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Social Capital, Accountability, and Rural Waqf Governance: A Proposed Model for Sustainable Community-Based Waqf Management

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ABSTRACT

Existing studies on waqf governance have largely emphasized professionalization, formal accountability, and institutional strengthening, while giving limited attention to how governance is practiced in rural settings where social relationships remain central. This study examines how waqf governance operates in rural communities through socially embedded mechanisms of trust, social capital, and community participation. Using an interpretive qualitative case study in Woka Jaya Village, East Halmahera, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The findings reveal that rural waqf governance is sustained through social capital manifested in trust, religious leadership, mutual cooperation (*ta'awun*), deliberation, and community-based supervision. These mechanisms enable local assets, including waqf land, coconut plantation yields, and voluntary labor, to be transformed into sustainable religious and social benefits while maintaining downward accountability through direct communication and public deliberation. However, dependence on personal relationships and practices creates challenges related to documentation, leadership succession, and institutional continuity. Based on these findings, this study proposes an Integrated Social Capital-Based Rural Waqf Governance Model consisting of six interconnected dimensions: spiritual values, social capital, *nazhir* legitimacy, local asset transformation, downward accountability, and institutional reinforcement. The study emphasizes that sustainable rural waqf governance requires the integration of community-based social mechanisms with modern governance practices, including asset legalization, financial reporting, *nazhir* professionalization, and gradual adoption of digital accounting systems.

Keywords: Accountability, Rural Communities, Social Capital, Waqf Governance

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INTRODUCTION

The governance of waqf in rural Muslim communities is not exclusively defined by formal administration, professional management, or standardized accountability mechanisms. It is also shaped by religious values, social relationships, collective norms, and forms of trust through which communities regulate the use of endowed assets and maintain their social benefits (Moses, 2021; Osman & Agyemang, 2020). This social dimension is particularly important because waqf, unlike a purely commercial institution, operates simultaneously within religious, economic, and communal spheres. As part of Islamic social finance, waqf connects spiritual commitments with broader objectives of welfare distribution, the reduction of economic inequality, and community empowerment (Kuran, 2001). Together with *zakat, infaq*, and *sadaqah*, it constitutes an important mechanism through which Islamic ethical values are translated into social and economic practices. Recent studies accordingly emphasize the potential of waqf to support community empowerment, strengthen economic self-reliance, and expand financial inclusion based on Sharia principles (Mikail et al., 2024; Wagay & Nabi, 2025).

The social character of waqf is embedded in its institutional logic. Its principal feature lies in the preservation of the endowed asset (*mauquf*) while its benefits are continuously directed toward designated beneficiaries (Sulaiman et al., 2026; Trifiletti, 2026). Waqf therefore cannot be understood simply as an act of individual religious devotion or the transfer of property for charitable purposes. It also constitutes a social institution through which religious commitments are connected to community spaces, collective interests, and the organization of social life. The meaning and operation of waqf are consequently shaped by the social environments in which it develops. Community relationships, collective values, and locally available resources influence both the formation of waqf and the ways in which its benefits are maintained and distributed (Moses, 2021). This social embeddedness is especially visible in rural communities, where the optimization of local assets and the strength of community social capital can provide important foundations for economic empowerment (Hamim et al., 2023). The historical development of waqf likewise demonstrates that its institutional forms have continually adapted to changing social conditions, including a broader transformation toward management models associated with social justice and sustainable development (Zafar & Jafar, 2025).

The increasing attention to waqf as an instrument of social and economic development has simultaneously generated demands for more systematic forms of governance (Ladiku et al., 2025; Ladiku & Zaman, 2024; Wibowo et al., 2026; Zaimah & Zaman, 2024). In Indonesia, waqf assets possess substantial economic and social potential. Data from the Waqf Information System—SIWAK of the Ministry of Religious Affairs indicate the extensive distribution of waqf land across the country, although a proportion of these assets continues to face problems concerning legal status and certification. The projected potential of national cash waqf further demonstrates the capacity of waqf to contribute to community economic development when its assets and benefits are managed productively (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2024). Yet the existence of extensive assets does not automatically produce corresponding socio-economic benefits. Questions of governance remain central, particularly those concerning the professionalism of *nazhir*, the transparency of management, the availability of reliable records, and mechanisms through which managers may be held accountable.

Modern approaches to waqf governance have therefore increasingly emphasized professionalization and institutional reinforcement. Waqf institutions are expected to develop effective management systems, supervisory structures, and stronger managerial capacities so that endowed assets may generate sustainable benefits (Ayub et al., 2025). From this perspective, the modernization of waqf is closely connected to the formalization of managerial procedures. Documentation, financial recording, asset certification, organizational standards, and technological innovation are treated as important instruments for improving institutional performance. Digital record-keeping, for example, may improve transparency, information accuracy, and public confidence in waqf institutions (Zainuddin et al., 2025). Such developments are important because waqf concerns assets devoted to public and religious purposes and therefore requires mechanisms capable of protecting both the assets themselves and the interests of their beneficiaries.

