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Waqf in Johor: A Systematic Literature Review of Governance, Legal Framework, Economic Sustainability, and Development

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Abstract

Background: Waqf has significantly supported Malaysian society, including Johor, primarily contributing to religious, educational, and social institutions. Recently, increased attention has been paid to innovations and challenges within Johor's waqf sector. Purpose: This review examines waqf research in Johor over the past decade, focusing on governance, legal frameworks, economic sustainability, historical background, development, and recent advancements in waqf. Methodology: Keywords related to waqf and Johor were employed to examine numerous academic journals, conference proceedings, policy papers, and reputable reports from 2013 to 2025. Ongoing studies examining waqf in Johor or utilising Johor as a case study were included, while works covering the subject broadly without specific reference to Johor were excluded. Relevant sources were thematically analysed. Key Findings: Waqf affairs in Johor reflect the conservative designs of the State Islamic Religious Council (SIRC) alongside the bold strategies of corporate waqf. Current waqf laws in Johor derive from state regulations, although certain areas remain questionable and require updates. Johor has made significant economic strides by implementing innovative management of trust assets, issuing waqf shares, and garnering substantial public donations for waqf purposes. Nevertheless, issues like underdeveloped assets, insufficient resources, and data challenges persist. Implications: In conclusion, while Johor is viewed as a model for waqf, it faces various challenges related to laws and operations, similar to those faced by many other states. Enhancing governance, modernising the legal framework, improving effective management, and fostering public awareness are critical for maximising the impact of waqf in Johor. Conclusion: Innovations in waqf in Johor illustrate the ability to adapt to changes while maintaining effective oversight. Future research should investigate the long-term social impact of Johor's waqf activities, with a focus on the necessary steps for legal reforms, training, and effective asset management in waqf.

Keywords: *Waqf, Systematic Literature Review, Legal Framework, Economic Sustainability, and Development*

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1. Introduction

As Islamic law guides, waqf (or *awqaf*) refers to the permanent endowment of assets for religious or charitable purposes. Waqf has been a significant part of Malaysian culture for a long time, particularly in Johor, where it primarily provides funding for mosques, Islamic schools, graveyards, and other community services (JAWHAR, n.d.; Nor Muhamad, Abdullah, Mohd Noor, & Rosli, 2019). Similar to other states in the Malay Peninsula, the waqf system in Johor was established initially by influential and wealthy individuals as a religious act to assist the community and promote the spread of Islam.

For many years, waqf contributed to enhancing the lives of Muslims by supporting schools, hospitals, and helping the poor sustain their livelihoods. However, outdated laws from the colonial era and shifts in government policy after independence led to periods of inactivity and poor management within the waqf sector. As the 20th century drew close, many waqf assets remained underutilised or mismanaged due to various regulatory and governance challenges. Over the years, waqf has retained its importance in the state of Johor, and it is often cited as an example of a state that has significantly modernised its waqf sector (Mohiddin, 2015). According to the country's legal framework, Johor's waqf management is administered under the Johor Islamic Religious Council (SIRC of Johor). This means the Council currently oversees and manages all waqf properties in the state. With the Council's supervision, funds from waqf resources have been allocated to various initiatives, such as operating religious schools, providing medical services, and supporting community programmes. For instance, the Council established 573 schools on waqf land, demonstrating the crucial role waqf has played in providing education over many years (Ali et al., 2022). Moreover, in the past few years, Johor has made corporate waqf possible by endowing company assets as waqf to help benefit the community. The state's investment company, JCorp, made headlines when it donated RM200 million worth of shares to the waqf and launched Waqaf An-Nur Corporation Berhad (WANCorp) to manage them (Basiron, Abidin, & Razak, 2023; Rahman & Jensen, 2024). Indeed, Johor has taken the lead in Malaysia regarding waqf, clarifying that the institution is still relevant to the country's economic and social life. Although the waqf sector in Johor has made progress, it still faces a range of contemporary challenges. Hurdles in public administration, land development, and old laws can block the realisation of the waqf's value (Kader, 2016; Thaker & Thaker, 2015). Good governance, transparency, and sustainability should always be maintained in waqf projects. Due to the way Johor combines old practices with new reforms, a review of recent literature can inform how waqf in Johor has evolved over the past decade (Yusoff, Wahab, Salleh, Atan, & Baharudin, 2021).

