

## Analysis of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the Context of *Maqasid Al-Shariah*

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### ABSTRACT

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a universal call to action targeting a better future solution. The SDGs approach takes into consideration human rights and the protection of nature. These widely accepted global blueprints encourage nations to adopt the 17 interlinked goals. The Maqasid Al-Shariah underlines the Islamic law and perspectives that address the importance of human well-being in the present and the hereafter. Thus, there are similarities between Maqasid Al-Shariah and SDGs in the sense that both strive for well-being and sustainability. This paper aims to analyse the linkage between SDGs and the five aspects of the Maqasid Al-Shariah. The objectives are i) to identify the association between the Maqasid Al-Shariah and the SDGs indicators and ii) to assess the strength of association between Maqasid Al-Shariah and SDGs indicators. The paper employed thematic analysis in determining linkages between Maqasid Al-Shariah and SDGs indicators. Microsoft Excel was used to undertake the descriptive analysis according to the marking system, percentage, ranking, and average percentage. The results show that the highest association can be seen between Maqasid Al-Shariah and SDGs 3, 16 and 17. The SDGs merit being a global agenda, the findings reveal a possible middle ground between the two approaches.

*Keywords:* Indicators, Maqasid Al-Shariah, Sustainable Development Goals

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### INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are presently accepted as universal call to action to ensure better and sustainable future. The goals are officially adopted by 193 countries at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit 2015 (“Sustainable Development Goals Officially Adopted”, 2015). These include

a set of 17 goals, with 169 targets and 247 indicators, although the indicators are subject to review periodically.

The *Maqasid Al-Shariah* is the objective of Islamic law that emphasises on the conduct of humankind. Al-Ghazali argued that *Maqasid Al-Shariah* is the reason for divine law that seeks to protect the welfare and public interests, specifically in terms of preservation of faith, life, intellect, progeny and property (Edastama, 2021). In modern times, Zainal et al (2019) acknowledged *Maqasid Al-Shariah* has become increasingly prominent, especially with more and more scholars sought to adapt Maqsid Shariah to the changing environments and social values. Sani et al. (2020) suggested that building a positive outlook on life in society can start with enhancing the natural environment to create a healthy society.

In the context of Maqasid Al-Shariah, collective efforts in enjoining good and forbidding wrong are the basis for the well-being of all living things on this Earth. M.Kamal (2020) stated this concept falls in line with the promotion of sustainable actions under the SDGs, which call for a concerted effort towards 5Ps (People, Planet, Peace, Prosperity and Partnership). Despite their similar aims, which is the well-being of living beings on this planet, *Maqasid Al-Shariah* and SDGs are often being dichotomised into Islamic and Western perspectives. For instance, the *Maqasid Al-Shariah* is often associated with the Islamic approach while SDGs typically represent the western outlooks. This paper, therefore, aims to analyse the linkage between SDGs and the five aspects faith, self, intellect, posterity and property of the *Maqasid Al-Shariah*. The objectives are i) to identify the association between the *Maqasid Al-Shariah* and the SDGs indicators and ii) to assess the strength of association between *Maqasid Al-Shariah* and SDGs indicators.

### **Reviews of the *Maqasid Al-Shariah* And Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

This section introduces *Maqasid Al-Shariah* from operational terminology point of view and as well as the SDGs including the targets and indicators.

### **Operational Terminology of the Aspects of the *Maqasid Al-Shariah***

The *Maqasid Al-Shariah* revolves around the preservation of five aspects, namely faith, self, intellect, posterity, and property. As mentioned by Al Haq and Wahab (2019), the five aspects of the *Maqasid Al-Shariah* is addressing a broad perspective of human actions and conducts. The practice of the *Maqasid Al-Shariah* is according to Islamic law as Islam is a guide to shape social behaviours (Mahazan et al., 2015). However, understanding the operational definitions would assist in providing the direction in connecting the *Maqasid Al-Shariah* to SDGs indicators. As the terminology will determine and implicate the understanding of the SDGs. Thus, the operational definitions of these aspects of *Maqasid*

*Al-Shariah* were derived from literature and are shown in Table 1.

