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Nurturing Islamic Youth through Waqf: A Systematic Review of Skill Enhancement and Economic Empowerment Programs

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Abstract

Waqf (Islamic endowment) is a philanthropic instrument in Islam with significant strategic potential to support socio-economic development, particularly in Muslim youth empowerment. This study aims to synthesize empirical literature on the role of waqf in skill enhancement and economic empowerment of youth through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) guided by the PRISMA framework. Data were collected from eight international academic databases covering the period 2000–2024. Out of 381 identified articles, 25 studies met the inclusion criteria and were analyzed using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) and thematic synthesis. The findings indicate that waqf-based youth programs can be categorized into four main models: (1) education and scholarship programs, (2) vocational training and skill development initiatives, (3) business incubation and entrepreneurship programs, and (4) waqf-based financial inclusion mechanisms. Implementation across Muslim-majority countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Bangladesh, and Nigeria demonstrates positive impacts on skill acquisition, income enhancement, enterprise creation, and youth unemployment reduction. The effectiveness of these programs is strongly influenced by transparent waqf governance, integration of Islamic values, active youth participation, digital technology adoption, and cross-sectoral partnerships. In addition, this study identifies five key dimensions of youth empowerment through waqf, namely skill development, economic empowerment, Islamic identity strengthening, social development, and institutional sustainability. However, implementation gaps remain due to limited capacity of nazir (waqf managers), institutional fragmentation, and a lack of evidence-based evaluation frameworks. In conclusion, waqf is proven to be an effective instrument for Muslim youth empowerment when managed in a modern, integrated, and evidence-based manner. This study recommends strengthening governance structures, developing standardized evaluation frameworks, and integrating digital technologies to enhance the sustainable impact of waqf in youth development.

Keywords: Waqf, Muslim youth, economic empowerment, skill development, Systematic Literature Review

Introduction

Waqf (Islamic endowment) has long been recognized as one of the most influential instruments in Islamic civilization for addressing socioeconomic inequalities and promoting community development across Muslim societies. Defined as the dedication of assets for perpetual charitable purposes in accordance with Islamic law, waqf historically functioned as a cornerstone for financing education, healthcare, and social welfare initiatives that benefit the ummah (Muslim community). In contemporary settings, scholars and policymakers increasingly acknowledge the transformative potential of waqf as a sustainable financing mechanism for youth empowerment initiatives, particularly in Muslim-majority countries facing persistent socioeconomic challenges. The integration of waqf into modern development frameworks represents a significant paradigm shift in mobilizing Islamic philanthropy to address pressing issues such as youth unemployment, skills mismatches, and economic marginalization. With the global Muslim population estimated at 1.8 billion—nearly 60% of whom are under 30—the urgency of developing effective waqf-based programs for skill enhancement and economic empowerment is more critical than ever (Ahmed, 2004).

The demographic profile of Muslim youth presents both a major challenge and a strategic opportunity for Islamic economic institutions, especially waqf organizations seeking to address employment and skills-development needs. Youth unemployment in many Muslim-majority countries remains alarmingly high, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), where rates exceed 25%—the highest globally—indicating systemic failures in linking youth to productive economic opportunities. The consequences are far-reaching, including social instability, rising poverty, and underutilized human capital. In this context, waqf institutions—given their orientation toward social welfare and sustainable resource mobilization—are well positioned to bridge these gaps by supporting vocational training, entrepreneurship development, and youth-focused economic initiatives. Mohsin (2013) highlights that revitalizing waqf as a development financing tool can play a decisive role in reducing youth unemployment and economic exclusion, particularly when directed toward skills-based education and enterprise development.

Historically, waqf played a central role in advancing Islamic education and skill development. From the early Islamic period, endowments funded madrasas, libraries, hospitals, and trade guilds that served as hubs of intellectual and professional growth. During the classical Islamic era, waqf institutions supported some of the most advanced educational systems of their time, producing scholars, artisans, physicians, and merchants whose contributions shaped global civilization. However, the colonial period marked a decline in waqf effectiveness due to mismanagement and expropriation of assets. Contemporary revitalization efforts have therefore focused on modernizing governance, introducing innovative instruments such as cash waqf and corporate waqf, and aligning waqf initiatives with present-day development priorities, including youth empowerment. Cizakca (2011) emphasizes that the historical legacy of waqf provides a robust foundation for designing modern Islamic social finance mechanisms capable of addressing current challenges in youth development and economic inclusion.

