



Waqf Funds as an Instrument for the Dissemination of Knowledge in Classical Islamic Civilization

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Abstract

In classical Islamic history, *waqf* was not only a practice of religious philanthropy but also served as a strategic mechanism supporting the sustainability of education and the development of science. The urgency of this study lies in the lack of historical studies that systematically position *waqf* as the institutional foundation of science, especially in the context of its relevance to modern educational models. This research aims to analyze the role of *waqf* in strengthening scientific institutions and examine its management mechanisms that encouraged the sustainability of intellectual activity during the golden age of Islam. Using qualitative methods based on historical-descriptive analysis, this study examines classical works and secondary sources through document analysis of *waqf* practices in various centers of knowledge during the Islamic Middle Ages. The results show that *waqf* not only provided funding for mosques but also supported the establishment and management of madrasas, universities, libraries, and study centers such as Bayt al-Hikmah in Baghdad and Al-Qarawiyyin in Fez. Furthermore, the scholarship system, teacher allowances, and the provision of research facilities are concrete forms of *waqf*'s contribution to creating a sustainable scientific ecosystem. These findings reveal that the existence of *waqf* facilitates the transfer of knowledge across generations and promotes intellectual exchange between the Islamic world and other civilizations. In conclusion, *waqf* serves as a structural foundation for scientific civilization, not merely a charitable act, and its relevance offers a sustainable model for educational financing that can be applied in contemporary contexts.

Keywords: *Waqf*; Dissemination of Knowledge; Islamic Civilization; Islamic Philanthropy; Classical Islam

Abstrak

Wakaf dalam sejarah Islam klasik tidak hanya menjadi praktik filantropi keagamaan, tetapi juga berfungsi sebagai mekanisme strategis yang menopang keberlangsungan pendidikan dan pengembangan ilmu. Urgensi kajian ini terletak pada minimnya telaah historis yang memosisikan wakaf secara sistematis sebagai fondasi kelembagaan ilmu pengetahuan, terutama dalam konteks relevansinya terhadap model pendidikan modern. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis peran wakaf dalam memperkuat institusi keilmuan serta mengkaji

mekanisme pengelolaannya yang mendorong keberlanjutan aktivitas intelektual di era kejayaan Islam. Menggunakan metode kualitatif berbasis analisis historis-deskriptif, penelitian ini menelaah karya-karya klasik dan sumber sekunder melalui analisis dokumen terhadap praktik wakaf di berbagai pusat ilmu pada abad pertengahan Islam. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa wakaf tidak hanya menjadi sumber pendanaan masjid, tetapi juga mendukung pendirian dan pengelolaan madrasah, universitas, perpustakaan, serta pusat studi seperti Bayt al-Hikmah di Baghdad dan Al-Qarawiyyin di Fez. Selain itu, sistem beasiswa, tunjangan pendidik, serta penyediaan fasilitas riset menjadi bentuk konkret kontribusi wakaf dalam menciptakan ekosistem ilmu yang berkelanjutan. Temuan ini mengungkap bahwa keberadaan wakaf memungkinkan transfer pengetahuan lintas generasi dan membuka interaksi intelektual antara dunia Islam dan peradaban lain. Kesimpulannya, wakaf berperan sebagai fondasi struktural peradaban ilmu, bukan sekadar amal sosial, dan relevansinya menawarkan model pembiayaan pendidikan yang berkelanjutan untuk diterapkan dalam konteks kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: Wakaf; Penyebaran Ilmu; Peradaban Islam; Filantropi Islam; Islam Klasik

Introduction

Waqf is an Islamic economic instrument that plays a strategic role in the development of human civilization, particularly during the classical Islamic era (Sa'adillah et al., 2023). In addition to its enduring value, *waqf* from the 8th to 14th centuries served as a long-term resource allocation mechanism that supported social, educational, and scientific development (Haneef, 2018; Siregar, 2023). In the context of Islamic economics, *waqf* is understood as the transfer of productive assets for the public good in a sustainable and non-commercial manner. This system enables the creation of a distribution of resources that is not dependent on individual patronage or political power alone (Hadi et al, 2025). Therefore, *waqf* is not only a normative-religious concept but also serves as a structural foundation for equal access to knowledge and the strengthening of educational institutions in various Islamic regions (Usman & Ab Rahman, 2022).

