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Challenges and Practices in the Disposal of Quranic Literature and Islamic Information Materials in Malaysia

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Abstract

This study investigates the disposal practices of Qur'anic literature and related materials in Malaysia, emphasizing the importance of preserving their sanctity and preventing misuse. Through interviews with stakeholders involved in the process, the research highlights both institutional and personal methods of disposal. The findings aim to improve understanding of proper disposal techniques, offering practical guidance to Muslim communities and authorities. By following these recommended practices, the sanctity of Qur'anic materials can be upheld, ensuring their respectful handling and disposal when they are no longer needed. This contributes to maintaining the dignity and reverence of Islamic literature in everyday life.

Keywords: Quran, Information materials, Disposal of Quran, Disposal, Sacred text

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1.0 Introduction

During the era of the Prophet's companions, especially the third Caliph Uthman Ibnu Affan's time, paper-based Quranic literature information materials were still limited. Therefore, an ethical burning of *mushaf* (Quran) is appropriate (Mohd Zamri et al., 2024). The advancement of technology in printing media has led to an increasing number of papers based on published Quranic literature and information materials. Access to paper-based resources has improved, and there is a growing market for the publications of Islamic literature materials.

The literature on Quranic text disposal underscores the significance and complexity of handling religious materials with respect and compliance with Islamic guidelines (Pangilun et al., 2018). Traditional methods, including burning and burying, remain foundational practices worldwide, especially in countries with large Muslim populations (Abd Wakil, 2024). However, challenges associated with this method, such as limited community awareness, logistical difficulties, and environmental considerations, highlight the critical need for better disposal practices. Studies suggest that while some efforts have been made to educate the Muslim community on proper disposal methods, a comprehensive approach remains lacking, particularly in Malaysia. Insufficient awareness among the public, limited disposal centers, and financial constraints contribute to ongoing improper disposal, which can compromise the sanctity of the Quranic materials. Furthermore, rapid technological advances and increased use of digital Quranic applications signal a shift in how these materials are

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accessed and perceived, indicating that traditional disposal methods may need to adapt to contemporary contexts. Thus, the current research and practice gaps indicate an urgent need for structured solutions that combine religious respect with modern operational efficiency. This study addresses these gaps by investigating existing disposal practices in Malaysia, analyzing community awareness, and proposing a framework for accessible disposal resources. The research objectives are as follows:

1. To analyze the primary challenges affecting Quranic disposal efforts, including technological, environmental, financial, and logistical obstacles.
2. To provide actionable recommendations to improve disposal practices, including developing a digital informational portal to raise awareness and streamline access to proper disposal methods for the community.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Historical Methods of Quranic Text Preservation and Destruction

The preservation and destruction of Quranic texts have deep historical roots, with one of the most significant early instances occurring during Caliph Uthman ibn Affan (644-656 CE). Standardizing and preserving the Quranic text during this period involved a critical text destruction and compilation method later known as the Uthmani Rasm (Abd Wakil, 2024).

In the early days of Islam, Quranic verses were recorded on diverse materials including date palm leaves, animal skins, thin stone tablets, bark, and camel shoulder bones. As the Islamic community expanded, Quranic recitation and transcription variations became a concern (Mohd Zamri et al., 2024). Caliph Uthman initiated a standardization process that involved collecting all existing manuscripts, creating an official compilation, and systematically destroying alternative versions to ensure textual uniformity.

The destruction process during this period was methodical and purposeful. Manuscripts that did not conform to the standardized version were deliberately destroyed, effectively creating the first large-scale, controlled disposal of Quranic texts. This method went beyond simple disposal; it was a deliberate act of textual preservation and standardization. The materials used for earlier recordings such as date palm leaves, animal skins, and various organic materials were systematically destroyed by burning (Al-Qurtubi, 1993; An-Nawawi, 1993; Mohd Zamri et al., 2024). This decision was not an act of disrespect but rather aimed at preserving the sanctity and unity of the Quran.