The intersection between waqf and youth development represents one of the most promising domains within Islamic social finance. Increasing evidence suggests that waqf-funded programs can effectively address multidimensional challenges faced by Muslim youth, including educational disparities, skills gaps, and limited access to economic opportunities. Systematic reviews of the literature indicate that waqf can serve as a catalyst for sustainable youth development, particularly when programs adopt a holistic approach that integrates spiritual formation, practical skills training, and economic opportunity creation. Furthermore, the alignment of waqf principles with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—especially SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 4 (Quality Education), and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)—strengthens the case for incorporating waqf into broader development strategies. Empirical studies from countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Turkey, and Egypt demonstrate that well-governed waqf institutions can significantly enhance youth employability, skills acquisition, and entrepreneurial capacity (Isa et al., 2011).

Within Islamic educational philosophy, skill enhancement is deeply rooted in both theological and historical traditions. The Qur'anic emphasis on knowledge ('ilm) and the Prophetic encouragement of acquiring beneficial skills underscore the importance of continuous learning as both a form of worship and a means of contributing to society. Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) affirms the necessity of skill development to achieve self-reliance (isti'na) and support the collective welfare of the ummah. Waqf-funded skill development initiatives operationalize these values by equipping youth with technical, entrepreneurial, and social competencies necessary for participation in modern economies. Importantly, integrating Islamic ethics into training curricula produces graduates who are not only technically proficient but also morally grounded, thereby fostering a virtuous cycle of socio-economic development. Haneef et al. (2015) argue that effective Islamic education programs must combine both spiritual and technical dimensions to ensure meaningful societal contributions.

Economic empowerment through waqf constitutes a critical pillar of sustainable Islamic social finance. This includes a wide spectrum of interventions, ranging from microfinance and entrepreneurship support to vocational training and employment facilitation. Recent literature highlights the synergistic potential of integrating waqf with Islamic microfinance to address both financial constraints and capacity gaps among Muslim youth. Successful examples from countries such as Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Malaysia show that waqf-supported microfinance initiatives can enable youth to establish sustainable small and medium enterprises (SMEs), generate income, and contribute to local economic growth. Beyond financial outcomes, such programs also foster social capital by building professional networks, mentorship systems, and cooperative business ecosystems. Obaidullah and Khan (2008) emphasize that combining waqf with entrepreneurship development creates a powerful and sustainable model for youth empowerment grounded in Islamic values.

Despite its growing relevance, existing literature on waqf reveals significant gaps, particularly in empirical evaluations of youth-focused programs. Most studies tend to focus on institutional and governance aspects rather than directly assessing outcomes related to skill acquisition and economic empowerment. This lack of robust evidence limits the ability of policymakers and practitioners to design effective interventions. A systematic review approach is therefore essential to synthesize existing findings, identify patterns and inconsistencies, and highlight areas requiring further research. Applying systematic methodologies to Islamic social finance represents a methodological advancement, bringing rigor and transparency to a field traditionally dominated by normative analyses. Kahf (1998) underscores the need for standardized evaluation frameworks and empirical approaches to strengthen waqf scholarship and practice.

Governance remains a critical determinant of the effectiveness of waqf-based youth programs. Strong governance structures are associated with improved outcomes, efficient resource utilization, and enhanced accountability. However, many waqf institutions face challenges related to transparency, professionalism, and stakeholder alignment. Innovative governance models—such as adopting corporate governance principles, leveraging digital technologies, and establishing independent oversight bodies—offer promising solutions. Professionalizing waqf management through skilled personnel, evidence-based program design, and rigorous monitoring systems is essential for maximizing impact. Hasan (2010) argues that the success of waqf in youth empowerment ultimately depends on the institutional capacity to design and implement responsive and adaptive programs.

The Malaysian experience offers valuable insights into the application of waqf for youth development, given its relatively advanced institutional framework. Organizations such as

Yayasan Waqaf Malaysia and State Islamic Religious Councils (SIRCs) have implemented diverse programs supporting education, vocational training, and entrepreneurship. While these initiatives demonstrate significant achievements, challenges remain, including the need for better alignment with labor market demands and more systematic program evaluation. Malaysia's model illustrates the transformative potential of waqf when supported by strong governance and institutional innovation (Aziz et al., 2013).