The historical role of *waqf* is evident in the development of classical Islamic educational institutions. The Nizamiyah *Madrasah* in Baghdad, Al-Azhar University in Cairo, and several other academic institutions expanded through the support of *waqf* funds managed by *nazirs*, or political authorities, utilizing specific administrative models (Cahyo, 2023). *Waqf* funds were utilized to provide learning facilities, offer scholarships to underprivileged students, compensate teachers, and maintain educational infrastructure (Sihaloho, 2024). This practice demonstrates that the sustainability of Islamic education is not only supported by religious fervor but also by the long-term management of *waqf*-based assets that transcends private interests.

Historical literature reveals that numerous scientific works emerged within *waqf* institutions, offering broad access to knowledge for people across various social strata (Sukmana, Rusydiana, & Laila, 2024). The Bayt al-Hikmah Library in Baghdad, for example, grew into a global intellectual center thanks to *waqf* funding

that supported translation, research, and scholarly discussion (Puspita, 2023). A similar trend occurred in Cordoba and Damascus, where *waqf* became a vital instrument in building an inclusive scientific ecosystem (Jafar, Ibrahim, & Malik, 2025). This historical evidence confirms that *waqf* served as a bridge connecting science with public access, thus fostering an advanced and competitive civilization.

Several previous studies have highlighted certain aspects of the role of *waqf* in education and knowledge, but these remain partial. Sihaloho (2024) reviews the contribution of *waqf* in supporting the Nizamiyah *Madrasah*, but has not yet addressed its long-term socio-economic impact. Saiti, Dembele, and Bulut (2021) focus on *waqf* as an instrument of wealth distribution, without discussing the mechanisms of knowledge transfer it generates. Siregar (2023) examines the strengthening of classical Islamic libraries through *waqf*, but lacks a link to intellectual mobility and knowledge transmission networks. Amezzian (2024) explores the relationship between *waqf* and education during the Abbasid period from a legal and administrative perspective, but does not delve into its epistemological dimensions. Laallam et al. (2020) highlight the role of *waqf* in supporting the lives of '*ulamā*' (Islamic scholars), but tend to focus on the religious elite. Therefore, comprehensive studies integrating the economic, social, institutional, and epistemological aspects of the dissemination of knowledge through *waqf* are still very limited, necessitating further, more integrative research.

Based on these gaps, the research questions are: how do *waqf* mechanisms support the establishment and sustainability of classical Islamic educational institutions? What models of *waqf* facilitate the production, distribution, and transmission of knowledge across regions? What are the historical implications of classical *waqf* experiences for the formulation of contemporary *waqf* management models for education? The objectives of this study are: to analyze the *waqf* management structure in supporting educational institutions; to uncover the networks and practices of knowledge dissemination facilitated by *waqf*; and to formulate conceptual and applicable implications for the design of modern *waqf* management that supports education. The initial argument underlying the importance of this study is that *waqf* is not only a philanthropic tool but a civilizational infrastructure that supports social, economic, and epistemological continuity in the dissemination of knowledge. By examining the institutions, mechanisms, and practices of *waqf* management in the classical era, this study is expected to provide a theoretical contribution to Islamic intellectual history and enrich the discourse on modern *waqf* development. Its practical contribution lies in providing a conceptual framework for redesigning contemporary *waqf* management models that support education and access to knowledge based on sustainability, independence, and social justice.

