

CHAPTER 5

COST ELEMENTS IN MUSLIM FUNERAL MANAGEMENT

5.1 Introduction

This research presents a qualitative academic empirical study to better understand the reality behind the decision regarding the cost of Muslim funerals today. This phenomenon is related to the development Muslim funeral cost framework based on the inputs from selected respondents. Thus, this chapter will present the findings on Muslim funeral cost elements based on interviews conducted with representatives from 17 Muslim funeral management organisations.

5.2 Obligation

The concept of *Fard kifayah* in Islam dictates that when a person dies, it is the deceased's right to have his body managed according to the Islamic funeral rites, which falls to those living. According to Maftuh Ahnan *et al.* (2005), there are four main components of the Islamic funeral rites: washing the body, shrouding, praying, and burial. Therefore, the obligation arising from the results of washing, shrouding, funeral prayer and burial is obligatory and is fulfilled as a communal responsibility (*Fard kifayah*) and religious duty without forgetting anything. The imposition of this communal obligation awakens in Muslims a deep sense of duty to ensure that the deceased is treated with respect and dignity in accordance with Islamic teachings.

5.2.1 Washing (*al-Ghusl*)

Washing the body is the first thing that should be done as part of the Islamic funeral rites. It is done as a symbol of respect for the rights of the deceased. Several requirements must be fulfilled when washing the body to maintain its cleanliness, specifically to perform cleansing or *istinjah*, which includes cleaning the cavity below the navel and the head cavity. Furthermore, water should be poured over the entire body to remove excrement. During this process, funeral directors commonly use specialised materials, which incurs additional costs.

These materials are described below,

“For the washing material, we need to have a sintok, soap, or shampoo (do not contain alcohol, the soap is clean and pure), rose water is for the last wash for the body. When we do the last wash, we mix rose water, soap, camphor, sandalwood powder in the water bucket, then we stir it off when we have finished wash and take ablution (wudhu) for the body, then we pour the mixed water as a last water. The reason for the water is to remove dirt, smell of dirtiness and others.”²⁸

Regarding the use of *sidr* or *bidara* leaves, even though their use is recommended as part of the sunnah, only some Muslim funeral directors use them as these leaves could be difficult to obtain in some places.

“Despite to have bidara leave is sunnah, we're trying to have it too. Our method in preparing the leaves; we blend, and we plant it in the graveyard areas. We blend by using mixer early then we get into fridge. We'll take it to the van if the washing task is being perform in a van. This is due in the van, we don't have a mixer machine, so the leaves we need to be ready early.”²⁹

“For washing the body, the bidara leaves are still used. We take it from people's houses because it's easily available here; Most houses

²⁸ R7. 23 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

²⁹ R12. 11 August 2022. (Personal Interview)

are able to provide (can say in one village there are five or six houses that are planting bidara and the trees are large; easy to take.”³⁰

According to respondents R14 and R12, *bidara* leaves are easily found in their area as *bidara* trees are planted in most houses or cemetery compounds to get the leaves for funeral arrangements. Donating them is a common practice for community members; hence, it is possible to get them for free for funeral management purposes.

During the interview, R12 also shared how the *bidara* leaves are used in funeral management. Some funeral directors would crush and mix a large batch of *bidara* leaves with water. The solution is then stored in the fridge for later use. However, in some places where it is difficult to obtain *bidara* leaves, they are replaced by other materials, such as rose water, as mentioned by R13.

“We use rose water. The water of the bidara leaves is difficult to obtain in Sabah.”³¹

On the other hand, in this modern era, technological advances and new creative ideas have allowed fresh *bidara* leaves to be produced into other products such as *bidara* powder, liquid soap, and dried leaves. Such innovations have made *bidara* leaves more accessible, long-lasting, and easily used everywhere. This is exemplified by Respondent R5, who uses *bidara* powder to wash the body.

“During the process of washing the body, many ingredients were used, including rose water, sandalwood, bidara powder, and camphor.”³²

Another respondent, R3, mentioned that there are materials that are interchangeable with other materials that have the same function as rare and hard-to-

³⁰ R14. 28 July 2022. (Personal Interview)

³¹ R13. 9 August 2022. (Personal Interview)

³² R5. 15 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

find materials, such as sintok. It can be replaced by soaps that are easier to obtain in some areas. The use of readily available materials can reduce the cost of obtaining them.

“We usually use soap, sandalwood, camphor, and water. The sintok root we rarely use even though we know it is more or less the same as soap.”³³

Respondent R12 prefers liquid soap to bar soap that is commonly used by others. Using liquid soap makes their job easier than bar soap because they have to take more care when washing the body.

“To wash the body, we don't use bar soap because it is little hard. The liquid soap because it is simplified, then we also use camphor, sandalwood powder, and rose water; that's what we use.”³⁴

According to most respondents, the ingredients needed to wash the body are clean water, rose water, camphor, sandalwood powder, soap, shampoo, *sintok*, and *bidara* leaves. In this regard, funeral directors and family members prefer to follow the sunnah (perfect way) in completing body wash (al-ghusl).

“For washing body, we need soap, shampoo, water of the water, rose water, sandalwood, this new chalk is a basic item. All of these, it is a sunnah for fragrance. If there's no these item, it is no problem since it is not an obligation. Our society thinks it's mandatory, so they cannot wash the body when the items is not available. The truth it is sunnah thing and the only mandatory is water only. Then from a cost point of view these materials add up to cost.”³⁵

R4 highlighted that even though it is sunnah to use some materials, they are not obligatory. Hence, there is no problem if these materials are absent because water is the only necessary element. Funeral directors and family members need to understand that

³³ R3.14 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

³⁴ R12. 11 August 2021. (Personal Interview)

³⁵ R4. 15 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

using all these materials for body washing is not obligatory, especially if it is burdensome.

The number of materials used directly correlates with the total cost. Some additional materials are also required to clean up the body. Furthermore, funeral directors, specifically those who perform the washing, need some equipments to facilitate the washing process.

“For washing body; needs soap, gloves, camphor, apron, water bucket and place for wash.”³⁶

“...Next, cotton is also needed, then cotton buds to clean the nails, teeth and even ears of the remains. Then soap, rose water, sandalwood powder, camphor, gloves, apron and water bucket to pour the water. Okay so right now, we're still in a state of overshadowing by COVID. That means for the funeral management we still need to wear full PPE while managing the body.”³⁷

“We have a new approach for managing the body; we have an apron, glove, and kain basahan.”³⁸

According to statements given by respondents R9, R1, and R12, other equipments used include gloves, an apron, face mask, cotton, cotton bud, a water bucket, and a place for washing the body. Gloves, aprons, cotton, cotton bud, and face mask are disposable equipment. Usually, all these items are included in the funeral kit or package set, which costs approximately RM150³⁹. Water buckets and the place for washing the body are mostly provided by the *waqf* facilities provided in the *qaryah* mosque.

