

## **Bridging Equity and Excellence: A Comparative Study of Waqf and Performance-Based Research Funding in Academic Library Finance**

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### **Abstract**

Academic libraries are facing escalating pressures from reduced public funding, rising operational costs, and the growing need for digital innovation. As institutions seek resilient financial models, different countries have adopted varied funding mechanisms shaped by local contexts. This study offers a comparative analysis of two contrasting approaches: Malaysia's Waqf-based model, rooted in ethical community contributions, and New Zealand's Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF), driven by measurable academic outputs. Using a qualitative multi-case study involving two Malaysian universities and one from New Zealand, data were gathered through interviews and document analysis. The findings indicate that Waqf provides inclusive, socially anchored support for targeted projects such as infrastructure upgrades and digital resources. However, its scalability remains limited due to rigid governance structures and its positioning as a complementary funding mechanism rather than a primary institutional source. In contrast, the PBRF enhances institutional research performance and international visibility but tends to deprioritize community engagement and equitable access. This study contributes to the discourse on sustainable library funding by proposing a hybrid framework that balances the ethical stewardship of Waqf with the structured accountability of PBRF. The findings offer practical implications for higher education leaders and policymakers navigating post-pandemic academic finance reforms, particularly in aligning institutional performance with broader societal responsibilities.

**Keywords:** Waqf, Financial sustainability, Academic libraries, Librarian, Entrepreneurial competencies, Performance-based research fund, Community engagement.

### **Introduction**

Academic libraries serve as fundamental components of higher education institutions because they advance academic excellence while providing equal opportunities for information access. The adoption of the entrepreneurial university model has brought

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substantial financial difficulties, yet it has strengthened institutional independence. The reduction of public funding, together with rapid technological development, has created sustainability problems that make it harder for libraries to meet their users' evolving needs. The Global Financial Crisis negatively impacted both Harvard and Yale despite their global standing, and Canadian universities experienced exchange rate volatility, which blocked student access to digital resources (Scott & Eva, 2017).

Numerous institutions have established customized alternative funding models to tackle their organizational and national challenges. The Islamic endowment model known as waqf establishes long-term stability in countries such as China and Indonesia, according to research by Gregorio & Savage (2020) and Liu et al. (2023). Waqf started as a moral practice through communal philanthropy, but it evolved into a sustainable system for promoting educational development. Blockchain technology implementations have improved both governance and operational transparency in recent times, according to Ma'ruf et al. (2024) and Intan et al. (2024). The Indonesian iBantu platform shows how Indonesian waqf systems can use digital infrastructure to create socio-economic opportunities for marginalized communities (Muharam & Osman, 2024). The educational system demonstrates its ability to meet present-day needs through its combination with crowdfunding services (Kurniawan et al., 2024).

The Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) of New Zealand functions as a performance-driven model because it distributes funds according to research output and institutional performance. The PBRF system enhanced research quality and efficiency, according to Spicer et al. (2006), yet received criticism because it strengthens managerial approaches while ignoring educational equity concerns (Roberts, 2013). The research investment in New Zealand stays below OECD standards, which restricts its ability to create meaningful societal outcomes (Menzies, 2012).

This study investigates the Waqf and PBRF funding approaches independently to assess their impact on sustainability, community engagement, and strategic development within academic libraries. Employing a qualitative multi-case study and thematic analysis, the research offers actionable recommendations for university leaders and policymakers aiming to balance research excellence with inclusivity. In Malaysia, public academic libraries rely on core government and institutional funding, with Waqf acting as an emerging, community-based complementary resource.

Importantly, Waqf funding in this study is examined as a supplementary financial mechanism, not a primary institutional budget. It is typically deployed for specific initiatives, such as infrastructure upgrades or digital collections, and often fills gaps left by annual public allocations. This distinction ensures conceptual clarity when comparing Waqf with PBRF, which functions as a centrally allocated, performance-driven funding system.

The paper concludes by proposing adaptive funding frameworks that merge performance accountability with ethical and inclusive community values.