Method

This study employs a qualitative method with a library research approach, focusing on a historical-descriptive analysis to reconstruct the role of *waqf* as an instrument for disseminating knowledge in classical Islamic civilization from the 8th to the 14th century CE. Data sources are systematically classified into primary and secondary sources; primary sources include classical fiqh books such as *al-Umm*, *al-Mughnī*, works of *fuqahā'* on *waqf*, and historical records of educational institutions such as madrasas, libraries, and Bayt al-Ḥikmah during the Abbasid period, while secondary sources consist of contemporary academic books, reputable journal articles, dissertations, and relevant previous research results. Data collection techniques are carried out through documentation, involving operational steps such as text searches using criteria of theme relevance, author authority, and historical validity. The selection, categorization, and inventory of literature follow this. Data analysis was conducted using content analysis techniques, including thematic categorization, contextual-sociological interpretation, and comparison between sources, to identify patterns, functions, and implications of *waqf* on the development of educational institutions and the transmission of knowledge. This methodological approach was designed to produce an objective and comprehensive argumentative mapping of the contribution of *waqf* to supporting the intellectual dynamics of classical Islamic civilization.

Results and Discussion

Normative Basis of *Waqf* in Islam

Waqf is crucial in Islamic law as a philanthropic instrument oriented toward sustainable benefit (*istimrāriyah al-Manfa'ah*) (Dallh, 2023). Normatively, the basis of *waqf* is not explicitly mentioned in the Quran through the technical term “*waqf*,” but its principle is reflected in the call to spend the best of one’s wealth in the path of Allah (Rashid, 2021). Surah Ali Imran, verse 92, affirms, “You will not attain perfect righteousness until you spend from what you love,” which commentators such as al-Ṭabarī (2001) and al-Qurṭubī (1964) understand as an encouragement to permanently abandon wealth for the benefit of the community. Other verses, such as Surah al-Baqarah verses 261 and 267, reinforce the multiplied reward for charitable giving (*tayyib*), providing the moral foundation for giving away property no longer privately owned. Although these verses are more general in the context of charity and almsgiving, scholars have concluded that the spirit of retaining the principal and distributing its benefits aligns with the concept of *waqf* as a sustainable social charity (Karimah, Pamuncak, & Mubin, 2023).

The Prophet’s hadith explains the concept of *waqf* in a more concrete and applicable manner. Al-Bukhārī’s account of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb’s *waqf* in Khaybar serves as a primary reference, where the Prophet said: “withhold its principal and distribute its benefits” (Al-Bukhārī, 1993). This interpretation emphasizes two basic principles of *waqf*: retention of ownership (*ḥabs al-Aṣl*) and utilization of benefits

(*tasbīl al-Manfa'ah*), which distinguish it from consumptive charity. Another hadith, “When a person dies, his deeds are cut off except for three: ongoing charity, beneficial knowledge, and the prayer of a righteous child” (Al-Naisābūrī, 1955), was interpreted by al-Nawawī (1976) as a manifestation of *waqf* due to its continued benefits. However, Ibn Qudāmah (1997) emphasized that not all ongoing charity is *waqf*, but rather that *waqf* is a form of continuing charity that is bound by sharia law and institutionalization. Thus, the foundation of the hadith provides a dimension of worship and continuity of reward, while simultaneously opening up space for the institutionalization of wealth for the public good.

In the treasury of Islamic jurisprudence, the *fuqahā* developed a juridical and philosophical definition of *waqf*. Abū Ḥanīfah defined *waqf* as *ḥabs al-ʿAyn wa taṣdīq al-Manfa'ah*, namely the retention of the principal assets that remain owned by the *waqif*, so that, according to some narrations, he permitted the revocation of the *waqf* if there is a benefit (Kamali, 2008). In contrast, the Mālikī, ash-Shāfiʿī, and Ḥanbalī schools emphasized that *waqf* is *lāzim* (binding) and removes assets from the *waqif*'s ownership permanently (Qudāmah, 1997). Ash-Shāfiʿī (1999) in *al-Umm* stated, “*Waqf* is to retain the principal and flow benefits throughout time,” emphasizing the aspect of eternity. Mālik (1994) in *al-Mudawwanah* provides flexibility in management for the benefit of the community, while Aḥmad in *al-Mughnī* emphasizes the value of *waqf* worship as long as its benefits continue (Qudāmah, 1997). This difference highlights the richness of *ijtihād* based on *maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah*, (the principles of Islamic law) particularly in the preservation of property (*ḥifẓ al-Māl*).

