e-ISSN: 2590-3942

PENERBIT PRESS UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

Available online at
https://journal.uitm.edu.my/ojs/index.php/

Journal of Islamic Philanthropy & Social Finance 2026, 8 (2), 1–14

Journal of Islamic Philanthropy & Social Finance

Waqf-Based Learning Spaces as Islamic Social Infrastructure: A Tauhidic Perspective on Knowledge, Charity and Spatial Meaning

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received:
04 March 2026
Revised:
23 April 2026
Accepted:
04 May 2026
Published:
10 September 2026

Keywords:
Waqf;
Social Infrastructure;
Learning Spaces;
Tauhidic Framework;
Sadaqah Jariyah

DOI:

https://doi.org/10.24191/2z1kp721

ABSTRACT

Waqf has historically functioned as a foundational institution of Islamic philanthropy, sustaining educational, religious, and social welfare institutions across Muslim societies. Contemporary Islamic social finance discourse, however, increasingly emphasises governance structures, financial sustainability, and asset productivity, often under-theorising the spatial and educational dimensions through which waqf's impact is realised. This paper argues that waqf-based learning spaces—such as madrasahs, mosques, libraries, and community learning centres—should be reconceptualised as Islamic social infrastructure that embodies sadaqah jariyah through the integration of ethical intention (niyyah), spatial embodiment, and social benefit (maslahah). Adopting a qualitative conceptual methodology, the study synthesises classical Islamic thought, contemporary Islamic social finance scholarship, and learning-space theory to develop a tauhidic framework for understanding waqf's institutional and spatial impact. The paper contends that reducing waqf to financial performance metrics risks obscuring its civilisational role in sustaining ethical formation and knowledge continuity. By positioning waqf-based learning spaces as institution-based value creation aligned with maqasid al-shariah, this framework expands prevailing conceptualisations of waqf impact beyond capital preservation toward holistic human development. The study offers theoretical contributions to Islamic philanthropy and social finance by integrating spatial meaning into waqf discourse and provides policy-relevant insights for waqf governance, educational planning, and impact evaluation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Waqf remains one of the most enduring institutions of Islamic philanthropy, historically sustaining education, worship, and social welfare through an intergenerational ethic of sadaqah jariyah. Recent scholarship increasingly recognises waqf as a strategic pillar of Islamic social finance due to its capacity to support long-term development outcomes that require durable institutions rather than short-term relief (Rusydiana, 2025; Elmahgop et al., 2025). Nevertheless, contemporary waqf discourse often prioritises governance structures, financial models, and administrative reforms, while the spatial and educational realities of waqf-supported institutions remain under-theorised (Abd Aziz et al., 2025; Kamaruzaman & Ishak, 2023). This imbalance is significant, as waqf's historical role has never been limited to asset management; rather, it has materialised Islamic social ethics through lived institutions, particularly learning spaces where knowledge, worship, and communal responsibility converge.

In this study, several key concepts are used in a specific sense. Islamic social infrastructure refers to institution-based environments that sustain social life, knowledge transmission, and ethical development through long-term, value-oriented functions. Spatial embodiment denotes the way physical space materialises and expresses underlying ethical, social, and epistemological principles. The tauhidic framework refers to an integrative worldview grounded in the unity of knowledge, where intention (niyyah), physical form, and social outcomes are understood as interconnected and oriented toward divine purpose.

Across the last five years, Islamic social finance literature has expanded rapidly, with systematic and trend-based reviews emphasising the need to strengthen accountability, impact measurement, and governance capacities of waqf institutions in order to deliver verifiable social outcomes (Abd Aziz et al., 2025; Kamaruzaman & Ishak, 2023). Related work on Islamic social finance more broadly also argues that performance measurement needs to move beyond narrow financial proxies toward frameworks that capture social value, ethical alignment, and development impact (Azmi et al., 2025). Parallel governance-focused studies note persistent challenges such as regulatory fragmentation, trustee capacity, risk management, and institutional accountability—issues that shape whether waqf can effectively deliver benefits at scale (Ishak et al., 2025; "Enhancing Waqf Governance for Sustainable Development," 2024). These strands are vital. However, when waqf is framed predominantly through financial performance metrics, its broader role as a civilisational and educational institution risks being obscured.