Table 1  
*Operational terminology of the Maqasid Al-Shariah*

Aspect	Operational terminology	Reference
Faith	Spiritual attachment and dependence of humankind to Allah's as the creator and their tasks as stewardship.	Dariah et al., 2016; Abdul Rahman, 2010
Self	Preservation of individual life or well-being, instil self-discipline, sacrifice, and purity.	Adil, 2020; Vejzagic & Smolo, 2011
Intellect	Protection of mind to acquire intellectual skills and knowledge. The human capacity to enhance the education system and technological advancement.	Afridi, 2016; Abdullah 2015; Ismail et al., 2018. Sarkawi et al., 2017
Posterity	Safeguard the society for the social- behaviour, governance, and community rights.	Asutay & Harningtyas, 2015; Sarkawi et al., 2017
Property	The management system of the wealth, which involves sustainable benefits to the economy.	Azmi et al., 2019; Dusuki & Bouheraoua, 2009

### *Understanding the SDGs*

The SDGs is an agenda built on the principle of “leaving no one behind” (United Nations CDP, 2018), with a total number of 17 goals, 169 targets, and 247 global indicators (United Nations Statistic Division, 2020). The primary objective of the SDGs is to create a new-found vision of sustainability for 2030, while at the same time embracing people with disabilities (United Nations, 2016). Morton et al. (2017) describe the idea of promoting a world with equality regardless of any physical or emotional disabilities.

Apart from the 17 goals, SDGs also come with 169 outcome and implementation targets. Additionally, 247 global indicators are also formulated and are used to track the progress of actions towards achieving the specified targets of the SDGs. The number of indicators for each goal is shown in Table 2.

Table 2  
*The SDGs (Goals, targets, and indicators)*

Goal No.	Goal	Target (Nos.)	Indicator (Nos.)
1	No Poverty	7	14
2	Zero Hunger	8	13
3	Good Health and Well-Being	13	28
4	Quality Education	10	12
5	Gender Equality	9	14
6	Clean Water and Sanitation	8	11
7	Affordable and Clean Energy	5	6
8	Decent Work And Economic Growth	12	16
9	Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	8	12
10	Reducing Inequalities	10	14

Goal No.	Goal	Target (Nos.)	Indicator (Nos.)
11	Sustainable Cities and Communities	10	14
12	Responsible Consumption and Production	11	13
13	Climate Action	5	8
14	Life Below Water	10	10
15	Life On Land	12	14
16	Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	12	24
17	Partnerships for the Goals	19	24
<b>Total</b>		<b>169</b>	<b>247</b>

Based on Table 2, the goal with the highest numbers of indicators is Goal 3 (n=28), followed by Goal 17 (n=25) and Goal 16 (n=23). The global indicators are refined annually and reviewed comprehensively to attend to the sustainable development issues. Therefore, according to the United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs (2020), the numbers of the indicators tend to increase based on the resolution adopted by the General Assembly on Work of the Statistical Commission on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/71/313), Annex. In order to ensure the relevance of the indicator, the Statistical Commission plans to conduct another review in 2025 (United Nations Statistic Division, 2020).

### ***Linking Maqasid Al-Shariah and SDGs***

Due to their similar aims of enjoining the overall well-being of humankind, many contemporary scholars such as Ab Rahman (2019) have sought to link *Maqasid Al-Shariah* and the SDGs. For instance, Dariah et al. (2016) emphasise that each of the SDG indicators has a high potential to be incorporated with the five aspects of the *Maqasid Al-Shariah* sums up by Al-Ghazali (Zainal et al, 2019). At the same time, the operational terminology of the *Maqasid Al-Shariah* is in the process to be fitted in line with the SDGs as the contemporary approach (Hossain, 2014). Adopting and blending the aspects of *Maqasid Al-Shariah* and the SDGs is to ensure the current system is under the umbrella of the Islamic perspectives that are the *Maqasid Al-Shariah* (Dariah et al., 2016), and seeing it as a way of strengthening the foundation of the sustainable goals with Islam as the basis to guide the process (Abdullah, 2017; Hossain, 2014).

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed two types of approaches, which were document analysis and a series of descriptive analyses. A checklist was used to cross-analyse 244 SDG out of 247 global indicators to the five aspects of *Maqasid Al-Shariah*. Three number of indicators were missing due to them being repeated under two or three different targets. In our pursuit for sustainable development, we strongly believe that for a development to be sustainable, it must also, first and foremost, be shariah-compliant.

The 244 analysed indicators were systematically categorised under the five *Maqasid Al-Shariah* aspects. They are considered as the key features to understand and prioritise the relevancy of the SDGs with *Maqasid Al-Shariah*. Thematic analysis was conducted in the process. Keywords in the SDG indicators were identified and matched to those in the aspects of *Maqasid Al-Shariah*. The result of the assessment was evaluated according to the marking system, percentage, ranking system, and average percentage. Mean values were also calculated.

