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WAQF LAND UTILISATION FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT: A CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract:

The strategic utilisation of Waqf land for agriculture represents an important mechanism for achieving sustainable food security, rural resilience, and inclusive socio-economic development. However, existing reviews have primarily examined waqf from the perspectives of Islamic social finance or its general socio-economic functions, with limited synthesis of how waqf land utilisation contributes to agricultural development, governance, and community empowerment across different institutional and geographical contexts. This critical literature review addresses this gap by critically synthesising existing evidence and developing an integrated understanding of productive waqf land utilisation in support of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). The review analysed 18 peer-reviewed

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publications published between 2009 and 2025, identified through searches of Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Four interrelated themes emerged: (i) sustainable agricultural practices and food security, (ii) socio-economic empowerment and rural development, (iii) institutional governance and legal frameworks, and (iv) innovative financing and management models. The findings demonstrate that productive waqf initiatives contribute significantly to food security, employment generation, poverty alleviation, and community resilience through sustainable agricultural development. Nevertheless, legal fragmentation, weak governance structures, management deficiencies, and liquidity constraints continue to restrict the effective utilisation and scalability of waqf land initiatives. Drawing upon Social Enterprise Theory and Stakeholder Theory, this review proposes an integrated conceptual framework that explains the interrelationships among governance, financing mechanisms, agricultural innovation, and socio-economic outcomes. Ultimately, the review emphasises that professionalised management, institutional collaboration, technological innovation, and harmonised legal frameworks are essential prerequisites for enhancing the contribution of waqf land to socio-economic development and supporting sustainable development objectives.

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Keyword:

Agricultural Development, Agribusiness, Food Security, Islamic Endowment, Productive Waqf, Socio-Economic Empowerment, Waqf Land



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Introduction

The increasing global concern on food insecurity, rural underdevelopment, and widening socio-economic inequality has increased the interest of policymakers and academics to explore an alternative way to use resources that can produce long lasting and inclusive growth. To address these challenges waqf (Islamic endowment) land represents a largely untapped asset that has the potential to be developed. However, Mokhtar & Ibrahim (2009) and Ishak et al., (2025) found that a significant proportion of waqf land remains idle or underutilised, particularly in countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia, where institutional inefficiencies and governance constraints persist. This underutilisation is because of the lack of funds among mutawallis (trustees) and lack of robust legal frameworks to facilitate commercial development (Hassan et al., 2021). Consequently, the strategic utilisation of waqf land for agricultural development emerges as a critical pathway to enhance food security, stimulate rural economies, and foster socio-economic empowerment. Thus, aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)

Islamic law defines waqf as the perpetual dedication of assets to religious, charitable, and public purposes. However, waqf land is unique in that it has spiritual and economic undertones, with the usufruct aimed at providing perpetual public benefit to society. Modern literature has attempted to redefine the concept of waqf as an advanced Islamic social finance tool that combines philanthropy with economic activities (Medias et al., 2021). The use of waqf land in agricultural activities covers a broad range of activities, including the production of crops, livestock, and agribusiness enterprises, which can provide income, employment, and self-sufficiency to society, thereby changing the dependency trend in the waqf sector to self-sufficiency (Sukmana et al., 2024). Therefore, waqf land is increasingly being seen as a dynamic tool for socio-economic transformation and sustainable development rather than as a static tool for providing public benefit.

However, there are several critical gaps and challenges that are affecting the effective utilisation of waqf land. Firstly, most of the existing literature is still fragmented and context specific, with a lack of integrative literature that synthesises knowledge from different geographical and contextual settings. Secondly, there is a lack of empirical evidence on effective models of agricultural development using waqf land, especially those that incorporate modern financing models such as sukuk (Islamic bonds) and crowdfunding, and technology (Ayub et al., 2024; Pitchay et al., 2022). Thirdly, issues of governance, such as legal ambiguities relating to land titles, lack of institutional capacity, and poor coordination of stakeholders, still pose a significant challenge to the optimal utilisation of waqf land (Mokhtar & Ibrahim, 2009; Ishak et al., 2025). Lastly, existing literature on waqf land has concentrated more on descriptive research, thus limiting the development of theory and comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms by which waqf land can be utilised to enhance socio-economic empowerment.