This paper argues that waqf-based learning spaces should be understood as Islamic social infrastructure. The concept of "social infrastructure" has gained renewed analytical attention in contemporary scholarship to describe public and institutional spaces that support social life, belonging, access to essential services, and collective capacity—where the physical qualities of space interact with organisational and social factors to shape outcomes (Enneking et al., 2025). Such a lens is especially relevant to waqf because waqf's long-run impact is historically expressed not only through cashflows, but through institutions that enable continuity of benefit: schools, madrasahs, libraries, mosques, and community learning centres. In contemporary Muslim societies, waqf's relevance to education and human development is increasingly discussed in relation to SDG-linked agendas, including quality education (SDG 4) and reduced inequalities, reinforcing waqf's role as a long-term development instrument within Islamic social finance (Palasenda, 2024; Sadiq et al., 2025).

In Islamic educational traditions, such spatial dimensions are not abstract. Learning historically unfolds across a range of interconnected environments, including mosque-based teaching circles, open courtyards, shaded verandas, and communal gathering spaces. These spatial settings facilitate not only formal

instruction but also informal learning, reflection, and social interaction, reinforcing the role of space as an active participant in the educational process.

At the same time, learning-space research in the built environment and higher education fields provides strong support for the proposition that learning is shaped by spatial conditions, not merely by curriculum. Recent reviews and scientometric studies identify recurring design considerations for learning environments—such as accessibility, flexibility, social interaction affordances, environmental comfort, and place-based belonging—that influence student engagement and informal learning practices (Aziz et al., 2024; Cui et al., 2025; Salih et al., 2024). Campus "in-between" spaces and informal learning settings are increasingly studied as critical spatial ecologies where peer learning, collaboration, and social ties are formed, thereby extending learning beyond formal classrooms (Akkurt et al., 2025). These findings suggest a productive intersection for Islamic philanthropy scholarship: if waqf supports education as a form of enduring charity, then the spatial design and institutional character of waqf-funded learning spaces should be treated as central—not peripheral—to waqf's philanthropic impact.

A tauhidic worldview offers an integrated way to reconnect these domains. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas frames Islamic education as ta'dib, an inculcation of adab that orients the self toward rightful order, justice, and proper placing of things within the hierarchy of knowledge and being (al-Attas, 1980). Within this view, learning spaces are not neutral containers. They can embody an epistemic and ethical orientation—through the way they cultivate attentiveness, humility, social responsibility, and reverence for knowledge. Similarly, Imam al-Ghazali distinguishes beneficial knowledge from knowledge pursued for status or worldly domination, arguing that true knowledge should refine the self and lead toward felicity (sa'adah) through right action and spiritual realignment (al-Ghazali, 2004). In this sense, waqf-funded learning spaces function as more than "education infrastructure"; they are settings that can nurture character, adab, and communal ethics—thus directly aligning with the aims of Islamic philanthropy.

Yet, contemporary waqf development can drift toward transactional logics when spatial and educational purposes are treated as secondary to monetisation. This drift is compounded by genuine pressures faced by waqf administrators: land development complexities, institutional constraints, and the demand for demonstrable sustainability. Recent empirical work on waqf development highlights the critical success factors required for productive waqf land development—underscoring that governance and execution capacity decisively shape outcomes (Ishak et al., 2025). Likewise, studies on waqf investment and socio-economic impact demonstrate the scale of waqf's potential contributions to education and public welfare, while also reinforcing the need for clearer impact pathways and accountability (Elmahgop et al., 2025). These pressures help explain why waqf discourse may lean toward financial architecture. However, from a tauhidic perspective, a waqf project that is financially viable yet conceptually detached from educational purpose and ethical intentionality risks weakening the very meaning of sadaqah jariyah as lived continuity of benefit.