Accountability, however, does not operate exclusively through formal administrative relations between waqf managers and regulatory institutions. Waqf management also involves responsibility toward the communities from which waqf derives its social legitimacy and for whose benefit its assets are maintained. Osman and Agyemang conceptualize this relationship as *downward accountability*, namely the moral and social responsibility of managers toward communities and beneficiaries rather than merely upward accountability toward regulators and supervisory bodies (Osman & Agyemang, 2020). This perspective broadens the meaning of governance because it directs attention to social relations through which information is communicated, managerial conduct is evaluated, and community trust is maintained (Fogg, 2018).

In communities where organizational structures remain relatively informal, such accountability may be exercised not primarily through standardized reports but through direct interaction, collective deliberation, social supervision, and interpersonal trust.

The emphasis on formal governance should therefore not lead to the assumption that communities with limited administrative infrastructure necessarily lack mechanisms of governance. In some rural settings, social capital itself may perform regulatory functions normally associated with formal institutions. Community participation and existing social networks, for example, can support collective monitoring and create forms of oversight that combine formal and informal mechanisms (Srirejeki & Khairurrizqo, 2025). In waqf governance, stakeholder participation, trustee accountability, and participatory models are also increasingly recognized as important parts of governance alongside regulatory and institutional frameworks (Himmawan et al., 2025). From this perspective, the issue is not simply whether rural waqf management has achieved the standards of modern institutional governance, but how governance operates within different social and institutional settings. Recent research therefore points to the need for governance models that combine professional and formal accountability with approaches that respond to local socio-cultural and institutional conditions (Ayub et al., 2025).

Despite the growing body of literature on waqf governance, existing studies have predominantly focused on institutional professionalization, managerial effectiveness, regulatory compliance, and formal accountability mechanisms within established waqf organizations. While these studies have contributed significantly to understanding the institutional dimensions of waqf management, they provide limited explanation of how governance operates in rural communities where social relationships, religious legitimacy, interpersonal trust, and collective norms remain central to the management of waqf assets.

As a result, governance in rural waqf settings is often assessed using formal institutional indicators such as documentation systems, financial reporting, organizational structure, and asset certification. Such an approach risks overlooking the possibility that governance may also emerge through informal mechanisms embedded within community life. Social supervision, deliberative decision-making, religious authority, and community trust may perform governance functions that are comparable to those conventionally associated with formal institutions. Nevertheless, the interaction between these socially embedded mechanisms and contemporary demands for institutional formalization remains insufficiently explored in the waqf governance literature.

This issue is particularly relevant in Woka Jaya Village, East Halmahera, where waqf practices are developed through strong social cohesion, religious commitment, local leadership, and community participation. Waqf assets are utilized not only through land endowments for religious and educational facilities but also through the productive use of coconut plantation yields and community labor contributions. Although these practices continue to generate social benefits, their management largely depends on informal governance arrangements characterized by oral agreements, community trust, and locally accepted norms. At the same time, increasing expectations regarding accountability, asset legalization, documentation, and managerial professionalism create pressures for institutional strengthening.

Drawing on social capital theory and the concept of downward accountability, this study examines how governance is constructed and sustained within a rural waqf environment. Rather than treating informality as a governance deficiency, the study conceptualizes social capital as a governance infrastructure through which legitimacy is established, accountability is maintained, and collective participation is mobilized. The study further investigates how these social mechanisms interact with formal governance requirements in supporting the long-term sustainability of waqf institutions.

This study contributes to the waqf governance literature in three ways. First, it extends existing discussions by demonstrating that social capital functions not merely as a supporting factor but as a governance mechanism in rural waqf management. Second, it enriches the concept of downward accountability by illustrating how accountability is practiced through direct communication, deliberation, and community-based social supervision. Third, the study proposes an Integrated Social Capital-Based Rural Waqf Governance Model that combines spiritual values, social capital, *nazhir* legitimacy, asset transformation, downward accountability, and institutional reinforcement as interconnected dimensions of sustainable rural waqf governance.

METHOD

Research Design and Approach

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design grounded in interpretive phenomenology. This approach was selected because the study sought not only to describe waqf management practices in a rural community but also to understand how social actors interpret their experiences in managing, accounting for, and maintaining the sustainability of waqf assets within the context of local community life.

Interpretive phenomenology positions lived experience as the primary source for understanding a social phenomenon. From this perspective, social reality is not regarded as entirely objective or separate from the actors who experience it; instead, it is constructed through individuals' interpretations of the values, experiences, social relationships, and cultural contexts surrounding them (Alase, 2017; Frechette et al., 2020). Accordingly, waqf practices in this study are understood not merely as the legal transfer of rights over assets but as socio-religious experiences shaped by interpretations of trustworthiness, worship, trust, and responsibility toward the community.

The case study design enabled an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon within a specific context, namely waqf governance practices in Woka Jaya Village, East Wasile District, East Halmahera Regency. The village was selected because it represents a rural community characterized by strong social relationships, mutual cooperation, the legitimacy of religious leaders, and the utilization of local assets, such as land and coconut plantations, for socio-religious purposes. This context provides an analytical setting for understanding how waqf governance develops through the interaction of religious values, community social capital, and the need to strengthen institutional accountability.

Epistemologically, this study adopts an interpretive perspective that views waqf governance practices as a social reality constructed through interactions among *waqif*, *nazhir*, beneficiaries (*mauquf 'alaih*), and members of the community. Therefore, the study does not assume that formal mechanisms constitute the only legitimate form of governance. Instead, it seeks to understand how rural communities establish mechanisms of regulation, legitimacy, and accountability based on their social experiences. This perspective is particularly relevant because some rural waqf practices continue to operate through informal mechanisms grounded in trust and community relationships.

