

Rethinking Knowledge Waqf: Governance, Ethics, and Educational Sustainability in Islam

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Abstract

Knowledge waqf refers to the voluntary and perpetual endowment of intellectual assets—such as teaching, research, and mentorship—for public benefit, deeply rooted in Islamic philanthropic traditions. Using Creswell's (2013) qualitative literature review approach, this paper examines the evolution, application, and ethical challenges of knowledge waqf in Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Middle East. Key obstacles include weak governance frameworks, legal ambiguities, and ethical concerns about honoraria. The study proposes innovative strategies such as blockchain-enabled transparency and Open Educational Resources (OER) to revitalize knowledge waqf. It advances a hybrid governance model integrating Islamic ethics and modern administrative mechanisms. Theoretically, this paper expands the waqf paradigm to intellectual capital, aligning it with the Maqasid al-Shariah and SDG 4. The findings underscore the potential of knowledge waqf to foster educational equity and sustainability, offering policymakers a faith-based, ethically grounded tool for inclusive academic development.

Keywords: Knowledge Waqf, Islamic Philanthropy, Educational Sustainability, Maqasid al-Shariah, SDG 4 (Quality Education)

Introduction

Knowledge waqf refers to the voluntary and perpetual donation of intellectual assets—such as educational materials, scholarly expertise, research findings, and academic mentorship—by educators and intellectuals for the public good, without seeking financial compensation (Laluddin et al., 2021; Abd Aziz et al., 2023). Rooted in the Islamic philanthropic tradition of waqf, which historically involved dedicating physical assets like land or buildings for societal

benefit, knowledge waqf shifts the focus toward intangible resources that foster intellectual and educational development. This form of endowment offers a strategic model for addressing modern educational challenges while upholding the spirit of Islamic social responsibility.

Historically, knowledge waqf played a vital role in shaping the educational landscape across the Islamic world. Esteemed institutions such as Al-Azhar University in Egypt and the Nizamiyyah Madrasah in Baghdad were supported by waqf endowments, enabling them to provide free and high-quality education (Cizakca, 2000; Makdisi, 1981). These waqf-supported institutions operated independently from state control, allowing academic freedom and equitable access to education regardless of socio-economic status (Ahmed, 2002). Thus, knowledge waqf contributed not only to intellectual growth but also to social mobility by democratizing education.

In today's context, the revival of knowledge waqf is seen as a promising solution to the persistent financial and structural challenges confronting global education systems. As institutions grapple with limited resources and increasing demands for inclusive education, knowledge waqf presents a complementary model aligned with both Islamic ethics and global development goals (Osman and Mohammed, 2017; Mohaiyadin & Aman, 2021). By facilitating open access to knowledge and promoting collaborative innovation, knowledge waqf supports educational equity and sustainability in the 21st century (Hassan et al., 2022).

However, several obstacles hinder the effective implementation of knowledge waqf. A key challenge is widespread misunderstanding of the concept. Many people still associate waqf only with physical assets, overlooking the legitimacy and value of intellectual contributions (Ahmed, 2007; Osman and Mohammed, 2017). This limits public participation and undermines the growth of knowledge waqf initiatives.

Another major barrier lies in weak legal and institutional frameworks. In many Muslim-majority countries, existing waqf laws are outdated and not designed to regulate or support intangible waqf contributions. Furthermore, issues such as poor governance, lack of transparency, and mismanagement erode public trust and threaten the sustainability of such initiatives (Kunhibava et al., 2024; Mohaiyadin & Aman, 2021). Effective governance is therefore critical to ensuring the proper use and long-term impact of intellectual endowments.

To overcome these challenges, integrating classical Islamic governance principles—such as ethical conduct, accountability, and community responsibility—with modern management tools like financial auditing and professional oversight is essential (Abd Aziz et al., 2023; Rashid, 2018). Such a hybrid approach would improve efficiency, build trust, and encourage broader participation in knowledge waqf.

The role of scholars and academic institutions is equally vital. As influential figures, scholars can raise awareness, advocate for knowledge waqf, and lead by example through contributions of their work and mentorship (Mohsin, 2013; Laluddin et al., 2021). Universities and research centers can serve as institutional platforms to facilitate and manage these intellectual endowments.