Accordingly, this paper positions waqf-based learning spaces as Islamic social infrastructure—institutions where niyyah (ethical intention), spatial form, and maslahah (public benefit) converge. By synthesising recent waqf and Islamic social finance scholarship with contemporary learning-space research and a tauhidic philosophical framing, the paper addresses a conceptual gap: how spatial meaning and educational purpose can be restored as core dimensions of waqf impact, rather than treated as incidental outcomes of asset development. The argument is not that governance and financial models are unimportant, but that they are insufficient if they do not serve the higher ends of knowledge, adab, and communal well-being that waqf historically exists to sustain.

The objectives of this paper are threefold. First, it re-examines waqf's educational role through the lens of Islamic philanthropy and contemporary Islamic social finance debates on governance and impact. Second, it develops a tauhidic conceptual framing that integrates classical Islamic insights on knowledge and ethical formation with contemporary understandings of social infrastructure and learning-space affordances. Third, it proposes a conceptual framework to guide policymakers, waqf authorities, and educational institutions in planning and governing waqf-based learning spaces in ways that preserve ethical intentionality, strengthen social value, and support sustainable educational benefit across generations. In doing so, the paper contributes to JIPSF's multidisciplinary agenda by offering a bridge between Islamic philanthropy and the built environment—reframing waqf not merely as a financial mechanism, but as a civilisational institution whose impact is realised through meaningful spaces of learning.

2. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopts a conceptual framework that integrates Islamic philanthropy, tauhidic epistemology, and contemporary theories of social infrastructure to reconceptualise waqf-based learning spaces as enduring institutions of ethical, educational, and social formation. Within much of the current Islamic social finance literature, waqf is predominantly examined through lenses of governance, asset management, and financial sustainability (Cizakca, 2011; Mohsin, 2013; Abd Aziz et al., 2025). While these perspectives are essential, they often understate the institutional and spatial dimensions through which waqf's social benefits are actually experienced. This framework responds to recent calls to expand waqf analysis beyond technocratic performance indicators towards holistic, meaning-oriented conceptions of impact (Azmi et al., 2025; Rusydiana, 2025).

2.1 Waqf as Civilisational and Educational Infrastructure

Historically, waqf has functioned as a cornerstone of Islamic civilisation, underwriting educational, religious, and welfare institutions that shaped intellectual life and social cohesion over long temporal horizons (Hoexter, 1998; Kahf, 2003). Madrasahs, mosques, libraries, and learning complexes funded through waqf were not merely service providers, but institutional frameworks that embedded knowledge transmission within everyday social and spatial practices. Contemporary Islamic social finance scholarship increasingly acknowledges this civilisational role, particularly in relation to education and human capital development (Sadiq et al., 2025; Elmahgop et al., 2025).

However, recent governance-oriented studies also note that modern waqf administration frequently prioritises land development, revenue optimisation, and compliance mechanisms, sometimes at the expense of educational purpose and social meaning (Kamaruzaman & Ishak, 2023; Ishak et al., 2025). From this perspective, waqf risks being reframed as a financial asset class rather than as a social institution whose value unfolds through sustained engagement with people and place. Conceptualising waqf-based learning spaces as social infrastructure offers a corrective lens. Social infrastructure theory emphasises the role of durable institutions and public spaces in supporting social interaction, trust, and collective capacity over time (Enneking et al., 2025). This aligns closely with waqf's logic of perpetuity, where continuity of benefit is realised through enduring institutions rather than episodic charitable interventions.

2.2 Tauhidic Epistemology and the Purpose of Learning Spaces

The epistemological foundation of this framework is tauhid, which affirms the unity of existence and the inseparability of knowledge, ethics, and material reality. Classical Islamic thinkers consistently emphasise

that education is not merely the acquisition of information, but the cultivation of right order within the self and society. Al-Attas (1980) articulates this through the concept of ta'dib, where education instils adab by recognising the proper place of knowledge, action, and purpose within divine order. Similarly, al-Ghazali (2004) warns that knowledge divorced from ethical discipline and spiritual orientation risks becoming a source of corruption rather than guidance.