## **Review of Literature**

Throughout history, Waqf, an Islamic finance instrument, has supported the promotion of education and social welfare. The Abbasid period supported independent learning institutions through Waqf, which advanced multiple fields of knowledge (Amezian, 2024). Digital integration, particularly in modern practices, has improved the contemporary governance of Waqf. In Indonesia, iBantu employs blockchain technology to foster trust by enhancing transparency features that align with Sharia law (Muharam & Osman, 2024).

Blockchain technologies have effectively strengthened accountability and resource management (Intan et al., 2024). Malaysian government agencies have launched strategic Waqf programs to enhance higher education development. The Islamic Endowment Fund (1999) and Wakaf Dana Ilmu at Universiti Putra Malaysia (2012) demonstrate how Waqf institutions serve academic excellence advancement and institutional resilience. The resource dependence theory supports this framework because organizations depend on external resources to reduce financial risks (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Nevertheless, challenges remain. The governance structure of Waqf through State Islamic Religious Councils (SIRCs) creates limitations for innovative practices and operational adaptability. Usman & Rahman, (2022). Waqf operates with specific restrictions in nations where Muslims are not the majority population outside of Malaysia. Weak governance structures and low stakeholder engagement in Sri Lanka have prevented Waqf implementation (Thabith & Mohamad, 2021). Similar coordination problems in Indonesia and Singapore have stopped the establishment of Waqf authority (Listiana et al., 2024).

Scholars suggest addressing these challenges through SDG alignment of Waqf strategies, which would enhance its cross-cultural and institutional adaptability (Abdullah, 2018). The performance-based PBRF system of New Zealand represents an assessment-driven model that distributes funds through quantifiable academic performance. The system introduced at the beginning improved research output across all national universities (Hazledine & Kurniawan, 2005) and established a system to formally distribute resources while evaluating academic performance (Spicer et al., 2006). The rigid performance standards have created funding inequities that negatively affect smaller institutions and those in development stages (Hillman & Corral, 2017). The model drives institutions to concentrate on research results while diminishing their commitment to educational and societal responsibilities (Roberts, 2013). The academic library sector worldwide modifies its funding structures to support United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The German Excellence Initiative fosters sustainable funding models that not only enhance

institutional stability but also promote environmentally responsible practices within higher education institutions (Federal Ministry of Education and Research [BMBF], 2019). Libraries in the United States maintain financial stability through entrepreneurial approaches combined with open-access frameworks during economic turbulence (Taylor, 2021).

Libraries that work with different sectors, particularly in agriculture and healthcare, have increased their capabilities to achieve SDG-related targets (Mbagwu et al., 2020). Academic libraries face financial challenges that Waqf and PBRF provide different yet effective solutions to address. The ethical Waqf system provides social value but struggles with scalability and governance. Although PBRF encourages research productivity, smaller institutions suffer as a result. Using digital innovation and sustainability principles with the strengths of Waqf and PBRF funding models would create a funding system that helps achieve global development goals while being fair and strong. Table 1 illustrates the main differences between Waqf and PBRF funding models regarding their sustainability features together with governance characteristics and social impact.

**Table 1:** *Comparative Attributes of Waqf (Malaysia) and PBRF (New Zealand) as Components of Academic Library Financing*

Aspect	Waqf	PBRF
Definition	Islamic endowment supporting educational and social initiatives through sustainable funding (Nafar, 2019).	Government-funded mechanism allocating resources based on research performance (Roberts, 2013).
Funding source	Community donations and voluntary endowments provide supplementary funding, but the primary source remains government funding allocated based on performance and strategic goals (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2024; Budget 2024).	Government funding with allocation based on performance metrics (Buckle & Creedy, 2019)
Sustainability	Perpetual financial support, preserving principal while using returns (Arab & Zakariyah, 2023).	Periodic funding dependent on performance evaluations (Buckle & Creedy, 2019).
Governance	Finance is managed by SIRC's or dedicated Waqf institutions; and	Governed by national education agencies

