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Revitalizing Waqaf for Intergenerational Justice: Ethical Mechanisms for Wealth Preservation and Social Equity

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Abstract

Waqaf has historically functioned as a mechanism for ethical wealth preservation and social redistribution, ensuring continuity across generations while addressing inequality within communities. Yet, contemporary waqf institutions often face systemic challenges such as weak governance, asset mismanagement, and inequitable distribution, limiting their effectiveness. This paper develops a governance- and equity-oriented conceptual framework that situates waqf as an ethical instrument for intergenerational justice. The proposed model integrates three interdependent pillars: governance for asset preservation, equity mechanisms for fair distribution, and sustainability to ensure long-term benefits across financial, social, and environmental dimensions. Comparative evidence from Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India demonstrates both the challenges and opportunities of revitalizing waqf institutions. The framework contributes theoretically by linking Islamic finance with intergenerational equity studies and institutional theory, and it provides practical guidance for policymakers and practitioners to modernize waqf governance, strengthen accountability, and align with the Sustainable Development Goals. By balancing preservation and equity, waqf can reclaim its role as a dynamic and sustainable

institution capable of addressing global inequality and safeguarding resources for future generations.
Keywords: Waqaf, Intergenerational Justice, Ethics, Wealth Preservation, Social Equity

Introduction

The waqaf, or Islamic charitable endowment, has long stood as one of the most enduring institutions of Muslim societies. Traditionally, waqaf has served as both a spiritual act of piety and a socio-economic mechanism for preserving wealth and ensuring its ethical distribution across generations. Unlike conventional endowments that may be dissolved or redirected, the perpetuity principle embedded in waqaf law ensures that endowed assets remain preserved indefinitely, with their benefits channelled toward community welfare. This makes waqaf a uniquely powerful tool for intergenerational justice, balancing the preservation of wealth with equitable access to its returns for society.

Historically, waqaf institutions funded mosques, schools, hospitals, caravanserais, and other public goods that strengthened both the material and moral fabric of Muslim communities. In Ottoman Turkey, a significant proportion of urban property was endowed as waqf, financing education, health care, and public infrastructure for centuries (Hoexter, 1998). In Mughal India, emperors and nobles established awqaf to sustain religious institutions and social welfare initiatives, embedding waqf deeply in the cultural and economic landscape (Kuran, 2019). These examples illustrate that waqaf was not merely a religious obligation but an institutionalized form of ethical wealth management, ensuring that resources benefitted both present and future generations.

In the contemporary era, the relevance of waqaf is being re-examined in light of widening global inequalities. According to the World Inequality Report (2022), the richest 10 percent of the global population control 76 percent of total wealth, while the bottom half of humanity owns just 2 percent. This imbalance is particularly stark in regions where economic growth has failed to translate into equitable distribution, leaving marginalized communities excluded from prosperity. The World Bank (2020) has also noted that in many developing countries, systemic weaknesses in governance exacerbate inequality by allowing mismanagement of public and communal assets. Against this backdrop, waqaf has renewed importance as a faith-based yet globally relevant instrument for addressing intergenerational equity.

However, despite its ethical underpinnings, many contemporary waqaf institutions fall short of their potential. In India, the Sachar Committee (2006) estimated that the country has over 870,000 waqf properties, yet poor management, legal disputes, and encroachments mean that only a fraction of these assets generate meaningful social returns. The Government of India's Waqf (Amendment) Act of 2025 sought to address these gaps by digitizing registries, mandating inclusive board structures, and enhancing accountability (Government of India, 2025). Yet, challenges remain in enforcing these reforms effectively. In Pakistan, the Punjab Auqaf and Religious Affairs Department manages vast tracts of waqf land, but widespread encroachment and inefficient management practices result in significant lost revenue (Government of Punjab, 2024). Even in Malaysia and Indonesia, often praised for their innovative approaches to Islamic finance, fragmentation of authority and jurisdictional overlaps hinder the optimization of waqf assets (Mohd Hadli Shah et al., 2024).