To overcome the limitations of the theories, the present review is mainly based on the guidelines of the Social Enterprise Theory, which focuses on the ability of an organisation to attain social and economic goals by engaging in business activities in the market system. This theory is relevant to the context of the productive waqf institution, as it links the charity-oriented nature of the endowment with the need for effective and efficient agricultural practices. According to the guidelines of the theory, the waqf institution may be regarded as a social enterprise that uses the land assets for generating income and investing it in social initiatives such as education and healthcare (Priyadi & Achiria, 2022; Sukmana et al., 2024). Moreover, the Stakeholder Theory has also been integrated into the present review to explain the complex structure of the Waqf Land Development Institution. As the institution involves different stakeholders such as trustees, government agencies, and Shariah scholars, it is essential to consider the importance of effective cooperation and transparency for the successful implementation of the institution (Ishak et al., 2025; Himmawan et al., 2025; Gwadabe & Rahman, 2022). This indicates that the successful implementation of the waqf land utilisation institution depends not only on the availability of financial assets but also on effective management and governance (Medias et al., 2021; Ayub et al., 2024).

The major objective of this study is to critically review and synthesises existing literature on waqf land utilisation in agricultural development and socio-economic empowerment. Specifically, this study aims to: (i) review the contemporary practices and models of productive waqf land utilisation in agricultural development, (ii) analyse the socio-economic benefits associated with waqf implementation, and (iii) analyse the governance challenges, and critical success factors associated with waqf-based agricultural initiatives. Through a review of

existing literature, this study attempts to contribute to academic literature as well as inform policy development in the broader domain of Islamic social finance.

This literature review attempts to synthesise existing literature on waqf land usage within the broader contexts of agricultural development and socio-economic empowerment in Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member states. The study is organised as follows: the next section provides a description of the methodology employed in conducting the literature review. This is followed by a critical review of major literature findings on agricultural development initiatives based on waqf land usage. Finally, a discussion section attempts to synthesise literature findings along with conceptual and practical perspectives to propose a comprehensive framework for effective waqf land usage. The concluding section of the study attempts to summarise major findings along with limitations, highlighting the importance of waqf in agricultural developments.

Methodology

This study adopts a critical literature review approach to examine and synthesise existing literature on waqf land utilisation for agricultural development and socio-economic empowerment. This approach was selected because the topic is interdisciplinary, involving Islamic social finance, agricultural development, rural socio-economic transformation, governance, and sustainable development.

The literature search was conducted using major academic databases namely Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and other sources of Islamic finance literature. The search was guided by keyword combinations related to the three main constructs of the study: waqf land, agricultural development, and socio-economic empowerment. The keywords included “waqf land”, “Islamic endowment”, “productive waqf”, “agriculture”, “agribusiness”, “farming”, “food security”, “rural development”, “socio-economic empowerment”, “poverty alleviation”, and “Islamic social finance”. Boolean operators were used to combine the search terms, such as “waqf land” AND “agriculture”, “productive waqf” AND “socio-economic empowerment”, and “Islamic endowment” AND “food security”.

The selection of literature was based on clearly defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Studies were included if they: (i) focused on waqf land, productive waqf, or Islamic endowment assets; (ii) discussed agricultural development, agribusiness, food security, rural development, or socio-economic empowerment; (iii) provided conceptual, empirical, policy, or governance insights relevant to waqf-based development; and (iv) were published as peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, or scholarly publications between 2009 and 2025. Studies were excluded if they: (i) discussed waqf only in general terms without reference to land utilisation or productive development; (ii) focused solely on cash waqf, mosque waqf, or educational waqf without linkage to agricultural or socio-economic outcomes; (iii) were non-academic commentaries, editorials, or opinion pieces; or (iv) lacked sufficient relevance to the relationship between waqf land, agriculture, and community empowerment. Based on these criteria, 18 publications were selected for detailed analysis.

