

# EVALUATING THE BOOKKEEPING PRACTICES OF MUSLIM TRADERS IN THE CONTEXT OF ISLAMIC INHERITANCE

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose** — This study evaluates the bookkeeping practices of Muslim traders that carry out their trading activities in Kano State, Nigeria, from an Islamic inheritance perspective.

**Design/Methodology/Approach** — The major source of data was the administration of questionnaires. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted to support the results.

**Findings** — The questionnaire results found traders maintaining incomplete and improper records of their assets and liabilities. They also kept very minimal records for *waṣiyyah* (Islamic will). The findings imply that their inheritable wealth would not be fairly distributed based on the provisions of Islamic inheritance law. This claim was supported by real-life cases obtained through interviews portraying the consequences of incomplete and improper bookkeeping records.

**Originality/Value** — This paper is a pioneer study that empirically links bookkeeping practices to Islamic inheritance.

**Research Limitations** — This study is limited to Kano State, which is one of the 36 states of Nigeria.

**Practical Implications** — Traders are required to maintain proper and complete records of their assets, liabilities and *waṣiyyah* with a view to ensuring that their wealth is fairly distributed among their claimants when they die.

**Social Implications** — Keeping proper and complete records by traders could maximise the share to be given to each of their heirs and would save them against exposure to poverty, particularly if the wealth is properly invested.

**Keywords** — Assets, Bookkeeping, Islamic inheritance, Liabilities, Recordkeeping, Traders, *Waṣiyyah*

**Article Classification** — Research paper



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## INTRODUCTION

Islam is a religion that has comprehensively prescribed how the wealth of a deceased is to be justly shared among rightful heirs and other claimants. Islamic inheritance (succession) law has clearly identified heirs with their respective allocations from the estate left by a deceased and has also identified those who are excluded (whether partially or completely) from the inheritance (Awang, 2008). The regulations for Islamic inheritance have been revealed by Allah (SWT) to mankind in a wise and gradual manner, and they are well-matched with the judiciary and human nature (Awang, 2008). Zuleika and Desintha (n.d.) state that Islamic succession serves as an organised way of redistributing and spreading wealth from one generation to another. It is the only form of inheritance that has adequately protected the interest of weak persons, orphans and infants. Similarly, it provides the share to be given to each heir with no discrimination between men and women in a fair and transparent manner (Yusup, 2017). Therefore, when a Muslim dies his/her entire estate is allocated among heirs after liabilities and *waṣiyyah* (Islamic will) are fully settled, as mentioned in the Qur'ān (4:11–12) (Umar & Haron, 2021).

However, in order to correctly and fairly distribute the estate left by a deceased Muslim among claimants, there must be proper and complete records of assets, liabilities and *waṣiyyah* (Umar & Mohammed, 2017). This indicates that Muslims must strive to keep records of their assets, liabilities and *waṣiyyah* to ensure their estates are correctly shared in accordance with the Shari'ah. Recordkeeping is a clerical aspect of accounting that entails recording transactions and events in a systematic manner (Umar, 2017).

Despite the wide scope of Islamic accounting, the contemporary theory and practices of Islamic accounting largely focus on Islamic financial institutions (IFIs). The Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions (AAOIFI) developed financial accounting standards primarily for recording, presenting and reporting the transactions of IFIs (Umar, 2019b). Presently, there are no accounting standards to guide Muslims in recording, presenting and reporting transactions for the purpose of Islamic inheritance. However, the authors identified a few studies, such as Umar and Mohammed (2017), Umar and Kurawa (2019), and Umar and Haron (2021), that conceptually linked Islamic inheritance to accounting. Besides, Umar *et al.* (2021b) empirically investigated the potential of forensic accounting to detect and prevent fraud in the administration of Islamic inheritance. Briefly, Islamic inheritance does not attract adequate attention from academics and practitioners of accounting.

Moreover, the findings of previous studies indicate that micro, small and medium enterprises' (MSMEs) owners did not maintain proper and complete records (Maseko & Manyani, 2011; Ademola *et al.*, 2012; Ghasia *et al.*, 2017; Zotorvie, 2017; Nyathi *et al.*, 2018; Mwebesa *et al.*, 2018; Muteti *et al.*, 2018). Thus, from the Islamic inheritance perspective, the findings of these studies signify that many assets belonging to Muslim traders might not constitute part of the estate to be shared among their heirs when they die. Consequently, the welfare of their heirs, who mostly become orphans, would be jeopardised. Besides, there is a high possibility of the liabilities of traders not being fully settled before distributing the residue. It is worth remembering that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) never performed the funeral prayer for an indebted Muslim unless someone settled or pledged to settle his debt. Allah (SWT) clearly ruled that liabilities and legacies must be settled from what is left by the deceased before sharing the estate among his/her heirs.