Research Stages

The research process was conducted through five main phases, following the qualitative research approach proposed by Creswell & Poth (2016): (1) research orientation and conceptualization; (2) identification of key informants; (3) field data collection; (4) interpretive data analysis; and (5) verification of the findings through data validation procedures. The research process began with an orientation and conceptualization phase. This initial exploration helped shape the conceptual focus and identify key problems that required deeper investigation. Following this, informant selection used purposive sampling. Informants were chosen based on their relevance and experience, including *nazhir* with more than ten years of service, *waqif, mauquf 'alaih*, and respected community leaders. This ensured that the data would be drawn from individuals who possessed substantial knowledge and direct involvement in rural waqf practices.

The data collection stage employed multiple qualitative techniques. In-depth interviews were conducted using structured interview transcripts, complemented by participant observation of activities such as copra harvesting and communal cooperation. Additionally, document reviews were carried out, examining manual cash records, AIW documents, and purchase receipts to obtain supporting evidence and contextual information.

Data were then analyzed through an interactive interpretive-phenomenological approach. This involved thematic coding to reduce data and identify key themes related to motivation, governance models, and accountability. The findings were organized and presented through relational matrices and conceptual discussions. Throughout the analysis, the researchers applied bracketing (*epoché*) to minimize personal bias and maintain interpretive neutrality.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study incorporated data credibility testing through source triangulation and method triangulation. By comparing information from different informants and cross-checking data obtained through interviews, observations, and documents, the researchers strengthened the validity and reliability of the conclusions.

Data Collection and Trustworthiness

Prior to data collection, all participants were informed about the objectives of the study and voluntarily agreed to participate. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without consequence. Data collection continued until thematic saturation was achieved, whereby no substantially new themes, meanings, or patterns emerged from subsequent interviews. Saturation was indicated by the recurrence of similar explanations regarding trust, social capital, accountability practices, religious leadership, and community participation in waqf governance.

To ensure the credibility and dependability of the qualitative data, research informants were selected using purposive sampling based on four relevant categories of social roles (Ali, 2012; Palinkas et al., 2015). The characteristics of main informants are presented in Table 1. The study also included interviews with additional informants, consisting of a waqf beneficiary who received assistance after a house fire and a village official who provided an institutional perspective on community waqf practices.

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

No.	Informant Code	Age (Years)	Social Role	Involvement in Waqf Practices
1.	R1	70	Wakif	Donated residential land and plantation land for socio-religious purposes
2.	R2	64	Wakif	Donated the benefits generated from approximately one hectare of coconut plantation to support mosque facilities.
3.	R3	65	Nazhir	Managed productive waqf for more than ten years and received the mandate to administer community *waqf* assets
4.	R4	36	Treasurer of *nazhir*	Managed religious activities and community-based waqf assets
5.	R5	51	Wakif	Donated land for the construction of worship facilities and Qur'anic Education Centre

Source: Processed by the author(s)

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted concurrently with data collection following an iterative thematic process. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentary evidence were repeatedly reviewed and coded. Initial codes were grouped into broader categories, including spiritual values, social capital, local leadership, accountability practices, and institutional challenges. These themes were subsequently interpreted to construct the proposed rural waqf governance model.

Consistent with the interpretive phenomenological approach, the researchers sought to understand participants' experiences and meanings regarding *waqf* governance. The analytical process involved data reduction, thematic categorization, interpretation of meanings, and the development of conceptual relationships among themes. The final stage of analysis integrated the findings into an Integrated Social Capital-Based Rural Waqf Governance Model that explains how spiritual values, social capital, *nazhir* legitimacy, asset transformation, downward accountability, and institutional reinforcement interact in sustaining rural waqf governance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Waqf as A Spiritual and Socia Responsibility

Waqf practices in Woka Jaya Village are predominantly understood through religious and social meanings rather than formal legal or administrative frameworks. Participants consistently described waqf as an expression of religious responsibility and communal concern. Property was perceived not merely as a private economic asset but as a trust whose benefits should extend to the wider community. As explained by R1 (Waqif):

> "Waqf is a form of giving, so there is nothing wrong with it. It is provision for the hereafter. In the past, there was no road to the plantation area. It was better for me to donate my land than to let people struggle to reach the area. Besides, I still have other land for my plantation."

This account illustrates how decisions to establish waqf were closely associated with spiritual aspirations and social responsibility. The donated land was viewed not simply as a transferred asset but as a means of creating lasting benefits for community members. Similar narratives emerged across interviews, where participants frequently associated waqf with *amal jariyah*, collective welfare, and responsibility toward future generations.

Participants also emphasized that ownership entails moral obligations. Rather than referring to legal requirements or administrative procedures, they explained waqf decisions through notions of trustworthiness, stewardship, and accountability before God. Within this context, waqf was understood as a mechanism through which private assets could be transformed into enduring social and religious benefits.

These findings demonstrate that spiritual values form an important foundation for rural waqf governance. Religious beliefs influence how community members understand ownership, identify collective needs, and justify the allocation of assets for public purposes.