Within this worldview, learning spaces are not neutral containers. They participate actively in shaping intellectual disposition, ethical sensibility, and modes of engagement with knowledge. Contemporary Islamic education scholarship reinforces this view by arguing that pedagogical environments—whether physical or mediated—must be aligned with Islamic epistemology if education is to remain transformative rather than merely instrumental (Wan Daud, 1998; Memon, 2021; Ibrahim et al., 2024). Recent tauhidic pedagogical studies further demonstrate that when learning environments are oriented toward ʿilm, adab, and maʿrifah, they foster ethical awareness and reflective depth rather than technical proficiency alone (Salam et al., 2025).

Applied to waqf, this suggests that philanthropic support for education extends beyond funding structures or facilities. Waqf sustains epistemic environments in which knowledge is encountered as a moral and spiritual pursuit. The continuity of such environments through waqf embodies sadaqah jariyah not only through longevity, but through the persistent cultivation of ethical and intellectual responsibility.

2.3 Learning Spaces, Symbolism, and Social Experience

Recent research in learning-environment studies underscores the significance of spatial affordances in shaping learning behaviour, social interaction, and cognitive engagement. Empirical and review-based studies identify factors such as spatial hierarchy, accessibility, flexibility, environmental comfort, and opportunities for informal interaction as critical to meaningful learning experiences (Aziz et al., 2024; Cui et al., 2025; Akkurt et al., 2025). Informal and transitional spaces—corridors, courtyards, libraries, and communal areas—are increasingly recognised as vital components of learning ecologies that support collaboration and reflection (Salih et al., 2024).

Islamic architectural scholarship adds a symbolic dimension to this understanding. Scholars such as Nasr (1987) and Burckhardt (1976) argue that Islamic architecture embodies metaphysical principles through proportion, orientation, geometry, and light, allowing built form to function as a medium of remembrance (dhikr). When such symbolic dimensions are acknowledged, architecture becomes a pedagogical agent rather than a neutral backdrop. Recent studies on Islamic and Malay architectural heritage similarly demonstrate how spatial sequencing and ornamentation encode ethical and cosmological meanings that shape user experience (Hanafi et al., 2023; Mohd For et al., 2024).

Integrating these insights, waqf-based learning spaces can be understood as environments where spatial symbolism, social interaction, and educational purpose intersect. Philanthropic impact, in this sense, is mediated not only through access to education but through the quality of spatial experience that frames how knowledge is encountered and internalised.

2.4 An Integrative Tauhidic Framework for Waqf-Based Learning Spaces

Synthesising the above strands, the conceptual framework proposed in this study rests on three interdependent components: ethical intention (niyyah), spatial embodiment, and social benefit (maslahah). Ethical intention anchors waqf within Islamic philanthropy as an act of worship and communal

responsibility. Spatial embodiment translates this intention into learning environments that cultivate adab, reflection, and social interaction. Social benefit emerges through sustained access to knowledge, ethical formation, and community development over time.

This framing resonates with recent Islamic social finance scholarship that emphasises value alignment and impact orientation, while extending these discussions to include spatial and institutional dimensions that are often implicit or overlooked (Azmi et al., 2025; Abd Aziz et al., 2025). Governance structures and financial mechanisms remain essential, but within a tauhidic framework they are understood as enabling means rather than ultimate ends. Their purpose is to sustain environments that support knowledge, justice, and holistic human flourishing.

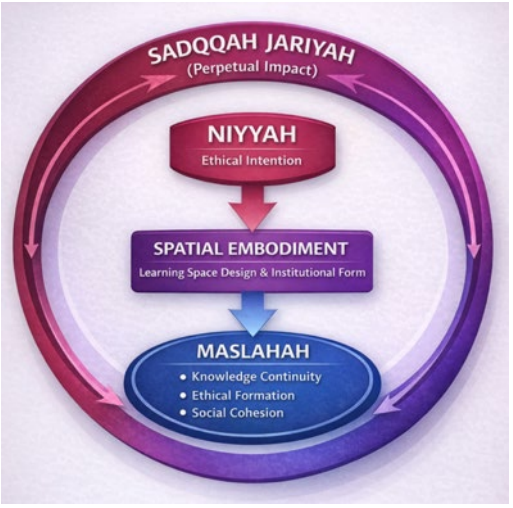


Figure 1. Tauhidic Framework of Waqf-Based Learning Spaces as Islamic Social Infrastructure