The analytical framework was developed around four core dimensions derived from the study objectives and recurring issues identified in the literature: agricultural utilisation, socio-economic empowerment, institutional governance, and financing mechanisms. These dimensions were used to organise the review and guide the interpretation of the selected

studies. Agricultural utilisation refers to the transformation of idle waqf land into productive agricultural activities such as crop production, livestock farming, hydroponics, and biofloc systems. Socio-economic empowerment refers to outcomes such as employment generation, poverty alleviation, income creation, skills development, and community resilience. Institutional governance refers to legal structures, trustee capacity, stakeholder coordination, accountability, and policy support. Financing mechanisms refer to instruments such as crowdfunding, cooperative waqf models, *Salam-Muzara'ah* arrangements, and other social-commercial financing approaches used to support waqf land development.

The selected literature was analysed using thematic synthesis. First, descriptive coding was conducted to identify the study context, country, research focus, methodology, waqf model, agricultural activity, governance issue, financing approach, and socio-economic outcome. Second, analytical coding was used to group recurring ideas into broader themes. Third, the themes were compared across different geographical and institutional contexts to identify similarities, differences, contradictions, and research gaps. This process resulted in four major themes: (i) sustainable agricultural practices and food security, (ii) socio-economic empowerment and youth development, (iii) institutional governance and legal frameworks, and (iv) innovative financing and management models. The thematic synthesis enabled the review to move beyond descriptive summary by critically examining the interrelationships between governance structures, financing models, agricultural innovation, and socio-economic outcomes.

Figure 1 below outlines the underpinning this critical literature review. The framework illustrates the relationships between governance structures, financial mechanisms, agricultural innovation, and socio-economic empowerment outcomes associated with waqf land utilisation. The framework also demonstrates how institutional collaboration, professional management, and sustainable agricultural practices contribute to transforming idle waqf assets into productive resources capable of supporting food security, poverty reduction, and community resilience.