In addition to the results from cross-analyses using the checklist, cross-referencing from the theoretical findings also provided a better understanding of how SDGs is relevant and compatible with *Maqasid Al-Shariah*. The outcome of the comparative analysis determined and prioritised the 244 indicators of the SDGs towards the five aspects of the *Maqasid Al-Shariah*.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings are divided into two sections of analysis: the descriptive analysis and the mean values.

### Descriptive analysis of the SDGs and *Maqasid Al-Shariah*

This section shows the cross-analyses result between SDGs indicators and the five aspects of the *Maqasid Al-Shariah*. Based on the descriptive analysis provided in Table 3, the result is interpreted into three different marking systems that are the frequency, percentage, and ranking. The 169 targets and 244 indicators under the SDGs are cross-tabulated with the five aspects of the *Maqasid Al-Shariah*.

The results in Table 3 highlight the relation between the SDGs indicators and the aspects of *Maqasid Al-Shariah*. The highest frequency of relations between the SDGs indicators and the aspects of *Maqasid Al-Shariah* is on the Property: economic and management system (n= 73), followed by Posterity: social: behaviour, governance and community rights (n= 70), and on Self: individual life or well-being (n= 68).

Table 3  
Cross-Analysis between the SDGs and *Maqasid Al-Shariah*

Goal	SDGs	Total No. of Indicator	Aspects of <i>Maqasid Al-Shariah</i>				
			Faith	Self	Intellect	Posterity	Property
1	No poverty	14	0	4	1	4	5
2	Zero Hunger	13	0	5	0	0	8
3	Good Health and Well-Being	27	1	15	3	7	1
4	Quality Education	11	0	0	9	2	0
5	Gender Equality	14	0	0	0	14	0
6	Clean Water and Sanitation	11	0	6	0	0	5

Goal	SDGs	Total No. of Indicator	Aspects of <i>Maqasid Al-Shariah</i>				
			Faith	Self	Intellect	Posterity	Property
7	Affordable and Clean Energy	6	0	0	4	1	1
8	Decent work and economic growth	17	0	1	0	4	12
9	Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure	12	0	3	4	0	5
10	Reducing inequalities	11	0	0	0	5	6
11	Sustainable cities and communities	15	0	8	0	6	1
12	Responsible consumption and production	13	0	2	2	1	8
13	Climate action	8	0	3	2	1	2
14	Life below water	10	0	5	1	2	2
15	Life on land	14	0	11	0	1	2
16	Peace, justice and strong institutions	23	2	4	1	14	2
17	Partnerships for the goals	25	0	1	3	8	13
TOTAL (n)		244	3	68	30	70	73
Percentage based on frequency		100	1.2	27.9	12.3	28.7	29.9
Ranking based on the frequency		-	5	3	4	2	1

Another two aspects of the *Maqasid Al-Shariah* shows a smaller number of frequencies related to the SDGs where Intellect: education system and technological advancement shows relations to only 30 indicators (n= 30) and Faith: spiritual indicator with three indicators (n=3). This means many of the SDG indicators are related to the aspects of Property, Posterity and Self of the *Maqasid Al-Shariah*.

The frequency result was converted to percentage and ranking to assess the relations further. The results show that, in terms of percentage, almost 30% out of the total SDG indicators are related to the *Maqasid Al-Shariah* through the aspect of Property: economic and management system (29.9%). Similarly, in terms of ranking, Property remains the aspect of *Maqasid Al-Shariah* with the highest relations to SDG indicators, followed by Posterity and Self.

Another important finding from the cross-analysis results shown in Table 3 is that the SDG indicators are not linked to the aspects of *Maqasid Al-Shariah* equitably. Property became the highest related aspect because indicators under six SDGs are highly related to it. Similarly with Self, is heavily related to many of the indicators from six SDGs. For Posterity, although it ranked second in terms of frequency of relations, it is only strongly related to indicators from only two SDGs. This means that SDGs and the indicators are not well encompassing as the *Maqasid Al-Shariah*. In fact, none of the goals are strongly

related to the Faith aspect. The following shows the strength of SDGs to the aspects of *Maqasid Al-Shariah*.

- Faith: None
- Self: SDG 3, 6, 11, 13, 14 and 15
- Intellect: SDG 4 and 7
- Prosperity: SDG 5 and 16
- Property: SDG 1, 2, 8, 9, 10, 12, and 17

The pattern of the strength of the relation between SDG indicators and the aspects of *Maqasid Al-Shariah* is evident in Figure 1. From the figure, it can be seen that 14 out of the 17 goals have 50% or more than their indicators strongly related to a particular aspect of *Maqasid Al-Shariah*. In the case of SDG 5, all of its indicators are related to the aspect of Posterity only.