Therefore, this paper systematically reviews the literature on waqf in Johor over the past decade. It synthesises findings from academic studies, policy analyses, and reliable reports on governance structures, legal perspectives, economic sustainability, historical evolution, and contemporary developments to address the following significant themes. The review thoroughly summarises the state of waqf in Johor and its progress over the last ten years by combining insights from various themes. Policymakers, waqf managers, and researchers can all benefit from this synthesis, which provides evidence-based recommendations for enhancing waqf management and informing future research in Johor and beyond.

2. Research Methods

The paper used research methods. The search approach comes initially. Recent Johor waqf literature was identified using a structured evaluation process. Google Scholar, Semantic Scholar and Connected Papers were searched. Searches included “waqf Johor”, “wakaf Johor” and “waqaf Johor”. Searches were conducted from 2013 to 2024, encompassing published works over the recent decade. Additionally, the Department of Awqaf, Zakat and Hajj (JAWHAR), the Malaysian Waqf Foundation (YWM), the SIRC of Johor, Johor Corporation (JCorp), Waqaf An-Nur Corporation (WANCorp), and some other significant websites were examined. English and Malay materials presented information on Johor’s waqf. Next, the search’s inclusion and exclusion criteria. Any source in the review dealt with the Johor waqf or compared it to the state. Academic journal articles, conference papers, graduate theses, policy papers, and reports from well-known agencies, NGOs, and international organisations were explicitly studied on the Johor experience to understand at least one of these features of the review’s subjects. The subjects include waqf organisation, legal framework, outcomes, history, and recent events. Books without independent information were excluded, and factual and researched articles were preferred over opinion pieces or news items to maintain focus on the Johor waqf. After discovering sources, titles and abstracts were utilised to exclude irrelevant articles. Next, the remaining full-texts were examined for compliance.

Then there is data extraction and analysis. The main objective, strategy, and practical findings of the Johor waqf research were extracted from the studied works. Categories were created using data extraction forms based on established topics. History, government structure, legal framework, sustainability, and changes are key. The study employed thematic synthesis, which involved coding and integrating the data into a narrative. The convergences and divergences of the traditions were analysed. Quality evaluation follows. Summary and description are the main goals of this review. However, some basic evaluations were done to verify the sources. Expert-reviewed papers and reports were assumed to be credible. Conference papers and theses are only utilised by respectable academic institutions. Each study detailed its research techniques, logic, and any biases or changes that should be acknowledged in the debate. To finish, the scope and limits. The literature makes it difficult for this review to address all issues. About 40 to 50 sources were reviewed for this research. Since the selected publications cover a variety of themes, the evaluation covers a broad spectrum of concepts that address Johor Waqf’s management concerns and effective practices. One restriction is that scholarly literature may not capture new advancements. Experts evaluate concrete articles and gather information from multiple sources in certain circumstances. Despite these limitations, this research technique keeps Johor waqf studies updated and structured.

The following sections present the literature review results, organised by the key themes identified. They are followed by a discussion that interprets these findings and concludes with an overview of insights and future directions.

3. Results

The study of waqf in Johor in the past decade reveals many different aspects. The findings are organised into five thematic areas: the historical evolution of waqf in Johor, governance structures in place, legal and regulatory perspectives, the economic sustainability and development of waqf assets, and contemporary initiatives and developments. Each theme is discussed below, accompanied by representative studies and reports that support key points.

3.1 Historical Evolution of Waqf in Johor

Johor's waqf practices have evolved, spanning from the pre-colonial era to the present day, following independence. Following the introduction of Islam to the Malay Peninsula, Islamic endowments were established to finance mosques, religious schools, and various charitable endeavours. While there is limited documentation on Johor's early waqf, it is widely believed that the Malacca Sultanate established waqf practices in Malaysia during the 14th century, which then became prevalent in Johor and other sultanates (Pitchay, Ramlan, Jalil, & Ratnasari, 2024).