Against the above background, the current study seeks to evaluate the bookkeeping practices of Muslim traders in the context of Islamic inheritance in Kano State, Nigeria. This study

selected Kano State, one of the 36 states of Nigeria, as a case study. Nigeria is the most populated nation in Africa, with an estimated population of over 200 million people (Mustafa *et al.*, 2018). In Nigeria, Kano is the most populous state, with over 20 million people, of whom at least 95 per cent are Muslims (Mustafa *et al.*, 2018). It has been recognised as a prominent commercial and industrial centre since the pre-colonial era, where goods were bought and sold for both domestic and international consumption in neighbouring countries, such as the Niger Republic, Chad and Benin (Mustapha *et al.*, 2014).

To the best of the authors' knowledge, the current study pioneered empirical evaluation of recordkeeping practices of Muslim traders from an Islamic inheritance perspective. This study is highly needed because Islamic inheritance is a two-level platform on which almost every Muslim inherits from someone at one time and becomes a deceased at another (Umar & Kurawa, 2019). The contribution of this study is five-fold:

1. The findings will motivate Muslim traders to maintain proper records of their assets, liabilities and *waṣiyyah* with a view to ensuring that their estates are shared fairly among claimants.
2. The policymakers will use the findings to provide policies that mandate people to maintain complete records of their assets, liabilities and *waṣiyyah* to ensure that their estates are correctly distributed after their death.
3. It is expected to draw the attention of relevant authorities and professional institutions to develop accounting and Sharī'ah standards for Islamic inheritance.
4. The findings are expected to motivate the relevant academic institutions to integrate Islamic inheritance into their curricula, particularly the ones that offer accounting courses. Eventually, Islamic inheritance accounting may become a specialised branch of Islamic accounting and a course of study.
5. As a pioneer research, it is expected to serve as a motivator and guidance for future studies that will aim to improve on this study.

The rest of the paper is arranged in four sections. The second section discusses the literature on the importance of bookkeeping practices in Islam and the relevance of bookkeeping practices to Islamic succession, and it reviews empirical studies. The third section describes the research methodology used. The results and discussion are presented in the fourth section. Finally, the fifth section provides the conclusion and recommendations of the study.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### The Importance of Bookkeeping Practices in Islam

The terms bookkeeping and recordkeeping are commonly used interchangeably. They entail the process of recording transactions in the books of accounts (Wood & Sangster, 2012). A bookkeeper, otherwise called an accounting clerk or accounting technician, is saddled with the responsibility of keeping the records of the daily financial transactions of an entity (Ademola *et al.*, 2012). The terms *al-kātib*, *kātib al-māl*, *mubāshir* or *āmil* are Arabic words that were used interchangeably to refer to the accountants/bookkeepers in the Islamic state responsible for writing and recording financial information (Zaid, 2000a). *Al-kātib* is responsible for keeping the books under various accounting systems (Zaid, 2004). The introduction of zakat in the second year after

Hijrah (624 CE) and the increased duties of the Islamic state necessitated the state in its early stage to develop accounting records and reporting systems (Zaid, 2000b).

In practice, for a business entity to achieve proper and complete records of its transactions, it has to securely keep source documents (such as sales invoices, purchase invoices, cheque counterfoils, cash receipts, bank statements, credit notes, debit notes, payment vouchers, petty cash vouchers, bank pay-in-slips, etc.) and books of original entry (such as purchases, sales, purchase returns and sales returns daybooks) (Umar, 2019b). Many modern scholars, such as Wood and Sangster (2012), believe that Luca Pacioli was the first scholar to provide a standard and recognise the procedure for recordkeeping. However, in reality, the practice of accounting began when *dīwāns* for recording the revenues and expenses of *bayt al-māl* (the public treasury) were developed (Zaid, 2004). Historical facts discovered in Turkey and Egypt showed that accounting records and reports developed in the early Islamic states were similar to those applied in the Italian Republics, as provided by Pacioli in 1494 (Zaid, 2000b). It is further stated that some of the journals and books of accounts maintained by the Islamic state during the Abbasid Caliphate (132–232 H) (750–847 CE) are as follows: *jarīdat al-kharāj* (agricultural land tax book), *jarīdat al-nafaqāt* (expenditures journal), *jarīdat al-māl* (funds journal), *jarīdat al-mušādarīn* (confiscated funds journal), *daftar al-yawmiyyah* (daily book), *daftar al-tawjīhāt* (book of directions), *daftar al-tahwīlāt* (books of transfers), etc.

Further, many contemporary Islamic accounting scholars and practitioners believe that the practice of recordkeeping has been divinely mentioned, as stated in Qur’ān (2:282). The verse calls for the keeping of proper records of debts. Recordkeeping is equally supported by the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet (SAW) from ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar that:

Allah’s Apostle said, “It is not permissible for any Muslim who has something to will to stay for two nights without having his last will and testament written and kept ready with him” (al-Bukhārī, Vol. 4, Book 51, *ḥadīth* no. 1, p. 633; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Book 013, *ḥadīth* no. 3987, p. 988).