	consequently, lead to regulatory issues (Usman & Rahman, 2022).	with standardized accountability metrics (Curtis, 2008).
Community engagement	High; fosters inclusivity and societal participation (Hasan et al., 2019).	Low to moderate; focuses primarily on institutional performance (Sarpong, 2023).
Alignment with SDGs	Strong alignment, supporting equitable education and reducing inequalities (Judijanto, Sari & Nugroho, 2024).	Indirect impact, primarily through improved academic quality (Jain & Behera, 2023).
Challenges	Governance challenges in higher education institutions often stem from tensions between philanthropic influence and institutional ideals, limited transparency, and the complexity of balancing multiple stakeholder interests, which can hinder scalability and effective decision-making (Chait, 2023; Convене, 2024).	Academic pressure and limited societal impact focus (Curtis, 2008).

**Source:** Author

Note: Table developed by the authors based on primary data and published sources cited in the manuscript.

**Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative multi-case study approach to evaluate Waqf funding in Malaysian academic libraries while conducting a comparative analysis with the PBRF model in New Zealand. The study method enables in-depth exploration of various institutional and cultural settings, which produces detailed knowledge and trustworthy comparative findings (Yin, 2018). This study adds to the field discussions about enduring funding models through its exploration of two separate funding systems (Creswell, 2014; Stake, 1995). The multiple-case study design enables researchers to discover both commonalities and distinctions between funding structures and their operational outcomes (Gustafsson, 2017). The research methods provided enhanced generalizability through cross-case analysis and institutional behavior interpretation compared to single-study study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The

chosen selection of two Malaysian universities and one in New Zealand shown in Table 2.

**Table 2:** *Justification for Case Study Selection*

Criteria	Malaysian Universities	New Zealand University
Institutional and Geographical Diversity	Reflects community-driven Waqf model rooted in Islamic principles.	Represents a secular, performance-driven PBRF model.
Representative Frameworks	Research University (RU) status, demonstrating leadership in research and innovation funded through Waqf	Nationally standardized PBRF framework ensures consistency across universities
Governance Structures and Funding Models	Showcases Waqf funding's potential for inclusivity and long-term sustainability.	Highlights the influence of PBRF metrics on research excellence.
Cultural and Financial Contrasts	Reflects culturally rooted Islamic Waqf principles.	Represents a secular, metric-driven funding system.
Ethical and Practical Considerations	Access granted to detailed funding data and governance frameworks, ensuring ethical and comprehensive data collection.	Full access provided to PBRF governance and funding allocation data for robust analysis.

Source: Author

**Note:** Table developed by the authors based on primary data and published sources cited in the manuscript.

Data collection involved semi-structured interviews with senior librarians and financial administrators directly involved in funding management. These interviews explored governance structures, strategic objectives, and operational challenges associated with each model. To ensure data validity and triangulation, interview findings were supported by the analysis of institutional documents, funding reports, and relevant policy materials. Demographic profiles of participants and institutional characteristics are summarized in Table 3.

A thematic matrix was developed to compare the roles of librarians between the two models based on interview transcripts. Role categories were identified through open

and axial coding of responses, and each role was marked as “present” (coded 1) if it was explicitly emphasized by at least two participants within a model. This binary representation allows for visual comparison of the roles under the Waqf and PBRF frameworks and supports cross-case thematic analysis without quantifying statistical significance.

**Table 3:** *Demographic and Organizational Profile of Participants*

Category	Malaysian Academic Library (CASE A)	Malaysian Academic Library B (CASE B)	New Academic (CASE C)	Zealand Library
Participants' Information				
Participants	Head of Finance Department	Head of Financial Generation Unit	Head of Academic Resource Management	
Experience	Over 15 years	Over 15 years	Over 15 years	
Years of Experience in Waqf/Funds Management	More than 5 years	More than 5 years	More than 5 years	
Key Responsibilities	Oversee Waqf fundraising, approve project proposals, manage fund allocation	Oversee Waqf fundraising, manage donor relations, approve expenditure	Manage budget allocations, oversee research funding, and strategic partnerships	
Institutional Information				
Status of Institution	Research University (RU)	Research University (RU)	Leading Research University	
Geographical Location	Central Malaysia	Central Malaysia	Central New Zealand	