Similar interpretations emerged across interviews. Participants frequently described waqf as a means of extending the value of their assets beyond personal and family interests, allowing them to contribute to communal welfare and future generations. These accounts suggest that waqf is embedded in everyday religious understandings of responsibility, stewardship, and social obligation. In this context, waqf is perceived not merely as an economic or philanthropic activity, but as a social practice that connects religious commitment, community relations, and the continuity of collective benefits (Alase, 2017; Frechette et al., 2020). These findings support the argument that waqf should be understood as a socio-religious institution whose meaning is shaped by the social environment in which it operates (Moses, 2021). The significance of waqf derives not only from the legal status of an endowed asset but also from the interaction between religious values, community relationships, and everyday social practices. Through this process, spiritual commitments are translated into collective benefits that are sustained through community participation (Wagay & Nabi, 2025).

Beyond its spiritual orientation, the findings also indicate that the meaning of waqf in Woka Jaya Village is closely associated with the principle of *ta'awun* (mutual assistance) and responsiveness to community needs. This was reflected in the account of R2, who allocated the proceeds from his coconut plantation to support the maintenance of mosque facilities. As explained by R2:

> "...The mosque roof had been there for decades, and I was worried that it would begin to leak. I could have asked the community for assistance, but I also thought that I needed to perform a charitable deed. So, I thought that the proceeds from four coconut harvests might be sufficient to replace the roof."

R2's account demonstrates how private economic resources are transformed into instruments of collective welfare. Although the coconut plantation remained under individual ownership, its benefits were redirected toward addressing community needs. In this process, the plantation was no longer perceived solely as a source of personal income but was reconstructed as a social resource capable of generating religious and communal benefits. This finding indicates that the meaning of ownership is negotiated through religious and social considerations, enabling private assets to assume broader functions within the community. At this point, the findings indicate that rural waqf practices operate through the following transformation:

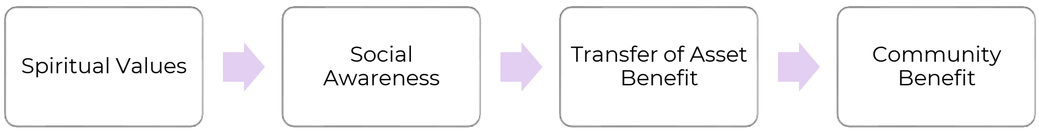

Figure 1. The Transformation Rural Waqf Practices
Source: Processed by author

The transformation explains why community members are willing to allocate part of their assets without strong administrative pressure. The primary motivation does not arise from formal control mechanisms, but from the internalization of religious values and social relationships that have developed within the community. Therefore, waqf practices in Woka Jaya Village demonstrate that the sustainability of rural waqf depends not only on the existence of assets or formal regulations, but also on the community's ability to construct shared meanings concerning trustworthiness, social benefits, and collective responsibility.

Beyond individual religious motivation, these findings demonstrate the governance significance of spiritual values in rural waqf management. The internalization of trustworthiness, collective responsibility, and religious obligation provides normative foundations that guide behavior and reduce reliance on formal control mechanisms. In this sense, spiritual values function not merely as motivations for establishing waqf but also as informal governance resources that support institutional sustainability.

Local Assets as Community-based Productive Waqf Instruments

Waqf practices in Woka Jaya Village are not limited to the conventional transfer of land for the construction of religious facilities. They have also developed through adaptation to the economic and social characteristics of the rural community. Residents transform locally available assets into sources of social benefit through community-based waqf mechanisms.

The finding identified three principal forms of waqf practices in Woka Jaya Village: land waqf for socio-religious facilities, productive waqf based on coconut plantation yields, and service-based waqf through community labor contributions. These three forms demonstrate that the community does not understand waqf merely as the transfer of asset ownership, but as a process through which private resources are transformed into collective benefits.

The first form is land waqf used for the construction of mosques and religious educational facilities, including Qur'anic Education Centre. Informant of R5 explained:

> "…The first purpose was to make things easier. I sincerely donated it for the sake of God so that the surrounding community could worship more easily and would not have to travel far. In the past, Woka Jaya had only two small prayer rooms. The land was also intended to make it easier for children to learn to recite the Qur'an."

This statement indicates that land waqf is understood not simply as the donation of a physical asset, but as the creation of a social space that enables community members to fulfil their religious and educational needs. Land that previously possessed individual economic value undergoes a functional transformation into social infrastructure that benefits the wider community. From a community-based governance perspective, this phenomenon demonstrates that waqf assets acquire social value not only because of their legal status, but also because of collective agreement regarding their objectives and utilization. In other words, the community does not merely preserve waqf assets but actively connects them with emerging social needs.

The second and more distinctive finding is the development of productive waqf based on coconut plantations. Unlike traditional waqf models that commonly focus on the transfer of immovable assets, the residents of Woka Jaya Village have developed a mechanism through which the economic benefits generated by agricultural assets are allocated to support socio-religious needs.

In R2's case, ownership of the coconut plantation was not transferred. Instead, the benefits generated from its harvest were directed toward financing mosque facilities. This practice illustrates the community's flexibility in interpreting waqf through an orientation toward the sustainability of benefits.