When managing the body, there are occasions when the body has impairments (*uzur*) that cannot be avoided and requires additional materials.

³⁶ R9. 20 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

³⁷ R13. August 9, 2022. (Personal Interview)

³⁸ R12. 11 August 2022. (Personal Interview)

³⁹ R4. 15 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

“...We use liquid to get out of the excrement more easily. Then to cover the bleeding, in addition to cotton we use the bandage to cover the bleeding.”⁴⁰

Other materials are also used to manage an impaired body (*uzur*), such as a liquid that makes it easier to remove the excrement and bandages to stop the bleeding and cover it up.

In addition to the cost of the materials required for the washing of the body, provision must also be made for fees for the payment of wages or so-called compensation (*saguhati*) to the funeral directors (body washers) entrusted in performing the rites. This is often included in the cost of funeral management.

“There is compensation (saguhati) or we call it wages for tukang mandi (funeral directors) who perform the washing task. In our qaryah, the wage does not have a specific rate, it is up to the heir to pay it.”⁴¹

“There are about three people who do it ... the compensation (saguhati) around two hundred (RM200). The leader will divide it among them, but there are also those who give alms. However, the mosque has already allocated two hundred RM200 for the washing.”⁴²

According to respondents R11 and R7, the payment rate is not set by the helpers, and some washers (*tukang mandi*) do not expect to be paid. The rates are mainly set by the mosque administration or the funeral management body. In some cases, the rate is decided by the deceased's next of kin according to their financial means.

“For the washer, the wage costs between RM200 or RM300 depending on the condition of the remains sometimes the remains are decomposed, we may think the risk is higher. Sometimes need more

⁴⁰ R12. 11 August 2022. (Personal Interview)

⁴¹ R11. 3 August 2022. (Personal Interview)

⁴² R7. 23 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

*because the remains are big but probably below RM300. So for washing, RM300 for washer plus RM150, so total RM450 ringgit*⁴³

*“First, wash and shroud, RM200.”*⁴⁴

*” We have a standard rate for funeral wash which is one hundred (RM100) for each remains. Then the materials for wash and shroud, all we give for free.”*⁴⁵

According to respondent R4, payment received by the washer ranges from RM 200 to RM 300, depending on the risk, size, and condition of the body. Respondent R1, mentioned a payment of RM 200 for washing and shrouding the body while respondent R6 specified a standard wage of RM 100 for a body.

Usually, the payment is based on the value agreed by the management and will be divided according to the number of washers involved on the day.

*“For washing and shrouding, it has been stated two hundred (RM200). There are around 3 people who are performing this task. The leader as head of the team will divide among them... Then, we can give to our assistant fifty (RM50) to sixty (RM60).”*⁴⁶

*“Pay for the funeral directors for both task; wash and shroud is RM200. If there are two funeral directors, then the amount is divided to two; each get RM100.”*⁴⁷

*“The range is from one hundred fifty (RM150) to two hundred (RM200). Oh, that's just how things are around here. In most cases, there are two people in charge of the funeral, and one of them is designated as the chief. Family members also lend a hand.”*⁴⁸

*“For washing, we have a package of four people with the payment for a hundred and fifty dollars (RM150).”*⁴⁹

⁴³ R4. 15 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

⁴⁴ R1. 14 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

⁴⁵ R6. 16 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

⁴⁶ R7. 25 August 2022. (Personal Interview)

⁴⁷ R3. 14 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

⁴⁸ R11. 3 August 2022. (Personal Interview)

⁴⁹ R17. 25 August 2022. (Personal Interview)

Respondent R7 allocated between RM50 and RM60 to each helper (approximately 3 to 4 assistants) while respondent R17 employs more helpers to manage the remains. He normally has four helpers which are paid between RM40 to RM50 each. This is in contrast to R3 and R11 who are funeral directors responsible for washing and shrouding the body. They mainly take on the role of a leader during the washing process and the process will involve other members of the family.

Meanwhile, some places still do not allocate for payments wages and the funeral rites are practised as an act of mutual help (*gotong-royong*).

“In our qaryah, there is no wage. I mean in terms of taking care for washing and shrouding, there is no wages directly...sometimes we also object to receiving saguhati from family members. Because we know the family members have just lost their family members, that means we don't want to make it a burden on the family members to pay to the funeral directors (upah) earlier.”⁵⁰

According to the statement from respondent R13, the family is in a state of grief and hardship after the death of their family members; therefore, it is not worth adding to their burden by charging them a payment for the funeral directors and helpers; rather, they are more concerned with assisting the family and easing their burden and hardship by practising *gotong royong*. The *gotong-royong* for funeral rites is performed by family members and members of the community.

“Washing...usually for the men takes an hour. But for woman, depend on the situation; takes an hour to an hour and half. The time mentioned is till the shroud. It's not complicated for a man compare to a woman who takes a bit extra time.”⁵¹

“Half an hour of washing, half an hour of shrouds usually.”⁵²

“An hour.”⁵³

⁵⁰ R13. 9 August 2022. (Personal Interview)

⁵¹ R1. 14 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

⁵² R3. 14 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

⁵³ R5. 15 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

“Takes approximately an hour to half an hour.”⁵⁴

“40 minutes to an hour⁵⁵.”

According to R1, R2, R3, and R5, the average time required for the management of male body is one hour, while R1 specified that the time required for the management of female remains is more than an hour since the management of female body is slightly more complex.

In addition to the funeral directors assigned to conduct the washing and shrouding, family members are permitted and strongly encouraged to participate in the management of the body.

“Usually take two people outsiders (funeral directors) and we encourage his family to join.”⁵⁶

“During the process; washing and shrouding, we'll allow only five people with SOP. Three from our side (the mosque) and two family's members, who helped.”⁵⁷

“Sometimes there are not enough heirs to help, so we send more, 4, 5 people because at least the best number of people is three and the most 5 people. It can't be so much. Three to five people is enough but we're prioritising the heirs to the handle. Sometimes the heirs want to join, so we open the space. If the heirs are not able to help, then we need to call others to help them, so that's what we hire volunteer.”⁵⁸

R4 explained that allowing family members to participate in managing their loved one's body can lessen the need to involve paid helpers, which in turn, reduce the cost of paying them. However, in some cases, the family members are unwilling to participate and there will be a need for additional payments for helpers who will come to the location to assist in managing the funeral.

⁵⁴ R4. 15 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

⁵⁵ R2. 7 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

⁵⁶ R4. 15 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

⁵⁷ R1. December 2021. (Personal Interview)

⁵⁸ R4. 15 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

5.2.2 Shrouding (*al-Kafn*)

According to the Muslim funeral rite, the body will be shrouded with a white cloth after washing it. The *kafn* or the shrouding cloth will be placed over the deceased's body. The process should be done as thoroughly as possible with clean, modest, and pure cloth to not burden the family.