Prior to the colonisation of Johor, waqf was overseen by religious leaders or appointed trustees following the traditions of Islam and the community. Then, British influence in Malaya led Johor to establish further systems for managing Islamic affairs, as the state was treated as semi-autonomous under a treaty. The introduction of newer Western legal concepts by colonial rule impacted waqf management. In various states of Malaya, the colonial government took control of waqf from unofficial trustees and placed it under the authority of state Islamic councils to ensure a more effective regulatory system (Mohiddin, 2015). Johor was slower to engage in this development, continuing to utilise its legal code in 1895 and became among the first to draft a Malay code. After 1957, Johor was incorporated into independent Malaya, and statutes placed the administration of waqf under the SIRC of Johor (Negeri Johor, n.d.). This transition sheds light on how local self-governance addresses the new provisions of law from the post-independence period, primarily by striking a balance between Islamic law and government regulations. It was a significant achievement when waqf regulations were created in Johor. The Waqf Rules in Johor were passed in 1983, known as *Kaedah-Kaedah Wakaf Johor 1983,* to guide the formation and management of waqf in the state. With these rules, the earlier laws on Islamic administration were supplemented by providing details about registering waqf properties, establishing the SIRC of Johor to manage them, and appointing committees to oversee the waqf. In 1983, implementing the Waqf Rules brought a measure of organisation to Johor's waqf system, which remains in place today, even with reasonable changes. The Administration of Islamic Law (Johor) Enactment, No. 16 of 2003, primarily covering sections 89 to 95, has currently become the primary statute governing waqf management (JAWHAR, n.d.; Nor Muhamad et al., 2019; SIRC of Johor, n.d.).

Despite these formal structures, much of the later part of the 20th century saw the waqf sector in Johor making little progress compared to other states. Scholars note that waqf was less effective after the colonial period due to frequent mistakes, a lack of public awareness, and challenging legal regulations (Mohiddin, 2015). Waqf assets, primarily small lands or old, dilapidated buildings, were not being utilised to their full potential. Many individuals did not benefit significantly from the waqf properties or earned very little, leading to decreased participation in creating new waqf projects. This period of stagnation prompted discussions about changes and new strategies for improvement. Nevertheless, in the past decade, Johor's waqf has undergone a phase of rebuilding and restoration, leveraging its historical foundation while experimenting with updated practices. Studies have shown that Johor is an example of a community that has revived the practice of waqf through modern financial methods. Existing waqf lands traditionally used for religious purposes provided a robust foundation for modern development programmes to grow (Fatoni, 2021; Mohamed, Isa, & Mohamed, 2018; Sulaiman & Alhaji Zakari, 2019). However, older practices, such as making waqf donations, have remained popular among Johor's Muslim community, and modern initiatives are also utilising them to raise funds and construct new structures.

In summary, Johor's waqf evolution can be viewed as transitioning from informal, community-based management (pre-colonial) to regulated, state-centric management (post-colonial and early post-independence) and towards a present-day hybrid model that maintains state oversight while engaging corporate entities and the public in innovative ways. This historical context is crucial for understanding current governance and legal arrangements, which are discussed next.

3.2 Governance Structures and Administration

The waqf governance system in Johor aligns with Malaysia's constitution, which reserves matters of Islam for state administration. Henceforward, SIRC of Johor has the responsibility and authority to oversee and manage all waqf endowments in Johor. The Council assumes sole responsibility for overseeing and managing the assets under every waqf arrangement in Johor (Kader, 2016; Rahman & Jensen, 2024). The centralised system is designed to provide professional management and avoid division of waqf control. It manages waqf assets, oversees revenue generation from properties leased out, and keeps detailed information about existing and newly created waqf endowments (Wakaf Johor, n.d.). It has also distinguished itself through cooperative endeavours with various organisations that have utilised the practice of corporate waqf. Furthermore, it introduced a ground-breaking governance method by collaborating with Johor Corporation to establish WANCorp. WANCorp is a company limited by guarantee that was specifically appointed as a trustee by SIRC of Johor to manage the state's Islamic endowment properties (Noh, Basir, Taib, Amadun, & Husin, 2015; Waqaf An-Nur, n.d.).