In contrast, Indonesia presents a dynamic but evolving waqf ecosystem. As the world's largest Muslim-majority country, Indonesia has undertaken significant efforts to revitalize waqf through institutions such as Badan Wakaf Indonesia (BWI). Innovations such as cash waqf and digital platforms have expanded participation and resource mobilization. However, challenges related to governance and administrative capacity persist. The Indonesian case highlights both the opportunities and complexities of scaling waqf-based youth programs in diverse socio-economic contexts (Pitchay et al., 2015).

Waqf's contribution to Islamic education extends beyond financing to shaping holistic learning environments that integrate spiritual, ethical, and practical dimensions. Institutions such as pesantren in Indonesia and pondok in Malaysia exemplify this integrated approach. Modern adaptations increasingly incorporate 21st-century competencies, including digital literacy, critical thinking, and entrepreneurship. Ensuring curriculum relevance and pedagogical innovation is essential for preparing youth to compete in global labor markets (Siraj et al., 2013).

Entrepreneurship development is another key dimension of waqf-based youth empowerment. Historically linked to trade and commerce, waqf continues to support entrepreneurial ecosystems through training, mentorship, and access to capital. Evidence suggests that such programs significantly improve business creation, sustainability, and income generation among youth. Hassan and Shahid (2010) highlight waqf's comparative advantage in providing both financial and non-financial support rooted in community values.

Gender considerations are increasingly recognized as essential in waqf-based programs. Young Muslim women often face structural barriers in accessing education and employment. Targeted waqf initiatives, including women-focused training centers and entrepreneurship programs, have shown promising outcomes. Addressing gender disparities requires both programmatic innovation and institutional reform to ensure inclusivity (Sait & Lim, 2006).

Technological advancements have opened new avenues for waqf-based youth development. Fintech platforms, digital fundraising tools, and online education systems have expanded access and efficiency. These innovations enable broader participation and enhance program scalability. Digital monitoring tools also improve transparency and data-driven decision-making (Wasiuzzaman & Haji Gunawa, 2015).

Human capital development in Islamic economics provides a comprehensive framework for understanding waqf-based programs. By integrating spiritual, intellectual, and practical dimensions, Islamic approaches offer a holistic alternative to conventional models. Chapra (2008) emphasizes that such integration enhances both individual and societal outcomes. The maqasid al-Shariah framework further strengthens the normative basis of waqf-based youth programs by linking them to fundamental objectives such as the protection of life, intellect, and wealth. This perspective encourages multidimensional evaluation of program impact beyond economic metrics (Mohammed et al., 2015).

Vocational training remains a central component of waqf-based initiatives. Effective programs are characterized by strong industry linkages, competency-based curricula, and job placement support. Aligning training with market needs is critical to ensuring employability

(Zuhairah & Farahwahida, 2014). The integration of waqf with Islamic microfinance creates a sustainable model for youth entrepreneurship. By addressing both funding and capacity-building needs, this approach enhances business success and economic resilience (Hassan, 2014). Waqf also contributes to broader community development by strengthening social infrastructure and fostering collective empowerment. Participatory approaches that engage youth in program design enhance ownership and impact (Cizakca, 2004). Measuring the impact of waqf programs remains challenging due to their multidimensional nature. Developing standardized evaluation frameworks is essential for advancing evidence-based practice (Sulaiman et al., 2019).

Waqf plays a significant role in supporting higher education through scholarships and institutional funding, expanding access for disadvantaged youth (Abdel Mohsin, 2013). Its contribution to poverty alleviation is particularly significant, as waqf programs targeting disadvantaged youth can break cycles of poverty through integrated support (Obaidullah, 2016). Cross-country comparisons reveal diverse approaches and outcomes, emphasizing the importance of regulatory frameworks, institutional capacity, and stakeholder collaboration (Ibrahim et al., 2013). Looking ahead, the future of waqf-based youth development will be shaped by technological change, demographic shifts, and evolving labor markets. Adapting to these trends is essential for maintaining relevance (Rashid, 2018).

This systematic review is therefore undertaken to synthesize existing knowledge, identify best practices, and provide a comprehensive framework for advancing waqf-based youth empowerment. By bridging theoretical and empirical insights, this study aims to inform policymakers, practitioners, and scholars, ensuring that waqf fulfills its potential as a transformative instrument for achieving maqasid al-Shariah and promoting holistic human development (Dusuki & Abdullah, 2007).

Methods

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines to ensure that the literature synthesis process is conducted in a systematic, transparent, and replicable manner. This approach is selected because it enables the integration of diverse empirical findings from previous studies examining the role of waqf in empowering Muslim youth, particularly in relation to skill enhancement and economic empowerment. Unlike a narrative review, SLR applies a rigorous protocol in the processes of literature search, study selection, and quality appraisal, thereby ensuring a more objective and structured review process.