“Washing and shrouding are two common processes. So, we will use the same materials for shrouding as we use for the washing, such as sandalwood powder. We also use it for the shrouding.”⁵⁹

This statement from R2 clarifies that funeral directors use almost the same materials for washing and shrouding. In this regard, the funeral directors will put sufficient portions of the items used for washing and shrouding in the funeral management kit or set.

Some materials are necessary to complete the shrouding process to ensure the process can be done accurately and perfectly!

“For shrouding, we will put sandalwood powder, rose water, attar oil on the deceased. Then, we use cotton roll...”⁶⁰

“The materials needed for the funeral are shrouding cloth and a set of materials; one piece of shrouding cloth, five packs of sandalwood powder, four packs of rolled cotton, one pack of a cotton bud, there is also one black eyeliner to put on the female body, and sometimes for the male body (if they prefer), rose water, one pack of camphor and musk perfume...”⁶¹

According to R12 and R16, common materials needed for shrouding are shrouding cloth, cotton rolls, sandalwood powder, camphor, attar oil, and perfume. Meanwhile, some bodies require material stated by R16, like eyeliner (*celak*),

⁵⁹ R2. 7 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

⁶⁰ R12. 11 August 2022. (Personal Interview)

⁶¹ R16. 29 July 2022. (Personal Interview)

commonly used for female bodies. R16 uses a complete funeral management kit that contains all the items in smaller packets, making it easier for funeral directors to use.

Compared to other materials, the shrouding cloth used to cover the body is the most important material needed. The total number of shroud layers used to cover the body also differs for men and women.

*"..this shroud cloth should be large; for a male body, we need three pieces. If we have extra, then we ask the permission of the next of kin to use some extra clothing like a pair of shirts, a sarong, and a turban, which are men's main three-piece clothing items. Meanwhile, a female body requires a lot of accessories, like cawat (underwear) and telekung (prayer wear) ."*⁶²

*"Normally, we use three layers of shrouding cloth for a male body. A female body requires five layers, including the telekung.. Moreover, men have a sarong, a shirt, and a turban as accessories."*⁶³

*"...items like the serban (turban) and kopiah are typically provided by the family. We asked for the kopiah that the deceased always wore for prayer, just as we would have requested if we were going to put kopiah. Like women, we typically use her prayer cloths (telekung)."*⁶⁴

Furthermore, R7 and R13 also stated that male bodies require 3 layers of shrouding cloth, and if there is extra, the funeral directors will ask permission from the heirs for additional accessories such as a robe, a sarong, and a turban. Meanwhile, a female body needs 5 layers of shrouding clothes and additional accessories besides the main layer, which add to the use of cloth such as *cawat* (underwear) and *telekung* (prayer wear). In contrast, R14 asked for common accessories used by the deceased, such as *kopiah*, turban, or prayer cloth, typically provided by the family members.

⁶² R7. 23 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

⁶³ R13. 9 August 2022. (Personal Interview)

⁶⁴ R14. 28 July 2022. (Personal Interview)

The cloth is long, so then the funeral director will cut it. If a man's body, three. He cut it into three., For a woman, we'll cut it into five. So he/she got the same size standard.”⁶⁵

According to R1 and R7, the original shrouding cloth is long (without sheets or layers), and it is up to the funeral director to cut it to the required number of sheets or layers; three layers for men and five layers for women. Each cut has a standard size, and its dimensions can be freely chosen.

*“Then for shrouding materials, we have shroud cloth, cotton, cendana (sandalwood), camphor, and usually the cost for these items is below RM200.”*⁶⁶

*“The shrouding set costs RM200. The sets complete with the shroud cloth, the camphor, the rose water, all related powders.”*⁶⁷

*“And we charge two hundred ringgits for the shrouding cloth and other related items (RM200).”*⁶⁸

*“Like us, we charge 150 ringgit (RM150) a set. That's the price of all the goods and the profits we get.. we don't want to burden people.”*⁶⁹

R1 and R4 explained that most sets contain a sufficient portion of each required material and are priced at RM200 or less. On the other hand, R4 creates his own set and offers the kit for sale for only RM150. For R4, the cost charged for the set is already reasonable and will not burden customers. These sets include every material needed to prepare bodies for the funeral. They greatly help funeral directors as they do not need to search for each item.

“There is little difference for women, which is a little costly. There is a place that charges a hundred eighty (RM180). This is because shroud cloth for women is more than a man's body. A man's body has three pieces, and a woman's body has up to five pieces. There is a

⁶⁵ R1. 14 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

⁶⁶ R4. 15 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

⁶⁷ R1. 14 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

⁶⁸ R17. 25 August 2022. (Personal Interview)

⁶⁹ R4. 15 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

*place that makes clothes. So that is why we run a little bit at the cost.”*⁷⁰

On the other hand, according to respondent R11, the cost of materials for female bodies is significantly higher than that for males. This discrepancy results from the difference between the amount of additional shrouding cloths and the cotton rolls used. At the same time, additional accessories may incur additional costs.

In addition to the expenses for the materials mentioned by the respondents, another cost that should be considered is the payment for helpers involved in shrouding and washing the body. According to the respondents, the tasks of washing and shrouding the body are carried out simultaneously (one after the other) by the same funeral directors. As a result, the washing and shrouding payment is paid in one go. As mentioned, the payment for washing and shrouding is between RM50 and RM200.

5.2.3 Funeral Prayer (*Solat al-Janazah*)

The *Janazah* Prayer will be performed after the body has been washed and shrouded. Scholars agreed that prayers must be held for every deceased Muslim being the body is buried, and doing so is a *Fard kifayah*.

*” For prayer, we do it for free (no fee). ”*⁷¹

*” ...from what I know, there is no instruction from the religious office nor the Islamic Religious Council. Nevertheless, doesn't mean it doesn't exist. No payment is needed. If anyone gives money for the Solat, we will not take it. ”*⁷²

“To be shariah-compliant, we want to correct how the community does it; They think everything involves a cost to the point that prayers also need payment, and they need to pay people to pray. The kenduri

⁷⁰ R11. 3 August 2022. (Personal Interview)

⁷¹ R9. 20 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

⁷² R11. 3 August 2022. (Personal Interview)

(feast) is also included in the cost. There are still people who do this."⁷³

For the funeral prayers, respondents R9 and 11 stated that there is no payment for performing a prayer for the deceased, either for the imam leading the funeral prayer or the congregation present. R4 stated that the community's understanding should be corrected to create awareness that no payment is required for the prayer. R11 mentioned that he follows instructions from the Islamic religious council in the state. He takes no wages for prayer and will not receive it if any member of the community offers it.