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At the same time, there are notable success stories that demonstrate the potential of revitalized waqf governance. In Saudi Arabia, licensed waqf investment funds regulated under the Capital Market Authority grew from SAR 500 million to SAR 1 billion (USD 266 million) in just one year, with returns reinvested in education, healthcare, and poverty alleviation (Elmahgop et al., 2025). In Bangladesh, waqf institutions that implemented transparent reporting and beneficiary-focused programs were more effective in attracting donor support and delivering equitable social outcomes (Uddin & Chowdhury, 2021). These cases illustrate that when governance structures are professionalized and aligned with ethical principles, waqf can function as a powerful mechanism for both preserving assets and distributing benefits equitably.

The concept of intergenerational justice provides an important lens for understanding the potential of waqf in the modern era. Philosophers such as Rawls (1971) and Gosseries (2009) argue that justice requires not only fairness among contemporaries but also fairness between generations. Institutions must therefore preserve resources for the future while ensuring equitable access for the present. Waqf embodies this principle: endowed assets are protected in perpetuity, ensuring continuity across generations, while the usufruct or returns are distributed to meet current social needs. This dual function positions waqf as an inherently ethical mechanism for wealth transfer that bridges temporal boundaries.

Yet the balance between preservation and equity is not without tension. On one hand, overemphasis on preservation can result in assets being locked in legal or administrative limbo, failing to generate tangible benefits for current beneficiaries. On the other hand, prioritizing immediate distribution without sustainable investment risks depleting the asset base, undermining the principle of perpetuity. This tension reflects a broader challenge in institutional design: how to ensure that wealth is preserved ethically for future generations while addressing the pressing needs of marginalized communities today.

To address this challenge, this paper develops a governance-oriented conceptual framework for waqf that integrates three interdependent pillars: governance for preservation, equity mechanisms for distribution, and sustainability for intergenerational justice. Governance ensures that waqf assets are managed transparently and professionally, preventing mismanagement and encroachment. Equity mechanisms ensure that the benefits of waqf are distributed fairly, targeting marginalized groups and reducing socio-economic disparities. Sustainability ensures that waqf investments generate recurring returns, aligning with broader development goals such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At the center of this framework lies the principle of intergenerational justice, which balances the dual imperatives of preservation and equity.

The contribution of this study is threefold. First, it positions waqf as a tool for ethical wealth transfer across generations, drawing on both Islamic finance principles and theories of intergenerational justice. Second, it synthesizes evidence from diverse contexts including Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India to illustrate the challenges and opportunities of waqf revitalization. Third, it offers practical and policy-oriented insights, proposing mechanisms for waqf governance that balance asset preservation with social equity.

In summary, waqf remains a unique and powerful institution with the potential to bridge ethical traditions with contemporary development imperatives. Revitalizing waqf for intergenerational justice requires more than legal reforms; it requires a holistic framework that integrates governance, equity, and sustainability. By doing so, waqf can reclaim its role as an ethical custodian of wealth, ensuring that resources are preserved for the future while addressing inequality and social justice in the present.

Problem Statement

The waqaf institution has long been recognized as a mechanism for ensuring the preservation and ethical distribution of wealth across generations. Historically, endowed properties and funds served to maintain educational institutions, hospitals, and community infrastructure in Muslim societies. These assets were preserved for perpetuity while their benefits were directed toward the welfare of present communities. In principle, waqaf embodies a dual responsibility. First, it safeguards assets for future generations through the principle of perpetuity. Second, it ensures social equity by distributing benefits in ways that reduce poverty and promote justice. Yet, despite its embedded ethical values, contemporary waqaf institutions are struggling to balance these two functions.

One of the major problems lies in the governance and management of waqaf assets. In many contexts, waqaf lands and properties remain underutilized, encroached upon, or managed inefficiently. The Sachar Committee (2006) highlighted that although India has over 870,000 registered waqf properties, their contribution to Muslim socio-economic development remains marginal due to poor administration and lack of professional management. More recently, the Government of India (2025) introduced amendments requiring digitized registries and the inclusion of women and professionals on waqf boards, seeking to close accountability gaps. Yet despite these reforms, implementation challenges remain and encroachments continue to erode the value of waqf assets.