None of the SDGs has a strong relationship with the Faith aspect. Even when there is a relation, as with SDG 3 and 16, less than 10% of the indicators of the goals are related to the aspect. Theoretically, the essence of faith in the *Maqasid Al-Shariah* is indirectly fulfilling the direction of the SDGs, however, the absence of acknowledgement in faith-related indicators may have created a gap that causes the dichotomised Islamic and western perspectives.

### Mean Values between the Five Aspects of the *Maqasid Al-Shariah* and the SDGs Indicators

Mean values of the relation between SDG indicators and the aspects of *Maqasid Al-Shariah* were calculated to investigate the ranking and strength of the relationships. The mean values are shown in Table 4.

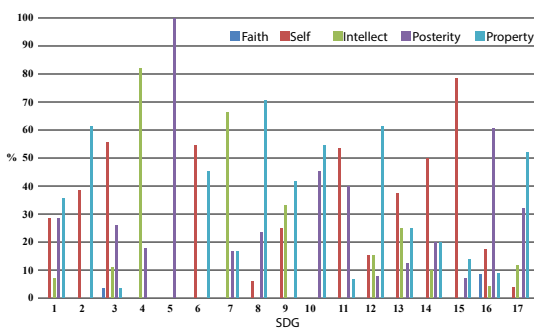


Figure 1. Strength of relation between the SDGs and *Maqasid Al-Shariah*

Based on the mean values, the ranking remains similar to the one calculated based on frequency and percentage as described earlier. However, the results in Table 4 highlight a wide disparity in the mean values among the five aspects of the *Maqasid Al-Shariah*. The results show that Property ( $M = 4.30$ ), Posterity ( $M = 4.12$ ) and Self ( $M = 4.06$ ) have also the same mean-variance, but Faith only scored  $M = 0.18$ .

Table 4

*Mean values between the five aspects of the Maqasid Al-Shariah with the SDGs indicators*

Aspect	Indication	Faith	Self	Intellect	Posterity	Property
Mean	MS vs SDGs	0.18	4.06	1.77	4.12	4.30
Ranking based on mean	MS vs SDGs	5	3	4	2	1

## CONCLUSION

This paper addresses the issues of the functional relationship between two groups, which are the five aspects of the Maqasid Syariah and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, by highlighting the comparative analysis between the two groups. Understanding the relation between the two groups is important in any effort for integration and transition of the contemporary and globally accepted SDGs into those that are in line and imbued with Islamic values and perspectives.

The results of analyses presented thus far show that Property, Posterity and Self as the more strongly related aspects of *Maqasid Al-Shariah* to SDG indicators. This suggests that these three aspects provide the greatest opportunity or potential in associating SDGs to *Maqasid Al-Shariah*. These three aspects can be used as the platform to infuse further Islamic perspectives into the contemporary ‘Western’ SDGs. Sani et al. (2020) proposed improving the natural environment as a starting point for fostering a positive outlook on life in society.

Results of the analyses also show that there is a weak link between SDGs and the *Maqasid Al-Shariah*. This issue must be dealt with if SDGs are truly to be fully consistent with *Maqasid Al-Shariah*. Among the steps that can be taken to address this is by creating another goal to add to the existing 17 goals. The new goal can be made to focus on matters related to spirituality. Alternatively, more spirituality-focused indicators can be developed under the existing goals to inject faith-related, or Islamic-based, values and perspectives.

According to Kholisha et al. (2020), the primary objective of the *Maqasid Al-Shariah* addresses the Islamic law that aims to seek benefits for humankind, concerning their welfare and affairs in the world and hereafter. The concept is ensuring a sustainable advantage for society to prevent themselves from causing harm to the world and safeguarding people’s needs (Khan, 2016). The essence of the *Maqasid Al-Shariah* is indirectly fulfilling the direction of the SDGs that is targeting a better and sustainable future. There is a common interest between the two groups. Therefore, the threshold to connect and relate the two is seen as achievable. In fact, some schools of thought already see SDGs as the platform to operationalise *Maqasid Al-Shariah*. SDGs has the advantage of being a global agenda. Thus, operationalising *Maqasid Al-Shariah* through SDGs would make the former more acceptable and more understandable to the global communities. The possibility of

addressing the SDGs under *Maqasid Al-Shariah*'s umbrella is viewed as uncovering a potential method of connecting a contemporary approach with the Islamic perspectives.

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