2.2 Disposal of Quranic Texts and Records

In Quranic materials, 'disposal' refers to the prescribed Islamic methods for respectfully handling sacred texts that are damaged, worn, or otherwise unsuitable for continued use (JAKIM, 2015). Unlike standard waste disposal, the disposal of Quranic literature follows strict guidelines to avoid violating Islamic law. To maintain the sanctity of religious materials. Scholars have long recommended respectful methods like burning, burying, or shredding to prevent Quranic verses from becoming desecrated (Al-Qurtubi, 1993; An-Nawawi, 1993; Majid et al. 2022). These techniques safeguard the Quran's purity by ensuring its passages are not thrown away thoughtlessly or combined with everyday garbage.

Disposal is the last phase of the records' life cycle and involves destroying the records. When inactive records' retention periods expire, the records' life cycle ends. Records can be deleted or transferred to archives if they are no longer required. At the end of a record's life cycle, the management team must determine whether to destroy or keep the record. Records must be disposed of properly to avoid future issues, whether transferring them to archive storage or another organization or fully destroying them. In most situations, this will imply physically destroying the record or, in the case of electronic records, removing the records from the electronic system and its backups. Destruction can be carried out in various methods, including but not limited to disposing in the bin, shredding paper documents, deleting electronic records, and shredding optical disks. Therefore, the disposal of Quranic materials is a highly specialized process defined by religious and cultural imperatives, requiring methods that uphold the sanctity of the text.

Countries like Saudi Arabia and Egypt have implemented systematic practices to ensure that worn or unusable Quranic texts are disposed of with dignity (Myrvold, 2016; Mohd Zamri et al., 2024). These practices align with Malaysia's adherence to religious guidelines, as outlined by Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM), which supports burning and burial methods under controlled conditions to maintain respect for these texts (*Garis Panduan Pelupusan Teks Al-Quran*, 2020).

Over time, the Quranic disposal practices in Malaysia have evolved due to technological advancement while maintaining their sanctity. These methods include burning, burying, de-inking, and recycling. Firstly, burning remains a widely accepted method while controlling burning reduces Quranic materials to ashes, preventing desecration and ensuring that verses are not mixed with waste (Majid et al., 2022). The ashes are often buried or scattered in the sea to complete the respectful disposal process. Secondly, burying is practiced when burning is not feasible. Quranic materials are buried in clean and secure locations to ensure they decompose naturally without being disturbed (Ainul Khauthar, 2017; Abd Wakil, 2024). This method is prevalent in areas with limited access to incinerators or disposal facilities. Third, the de-inking method involves dissolving Quranic pages in water to remove the ink, ensuring the verses are no longer visible. Once the ink is removed, the remaining pulp can be buried or recycled, maintaining the sanctity of the Quran (Arieff Salleh et al., 2012; Zamri, Rahman, & Najid, 2024). This method has gained popularity as an environmentally friendly alternative to burning. Lastly, recycling Quranic materials is another modern solution, particularly in regions with advanced waste management systems. The paper is recycled into non-religious materials after removing the verses through de-inking or shredding (Nurul Jannah et al., 2018). This process aligns with environmental sustainability goals while adhering to Islamic principles of respecting the Quranic text.

3.0 Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach using the purposive sampling technique to explore the challenges and practices surrounding the disposal of Quranic materials in Malaysia. This technique is appropriate for this study as it focuses on participants with direct experience relevant to the study's objectives (Patton, 2015). Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with five respondents directly involved in Quranic disposal practices because it allowed for flexibility and enabled the researcher to probe deeper into participants' experiences and insights (Kvale, 2007). The five respondents were selected based on their expertise, roles, and direct involvement in Quranic disposal practices. The selection criteria ensured representation from both institutional and community-based perspectives, as follows:

Table 1: Summary of the key roles, positions, and justifications for selecting the five respondents involved in this study.

