

WAQF MANAGEMENT, GOVERNANCE, AND ACCOUNTABILITY PRACTICES: THE STATE OF THE CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

Hisham Yaacob^{1*}

Sharifah Norzehan Syed Yusuf²

Intan Salwani Mohamed³

Maslinawati Mohamad³,

Hairul Suhaimi Nahar⁴

¹ Dept. of Accounting, College of Business and Economics, United Arab Emirates University, Al Ain, United Arab Emirates (E-mail: hisham.yaacob@uaeu.ac.ae)

² Accounting Research Institute, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam, Malaysia
(E-mail: shari893@uitm.edu.my)

³ Faculty of Accountancy, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Selangor, Kampus Puncak Alam, Selangor, Malaysia (E-mail: intan838@uitm.edu.my; masli856@uitm.edu.my)

⁴ Dept. of Accounting, College of Business Administration, Tabuk University, Tabuk, Saudi Arabia
(E-mail: hbinnahar@ut.edu.sa)

*Corresponding author: hisham.yaacob@uaeu.ac.ae

Article history

Received date : 25-8-2025

Revised date : 26-8-2025

Accepted date : 27-9-2025

Published date : 16-10-2025

To cite this document:

Yaacob, H., Syed Yusuf, S. N., Mohamed, I. S., Mohamad, M., & Nahar, H. S. (2025). Waqf management, governance, and accountability practices: The state of the contemporary literature. *Journal of Islamic, Social, Economics and Development (JISED)*, 10 (77), 209 – 223.

Abstract: *Waqf (plural: awqaf) is an Islamic endowment that gives the waqif (benefactor) a continuing good deed. Awqaf has proven to be effective socio-economic contributing public goods such as education, healthcare, and food since the beginning of Islam at no cost to Muslim society. This paper intends to examine extant literature on waqf management, governance and accountability in Scopus database. The result indicates three main themes of waqf management and administration, disclosures and risks management, and governance and administration dominate the waqf literature. It is therefore suggested that future research should ideally focus more on the in-depth study in waqf actual settings to better understand the issues and challenges confronting the management and governance practices that are vital to achieving greater accountability to the waqf stakeholders and ensuring waqf growth and sustainability.*

Keywords: *Accountability, Sustainability, Waqf, Waqf Governance, Waqf Management*

Introduction

This paper reviews and discusses the extant research on waqf management, governance and accountability from the early 2015. It begins with a discussion on waqf in the realms of Islam. Selected literature on charities is reviewed to broaden the context, as research on waqf is currently, observably incomplete, with a noticeable lack of empirical studies in the body of knowledge. This is followed by a section discussing waqf management and administration, covering governance and accountability in both the charity and waqf context. The conclusion ends the paper.

In the Malaysian context, waqf practices differ in that the employees in charge of waqf activities are either state or federal employees (Yaacob, 2006). Waqf managers are now government employees in the modern era, and their salaries were funded by the state budget. Whether implicitly or explicitly, the *mutawalli* or manager is required to exercise fiduciary duties with the utmost care and diligence (Imtiaz, 1988). The goal of the waqf is to gain Allah's approval as a good deed, and the beneficiaries are typically identified explicitly by the *waqif* (Abdullah, 2020). The two most common waqf are the waqf *Khayri* (general) and the waqf *Khas* (specific) (Yaacob, 2006). The cash waqf has recently gained popularity and is being promoted by many waqf managers due to its viability (Nahar & Yaacob, 2011; Sanusi & Shafiai, 2015; Yaacob et al., 2015), causing waqf to become an important part of the Islamic socioeconomic system (Shatzmiller, 2001). Following the public and private sectors, *waqf* represents the third sector whose role in the equitable distribution or, more precisely, redistribution of wealth in Islam has been successful and demonstrated since its inception over 1400 years ago by our Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) and his sahabah (companions) (Isin & Lefebvre, 2005; Yaacob & Nahar, 2017). As the practices grow, awqaf also provide public goods while also acting as a poverty alleviation mechanism by providing free education, healthcare, public infrastructure, capital financing for businesses, and many other services (Lita, 2021).