Within this context, the coconut plantation undergoes a transformation in meaning. Economically, it remains an individual productive asset. However, through the community's construction of socio-religious values, its yields become a social financing instrument. Therefore, the productivity of waqf is determined not merely by the size of the asset, but by the community's ability to transform the asset into a sustainable source of benefits. This finding supports Hamim et al (2023), who argue that waqf in rural areas has considerable potential as an empowerment instrument when developed according to local community characteristics. Productive waqf does not necessarily have to begin with large-scale investments or professional institutions. It may also develop through the optimization of resources already owned by community members.

In addition to land and plantation yields, the study identified a third form, namely service-based waqf through community labor contributions. Mutual cooperation in the construction and maintenance of religious facilities indicates that community members contribute not only material assets but also their time, skills, and labor. This phenomenon broadens the understanding of rural waqf. In Woka Jaya Village, social resources in the form of labor, time, and community solidarity possess economic and social value that can support the sustainability of waqf institutions. Thus, waqf operates not only through asset-based philanthropy but also through community-based contributions.

From the perspective of social capital, the transformation of local assets is enabled by three principal conditions. First, community members place their trust in waqf managers. Second, collective norms encourage residents to prioritize shared interests. Third, community social networks enable the management and distribution of benefits to be conducted participatively (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 2000).

Accordingly, waqf innovation in Woka Jaya Village demonstrates that rural communities possess the internal capacity to develop waqf management models suited to local conditions. Although the model does not entirely follow modern institutional patterns, it possesses its own governance logic, constructed through social relationships, religious values, and an orientation toward collective benefits. These findings imply that the transformation of local assets is not solely an economic process but also a governance process. Decisions regarding asset utilization, benefit allocation, and collective participation are embedded within community-based governance arrangements. The ability of the community to mobilize local resources reflects the operation of governance mechanisms that rely on shared norms, trust, and collective oversight rather than formal administrative structures alone.

Social Capital and Downward Accountability in Rural Waqf Governance

The findings reveal that waqf governance in Woka Jaya Village develops through social mechanisms grounded in trust, religious legitimacy, and close relationships between waqf managers and community members. Unlike formal waqf institutions, which generally rely on organizational structures, administrative procedures, and written reporting systems, waqf management in Woka Jaya Village operates primarily through social mechanisms based on interpersonal relationships and the moral reputation of the managers.

Within a rural community, such mechanisms should not be interpreted as an absence of governance. Rather, they represent a form of governance constructed through the community's social resources. Community members have their own mechanisms for ensuring that waqf assets are managed in accordance with their original purposes, including trust in the managers, social supervision, and direct communication between *nazhir* and community members.

One of the most dominant forms of social capital identified in this study is trust in the *nazhir*. In practice, *waqif* do not evaluate managers solely on the basis of their technical competence. They also consider the individual's moral integrity and social position within the community. This is illustrated by R2's experience when he entrusted the management of his coconut plantation yields to R3, the local mosque imam. He explained:

> "…I entrusted the management to him in his capacity as the imam of the mosque."

This statement demonstrates that the decision to entrust asset management was not based solely on an administrative relationship. It was also based on the belief that an imam possessed the moral capacity to safeguard the waqf mandate. Therefore, the legitimacy of a *nazhir* in a rural setting is derived not only from formal authority but also from social capital in the form of reputation, experience, and community trust.

This phenomenon indicates that social capital functions as a social control mechanism in waqf governance. When formal administrative systems have not been fully developed, community members use social relationships to ensure that managers continue to fulfil their responsibilities. According to Bourdieu (1986), social capital constitutes resources embedded in social networks that actors may use to acquire legitimacy and perform particular social functions.

In Woka Jaya Village, the position of the *nazhir* is understood not merely as that of an asset manager, but also as that of an actor who bears moral responsibility toward the community. Social proximity between the *nazhir* and community members creates an informal supervisory mechanism. Residents know who manages the waqf assets, how the benefits are utilized, and how decisions concerning waqf are made. The findings also reveal a form of *downward accountability* in rural waqf management. Osman & Agyemang (2020) explain that accountability within waqf institutions is directed not only upward through regulators and supervisory institutions, but also downward toward the communities that form part of the waqf ecosystem.

In this study, *downward accountability* emerges through direct relationships between the *nazhir* and the community. Accountability is not always expressed through complex formal reports, but through information disclosure, social communication, and community involvement in understanding the utilization of waqf benefits. This practice is illustrated by R4, the 36-year-old treasurer of the *nazhir* of Al-Falah Mosque:

> "…When there is an announcement for a community service activity and people gather, we inform them how much money has been spent, how much income has been received, and how much remains."

This statement indicates that transparency in waqf management is practised through community social spaces. Information regarding income and expenditure is not presented through formal written reports, but through community forums that allow residents to receive information and respond to the management of waqf funds.

From an interpretive phenomenological perspective, this practice demonstrates that the community has constructed its own understanding of accountability. Accountability is not understood solely as an administrative obligation, but as a practice of maintaining trust between managers and community members. Disclosure therefore becomes a moral mechanism for sustaining social legitimacy. This finding expands the understanding of *downward accountability* in the context of waqf. Accountability is commonly associated with an organization's obligation to provide reports, performance indicators, and formal evaluation mechanisms. However, the case of Woka Jaya Village demonstrates that in communities characterized by strong social ties, accountability may also operate through trust-based mechanisms, social proximity, and reputation. Nevertheless, the findings also reveal limitations in accountability mechanisms based on social capital. A high degree of dependence on personal relationships and oral communication may create difficulties when leadership changes or when the community's social structure is transformed. Information concerning asset management may not be systematically preserved unless it is strengthened through more formal administrative mechanisms. This condition indicates that the strengthening of waqf governance should not replace existing social mechanisms. Instead, it should integrate social capital with modern governance practices. As explained by Ayub et al. (2025), the sustainability of waqf institutions requires a balance between community social values and management professionalization.