Respondent Role	Position	Justification for Selection
Religious Authority Representative	Staff from the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM)	Provides insights into official guidelines and policies governing Quranic disposal in Malaysia and challenges faced by regulatory bodies.
Disposal Center Staff	Staff member at Pusat pelupusan Riyadh Restu, Selangor	Offers firsthand knowledge of operational processes, logistical challenges, and community engagement efforts in Quranic disposal.
Community Leader	Imam of a local mosque in Kedah	Sheds light on grassroots disposal practices, community awareness, and the role of mosques in facilitating proper disposal methods.
Environmental NGO Representative	Member of an organization specializing in sustainable waste management	Provides insights into the environmental implications of Quranic disposal methods and the potential for integrating sustainability practices.
Individual Practitioner	Community members experienced in personal Quranic disposal methods	Represents informal, personal methods used by individuals who may lack access to institutional facilities, highlighting gaps in public awareness and accessibility

Sources: Authors' compilation

3.1 Thematic Analysis Process

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data collected through interviews with five respondents involved in Quranic disposal practices. It allows for interpretation, identification, and analysis of patterns (themes) within qualitative data. The thematic analysis process followed the six-step framework outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), ensuring a systematic and rigorous approach:

Table 2: Summary of the thematic analysis process applied in this study

Step	Description
1. Data Familiarization	All interviews were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy. The researcher carefully read and re-read the transcripts to become familiar with the data. Notes and initial impressions were documented during this phase.
2. Generating Initial Codes	The data were systematically coded using a manual process. Codes were applied to meaningful text, focusing on patterns related to operational challenges, community awareness, and environmental issues.
3. Searching for Themes	Codes were grouped into broader themes based on their relationships and commonalities. This phase involved identifying overarching patterns across the data set.
4. Reviewing Themes	The themes were reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately represented the data. Some themes were merged for coherence, while others were split into sub-themes to capture nuance.
5. Defining and Naming Themes	Clearly define each theme and its scope. Selected illustrative quotes to support findings.
6. Producing the Report	The final step involved synthesizing the themes into coherent findings that addressed the research questions. Themes were contextualized within the broader literature to highlight the challenges and practices of Quranic disposal.

4.0 Findings

The findings of this study are presented thematically, reflecting the key themes and sub-themes that emerged from the analysis. Each theme is supported by data extracts, such as direct quotes from five respondents. This approach highlights areas of agreement, divergence, and nuance, providing a comprehensive view of the challenges and practices in Quranic disposal.

4.1 Theme 1: Operational Challenges

This theme relates to financial and logistical issues as highlighted in Objective 1. It encompasses views on restricted resources and the elevated expenses linked to the disposal of Quranic materials.

Sub-theme 1.1: Limited Facilities

Most respondents agreed that the lack of disposal facilities is a significant challenge. However, their perspectives differed in terms of the root causes:

i. The representative from JAKIM stated:

"One of the main issues is the limited funding to establish more centers, especially in rural areas."

ii. In contrast, the community imam emphasized:

"Even where facilities exist, they are not well-publicized, so many people don't know they are available."

iii. One respondent from a disposal center noted:

"The number of facilities is insufficient to serve the entire community, especially in rural areas."

This shortage leads to delays in disposing of Quranic materials and forces individuals to keep damaged materials at home. Many are conscious that the places provided are very few and may be quite far from where they live. Disposal centers of Quranic literature and information materials are not open daily and only at certain times. This can also make it difficult for them to send materials due to travel distance, time, and cost factors. Those who work need to manage their time best; therefore, they can send in these materials or take time off for these tasks (Sahlawati, 2020). Due to such constraints, some of the material factors of the Quranic literature and information materials could not be managed well. Besides, they have to find or rent a large place to operate the disposal of al-Quran materials because they need a large space to collect the copies of al-Quran materials.

Sub-theme 1.2: High Operational Costs

Managing disposal facilities is expensive, particularly for processes like incineration.

i. The representative from JAKIM shared:

"The cost of operating incinerators and transporting ashes to designated locations is a significant challenge."

ii. The disposal center staff highlighted specific operational difficulties:

"The cost of incineration and transporting ashes is increasing, affecting our capacity to handle large volumes."

iii. Meanwhile, the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) representative suggested:

"Introducing sustainable methods like de-inking could reduce long-term costs and make operations more efficient."