The authorisation of WANCorp to oversee and administer certain waqf assets, including shares and commercial properties derived from Johor Corporation (JCorp). It can be understood that this governance structure is pioneering as the Council appointed WANCorp as a professional manager, allowing them to implement best practices in management and business decision-making while empowering SIRC of Johor to ensure compliance with Shariah law and provide strategic guidance (Waqaf An-Nur, n.d.). WANCorp's initial responsibilities included overseeing and managing the RM200 million shares gifted by JCorp in 2006 for philanthropic activities (Rahman & Jensen, 2024). Over time, WANCorp's scope has expanded to include managing waqf contributions from the public and running various welfare programs funded by waqf income. This public-corporate partnership model has begun to influence the management of resources in other areas as well. WANCorp and other relevant bodies are authorised by the SIRIC of Johor to manage and administer waqf assets, such as hospitals, when expertise in that field is necessary (Aris, Abas, & Muaziz, 2017). WANCorp oversees several waqf organisations, including the Waqaf An-Nur medical facilities, which provide free or reduced-cost healthcare services to those in need (Borham & Mahamood, 2013). Collaboration among the Council, WANCorp, and KPJ Healthcare ensures the smooth operation of these facilities, resulting in a model for effectively managing and allocating waqf assets for both charitable and business purposes (Waqaf An-Nur, n.d.). Moreover, SIRC of Johor has worked closely with government agencies and NGOs to enhance the management and growth of waqf in Johor. For instance, at the Malaysian federal level, JAWHAR and YWM contribute to the governance of waqf in Johor. Johor collaborates with JAWHAR to align waqf practices, including harmonised data collection and participation in joint development efforts. At the same time, YWM occasionally provides funds and expertise to support Johor's waqf development initiatives (Mohd Roslan & Nor Muhamad, 2024; Yusoff et al., 2021). However, SIRC of Johor still makes independent decisions concerning the affairs of Johor's waqf.

Nevertheless, existing research recognises governance challenges. A challenge arises when the State Islamic Council manages waqf alongside other duties, including zakat and Islamic matters. Some research has pointed out the shortcomings in the skills and expertise available to the Council, despite strong real estate, finance, and law skills being essential for effective waqf management (Muneeza, Kunhibava, Mohamed, & Mustapha, 2024; Ramdani, Widiastuti, & Mawardi, 2024). Some researchers reported that poor planning by *mutawallis* and inadequate administration represent significant obstacles to advancing waqf management in Johor. These results imply that organisational effectiveness and strategic planning require continued progress. Opaque operations and a lack of accountability are other significant issues, despite the waqf imposing a unique level of responsibility on its appointed stewards. Efforts to improve transparency, such as compiling a waqf asset inventory and generating reports, are underway, despite the literature suggesting that these initiatives are still in the preliminary stages (Yusoff et al., 2021).

In summary, Johor's waqf governance system is centred on SIRC of Johor, a corporate waqf body (WANCorp), and alliances with the public and private sectors. Overall, overseeing this system requires tight control to maximise the productive use of waqf resources. A significant challenge persists in achieving seamless collaboration among all parties, including the Council, its subsidiaries, and federal agencies. The following section addresses the statutory framework and the significant legal issues that shape this governance system.

3.3 Legal and Regulatory Perspectives

Waqf regulation and management in Johor occur within the general framework of Malaysian Islamic law. Generally, states throughout the country establish laws for waqf following the principles of Islamic jurisprudence and the limitations imposed by the Federal Constitution. Specifically under Article 74 and the Ninth Schedule of Malaysia's Federal Constitution, states like Johor are empowered to oversee Islamic matters, including waqf (Kader, 2016; Yusoff et al., 2021). Johor's first comprehensive guideline concerning waqf was the Wakaf Rules 1983 (Kaedah-Kaedah Wakaf Johor 1983). The Wakaf Rules 1983 specify the meaning, function, structure and procedures in establishing and administering wakaf in Johor. The rules also specify the designation of waqf managers (*nazir/mutawalli*) for individual waqfs and the role of the Council or its authorised representatives in managing the waqf (Sano & Kassim, 2021). According to the rules, once an asset is declared waqf, it cannot be sold or passed on except under exceptional circumstances, such as consecrations involving the replacement of old or inferior assets with more advantageous ones (Aziz, Hafiz, Wei, & Abdul, 2019). Nevertheless, the Rules of 1983 and the Administration of Islamic Law Enactment 2003 did not fully cover every practical situation, and many informed experts have noticed deficiencies and outdated elements in Johor state's waqf legal framework.