Similar issues persist in Pakistan, where the Punjab Auqaf and Religious Affairs Department oversees thousands of acres of waqf land. Reports indicate that a substantial portion of these lands is illegally occupied or remains idle, leading to millions of dollars in lost revenue (Government of Punjab, 2024). These resources, if properly managed, could have been directed toward education, health care, and social equity programs. Instead, weak governance and lack of enforcement undermine the dual mandate of preservation and distribution.

In Southeast Asia, countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia have made significant efforts to modernize waqf institutions by introducing cash waqf, productive waqf, and green waqf models. These initiatives are intended to transform waqf assets into income-generating ventures that fund social welfare programs. However, research shows that fragmentation of authority, jurisdictional overlaps, and lack of standardized accounting frameworks continue to limit their efficiency (Mohd Hadli Shah et al., 2024). These institutional weaknesses reduce donor confidence and hinder the capacity of waqf to address both intergenerational preservation and equitable distribution.

The challenge is not only one of mismanagement but also of imbalance between asset preservation and social equity. In some countries, the emphasis on protecting waqf assets for perpetuity has led to situations where properties remain idle or locked in legal disputes, with little benefit accruing to current communities. In other contexts, waqf assets are distributed in ways that meet immediate social needs but without sustainable reinvestment strategies, thereby eroding the value of the assets for future generations. This tension highlights the absence of frameworks that integrate both functions in a balanced manner.

At a global level, the problem of inequality intensifies the urgency of revitalizing waqf. According to the World Inequality Report (2022), the top 10 percent of the global population controls more than three-quarters of total wealth, while the bottom half holds only 2 percent. This growing disparity reflects structural failures in wealth distribution systems. Waqf, if effectively governed, has the potential to act as an ethical counterbalance by redistributing resources toward marginalized groups while ensuring long-term preservation. However, without adequate governance mechanisms and equity-focused strategies, waqf risks replicating the very inequities it is meant to address.

Another layer of the problem concerns transparency and accountability. A comparative review of waqf accountability practices across countries found inconsistencies in financial disclosures and reporting mechanisms (Ikhyanuddin et al., 2022). In Bangladesh, for example, Uddin and Chowdhury (2021) found that waqf institutions that implemented transparent reporting were more successful in attracting donor support and delivering equitable outcomes. Conversely, institutions lacking accountability mechanisms often suffered from community distrust and reduced donor engagement. This evidence reinforces that accountability is not a peripheral issue but central to waqf's ability to balance preservation with equity.

The lack of integration with broader sustainability goals further complicates the problem. The United Nations Development Programme (2023) has promoted green waqf initiatives in Indonesia, demonstrating that waqf can support renewable energy, reforestation, and climate adaptation projects. These initiatives show how waqf can serve intergenerational justice by addressing ecological sustainability alongside social equity. Yet most waqf institutions remain narrowly focused on traditional charitable purposes, failing to incorporate financial, social, and environmental sustainability into their models. As a result, the potential of waqf to serve as a comprehensive instrument of intergenerational justice remains underutilized.

In summary, the problem lies in the inability of waqf institutions to operationalize their ethical mandate in practice. Weak governance and accountability structures undermine preservation, while lack of equity-oriented mechanisms limits social distribution. The absence of integrated sustainability strategies further reduces intergenerational relevance. As wealth disparities grow globally, the role of waqf as a mechanism for ethical wealth preservation and social equity becomes increasingly critical. Yet without structural reforms and a clear conceptual framework, waqf will remain underutilized and vulnerable to mismanagement. This paper therefore seeks to address this gap by proposing a governance- and equity-oriented conceptual framework that revitalizes waqf for intergenerational justice.

Literature Review

The literature on waqaf spans history, law, governance, economics, and social development. For the purposes of this study, the review is organized into five main themes: historical perspectives on waqaf as a mechanism for wealth preservation, governance and accountability in contemporary waqf institutions, the role of waqf in advancing social equity, the integration of intergenerational justice frameworks, and emerging innovations such as productive and green waqf.