Muslim scholars only began to pay attention to waqf (Islamic endowment) in the late twentieth century (Nahar & Yaacob, 2023; Shatzmiller, 2001). Awqaf existed in Malaysia beginning with the spread of Islam in 1200, but there was no written documentation until the early 1900s (Yaacob, 2013). The Malayan Federation was formed after the British granted independence, and the constitution clearly states that Islamic affairs are under the jurisdiction of the state and that each state has a State Islamic Religious Council (SIRC) for that purpose (Yaacob, 2006). As a result, each SIRC serves as a waqf trustee or *mutawalli*. In the specific context of waqf education, it began centuries ago in Egypt, Al Azhar University 970AD, Morocco, and Turkey (Mahamood et al., 2018). Scholars even contend that Oxford and Cambridge are founded on trust (endowment), like waqf, as Merton College was in 1262 AD. Even the world's oldest recorded university, the University of Al-Qarawiyyin in Fez, Morocco, is a waqf university founded in 859 A.D. with her inheritance by Fatima Al-Fihri (Haneef, 2018).

Methods

This paper aims to examine issues and challenges faced by waqf institutions from three specific perspectives of management, governance, and accountability. Focusing on the available established database of Scopus, relevant published articles on the three areas were collected and the literature was reviewed and analyzed. The use of a single Scopus database is premised on the fact that it contains a sizeable number of periodicals with a defined publication quality, rendering all published studies under its indexation to be of high quality and wide in coverage. The search for published articles was based on specific keywords which include “waqf management”, “waqf governance”, and “waqf accountability” to avoid non-relevant literature

listed in the search and saving time. The samples are from 2015 to 2022. Other databases are excluded in the search to ensure the review get only quality papers (Thaker, 2023).

The 3 selected keywords search yield 35 published articles in the Scopus database, 6 of which had to be removed due to their limited relevance to the specified themes. The analysis was done on the final samples of 29 articles which are listed in Table 1 below. Overall, the analysis results indicate that despite the topic having received increased research interest, a specific study in the real waqf setting remains context-centered and, hence, limited. Most of the published articles delved into the conceptual discussions on management, governance, and accountability separately. Limited real waqf cases are covered based on the 29 compiled articles, leaving the literature repertoire in the specified area to consist of merely conceptual writings without credible examples of actual practices on the ground. This essentially provides little practical understanding of issues and challenges facing waqf practices in the Islamic and non-Islamic world. The detailed analyses are provided in Table 1 below, segregated into several identified sub-themes.

Table 1: Summary of Past Studies on Waqf Governance, Management, and Accountability

No	Source	Objective(s)	Key Theme(s)	Nature & Method	Setting	Salient Findings
1	Sano & Kassim (2021)	To establish an effective governance framework for waqf (Islamic endowment) in the Republic of Guinea that would assist in enhancing socio-economic activities and eradicating poverty in the country.	Governance framework	Empirical through archival documents comparison and review.	Republic of Guinea	- Several prevailing issues affecting the development of waqf institutions are identified. - Key reformatory measures proposed: (1) The passing of general codified legislation that comprehensively governs waqf affairs in the country. (2) Setting up of a dedicated supervisory entity and competent managerial bodies to ensure the smooth and effective awqaf operation.
2	Hussin et al. (2021)	To comprehensively discuss the issue of risk vis-à-vis the perpetuity restriction principle inherent in waqf, thereby finding a resolution to the dilemma of perpetuity restriction inherent in cash waqf against the natural risk occurrence.	Risk	Documentation review (past journal articles, books, relevant financial axioms, and fatwas).	Malaysia	The perpetuity restriction and the natural occurrence of risk can be resolved through the integration of waqf risk management, especially concerning cash waqf, with the Islamic spiritual approach.