Category	Malaysian Academic Library (CASE A)	Malaysian Academic Library B (CASE B)	New Academic (CASE C)	Zealand Library
Specialized Centre Organizing the Waqf/Funding	Centre for Management of Waqf, Zakat, and Endowment (WAZAN)	Endowment and Donation Committee	Research Funding and Partnership Office	
Institutional Hierarchy	Vice-Chancellor, Chief Librarian, Head of WAZAN	Vice-Chancellor, Chief Librarian, Endowment Committee Director	Vice-Chancellor, Research Director, Head of Resource Management	
Governance Structure	WAZAN Committee, Executive Board	Endowment and Donation Committee, Executive Board	University Board, Funding and Research Council	
Decision-Making Authority	WAZAN Director, Chief Librarian	Endowment Committee Director, Chief Librarian	Head of Academic Resource Management, Research Director	
Waqf/Financial Project Details				
Types of Projects Funded	Infrastructure upgrades, digital resources, research funding	Supporting ongoing projects (public facilities, infrastructure upgrades, library resources)	Library resource enhancement, digital platforms	
Number of Projects Funded within 5 Years	5-10 projects	5-10 projects	3-5 projects	



Category	Malaysian Academic Library (CASE A)	Malaysian Academic Library B (CASE B)	New Academic (CASE C)	Zealand Library
Approximate Cost of Completed Projects within 5 Years (RM/NZD)	RM 1,500,000 - RM 2,000,000	RM 1,000,000 - RM 2,000,000	NZD 800,000 - NZD 1,200,000	
Utilization of Apps/Web/Online for Contributions	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Institutional Policies Governing Waqf/Funding	Waqf, Zakat, and Endowment Policy, Library	Endowment Funds Policy, Library	PBRF Policy, Strategic Funding Guidelines	
Key Funding Sources	Alumni Donations, External Contributions, University Allocations, Staff Donations	Alumni Contributions, Staff Donations, Corporate Donations	Government funding, private partnerships, research grants	

Source: Author

### Findings and Discussion: Comparative Analysis Strategic Impact of Librarians' Roles and Engagement

This study reveals how library funding models significantly influence the strategic roles and social positioning of librarians. In Malaysia (Cases A and B), where Waqf-based funding is practiced, librarians are not only information custodians but also community stewards. Their responsibilities include informal management of endowment resources, often guided by the Islamic principle of amal jariah (continuous charity). A participating librarian explained that their work includes both professional obligations and community service responsibilities because they maintain dual responsibilities that academic librarians typically face. The dual nature of Waqf contributions in institutions dedicated to Islamic studies stems from their role as religious donations and financial investments for preserving intellectual heritage.