Additionally, technological advancements offer significant opportunities. Digital platforms expand global access to educational resources, while tools like blockchain can improve transparency and accountability in managing waqf assets (Hassan et al., 2022; Rashid, 2018). By combining traditional principles with modern tools, knowledge waqf can evolve into a dynamic and sustainable model for educational development.

This paper aims to explore the historical foundations, current relevance, and future potential of knowledge waqf as a sustainable educational model. It identifies key challenges and proposes practical governance and policy solutions to enhance its effectiveness and long-term impact in modern educational systems.

Literature Review

Waqf, as a longstanding Islamic philanthropic institution, has historically played a vital role in supporting educational and societal development throughout the Muslim world. The traditional concept of waqf involves the perpetual dedication of a property or asset—be it physical or, in modern interpretations, intangible—for the continuous benefit of the public, grounded in Islamic principles of altruism, sustainability, and community welfare (Cizakca, 2000; Makdisi, 1981). Over time, the classical understanding of waqf has expanded beyond physical assets like land and buildings to encompass intellectual contributions, giving rise to what is now conceptualized as knowledge waqf—a term referring to the voluntary, irrevocable, and perpetual endowment of scholarly knowledge, teaching services, educational materials, and intellectual outputs for the betterment of society (Laluddin et al., 2021; Abd Aziz et al., 2023).

Historically, some of the most influential Islamic institutions in the world were established and maintained through waqf endowments. Notable examples include Al-Azhar University in Egypt and the Nizamiyyah Madrasah in Baghdad, both of which benefited from centuries of waqf-supported operations (Makdisi, 1981; Cizakca, 2000). These institutions became prominent centers of learning, operating independently of direct state control due to their financial sustainability through waqf funds (Ahmed, 2002). The autonomy provided by waqf allowed these institutions to prioritize intellectual development, foster academic freedom, and maintain educational continuity during times of political instability and economic fluctuation (Laluddin et al., 2021).

The classical Islamic tradition of waqf emphasizes four essential principles: voluntariness, perpetuity, irrevocability, and public benefit. Voluntariness entails that waqf contributions are made without the expectation of financial return, reflecting the Islamic ethic of altruism (Usman and Ab Rahman 2023). Perpetuity ensures the long-term continuation of benefits from waqf assets, exemplified by educational waqf institutions that have operated for centuries (Cizakca, 2000; Hassan et al., 2022). Irrevocability ensures that once a waqf is created, it cannot be withdrawn or altered, preserving its stability and public trust (Rodiyah, 2018). Finally, the principle of public benefit underlines that waqf contributions must serve the broader community, especially in facilitating access to knowledge and promoting equitable development (Syahirah & Hazizi, 2024; Hassan et al., 2022).

In modern contexts, renewed interest in knowledge waqf is driven by persistent challenges in educational financing and accessibility. Contemporary educational institutions—particularly

in Muslim-majority countries—face increasing difficulties in securing sustainable funding sources to support research, teaching, and inclusive learning (Abd Aziz et al., 2023; Rashid, 2018). Scholars have proposed knowledge waqf as an innovative solution to bridge these gaps by enabling scholars and institutions to dedicate their intellectual resources to the public domain. The concept aligns strongly with global educational objectives, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which advocates for inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all (Osman and Mohammed, 2017).

Numerous recent studies highlight the strategic relevance of knowledge waqf in fostering educational quality, advancing research, and democratizing access to intellectual resources (Mohaiyadin & Aman, 2021). For example, Laluddin et al. (2021) argue that knowledge waqf has the potential to transform higher education by encouraging the open sharing of scholarly materials, mentorship programs, and research findings. These contributions not only supplement institutional funding but also expand access to quality education among marginalized and underprivileged groups. Table 1 presents a comparison of classical and contemporary interpretations of knowledge waqf across four domains: voluntariness, assets, governance, and reward ethics.