No	Source	Objective(s)	Key Theme(s)	Nature & Method	Setting	Salient Findings
						▪ Awareness of waqf risk management and Islamic spirituality enable stakeholders to accept the reality of risk that is inevitable. ▪ The violation of perpetuity is exonerated given that mental faculties aligned with revealed texts have been exhaustively used beforehand.
3	Yakob et al. (2021)	To assess enterprise risk management (ERM) practices in waqf institutions (WIs).	ERM	Structured interviews and questionnaire surveys with 9 waqf managers in Malaysia.	Malaysia	▪ WIs have a sub-optimal ERM implementation, focusing more on ERM practices at the strategic level yet ignoring those at the operational level. ▪ WIs officers have well-defined internal environments and objectives, but lacking in risk monitoring, which ensures effective ERM implementation. ▪ ERM knowledge and top management support do not clearly show associations with ERM implementation.
4	Alshater et al. (2021)	To analyse waqf research development.	Waqf research development	Scientometrics method using the Bibliometrix R Package, VOSviewer, and Excel software.	global	▪ Waqf research can be categorized into 3 sub-areas of (1) waqf fundamentals ; (2) analysis of cash waqf; and (3) waqf applications in Islamic social finance. ▪ The fundamental research in waqf is not good enough for such a powerful Islamic social finance instrument. ▪ 9 future research directions were suggested.

No	Source	Objective(s)	Key Theme(s)	Nature & Method	Setting	Salient Findings
5	Abdullahi & Sohail (2021)	To examine the role of Islamic social finance (ISF) instruments such as Zakah, Sadaqah, and Waqf in the provision of social services by Islamic faith-based organizations (IFBOs) in Southwest Nigeria.	The provision of social services through ISF instruments	An exploratory approach based on field interviews conducted with leaders of IFBOs.	Nigeria	▪ Faith in the Unseen God, scriptural texts, and socioeconomic factors as the major motivation for IFBOs' concern for social services. ▪ Zakah, Awqaf, Sadaqah, and gifts are ISF strategies used to improve access to social services. ▪ The IFBOs have efficient stand-alone and windows operational structures that align with IFBOs' corporate governance. ▪ IFBOs Challenges include inadequate funding, dearth of workforce, lukewarm and uncooperative attitude, and attitudinal behaviour of givers and takers.
6	Kamaruddin & Hanefah (2021)	To examine and compare the current waqf governance practices in waqf institutions in Malaysia.	Waqf governance practices	Documentation review	Malaysia	▪ Moderate waqf governance practices under 3 waqf governance categories namely waqf governance policy, board, and practices ▪ A significant impact of corporatisation reformation on waqf governance practices.
7	Zain & Muhamad Sori (2020)	To explore a sustainable and responsible investment (SRI) sukuk model based on Musharakah in developing waqf properties and assets under the SRI sukuk framework in Malaysia.	SRI sukuk model for waqf	Desk research and semi-structured interviews.	Malaysia	▪ The Musharakah-based sukuk model is proposed, and elaborated based on the purpose of development, functionality, choice of Shari'ah contract, obligor, and return mechanism.
8	Hasan et al. (2020)	To highlight the implications of governance and reporting practices in	Governance, reporting practices,	Questionnaire survey	Malaysia	▪ Only board ability has a significant positive impact on accountability.

No	Source	Objective(s)	Key Theme(s)	Nature & Method	Setting	Salient Findings
		ensuring accountability and building donors' trust in Waqf Institutions (WIs)	accountability, trust in (WIs)			- Voluntary information disclosure has a significant positive impact on accountability. - Accountability has a significant impact on building trust in waqf management.
9	Saad et al. (2019)	To uncover challenges (management, investment, and finance) facing Waqf institutions in Yemen.	Management, investment, and finance	Exploratory study & non-empirical	Yemen	Poor governance structure and human resource issues are apparent problems in waqf management.
10	Daud (2019)	To explore how Islamic governance can contribute to sufficient waqf reporting	Islamic governance & waqf reporting	Descriptive approach	Malaysia	Several systems in Islamic governance are discussed to achieve transparency in waqf reporting.
11	Abd-Jalil et al. (2019)	To conceptualise the relationship between information disclosure and Waqif commitment, taking into consideration the role of the level of trust (mediator variable) and communication and type of payment (moderator variables).	information disclosure, Waqif commitment, trust, and communication and type of payment.	Conceptual framework development from the theory of social exchange (mediated philanthropy model) and selected previous literature.	Malaysia	- Nine propositions were raised, and the factor of communication and payment method is proposed as a moderator. - There are five antecedents of information disclosure proposed, which is basic information, financial information, non-financial information, future information, and governance information.
12	Jahar (2019)	To examine the "bureaucratization" of Sharia in Indonesia, giving special attention to zakat, waqf, and other aspects of family law.	Legal	Documentation review	Indonesia	The incorporation of Sharia into state law is a project of formalizing a state-defined brand of Islam and Sharia legislation.
13	Aziz & Ali (2018)	To explore immovable Waqf and analyse the governance of Waqf institutions in India and Malaysia in the past and present.	Waqf governance	Comparative study	India and Malaysia	- Both countries have quite comprehensive legal frameworks for the governance of Waqf institutions, though there is still room for further improvement. - The most fundamental difference between