*"For prayer, we give him (the imam) 50 ringgit (RM50), talqin RM50."*⁷⁴

*"...The imam has already spent his time for prayer and talqin, so we'll give him 100 ringgit (RM100) as a gratuity. We also give RM100 to the managing officer. If there are two officers, each officer gets 50 ringgit (Usually, the AJK Khairat of the community area (taman) who is in charge of this matter) ..."*⁷⁵

*"Talqin, for the imam, we have scheduled his agenda in one day, and we will pay accordingly until the burial is completed. For example, one day, he recites the talqin. After that, he will lead the prayer. Then he will escort the burial. This means there are three tasks, talqin, prayer and talqin at the grave, so we give him RM40."*⁷⁶

On the other hand, respondent R1 allocated a gift of RM50 for the imam of prayer, and R3 allocated the imam's payment of around RM100 for the prayer and *talqin*. This payment is considered a gratuity for the imam's time. Lastly, R15 pays RM40 to the imam conducting the *talqin*, prayer, and *talqin* at the cemetery.

⁷³ R4. 15 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

⁷⁴ R1. 14 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

⁷⁵ R3. 14 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

⁷⁶ R15. 4 August 2022. (Personal Interview)

5.2.4 Burial (*Dafn*)

After washing, shrouding and prayers, the body will be brought to the cemetery for burial. In this cemetery, bodies will be buried before being resurrected in the afterlife. As the final rite, a grave hole will be dug before the body is buried.

“But we've got specific people who are going to dig, and we have five to six people that specialised in digging the grave...”⁷⁷

“...sometimes four people take turns..”⁷⁸

As for the digging of graves, R8 explained that they have specific helpers appointed and assigned to dig the hole of the grave. Between four to six people will take a turn and prepare for the task of digging the grave.⁷⁹

“If you look at the flow, it will take three hours to dig.. let us say they call us at 8 am, so we'll take an hour to get there and to set up the team. Okay, at 9 o'clock we'll wash the body so we'll book a grave site.. from that call we'll call the gravesite in three hours, 9, 10, 11, the burial will be at 11. So from 9 o'clock, we'll wash the body. At 10 o'clock, pray and prepare for burial.”⁸⁰

“Three hours to four hours.”⁸¹

The task of digging the graves will be carried out faster and smoother when there is collaboration between the gravediggers. In some places, the graves are ready to be dug, but some graveyards only allow digging after they receive the burial permit. R4 and R2 explained that digging a grave usually takes three to four hours. Hence, for the preparation of the grave, as soon as the news is received, several grave diggers must work together so that the grave hole can be dug quickly before the body reaches the graveyard.

⁷⁷ R8. 28 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

⁷⁸ R7. 23 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

⁷⁹ R7. December 23, 2021. (Personal Interview)

⁸⁰ R4. 15 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

⁸¹ R2. 7 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

Normally, there is already a standard size and depth for the grave hole. However, no definite rule determines the depth of the grave as this depends on the local customs and soil conditions at the burial site. Remembering that the grave must meet the necessary health and safety requirements is also important.

“In this light, the grave is always dug at chest level so wild animals can't rummage it up. That's why it needs to be deep. Because a body has a distinct smell, wild animals will dig the grave if there is a smell. If the grave is deep, for protection, we use a board called a lahd board. The lahd board actually helps to cover the body. If it's not there, animals can rummage through the grave. Our main enemies are tigers and pigs. These animals always dig the grave.. animals like tigers like carcasses, and they can smell if there is a grave nearby, this is if the grave is near the forest, but in the city, there are no wild animals, only dogs that disturb the grave. For size, the standard size for a grave is six feet long and four feet wide. Normally, Malaysian don't even reach six feet tall.”⁸²

R7 explained that the normal depth is at the chest level. Burying the body at this depth can avoid odour to prevent animals from digging and disturbing the grave. The gravedigger will also dig according to the size of the body. The standard size of a grave is four feet deep and six feet long (4 feet deep x 6 feet long).

In terms of payment, there is an allocated wage paid to the gravedigger digging the grave, as stated:

“For the burial, gravediggers are paid three hundred and fifty (RM350), which is the same for the female and male body. This task requires energy.”⁸³

“Then the pay for the gravedigger is RM300.”⁸⁴

“A grave digger usually charges around four hundred (RM400).”⁸⁵

“Three hundred (RM300) for manual digging.”⁸⁶

⁸² R7. 23 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

⁸³ R9. December 20, 2021. (Personal Interview)

⁸⁴ R3. December 14, 2021. (Personal Interview)

⁸⁵ R6. December 16, 2021. (Personal Interview)

⁸⁶ R5. December 15, 2021. (Personal Interview)

"That day in the meeting, each agreed to RM150, but now RM170. The payment is a gratuity, not a wage. Let's say there's three or five people. They will divide equally. It's not pay or wage. It's a gratuity...as a courtesy. It's up to them whether they want to accept it or don't. Because sometimes we give, they don't want to accept; some say, "just donate to the surau or mosque".⁸⁷

"There is a pay for the gravedigger. The gravedigger usually gets fifty ringgit (50 ringgit) per person. Normally, there are two."⁸⁸

As shown in the above statement, respondents R9, R3, R6, R5 and R15 stated that the wage paid to grave diggers ranges from RM170 to RM400 for female and male bodies, and this process relies entirely on manual labour. The amount paid will then be divided equally among the grave diggers performing the duty. This differs for R14, who pays RM50 directly to each grave digger. In the meantime, for R15, the payment is more of a gratuity than a wage payment. There are times when the gravediggers did not want to accept the gratuity payment and asked for the money to be donated to any charity fund.

"They are not full-time, they got other jobs, but when there's death, they're experts that we call for help."⁸⁹

"Not full-time, we will call him when there is death."⁹⁰

"But we're still taking three hundred. Sometimes, the gravedigger can't dig because he has other work and so on. This is just part-time. They can't work full-time. Because death doesn't happen every day. They can't work full-time. He's got to work every day."⁹¹

R16, R7 and R11 explained that most grave diggers are part-timers (not full-time workers) because deaths do not occur daily. However, they need to be always prepared to be ready as soon as they receive the news of a death. In this light, according to R11,

⁸⁷R15. 4 August 2022. (Personal Interview)

⁸⁸R14. 28 July 2022. (Personal Interview)

⁸⁹R16. 29 August 2022. (Personal Interview)

⁹⁰R7. 22 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

⁹¹R11. 3 August 2022. (Personal Interview)

there are also constraints because, as part-timers, the grave diggers sometimes cannot dig the grave when needed due to other job demands or they are working their main job at the time. Hence, they must find other alternatives to overcome the lack of diggers.

Yes, yes. If he's free, he is a rubber cutter. Ah. What's its name? If we tell him early, he'll be there.. if he goes to work already, if he has time when he gets back.. but he'll let us know if he don't have time. If we don't have time, then we'll call the excavators.. excavator is cheaper, just two hundred (RM200).⁹²

As shared by R11, the gravedigger is a part-timer who works as a rubber cutter. If he was told the news of the death early before he went to work but did not have time to dig the grave, R11 would seek excavator services to dig the hole. The cost of excavators is around RM200 and is cheaper than the wages for grave diggers.