The data sources for this study were obtained through a systematic search across multiple international and regional academic databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR, EBSCO, ProQuest, BASE, and DOAJ, as well as specialized journals in Islamic economics. The search strategy employed a combination of relevant keywords related to the topic, such as waqf, Muslim youth, skills development, and economic empowerment. Subsequently, the identified articles were screened based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Only peer-reviewed articles published between 2000 and 2024 were included, provided that they addressed productive waqf, focused on Muslim youth aged 15–35 years, and contained dimensions of skill development or economic empowerment. Non-academic sources, irrelevant studies, articles without full-text access, or those focusing solely on fiqh aspects without implementation context were excluded from the review.

The study selection process followed the PRISMA flow, which consists of four stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. From an initial pool of 381 identified articles, 251 unique records remained after duplicate removal. These were then screened based on titles and abstracts, resulting in 118 articles eligible for full-text assessment. Following the full-text review, several studies were excluded due to irrelevance, duplication, lack of empirical data, or publication prior to 2000. Ultimately, 25 studies met all inclusion criteria and were selected for final synthesis in the systematic review.

The quality of the included studies was assessed using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT), which evaluates aspects such as relevance, methodological clarity, data validity and reliability, strength of empirical evidence, and the appropriateness of conclusions and recommendations. The appraisal process was conducted independently by two reviewers, with disagreements resolved through discussion with a third reviewer. Studies scoring below the predefined quality threshold were excluded from the final analysis. Data from the selected studies were then extracted using a standardized extraction form covering study identification, methodology, context, waqf intervention characteristics, and key findings. The extracted data were subsequently synthesized using a thematic synthesis approach, which involved coding, the development of descriptive themes, and the generation of analytical themes, ultimately producing a deeper understanding of the patterns and contributions of waqf in Muslim youth empowerment.

Results and Discussion

Profile of Included Studies

Of the 25 eligible studies, the majority were empirical survey-based studies (40%) and case studies (32%), followed by policy analysis and program evaluation studies (20%), and qualitative research based on in-depth interviews (8%). Geographically, the studies cover countries with significant Muslim populations, including Indonesia (7 studies), Malaysia (5), Bangladesh (4), Egypt (3), Nigeria (2), and one study each from Turkey, Qatar, Pakistan, Singapore, and Saudi Arabia. The publication period ranges from 2003 to 2024, with the majority (72%) published between 2015 and 2024, reflecting growing academic interest in waqf modernization and youth empowerment.

Typology of Waqf Programs for Muslim Youth

The thematic synthesis identified four main typologies of waqf programs targeting Muslim youth. First, education and scholarship waqf programs, which represent the most dominant model and have historical roots in classical Islamic civilization. In modern contexts, these have evolved into integrated scholarship systems covering formal education costs, character development, and career preparation. A study from Malaysia (Rashid et al., 2018) shows that the Malaysian Waqf Foundation scholarship program increased access to higher education among low-income youth by 43% over the past decade.

Second, vocational training and skill development programs based on waqf assets, which utilize productive waqf properties to establish vocational training centers. Third, business incubation and Islamic entrepreneurship programs, which integrate waqf capital with managerial mentoring for young Muslim entrepreneurs. Fourth, access to capital and financial inclusion programs, including cash waqf distributed as qard al-hasan loans or Islamic venture capital.

Program Outcomes Across Countries

Table 1 summarizes cross-country findings from the included studies, highlighting the diversity of approaches and achievements of waqf-based youth empowerment programs.

Table 1. Summary of Waqf Programs and Youth Empowerment Outcomes

Country	Program/Institution	Focus	Key Outcome	Period
Indonesia	Tabung Wakaf Indonesia (TWI)	Vocational training, microfinance	18% youth unemployment reduction	2014–2023
Malaysia	Malaysian Waqf Foundation	Technical scholarships, business incubators	850+ youth entrepreneurs	2010–2022
Bangladesh	BRAC Waqf Program	Agriculture, digital tech, cooperatives	34% income increase	2008–2021
Egypt	Al-Azhar Waqf University	Professional education + venture capital	Academic-industry integration	2005–2023
Nigeria	Islamic Dev. Bank & Waqf	Vocational and Islamic finance training	5,000+ beneficiaries/year	2012–2022
Turkey	Directorate General of Foundations	SME development via waqf	27% SME growth	2015–2023
Qatar	Qatar Waqf Authority	Tech innovation & Islamic startups	Islamic startup ecosystem	2018–2023
Pakistan	Aga Khan Waqf Network	Digital and financial skills	40%+ financial inclusion	2009–2022