Spiritually, *waqf* is the highest form of sacrifice for a believer to draw closer to Allah (Amrullah et al., 2022). *Waqf* is not merely material generosity, but a transformation of intention towards investment in the afterlife (*istiṣmār al-Ākhirah*), as explained by al-Ghazālī (2009) within the framework of purity of intention (*ikhhlās*) and sustainability of charity. This transcendental dimension is combined with the social dimension, as *waqf* becomes a mechanism for equitable wealth distribution oriented towards collective welfare (*taḥqīq al-ʿAdl al-Ijtimaʿī*) (Haneef, 2018). Through *waqf*, wealth is diverted from individual interests to serve the community, including education, health, public infrastructure development, and assistance to the poor (Iskandar, 2022). In contrast to consumptive alms, *waqf* is productive because it maintains principal assets and provides long-term benefits (Nasution et al., 2024).

Thus, normatively, *waqf* is a social worship institution that combines spiritual values and civilizational responsibilities. The theological foundations derived from the Quran, Hadith, and the *ijtihād* of jurists not only affirm the position of *waqf* as a continuous charity but also as a strategic instrument for the development of knowledge and a supporter of Islamic civilization. The principle of *ḥabs al-Aṣl wa tasbīl al-Manfa'ah* paved the way for the birth of educational institutions such as

madrasahs, libraries, hospitals, and Bayt al-Ḥikmah, all of which are based on the *waqf* system. Based on this foundation, the following study will explore how the concept of *waqf*, originally rooted in spirituality, evolved into the intellectual engine of classical Islamic civilization.

Management Mechanism for Waqf Funds for Education

Since the classical Islamic era, *waqf* has evolved into an educational financing mechanism that is not merely an individual act of worship but is integrated with institutional governance. However, this success did not occur spontaneously; it rests on an organized structure of administration, accountability, and philanthropic management (Usman & Ab Rahman, 2022). In the context of Islamic philanthropy, *waqf* has evolved into a practice of endowment-based education, akin to the concept of endowments in modern universities (Muhammad & Al-Shaghdari, 2024). The theoretical framework employed by contemporary scholars, such as Monzer Kahf (2015) and Murat Çizakça (2000), suggests that the sustainability of education in Islamic history is closely linked to three main pillars: management (*nazir*), regulation (*waqfiyyah*), and the distribution of benefits (*maslahah ta'lim*). Therefore, understanding the operational mechanisms of *waqf* is crucial for assessing its effectiveness as a basis for disseminating knowledge.

During the Umayyad era, the institutionalization of *waqf* began to enter the realm of the state. *Waqf* was no longer an unsupervised private donation, but was linked to political legitimacy (Quddus, 2024). *Nazir*, during this period, often came from officials appointed by the caliph, placing *waqf* management within the orbit of power. However, it should be noted that the closeness of *waqf* to state authority had two sides: on the one hand, it strengthened stability, but on the other, it opened up the potential for political control over the distribution of benefits (Siddiqui, Wasif, & Hughes, 2024). Historical archives indicate that some madrasahs and mosques were funded by state *waqf*; however, no formal audit system or comprehensive *waqf* documentation has been found (Mayurida, Anwar, & Hasbi, 2021).