Table 1

Classical vs. Contemporary Interpretations of Knowledge Waqf

Aspect	Classical Interpretation	Contemporary Interpretation
Nature of Asset	Tangible property (e.g., land, buildings, wells)	Intangible intellectual contributions (e.g., teaching, research, mentorship)
Voluntariness	Full altruism: no material returns expected	Voluntary, but may include symbolic or structured honorarium in some contexts
Permanency (Istimrār)	Perpetual use of endowed property for societal benefit	Continuous digital access or intellectual legacy (e.g., open access materials, OERs)
Irrevocability (Lazm)	Once declared, cannot be revoked or transferred	Intellectual waqf remains publicly accessible and cannot be retracted once disseminated
Governance	Managed by religious scholars or local jurists (mutawalli) based on Islamic legal tradition	Governed by institutions (universities, NGOs) under hybrid ethical-administrative frameworks
Accountability	Primarily moral and religious accountability	Includes legal, digital, and institutional mechanisms (e.g., blockchain transparency)
Scope of Beneficiaries	Local community focus; often limited by geography	Broad and inclusive; potentially global via internet and e-learning platforms
Recognition & Reward	Spiritual reward (ajr), public respect	Public awards, titles, certificates; professional development recognition

Despite these promising prospects, there are significant barriers that impede the broader implementation of knowledge waqf. One of the most prominent is the limited public awareness and misconceptions surrounding the concept of waqf itself. Many individuals, including educators, still perceive waqf primarily as involving tangible assets, such as land or property, and are unaware that intellectual contributions can also constitute valid waqf (Ahmed, 2007; Osman and Mohammed, 2017). This limited understanding reduces the pool

of potential contributors and weakens community engagement in waqf-based educational initiatives.

Another major challenge is the absence of comprehensive legal and regulatory frameworks that explicitly support and govern knowledge waqf. In many Muslim countries, existing waqf laws do not adequately account for intangible forms of waqf, leaving intellectual contributions in a legal gray area. This legal ambiguity undermines the enforceability, protection, and governance of knowledge waqf assets (Kunhibava et al., 2024; Mohaiyadin & Aman, 2021). Additionally, administrative inconsistencies across different regions—such as the varied practices among Malaysia's State Islamic Religious Councils (SIRCs)—create confusion and hinder standardization (Kamaruddin et al., 2018).

Effective governance is widely recognized as essential to the success of contemporary knowledge waqf. According to Hassan et al., (2022), waqf institutions must adopt governance principles rooted in transparency, accountability, efficiency, and inclusivity. These principles are consistent with both Islamic ethical standards and modern public administration frameworks. Implementing clear governance structures not only enhances operational effectiveness but also builds public confidence and encourages sustained contributions. Osman and Mohammed (2017) emphasize that structured oversight and ethical management practices can protect waqf from mismanagement and exploitation, thereby preserving its credibility and long-term societal value.

A particularly sensitive topic within the literature on knowledge waqf involves the issue of honorarium payments to scholars and waqf administrators. Classical scholars such as Ibn Khaldun (1967) and Ibn Qudamah (1997) argued that waqf should remain entirely voluntary, devoid of financial incentive, to maintain its spiritual and ethical integrity. In their view, monetary compensation risks transforming a charitable act into a transactional one, thereby compromising the sincerity of the intention behind the waqf.

However, modern realities demand a more pragmatic approach. Managing large-scale educational waqf initiatives often requires skilled professionals, especially in administrative, financial, and technical roles (Kamaruddin et al., 2018; Nasution & Hasanah, 2020). In response, some legal systems have adapted accordingly. For instance, Indonesia's Waqf Law No. 41/2004 allows waqf administrators (nadzir) to receive up to 10% of the waqf income for administrative expenses (Rodiyah, 2018). In Malaysia, some SIRCs permit structured remuneration to professional administrators under strict conditions to improve efficiency and asset utilization (Ismail et al., 2015).

This evolving discourse has led to the emergence of a balanced perspective in recent literature. While fixed salaries may conflict with the foundational principles of waqf, many scholars argue that modest, spontaneous honorariums—offered as a token of appreciation without prior arrangement—can be ethically permissible if transparently managed (Osman and Mohammed, 2017; Nasution & Hasanah, 2020). Such recognition does not necessarily violate the principle of voluntarism if given without expectation, especially when rooted in cultural norms of gratitude. Nonetheless, scholars like Hassan et al., 2022 warn that without clear guidelines, even well-intentioned practices could lead to ethical confusion or reputational harm.