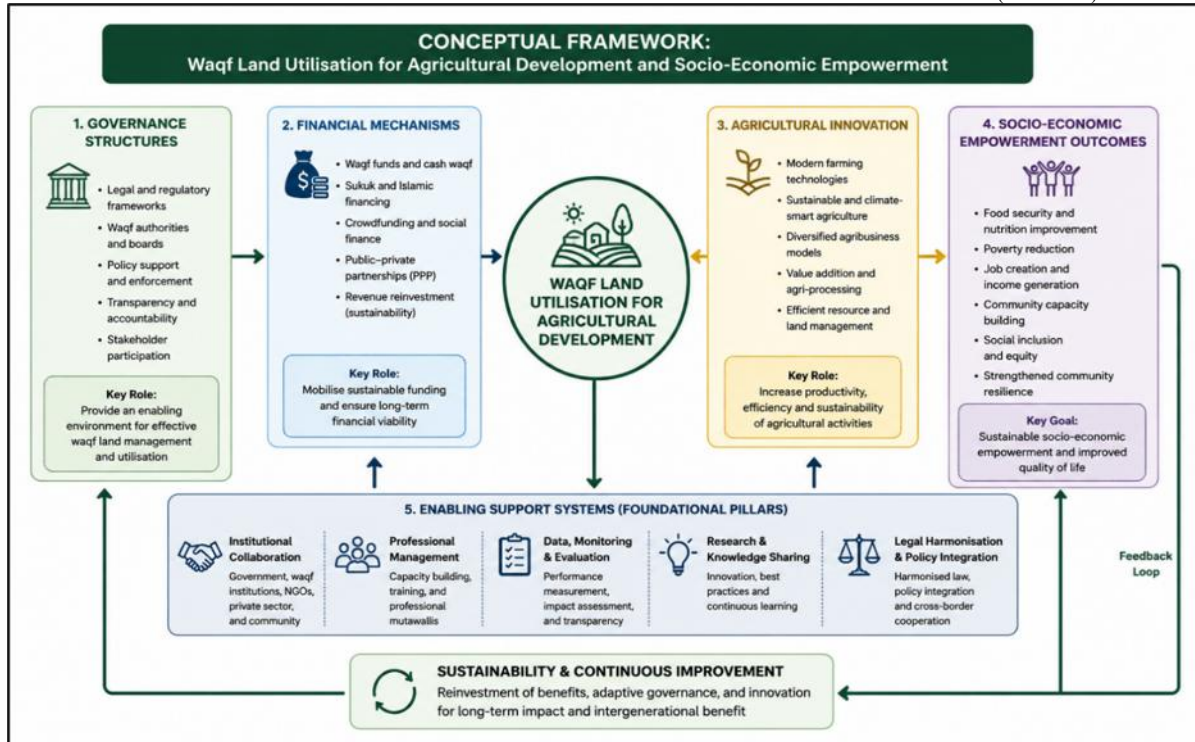


Figure 1: Conceptual Review Framework

Results

The final sample of studies for this review consists of 18 studies identified as highly impactful and compliant with the inclusion criteria after a rigorous screening and selection process. The studies are part of a carefully curated set of literature that specifically examines the utilisation of waqf lands, specifically in relation to agricultural development and socio-economic empowerment. The studies are geographically diverse, with relevance to studies from Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) countries, including Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Nigeria. The inclusion of both empirical and conceptual studies provides a comprehensive balance, allowing for the synthesis of the literature (Medias et al., 2021; Ishak et al., 2025).

Table 1: A structured synthesis of the final sample of studies, including their focus, methodologies, and contributions. The structured synthesis is integral to the review as it facilitates the comparative analysis and identification of the ways in which the varying institutional settings, from the legalistic frameworks of Malaysia to the community centric approaches in Indonesia and Nigeria, address the sleeping potential inherent in land assets. By collating the various contributions from empirical and conceptual studies, the table provides a framework to identify the key themes and systemic challenges that define the current status quo in productive waqf lands globally. From a longitudinal perspective, an investigation of the literature in Table 1 shows an evolutionary pattern in the research focus, from foundational issues in the 2000s on legal issues to sophisticated agribusiness modelling in the 2020s. From a chronology of ideas, there is a progression from descriptive research on land underutilisation to the conceptualization of integrated models of financing such as "Salam-Muzara'ah Linked Waqf" and the application of FinTech in community empowerment (Ayub et al., 2024; Majid, 2021). From a methodological perspective, there is an apparent trend towards greater analytical sophistication, with more recent research applying multi stakeholder research and Analytical

Network Processes (ANP) in resolving conflicting governance issues. This progression is an indication of a mature field of research where waqf is no longer considered a religious injunction but a socio-economic venture that can address global issues such as food security and rural poverty.