Thus, social capital is not merely a supporting factor in waqf governance. It constitutes a principal governance mechanism that enables rural waqf practices to endure. Trust, collective norms, and social legitimacy provide the foundation for *downward accountability*, while stronger administration and documentation are necessary to support institutional sustainability. The findings extend existing discussions of social capital by demonstrating that trust is not merely a facilitating factor but constitutes a governance mechanism through which monitoring, legitimacy, and accountability are maintained in the absence of extensive formal institutions.

Local Wisdom as A Governance Mechanism in Rural Waqf

Sustainability of waqf management in Woka Jaya Village is determined not only by the availability of waqf assets and the capacity of managers, but also by the social values embedded in community life. Trustworthiness, mutual cooperation, deliberation, and respect for religious leaders operate as social mechanisms that regulate how waqf assets are managed, utilized, and accounted for to the community. Within this context, local wisdom should not be understood merely as a cultural heritage or social custom. It functions as an informal institutional mechanism that establishes rules, defines acceptable conduct, and provides legitimacy to actors involved in waqf governance. Although the community has not fully implemented modern administrative systems, it possesses a regulatory system that operates through collectively accepted values and norms. This phenomenon indicates that rural waqf governance develops through a combination of religious values and community social structures. Trustworthiness, for example, is understood not only as a moral concept in Islamic teachings but also as a social standard used by the community to assess an individual's suitability to serve as a *nazhir*. A person is considered suitable not only because of religious knowledge but also because of a positive reputation, trustworthiness, and strong social relationships with community members.

The position of mosque imams and religious leaders as *nazhir* illustrates the dual function of religious leadership. On the one hand, they perform spiritual roles as leaders of worship. On the other hand, they perform social roles as asset managers responsible for ensuring the continuity of waqf benefits. The legitimacy of the *nazhir* in Woka Jaya Village therefore does not derive exclusively from formal structures. It is constructed through a long-term social process involving shared experiences, social proximity, and the community's perception that the manager possesses a moral commitment to collective interests.

This finding reinforces Bourdieu's (1986) concept of social capital, according to which social relationships may become resources that provide legitimacy and the capacity to act within a social structure. In this study, social capital enables the *nazhir* to obtain the social authority required to manage waqf assets, while community members retain control through social norms and relationships. In addition to trustworthiness, mutual cooperation constitutes an important mechanism for maintaining the sustainability of waqf. The community does not regard waqf as the sole responsibility of the *nazhir*, but as a collective community responsibility. Mutual cooperation is evident in the construction and maintenance of religious facilities and in social activities related to the utilization of waqf assets. Community members contribute their labor, time, and resources according to their respective capacities. This indicates that waqf sustainability depends not only on material assets but also on the social capacity of the community to participate.

From a community-based governance perspective, this participation demonstrates that the community has the capacity to regulate shared resources through socially constructed rules. Community members are not merely beneficiaries but also actors who actively maintain the sustainability of waqf institutions.

Deliberation is another important mechanism in decision-making concerning the utilization of waqf benefits. Decisions regarding the use of waqf proceeds, the needs of social facilities, and the distribution of benefits are made through community communication. This deliberative mechanism generates legitimacy because decisions are not made exclusively by managers but receive social acceptance from community members.

As a result, decision-making in rural waqf governance is not entirely hierarchical. Instead, it occurs through social negotiation between managers and the community. Within the context of *downward accountability*, deliberation constitutes a forum through which community members may obtain information, develop an understanding, and provide input concerning waqf management. Nevertheless, the strength of local wisdom also creates challenges. Dependence on particular individuals, particularly religious leaders who serve as the central figures of community trust, may become a weakness when it is not accompanied by institutional strengthening. Leadership succession may threaten management continuity when knowledge and waqf practices are not properly documented. Successful waqf management requires a balance between the social dimensions of the community and institutional professionalization (Ayub et al., 2025) and digital record-keeping can enhance transparency and accountability, although its implementation must consider the social characteristics of the community in which waqf develops (Zainuddin et al., 2026).

The strengthening of waqf governance should therefore not replace existing social mechanisms. Instead, it should integrate local wisdom with modern institutional systems. Asset documentation, financial record-keeping, enhanced *nazhir* capacity, and the utilization of digital technology should be positioned as supporting instruments that strengthen rather than replace the social values underpinning the community.

Accordingly, local wisdom in the waqf governance of Woka Jaya Village may be understood as a community-based institutional arrangement. Trustworthiness provides the moral foundation, mutual cooperation establishes a participatory mechanism, deliberation creates decision-making legitimacy, and religious leadership provides social authority. Together, these elements constitute a governance system that enables waqf to continue operating despite the limitations of formal institutions.