Figure 1 presents the tauhidic framework proposed in this study. The framework is structured around three interrelated components: niyyah (ethical intention), spatial embodiment, and maslahah (social benefit). Ethical intention serves as the foundational driver that informs the purpose of waqf. This intention is translated into physical reality through spatial embodiment, where learning environments are shaped to reflect ethical and epistemological values. Social benefit emerges as the outcome of this integration, realised through sustained access to education, ethical formation, and community development. The framework emphasises that these components are not linear but dynamically interconnected within a unified tauhidic worldview.

In summary, this conceptual and theoretical framework positions waqf-based learning spaces as Islamic social infrastructure grounded in *tauhidic* epistemology. By integrating insights from Islamic social finance, classical and contemporary Islamic thought, and learning-space research, the framework provides a robust foundation for rethinking how waqf institutions can support meaningful, ethical, and socially transformative education in contemporary Muslim societies.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN / CONCEPTUAL METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative, conceptual research design grounded in interpretive analysis and normative inquiry. The approach is appropriate given the paper's objective to reconceptualize waqf-based learning

spaces as Islamic social infrastructure through the integration of Islamic philanthropy, tauhidic epistemology, and spatial theory. Rather than testing variables or measuring empirical outcomes, the study seeks to develop a coherent theoretical framework that clarifies meaning, purpose, and ethical orientation within contemporary waqf and Islamic social finance discourse.

Conceptual research is widely employed in Islamic social finance and related normative fields where the aim is to refine definitions, integrate bodies of knowledge, and advance theoretical understanding (Kahf, 2003; Hassan & Ashraf, 2010; Azmi et al., 2025). In the context of waqf studies, such an approach is particularly relevant because many foundational questions—concerning intention (niyyah), perpetuity, social benefit (maslahah), and ethical responsibility—are inherently normative and philosophical rather than empirical. This study therefore positions theory-building as a legitimate and necessary methodological contribution.

3.1 Sources and Analytical Orientation

The conceptual framework is developed through a critical synthesis of three main bodies of literature. First, classical and contemporary writings on waqf and Islamic philanthropy are examined to establish waqf's historical role, ethical foundations, and current institutional challenges (Hoexter, 1998; Cizakca, 2011; Abd Aziz et al., 2025). This includes recent Islamic social finance scholarship that highlights governance, sustainability, and impact assessment, while also noting limitations of overly technocratic approaches (Kamaruzaman & Ishak, 2023; Rusydiana, 2025).

Second, foundational texts and scholarly interpretations of Islamic epistemology are analysed to ground the framework in a tauhidic worldview. Works by al-Attas (1980), al-Ghazali (2004), Wan Daud (1998), and Nasr (1987) are engaged to clarify the Islamic understanding of knowledge, education, and ethical formation. These sources provide the normative lens through which learning spaces are interpreted, not as neutral settings, but as environments that participate in shaping intellectual and moral orientation.

Third, contemporary literature on learning environments and social infrastructure is reviewed to understand how spatial conditions influence social interaction, learning behaviour, and collective experience (Oblinger, 2006; Aziz et al., 2024; Enneking et al., 2025). This body of work enables the translation of philosophical and philanthropic principles into spatial and institutional terms, allowing waqf-based learning spaces to be analysed as lived environments rather than abstract endowments.

3.2 Analytical Process and Framework Development

The analysis proceeds through an iterative process of thematic synthesis and conceptual integration. Key concepts, such as niyyah, sadaqah jariyah, ta'dib, adab, social infrastructure, and learning-space affordances, are first examined within their respective literatures. These concepts are then brought into dialogue to identify points of convergence and tension between Islamic philanthropy, epistemology, and spatial theory.

Rather than privileging any single disciplinary lens, the study employs a tauhidic integrative logic, in which ethical intention, material form, and social outcome are understood as interdependent. Through this synthesis, the study articulates a three-part conceptual structure comprising ethical intention (niyyah), spatial embodiment, and social benefit (maslahah). This structure serves as an analytical scaffold for understanding how waqf-based learning spaces function as Islamic social infrastructure.