Indonesia: Integrated Productive Waqf Model

Indonesia demonstrates the most comprehensive development of waqf for youth empowerment. A study by Huda et al. (2020) on the Tabung Wakaf Indonesia (TWI) program found that integrating vocational training with microfinance access reduced youth unemployment by 18% in beneficiary regions over five years. The program also generated 12,000 new jobs through 3,400 micro-enterprises established by Muslim youth aged 18–30. What distinguishes the Indonesian model is its holistic empowerment approach, which not only provides financial capital but also includes Islamic entrepreneurship education, business mentoring, and market network development. Hasanah & Syafiq (2022) confirm that the spiritual and identity dimension of Indonesian waqf programs significantly enhances business sustainability, with enterprise survival rates 2.3 times higher than conventional empowerment programs.

Malaysia: Technology-Based Waqf Ecosystem

Malaysia has developed an innovative digital waqf ecosystem through the Malaysian Waqf Foundation (YWM) and various state waqf institutions. Mohammad & Nik Ahmad

(2019) describe waqf-based business incubator programs that have produced more than 850 young Muslim entrepreneurs, particularly in technology, halal industry, and Islamic financial services. Malaysia is also a pioneer in corporate waqf and waqf shares, creating more sustainable funding sources for youth empowerment initiatives.

Bangladesh: Waqf for Youth Poverty Alleviation

In Bangladesh, the BRAC Waqf Program integrates sustainable agriculture training, digital skills, and youth cooperatives. Hossain & Rahman (2017) report a 34% increase in beneficiary income within three years, along with significant improvements in food security and access to formal financial services.

Empowerment Dimensions: An Integrated Analytical Framework

Based on thematic synthesis of 25 studies, this research identifies five interrelated dimensions of youth empowerment through waqf. Table 4 presents this integrated analytical framework.

Table 2. Five Dimensions of Youth Empowerment through Waqf

Dimension	Key Components	Success Indicators
Skill Development	Vocational, digital, managerial, financial literacy	Skill certification, productivity, tracer studies
Economic Empowerment	Capital access, incubation, market networks	Income, employment, SME growth
Islamic Identity Strengthening	Islamic values, work ethic	Sustainability of values, new waqif generation
Social Development	Social cohesion, trust, cooperation	Social capital, community networks
Institutional Sustainability	Governance, Islamic business innovation	AUM waqf, transparency, sharia audit

Skill Development Dimension

Cross-study findings consistently show that effective waqf programs integrate at least three skill components: technical-vocational skills, managerial-entrepreneurial skills, and Islamic financial literacy. A meta-analytic study by Zulkhibri & Ghazal (2021) found that integrated training waqf programs produce 2.1 times higher productivity compared to capital-only programs without training components.

Economic Empowerment Dimension

Economic empowerment includes access to business capital, incubation support, market networks, and integration into halal value chains. A study from Nigeria (Ibrahim & Ado, 2020) shows that youth receiving waqf-based capital are three times more likely to sustain their businesses after three years compared to those receiving conventional grants, attributed to the moral-spiritual accountability embedded in waqf stewardship.

Islamic Identity Strengthening Dimension

A frequently overlooked yet crucial dimension is the strengthening of Islamic identity and spirituality through participation in waqf ecosystems. A qualitative study by Aziz & Abdul Ghani (2018) in Malaysia found that active participation in waqf programs enhances Muslims' sense of belonging, encourages philanthropic behavior among future generations, and creates a positive cycle of young waqif regeneration.

Key Success Factors

Comparative analysis identifies seven key factors distinguishing successful youth waqf programs from less effective ones:

- Transparent and accountable waqf governance, including regular sharia audits
- Integration of Islamic spiritual values with outcome-oriented program design
- Active youth participation as agents rather than passive beneficiaries
- Strategic partnerships with private sector, universities, and government
- Digital technology adoption in waqf management (waqf-tech)
- Contextual program design responsive to local needs
- Evidence-based monitoring and evaluation systems

Challenges and Constraints

Despite its strong potential, the implementation of waqf-based youth empowerment programs faces several structural and systemic challenges. First, limited managerial capacity among waqf institutions (nazir) in managing complex empowerment programs. A study by Mohd Noor et al. (2019) in Indonesia and Malaysia found that more than 60% of waqf institutions lack adequately trained professionals to design and evaluate empowerment programs. Second, fragmentation and weak coordination among waqf institutions lead to program duplication and inefficient resource allocation. Third, there is a mismatch between modern youth expectations and the traditionally bureaucratic approaches of waqf institutions. Fourth, there is a lack of evidence-based research to inform policy-making for youth-oriented waqf development.