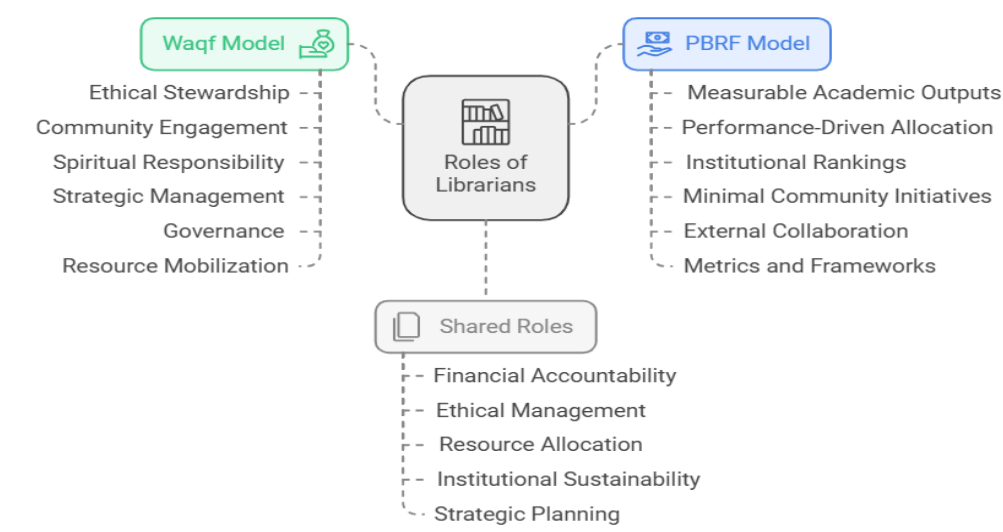
Sarjidan and Kasim (2023) identify spiritual dedication as a crucial element for maintaining Waqf-based funding models. The philosophical approach in Case B resulted in creating a dedicated Waqf and Financial Generation Unit which combined librarians with financial administrators after public funding declined. A participant stated that Waqf resources amount to more than financial donations because they represent a community trust which librarians must answer to Allah. The new role of librarians involves financial strategy development and ethical stewardship as well as institutional intermediary functions.

The PBRF framework governs Case C in New Zealand where the institutional focus differs from other settings. The main focus of this institution centers on measurable research outcomes and performance indicators. A librarian at the institution pointed out that academic productivity fails to capture the complete worth of the library since its true value stems from community engagement. The PBRF model enhances academic excellence but fails to recognize the civic roles that libraries have traditionally served according to Osareh et al. (2023).

While PBRF may boost efficiency and competitiveness, institutions with limited resources often struggle to meet its rigid performance thresholds (Marshall, 2018; Wekullo & Musoba, 2020). Collaboration with Australian institutions in Case C facilitates benchmarking and shared resources, yet remains narrowly focused. “We share frameworks quite frequently to enhance research excellence,” said another librarian. Although beneficial in terms of performance alignment, these partnerships seldom extend to public or community engagement.

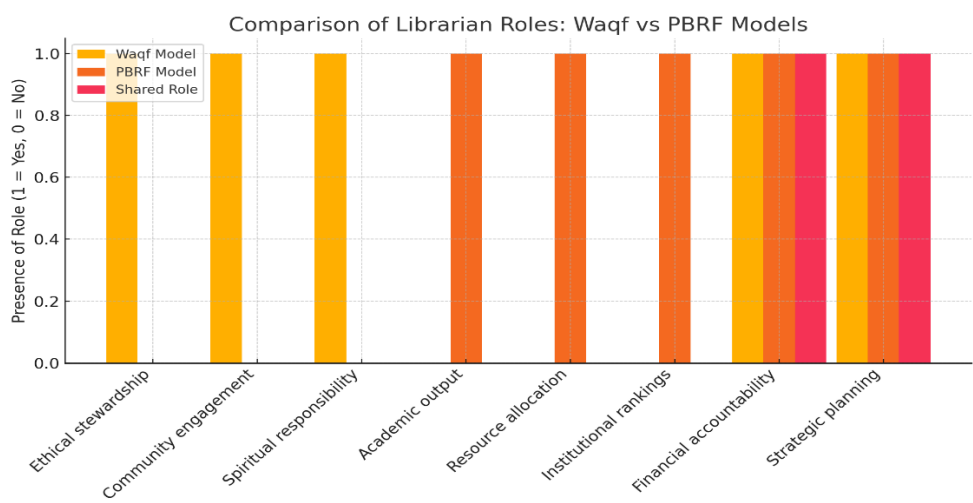
The Waqf model shows its ethical community-focused approach to librarianship through Figure 1 and Figure 2 illustrates this approach further. The PBRF model focuses on research-based responsibilities which institutions evaluate through performance metrics and external rankings. The two models share financial accountability and strategic planning elements yet function within separate cultural and governance systems. A hybrid funding framework could emerge from combining Waqf's community-oriented approach with PBRF's structured output-based mechanisms to produce an adaptable and resilient academic library funding system.