Historical Perspectives on Waqaf as Wealth Preservation

The origins of waqaf date back to early Islamic history, where it was institutionalized as a perpetual endowment designed to preserve wealth while benefiting society. Historical accounts document how the Prophet Muhammad encouraged charitable endowments, and subsequent Muslim empires expanded this practice to finance infrastructure, education, and health services (Hoexter, 1998). In the Ottoman Empire, it is estimated that more than one-third of arable land and urban property was dedicated to waqf, financing schools, hospitals, and caravanserais for centuries (Kuran, 2019). Similarly, in Mughal India, waqf lands were used to sustain religious and social institutions, embedding waqaf deeply in the socio-economic structure of Muslim communities.

Scholars highlight that waqaf historically played a dual role. First, it preserved wealth across generations through the principle of perpetuity. Second, it ensured the equitable distribution of benefits by channeling resources into public goods. This dual function has led researchers to characterize waqaf as an early form of social contract, where private wealth was transformed into communal welfare (Gaudiosi, 1988). However, while historical waqaf institutions thrived under relatively stable governance systems, their modern counterparts face different political and economic realities that complicate this dual role.

Governance and Accountability in Contemporary Waqf Institutions

In modern times, governance has emerged as a central issue in the waqaf literature. Scholars agree that weak governance structures limit the ability of waqf institutions to preserve assets or deliver equitable benefits. Ikhyanuddin et al. (2022) conducted a comparative review of waqf accountability practices worldwide and found significant variation. Countries such as Malaysia and Turkey have introduced standardized accounting frameworks, while others lack even basic reporting requirements. This inconsistency undermines public trust and donor confidence.

In India, the Sachar Committee (2006) reported that despite the existence of more than 870,000 waqf properties, many remain idle or illegally occupied. The Waqf (Amendment) Act of 2025 introduced reforms such as digitized registries and more inclusive board structures (Government of India, 2025). These initiatives are intended to improve transparency and governance. However, scholars argue that without enforcement and capacity building, legal reforms remain largely symbolic (Khan, 2019).

In Pakistan, similar problems persist. The Punjab Auqaf Department has jurisdiction over thousands of acres of waqf land, yet widespread encroachment and lack of professional management lead to underperformance (Government of Punjab, 2024). Malaysia and Indonesia, often cited as leaders in Islamic finance, have pioneered cash waqf and productive waqf models. Yet fragmentation between state and federal authorities in Malaysia and between religious and government bodies in Indonesia continues to undermine effective governance (Mohd Hadli Shah et al., 2024).

Accountability is closely tied to governance in the literature. Uddin and Chowdhury (2021) showed that in Bangladesh, waqf institutions that implemented transparent reporting and engaged stakeholders were more successful in attracting donor support. Conversely, institutions without clear accountability mechanisms suffered from community distrust. This suggests that accountability is not only a technical requirement but also a key driver of legitimacy and long-term sustainability.

Waqaf and Social Equity

A growing body of literature situates waqaf within the broader discourse on social equity. Waqf has historically provided education, health care, and poverty alleviation to marginalized communities. Latif (2018) argues that good waqf governance is essential for ensuring distributive justice, which aligns with the Islamic principle of maslahah or the public good.

Empirical studies highlight successful equity-focused waqf initiatives. In Malaysia, community waqf projects have been developed to provide scholarships for low-income students and housing for underprivileged families. In Indonesia, cash waqf schemes have been directed toward microfinance programs that empower women and small businesses (Sadeq, 2002). These initiatives demonstrate that waqf can play a significant role in reducing socio-economic inequalities.

However, scholars also caution that without robust equity mechanisms, waqf may fail to deliver on its distributive mandate. For example, poorly managed waqf projects sometimes concentrate benefits among elites or fail to reach intended beneficiaries. This reflects the broader challenge of aligning waqf management with social equity objectives (Bachri, 2024).

Intergenerational Justice and Waqaf

The concept of intergenerational justice provides an important theoretical foundation for revitalizing waqf. Rawls (1971) argued that justice requires fairness not only among contemporaries but also across generations. Gosseries (2009) similarly emphasized the need for institutions to preserve resources for the future while ensuring equitable access for the present. These theories resonate strongly with the principle of perpetuity in waqf.