A significant transformation occurred during the Abbasid era, when *waqf* emerged as a complex, scholarly economic institution. The Bayt al-Ḥikmah, madrasahs, and scientific libraries were not solely dependent on private donations; instead, they were managed through agricultural *waqf* assets, markets, and commercial properties (Anggraini & Kawakib, 2025). *Nazirs* during this period were not simply executors. Still, they acted as trustees with administrative capabilities, recording income, accounting for distributions, and reporting the use of funds to legal authorities such as the *qāḍī al-Awqāf* (the judge of the *Awqāf*) (Hoexter, 1998a). Ninth-century manuscripts indicate the existence of written record-keeping initiatives, a precursor to formal *waqfiyyah* (Singer, 2008). However, historical records do not yet reflect a systematic audit mechanism or performance assessment of *nazirs* (Kozłowski, 2005). The Abbasid model demonstrates a shift in *waqf* from private worship to an educational and economic entity based on governance (*waqf*

governance), while simultaneously creating space for institutional accountability (Abdullah & Yaacob, 2012).

The Ayyubid dynasty then introduced a more socialist paradigm of educational philanthropy. The Nizamiyah *Madrasah* and similar institutions provided not only instruction but also accommodation, meals, and scholarships for students from low-income backgrounds. *Nazir* was not only administratively but also morally responsible, as they were supervised by judicial institutions such as the *qāḍī al-Awqāf* (Alsarhan, Salaemh, Khasawneh, Al-Oliemat, & Khasawneh, 2023). Within the framework of the *maqāsid al-Sharī'ah*, this practice strengthened egalitarian access to knowledge. However, attention to the distribution of benefits was not accompanied by documentation of asset management mechanisms (Mohammed, 2024). Primary sources detailing the fund distribution process, public accountability, or transparency mechanisms are not well-documented (Hammad, 2024).

The peak of professionalization in *waqf* management was seen during the Ottoman era. For the first time in Islamic history, written legal documents (*waqfiyyah*) were issued, outlining asset limits, objectives, managers, reporting methods, and even sanctions for *nazirs* who deviated from their mandate. *Waqfiyyah* archives from institutions such as the Suleymaniye and Al-Fatih *waqfs* demonstrate a system of financial balance sheet recording, regular inspections by the *maḥkamat al-Awqāf* (*Awqāf* administrators), and oversight by *qāḍī* (Karademir, 2024). *Nazirs* functioned as professional administrators, not scholars or officials, but managers with accounting skills (Iskandar, 2022). Unlike the Umayyads and Abbasids, the Ottomans demonstrated an integration of philanthropic spirituality and managerial rationality.

The tradition of *waqf* management was also evident in other Islamic kingdoms such as the Mamluk, Fatimid, and Andalusian dynasties. In Egypt, the Mamluks developed *waqf* to support Al-Azhar University, making it one of the world's greatest centers of Islamic education to this day (Behrens-Abouseif, 2007). *Nazirs* played a central role in ensuring the university's continued operations by distributing *waqf* proceeds in the form of agricultural, commercial, and property investments (Hoexter, 1998b). In Andalusia, *waqf* supported the development of libraries and educational institutions that became icons of Islamic civilization in Europe. *Waqf* administrators functioned not only as administrators but also as cultural patrons, bridging the development of knowledge and the spread of Islamic civilization in the West (Hodgson, 2002). A striking difference lies in the character of the *nazir*: in the East, *nazirs* tended to act as state administrators, while in Andalusia, they also acted as cultural patrons. This variation demonstrates the adaptability of the *waqf* system to social needs.