**Figure 1:** *Thematic Roles of Academic Librarians in Waqf and PBRF Funding Frameworks*



Source: Author

**Figure 2:** *Binary Comparison of Librarian Role Presence in Waqf and PBRF Models*



Source: Author

### **Innovative Fundraising and Resource Expansion**

In Malaysian academic libraries (Cases A and B), the Waqf funding model has enabled institutions to pursue both academic excellence and social commitment. In Case B, the creation of Tabung Wakaf Perpustakaan demonstrates how alumni, community members, and corporate sponsors have been successfully mobilized to support library development. A librarian shared, “Through Waqf, we are not only raising funds but also creating a permanent endowment that will link our community to the library of the future.” This reflects a long-term, values-driven vision of sustainability. In Case A, modern tools like Sistem Give2UKM provide real-time donation updates every seven days, reinforcing transparency. As explained by one participant, “The accountability features of Give2UKM increase the confidence of donors to give more and ensure that the funds are used properly.”

Traditional Waqf principles combined with digital tools demonstrate how technology improves trust-based governance systems. Waqf funding has directly supported various impactful projects in these cases. For instance: The Chancellor’s Pavilion Project (RM 163,050) and Upgrade of Discussion Rooms (RM 540,000) invested in learning infrastructure improvements for students and staff at the institution. The Knowledge Resource Acquisition Fund (RM 300,000) of Case A enhanced both digital and physical collections to address immediate academic requirements. The librarians in Case B handle both financial planning and expenditure monitoring duties. The librarian emphasized that entrepreneurial abilities play a vital role in managing financial resources and maintaining service operations. The findings confirm Sa’ari’s (2018) study which established entrepreneurial competencies as vital skills for RUs’ librarians in Malaysia. Library innovation through budget-constrained entrepreneurial competencies strengthens their academic and societal functions.

Waqf-based funding serves as an essential funding source for strategic projects and community-driven initiatives yet it does not function as the main financial source for core library resources in RUs. The main funding source for these institutions comes from government or central university budgets but Waqf funds serve to pay for particular expenses or fill gaps when standard funding is inadequate.

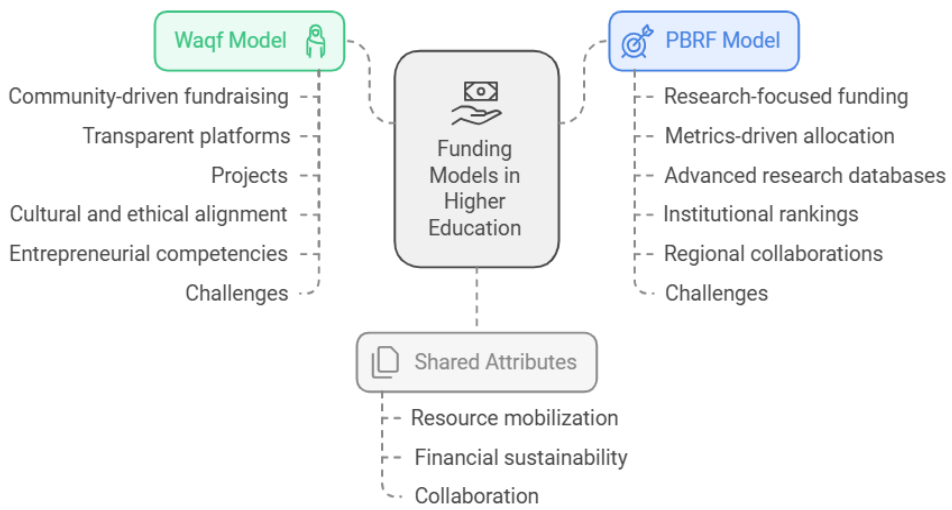
The PBRF model governs Case C in New Zealand through a research-focused funding approach. According to the librarian the library demonstrates its worth by generating academic results rather than by focusing on community outreach activities. This highlights the institutional focus on performance metrics.