By design, waqf assets are preserved indefinitely, with only their returns distributed for social purposes. This structure ensures that future generations benefit from the same resources as the present. Scholars such as Kuran (2019) argue that this makes waqf one of the earliest institutional embodiments of intergenerational equity. However, the literature also highlights tensions between preservation and distribution. Excessive focus on preservation can lock assets in administrative limbo, while short-term distribution without sustainability erodes asset value over time. This tension underscores the need for frameworks that balance both objectives.

Emerging Innovations: Productive and Green Waqaf

Recent scholarship has focused on innovations that seek to modernize waqf institutions and align them with contemporary development goals. Productive waqf refers to the investment of waqf assets in income-generating ventures such as real estate, agriculture, or businesses, with profits used for social welfare. Apriantoro (2024) conducted a bibliometric analysis showing significant growth in research on productive waqf, reflecting global interest in its potential.

Green waqf is another emerging concept that integrates environmental sustainability into waqf management. UNDP (2023) has promoted green waqf frameworks in Indonesia, where waqf funds are directed toward renewable energy, reforestation, and climate adaptation projects. These initiatives link waqf with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 12 on responsible consumption and SDG 16 on strong institutions.

The literature suggests that innovations such as productive and green waqf can address both preservation and equity by generating recurring returns while addressing pressing social and environmental issues. However, their success depends on effective governance and accountability structures.

The reviewed literature converges on several key points. First, waqf has a rich historical legacy as a mechanism for intergenerational justice, but contemporary institutions often fall short due to weak governance and accountability. Second, waqf has significant potential to advance social equity, but only if managed transparently and equitably. Third, theories of intergenerational justice align closely with the principles of waqf, providing a strong conceptual foundation for revitalization. Fourth, innovations such as productive and green waqf demonstrate adaptability, but their effectiveness hinges on structural reforms.

In sum, the literature highlights both the promise and the limitations of waqf as an instrument of ethical wealth preservation and social equity. The next step is to propose a conceptual framework that integrates governance, equity, and sustainability to revitalize waqf for intergenerational justice.

Conceptual Framework

This diagram illustrates the governance and equity-oriented conceptual framework for revitalizing waqaf. The innermost ring represents governance as the foundation of asset preservation. The middle ring signifies equity mechanisms that ensure fair distribution. The outer ring symbolizes sustainability, which guarantees benefits across generations. At the center lies intergenerational justice, the ultimate outcome of these integrated dimensions.

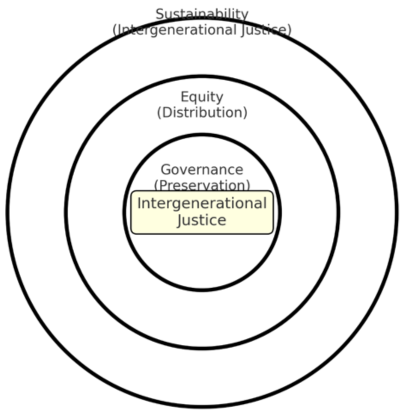

Illustration 1: Conceptual Framework

Illustration 1 shows how governance, equity, and sustainability interact to revitalize waqaf for intergenerational justice. The diagram positions governance as the innermost ring because it forms the foundation of waqf institutions. Strong governance structures, such as clear legal frameworks, digitized registries, professional management, and effective enforcement, are necessary to preserve assets and prevent mismanagement. Without governance, preservation across generations cannot be guaranteed.

The middle ring represents equity, emphasizing the mechanisms required to ensure that the benefits of waqf are distributed fairly. Equity highlights the ethical obligation of waqf to reduce socio-economic disparities by targeting marginalized groups and ensuring transparent beneficiary selection. It demonstrates that preservation alone is insufficient unless benefits reach those most in need.