It is essential to note that the development and maintenance of accounting records by the Islamic state motivated Muslim traders to ensure that records of their businesses were complete and proper, particularly to measure their profits and capital growth in order to calculate the zakat payable to the *bayt al-māl* (Zaid, 2000b). This is because keeping incomplete records of zakatable assets would certainly lead to the underpayment of business zakat (Umar *et al.*, 2021a). Briefly, it is compellingly arguable that recordkeeping practices were divinely provided and practiced in Islamic states before Luca Pacioli released the principles of double entry.

### **The Relevance of Bookkeeping Practices to Islamic Inheritance**

Allah (SWT) has clearly predetermined how the estate of a deceased Muslim is to be shared among heirs in a way that ensures fairness and circumvents conflicts among them (Awang, 2008). Three verses are used to establish the sharing ratio among heirs (Qur’ān, 4:11, 12 and 176) (Umar & Kurawa, 2019). Verses 11 and 12 show that a deceased’s estate (residue) should be shared among heirs after the deceased’s liabilities and bequests have been settled. From these verses, three elements can be identified: estate (assets), liabilities and bequests.

**Assets:** The inherited estate could be broadly classified into two: business estate and non-business estate (Umar & Mohammed, 2017). The business estate is an investment of the deceased, which might be in the form of a company partnership or one man business. Inheriting the business estate signifies that, if possible, all the heirs should be introduced into the business as partners/shareholders (Umar & Kurawa, 2019; Umar & Haron, 2021). The non-business estate is any estate other than the business estate, which is idle and not used to generate income or profit for the owner(s). This would include cash in hand and cash at bank, land and buildings, electronics, motors, furniture, machinery, livestock, jewellery, receivables, furniture and farm products, among others, that are not utilised in generating profit or income.

In relation to recordkeeping, every Muslim is expected to have a register/book for recording the details of the purchases of assets as well as their disposal. The details should include at least the nature (or type), value and location of the assets, as well as the date of purchase (or disposal). The source and supporting documents, such as certificates of ownership, receipts and invoices, are also relevant in the case of litigation or dispute. Specifically, in the case of receivables, the amount, names and addresses of the debtors should be properly documented.

**Liabilities:** Liabilities are the obligations upon the deceased which must be settled before distributing the estate. In Islamic inheritance, the debts of the deceased are divided into two: debts of Allah and debts of people (Lakhvi, 2003). The debts of Allah may consist of outstanding zakat, expiation, unperformed pilgrimage, and others. The debts of people are the amount the deceased owes to suppliers and other creditors that have not been settled by him while alive. It is clearly mentioned in the Qur'ān (4:11-12) that heirs are entitled to the residue of the estate after debts and legacies are paid. Similarly, there is a *ḥadīth* that emphasises the settlement of the deceased's liabilities before the distribution.

Abu Huraira (Allah be pleased with him) reported that when the body of a dead person having the burden of debt upon him was brought to Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him), he would ask whether he had left property enough to clear off his debt. If the property left had been sufficient for that (purpose), he observed funeral prayer for him; otherwise, he said (to his companions): You observe prayer for your companion [..] (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Book 011, *ḥadīth* no. 3944, p. 976).

The above *ḥadīth* has clearly shown the importance of settling the liabilities of a deceased Muslim before burial, as the Prophet (SAW) even refused to observe funeral prayer for a Muslim whose debts were not settled.

**Waṣīyyah:** *Waṣīyyah* simply means 'will, bequest or legacy'. Abd Aziz *et al.* (2017) describe *waṣīyyah* as the means of assigning wealth to selected beneficiaries which takes effect when the owner dies. It is regarded as a tool for financial management that becomes effective when the donor is dead. It could be made in favour of non-heirs of the deceased or religious and philanthropic institutions, such as mosques, schools and orphanages, among others (Puad *et al.*, 2018). In other words, it is recommended to be done for relatives excluded from automatic inheritance, non-Muslim relatives and other unrelated individuals or institutions (Al-Jibaly, 2005). Similarly, *waṣīyyah* enables a Muslim to transfer a portion of his asset (up to one-third) to those who are not entitled to inherit from him under Islamic succession law, either orally, in writing or

both, but preferably it is recommended to be formally documented (Mohammad, 2015). Hence, Umar (2019a) suggested that a successful businessperson could perpetually be of great help by making a will dedicating a certain share from the equity of his/her business as waqf (Islamic endowment) not only for the orphaned grandchildren but also other excluded heirs. Hence, it is an avenue for wider redistribution of wealth in Muslim societies.

Wills are approved by the Qur'ān (2:180). The rules for *waṣiyyah* are determined by the conditions given by the donor and could be based on the Sunnah (Prophet's tradition) or based on recommendation (for the welfare of excluded heirs), and at times it could be obligatory (Puad *et al.*, 2018). Some countries such as Egypt (1943 & 1946), Sudan (1945), Syria (1953), Tunisia (1956 & 1959), Morocco (1958), Iraq (1959 & 1963) and Pakistan (1961) enacted laws that mandate people to make bequests in favour of orphaned grandchildren that are excluded from inheriting from a deceased because of the presence of other heirs (Faruki, 1965). However, in countries where there are no such enabling laws, one can make a will in their favour (Umar, 2019a).