While PBRF has enabled investment in advanced databases and improved institutional rankings, its community connection remains limited (Marshall, 2018; Osareh et al., 2023). For less-resourced universities, this model may also raise

concerns about stability, especially when funding is strictly tied to output measures (Wekullo & Musoba, 2020). Nonetheless, Case C benefits from strong regional collaboration, particularly with Australian universities. “Australia is our immediate neighbors, and we share many research collaborations,” shared a participant. These partnerships support the academic goals of the PBRF model but do not necessarily extend to broader community roles.

Figure 3 summarizes the comparative features of the Waqf and PBRF models. Waqf is characterized by community fundraising, ethical alignment, transparency, and local impact. Meanwhile, PBRF is driven by academic productivity, ranking systems, and regional partnerships. Both models demonstrate strengths in planning and partnership, though each faces different limitations in scalability and inclusivity.

**Figure 3:** *Comparative Attributes of Waqf and PBRF Funding Models in Higher Education, Including Shared Features and System-Specific Challenges*



Source: Author

Note: Shared attributes refer to elements common across both models, while distinct characteristics reflect context-specific funding strategies and operational focus.

Modern academic demands increasingly depend on technological innovation as a key driver for accessibility, equity, and sustainability. In Case A, the introduction of the SIR Corner, funded by Yayasan Bank Rakyat, exemplifies how Waqf-based funding is being used to close the digital divide. The facility provides access to more than

100,000 digital materials that builds an inclusive learning environment which helps both students and faculty members. "The SIR Corner exhibits our institution's commitment to linking students with digital resources which aligns with the principles of Society 5.0 for inclusive education", as explained one of the respondents. The current initiatives demonstrate the wider role of libraries in enabling digital access to knowledge during a rapid transition to digital systems (Ihsan & Ibrahim, 2011; Raju, 2019).

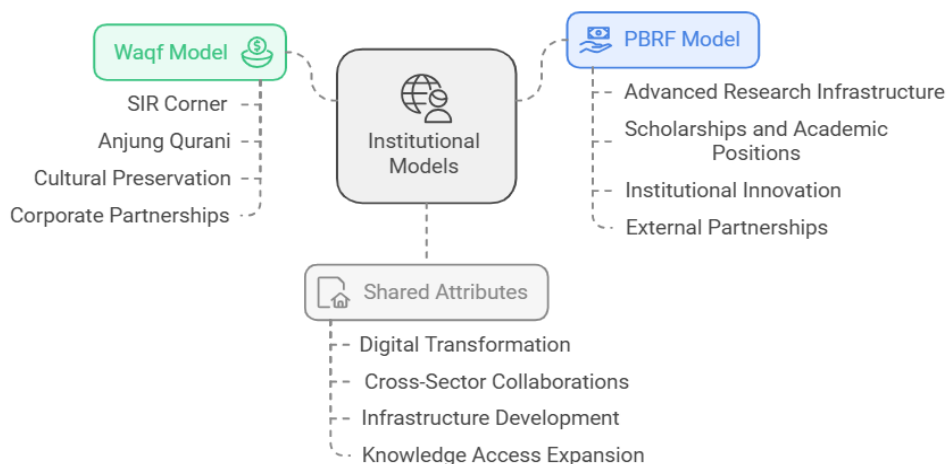
An establishment of Anjung Qurani in Case B demonstrates the combination of conventional Islamic education and contemporary ICT tools. This initiative combines Quranic research activities with digital literacy instruction which helps students interact with traditional heritage content alongside modern innovations. According to one of the librarians, Anjung Qurani embodies the ideal convergence between cultural heritage preservation and modern educational practices. The approaches described in these strategies match previous studies which demonstrate how technology improves student access to culturally relevant academic materials (Khalil et al., 2014).