To maintain ethical consistency, institutions should set clear honorarium limits, differentiate between voluntary and professional roles, and publish transparent policy statements. Therefore, institutional policies must clearly define the nature, limits, and purpose of honorarium payments. These policies should outline the criteria under which honorariums are allowed and differentiate between voluntary waqf contributions and contracted professional services (Furqon, 2011; Usman and Ab Rahman, 2023). Transparency and consistency in applying these policies can enhance trust and accountability, ensuring that knowledge waqf remains aligned with its core ethical values.

Technology also plays a critical role in the evolving landscape of knowledge waqf. Digital platforms, including university repositories, e-learning modules, and virtual libraries, facilitate the global dissemination of waqf-funded intellectual materials (Hassan et al., 2022; Usman and Ab Rahman, 2023). Blockchain technology, as noted by Rashid (2018), offers innovative tools for waqf asset tracking, ensuring financial transparency and donor confidence. These technological advancements significantly broaden the impact of knowledge waqf by making it scalable, accessible, and secure.

Recent developments in Malaysia and Indonesia further highlight the adaptability of knowledge waqf. In Malaysia, public universities actively promote Open Educational Resources (OER) initiatives that are underpinned by waqf contributions (Abd Aziz et al., 2023; Ahmad et al., 2023). These efforts enhance inclusivity and reduce dependence on traditional funding. In Indonesia, religious organizations such as Muhammadiyah institutionalize knowledge waqf through structured public lectures, mentorship programs, and open-access religious content, reflecting a communal approach grounded in Islamic ethics and national identity (Fauzia, 2017; Furqon, 2011; Bonang et al., 2024).

Literature also emphasizes the importance of recognition and motivation mechanisms for sustaining knowledge waqf. Kahf (2003) and Laluddin et al. (2021) suggest that non-financial incentives—such as public recognition, honorary titles, or community acknowledgments—can effectively reinforce the intrinsic motivations of scholars who contribute to waqf. These recognition strategies maintain ethical compliance while encouraging continued engagement and participation.

In conclusion, the existing body of literature illustrates that knowledge waqf is a robust and adaptable model for addressing contemporary educational challenges in Muslim societies. While deeply rooted in classical Islamic jurisprudence, knowledge waqf continues to evolve, embracing technological innovation, administrative professionalism, and strategic public engagement. To maximize its effectiveness, however, the sector must address critical gaps in awareness, regulation, ethical guidance, and institutional capacity. As the literature reveals, a holistic, ethically grounded, and context-sensitive approach is essential to revitalize knowledge waqf as a sustainable instrument for educational transformation in the modern world.

From an initial pool of 87 documents, 43 sources were selected for their relevance, peer-reviewed status, and publication between 2010 and 2024, ensuring academic rigor and currency.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative research method through a systematic literature review to explore knowledge waqf from both classical and modern perspectives. Guided by Creswell's (2014) framework, this approach allows a deep understanding of the theological, ethical, and practical aspects of knowledge waqf (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Scholarly sources were gathered from reliable databases such as Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), and Google Scholar, focusing on peer-reviewed journals, academic books, and key reports published between 2010 and 2024. Keywords such as "knowledge waqf," "Islamic philanthropy," and "educational waqf" were used to guide the search (Patton, 2015).

Classical Islamic texts by Al-Qarafi (1994) and Al-Zuhayli (2003) were reviewed to explain core waqf principles, including voluntariness, perpetuity, irrevocability, and public benefit. Contemporary works by scholars like Usman and Ab Rahman (2023): Rodiyah (2018), and Laluddin et al. (2021) were also analyzed to understand current practices and challenges.

A comparative analysis was conducted to study practices in Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Middle East (Yin, 2018; Fauzia, 2017; Hathout, 1995). Textual analysis, following Silverman (2015), was used to examine ethical issues, especially related to honorariums. Finally, a critical synthesis of the literature was done in line with Stake's (2010) approach, helping to develop practical recommendations for improving the governance and impact of knowledge waqf.