Apart from that, the community has not widely disclosed the parties that are directly involved in managing the disposal of Al-Quran materials. For example, the Islamic Religious Department of each state and related NGOs are responsible for raising community awareness to jointly take care of the purity of the Qur'an in any case. The parties have provided a place for the community to send these Quranic materials at a small management fee. The fee charged with a certain value systematically covers the operating costs and disposal process. However, some of the public face financial problems sending these materials to disposal centers (Mohd Isa, 2019). With the rising cost of living, the community is taking austerity measures and letting these materials be stored as is.

4.2 Theme 2: Community Awareness Gaps

This theme highlights the *Community Awareness Gaps* recognized in Objective 1, especially emphasizing the insufficient knowledge and restrained outreach from institutions. It further emphasizes how these obstacles greatly impede public understanding and the correct methods of Quranic disposal.

Sub-theme 2.1: Lack of Knowledge

There is a consensus that many people are unaware of proper disposal methods, but the level of awareness varies. The interviews revealed that the general public lacks knowledge of proper disposal methods.

i. The individual practitioner noted:

"In my community, most people just store old Quranic materials indefinitely because they don't know what to do with them."

ii. The imam observed:

"Some people think it's acceptable to recycle Quranic materials with regular paper, which shows a lack of basic knowledge."

iii. The disposal center staff shared:

"Most people think throwing old Quranic materials in the trash is acceptable because they don't know any better."

The Muslim community in Malaysia is less exposed to methods that comply with Islamic law to dispose of such materials, so the practices that fall into the category of insulting the Quran are common (Zainudin, 2011; Arieff Salleh et al., 2012; Ahmad Rabiul, 2012). They are also seen as indifferent to glorifying the holy verses of the Qur'an when they do not have the knowledge and awareness of the method of disposing of Quranic materials following Shariah. This was also acknowledged by Anuar (2020), who claimed that he did not know that the technique that had been practiced was against the Shariah. This is seen when most of them keep this material in storage

until termites eat it. Some mix it and throw it in the trash, send it to the recycling centers, and some even throw the old Al-Quran in the garbage, in the wrong places with piles and other rubbish. Therefore, the disposal of Quranic materials cannot be managed properly because of the lack of proper knowledge.

Sub-theme 2.2: Limited Outreach by Institutions

Institutions responsible for disposal often struggle to raise awareness. Opinions diverged on the effectiveness of institutional outreach:

i. The JAKIM representative admitted:

"Our outreach initiatives are resource-constrained and rely heavily on mosques for information dissemination"

ii. However, the community imam believed:

"The responsibility lies with both institutions and individuals. Mosques can only do so much without better support from N."

iii. A community leader commented:

"There aren't enough campaigns or resources to educate the public about where and how to dispose of Quranic materials."

In addition, the community is not much exposed to the responsible parties directly involved in managing the disposal of Quranic materials, such as the Islamic Religious Department of each state. The department provides a place for the community to send the Quranic materials and charges a small fee. However, many of the community are unaware of these disposal centers, which are usually few and may be quite far to access. These can make it difficult to send materials there as they involve travel distance, time, and cost factors. However, some communities do not know how to dispose of the Quranic literature and information materials, and those are responsible other than where to bring the materials to be disposed of. In other words, the community does not know where to refer to this matter of disposal (Mohd Isa, 2019).

4.3 Theme 3: Environmental and Logistical Issues

This theme reflects the environmental and disaster-related barriers outlined in Objective 1, particularly focusing on the impact of floods and the need for sustainable disposal methods. This theme also emerged as significant barriers toward environmental sustainability.

Sub-theme 3.1: Natural Disasters

Floods were highlighted as a key issue, damaging large volumes of Quranic materials. Respondents unanimously cited floods as a major logistical challenge but offered differing perspectives on the solutions:

i. A respondent from a disposal center recounted:

"After the 2021 floods, we handled over 200 tons of damaged Quranic texts, which overwhelmed our resources."

ii. The community leader emphasized:

"We need more government support during disasters to handle the sudden influx of damaged Quranic materials."

iii. The NGO representative suggested:

"Partnerships with private companies could help streamline disaster response and ensure proper disposal."