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						the two countries is the notion of the centralized regulatory body.
14	Islam (2018)	To explore the various stages of Waqf governance development in Bangladesh	Waqf governance	Exploratory study & non-empirical	Bangladesh	Separate phases of Waqf governance development in Bangladesh.
15	Shaikh (2018)	To examine the motives behind the foundation of waqf institutions and explore their importance for the welfare and development of an Islamic state and its subjects.	Waqf & development	Documentation review	Islamic world	Reasons to create waqfs i.e., religious, social, economic, and political. (1) To secure his wealth from expropriation and as an act of devotion due to weak private property rights and limited testamentary justice. (2) Awareness of the importance of awqaf institution to increase the safety of property and especially to accomplish long-term control over the property.
16	Mohammad (2018)	To discuss the objectives (maqāsid) of Sharī'ah and the objectives of waqf.	(maqāsid) of Sharī'ah and waqf	Review and opinion	Islamic world	The synthesis of waqf and Sharī'ah objectives should be the guiding rules for the legislature, Fatāwā, and courts in the proclamation of new rules and laws, or permissibility of actions and omissions of nāzir, and managers of awqāf properties.
17	Md-Zabri & Mohammed (2018)	To validate a potential synergistic venture between cash waqf institutions (CWIs) and financial cooperatives (FCs) in the provision of affordable Islamic home financing (IHF) in Malaysia.	cash waqf, financial cooperatives, Islamic home financing	Semi-structured interviews with ten experts to validate the cash waqf-financial-cooperative-musharakah mutanāqishah model.	Malaysia	Varying degrees of latent issues and challenges in the implementation of the model: (1) FCs need to practice the correct business model, implement good governance structures, and employ the right people. (2) CWIs need to work on their accountability

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						issues by publishing their audited accounts in mainstream newspapers.
18	Suhaili et al. (2018)	To overcome the paradigm of the complex collaborative relationships between the interested parties of waqf and the SIRC's.	Waqf and SIRC's collaboration	The qualitative approach of a case study	Malaysia	▪ The success of the model demonstrated by Wakaf CSR had inspired many versions of collaborative waqf projects with SIRC's. ▪ Collaborative governance from a polycentric perspective is an ideal formulation for executing the waqf sector in the Malaysian context.
19	Mohd-Zain et al. (2018)	To explore the internal control and its components in Waqf institutions.	internal control	Review and opinion	Malaysia	<i>Wasatiyyah</i> approach can be used to evaluate the internal control of Waqf institutions.
20	Hassan et al. (2018)	To undertake a global review of the current state of waqf practices in understanding the challenges and issues in waqf.	challenges and issues in waqf practices	Review and opinion	Islamic world	▪ Low waqf practices due to lack of trust in waqf managers and institutions based on evidence that financial greed takes over the financial objective creating a fear of permanent loss among the endowers. ▪ Investments of the waqf fund are not well diversified and not invested properly to generate income to support waqf assets.
21	Awaluddin et al. (2018)	To explore the governance disclosure and practices of two separate Malaysian Awqāf institutions with different operational setups (corporatized vs. government platform)	governance disclosure and practices	interviews and documentation reviews	Malaysia	▪ The essences of governance are observable in both entities with immense potential for improvement remains. ▪ The different operational setup provides indications suggesting the benefits of running waqf operations on a corporatized platform.