For instance, some object to the prohibition that seems to derive from earlier traditions but contradicts proper waqf practice, which allows only one-third of a person's property to be donated as a waqf endowment. This amounts to a restriction similar to Islamic inheritance practice, although people can donate their entire estate as waqf under Islamic law whenever they wish. Johor's rules occasionally reference a constraint that may clash with recognised Islamic waqf principles. However, this rule is not strictly applied in practice, but such a restriction within Johor's laws could discourage donors from making substantial endowments (Ascarya, Sukmana, Rahmawati, & Masrifah, 2022). Its continued existence demonstrates the need for the rule to be updated. Moreover, a significant issue arises from the implementation of waqf laws alongside other civil and regional government regulations. In this context, all waqf properties, being stationary assets, are subject to strict land administration requirements, such as title registration, land use, and zoning regulations, which occasionally cause struggles with land development because regular land laws do not fully recognise waqf (Ghazali, Sipan, Haji Mohammad, & Ab Aziz, 2021; Rashid et al., 2024; Yusop, 2016). This, among other things, can address a common issue where properties on paper do not accurately reflect actual waqf ownership, resulting in uncertainty about who truly owns them (Yusoff et al., 2021). Hence, there is a call for developing a unified legal system that connects waqf registration to the national land registry, ensuring that ownership of waqf properties can be safeguarded within SIRC and protected against unauthorised occupation (Abd. Jalil, 2020; Yusoff et al., 2021).

In this decade, the practice of cash waqf has gained popularity. Specifically, since 2007, a national fatwa made money endowments legal in Malaysia, and the Johor state government utilised this by developing the Johor Waqf Shares scheme (*Saham Wakaf Johor*). Consequently, through a legal process, Johor's Islamic Council was required to establish a waqf fund and assign it a name, which was accomplished. Individuals can buy waqf units for as little as RM10 from SIRC of Johor, which are then set aside as waqf and invested for the community's welfare (Abd. Jalil, 2020; Gadot, Yahya, & Rosli, 2019). The innovation presented here is that the collective fund is established as a waqf, and the money collected must be directed towards purposes such as education, healthcare, or mosque development, in accordance with the donors' wishes. The fact that more than RM20 million was raised by 2022 through cash waqf demonstrates that the legal system in Johor is flexible in its application (Abd. Jalil, 2020; Kamal & Che Seman, 2017; Noor Ariffin, Yahaya, Mohamad, & Jusoh@Yusoff, 2021). Nonetheless, running a cash waqf fund meant that MAINJ had to handle questions regarding proper investments and the distribution of returns, which were addressed through fatwa or guidelines from management (Effendi & Maulida, 2021). Notably, waqf is still not governed by a new state-level law in Johor, unlike states such as Selangor, which passed a Waqf Enactment as recent as 2015 (JAWHAR, n.d.). For instance, this new enactment could define how *istibdal* should be conducted and outline the rules for administering different types of waqf. Alternatively, it could designate Waqaf An-Nur Corporation as an official and authorised *mutawalli*, reinforcing the legality of corporate waqf. (Borham & Mahamood, 2013; Ghadas & Aziz, 2017). This also includes ensuring that waqf conditions are adhered to and resolving potential conflicts. Some recommend clarifying court rules or establishing a dedicated tribunal for waqf to resolve cases more efficiently (Syufaat, 2018).

In conclusion, the laws of waqf in Johor are based on Islamic law and reflect the principles of classical waqf; however, they reveal some gaps regarding contemporary challenges. While the state continues to reform practically by issuing new rules and fatwas, a significant change in the law would facilitate further innovations.