Furthermore, following the floods that hit several states in Malaysia at the end of 2021, 200-300 tons of Al-Quran and holy books containing Quranic verses were badly damaged due to the floods that had to be cleaned (Rahmat, 2022). These books were found to be very muddy, and they had grown fungus from being soaked in water for a very long time and had been badly damaged by the great floods.

As a result of these flood concerns, implementing agencies had to consider very high management costs when too many Quranic sources were damaged. The wet text needed to be dried before being processed for baking. Furthermore, text that is brittle or contains termites cannot be rubbed using a shredder or burned properly using an incinerator, and it must be done manually for proper burning. This caused disposing of the Qur'anic material to necessitate a lot of manpower and mechanical assistance because it needed several incineration processes before the ashes were sent to the sea (Abd Latif, 2020). As a result of these flood concerns, implementing agencies had to consider very high management costs when too many Quranic sources were damaged. The wet text needed to be dried before being processed for baking. Furthermore, text that is brittle or contains termites cannot be rubbed using a shredder or burned properly using an incinerator, and it must be done manually for proper burning. This caused disposing of the Qur'anic material to necessitate a lot of manpower and mechanical assistance because it needed several incineration processes before the ashes were sent to the sea (Abd Latif, 2020).

The stages involved in the disposal process are collection, filtration of resources, dissolution and extraction of materials, incineration, ash mixing, drying, and packaging before being sent to the sea for disposal. Thus, in the face of the problem of Quranic manuscripts being damaged due to floods, the agency needed higher funding due to the transportation costs required to bring back the damaged manuscripts to the disposal centers (Rahmat, 2022).

Sub-theme 3.2: Sustainability Concerns

Some respondents emphasized the importance of incorporating environmentally friendly methods like recycling.

i. The NGO representative advocated for recycling and de-inking:

"Recycling not only respects the sanctity of the Quran but also reduces waste, making it an environmentally responsible solution."

ii. The JAKIM representative focused on improving current practices:

"By combining recycling with established practices, we can ensure sustainability without compromising on religious guidelines."

Sustainability concerns emerged as a significant theme, highlighting the need for environmentally friendly disposal methods to align with Islamic principles and modern environmental standards. Respondents emphasized that traditional methods, such as burning and burial, while respectful, may not always be sustainable given the increasing volume of Quranic materials requiring disposal.

Recycling was identified as a promising approach to address these sustainability challenges. The process involves de-inking Quranic pages to remove sacred text, after which the remaining material can be repurposed into non-religious products (Arieff Salleh et al., 2012). This method aligns with the growing emphasis on sustainable waste management, as it minimizes reliance on incineration and burial, which can be resource-intensive and environmentally taxing. Recycling also helps reduce the carbon footprint associated with disposal practices, supporting broader environmental goals.

4.4 Summary of Findings in Relation to Objectives

The identified themes directly aid Objective 1 by emphasizing particular technological (e.g., incineration techniques), environmental (e.g., flood impact), financial (e.g., high operational costs and logistical (e.g., remote locations) obstacles to Quranic disposal. Moreover, the feedback offered by participants (e.g., improved awareness, sustainable practices) establishes a basis for the practical recommendations that will be formulated in relation to Objective 2.

5.0 Discussion

The review of the disposal practices of the Quranic literature and related information materials indicated that many still lack understanding of proper disposal of the materials (Zainudin, 2011; Arieff Salleh et al., 2012; Ahmad Rabiul, 2012). This finding support that many people out there dispose Quranic materials improperly due to lack of knowledge and awareness. Therefore, this finding is directly connected to objective 1 which is to analyze the primary challenges affecting Quranic disposal. Specifically, this finding identified operational challenges, community awareness and environmental issues that remain unresolved and may hinder the Quranic disposal practices.

Indirectly, the disposal of Islamic literature is a major issue that has global implications. It focuses on the interaction with the holy scriptures of Islam. In Malaysia, where Muslims make up most of the population, we encounter much more religious literature than those who follow other faiths. Over time, the needs and demands will only increase. Therefore, it is necessary to spread Islamic literature while also planning its eventual destruction.