No	Source	Objective(s)	Key Theme(s)	Nature & Method	Setting	Salient Findings
22	Shaikh et al. (2017)	To discuss the application of waqf in the social finance sector.	waqf and social finance	Qualitative approach covering literature review and descriptive data	Malaysia	Waqf acts as a social finance institution by providing intermediation services for effectively utilising perpetual social savings for funding social and development projects and services.
23	Hasan et al. (2017a)	To determine the ability of government-managed Waqf institutions at influencing waqif's trust and commitment.	Waqif's trust and commitment	Questionnaire	Bangladesh	- Only board integrity has a statistically non-significant impact on Waqif's Trust. - Board opportunism negatively affects trust, communication, and accountability are found to have a positive association with Waqif's trust. - Trust is also found to have a positive impact on commitment.
24	Hasan et al. (2017b)	To discuss the negative issues in waqf institutions and propose the need for Shari'ah governance.	Shari'ah governance	Exploratory research, documentation review	N/A	<i>Shari'ah</i> governance practices for waqf institutions should be based on trust, accountability, God consciousness, hisbah, and mutual consultation.
25	Abdullah & Ismail (2017)	To explore the characteristics of waqf property, the management of waqf, and discuss the governance of waqf management in microfinance.	Waqf management, microfinance, and governance	Documentation review	N/A	- Permanence, irrevocability, and perpetuity are the characteristics of cash waqf, differentiating it from other types of donations. - As the donors of cash waqf do not aim to make a financial profit, waqf-based Islamic microfinance will be able to provide low-cost capital to poor entrepreneurs.
26	Noordin et al. (2017)	To develop a contingency framework and outline approaches towards performance measurement systems (PMS) of waqf institutions.	PMS of waqf institutions	Documentation review	N/A	- Current PMS practices of waqf institutions are less standardized and limited in scope. - Performance is commonly reflected in financial reporting and economic indicators

No	Source	Objective(s)	Key Theme(s)	Nature & Method	Setting	Salient Findings
27	Nor & Yaakub (2017)	To discuss the importance of governance educational endowments established by universities.	Governance and Education waqf	Documentati on review	N/A	▪ Success factors for education waqf are societal awareness, high Muslim population demographic situation, economic positions, and efficient and professional governance.
28	Yaakob et al. (2016)	To explore the major themes in the discussions on the growth of waqf properties through infrastructure development.	waqf properties growth, infrastructure development	Documentati on review	N/A	▪ Risk management is crucial in waqf investment, ensuring the accountability and transparency of waqf operations.
29	Sabri (2015)	To explore the management of waqf by Ottoman Waqf (Evkaf) institution in Cyprus.	Waqf management	Analysis of archival evidence on conservation projects initiated during the British colonial (1878 to 1960).	Cyprus	▪ A model framework of initiation, authorization, and implementation processes of the upkeep of the Waqf-maintained properties was identified. ▪ It reveals how heritage conservation practices are negotiated with the existing institutions and how they are transferred and/or transformed at distinct levels of institutional governance.

Source: Scopus Database

Findings and Discussion

Qualitative research approach dominates the literature. Documentation, literature reviews, and bibliography were consistently applied by the researchers as their research method. The study found three major themes as below:

Waqf management and administration

Rather than the state, the *mutawalli* (waqf managers) oversaw managing the waqf in the early stages of Islam (Yaacob, 2006). Waqf management is critical because it involves the process of administering the waqf entity, which necessitates a specific set of skills and competencies to provide proper administration (managing the roles and responsibilities of all organizational members) of the waqf institution. Prior studies have recognized the non-existence of comprehensive policies or guidelines in place to ensure effective and efficient waqf management and administration (Mohd Afendi & Asmah, 2010). In the Malaysian context for instance, since its constitution states that all spiritual matters (religious) are under the purview of the states unless the state is under federal authority, such as the Federal Territories, state religious councils in Malaysia currently have sole authority over the waqf (Federal Constitution, 2002).