For graveyards located in the city, like shared by R4, who is a funeral director for bodies in Kuala Lumpur, those deceased need to be buried in specific graveyards (centralised burial grounds) allocated for those who passed and buried in the area. Payments for graveyard-related matters, such as the pay for the gravedigger and the graveyard charges, are made directly to the cemetery.

"Funeral costs in KL range from RM400 to RM1200 for locals. For a foreigner, the cost is RM400 to RM2000. Even JAWI managed graveyard, Rhaudatul Sakinah, which is a waqf grave also charged up to RM1700 for foreigners. The 1200 ringgit grace is a qaryah grave. Example [grave] Gombak UIA."⁹³

Some places have full-time gravediggers who have made grave. The monthly salary to the gravedigger is fixed, hence, each grave digger will dig half of the number of graves per month and they will receive additional payment for more graves dug.

⁹² R11. 3 August 2022. (Personal Interview)

⁹³ R4. 15 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

“ A thousand a month.. More than four means we're going to pay around rm400 for one grave.”⁹⁴

According to respondent R10, they pays the gravediggers an allowance of RM1000 per month. In this case, based on the rate of allowance, the gravedigger will need to prepare four graves (approximately RM250 per grave). They are also paid RM400 per additional grave.

However, some also use the hybrid technique to use the services of grave diggers and backhoe or excavators.

“The first step is to make a seven-foot hole using a backhoe and, then, to get the shape of the grave hole, we'll use a digger. Because it is like.. we need to determine the shape and size of the body. As for the backhoe, the owner gives it as a charity. Often, will come alone. Sometimes when he comes to the grave and offers to do it, he doesn't wait for us to ask him”.⁹⁵

R14 explained that the backhoe helps excavate the first mineral hole seven feet deep. Although the backhoe makes the digging easier by expediting the process of digging the ground, the service of grave diggers is still needed, especially to shape the *lahd* and trim or clean the area surrounding the grave hole (backhoes or excavators can only dredge a hole) according to the shape and size of the body to prepare for the burial. In this regard, a member of the *qaryah* owns an excavator, and he offers free service of his excavator. For him, donating a form of service or resources is an act of charity or *sadaqah*.

In addition, the cost of the burial includes the *lahd* board, which is included in the cost of the graveyard. A *lahd* board or grave hole board is a wooden plank used to cover the body in the graveyard before it is buried in the ground, as stated by R13:

⁹⁴ R10. January 12, 2022. (Personal Interview)

⁹⁵ R14. 28 July 2022. (Personal Interview)

*"When the body has been placed into the lahd, it is not buried yet.. we have to close the remains using a board. That's what we use here for burial."*⁹⁶

*"Like a lahd board, we're usually used to a 2 x 4 thick board and four pieces of 1 x 4. So the cost is about RM150."*⁹⁷

These boards are usually made of strong and durable wood. The size also varies according to the grave hole to be covered. According to R15, the size for a *lahd* board is 2 x 4 feet and 1 x 4 feet for the pole.

*"Another one hundred ringgit (RM100) for the lahd board."*⁹⁸

*A grave digger usually charges around four hundred (RM400) after this kepok which we call a board that is four squares more than one hundred (RM100) more than his price."*⁹⁹

Apart from the payment for the gravediggers, the other costs associated with this burial include the cost of the *lahd* board, which is around RM100 to RM150.

5.3 Necessity to Complete the Obligation

The theme necessity to complete the obligation arises from the fact that transportation is an essential part of Muslim funerals. The reason for this is that transportation plays an important role in fulfilling religious obligations, community duties, practical concerns, and cultural expectations. Islam places great importance on a speedy funeral, so a quick journey to the burial site is essential to fulfil this obligation, especially if it is far away. One of the most important aspects of fulfilling the obligations

⁹⁶ R13. August 9, 2022. (Personal Interview)

⁹⁷ R15. 4 August 2022. (Personal Interview)

⁹⁸ R3. December 14, 2021. (Personal Interview)

⁹⁹ R6. December 16, 2021. (Personal Interview)

associated with Muslim burial practices is therefore the provision of suitable transportation to ensure that the body is brought to the burial site.

5.3.1 Transportation

Once the washing, shrouding, and funeral prayer of the deceased is completed, the body will be taken to the burial ground for interment. It is highly recommended to expedite the burial of the deceased. Nowadays, transportation is an important and convenient medium to quickly transport the body from home or mosque to the cemetery for burial.

“Then, the most needed thing is, to go to the cemetery from the house, there should be transportation. In the past, we used to carry the coffin on foot, but now it’s modern times, right? Long ago, when we compare it to back then, when we used to walk, then a truck, and now we have a suitable vehicle, for example, a funeral van.”¹⁰⁰

As the distance between the deceased’s home and the cemetery is usually several kilometres up to tens of kilometres, it is not relevant to accompany the funeral procession on foot as it takes quite a long time. For R15, a good vehicle, such as a funeral van, is needed to transport the body from the place of death to the burial ground. This process can be expedited.

“For transportation costs, we usually charge fifty ringgit (RM50) for transport within one kilometre. One kilometre from the place of the incident, from the place of death to the grave. For distances exceeding one kilometre up to ten kilometres, it is one hundred ringgit (RM100), and for distances exceeding one hundred kilometres, we charge one hundred and fifty ringgit (RM150), depending on the distance, whether it’s far or near.”¹⁰¹

“Then, the fee for the funeral van from the house or mosque to the cemetery is RM40. Sometimes, the family wants to wash the deceased at home and pray at the mosque. We will pick up the body from the

¹⁰⁰ R15. 4 August 2022. (Personal Interview)

¹⁰¹ R17. 25 August 2022. (Personal Interview)

house and bring it to the mosque for prayer and then take it directly to the cemetery.”¹⁰²

“Then, RM100 is charged for the management van.”¹⁰³

“Our van charges RM20 because it feels like it’s close to Sg Kelambu, where the cemetery is located. However, in the event of someone’s passing, it’s sometimes the initiative of the heirs or the Nazir’s initiative because the Nazir may want to do good deeds. If they hear about a death occurring in a particular area like Klang, they would immediately go there. So, we provide more services such as RM50 for petrol. The basic fee for the van driver, I will still give RM20.”¹⁰⁴

For members of the *qaryah*, a lump sum payment is charged for the management and transportation costs. It is not calculated by kilometres but rather by trip because most of the distances are within the respective *qaryah*. According to respondents R3, R15, R16, and R17, the transportation cost for a deceased range from RM20 to RM100 for a trip within the respective *qaryah* or village.