Table 1.
***Waqf* Management Models in Various Islamic Dynasties**

Dynasty	Administrative Structure	Nazir's Role	Accountability Instruments	State-<i>Waqf</i> Relations
Umayyad	Centered on state officials	Extension of political power	Minimal formal documentation	Very political, legitimative
Abbasid	Starting from decentralization, institution-based	Professional, administratively competent	Basic (non-standard) recording	Collaborative, semi-autonomous
Ayyubid	<i>Madrasah</i> and <i>qāḍī</i> based	Moral-religious mandate	Judicial supervision (<i>qāḍī</i>)	Consolidative, religio-political
Ottoman	Special bureaucracy (<i>waqfiyyah</i>)	Legal administrator with audit	State audit and <i>waqfiyyah</i>	Institutional, legalistic
Mamluk/Andalusian	Flexible, locally based	Cultural patron and cleric	Traditional, community-based	Semi-independent, limited autonomy

Based on the table above, the *waqf* fund management mechanism for education demonstrates that *waqf* functions as an alternative economic system that is independent, sustainable, and capable of supporting civilization. Major Islamic dynasties successfully utilized *waqf* as an instrument to support education by emphasizing transparent governance, a strong role for *nazirs*, and broad distribution of benefits. The *waqf* management model from the classical era can serve as inspiration for the development of contemporary Islamic education systems, which often face funding constraints. Historical experience demonstrates that *waqf* is not only an instrument of worship but also a socio-economic mechanism with high resilience and relevance throughout the ages, particularly in financing education, the core of civilizational development.

***Waqf* as a Basis for Establishing Scientific Institutions**

The role of *waqf* in the establishment of madrasas during the classical Islamic period demonstrates that philanthropy in Islam was not merely charitable in nature but also strategically oriented towards the formation of an intellectual tradition. The Nizamiyah *Madrasah* represents the earliest evidence of the institutionalization of knowledge outside the direct control of political authority. Through *waqf*, this institution achieved financial independence, enabling the recruitment of scholars, curriculum development, and the provision of scholarships (Dargahani, 2019). The presence of figures such as al-Ghazālī within it demonstrates that *waqf* acted as cultural capital, creating a space where scholarly authority rested not on court patronage but on scholarly legitimacy and academic integrity (Rofi, 2025).

Libraries and translation centers like Bayt al-Ḥikmah expanded the function of *waqf* from simply supporting education to driving the circulation of knowledge across civilizations. *Waqfs* provided funding for translators, copyists, and the

preservation of manuscripts, making them institutional instruments for the transmission of knowledge (Puspita, 2023). These libraries not only collected texts from Greece, Persia, and India but also transformed them into the basis for new syntheses in Islamic philosophy, logic, and science. *Waqfs* served as a mechanism that positioned knowledge as a public good, rather than an elite privilege (Turdiyev & Wekke, 2024). Through financial autonomy, Bayt al-Ḥikmah became a cosmopolitan space that paved the way for the formation of a tradition of collective *ijtihād*, where scholars and translators worked collaboratively without bureaucratic or imperial pressures (Algeriani & Mohadi, 2017). Here, *waqf* functions as a buffer for the epistemic ecosystem that gave birth to figures such as al-Kindī and al-Fārābī (Turdiyev & Wekke, 2024).

Healthcare institutions like al-ʿAdūdī Hospital demonstrate that *waqf* also gave birth to a new paradigm of empirical science. *Waqf*-based hospitals not only provided free medical services but also functioned as learning hospitals, where medical teaching and clinical observation took place. *Waqf* funding enabled the purchase of medicines, the provision of laboratories, and the free admission of medical students, thus establishing a practice-based educational model (Farkhondehzadeh, Golshani, Sanaye, & Daneshfard, 2017). It was from these institutions that monumental medical works such as *al-Ḥāwī* by al-Rāzī and *al-Qānūn fī al-Ṭibb* by Ibn Sīnā were born (Savadi & Eshera, 2023). In this context, *waqf* was able to integrate social ethics with scientific research, making healthcare a path to intellectual innovation, not simply a philanthropic act.