Waqf disclosures and risks management

The concept of complete disclosure is also important. It aids stakeholders to comprehend the risks associated with waqf (Hussin et al., 2021). Non-financial activities are equally important in measuring the impact of waqf on society. Support for education for poor children, for example, has a significant impact on society, though it is not measurable now but will be in the future. The waqf accounts should also be simple to understand, as accounting is difficult for laypeople who lack basic accounting knowledge. Barlev (2006) contends that leaders must be faithful and honest in their interactions with the people, and he defines three types of accountabilities as the core accountability: human to God, human to human, and human to the priest. According to Islam, humans are also accountable to God, their fellow humans, and the environment or nature (Kamla, 2009; Yasmin et al., 2013). Talib et al. (2018) discovered divergence in waqf accounting and reporting due to differences in the practices of the State Religious Council and argued that there is a lack of waqf accounting and reporting standards, although AAOIFI had released a few waqf standards, namely, Shariah Standard (SS) No. 33 on waqf, Governance Standard (GS) No. 13 on waqf governance (AAOIFI SS13, 2008), and Financial Accounting Standard (FAS) No. 37 on Financial Nonetheless, these AAOIFI standards are not enforced, and they are adopted voluntarily by waqf institutions.

Waqf governance and accountability

Without a doubt, awqaf governance should be sharia-based, though any country-specific requirements on waqf laws should be considered. The AAOIFI recently published the waqf governance principle, which is based on Sharia and has four major pillars: accountability, fairness, transparency, and responsibilities. Although adoption by waqf institutions worldwide is still ongoing. According to studies, education waqf governance is still lacking (Hussin et al., 2021; Nor & Yaakub, 2015). According to Hassan et al. (2018), the governance framework of a waqf institution should be based on accountability, hisbah (sharia audit institution), god consciousness (*taqwa*), and mutual consultation (*syura*). According to the study, strong governance practices increase public confidence and trust, which is critical to waqf sustainability (Yaacob and Baisuni, 2014). As a result, there is an urgent need in Malaysia for a comprehensive waqf governance framework (Yusoff et al., 2021). In 2004, the Securities Commission of Malaysia issued waqf guidelines, which stated that there should be strong governance to protect investors (*waqif*). As discussed earlier, the majority of waqf governance and management research in Malaysia and elsewhere have been non-empirical (Ali et al., 2020; Nor & Yaakub, 2017; Saad et al., 2019; Hassan et al., 2017; Islam, 2018; Hanif & Zafar, 2020; Mohammad, 2018; Haneef, 2018). It is also worth noting that a few qualitative studies on waqf governance and management have been conducted in the last five years. Zain et al. (2018) investigated internal control in Malaysian waqf institutions and discovered that the *wasatiyyah* approach to evaluating internal control may improve good governance. However, the *wasatiyyah* concept has never been tested empirically. Because waqf is governed by Sharia, the concept of the middle ground does not apply. Awalludin et al. (2018) investigate governance disclosures at two waqf institutions and find evidence of adequate disclosures but recommend that the waqf be corporatized to improve governance. The difficulties stem from the fact that these waqf institutions are subject to state jurisdiction and the authority of the state religious council. The state religious council will not relinquish control unless the Sultan, or the head of state authorizes it. Accountability is essential in a charitable setting based on three specific issues (Cutt & Murray, 2000). For starters, because charitable organizations (including awqaf) practically operate in an environment of low-value conflict and high trust, accountability conceptually becomes a substitute for such a hospitable environment (Laughlin, 1988; Osman & Agyemang, 2020).

Conclusion

Operationally defined as the ownership of an asset intended for specific charitable purposes determined by the *waqif* by dedicating the asset's usufruct to specific beneficiaries (Kahf, 1998), waqf conceptually subscribes to the concept of charity in Islam and is part of the Islamic socio-economic mechanisms that serve to ensure equitable distribution of wealth, as evidenced by the formation of various waqf foundations such as the Waqf of Umar al Khattab and other sahabah (companions) and the Waqf *al haramayn* (Hoexter 1998). This review was undertaken to contribute to the knowledge of waqf governance, management, and accountability in a religious context that is lacking in Islamic institutional settings. The study argued that faith-based institutions provide a vantage point to study the management and governance relationship with accountability because religion should have a significant impact on the behaviour of the waqf managers (Nahar & Yaacob, 2011). Most extant literature focuses on the Malaysian and Indonesian context with global and selected countries experiences. Main research themes include waqf management and administration, disclosures and risk management, and waqf governance and accountability. The paper argued that even though the topic has received an increase in the researchers' interest, it was found that empirical study in the real waqf setting is still lacking. Hence, the paper suggests that future research should focus more on the in-depth study in the waqf actual settings to understand more of the issues, challenges, management, and governance practices to enhance accountability and sustainability.

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