3.4 Economic Sustainability and Development of Waqf Assets

A primary subject in the literature addresses how effectively waqf assets in Johor generate ongoing profits and the longevity of waqf institutions. Over time, Johor has benefited from these waqf assets, yet it still faces challenges in making those benefits sustainable. The productive use of waqf lands and buildings is a significant focus for development. Traditionally, many wakaf lands in Johor were designated for the construction of mosques and schools (Fazial, Hassan, Abdullah, Hamid, & Yahaya, 2021; Mohsin, 2019). Since these do not generate income, they do not contribute to paying the salaries of civil servants. Nevertheless, SIRC of Johor believe they can convert waqf land into commercial spaces as a funding source. For example, the Larkin Sentral Bus Terminal Waqf Project in Johor Bahru is frequently cited as a pioneer in Islamic financing. Due to the waqf status applied by JCorp, which previously managed Larkin Sentral, it is now overseen by WANCorp. (Borham & Mahamood, 2013; Noor, 2023). Therefore, the income generated by this project is directed to the intended beneficiaries or reinvested to enhance the waqf further. Moreover, SIRC of Johor organised a waqf IPO in 2015, the world's first to cover the costs of rebuilding and extending the terminal. The Waqaf An-Nur Corporation issued 85 million waqf shares to individuals. It used the funds, which totalled tens of millions of ringgit, to modernise Larkin Terminal and provide rent subsidies to some small traders, including single mothers who occupied the terminal's shops (Huda, 2020; Rahman & Jensen, 2024). As the first example of a significant development project on waqf land, the Larkin project is recognised for pioneering the use of unused waqf property for commercial purposes with public assistance (Noor, 2023; Rahman & Jensen, 2024). Another mechanism is by collaboration with government agencies. SIRC of Johor collaborated with federal agencies, including the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA), the Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (MARDI), and the Rubber Industry Smallholders Development Authority (RISDA), to conduct farming and agricultural ventures on underutilised waqf land. In these ventures, suitable waqf lands were cultivated for various goods such as fruits, vegetables, or rubber. The agencies provided their expertise and occasionally contributed financially, with all earnings shared or used for waqf purposes (Hali, 2021). By adopting this method, the lands remain with SIRC of Johor, but they generate income for socio-economic improvement by creating local jobs and supplying produce to markets.

The model by JCorp holds the key to sustaining the waqf strategy. With its RM200 million in shares, JCorp now has an endless source of funds. WANCorp receives dividends from its companies in the plantation, property, healthcare and similar fields every year (Rahman & Jensen, 2024). Afterwards, JCorp put these funds to work in multiple ways, including running six mosques that are now waqf, sponsoring medical clinics and dialysis services, and giving educational scholarships (Johor Corporation, 2023; Kamal & Che Seman, 2017). Henceforth, the International Federation of Accountants has confirmed that Johor Corporation has transformed its corporate assets into a waqf, managing numerous waqf medical clinics (Huda, 2020; Rahman & Jensen, 2024). In addition, Johor's corporate waqf is built on the same idea as an endowment fund for a university or foundation, except it is based on Islamic law. The Johor Waqf Shares scheme has received a significant amount of waqf. Until late 2022, the total public contributions received had reached RM20.8 million (Ali et al., 2022; Huda, 2020). These funds will pay for improvement projects for religious schools in Johor. It has been proven that the community is involved and that effective management can lead to permanent financing for waqf initiatives.

Nevertheless, studies focus on the challenges of maintaining economic growth on track. A 2021 study on Johor's waqf determined insufficient funds due to inadequate revenue for most properties (Ali et al., 2022; Wakaf Johor, n.d.). Out of all waqf assets, not all have strong commercial or JCorp support like the Larkin Bus Terminal does. Besides, waqf properties in Johor are generally small donations made by individuals, often in spots away from major trading centres. Looking after or developing these assets may cost the Council a significant amount of money. Officials also noted that outdated data on waqf assets slowed the process, since planning and development rely on correct information about what the state owns (Yusoff et al., 2021). This suggests that better asset management systems should be implemented, which also incurs additional costs. Examining the broader picture, waqf development in Johor supports both economic and social objectives. Waqf projects in Johor are designed to contribute to poverty alleviation, improved education, healthcare, and the development of public infrastructure, all of which support economic growth. The Ministry recommended utilising waqf for economic and social development, and Johor took this advice by starting the abovementioned projects (Ismail, Hassan, & Rahmat, 2023). The 12th Malaysia Plan (2021–2025) and the National Waqf Blueprint 2022 continue to urge the benefit of waqf assets. Therefore, Johor is likely to continue receiving policy support for its waqf ventures (Ministry of Economy, n.d.; Rahman & Jensen, 2024).

