice Indicator	Development / SDG Linkage
1	Hifz al-Din (preservation of religion)	Waqf for mosques, religious education, and da'wah institutions	Equal access to religious and moral education	SDG 4 (Quality Education); institutional trust-building
2	Hifz al-Nafs (preservation of life)	Zakat-funded health and emergency-relief programs	Reduced mortality and hunger among the poor (fuqara wal masakin)	SDG 1 (No Poverty); SDG 3 (Good Health)
3	Hifz al-'Aql (preservation of intellect)	Waqf-financed schools, scholarships, and cash-waqf education funds	Improved literacy and equitable access to knowledge	SDG 4 (Quality Education); SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities)
4	Hifz al-Nasl (preservation of lineage/family)	Qard hassan for family and micro-enterprise stability	Household economic resilience and reduced child labour	SDG 8 (Decent Work); SDG 5 (Gender Equality)
5	Hifz al-Mal (preservation of property)	Sharia-compliant cooperative financing and zakat-based asset transfer	Reduced wealth concentration and asset-based poverty	SDG 1 (No Poverty); SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities)

Conceptual Framework Diagrams

To provide a clearer representation of the proposed framework, Figure 1 illustrates the systematic relationship between the five dimensions of *maqasid al-shariah*, the corresponding Islamic legal instruments, and their expected social justice and community development outcomes. The framework demonstrates how the higher objectives of Islamic

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law can be translated into practical mechanisms that promote welfare, equity, and sustainable development. It also highlights the conceptual pathway linking Islamic legal principles with measurable development indicators applicable to contemporary community development programmes [47].

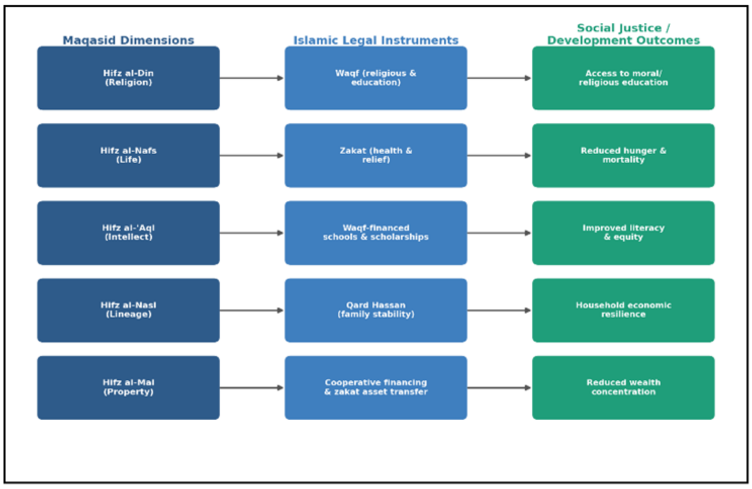

Figure 1. Maqasid-Based Social Justice Framework for Community Development

Figure 1 illustrates the core conceptual framework of the study. It demonstrates how each dimension of *maqasid al-shariah* is operationalised through specific Islamic legal instruments, including *zakat*, *waqf*, *qard hasan*, and Sharia-compliant financing. These instruments contribute to measurable social justice outcomes such as poverty reduction, educational access, household resilience, and equitable wealth distribution. The framework highlights that Islamic legal objectives extend beyond legal compliance by providing practical mechanisms for sustainable community development and supporting broader development goals [48].

While Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual relationships between *maqasid al-shariah*, Islamic legal instruments, and community development outcomes, Figure 2 focuses on the institutional governance structure required to operationalise this framework. It demonstrates how key stakeholders interact to ensure that Islamic social finance programmes are implemented effectively and evaluated according to both Sharia compliance and welfare-oriented objectives [49]. The figure highlights the complementary roles of the Sharia Supervisory Board, zakat and waqf management institutions, community development monitoring bodies, and beneficiary communities in creating a continuous cycle of implementation, accountability, impact assessment, and programme improvement [50].