Further, in some Muslim countries, some companies specialise in rendering services with respect to will writing. For example, in Malaysia, some estate planning companies and financial institutions, such as As-Salihin (estate planning company), Bank Muamalat Malaysia Berhad, Amanah Raya Berhad and Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad render services with respect to will drafting, documentation and execution (Mohammad, 2015). It is highly recommended that Muslims, irrespective of their ages, should document their *waṣiyyah* in written form with the view to having peace of mind because a person can die at any age (Abdullah *et al.*, 2017). Proper documentation would make it possible to implement it as intended by the deceased.

## Review of Empirical Studies

A review of empirical studies on the recordkeeping practices of businesses showed that MSMEs failed to maintain proper and complete records, particularly those that are not registered as companies. Most African MSMEs do not keep proper and complete records (Umar *et al.*, 2021a). For example, Maseko and Manyani (2011) found that most SMEs in Zimbabwe maintained their transactions improperly due to the lack of accounting knowledge and the inefficient application of accounting information in financial performance measurement. Nyathi *et al.* (2018) found similar results in Zimbabwe. Ghasia *et al.* (2017) investigated the management of business records in Tanzania. The study found that most SMEs do not practice sound records management. Other African studies like Zotorvie (2017) and Muteti *et al.* (2018) obtained similar findings in Ghana and Kenya, respectively. Moreover, Ademola *et al.* (2012) discovered that most small enterprises maintained poor records, making it difficult to assess their growth in Kogi State, Nigeria. Besides, Umar *et al.* (2021a) used semi-structured interviews and found zakat to have been underpaid because the traders maintained improper and incomplete records of zakatable assets and deductible liabilities.

It is clear from the above that MSME owners maintained poor records of their commercial activities, which negatively affected their growth and development. Management of business records is a key condition for the success of SMEs (Ghasia *et al.*, 2017). Hence, Adeyemi *et al.* (2015) provided three recommendations to enhance MSMEs' recordkeeping practices:

1. Managers of SMEs need proper orientation on the crucial role played by accounting and auditing services in the accomplishment of the objectives of their businesses.

2. The government should make a policy that would mandate all SME owners-managers to prepare and file audited annual financial statements, particularly with a view to providing finance that enables them to improve the society's economic development.
3. Accounting firms are expected to educate and introduce their services to SMEs instead of waiting until their owners-managers request these services.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Methods of Data Collection

The data were generated through the administration of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. As mentioned earlier, this study is a pioneering research in linking bookkeeping with Islamic inheritance in the context of Nigeria. Interviews were initially conducted in September 2018, which provided guidance on designing the questionnaires. The questionnaire was subjected to content validity by experts between January and May 2019. The administration of questionnaires began in June 2019 but became very tedious. This is because most of the traders declined to respond when they heard that the authors wanted to explore their recordkeeping. Indeed, they thought that they were to be assessed for tax purposes. While some of them were successfully convinced through the provision of proof that this was not the case, others still refused. Meanwhile, the administration of questionnaires was interrupted by lockdown and restriction of movements to stop the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the authors utilised the gradual easing in the lockdown period between May and July 2020 to administer the remaining questionnaires. Finally, the retrieval of the distributed questionnaires was completed in September 2020.

The questionnaire was designed to capture the recordkeeping for three elements of Islamic inheritance as established in the Qur'ān (4:11-12) relating to assets, debts and *waṣīyyah*. It contained 29 items, out of which eight questions pertained to the demographics of the respondents. The remaining 21 questions consisted of nine constructs for asset recordkeeping, five constructs for liabilities recordkeeping and seven questions for *waṣīyyah* recordkeeping. These constructs consisted of both financial and non-financial information obtainable in a typical accounting ledger and source documents. Responses to the questions on the subject matter of the study were arranged in the form of a three-point Likert scale, which included no-records (1), incomplete records (2) and complete records (3).

Moreover, in order to elicit more findings to support the questionnaire results, semi-structured interviews were adapted from previous studies, such as Thaker (2018) and Umar (2020). Through the interviews, the researchers explored real-life cases that could serve as key lessons for traders to adopt the culture of ensuring that they keep records of their assets, liabilities and *waṣīyyah* in a proper and complete manner at all times as required by the Shari'ah (Islamic law).

### Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The authors proposed to administer questionnaires to 700 traders in Kano State. Because of misunderstanding about the study by many respondents, a snowball sampling technique was used. This sampling method enables the researcher to get additional respondents through the information they get from the initial respondents (Acharya *et al.*, 2013). Through this technique, 500 questionnaires were distributed to traders drawn from various markets in the state. The sample size is considered adequate, as previous studies in the same area utilised smaller sample sizes (Dutse

& Aliyu, 2018; Mahmoud *et al.*, 2020). Overall, 422 questionnaires were retrieved, out of which 12 were found invalid for the analysis. The respondents did not return the remaining 78.