Table 1: A Structured Synthesis of the Final Sample of Studies

Authors/ Year	Title	Source	Study Focus	Method/Approach	Main Contribution
Ishak et al., 2025	The critical success factors of waqf land development for sustainable agriculture	Social Sciences and Humanities Open	Success factors for waqf agriculture	Qualitative Analysis	Identifies critical elements required to make waqf land viable for long term agriculture.
Allah Pitchay et al., 2018	Cooperative-waqf model: a proposal to develop idle waqf lands in Malaysia	ISRA International Journal of Islamic Finance	Development of idle waqf lands	Model Proposal/Qualitative	Propose a cooperative waqf model to integrate capital and land resources for productive use.
Sukmana et al., 2024	Designing waqf-based financing model for livestock project: empirical evidence from Indonesia	International Journal of Islamic and Middle Eastern Finance and Management	Waqf-based financing for agriculture	Empirical Case Study	Develops a specific financing model for livestock using waqf funds.
Mohd Thas Thaker & Allah Pitchay, 2018	Developing waqf land through crowdfunding waqf model (CWM): the case of Malaysia	Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research	Financing waqf land development	Case Study / Model Design	Demonstrates the viability of crowdfunding as a modern source of liquidity for waqf land projects.
Priyadi & Achiria, 2022	Social Enterprise Model in Waqf Land Management in Bantul, Indonesia	Millah: Journal of Religious Studies	Land management through social enterprise	Qualitative / Case Study	Integrates the social enterprise concept into waqf land management strategies.

Mokhtar & Ibrahim, 2009	The contemporary methods of Waqf land development in Malaysia	Managing it in Construction/Managing Construction for Tomorrow	Methods of developing waqf land	Review of contemporary methods	Identifies modern construction and management approaches for waqf properties.
Sadeq, 2002	Waqf, perpetual charity and poverty alleviation	International Journal of Social Economics	Poverty alleviation through waqf	Conceptual/Theoretical Analysis	Explains how waqf serves as a perpetual charity mechanism for redistribution and socio-economic support.
Hakim & Sarif, 2021	The Role of Productive Waqf in Community Economic Empowerment: A Case Study of Muhammadiyah Regional Board of Lumajang, East Java, Indonesia	Journal of King Abdulaziz University, Islamic Economics	Productive waqf and empowerment	Case Study	Analyses the practical impact of productive waqf on local economic empowerment.
Ayub et al., 2024	Waqf for accelerating socioeconomic development: a proposed model with focus on Pakistan	Qualitative Research in Financial Markets	Accelerating development through waqf	Model Proposal	Suggests structural models to utilise waqf for national development priorities.
Iman & Mohammad, 2017	Waqf as a framework for entrepreneurship	Humanomics	Entrepreneurial potential of waqf assets	Qualitative Analysis	Reconceptualizes waqf as a framework for fostering business and entrepreneurship.
Gwadabe & Rahman, 2022	Waqf as an Instrument to Attain Youth Empowerment for Sound Business Environment	Malaysian Journal of Qualitative Research	Social stability and business development	Qualitative Research	Explores waqf's role in creating a sound business environment through youth empowerment.

	and Peaceful Coexistence in Kano, Nigeria					
Abubakar & Rahman, 2021	The role of Waqf in the youth empowerment to attain the quality education in kano for sustainable development goals	Islamic Wealth and the SDGs: Global Strategies for Socio- Economic Impact	Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Qualitative Analysis		Links waqf- funded education to sustainable socio-economic development.
Medias et al., 2021	A systematic literature review on the socio- economic roles of waqf: evidence from organization of the Islamic cooperation (OIC) countries	Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research	Comprehensive review of waqf roles	Systematic Literature Review		Synthesises existing knowledge on the socio- economic impact of waqf across various nations.
Xu et al., 2021	Analysis of influencing factors of cultivated land fragmentation based on hierarchical linear model: A case study of Jiangsu Province, China	Land Use Policy	Land fragmentation	Hierarchical Linear Model		Identifies factors leading to fragmented agricultural land.
Ciaian et al., 2018	Land fragmentation and production diversification: A case study from rural Albania	Land Use Policy	Production diversification	Case Study		Examines the relationship between land structure and agricultural output variety.

Song et al., 2020	Vulnerability to biological disasters: A novel field of cultivated land use transition research	Dili Xuebao/Acta Geographica Sinica	Land use transition and vulnerability	Empirical Research	Explores biological disaster impacts on cultivated land transitions.
West & Marland, 2002	A synthesis of carbon sequestration, carbon emissions, and net carbon flux in agriculture: Comparing tillage practices in the United States	Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment	Carbon flux and tillage practices	Synthesis of data	Compares environmental impacts of different agricultural practices.
Hartvigsen, 2014	Land reform and land fragmentation in Central and Eastern Europe	Land Use Policy	Land reform impacts	Qualitative Analysis	Details how institutional changes impact land availability and fragmentation.