Additionally, humanity must take all reasonable measures to safeguard the environment. Environmental protection must be actively practiced, not only preached about. A balance between human activities and the environment is necessary for a healthy future. Islam is a cutting-edge religion that changes as society changes. Despite being built on precise beliefs and ideas, Islam is malleable and improves human living. The growth and development of Muslim societies worldwide, including Malaysia, may be evidence of this. One of the subjects explored in this phase is the disposal of Islamic literature materials. Although methods and procedures for disposing of Islamic literary materials have evolved, the ultimate goal is to preserve the *mushaf* while protecting the environment.

In light of the above discussions, Malaysia's recycling program for pieces of Islamic literature is a valid interpretation of the Shari'ah. Therefore, this strategy may assist people in overcoming obstacles and problems associated with disposal, particularly Muslims. Consequently, it is recommended that an informative portal be developed to support public understanding and proper Quranic disposal practices, which is directly aligned with Objective 2. Moh (2017) found that the shortage of designated disposal centers and the lack of public awareness campaigns highlighted the inadequacy of institutional outreach and the public's limited knowledge. In response, this study supports the development of a digital information portal as a practical solution to enhance disposal practices. Such an initiative can significantly address existing awareness gaps, as the portal could also serve as a tool for digital religious education. If widely accessible and endorsed by official bodies such as JAKIM and state religious departments, the portal would likely foster greater public trust and compliance.

The portal should provide information about the correct way to dispose of materials from the Qur'an. In addition, the location and disposal sites in each state should be accessible. The community should be able to directly contact the parties involved using the name and contact number specified in the portal. The portal will also include the proper manners that need to be taken to maintain the purity of the materials of the Quran. Increasing global advances in sophisticated technology and communication will facilitate the development and use of portals. At the same time, the public should be able to easily access the information in the portal using devices such as computers and smartphones.

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Disposal of Quranic literature and information materials is a global concern that should be handled properly. However, as Muslims make up the majority of the population in Malaysia, proper handling of such religious literature should be a top priority. The production of Quranic literature and information materials should match the exact demands to avoid unnecessary wastage. The difficulty of getting rid of Quranic literature and information materials may change over time, but the goal is always to respect the *mushaf*. Designated agencies are important in preserving the purity of the Quranic literature and information materials. The Ministry of Internal Affairs (KDN) is a superior body that monitors and controls all activities of the Quranic literature and information materials disposal and implements the disposal of illegal materials in this country. The Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (*Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia*) (JAKIM) monitors and implements disposal activities at the state level. Besides, the mosque encourages the community to dispose of

the materials by handing them to relevant agencies. Hopefully, this study will provide the necessary information on the best practices to manage the disposal of materials from the Quran.

This paper aimed to provide recommendations to the relevant authorities for improving the implementation and disposal of Quranic literature and Islamic informational materials in Malaysia. However, this study has some limitations. Firstly, the sample for this study was only taken randomly from the respondents' roles as identified in the methodology section and not based on the specifics of a location. In future studies, if the respondents' roles can be expanded to a particular area or state, this research can capture more in-depth data. This study also solely used qualitative methods to address the challenges in Quranic disposal practices in Malaysia. In further studies, a mixed methods approach should be implemented to further strengthen the findings of the research. Additionally, future studies should highlight the factors that influence Quranic disposal from both internal and external perspectives to provide a deeper understanding of Quranic disposal in Malaysia.

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Paper Contribution to Related Field of Study

This paper contributes to the field of record management by examining the various dimensions of disposing of Quranic texts and Islamic informational resources, with an emphasis on practices in Malaysia. By exploring the obstacles faced in Quranic disposal initiatives, the research provides important insights by utilizing interviews with stakeholders, evaluating existing practices, and reflecting on Islamic legal viewpoints, aiming to present an extensive understanding of this vital topic. These findings emphasize technological, environmental, financial, and logistical challenges that persist and require additional focus. This study not only contributes to the current body of work on Quranic disposal but also highlights the necessity for creative, sustainable approaches to manage the growing number of Quranic materials while maintaining their sacredness and environmental integrity.

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