Al-Qarawiyyin and Al-Azhar Universities were the pinnacle of *waqf* institutions, not only preserving knowledge but also institutionalizing it across generations. Both succeeded in establishing scholarly autonomy because they were independent of state power. The *waqf* system ensured the continuity of faculty salaries, the maintenance of classrooms, and the provision of dormitories (Hoque & Abdullah, 2021). Unlike the patronage universities of medieval Europe, *waqf*-funded universities in the Islamic world established a scholarly meritocracy based on *sanad* and diplomas, not social status (Sani et al., 2022). This enabled the mobility of scholars from various regions, strengthening international scholarly networks that connected Fez, Baghdad, Cairo, and Andalusia (Thurston, 2018). *Waqf* served as the foundation that gave birth to a scientific community, a supra-political academic community recognized for its authority throughout the Islamic world.

The sustainability of these institutions is inseparable from the nature of *waqf*, which defines property as non-transferable assets. *Waqf* assets cannot be sold or inherited, but are managed to generate recurring benefits. This model creates long-term stability that transcends dynastic cycles of power (Md Jani, Misbahrudin, & Salleh, 2022). However, the success of *waqf* is not always automatic; its effectiveness depends on the governance and integrity of the *nazir*. In some cases, stagnation occurs if *waqf* management is not adaptive to scientific needs (Alshater, Hassan,

Rashid, & Hasan, 2022). Therefore, *waqf* must be understood not merely as a financial asset, but as a social contract that demands accountability and a civilizational vision (Elmahgop et al., 2025). Herein lies the difference between a productive *waqf* that supports knowledge and a passive *waqf* trapped in structural conservatism.

The legacy of *waqf* to the Islamic intellectual tradition reflects not only the balance of spirituality and materialism but also the formation of an ethos of knowledge as a social act of worship. *Waqf* created an independent academic space, where the palace or state did not monopolize the pursuit of scientific truth. *Waqf* fostered a culture of knowledge as a public trust, bringing together scholars, scientists, and the public within a single knowledge ecosystem (Kasri & Chaerunnisa, 2021). From a sociology of knowledge perspective, *waqf* acts as cultural capital that transforms the social status of scholars into scientific authority, forming a new social structure based on expertise, rather than heredity or power (Jafar et al., 2025). Thus, the institution of *waqf* not only maintains the continuity of knowledge but also reorganizes the social hierarchy within Islamic civilization.

All of this historical evidence demonstrates that *waqf* has been the foundation of a long-term scientific civilization, shaping an ecosystem of education, research, and public service that transcends geographical and dynastic boundaries. Madrasas, libraries, hospitals, and universities are not merely charitable institutions, but social architectures of knowledge that have evolved from the ethics of *waqf*. This is where *waqf* transcends its economic function and emerges as a mechanism for engineering civilization. This model offers inspiration for the modern world to build knowledge endowments capable of independently supporting universities and research centers. Thus, understanding the history of *waqf* opens the door to reconstructing contemporary educational philanthropy and serves as a bridge to the global relevance of *waqf* in the sustainability of knowledge.

The Relevance of *Waqf* in Ensuring the Sustainability of Knowledge

The legacy of *waqf* in classical Islamic civilization demonstrates that the sustainability of knowledge does not rely solely on state support, but rather on social institutions with financial independence and intellectual vision. Institutions such as Al-Qarawiyyin and Al-Azhar demonstrate a *waqf* funding model that has supported generations of scholars and scientists across centuries through the provision of scholarships, libraries, dormitories, and research (Thurston, 2018). However, this historical success cannot be understood simply as a romanticization of the past. Within Schultz's (1961), human capital framework, *waqf* must be read as a social investment that generates intellectual productivity. The challenge today is how the principles of *waqf* financial sustainability can be adapted to the modern educational ecosystem governed by university governance, accreditation, and global competition.

Placing *waqf* in a contemporary context demands a re-reading that goes beyond the normative. The dependence of educational institutions on state subsidies or donor fluctuations highlights the fragility of the knowledge funding structure in the Muslim world (Sukmana, 2020). Giddens' (1984) structuration theory becomes relevant when *waqf* is positioned as a social structure that must be continuously renewed through modern governance mechanisms, accountability, and transparency. Revitalizing productive *waqf* will only be meaningful if it is accompanied by integration with Islamic financial instruments, such as cash *waqf*, *sukuk*-linked *waqf*, and endowment funds for strategic research (Syaichoni & Suminto, 2021). This demands repositioning *waqf* not merely as philanthropic worship, but as a policy instrument capable of competing with global university funding models such as the Harvard Endowment or the MIT Fund.