The findings from the included studies are organised into four major analytical categories that represent the lifecycle of waqf land development. These categories include: (1) Sustainable agricultural practices and food security; (2) Socio-economic empowerment and youth development; (3) Institutional governance and legal frameworks; and (4) Innovative financing and management models.

Sustainable Agricultural Practices and Food Security

The first major theme, sustainable agricultural practices and food security, underlines the importance of waqf land in addressing land conversion and enhancing agricultural production. The literature indicates that transforming idle waqf plots into active agricultural zones is essential for national food supply stability, particularly in regions facing rural abandonment (Listiana et al., 2025). Innovative technical applications such as hydroponic systems, biofloc fish farming, and integrated livestock breeding are frequently proposed as high yield solutions that optimise limited land space while maintaining environmental sustainability (Sukmana et al., 2024; Priyadi & Achiria, 2022). These agricultural practices are not only considered economic activities but also a way of fulfilling the religious obligation to ensure the spirit of waqf is alive and beneficial to the larger community (Ishak et al., 2025).

Socio-Economic Empowerment and Youth Development

The second major theme, socio-economic empowerment and youth development, underlines waqf land's role in addressing poverty and unemployment in rural communities. Findings demonstrate that productive waqf initiatives, such as the Islamic Social Entrepreneurship model, provide marginalised communities and youth with vocational training, starting capital, and sustainable income sources (Abubakar & Rahman, 2021; Gwadabe & Rahman, 2022). In countries like Nigeria and Indonesia, waqf land projects have successfully promoted employment and supported social services like education and healthcare, fostering a sound business environment and social cohesion (Gwadabe & Rahman, 2022; Hakim & Sarif, 2021).

Institutional Governance and Legal Frameworks

The third theme, institutional governance and legal frameworks, highlights the systemic challenges that currently exist and are acting as an impediment to the optimisation of waqf assets. The literature consistently identifies legal complexities, fragmented land titles, and a lack of professional management as the major challenges to the optimisation of waqf assets (Mokhtar & Ibrahim, 2009). Prior researchers emphasise the need for an effective policy framework, such as the National Waqf Land Code, and the need to leverage technology to enhance transparency and accountability in governance (Sulaiman & Zainuddin, 2023; Himmawan et al., 2025). The efficient management of waqf assets by the State Islamic Religious Councils and other trustees is the most critical success factor for the commercialisation and development of agribusiness from traditional activities such as cemeteries and mosques to large commercial activities (Hassan et al., 2021; Ishak et al., 2025).

Innovative Financing and Management Models

The fourth theme, innovative financing and management models, discusses the Anchor Company and Linked Waqf models as alternatives to address the financial liquidity challenges. The *Salam-Muzara'ah* Linked Waqf model seems to be the most favoured model for addressing the financial needs of the farming community to provide them with the required working capital (Majid, 2021). Moreover, the integration of FinTech and crowdfunding seems to be advocated to leverage cash waqf for the development of physical land assets (Ayub et al., 2024; Athief et al., 2025). This seems to be a significant shift towards a market resilient approach to endowment management through collaborative models between trustees, agribusinesses, and cooperatives (Ali Azizan et al., 2022).

Analysing the synthesis of the different themes indicates that there is a symbiotic relationship between governance, finance, and empowerment. Technical agricultural success is found to be dependent on institutional reforms; otherwise, the most innovative agrotech models do not deliver sustainable socio-economic impacts without clear legal codes and professional management (Mujahidin et al., 2025; Ishak et al., 2025). On the contrary, with effective governance and the use of Shariah compliant finance systems, waqf land is a powerful catalyst for building resilience in communities. Thus, the synthesis of the different themes indicates that while waqf land has immense potential for food security and empowerment, it is presently a bottleneck due to institutional inefficiencies that need immediate policy and technological interventions.