In short, what happened in Johor emphasises that with thoughtful planning and new ideas, waqf can boost local economies. The state has developed new types of waqf and provided successful examples where both generate revenue and have a social impact. Even so, ensuring the entire waqf collection is sustainable can still be challenging, as not every asset is easy to make profitable and many depend on community help and contributions. The results highlight the importance of income sources and effective financial planning at waqf agencies. In the last area, discussion centres on the latest trends, which often link to the economy but may involve social and policy factors.

3.5 Contemporary Developments and Emerging Trends

To begin with, government policies in Malaysia that pay more attention to waqf have helped lead to progress in Johor. Since the 11th and 12th Malaysia Plans set waqf as a development goal, and with the launch of the National Waqf Blueprint 2022, states like Johor can effectively utilise these national measures. Among its measures, the Waqf Blueprint includes strengthening the law related to waqf, enhancing the capacities of waqf institutions, organising the list of waqf assets and drawing interest from the private sector. The state has been implementing some of the actions recommended under guidance from the blueprint, which include reviewing its waqf laws, as discussed above (Rahman & Jensen, 2024).

One significant development is Johor's contribution to promoting the corporate waqf approach. While the original plan for JCorp's corporate waqf was drafted in 2006, the last decade focused on expanding and standardising the method. WANCorp began by managing JCorp's endowed shares and subsequently attracted additional donors to expand the size of its assets. It serves as an example of a professional manager of waqf funds for the benefit of all (Huda, 2020; Waqaf An-Nur, n.d.). The achievements have encouraged other Malaysian organisations to improve their performance. For example, several government organisations and banks in Malaysia have established their waqf funds, following Johor's approach to utilising their assets for this purpose (Rahman & Jensen, 2024). Furthermore, as people increasingly use technology and digital tools, Johor has introduced e-Wakaf Johor, an online platform for keeping users informed and donating to waqf funds (Huda, 2020; Wakaf Johor, n.d.). This is also part of a bigger trend in Malaysia, where several Islamic banks collaborated on MyWakaf to help manage online cash waqf donations. To appeal to young, tech-savvy donors, fintech is now being used in waqf to attract them with microdonations. Reports on the topic indicate that adding fintech integrations can help expand the list of donors and make the handling and collection of waqf funds more cost-effective. Johor has modernised its fundraising through online and mobile payment methods, following campaigns like *Saham Wakaf Johor*, which previously used physical certificates or mosque counters (Sanusi & Mohd Shafiai, 2015)

Furthermore, various development projects have continued. For example, SIRC of Johor has explored waqf beyond just building schools (Kamal & Che Seman, 2017). A 2022 report highlighted that waqf could help fund both the development and the day-to-day needs in education. It also provides school uniform donation initiatives to poor and needy students in primary schools, secondary schools and Johor Government Religious Schools (JGRS). However, waqf for financial school management, as well as teaching and learning facilities, has not been introduced at the secondary and primary school levels, especially in educational institutions supported by JIRC (Ali et al., 2022). Another way of contributing is through its healthcare waqf, which could also develop in other areas, such as microfinance, with assistance from Bank Negara's iTEKAD (Rahman & Jensen, 2024). As announced under the Malaysia Budget 2025, a grant of RM15 million will be allocated towards the seed capital component for iTEKAD. The grant will be matched with social finance funds, such as donations, zakat, and corporate social responsibility funds (Bank Negara Malaysia, n.d.).

Waqf is also experiencing emerging trends in rising public interest. However, more efforts are needed to keep this process going. In Johor, campaigns like "Jom Wakaf" have been frequently set up, especially during major religious celebrations, to encourage people to donate cash or property. Many studies have shown that misunderstandings and limited awareness prevent people from getting involved in waqf (Saufi, Mohamed, Saleh, Abdul Ghani, & Noor, 2021). Some studies have pointed out that people in Johor regard waqf highly, but often do not understand its non-religious applications (Mohiddin, 2015; Saufi et al., 2021). As such, SIRC of Johor has launched new initiatives, such as sermons, seminars, and online advertisements, to make the community aware of waqf's uses and the latest forms of giving. There are encouraging signs, such as the rise of cash waqf and the approval of new programmes.