The sustainability of Islamic scholarship extends beyond constructing buildings or providing facilities to creating an intellectual ecosystem that fosters intergenerational scientific networks. From Putnam's (2000) social capital perspective, *waqf* serves to connect scientific participation between teachers, students, donors, and the community. However, modern challenges suggest that many *waqf* institutions today are focused solely on physical construction, without allocating funds for scientific endeavors such as journals, laboratories, academic mobility, or international collaboration (Usman & Ab Rahman, 2022). Therefore, a renewed concept of *waqf* must encompass a new orientation: from charity-based institutions to knowledge-based institutions, which foster epistemic communities and a knowledge economy.

In the face of disparities in educational access, rising university costs, and the research crisis in the Muslim world, *waqf* offers a potential solution. However, its success depends on the adoption of professional, good governance-based governance, with an audit system, published financial reports, and the involvement of academic stakeholders (Zickafoose et al., 2024). Stiglitz's (1999) public goods theory can serve as a foundation for viewing *waqf*-based education as a public good that should be widely accessible, not controlled by institutional elites. Case studies such as Malaysia's Waqf University Model demonstrate that *waqf* can become a pillar of higher education if managed through investment schemes, rather than passive donations (Usman & Ab Rahman, 2022).

The link between *waqf* and global agendas such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) further emphasizes the need for innovation and recontextualization (Dwivedi et al., 2022). Within the framework of Amartya Sen's (1999) capability approach, *waqf* should be directed toward expanding human capabilities, not merely providing consumptive assistance. This means that *waqf* should fund strategic projects, such as health laboratories, green technology, Islamic ethics-based artificial intelligence, and international research scholarships. The use of digital technologies such as blockchain *waqf*, crowdfunding platforms, and AI-

based *waqf* management presents new opportunities for rapid, secure, and measurable philanthropic distribution (He, Feng, Fang, Liu, & Su, 2024). Thus, *waqf* can once again become a global epistemic actor contributing to solutions to the civilizational crisis.

Revitalizing *waqf* for the sustainability of knowledge requires integrating the classical tradition with modern innovation. This renewal requires transforming *waqf* into an epistemic infrastructure that supports the production of knowledge, research, and social innovation. Otherwise, *waqf* will be trapped in historical nostalgia without the capacity to address future challenges. By formulating a *Waqf*-Based Educational Governance Model, this study confirms that *waqf* is not merely a spiritual heritage, but a strategic instrument for renewing Islamic institutions toward a globally competitive paradigm of scientific civilization.

Conclusion

Waqf in classical Islamic civilization has proven to be more than just a spiritually valuable charity; it also serves as an economic and scientific instrument that supports the sustainability of education and the production of knowledge. This study confirms that *waqf*, based on the Quran, Hadith, and *ijtihad* of Islamic jurisprudence scholars, forms a wealth distribution mechanism that enables the establishment of scientific institutions such as the Nizamiyah *Madrasah*, Al-Qarawiyyin, Bayt al-Ḥikmah, and Al-Azhar, independent of state authority. Theoretically, this research enriches the understanding of Islamic philanthropy as a sustainable socio-educational funding model. Practically, the revitalization of productive *waqf* is relevant to strengthening the financial autonomy of education and research in the modern era. However, this study remains limited to a general historical review without an in-depth exploration of the regional context, *nazir* management models, and the economic-political dynamics that influence the success of *waqf* institutions. Further research can be directed at comparative studies between classical and contemporary *waqf* practices, searches for educational *waqf* archives, or analysis of modern *waqf* management policies in order to build applicable integration between historical treasures and current needs.

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