Concerning the sampling technique for the interviews, a convenience/purposive sampling technique was applied. According to Robinson (2014), convenience sampling is mostly applied in qualitative research, which allows the researcher to locate a convenient case that satisfies the requirements and then select the respondents based on a first-come-first-served basis till the sample size quotient is exhausted. This method was used by previous studies, such as Thaker (2018) and Umar (2020). It is the most widely used sampling technique whereby the participants are selected when they are found at the right place and at the right time (Acharya *et al.*, 2013). The purposive sample size is normally determined based on data saturation, which occurs when an additional sample provides no new information (Robinson, 2014). Consequently, five participants were interviewed, comprising three traders (R1, R2 and R3), one consultant (R4) and one journalist (R5) who were found to know of cases in which the estate of some Muslim traders was not fairly distributed in accordance with the Sharī'ah due to improper and incomplete records.

### Method of Data Analysis

Stata version 14 was used to analyse the data generated by administering the questionnaires. The results of Cronbach's alpha obtained by using the software were used to explain the internal consistency of the constructs. Besides, means and standard deviation results were used to explain the extent to which the traders maintain records of their assets, liabilities and *waṣiyyah*. This technique of data analysis was adopted from previous studies, such as Feng-I (2011) and Ural *et al.* (2017). The responses generated through the interviews were analysed collectively in such a way as to reach a position on the consequences of incomplete and improper recordkeeping by traders when they died and during the distribution of their estate.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results from the Administered Questionnaires

#### *Constructs Validity and Reliability*

At the beginning, the questionnaire was reviewed by six experts in order to establish its content validity. It was revised based on their comments and suggestions. Besides, a reliability test was conducted to find the internal consistency of the constructs in the questionnaire by using Cronbach's alpha.

**Table 1** presents the Cronbach alpha for the individual constructs of recordkeeping for assets by the Muslim traders. The Cronbach alpha coefficients for the constructs ranged from 0.9117 to 0.9229. **Table 2** presents the Cronbach alpha coefficients for the constructs depicting the recordkeeping of liabilities, which are found within the range of 0.8467 and 0.8621. In addition, **Table 3** reveals that the minimum and maximum coefficients of constructs for keeping records of *waṣiyyah* are 0.9509 and 0.9596, respectively. Thus, in line with the rule of thumb provided by George and Mallery (2003), the Cronbach alpha coefficients are found between good ( $\geq 0.80$ ) and excellent ( $\geq 0.90$ ). However, Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) advocate that the acceptable values of the Cronbach alpha should be within the range of 0.70 and 0.95. Therefore, Cronbach alpha coefficients greater than 0.95 indicate that some items are redundant. Following this argument, the Cronbach alpha values of assets and liabilities are acceptable as they fall within the recommended range, but those of *waṣiyyah* indicate the redundancy of its constructs as they are all higher than



0.95. Nevertheless, the values of *waṣiyyah* were considered because none of the constructs would be accepted if we were to go by Nunnally and Bernstein's rule of thumb. The fact is that *waṣiyyah* is an important component of Islamic inheritance that is always discussed along with assets and liabilities. Besides, this issue can be overlooked because, as earlier indicated, this study became the first to provide items for measuring records of *waṣiyyah*, assets and liabilities. Hence, there is a tendency to provide redundant items. It is believed that the constructs' validity, relevance, reliability and adequacy for measuring records of assets, liabilities and *waṣiyyah* will be improved when this study is continuously replicated.

### *Demographic Information*

**Table 1** shows that 349 respondents (85.12 per cent) are male and 61 (14.88 per cent) female. This happened because most husbands in Kano want their wives to stay at home to take care of children and perform other domestic responsibilities. Respondents that fall within the active groups (i.e., 21–40 and 41–60 years) constituted 83.13 per cent (340). Concerning the highest educational qualification, 260 (63.89 per cent) have at least secondary school certificates. The result indicates that the majority have at least basic knowledge of keeping records. Furthermore, 261 (63.97 per cent) are married while 122 (22.90 per cent) are single. However, 25 are divorced and widow and therefore accounted for 6.13 per cent of the entire respondents. This indicates that the majority are shouldered with household and family responsibilities. The years of business experience determine the size of a business. Only 151 (37.01 per cent) have less than ten years' experience in the business. This implies that 257 (62.99 per cent) have spent at least ten years in business. In the case of the number of heirs, only 198 (48.77 per cent) have more than ten heirs. Therefore, 208 (51.23 per cent) have less than 11 persons to inherit them. Moreover, 262 (64.37 per cent) have less than 11 dependent relatives (excluded/non-heirs). Therefore, only 155 (35.63 per cent) have at least 11 dependent relatives (excluded/non-heirs).