Findings and Discussion

Knowledge waqf is the voluntary sharing of knowledge without expecting payment, but in modern practice, this concept is sometimes blurred by the inclusion of structured roles and financial incentives. Countries like Malaysia and Indonesia allow small honorariums, which must be managed carefully to maintain ethical values. These approaches vary by region—for instance, Malaysia promotes open-access educational resources through universities, while Indonesia focuses more on community-based knowledge sharing led by religious organizations. Clear governance, transparency, and recognition of contributors are essential. To preserve the spiritual integrity of knowledge waqf, institutions must establish clear boundaries between voluntary contributions and paid roles. Therefore, with the right support and increased public awareness, knowledge waqf can become a powerful tool in reducing global educational inequality.

Clarifying Voluntary vs. Paid Contributions in Knowledge Waqf

One of the foundational principles of knowledge waqf is voluntariness, which mandates those intellectual contributions—such as teaching, research dissemination, and public lectures—are offered without financial expectation (Laluddin et al., 2021; Usman and Ab Rahman, 2023). This principle stems from classical Islamic teachings that underscore sincerity and altruism in charitable actions. As Kahf (2003) states, true waqf embodies voluntary dedication for public benefit without anticipation of material return. Mohsin (2013) similarly highlights that knowledge waqf distinguishes itself from commercial educational services by emphasizing intrinsic motivation over transactional relationships.

Table 2 compares knowledge waqf models in Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Middle East, revealing shared goals but distinct governance approaches. Malaysia shows legal and digital

innovation, Indonesia emphasizes community-driven models, while the Middle East reflects strong tradition with limited reform. These differences highlight the role of context in shaping waqf governance.

Table 2

Comparative Features of Knowledge Waqf Models in Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Middle East

Aspect	Malaysia	Indonesia	Middle East
Institutional Base	Public universities with OER initiatives	Religious bodies like Muhammadiyah	Historic institutions (e.g., Al-Azhar)
Contribution Type	Teaching, mentoring, and digital publications	Public lectures and religious education	Manuscripts, lectures, traditional dissemination
Governance Model	Fragmented (SIRC-based), some centralized via HEIs	Community-led, nationally aligned	Centralized, gradual reforms
Honorarium Policy	Allowed with conditions via SIRCs	Permitted (max 10%) by national waqf law	Generally discouraged; emphasizes voluntariness
Technology Use	Blockchain pilots, OER platforms	E-learning, open access content	Limited digitization
Recognition	Titles, certificates, awards	Community respect, public prestige	Traditional prestige, limited formal recognition
SDG 4 Alignment	Strong; supports equity and access	Strong; rural inclusion emphasis	Moderate; policy-dependent

However, in contemporary practice, the distinction between voluntary service and compensated contributions has become increasingly blurred. Institutions often require structured roles that, while consistent with waqf principles, involve honorariums or financial incentives. While some argue this undermines the spirit of waqf, others recognize the practical necessity of financial tokens, especially within modern institutional frameworks (Abd Aziz et al., 2023; Laluddin et al., 2021). Maintaining a clear distinction between truly voluntary contributions and paid engagements is critical to preserve ethical clarity and institutional trust.

Contemporary Practices of Knowledge Waqf: A Comparative Analysis

Knowledge waqf is being reimagined across different Islamic contexts to address modern educational challenges. Regional adaptations reflect both adherence to Islamic ethical traditions and innovative responses to resource limitations. A comparative analysis of practices in Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Middle East illustrates this dynamic evolution.

In Malaysia, knowledge waqf has become embedded in higher education institutions. Public universities encourage scholars to offer voluntary services, including mentoring, lectures, and publication sharing, as part of their waqf obligations (Usman and Ab Rahman, 2023). Initiatives such as Open Educational Resources (OER) allow students across socioeconomic strata to access high-quality content, promoting equity in learning (Abd Aziz et al., 2023).

Digital waqf is also gaining traction. Institutions like Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) have led efforts in open-access publishing, encouraging faculty to freely share educational

outputs (Ahmad et al., 2023). These initiatives are in line with Islamic principles of public benefit and perpetuity while enhancing the global dissemination of Islamic scholarship.

Nevertheless, the fragmented regulatory landscape—where State Islamic Religious Councils (SIRCs) govern waqf differently—poses a major challenge (Kamaruddin et al., 2018). These inconsistencies affect how honorariums and other administrative matters are handled, resulting in potential ethical confusion and operational inefficiencies (Ismail et al., 2015).