In brief, the scene of waqf in Johor is marked by creativity, new types of activities and increased joint efforts. The state has matched the country's progress and is often stepping ahead. The state's efforts demonstrate how waqf evolved from being a fixed charity to a vital component of Islamic social finance and public-private partnerships. These developments will move forward steadily if the identified problems, such as governance, legal, and funding issues, are addressed and the innovations align with the primary goal of waqf. The next part of the discussion will review the implications of the findings for various fields and practices.

Discussion

Studies on waqf in Johor reveal both achievements and ongoing problems. Over the past few years, Johor's waqf system has undergone significant transformation, demonstrating that an old practice can be adapted to meet new needs. Backed by SIRC of Johor and WANCorp, Johor has transitioned from utilising waqf for traditional purposes to developing new programmes for healthcare and education, and assisting those living in poverty. This aligns with the global developments in Islamic social finance, giving Johor a competitive edge over Singapore and Indonesia in several areas. The way Johor manages its waqf programme, relying on the Council and a state-supported company, has proven beneficial and inspiring. It aims to address the common issue of shortages in religious councils and has contributed to influencing shared governance reforms in various states in Malaysia. Nonetheless, over-reliance on the Council can pose risks, particularly if the institution becomes unable to manage its workload or tasks effectively. The delayed registration of land and issues with bureaucracy highlight the need for the government to decentralise and reinforce its institutions.

Reforming the legal system is also essential. Currently, Johor's laws on waqf do not address modern tools like cash waqf, trustee appointments, and asset transfers. Adopting best practices from other states' waqf statutes and aligning with the National Waqf Blueprint of 2022 may make the work easier and prompt federal assistance. If Shariah scholars help clarify the rule about giving one-third, it would help more Muslims feel motivated to participate and

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donate. Moreover, there is substantial economic potential in the waqf projects in Johor. Working on projects in agribusiness and healthcare helps support the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). One way for the state to boost its impact involves providing financial incentives and expediting the permit-granting process. Even so, a significant amount of waqf property remains underutilised. The value of dormant waqf assets can be leveraged by either establishing the Waqf Land Bank or issuing waqf-supported sukuk, and risks can be mitigated by diversifying the assets and setting up insurance and reserve funds.

As a result of waqf initiatives, people in Johor now have better opportunities for healthcare, education and work. Nevertheless, most people are unaware of these efforts. Mosque outreach programmes, which highlight good examples and acknowledge them through honours and awards, may encourage more Muslims to participate in endowing property for the community. It is also true that Johor's approach to business partnerships differs from that of other states. Johor connects the government sector, the corporate sector, and the local community, and can be considered adapting the pooling of waqf in Singapore or joining cash waqf with national bonds in Indonesia for greater efficiency. The modern approach used by the waqf system in Johor can create a bright future for the community. However, it will need improvements in legal systems, a shift in some government powers, careful risk monitoring, and regular engagement with the community to succeed further.

6. Conclusion and Suggestion

Over the past decade, Johor has led the way in finding innovative solutions to enhance waqf and align it with Malaysia's plans for advancement. This progress stems from the combination of new and old approaches. The joint project between SIRC of Johor and Johor Corporation, Waqaf An-Nur, ensures that waqf is now reliable and more widely utilised. Demonstrating its commitment to adapting waqf, the state of Johor has embraced these practices to build infrastructure that serves the public. However, specific regulations hinder some achievements. While its primary responsibility is to provide consistent policies, SIRC of Johor's accomplishments are obstructed by red tape, staffing issues, and outdated laws such as the 2003 law. The law needs to be updated, information should be clear and accessible, all records should be kept electronically, and personnel should receive adequate training to ensure that institutions gain public trust. While some waqf assets improve healthcare, agriculture, and business, others suffer due to financial challenges. They may be revived with sufficient funding from diverse sources, including private organisations. What has transpired in Johor can inform future policies and research. It shares similar goals in Islamic finance with Malaysia, which could inspire global initiatives with analogous approaches. It is crucial to review legislation, enhance the SIRC of Johor, improve its oversight, and involve the community in waqf projects. Consider the financial aspect by listening to users and refining transportation policies. The way Johor manages waqf has proven beneficial for the community, upholds religious beliefs and aids in long-term progress.

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