Discussion

The main contribution of this literature review is the in-depth synthesis of the linkage between waqf land empowerment and agriculture. Unlike the conventional waqf discourse that is confined within religion and law aspects, this study synthesises the current literature to illustrate that the development of idle endowments into productive agricultural ventures is a sustainable practice that has been proven successful through extensive research work done from 2009 to 2025. In doing so, this study has bridged the gap between Islamic social finance and agriculture by establishing how religious capital can be used as a means to meet the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) (Abduh, 2019; Ishak et al., 2025).

Regarding the first objective, which is review the contemporary practices and models of productive waqf land utilisation in agricultural development, the findings show that the technical application of waqf lands has been shifting to the direction of high efficiency systems. In most cases, the use of livestock projects, hydroponic and biofloc systems have dominated in the literature (Sukmana et al., 2024; Priyadi & Achiria, 2022). This is mainly because they help waqf institutions to overcome the barriers posed by large-scale agriculture and therefore reach resource optimization and food security much faster than using conventional models (Listiana et al., 2025). They are also very significant since they always deliver immediate results to the Ummah while being environmentally sustainable.

As far as the second research objective is concerned on socio-economic empowerment, the results show that the waqf based agriculture practices could yield multifaceted advantages, particularly poverty alleviation, job creation, and social resilience. Furthermore, the results have shown that the agriculture projects not only increase the income levels of people but also play an important role in human resource development by educating, training, and entrepreneurship development (Gwadabe & Rahman, 2022; Abubakar & Rahman, 2021). The integration of waqf in socio-economic ventures leads to social cohesion and inclusive growth, especially in rural and marginalized societies. This is also aligned with the *Maqasid Shari'ah* (objectives of Islamic law) regarding wealth circulation and social justice.

In the context of the third research objective, which focuses on obstacles and facilitating factors, literature shows that governance and institutional capabilities remain the most important factors influencing the effective use of waqf land (Mokhtar & Ibrahim, 2009; Mujahidin et al., 2025). In general, difficulties related to the success of waqf land utilization can be associated with fragmented legislation, inefficient administration, and limited funding. However, it is necessary to note that facilitating factors such as policy consistency, cooperation of stakeholders, and appropriate professional management may positively affect the effectiveness of projects based on waqf land (Sulaiman & Zainuddin, 2023).

Consequently, this study is filled with significant theoretical implications. This is because the study demonstrates the applicability of both Social Enterprise Theory and Stakeholder Theory to the field of Islamic social finance. The use of Social Enterprise Theory in defining waqf as a social enterprise enables the development of a theoretical underpinning that ensures a balance between the social purpose of the endowment and its financial sustainability needed to make agribusiness work (Priyadi & Achiria, 2022). On the other hand, the use of Stakeholder Theory provides an explanation of why collaboration among government agencies, private anchor

companies, and local farmers the most consistent indicator of successful project completion (Ali Azizan et al., 2022) is.

From the perspectives of policy and management, this review presents a strong case for the professionalization of land management of waqf lands. It would be crucial to have a policy of creating a National Waqf Land Code which helps manage land titles as well as creates cooperation between the private sector and the government through Public Private Waqf Partnership (PPWP) (Sulaiman & Zainuddin, 2023). For managers and mutawallis, the findings from this literature review suggest that the use of FinTech and crowdfunding can no longer remain optional but necessary to overcome the problems of liquidity (Ayub et al., 2024). Furthermore, educational programs should be initiated to develop a new generation of waqf managers competent in both Shariah and agribusiness management.