“The van, we will charge, usually ranging from RM100 up to RM1000 depending on the distance. The distance is calculated for a round trip. Normally, we will base the calculation on mileage in kilometres. RM1 per km. For example, if we were to travel to Kelantan, which is 400km away, the round trip would be 800km. So, that’d be RM800. This fee includes fuel, driver’s wage, maintenance, and everything else. Usually, we at SPJM will save a portion of this cost to help those who are struggling. Sometimes, we will provide support for those who cannot afford the full RM800 cost.”¹⁰⁵

In the case of R4, the cost for the funeral van transportation ranges from RM100 up to RM1000, depending on the distance. It is calculated based on mileage in kilometres. Furthermore, he explained that this fee includes expenses for the driver’s wage, maintenance, and other related costs. Additionally, any excess funds from the fee

¹⁰² R16. 29 July 2022. (Personal Interview)

¹⁰³ R3. 14 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

¹⁰⁴ R15. 4 August 2022. (Personal Interview)

¹⁰⁵ R4. 15 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

are used to help those who are facing financial difficulties and unable to afford the service.

The transportation cost charged accounts for the overall funeral management cost, as the management needs to consider the relatively high maintenance cost, annual road tax, and fuel costs, all of which are necessary expenses that must be incurred.

“Then, if, say, we understand that the deceased is from qaryah outside of ours, normally we would take 30 kilometres to this— this mosque. We will discuss; one kilometre for one ringgit. One ringgit, including toll charge, for a round trip.”¹⁰⁶

“It’s just, say, if someone passed away, the family wants to bring the body back. They can add extra mileage, which rate has been predetermined at the general meeting. For members, the mileage rate is RM1.50 per kilometre. For non-members, RM1.80 per kilometre.”¹⁰⁷

For those who wish to bring the deceased’s body back to their hometown or other locations or from other *qaryah* to the cemetery, the cost will be calculated based on the number of kilometres. According to R6 and R3, the cost per kilometre ranges from RM1 to RM1.80. However, for R3, there is an additional charge for non-members, which is set at RM1.80 per kilometre, while members are charged only RM1.50 per kilometre.

“The mosque is responsible for the maintenance. We will prepare a driver, the mosque will prepare them, and to the driver, we will provide the van free of charge for the qaryah member. Then, we will pay some wages to the driver. On one trip with the deceased body, we will give around twenty (RM20) to thirty (RM30). However, the mosque provides the fuel for the van. We provide them for our qaryah members. Even though we are not a charity, we provide van services free of charge. The fuel expenses for the van are also covered by the mosque. For the mosque in Kampung Darat.”¹⁰⁸

“The funeral van doesn’t have any cost because each mosque provides it, as mentioned earlier. That means, sometimes, we provide fuel for free to the van driver to refill the fuel. To replace the used

¹⁰⁶ R6. 16 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

¹⁰⁷ R3. 14 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

¹⁰⁸ R11. 3 August 2022. (Personal Interview)

fuel. Because the mosque has prepared the funeral van fully fueled so that it can be taken wherever it is needed. And when we use it, it means we reimburse the fuel money for the funeral van that was used earlier.”¹⁰⁹

There are also funeral transportation costs that are sponsored by the mosque for its *qaryah* members. According to R11, there is no charge (it’s free) for funeral transportation for *qaryah* members. The mosque covers all costs, including helpers’ allowances, fuel, and maintenance. As for R13, although there are no transportation costs because the van is a charitable donation, the same expenses are usually incurred, such as fuel costs when using it to transport the deceased, and these expenses are reimbursed to the management.

*“For the transportation, the funeral van, everything will be taken care of by the mosque. It’s all free. We have provided a donation box in the funeral van. If anybody wants to donate, we encourage it. But we won’t force anyone. However, if the family is financially able, they will usually donate around hundred and fifty. Meaning we don’t fix the amount. We only prepare a donation box. When we go to the burial site, they (family members) will ride with us in the funeral van, and they might see the donation box. We are not asking for payments because even the funeral van is donated. As of yesterday, I just finished the AJK meeting. We started using the funeral van around February or January. And so far, the total amount collected for the maintenance of the van is already around RM3,000.”*¹¹⁰

The situation differs for R14, which does not set any fees for van management costs. According to him, the cost of the van is free and taken care of by the mosque. A donation box is provided in the van to allow family members who want to contribute. By not setting any fees and only providing a donation box in the van, many people donate more than is needed, and now the donation box has collected around RM3,000.

¹⁰⁹ R13. 9 August 2022. (Personal Interview)

¹¹⁰ R14. 28 July 2022. (Personal Interview)

5.4 Others

The theme of the 'other' arises from the costs associated with the *talqin* and the gravestone, which, as non-essential aspects of the funeral, are not obligatory but nevertheless play a role and become an option. In this study, the cost of the *talqin* and gravestone were only mentioned by a proportion of respondents, suggesting that these items are not obligatory and were not weighted by all. *Talqin* and gravestone are not mandatory and are preferred based on cultural practices and also family choice.

5.4.1 *Talqin*

The *talqin* reading is common practice recited as soon as the deceased is buried. *Talqin* is a formed of practice which is done with the intention to give guidance and consultation to passed away and beneficial as a reminder to the living. Majority of the Shafi'ieyyah ulama or religious scholar likes to recite *talqin* after the body is buried. This religious ritual is done by one man standing at the side of the graveyard area and recites “ Oh Fulan, Son of Fulan...” and so on. This is to show that only one man is needed to recite the *talqin* while the other attending only listens.

There are few number of respondents that includes payment to the imam to recite the *talqin* to cost of the funeral.

“*Talqin* RM50.”¹¹¹

“One *talqin* equals to fifty (RM50).”¹¹²

“For *salah* and *talqin*. Meaning the imam allocating his time for us, as a token of appreciation we give RM100 as a gift.”¹¹³

¹¹¹ R1. December 2021. (Personal Interview)

¹¹² R7. December 2021. (Personal Interview)

¹¹³ R3. December 2021. (Personal Interview)

“ talqin, the talqin imam will ensure he is present hence we will pay till reach the cemetery area for example on the talqin day, after the talqin recital there will be salah then straight accompanied to the grave. Meaning there will be 3 parts, talqin, salah and talqin at the cemetery area hence the payment will be RM40.”¹¹⁴

Respondent R1 and R7 both stated the cost of *talqin* are RM50, whilst R3 stated RM100 should be including salah and *talqin*. R3 added additional RM100 as token of gift to be given to the imam as an appreciation for extending his time arranging and handling the funeral; hence salah and *talqin* perfectly. As well as R15, a token worth RM40 to be given to the imam for carrying out three duties all at once starting from the *talqin*, salah till the cemetery are closing up with *talqin* recital.