Indonesia presents a model grounded in community-based waqf practices. Organizations like Muhammadiyah implement structured policies to encourage voluntary teaching and public lectures by scholars, reinforcing the religious and social value of knowledge sharing (Fauzia, 2017; Furqon, 2011). These contributions are not seen as professional tasks but rather as acts of devotion and community service.

Indonesia has also embraced digital waqf platforms, allowing greater accessibility to Islamic learning resources. E-learning modules, open lectures, and religious scholarship archives now reach audiences across the country, especially in underserved regions (Bonang et al., 2023). These initiatives reflect an evolution of knowledge waqf in line with technological advancement.

The Middle East has deep historical roots in knowledge waqf, with Al-Azhar University in Egypt serving as a model of perpetual intellectual endowment (Hathout, 1995; Cizacka, 2000). Traditionally, scholars contributed without pay, sustaining the institution's operations across centuries.

Today, countries in the region are adapting classical waqf models to meet current educational demands. Efforts include digitizing waqf-supported manuscripts and launching free public lecture series sponsored by waqf funds (Hassan et al., 2022). Government-private collaborations have further promoted lifelong learning initiatives through waqf-based programs.

Ethical Debates on Honorarium Payments

The question of honorariums in knowledge waqf remains a central ethical and operational debate. Classical jurists, such as Ibn Khaldun (1967) and Ibn Qudamah (1997), emphasized that waqf must remain free from financial expectation to preserve its spiritual purity. However, evolving administrative demands challenge this interpretation.

In countries like Malaysia and Indonesia, legal frameworks now permit limited compensation. For example, Indonesia's Waqf Law No. 41/2004 allows up to 10% of income to be used for administrative remuneration (Rodiyah, 2018). Malaysian practices show similar trends, where remuneration is provided to administrators under carefully regulated terms (Ismail et al., 2015). Nonetheless, such allowances must be transparently managed to prevent waqf from becoming a commercial instrument.

Some scholars propose a middle ground. Spontaneous or modest honorariums—offered as unprompted tokens of appreciation—may align with cultural norms of gratitude without breaching waqf ethics (Osman & Mohammed, 2017; Nasution & Hasanah, 2020). These forms

of remuneration must remain symbolic and non-contractual to avoid undermining voluntariness (Laluddin et al., 2021).

Transparent policies are essential in managing this issue. Institutions must clearly outline when and how honorariums may be issued, ensuring there are acknowledgments of service, not substitutes for professional contracts (Furqon, 2011; Hassan et al., 2022). This clarity preserves institutional credibility and spiritual intent.

Governance and Sustainability of Knowledge Waqf

The long-term viability of knowledge waqf hinges on robust governance structures. Sadeq (2002) argues that institutional frameworks—built upon transparency, accountability, and continuous assessment—are vital for ensuring the sustainability of educational waqf projects. In the absence of structured oversight, even well-intentioned initiatives may falter due to mismanagement or public mistrust.

One crucial aspect of governance is the recognition of voluntary contributions. Kahf (2003) suggests that acknowledging the efforts of knowledge donors—through certificates, public honors, or leadership roles—can significantly motivate participation. Recognition also fosters community engagement and collective ownership of waqf initiatives (Laluddin et al., 2021).

Technology enhances governance effectiveness. Blockchain systems can track and verify the usage of waqf assets, thereby strengthening public confidence (Rashid, 2018). Digital archives and online management platforms also allow wider accessibility and transparent resource monitoring (Usman and Ab Rahman, 2023).

Furthermore, institutions must implement regular evaluation mechanisms. Continuous performance reviews ensure that waqf goals remain aligned with community needs and adapt to changing educational landscapes (Sadeq, 2002). Adaptive governance allows waqf institutions to grow while maintaining fidelity to Islamic values.

Broader Implications and Strategic Integration

From a strategic perspective, knowledge waqf has the potential to significantly reshape global educational equity. By offering cost-free, high-quality educational resources, knowledge waqf bridges the digital and economic divide in Muslim and non-Muslim societies alike (Kunhibava et al., 2024; Osman & Mohammed, 2017).