However, despite growing academic literature, there are certain contradictions and inconsistencies identified, especially in commercializing of sacred land. There is a contradiction between the necessity for profitability, which is needed to ensure sustainability, and the religious duty to protect the interests of the poor. Another major research gap concerns the long-term impact of waqf on the ability to adapt to climate change as sustainability is mentioned frequently as an aim. However, lack of research about the environmental impact of waqf can be found (Mahsun et al., 2022). There are also inconsistencies in definitions of productive use by different jurisdictions of OIC member states (Mujahidin et al., 2025).

In conclusion, the current critical literature review highlights the capacity of waqf lands to act as a driving force towards socio-economic empowerment and agriculture sustainability. This study is important for its ability to bring together an otherwise disunited field by presenting a structured framework for understanding that the problems faced in terms of waqf optimization are systemic in nature rather than a flaw in the system itself. By overcoming the challenges highlighted, stakeholders will be able to harness the great potential of waqfs and make a more sustainable future possible for the international community (Ishak et al., 2025; Medias et al., 2021).

Conclusions

This review analysis was undertaken by critically reviewing the use of waqf lands towards agricultural development and socio-economic empowerment based on the synthesis of an organized body of literature between 2009 and 2025. The scope of the review included determining the current uses of waqf lands towards agriculture, assessing the socio-economic implications of using waqf lands in agriculture, and analyzing the institutional and governance issues that have influenced the success of the uses. This review provides an extensive understanding of the use of waqf lands towards the purpose of strategic positioning in the modern world as a valuable resource (Ishak et al., 2025; Medias et al., 2021).

The study reveals the great potential of waqf land as a productive asset that is capable of driving sustainable agriculture and ensuring socio-economic empowerment systematically. As revealed in the literature review, there is an increasing trend in terms of waqf lands being utilized not only in religious contexts but also for diversified agricultural purposes such as the cultivation of highly productive crops, livestock production, and agribusiness innovation. All these practices are making a meaningful contribution to national food security, income creation, and job creation, especially in rural and marginalized areas (Sukmana et al., 2024). However, the

success of such initiatives is subject on high levels of governance, institutions, and innovations in financing through, for example, *Salam-Muzara'ah* and crowdfunding (Ayub et al., 2024; Majid, 2021). It is clear that there is a great connection between agricultural productivity and socio-economic outcomes, which makes waqf land even more valuable in realizing SDGs.

The main contribution of the review is the development of the Waqf Agriculture Empowerment nexus in terms of a complex socio-economic system as opposed to simply a religious responsibility. By developing an integrated conceptual framework to connect the governing factors to transformation, the study moves away from the land-abundant, capital-scarce issue to the issue of productive activation. This contribution acts as an essential link between Islamic social finance and contemporary agrarian reform, providing a basic to promote the professionalisation of waqf management to achieve global food security and rural resilience (Priyadi & Achiria, 2022).

Despite these insights, this review is subject to specific limitations, notably its primary reliance on English language publications, which may have excluded relevant regional study from Arabic, Malay, or Urdu sources. Furthermore, the current body of literature remains dominated by conceptual models and pilot scale initiatives rather than large scale empirical evaluations, as many agricultural waqf projects are still in their emerging stages (Athief et al., 2025). Given the rapid evolution of this field, these findings represent a snapshot in time that must be continually updated as new technological and financial innovations emerge. To address remaining gaps, future research should move beyond descriptive case studies toward quantitative, longitudinal analyses and impact evaluations using standardised metrics to measure food security and poverty reduction. There is an urgent need to explore Waqf Agrotech integration, specifically investigating how blockchain and artificial intelligence can solve transparency and traceability issues to bolster investor confidence (Himmawan et al., 2025). Finally, comparative studies between diverse legal jurisdictions (e.g., Civil Law vs. Sharia-based systems) are essential to identify the most effective regulatory environments for international land development. Addressing these gaps will be essential for unlocking the full potential of waqf land as a transformative tool for inclusive and sustainable development (Ishak et al., 2025).

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