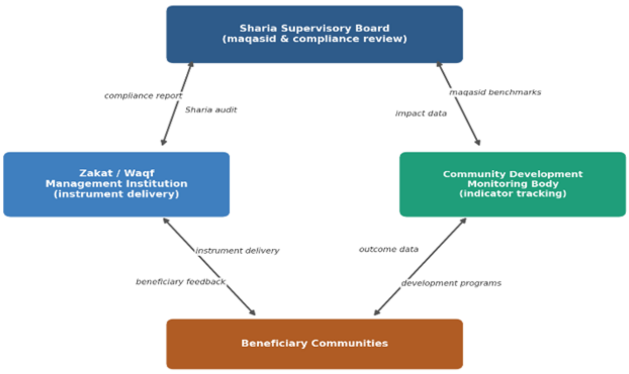

Figure 2. Governance and Accountability Structure for Sharia-Compliant Community Development Instruments

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Figure 2 presents the governance structure supporting the implementation of the proposed framework. The Sharia Supervisory Board provides oversight by ensuring both Sharia compliance and alignment with *maqasid al-shariah*. Zakat and waqf institutions are responsible for programme implementation, while the community development monitoring body evaluates development outcomes through measurable indicators. Continuous feedback from beneficiary communities enables institutional learning and improves programme effectiveness. This governance model promotes accountability, transparency, and sustainable social impact through coordinated interaction among all stakeholders [51].

Policy Implications and Limitations

The proposed framework offers several practical implications for policymakers, Islamic financial institutions, and community development practitioners. First, it provides Sharia Supervisory Boards with a structured approach for evaluating Islamic social finance programmes beyond formal legal compliance. Instead of focusing solely on the validity of contracts or financial transactions, the framework encourages institutions to assess whether their activities effectively contribute to the objectives of *maqasid al-shariah* and generate measurable improvements in social justice and community welfare.

Second, the framework has important implications for zakat and waqf regulatory authorities. By linking Islamic legal instruments with specific community development indicators and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it supports the development of more comprehensive reporting systems. Such an approach would enable institutions to demonstrate not only Sharia compliance but also their social and developmental impact, thereby improving transparency, accountability, and public confidence in Islamic social finance.

Third, the framework provides community development practitioners with a practical model for integrating Islamic legal principles into development planning and programme evaluation. In Muslim-majority societies, development initiatives grounded in *maqasid al-shariah* may strengthen stakeholder engagement, encourage community participation, and enhance the legitimacy of social programmes by aligning development objectives with widely accepted religious values.

Despite these contributions, the proposed framework has several limitations. As a conceptual study based exclusively on doctrinal and library research, the relationships identified between *maqasid al-shariah*, Islamic legal instruments, and development outcomes remain theoretical rather than empirically verified. Furthermore, the framework assumes the existence of effective governance structures, transparent institutional management, and well-functioning Sharia supervisory systems, conditions that may differ considerably across countries and regulatory environments. Variations in legal frameworks, administrative capacity, and institutional performance may therefore influence the practical application of the proposed model.

Future research should focus on empirically validating the framework through comparative case studies, surveys, interviews, or mixed-methods research involving Islamic financial institutions and community development organisations. Such studies would help assess the relative effectiveness of different Islamic legal instruments and refine the proposed indicators for measuring social justice and sustainable community development.

CONCLUSION

This study proposed a conceptual framework for reconstructing social justice through *maqasid al-shariah* by integrating the higher objectives of Islamic law with Islamic legal instruments and contemporary community development indicators. Through a qualitative doctrinal approach, the study demonstrated that the five classical *maqasid* dimensions can be systematically linked to practical mechanisms such as *zakat*, *waqf*, *qard hasan*, and Sharia-compliant financing, enabling Islamic institutions to promote measurable social justice outcomes and sustainable community development. The proposed framework contributes to the existing literature by bridging the gap between classical Islamic jurisprudence and modern development theory, transforming *maqasid al-shariah* from a normative legal concept into an operational model that can guide policy formulation, institutional governance, and programme evaluation. Furthermore, the integration of social justice indicators with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provides policymakers, Sharia supervisory boards, Islamic financial institutions, and community development practitioners with a structured approach for designing and assessing development initiatives within an Islamic legal context. Although the framework offers a comprehensive conceptual model, it remains theoretical and has not yet been empirically validated across different institutional and national settings. Therefore, future studies should examine its applicability through comparative case studies, surveys, interviews, or mixed-methods research involving Islamic social finance institutions. Such empirical validation would refine the proposed indicators, strengthen the practical implementation of *maqasid al-shariah*, and further enhance its contribution to achieving equitable, inclusive, and sustainable community development.

Acknowledgments

The authors sincerely thank Baku State University, Government College University Faisalabad, Pakistan, and the Islamic University in Niger for their valuable academic support and contributions to this research.

Author Contribution

All authors equally contributed to conceptualisation, methodology, analysis, manuscript preparation, revision, and approved the final version for publication together.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding this research, authorship, publication, financial support, institutional affiliations, or personal relationships.

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