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents**

S/No.		Items	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Gender	Male	349	85.12
		Female	61	14.88
2.	Age	Below 21 years	35	8.56
		21-40 years	226	55.26
		41-60 years	114	27.87
		Above 60 years	34	8.31
3.	Education level	Qur'ānic only	92	22.60
		Primary	55	13.51
		Secondary	143	35.14
		Tertiary	117	28.75
4.	Marital status	Single	122	29.90
		Married	261	63.97
		Divorced	16	3.92
		Widow	9	2.21
5.	Years in business	10 and Below	151	37.01

		11–20	146	35.78
		21–30	77	18.87
		31–40	21	5.15
		41 and above	13	3.19
6.	No. of heirs	10 and below	208	51.23
		11–20	120	29.56
		21–30	62	15.27
		31–40	8	1.97
		41 and above	8	1.97
7.	No. of dependent relatives	10 and below	262	64.37
	(excluded/non-heirs)	11–20	94	23.10
		21–30	34	8.35
		31–40	10	2.46
		41 and above	7	1.72

Source: Authors' computation using Stata version 14

### *Results from the Questionnaire*

It is important to recall that each construct was assessed on a three-point Likert scale in order to examine the extent to which traders maintain records, whereby no-records equal (1), incomplete records (2) and complete records (3). **Table 2** presents the means and standard deviations of the constructs for recordkeeping of assets by the respondents. The mean values show that the traders keep incomplete records for their assets because the mean value for each construct is at most slightly above incomplete records (2). The standard deviations indicate the low variability and narrow dispersions among the traders in keeping records of assets.

**Table 2: Keeping Records of Assets**

Questionnaire Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean	SD
I keep records of invoices, receipts, and any other documents as evidence of payment for my assets, such as farms, plots, houses, shops, cars, etc.	0.9168	2.07	0.67
I include the details (names and addresses) of my heirs/relatives as witnesses in the records of all valuable assets I purchase.	0.9218	1.98	0.73
I have records of official documents issued by the relevant government organisations (e.g., certificates of ownership) for land and buildings I purchase.	0.9229	2.06	0.74
I keep records of the locations/addresses of my assets.	0.9148	2.17	
I have records of my businesses and other investments.	0.9117	2.09	0.74
I have records of receivable amounts from my customers and other persons owing me.	0.9167	2.03	0.73
I have records of names and addresses of all my debtors (business and non-business related).	0.9165	2.00	0.72
I have all the necessary documents supporting the ownership of my assets (including receivables and investments).	0.9146	2.07	0.69
I have sufficient and supportive witnesses (people and documents) to defend the ownership of my assets in the case of litigation.	0.9255	2.06	0.70

Source: Authors' computation using Stata version 14

**Table 3** shows the means and standard deviations of the constructs for liabilities. Except for one, all the constructs have mean values which are slightly less than 2 (incomplete records). This indicates that the traders maintained incomplete records of their liabilities. Besides, the standard deviations of the constructs reveal the low variability and dispersions of keeping records of the liabilities of the traders.

**Table 3: Keeping Records of Liabilities**

Questionnaire items	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean	SD
I always keep records of my liabilities, such as payables to suppliers, outstanding zakat and other liabilities.	0.8621	1.98	0.79
I have records of full addressees of my suppliers and other creditors	0.8486	1.97	0.71
In the case of corporate liabilities (e.g., government or bank debts), I maintain all the official documents.	0.8523	2.00	0.79
I include the details (names and addresses) of my heirs and relatives as witnesses in the records of my liabilities.	0.8483	1.87	0.77
In the case of litigation, I have sufficient and supportive witnesses (people and documents) to defend the amount I am indebted to my suppliers and other creditors.	0.8467	1.97	0.79

Source: Authors' computation using Stata version 14

**Table 4** depicts the means and standard deviations of the constructs for *waṣiyyah* recordkeeping. All the mean values for the constructs are less than 2 with the exception of one. The results signify that the traders kept very minimal records for *waṣiyyah*. However, the standard deviations indicate the high variability and dispersions of the *waṣiyyah* recordkeeping of the traders.

**Table 4: Records of *Waṣiyyah***

Questionnaire items	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean	SD
I have the documents which clearly show the subject matter of my <i>waṣiyyah</i> .	0.9565	1.59	0.79
I have records of the amount to be deducted from my wealth (maximum $\frac{1}{3}$ ) before distributing the residue among heirs.	0.9596	1.43	0.71
I have records of the names and addresses of beneficiaries of the <i>waṣiyyah</i> .	0.9518	1.55	0.79
I have records of the names and addresses of witnesses.	0.9522	1.52	0.77
My <i>waṣiyyah</i> records contain the details (names and addresses) of my heirs and relatives as witnesses.	0.9512	1.55	0.79
I have records of the executors/trustees of the <i>waṣiyyah</i> .	0.9509	1.52	0.76
I have records of sufficient and supportive witnesses (people and documents) to defend my <i>waṣiyyah</i> in the case of litigation.	0.9538	1.53	0.76

Source: Authors' computation using Stata version 14

Briefly, the results revealed that the traders maintained incomplete records for assets and liabilities. Besides, records of *waṣiyyah* were found closer to having 'no records'. The findings correspond with the earlier studies that evaluated the bookkeeping practices of MSMEs such as Maseko & Manyani (2011), Zakiah *et al.* (2016), Ghasia *et al.* (2017), Muteti *et al.* (2018) and Umar *et al.* (2021a).