“Usually, a gratuity is given to the imam. It’s a like package come with it. An imam will lead a funeral salah along with a talqin. Usually in my village, if a family could afford, they will a RM100. If a family is less capable, they will only give him RM25 to RM50 as gratuity. But at certain times there are some imam that refuse to take it as to respect the family who can’t really afford.”¹¹⁵

However, for respondent R14 a gratuity or gift to the imam for leading the salah and *talqin* is usually not fixed, hence according to the capability of the family with minimum of RM25; for a less capable family the amount is usually RM25 to RM50 but for a more capable family they usually bring it up to RM100. But at certain times there are also imam who refuse to accept the gratuity or gift especially for the less capable family.

“ But all the funeral cost are already included. At the same time, even the heirs are willingly wanted to give to the imam, the mosque still pays to the officer in a total of one thousand two hundred (RM1200) is still fixed given and divided for the duties such as bathing, imam talqin and so on. There are some issues came up on why the officers in charge need to be paid for working at the mosque is a free-will work. But because we are doing jobs and duties and other mosque

¹¹⁴ R15. 4 August 2022. (Personal Interview)

¹¹⁵ R14. 28 July 2022. (Personal Interview)

at a different zone also pays it is fair to make a fixed payment for them as to avoid any unwanted issue.”¹¹⁶

In addition, respondents R5 added the fixed payment accordingly is pushed by the local customs (on that particular mosque zone) for payment for washing and funeral shroud as well as imam *talqin*.

“The talqin does not include in the mosque funeral shroud. It is upon requested by the family.”¹¹⁷

“ talqin is put upon the responsibility of the imam.”¹¹⁸

R10 stated *talqin* is put upon the responsibility of the imam with no payment and it is up to the family members (either it is a personal gift towards the imam). Different from R12 regarding on *talqin* recital is not include in the mosque management. The management does not include this element in funeral cost that needed to be paid by the management itself. It is up to the family heirs.

5.4.2 Grave Enclosure (*Kepok*) and Gravestone

It has become a common practice nowadays to construct grave enclosures structures known as “*kepok*” and gravestones. *Kepok* is a structure made of wood or stone that is built around someone’s grave, usually in a rectangular shape. The construction of *kepok* does not have specific requirements, and heirs build them according to their own preferences.

“So, our hands are tied because the grave is not ours. So, once the grave management counts in the kepok, it becomes more expensive.

¹¹⁶ R5. 15 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

¹¹⁷ R12. 11 August 2022. (Personal Interview)

¹¹⁸ R10. 12 January 2022. (Personal Interview)

Then, they want some particular types of stones, and we have to agree. It's RM100 for the kepok board.”¹¹⁹

According to R3, they need to include an additional cost of RM100 for the kepok because the management of the cemetery is not within the authority of the mosque, so the mosque management needs to follow the specific requirements set by the cemetery management (the fee for kepok).

“But recently, the cemetery management has determined that they want to add RM150 for the gravestone. This stone will have a marker with a number indicating the grave, so we have to pay RM150 for the stone.”

In addition to the cost of kepok, respondent R3 explained that there is an additional cost of RM150 charged for the gravestone, which is for a marker indicating the grave location number. This makes it easier for family members to identify the location of the grave, especially for visitation purposes.

In some places, the cost of kepok needs to be increased to comply with the specifications set by cemetery management, especially in urban areas where graves are more centralized.

“So, they made it ready beforehand. That's why they requested an initial claim of RM1700 (for foreigners), which included the cost of kepok. That's where it became expensive. For example, if we agreed to make a white kepok, after three months, the heirs would come and say, “Okay, I want to make it this way.” So, they would use the money they asked from other heirs. However, to me, there's no actual need for it other than to make it look beautiful or neat. Still, that thing can be assisted through the Baitulmal fund because it's all we are doing at all at once.”¹²⁰

“Grave digging and deposit for kepok and gravestone. The mosque will take care of that. The kepok and gravestone cost around a thousand and a hundred in total (RM1100). We already have that

¹¹⁹ R3. 14 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

¹²⁰ R4. 15 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

deposit, and we will add it to the project. They all follow the guidelines issued by JAWI (Jabatan Agama Islam Wilayah Persekutuan). They have standard designs and whatnot; same design for kepok and gravestone.”¹²¹

R4 explains that the burial fee in his area has already been set priorly at RM1700 (for foreigners), which includes the cost of the *kepok*. However, he sees this as an unnecessary expense and only serves to make things look aesthetically pleasing. On the other hand, R7 estimates that the payment for the *kepok* and gravestone is RM1100, which has already been paid as a deposit. The cemetery management will provide the *kepok* and gravestone as soon as the deposit is received. The design of the *kepok* and gravestone follows specific specifications that have been chosen by the heirs, resulting in uniformity in the design of the *kepok* and gravestone in the burial area.

5.5 Discussion of the Findings

The study findings indicate that in terms of managing funerals, there are four cost elements of funeral management that must be obligated to accomplish, beginning with the ritual washing of the deceased, followed by shrouding, prayer, and burial. The obligation to wash the body of the deceased is derived from the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), as narrated by Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him):

اغْسِلُوهُ بِمَاءٍ وَسِدْرٍ، وَكَفَّنُوهُ فِي ثَوْبَيْنِ

Meaning: “Wash him with water and Sidr and shroud him in two pieces of cloth.”¹²²

¹²¹ R7. 23 December 2021. (Personal Interview)

¹²² Al-Bukhari. (Internet). Sahih al-Bukhari. #1265. <https://sunnah.com/bukhari:1265>.

In this hadith, the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) recommends using water mixed with the leaves of the *sidr* tree (*sidr*) for the ritual washing of the deceased. The leaves of the *sidr* tree serve to cleanse impurities from the body, soften the skin to facilitate the washing and shrouding process, strengthen the skin of the deceased, and prevent the body from emitting unpleasant odours (Yusri Yusof *et al.*, 2017; Akmal Haji Zain, 2012). Some respondents still use natural substances such as *sidr* leaves, especially in rural areas where they are easily obtainable. In villages, *sidr* trees are commonly grown in the neighbourhood and even in cemeteries, making it convenient for funeral organisers to obtain the leaves. At times, the leaves are given free of charge (without cost) as a charitable offering by local residents, especially for funeral purposes.

However, it is different in urban areas where funeral organisers mostly rely on readily available commercial products that are also easy to procure in such areas. All of these products come with a cost. Therefore, respondents in these areas substitute the use of *sidr* leaves with other materials that have similar functions, such as soap, alum, and rose water. Furthermore, there are some who use *sidr* leaves that have been innovatively processed to suit current needs and convenience, such as *sidr* powder, *sidr* soap, and so on. These products are more portable and have a longer shelf life.