An Integrated Community-based Waqf Governance Model

Based on the overall research findings, waqf management practices in Woka Jaya Village indicate that the sustainability of waqf is determined not only by the existence of assets, but also by the interaction between spiritual values, social capital, local leadership, management mechanisms, and community accountability systems. The research findings show that the community of Woka Jaya Village has developed a community-based waqf governance model that has evolved organically from the community's social needs. This model does not fully follow the formal institutional patterns of modern waqf but has its own regulatory mechanisms rooted in religious values, social relationships, and trust in local leaders. The model identified in this study can be described as follows:

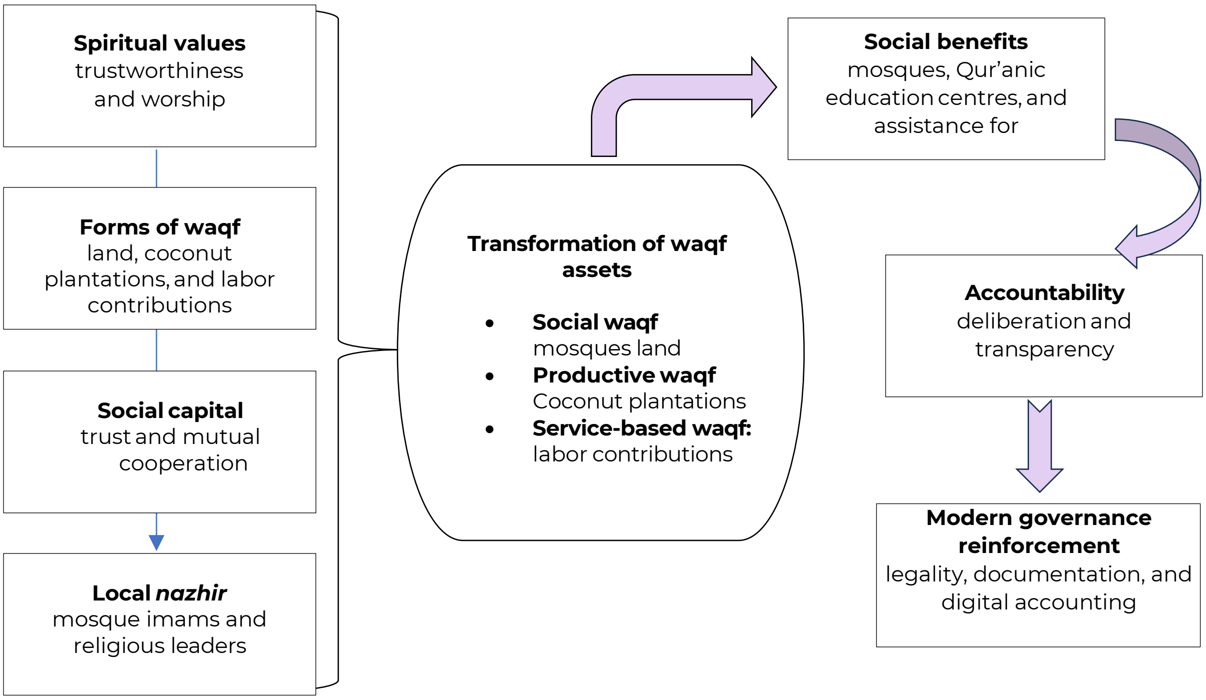

Figure 1. An Integrated Social Capital-Based Rural Waqf Governance Model
Source: Processed by author(s)

The proposed model emerged from the integration of the major themes identified throughout the study, namely spiritual values, social capital, *nazhir* legitimacy, local asset transformation, accountability practices, and institutional challenges. These themes were repeatedly observed across interviews, observations, and documentary evidence, indicating their central role in shaping rural waqf governance.

Unlike conventional waqf governance frameworks that primarily emphasize regulatory compliance, professional management, and formal accountability, the model developed in this study highlights how socially embedded mechanisms can function as governance infrastructure. The findings therefore expand current understandings of waqf governance by demonstrating that sustainability in rural contexts emerges from the integration of social legitimacy and institutional reinforcement rather than from formalization alone.

1. The Spiritual Dimension as the Foundation of Waqf Governance

The initial foundation of waqf governance in Woka Jaya Village is not primarily economic or administrative. Instead, it originates from the community's construction of spiritual values concerning the entrusted nature of property ownership.

The *waqif* does not understand waqf as the loss of private property, but as a transformation of ownership toward social benefit. Assets that previously belonged to the private sphere undergo a change in meaning and become social resources capable of generating sustainable benefits.
This spiritual dimension provides the initial motivation for community members to establish waqf. The values of worship, orientation toward the hereafter, and trustworthiness create an internal motivation that does not depend on external enforcement. Moses (2021) similarly explains that waqf is a socio-religious institution that develops through relationships among religious values, community spaces, and everyday social practices. In the model developed through this study, spiritual values therefore function as a normative foundation that provides the moral justification for allocating private resources to collective purposes.

2. Social Capital as the Driving Mechanism of Waqf Management

The second dimension of the model is social capital. The findings demonstrate that the sustainability of waqf in Woka Jaya Village is strongly influenced by trust, social networks, collective norms, and interpersonal relationships. Where formal administrative systems remain underdeveloped, social capital becomes the mechanism through which governance continues to operate. Community trust in the *nazhir* partially substitutes for administrative control, while social norms function as instruments for supervising managerial conduct. Bourdieu (1986) perspective explains that social capital consists of resources derived from social networks and may be used by actors to obtain legitimacy and perform particular functions within society. In this study, social capital enables the *nazhir* to fulfil their responsibilities because the community recognizes their moral and social legitimacy. Thus, social capital is not merely a social background condition. It serves as a governance infrastructure that enables waqf to endure within a rural context.