The outer ring symbolizes sustainability, which extends beyond financial returns to encompass social and environmental dimensions. Sustainability ensures that waqf remains relevant in addressing modern challenges, from poverty alleviation to climate adaptation, and aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

At the center of the rings lies intergenerational justice, representing the ultimate outcome of these integrated dimensions. When governance, equity, and sustainability function together, waqf can achieve its dual mandate of preserving wealth ethically while promoting social equity for current and future generations.

Governance for Preservation
Governance provides the structural foundation of the framework. Without strong governance, waqf assets are vulnerable to mismanagement, encroachment, and underutilization. Effective governance includes clear legal frameworks, digitized asset registries, professional board structures, and mechanisms for enforcement.

Evidence from India illustrates both the promise and challenges of governance reforms. The Waqf (Amendment) Act of 2025 mandated digitization of waqf properties and the inclusion of women and professionals on waqf boards (Government of India, 2025). These measures are designed to reduce encroachments and improve transparency. Yet, implementation has been slow and disputes over waqf lands continue to hinder progress. Similarly, in Pakistan, the Punjab Auqaf and Religious Affairs Department has jurisdiction over thousands of acres of waqf land, but reports of illegal occupation and poor asset utilization highlight ongoing governance weaknesses (Government of Punjab, 2024).

At the same time, strong governance can unlock the potential of waqf assets. In Saudi Arabia, the establishment of waqf investment funds under the supervision of the Capital Market Authority has led to better asset management and increased financial returns. These funds doubled in value within one year, with the generated income reinvested in education, healthcare, and poverty alleviation (Elmahgop et al., 2025). These examples show that governance structures that combine legal frameworks, regulatory oversight, and professional management are essential for the preservation of waqf assets across generations.

Equity Mechanisms for Distribution

The second pillar of the framework is equity. While governance secures the preservation of assets, equity mechanisms ensure that their benefits are distributed fairly to address inequality and promote justice. Equity requires that waqf resources reach marginalized and vulnerable groups, rather than being monopolized by elites or diverted for political purposes. Empirical studies demonstrate the importance of equity-oriented waqf practices. In Bangladesh, Uddin and Chowdhury (2021) found that waqf institutions that implemented transparent beneficiary selection and engaged local communities were more effective in delivering social welfare programs. In Malaysia, community waqf initiatives have provided scholarships for disadvantaged students and housing for low-income families, thereby reducing social disparities. Indonesia has also experimented with cash waqf directed toward microfinance projects that empower women and small enterprises (Sadeq, 2002). These initiatives illustrate how waqf can serve as an equalizer by directing resources toward those who need them most.

However, the literature also highlights instances where waqf projects fail to achieve equity. Poorly designed programs sometimes result in benefits accruing to already privileged groups, undermining waqf's ethical foundation. Bachri (2024) argues that unless waqf governance explicitly incorporates social equity as a guiding principle, institutions risk perpetuating existing inequalities. Therefore, equity mechanisms such as transparent beneficiary criteria, needs-based distribution, and stakeholder engagement are critical for ensuring that waqf fulfills its distributive mandate.

Sustainability for Intergenerational Justice

The third pillar of the framework is sustainability. While governance preserves assets and equity ensures fair distribution, sustainability guarantees that waqf continues to deliver benefits across generations. Sustainability encompasses financial, social, and environmental dimensions.

Financial sustainability requires that waqf assets are invested productively to generate recurring income. Productive waqf models in Malaysia and Indonesia have directed waqf resources into real estate, agriculture, and businesses, with returns reinvested into social programs (Apriantoro, 2024). Social sustainability ensures that benefits are distributed consistently to communities, strengthening long-term trust and legitimacy. Environmental sustainability, captured in the concept of green waqf, integrates ecological concerns into waqf management. UNDP (2023) has promoted green waqf frameworks in Indonesia, channeling waqf resources into renewable energy and reforestation projects. Such initiatives contribute not only to present welfare but also to the protection of natural resources for future generations.

The integration of sustainability into waqf governance ensures that the institution remains relevant in addressing contemporary challenges such as climate change, inequality, and resource depletion. By aligning waqf with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, sustainability also provides a bridge between Islamic principles and global development agendas.