The expansion of Open Educational Resources (OERs)—funded by knowledge waqf—has transformed access to learning for marginalized communities (Abd Aziz et al., 2023). These digital resources ensure that learners in rural or underserved areas are not excluded from the benefits of quality education.

Moreover, institutional collaboration—between universities, governments, and NGOs—can exponentially expand the reach of knowledge waqf. Initiatives like corporate waqf and cash waqf for education in Malaysia demonstrate how diversified models can address funding gaps while maintaining ethical integrity (Ismail et al., 2015; Mohsin, 2013).

Finally, public education and awareness campaigns are crucial. Misunderstandings about waqf's nature and permissible practices limit participation (Ahmed, 2007; Mohaiyadin & Aman, 2021). Structured outreach programs, including seminars, community workshops, and multimedia content, can demystify knowledge waqf and build stronger community engagement.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

Knowledge waqf has long stood as a pillar of educational advancement and intellectual empowerment in Islamic civilization. Historically, institutions such as Al-Azhar University and the Nizamiyyah Madrasah prospered through the voluntary and perpetual contributions of scholars who endowed their knowledge for public benefit. This tradition demonstrates that waqf, deeply rooted in Islamic ethical principles, can democratize education, promote academic independence, and address inequalities across social classes. In today's global educational landscape—marked by financial constraints and growing disparities—reviving knowledge waqf offers a spiritually aligned and socially sustainable alternative to conventional models of educational support (Usman and Ab Rahman, 2023).

However, the practical realization of knowledge waqf is hindered by several persistent barriers. Public misconceptions continue to restrict their scope, with many limiting waqf to physical assets such as land or buildings (Kunhibava et al., 2024, 2021). The absence of comprehensive legal frameworks, ambiguities surrounding honorarium practices, and inconsistent governance structures further complicate its application. These gaps risk compromising the altruistic foundations of knowledge waqf, potentially transforming it into a transactional mechanism devoid of spiritual intent. As modern educational systems evolve, institutions must carefully balance operational needs with the preservation of the ethical and voluntary nature of knowledge endowment (Hassan et al., 2022).

Addressing these issues requires a multidimensional and forward-looking strategy. Legal recognition must be established to protect and formalize intellectual contributions within waqf frameworks (Kunhibava et al., 2024). Institutions should develop transparent policies to distinguish voluntary scholarly work from compensated roles, ensuring that symbolic honorariums do not undermine the principle of altruism (Kamaruddin et al., 2018). Technology—including open-access platforms and blockchain systems—can enhance transparency, improve accessibility, and strengthen public trust. Recognition mechanisms, such as awards and leadership opportunities, should be institutionalized to honor voluntary contributions without commodifying them. Furthermore, sustained public engagement through awareness campaigns is vital for fostering a culture of intellectual philanthropy.

This study contributes to waqf theory by broadening its scope to include intellectual assets such as teaching, academic materials, and research mentorship, grounded in classical jurisprudential values including perpetuity (*istimrār*), irrevocability (*lazm*), and public benefit (*maslahah*) (Al-Zuhayli, 2003; Al-Qarafi, 1994; Cizakca, 2000). It offers a theoretical framework that connects Islamic ethical values with modern concepts of inclusive education and sustainable development, particularly in line with the aspirations of SDG 4 (Usman and Ab Rahman, 2023; Osman & Mohammed, 2017). Through its emphasis on knowledge as waqf, this study positions intellectual capital as a legitimate and sustainable resource for

endowment, complementing traditional waqf practices and enhancing their contemporary relevance (Laluddin et al., 2021).

In terms of context, the research responds to the fragmented and often ambiguous implementation of knowledge waqf in Muslim-majority countries, especially Malaysia and Indonesia (Kamaruddin et al., 2018; Rodiyah, 2018). These inconsistencies hinder public trust, legal clarity, and scalability of waqf-based educational systems. By proposing policy reforms—including standardized honorarium guidelines, the use of blockchain for transparency, and Open Educational Resources (OERs)—this paper provides actionable strategies to improve governance, ethics, and stakeholder engagement (Abd Azizi et al., 2023; Ahmad et al., 2023; Rashid, 2018). These recommendations are valuable for waqf managers, universities, and religious councils aiming to elevate knowledge waqf from a conceptual ideal to a functional and sustainable institution of Islamic philanthropy.

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