The resulting framework is normative and explanatory rather than predictive. It does not claim generalisability in the statistical sense, but offers conceptual clarity and transferability for scholars, policymakers, and waqf practitioners seeking to align educational spaces with the ethical aims of Islamic philanthropy. By making underlying assumptions explicit and situating them within established scholarly traditions, the methodology supports transparent and theoretically grounded interpretation.

3.3 Methodological Rigor and Contribution

Rigor in this conceptual study is ensured through systematic engagement with authoritative sources, coherence of argumentation, and consistency with Islamic epistemological principles. The triangulation of classical Islamic thought, contemporary Islamic social finance literature, and learning-space research strengthens the robustness of the framework and mitigates disciplinary bias. The methodology also aligns with recent methodological discussions in Islamic studies that emphasise integration (*tauhid*) over fragmentation in knowledge production (Wan Daud, 1998; Memon, 2021).

In sum, this research design provides a structured and defensible pathway for developing a tauhidic conceptual framework of waqf-based learning spaces. By articulating how philanthropic intention, spatial form, and social benefit intersect, the methodology supports the paper's broader aim of reorienting waqf discourse toward holistic, ethically grounded, and socially meaningful educational institutions.

4. DISCUSSION

This section discusses the implications of conceptualising waqf-based learning spaces as Islamic social infrastructure, drawing on the tauhidic framework developed in the preceding sections. The discussion demonstrates how waqf, when understood beyond financial and administrative parameters, operates as a civilisational institution that sustains ethical, educational, and social continuity. By foregrounding ethical intention (niyyah), spatial embodiment, and social benefit (maslahah), the discussion situates waqf-based learning spaces within contemporary debates on Islamic philanthropy, governance, and sustainable development.

4.1 Reframing Waqf Beyond Financial Instrumentalism

While contemporary Islamic social finance discourse has strengthened governance and financial sustainability, it has also reinforced a tendency to evaluate waqf primarily through financial performance metrics. When waqf is framed in this way, its broader role as a civilisational and educational institution risks being obscured (Cizakca, 2011; Kamaruzaman & Ishak, 2023; Abd Aziz et al., 2025). Although such metrics are necessary for institutional viability, they remain insufficient to capture the full philanthropic meaning of waqf. Waqf was historically established not to maximise returns but to ensure the continuity of social and educational benefits across generations.

Viewing waqf-based learning spaces as social infrastructure helps re-centre this broader purpose. Social infrastructure theory emphasises institutions that enable social interaction, trust, and collective capacity over time (Enneking et al., 2025). When applied to waqf, this perspective highlights learning spaces. such as schools, madrasahs, libraries, and mosque-based educational facilities—are not peripheral outputs of waqf investment, but primary mechanisms through which waqf fulfils its philanthropic mandate. Financial instruments and governance structures, from this standpoint, are enabling means rather than ends in themselves.

4.2 Waqf, Education, and the Continuity of Ethical Formation

One of the most distinctive contributions of waqf to Islamic civilisation has been its role in sustaining education as a public good. Unlike fee-based or state-dependent systems, waqf-supported education historically ensured access to knowledge regardless of personal wealth, embedding equity and communal responsibility into the educational landscape (Kahf, 2003; Hoexter, 1998). This continuity aligns closely with the Islamic understanding of sadaqah jariyah, in which the benefit persists through ongoing use and transmission.

The tauhidic framework advanced in this study reinforces that education in Islam is not merely the transfer of skills or information. Drawing on al-Attas (1980) and al-Ghazali (2004), knowledge is understood as a process of ethical and spiritual formation that orients the learner toward justice, responsibility, and awareness of divine order. Waqf-based learning spaces, therefore, function as environments where adab is cultivated through repeated engagement with knowledge in settings that embody moral and symbolic meaning. When such spaces are treated merely as cost centres or real-estate assets, this formative dimension risks being eroded.