Discussion

The conceptual framework presented in this study demonstrates how governance, equity, and sustainability interact to reposition waqaf as a mechanism of intergenerational justice. This layered model illustrates that ethical wealth preservation cannot be achieved by focusing on a single dimension in isolation. Governance preserves the assets, equity ensures fair distribution, and sustainability maintains relevance across generations. The discussion below elaborates on the significance of these pillars, their interaction, and the implications for policymakers, practitioners, and scholars.

Governance remains the cornerstone of effective waqf management. Without strong governance, assets are vulnerable to mismanagement, encroachment, or underutilization. Evidence from India highlights the dangers of weak governance, where despite reforms under the Waqf (Amendment) Act 2025, many waqf properties remain illegally occupied or poorly managed (Government of India, 2025). This undermines the ability of waqf institutions to preserve assets for future generations. Similarly, in Pakistan, reports of encroached lands and underutilized properties demonstrate how governance deficits erode both trust and long-term asset value (Government of Punjab, 2024).

Conversely, when governance mechanisms are robust, waqf assets can deliver transformative outcomes. In Saudi Arabia, the establishment of regulated waqf investment funds under the supervision of the Capital Market Authority doubled fund values within a year, with profits reinvested in healthcare and education (Elmahgop et al., 2025). These examples show that governance reforms should not be symbolic but must incorporate enforceable legal structures, professional board management, and digital transparency tools to preserve assets effectively.

Equity mechanisms ensure that preserved assets translate into tangible social benefits. Without equity, waqf risks becoming an instrument of asset accumulation rather than social redistribution. Equity requires transparent beneficiary selection, community participation, and distribution policies that prioritize marginalized groups.

Studies from Bangladesh illustrate how equity-oriented practices increase the effectiveness of waqf institutions. Uddin and Chowdhury (2021) found that institutions that published transparent financial and beneficiary reports attracted higher levels of donor trust and community support. In Malaysia, community waqf initiatives directed resources toward scholarships and affordable housing for disadvantaged groups, reducing inequality. Similarly, Indonesia's cash waqf programs, when directed to microfinance initiatives, empowered women and small enterprises, thereby improving social equity (Sadeq, 2002).

These examples highlight that waqf can act as a social equalizer, but only if equity mechanisms are embedded into institutional design. Without equity, even well-preserved assets risk reproducing existing socio-economic inequalities.

Sustainability ensures that waqf remains relevant not only for current beneficiaries but also for future generations. Financial sustainability requires productive investments that generate recurring income. Malaysia and Indonesia have pioneered productive waqf initiatives, investing assets into real estate, agriculture, and business ventures to fund social programs (Apriantoro, 2024). These initiatives demonstrate that perpetual preservation must be accompanied by productive use if waqf is to remain viable across generations.

Beyond financial sustainability, environmental considerations have emerged as a pressing concern. Green waqf models promoted by UNDP (2023) in Indonesia link Islamic endowments with renewable energy, reforestation, and climate adaptation. Such initiatives connect waqf with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 13 on climate action and SDG 16 on strong institutions. By integrating environmental concerns, waqf addresses intergenerational equity not only in economic terms but also in ecological stewardship.

Social sustainability is equally significant. Waqf institutions must ensure consistent and transparent benefit distribution to maintain legitimacy. Long-term community trust depends on institutions demonstrating fairness, efficiency, and responsiveness to evolving social needs. Without social sustainability, waqf risks losing its legitimacy as an ethical custodian of wealth.

Interactions Among Governance, Equity, and Sustainability

The layered rings framework emphasizes that governance, equity, and sustainability are interdependent. Governance provides the legal and institutional structures necessary for preservation. Equity ensures that governance translates into fair distribution, while sustainability secures the continuity of both preservation and equity.

For example, digitized registries and professional boards (governance) can improve efficiency, but without equity-focused policies, benefits may not reach marginalized groups. Similarly, productive waqf investments (sustainability) can generate financial returns, but without accountability and equitable redistribution, outcomes may deviate from waqf's ethical principles. Thus, the framework illustrates that ethical wealth preservation is a systemic outcome of interconnected pillars rather than a product of isolated reforms.