All respondents use basic materials such as clean water, soap, camphor, sandalwood powder, and rose water. Local wisdom is also evident in funeral management, where substances such as alum, rose water, and sandalwood powder are utilised (Yusri Yusof *et al.*, 2017). In the preparation of essential materials for the ritual washing, it is also necessary to provide convenience items for the personnel involved, such as gloves, aprons, cotton swabs, and face masks, which are all disposable items. All of these items are included in the cost calculation, which can be obtained in the form of a set, package, or individual purchase.

In carrying out the ritual washing, all respondents ensure that it is done perfectly. It has become a common practice to perform this perfect washing in all parts of Malaysia. With the list of materials used and the process involved in washing the deceased, the funeral organisers fulfil their duty, follow the recommended practices, and adhere to the etiquette of handling the deceased.

In the mandatory element of washing the deceased, there are two aspects that are focused on in the calculation of funeral management costs, namely the cost of materials used and the wage of the washer. These materials can be obtained in the form of packages or kits, individual purchases, and also in bulk. As for the wage aspect, it is payment to washers (and also shrouders) around RM50 to RM300. From the findings of this study, it was also found that the cost of washing and shrouding are included as they use similar materials and the same personnel, such as shrouding materials like the shroud fabric, sandalwood powder, rose water, and attar oil. Sandalwood powder and rose water are also used in the process of washing the deceased, while shroud fabric and attar oil are specifically for shrouding. The shroud used to cover the body of the deceased must be sufficient to cover the entire body. Thus, women's funerals require slightly higher costs compared to men's as they require more shroud fabric layers (5 layers) and cotton rolls.

According to all respondents, the shroud used to wrap a deceased body in Malaysia is made of cotton and is predominantly white in colour. Specifically, the shroud is required to be white, clean, pure, simple, and durable (Hamidi *et al.*, 2020; Dahlan, 2020). While it is not mandatory to use white cloth for shrouding, they are practising what is recommended by the shariah by shrouding the deceased in white cloths, as mentioned in the Hadith narrated by Ibn Abbas R.A that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

أَبْسُوا مِنْ ثِيَابِكُمُ الْبَيَاضَ فَإِنَّهَا خَيْرُ ثِيَابِكُمْ وَكُنُوا فِيهَا مَوْتًاكُمْ

Meaning: “Wear your white garments, for they are among your best garments, and shroud your dead in them.”

The white garment is considered a beautiful attire and the most suitable clothing for a believer. The white shroud used for burial purposes signifies the attribute of simplicity, indicating that it is not excessively expensive or luxurious. As stated in the Hadith narrated by Abu Dawud with a reliable chain of narration from Ali R.A, from Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, it is necessary to avoid extravagance in shrouding the deceased. Verily, nothing is taken to the grave except the shroud and the scent emanating from it, be it for those who passed away in the past or in the present times. This serves as a valuable reminder and advice for anyone who wishes to reflect on and learn from it.

Table 5.1 : The Costs of Materials and Wages for Washing and Shrouding Elements

Costs	Materials	Wages
No Cost	2	2
Below RM100	1	2
RM101 to RM200	11	9
RM201 to RM300	1	3
RM301 to RM400	1	-
Not Applicable	1	1
TOTAL	17	17

Source: Author’s Findings (2024)

From the study findings, it was found that the cost of these materials ranges from RM100 to RM350 (for non-free services). The table 5.1 above indicates that the majority of respondents, 11 in total, stated that the cost of materials for washing and shrouding ranged from RM101 to RM200, with most placing the cost of materials at

RM200. Two respondents did not charge any fees for the cost of materials for washing and shrouding. One of these respondents is a non-profit organisation (NGO) that funded all the funeral management costs through public donations, and the other respondent stated that the materials were fully funded by the mosque.

In terms of wages, most respondents stated that the amount of remuneration is determined by the funeral management organisation, which they refer to as “*saguhati*” or gratuity. Based on the table 9 above, the majority of respondents, 9 in total, stated that the cost of wages for the body washers and shroud makers is between RM101 and RM200, with most placing the amount at RM200 (on average for 3-4 body washers and shroud makers for one deceased person). Two respondents did not charge any wages for the body wash and shrouding services. Two respondents were charging wages below RM100, with a minimum amount of RM50.

The cost for *saguhati* to funeral directors (the washers and shrouders) is determined by the organisation and not by the request or determination of the washers and shrouders themselves. For them, it is to show appreciation for the effort and time that the washers and shrouders have spent in completing the washing and shrouding process. The washing and shrouding process is usually carried out in a group (several washers and shrouders), with one person leading, and this process is usually accompanied by family members of the deceased as well. However, some respondents explained that in their area, there is no payment at all for these washers and shrouders because they still strongly adhere to the spirit of gotong royong in the community. Gotong royong means to cooperate together and is familiar as the spirit of the kampung (village) in Indonesian and Malaysian cultures (Thompson, 2004). In the past, neighbours, especially in rural communities, helped each other by providing physical labour or other assistance to build their houses for free (without asking for anything in

return). This spirit underpins citizens' kinship, and this cultural uniqueness empowers the communities (Yuhertiana et. al, 2022). This can be seen particularly among respondents in rural areas where washers and shrouders refuse this payment or set a very minimal amount because they do not want to burden the family members who are already facing grief over the loss of their loved ones. In contrast, in urban areas, most respondents have set a specific amount of payment proportional to the number of washers and shrouders needed.

For funeral prayers (*Solat*), the majority of respondents stated that no costs should be incurred for this prayer, whether for the imam or the attending congregation. One respondent even suggested that the community should be educated to reject receiving money for funeral prayers. However, in some areas of Malaysia, the practice of giving money and gifts to the attending congregation still exists and has become a local custom. Although this is not under the jurisdiction of funeral management or mosque authorities and is up to the family members, this can sometimes burden families who cannot afford it yet still feels obliged to follow the local custom. In addition, in this study, four respondents set a certain amount of money as “*saguhati*” or gratuity, not wages, as a token of appreciation to the imam for dedicating his time to lead the funeral prayer and recite the *talqin* and *tahlil*. Through this study, it is observed that the value of “*saguhati*” also varies according to location. In rural areas, an amount of RM40 is already considered “*saguhati*” for the imam who performs all three tasks of prayer, *talqin* and *tahlil*. This amount is already considered sufficient in rural areas for the cost of fuel and time spent by the imam in fulfilling his responsibilities. However, in urban areas, the value of “*saguhati*” starts from RM50 and is only for one task. If the imam leads two tasks, such as prayer and *talqin*, a payment of RM100 will be given to the imam.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings derived from the study's primary sources, i.e., interviews with the respondents. According to the findings of the study, there are three aspects associated directly with the costs: obligation, the necessity to complete the obligation and others. There are four obligatory elements with associated costs: washing, the shroud, prayer, and the burial. Whereas for the element of necessity according to age, transportation of the body is required. *talqin*, *kepok*, and gravestone are cost-related items. This chapter also covers the outcomes associated with the cost aspect.