## Interview Results

The interviewees narrated some cases portraying the consequences of the deceased's lack of or incomplete records. Five participants provided the following statements:

One of the traders in this market, who was chairman of the market then, failed to keep records of his credit sales to other traders in the market. This is because he (the deceased) believed that, being the chairman, he had the power to recover the amount his debtors owed him. So, when he was alive, he hardly experienced the case of bad debts, not only because he was the chairman of the market but also one of the most influential and powerful traders in the market [...]. Unfortunately, when he died, most of the debtors refused to pay the debts to his family. The worst thing is that some debtors were part of the team delegated to recover the amount receivables. This significantly reduced the amount of wealth distributed to them, which happened as a result of incomplete records. (Respondent 1)

My relative, who is now deceased, entered into a partnership with a woman who gave him some amount of money as a capital contribution. But no proper document was kept for the agreement, including the capital contribution. When the trader died, the woman realised that the deceased had left abundant wealth, which made her to claim more than her capital contribution. Hence, a serious dispute emerged between the heirs and the woman. Eventually, she won against the heirs because they could not provide any document as their evidence. (Respondent 2)

It happened in Kano that a popular and influential international trader who was a relative to me died. Regrettably, when he was alive, he had not kept complete records of his assets and liabilities and other documents justifying his assets ownership. During the distribution, a substantial amount of the receivables was not recovered from the debtors because they had no written evidence. (Respondent 3)

We once conducted a forensic audit for some heirs. The deceased was a successful businessman in the state who secured bank loans when alive. One of the heirs, the eldest son of the deceased, suspected that the bank had overcharged the loan. Unfortunately, no proper documents were found in the records of the deceased showing the annual amount to be paid and the period within which the loan would be repaid. Therefore, he engaged our audit firm for an investigation. Fortunately, all the transactions were done through the bank account of the deceased. We used the bank statement and discovered that the bank was supposed to charge ₦175,000,000 (Nigerian currency) as interest, not ₦300,000,000. Consequently, the heirs were refunded the sum of ₦125,000,000. (Respondent 4)

A Nigerian (now deceased) subscribed ₦1.5 million for 1.5 million company shares at ₦1 each, co-founded with a Lebanese man in 1986. The equivalent amount of such capital could be estimated at USD 0.86 million during the period. When the Nigerian died, the Lebanese said to the heirs that the value of the deceased's investment was now ₦100 million. Later, he denied that the deceased had such

capital contribution when he realised that the heirs had no records as evidence of such capital contribution. Meanwhile, the heirs were able to find some of the records and documents of the deceased as evidence of such investments of ₪1.5 million. The Lebanese accepted this evidence, but he insisted on paying the same amount, ₪1 per share, though the investment had existed for at least 32 years [...]. (Respondent 5)

The above five real-life cases have clearly demonstrated the negative effects of either incomplete or no records for one's assets, liabilities and other transactions on estate distribution among the claimants. Incomplete records of one's assets would definitely reduce the potential share of each heir, consequent upon which the welfare of the heirs (orphans) would be jeopardised. Improper record keeping of one's liabilities signifies that the creditors of the deceased will receive partial settlement or no settlement at all. This is against the provision of the Qur'ān whereby Allah (SWT) ruled that all liabilities must be paid out of the estate of the deceased before the residue (if any) is shared among the heirs.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings indicate the traders' failure to maintain proper and complete records of their assets, liabilities and *waṣiyyah*. The fact is that traders must not only imbibe the culture of keeping proper and complete records but also protect them. This is because some vital records are usually not replaceable and, therefore, should be handled with extreme care by putting in place measures to protect them against destruction or damage—be it by fire, burglary or insect attack—because these documents can easily make or mar the going concern of such an entity (Alegbeleye & Chilaka, 2019).

The act of keeping improper and incomplete records by the traders contravenes the provisions of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). For example, Allah (SWT) directed all Muslims to write down debts that they have collected (Qur'ān, 2:282). Similarly, a *ḥadīth* report by 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar shows clearly that it is unlawful for Muslims to spend two nights without updating records of their last wills (al-Bukhārī, Vol. 4, Book 51, *ḥadīth* no. 1, p. 633; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Book 013, *ḥadīth* no. 3987, p. 988).

Lack of proper and complete records of assets, liabilities and *waṣiyyah* has many negative consequences. First, there is a high degree of certainty that the traders would not have their liabilities being completely settled before distributing their wealth. As mentioned earlier, Prophet (SAW) did not perform the funeral prayer for an indebted companion unless another person pledged to settle it on behalf of the deceased (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Book 011, *ḥadīth* no. 3944, p. 976). In another *ḥadīth*, reported by Abū Hurayrah, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said the soul of an indebted deceased Muslim is suspended unless the debt is settled on his behalf (Al-Tirmidhī, Vol. 2, No. 1078, p. 449).