4.3 Spatial Embodiment as a Dimension of Philanthropic Impact

A key insight emerging from the framework is that philanthropic impact in education is mediated through space. Recent research on learning environments confirms that spatial qualities influence behaviour, social interaction, and engagement with learning (Aziz et al., 2024; Cui et al., 2025). Informal and communal spaces, in particular, play a critical role in fostering collaboration, reflection, and peer learning (Salih et al., 2024). These findings resonate strongly with historical waqf-supported institutions, where learning unfolded across interconnected spaces rather than confined classrooms.

Islamic architectural scholarship further underscores that spatial form carries ethical and symbolic significance. Elements such as orientation, hierarchy, light, and enclosure have historically functioned as reminders of divine order and moral discipline (Nasr, 1987; Burckhardt, 1976). When waqf supports learning spaces that consciously integrate such principles, the philanthropic act extends beyond material provision to include the cultivation of meaning and ethical sensibility. This suggests that spatial design should be considered an integral dimension of waqf impact assessment, rather than a secondary or aesthetic concern.

4.4 Implications for Waqf Governance and Planning

The conceptualisation of waqf-based learning spaces as Islamic social infrastructure has important implications for waqf governance and planning. Current governance models often prioritise compliance, risk management, and financial reporting—areas that are undeniably important (Ishak et al., 2025). However, governance frameworks rarely incorporate criteria related to educational purpose, spatial quality, or ethical orientation. This creates a gap between administrative efficiency and philanthropic intention.

Integrating the proposed framework into waqf governance would require expanding evaluation criteria to include qualitative dimensions such as accessibility of learning spaces, continuity of educational use, and alignment with Islamic educational values. Planning processes could benefit from interdisciplinary collaboration between waqf administrators, educators, and built environment professionals to ensure that spatial decisions support long-term educational and social outcomes. Such an approach aligns with

emerging Islamic social finance discussions that call for impact-oriented governance models capable of capturing social and ethical value alongside financial sustainability (Azmi et al., 2025; Rusydiana, 2025).

4.5 Waqf-Based Learning Spaces and Contemporary Social Challenges

In contemporary Muslim societies, waqf-based learning spaces face new challenges related to urbanisation, demographic change, and technological transformation. These pressures have intensified demands for efficiency and scalability, often reinforcing the instrumental treatment of waqf assets. Yet, the need for spaces that cultivate ethical awareness, social cohesion, and intellectual depth remains as urgent as ever.

By framing waqf-based learning spaces as social infrastructure, this study offers a lens through which waqf can respond to contemporary challenges without abandoning its foundational values. Rather than competing with market-driven educational models, waqf can complement them by providing environments oriented toward holistic human development. This perspective reinforces waqf's relevance within broader Islamic social finance agendas that seek to balance economic growth with social justice and moral responsibility.

4.6 Synthesis and Theoretical Contribution

The discussion demonstrates that waqf-based learning spaces occupy a unique position at the intersection of Islamic philanthropy, education, and the built environment. The tauhidic framework articulated in this paper provides a means of integrating these domains into a coherent conceptual model that emphasises continuity, ethical intentionality, and spatial meaning. By shifting attention from assets to institutions, and from transactions to lived environments, the framework contributes to ongoing efforts to revitalise waqf as a civilisational institution rather than a technical instrument.

In doing so, the study complements and extends existing Islamic social finance literature by highlighting dimensions of waqf that are often implicit or marginalised. The discussion thus reinforces the argument that sustainable waqf development depends not only on sound governance and financial viability, but also on the preservation of educational purpose and ethical meaning embedded within the spaces waqf sustains. This framework contributes to Islamic social finance discourse by expanding the conceptualisation of waqf impact beyond capital preservation and financial return metrics toward institution-based value creation aligned with maqasid al-shariah.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper has argued that waqf-based learning spaces should be understood as a form of Islamic social infrastructure rather than merely as outputs of financial endowment or asset management. By integrating Islamic philanthropy, tauhidic epistemology, and contemporary learning-space theory, the study reframes waqf as a civilisational institution that sustains ethical, educational, and social continuity across generations. The proposed conceptual framework emphasises the interdependence of ethical intention (*niyyah*), spatial embodiment, and social benefit (*maslahah*), offering a holistic lens through which waqf's role in education can be re-evaluated within contemporary Islamic social finance discourse.