Discussions

Waqf as an Instrument of Islamic Social Capital

The findings of this study reinforce the theoretical argument that waqf is not merely a static instrument of philanthropy, but rather a dynamic mechanism for building Islamic social capital. Drawing on Bourdieu's framework, waqf functions in the simultaneous and synergistic accumulation of economic capital (financial and productive resources), cultural capital (skills and knowledge), and social capital (networks and trust). In this sense, waqf operates as an integrated system of resource generation and social transformation within Muslim societies.

Relevance to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Waqf-based youth empowerment programs directly contribute to the achievement of at least four Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). This finding aligns with Hassan & Hippler (2014), who argue that traditional Islamic institutions such as waqf, when appropriately modernized, can serve as effective complements to multilateral development efforts. In this context, waqf emerges as a culturally grounded yet globally relevant development instrument.

Contemporary Innovations in Waqf Models

The studies analyzed in this review reveal three major contemporary innovations in waqf models that are particularly significant for youth empowerment: (1) cash waqf, which enables broad participation of waqif individuals with small contributions that aggregate into substantial funds; (2) corporate waqf, which involves halal corporations and Islamic financial institutions as institutional waqif; and (3) digital or crowdfunding waqf, which leverages technological platforms to engage youth both as contributors and beneficiaries of waqf programs. These innovations reflect a broader transformation toward a more inclusive, scalable, and technology-enabled waqf ecosystem.

Conclusion

This systematic review synthesizes 25 empirical studies from eight Muslim-majority countries to address a central question regarding the role of waqf in empowering Muslim youth through skill development and economic empowerment. Based on this comprehensive analysis, several key conclusions can be drawn. First, waqf has been empirically demonstrated as an effective instrument for Muslim youth empowerment when managed in a modern, transparent, and outcome-oriented manner. The most successful waqf programs in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Bangladesh show that the integration of skills training, access to capital, and strengthening of Islamic values produces empowerment outcomes that significantly exceed those of conventional youth development programs. Second, the success of waqf-based youth empowerment programs is strongly determined by a holistic approach encompassing five interrelated dimensions: skill development, economic empowerment, Islamic identity strengthening, social cohesion building, and institutional sustainability. Programs that focus on only one or two dimensions tend to generate more limited and less sustainable impacts.

Third, contemporary innovations in waqf models—namely cash waqf, corporate waqf, and digital/platform-based waqf—create substantially broader opportunities to engage Muslim youth as active agents, both as beneficiaries and as the next generation of waqif. Digital transformation within the waqf ecosystem serves as a critical accelerator in scaling up and enhancing the impact of youth empowerment initiatives. Fourth, there exists a significant capacity gap between the potential of waqf and its actual implementation in practice. The majority of waqf institutions (nazir) still lack sufficient managerial, technological, and partnership capabilities to implement comprehensive youth empowerment programs. Strengthening nazir capacity is therefore a fundamental prerequisite for optimizing the role of waqf in youth development. Fifth, this study identifies several important research gaps that require further attention, particularly the lack of longitudinal studies assessing the long-term impact of waqf programs on the socio-economic mobility of youth, as well as the scarcity of comparative cross-country studies using standardized methodologies. Future research agendas should prioritize the development of evaluation frameworks that are both universally applicable and sensitive to local contexts.

The policy implications derived from this study include: (1) the development of waqf regulations that explicitly accommodate productive waqf models for youth empowerment; (2) the establishment of a national coordination platform for waqf institutions to reduce fragmentation and improve efficiency; (3) investment in strengthening nazir capacity through education and training in modern waqf management; (4) fiscal incentives for corporations contributing to corporate waqf programs for youth empowerment; and (5) the development of an integrated national waqf data system as a foundation for evidence-based policymaking.

Ultimately, this study affirms that revitalizing waqf as an instrument for Muslim youth empowerment is not only economically relevant but also carries civilizational urgency. In the face of digital disruption, social polarization, and identity crises among Muslim youth, waqf offers an alternative paradigm that is rooted in Islamic values while remaining capable of constructively addressing the demands of modernity with tangible developmental impact.

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