3. Nazhir Legitimacy as a Link between Values and Management Practices

The position of the *nazhir* in Woka Jaya Village is determined not only by formal status, but also by social legitimacy derived from reputation, experience, and proximity to the community.
The *nazhir* functions as a link between the spiritual values of waqf and asset management practices. They translate the waqf mandate into practical decisions regarding asset utilization and the distribution of benefits.

The success of rural waqf management is therefore strongly influenced by the social capacity of managers. The professionalism of a *nazhir* is measured not only through administrative competence but also through the ability to preserve community trust. This finding extends the discussion of waqf governance by demonstrating that social legitimacy constitutes an important form of institutional capital in rural communities.

4. Transforming Assets into Sustainable Sources of Benefits

The next dimension concerns the community's ability to transform local assets into sources of social benefit. The model demonstrates that waqf assets in Woka Jaya Village do not remain passive but undergo the following transformation:

private assets → waqf assets → sources of community benefits

This transformation is reflected in:
a) land converted into religious and educational facilities;
b) coconut plantations used as sources of social financing;
c) community labor contributed to the construction of shared facilities.

This finding supports Hamim et al. (2023), who argue that rural waqf has considerable empowerment potential when developed through a community-based approach and the optimization of local resources.

5. Downward Accountability as a Sustainability Mechanism

Another important dimension of the model is *downward accountability*. The findings indicate that the accountability of waqf managers is directed not only toward formal institutions or regulators, but primarily toward the community that forms part of the waqf ecosystem. Such accountability is implemented through:
a) Information disclosure in community forums;
b) Direct communication;
c) Deliberation;

d) Community involvement in the utilization of waqf benefits.

This finding reinforces Osman and Agyemang's (2020) argument that waqf governance must consider accountability toward communities that receive benefits and provide social legitimacy to waqf institutions. However, socially based *downward accountability* must also be strengthened through documentation systems to reduce complete dependence on personal relationships.

6. Integrating Traditional and Modern Governance

Although the local governance model in Woka Jaya Village possesses strong social foundations, the findings also demonstrate the need for institutional strengthening. The required transformation should not replace local mechanisms but integrate them with modern governance instruments, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Integration of Local Capital and Modern Governance Strengthening

Local Capital	Modern Governance
Trustworthiness	Governance standards
Social trust	Asset documentation
Deliberation	Reporting systems
Religious leadership	Professionalization of *nazhir*
Mutual cooperation	Accounting systems

Source: Processed by author(s)

This integration demonstrates that the modernization of waqf governance does not have to eliminate the community's social characteristics. Digital record-keeping, asset legalization, and improvements in the capacity of *nazhir* should function as supporting instruments that strengthen the existing social capital. This finding is consistent with Ayub et al. (2025), who argue that waqf professionalization should consider the social characteristics of waqf institutions. Zainuddin et al. (2026) similarly show that accounting technology may strengthen transparency and accountability when implemented in accordance with the institutional context.

CONCLUSION

Rural waqf governance cannot be understood solely through the lens of formal administration, regulatory compliance, and managerial professionalization. In Woka Jaya Village, governance is sustained through socially embedded mechanisms consisting of spiritual values, social capital, religious legitimacy, mutual cooperation, deliberative decision-making, and community-based accountability. These mechanisms enable waqf assets to be managed and utilized for sustainable social and religious benefits despite limited formal institutional arrangements. The findings show that social capital functions not merely as a supporting factor but as a governance infrastructure through which legitimacy, participation, social supervision, and accountability are maintained. In particular, downward accountability is practised through direct communication, deliberative forums, and community involvement rather than relying exclusively on formal reporting mechanisms. The study therefore extends existing discussions on waqf governance by demonstrating that effective governance may emerge through informal social institutions embedded within rural communities.

The implications of this study extend beyond the case of Woka Jaya Village. The findings suggest that rural waqf governance should be understood as an interactive process involving both social and institutional dimensions. Governance effectiveness depends not only on regulatory compliance and administrative capacity but also on the ability of communities to mobilize trust, social networks, and collective norms in managing waqf assets. Consequently, governance reforms in rural waqf institutions should adopt a context-sensitive approach that strengthens accountability and managerial capacity while preserving the social foundations that provide legitimacy, participation, and long-term sustainability.

This study has several limitations. First, the research was conducted in a single rural community with specific social, cultural, and institutional characteristics. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted as context-dependent rather than universally generalizable. Second, the study relied primarily on qualitative evidence derived from interviews, observations, and document reviews, which may not fully capture variations in waqf governance practices across different regions and institutional settings.

Future research may expand the applicability of the proposed model through comparative studies involving rural and urban waqf institutions across different socio-cultural contexts. Longitudinal research is also needed to examine how social capital, accountability, and governance practices evolve over time. In addition, quantitative and mixed-methods approaches could be employed to test the relationships among social capital, accountability, governance effectiveness, and the sustainability of waqf institutions.

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