The findings of this conceptual inquiry underscore that waqf's philanthropic impact in education cannot be fully captured through financial indicators or governance metrics alone. While sound management and sustainability remain essential, they are insufficient if disconnected from educational purpose and ethical

meaning. Waqf-based learning spaces historically functioned as environments where knowledge was pursued as a moral and spiritual endeavour, and this formative role remains central to waqf's relevance in modern Muslim societies. Reasserting this role requires recognising space itself as an active mediator of philanthropic outcomes.

5.1 Implications for Islamic Philanthropy and Social Finance

For Islamic philanthropy and social finance, this study highlights the need to broaden evaluative frameworks beyond transactional efficiency. Waqf institutions and policymakers are encouraged to incorporate qualitative dimensions, such as continuity of educational use, accessibility of learning spaces, and alignment with Islamic educational values, into waqf planning and assessment. Doing so would better reflect waqf's foundational purpose as sadaqah jariyah and strengthen its contribution to holistic human development.

The conceptualisation of waqf-based learning spaces as social infrastructure also complements contemporary Islamic social finance agendas that seek to align financial mechanisms with ethical and social objectives. By foregrounding institutional meaning and spatial quality, the framework offers a way to reconnect waqf governance with the higher aims of Islamic philanthropy, without undermining the importance of financial sustainability.

5.2 Implications for Waqf Governance and Educational Institutions

For waqf administrators and educational institutions, the study suggests the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration in waqf development. Decisions related to land use, building design, and programme continuity should involve not only financial and legal expertise but also educational and spatial considerations. Such an approach can help ensure that waqf-based learning spaces remain responsive to contemporary needs while preserving their ethical orientation.

Educational institutions that operate on waqf land or receive waqf support may also benefit from consciously articulating the philosophical and ethical foundations of their learning environments. Embedding tauhidic principles in spatial planning and institutional culture can reinforce education's role as a public trust (amanah), rather than as a purely instrumental activity.

5.3 Theoretical Contribution and Future Research

Theoretically, this paper contributes to Islamic philanthropy and social finance literature by extending waqf analysis into the domain of spatial and institutional meaning. By integrating tauhidic epistemology with learning-space theory, the study offers a conceptual framework that bridges Islamic studies, education, and the built environment. This integration responds to calls for more holistic and interdisciplinary approaches within Islamic social finance research.

Future research may build on this framework through empirical studies examining how waqf-based learning spaces are planned, governed, and experienced across different contexts. Comparative case studies across regions, educational levels, or institutional models could provide further insight into how spatial design and governance practices influence the educational impact of waqf. Additionally, longitudinal research could explore how engagement with waqf-based learning environments shapes ethical orientation and social responsibility over time.

5.4 Closing Reflection

Ultimately, rethinking waqf-based learning spaces as Islamic social infrastructure invites a return to waqf's original civilisational vision—one in which philanthropy sustains not only buildings or balance sheets, but the moral and intellectual life of the community. By restoring attention to ethical intention, spatial meaning, and educational purpose, waqf can continue to serve as a living institution of *sadaqah jariyah*, supporting knowledge, justice, and human flourishing in contemporary Muslim societies.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS/FUNDING

The authors thank the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments. We also appreciate the feedback provided by our colleagues during the preparation of this manuscript. This research did not receive any specific grants from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

7. CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors affirm that there is no conflict of interest in this article.

8. AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors jointly contributed to the development of this paper. All authors also contributed to reviewing and refining the paper, providing intellectual and methodological input, and ensuring its academic rigor and clarity. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript for publication

9. DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI IN THE WRITING PROCESS

The author declares that generative AI tools were not used in the creation of this article, except for text paraphrasing and cross-checking references. The author assumes full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and final content of this work.

10. DATA AVAILABILITY/SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to institutional and ethical requirements.

11. ETHICS STATEMENT

The author(s) declare that this study did not involve any human biological samples, data or animal subjects. Consequently, formal ethics committee approval and informed consent were not required for this research.

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