Global Comparisons

The framework can be applied across diverse contexts. In Saudi Arabia, the focus on governance and financial sustainability has generated significant returns, but greater emphasis on equity could improve social outcomes. In India and Pakistan, governance reforms remain critical to addressing asset mismanagement and encroachment. In Malaysia and

Indonesia, innovative models such as productive and green waqf show promise but require stronger integration with equity and governance structures to maximize impact.

These comparisons demonstrate the adaptability of the framework across regions. While specific challenges differ, the interdependence of governance, equity, and sustainability remains universal.

The discussion illustrates that waqf can only fulfill its potential for intergenerational justice when governance, equity, and sustainability are integrated. Governance secures preservation, equity ensures fairness, and sustainability guarantees continuity. Together, these dimensions allow waqf to function as an ethical custodian of wealth, balancing preservation with equitable distribution. By applying this framework, waqf institutions can be revitalized to address modern challenges while remaining faithful to their historical legacy.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the potential of waqaf as a mechanism for intergenerational justice through ethical wealth preservation and social equity. Drawing on historical precedents, comparative international evidence, and contemporary innovations, the study proposed a governance- and equity-oriented conceptual framework with three interdependent pillars: governance, equity, and sustainability. At the center lies intergenerational justice, representing the balance between preserving assets for future generations and ensuring fair distribution for present communities.

The discussion revealed that governance is the essential foundation of waqf preservation. Without enforceable laws, professional management, and digitized registries, assets remain vulnerable to mismanagement and encroachment. Equity mechanisms are equally vital, ensuring that benefits are distributed fairly to marginalized and underserved groups. Sustainability guarantees the long-term relevance of waqf by integrating financial, social, and environmental dimensions. Together, these three pillars form a holistic model that aligns waqf's ethical principles with contemporary development challenges.

The Implications of this Framework are Wide-Ranging

From a theoretical standpoint, the framework advances the literature on Islamic finance and intergenerational justice. It reframes waqf as not only a charitable or religious institution but also as a governance system that embodies fairness across time and society. By aligning waqf with theories of intergenerational justice (Rawls, 1971; Gosseries, 2009), the model demonstrates how Islamic institutions can contribute to global discourses on equity and sustainability. The framework also extends institutional theory by showing how legitimacy depends on integrating cultural traditions with modern standards of governance and accountability (Scott, 2014).

For policymakers, the framework underscores the importance of institutional reforms. Governments should prioritize the digitization of waqf assets to prevent encroachment and enhance transparency. Regulatory authorities must be empowered to enforce compliance, audit financial records, and penalize mismanagement. Policies should mandate regular reporting on both financial performance and social outcomes, aligning waqf practices with national development agendas and the Sustainable Development Goals. Additionally, governments should encourage innovative models such as productive and green waqf, which generate long-term returns while addressing pressing social and environmental challenges.

For practitioners, the framework highlights the need for professionalization and community engagement. Waqf boards should include experts in finance, law, and development to ensure efficient management. Transparent reporting and social audits can build donor trust and improve legitimacy. Practitioners should design projects that target marginalized groups and measure outcomes not only in financial terms but also in social impact. Diversified investment strategies, including renewable energy and social enterprises, can strengthen sustainability and expand the relevance of waqf in contemporary society.

The broader significance of this framework lies in demonstrating how waqf can bridge faith-based ethical traditions with modern development imperatives. At a time when global inequality is widening and environmental crises are intensifying, waqf provides a culturally rooted yet globally relevant mechanism for balancing preservation and equity. Revitalizing waqf for intergenerational justice requires more than symbolic reforms. It demands a holistic integration of governance, equity, and sustainability to ensure that assets are preserved, distributed fairly, and sustained for generations to come.

In conclusion, waqf can reclaim its historical role as an ethical custodian of wealth while addressing contemporary challenges of inequality and climate change. The layered rings framework provides both a conceptual and practical roadmap for this revitalization, positioning waqf as a dynamic institution that embodies intergenerational justice in theory, policy, and practice.

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