Second, the welfare of heirs may be jeopardised by the failure of traders to keep proper and complete records. Many valuable assets of the deceased could be lost by the heirs during distribution as they might not know about them or have valid documents to claim them. The creditors may overclaim from the estate, which will definitely reduce the allocation that ought to be given to each heir. The five real-life cases obtained through the interviews adequately document the consequences of improper and incomplete records, particularly on heirs.

However, Islam has provided proactive measures for ensuring that inheritable wealth is not only adequately transmitted to legitimate heirs but also protected after distribution. One such measure is the restriction of *waṣiyyah* to one-third by the Prophet (SAW) (al-Bukhārī, Vol. 4, Book 51, No. 5, pp. 633–634). This *ḥadīth* shows that the restriction is made to prevent exposing one's heirs to poverty. Allah (SWT) mentioned in the Qur'ān (18:82) how Prophet Mūsā (AS) and Khidr (AS) provided protection to the wealth inherited by two young orphans whose father was a righteous man. There are also a number of verses that warn against the misappropriation of orphans' wealth (see Qur'ān, 4:2, 6, 9, 10). In the case of maximisation of wealth of heirs after distribution, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was reported to have said that the wealth of an orphan should be invested so as to avoid being exhausted by zakat (Al-Tirmidhī, Vol. 2, No. 641, pp. 98–99). Although this is a weak narration, the Mālikī, Shāfi'ī and Ḥanbalī Schools believed that the wealth of an orphan is zakatable (Umar & Haron, 2021). Besides, Ismail and Taufiq (2015) opined that since Allah (SWT) said in the Qur'ān (4:5) "... feed and clothe them therewith..." and not "feed and clothe them out of their fund", it denotes the need to continuously invest the orphans' wealth in order to sustain the inherited wealth.

Third, creditors may be underpaid if the deceased did not keep proper and complete records. The creditors also have their own heirs whose life could be exposed to various socio-economic problems because of the underpayment. Fourth, the finding reveals that beneficiaries of *waṣiyyah* would suffer as a result of the lack of proper and complete records. This happened in Malaysia, whereby bequeathed assets continuously remained frozen because of improper records, which created serious misunderstandings among beneficiaries (Zakiah *et al.*, 2016). Fifth, lack of recordkeeping would make it difficult to calculate the amount of zakat to be paid out of the wealth left by the deceased. As mentioned earlier, zakat due but not settled by the deceased must be paid out of the wealth before distributing the residue among heirs (Lakhvi, 2003). According to Umar *et al.* (2021a) lack of proper and complete records has made zakat to have an insignificant contribution to poverty alleviation in Nigeria.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The practice of bookkeeping ensures that businesses have sound record management for all their activities, particularly financial transactions. Islamic inheritance law requires that liabilities and *waṣiyyah* be settled before sharing the residue among heirs. This implies that, in order to fairly distribute the estate among them and other claimants, the deceased must have kept complete records and other supporting documents for all assets, liabilities and *waṣiyyah*. Thus, this study investigated the extent to which businesspersons in Kano State, Nigeria, keep proper and complete records for their assets, liabilities and *waṣiyyah* with a view to establishing whether their wealth is going to be fairly distributed among their heirs and other claimants as required by the Sharī'ah. The study found that traders do not maintain proper and complete records for their assets, liabilities and *waṣiyyah*. The findings signify that the heirs of the traders are going to lose some assets, which could jeopardise their welfare. In fact, some valuable assets, such as plots of land, houses, etc., could not be claimed by them without possessing valid documents, particularly certificates of ownership. The findings also reveal a high possibility that when the traders die, their liabilities (including zakat) will not be settled as mandated by the Sharī'ah. Therefore, creditors to the deceased may be either underpaid or overpaid as there are no proper and complete records of liabilities. Similarly, *waṣiyyah* made by the traders would not be settled as bequeathed by them.

Thus, the findings predict that the estate of the traders would be unfairly distributed if corrective measures are not taken.

Based on the findings, the study makes four key recommendations with a view to inducing traders to maintain proper and complete records of their assets, liabilities and *waṣiyyah* and address the limitations of the current study:

1. The government, through its Ministry of Religious Affairs or a relevant commission, should promote the knowledge of Islamic inheritance among the public by giving special attention to the recordkeeping practices of assets, liabilities and *waṣiyyah* using various modern media (such as radio and television) and publications.
2. The government should formulate regulations that would compel traders, particularly MSME owners, to keep proper records of their business transactions. This is because lack of regulations is among the key factors that make the owners of such businesses keep improper and incomplete records of their business transactions, particularly in developing countries.
3. Collaborations should be made among trade associations, accounting professional associations and relevant government agencies to educate traders on the benefits of recordkeeping and the basic skills required for it. This could be done by organising lectures periodically.
4. This study needs to be replicated in other Muslim communities in different countries around the globe with a view to enhancing the validity, reliability, relevance and adequacy of items for measuring records of not only *waṣiyyah* but also assets and liabilities. Besides, future studies should explore how the recordkeeping practices of Muslims influence their distribution after death.

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