The successful expansion of library funding reaches depends heavily on strategic partnerships according to both cases. Yayasan Bank Rakyat formed a partnership to create digital infrastructure for the SIR Corner in Case A. Corporate donors supported the creation of Anjung Qurani as an innovative learning center through their financial contributions in Case B. The establishment of cross-sector partnerships enables higher funding impact which strengthens the institution's ability to deliver mission-relevant future-ready education.

The Case C scenario in New Zealand adopts a research-focused approach through implementation of the PBRF model. The Ngā Kaitiaki Takoha Foundation has become vital for supporting research positions and scholarships as well as facility development through its management of more than \$107 million in philanthropic donations. A Case C library official stated that "Strategic partnerships allow the institution to achieve its goals by developing initiatives which address social needs." The research conducted by Pérez Pulido and Gómez Pérez (2013) supports this finding by demonstrating that intersectoral alliances boost funding effectiveness.

The PBRF model together with the Waqf model apply technological advancements to strategic partnerships for achieving institutional objectives as illustrated in Figure 4. The Waqf model enables culturally grounded innovation through the SIR Corner and Anjung Qurani while maintaining close relationships with community members and corporate sponsors. The PBRF model uses systematic philanthropic partnerships to boost academic competitiveness. Shared features include infrastructure investment, digital transformation, and improved access to academic resources.

**Figure 4:** *Institutional Applications of Waqf and PBRF Models with Emphasis on Innovation, Partnerships, and Cultural Preservation*



Source: Author

### The First Waqf Initiative: Islamic Book Collection and Donation Transparency

The Waqf-funded initiative CASE A included an improvement to the Islamic book collection of the library which filled a significant academic resource deficiency while protecting cultural heritage. Waqf demonstrates its mission through an initiative backed by community donations which connects institutional goals to cultural and religious values. The project's objective was to enhance library collections while preserving and advancing Islamic knowledge in modern academic settings according to the respondent. The library protects Islamic intellectual traditions by prioritizing academic advancement together with cultural preservation as demonstrated by the Waqf project (Jamaludin et al., 2023; Khalil et al., 2014).

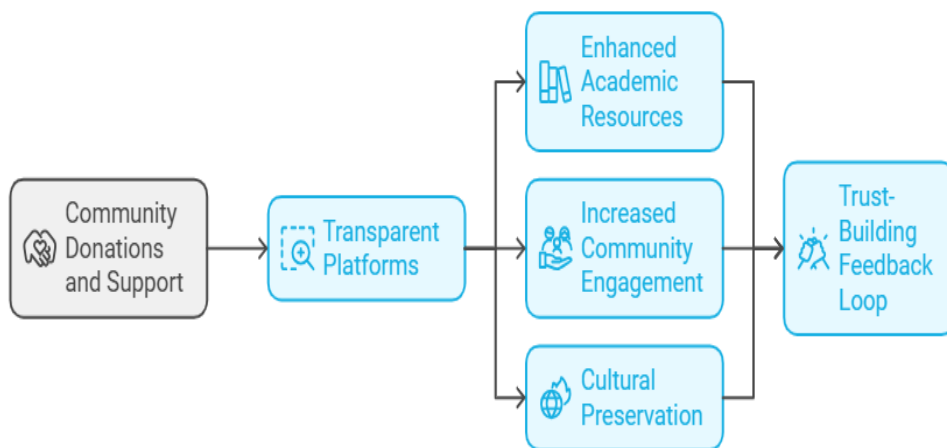
Give2UKM system served as the project's core platform which showcased novel Waqf management approaches. The platform allowed donors to view their donation status in real time while the system updated every seven days. The Islamic principle of manah (trust) was used to establish complete transparency which built strong donor trust. Give2UKM transparency according to the librarian builds donor trust in the system which leads to improved ethical fund management and sustained donor support. Waqf fundraising merged with digital tools developed an Islamic funding system that met traditional standards while fulfilling modern accountability needs (Ihsan & Ibrahim, 2011; Sa'ari, 2018). The implementation of this initiative created multiple effects which included (i) the increased Islamic book collection in the library

filled essential knowledge gaps that advanced academic development while protecting cultural heritage; (ii) an initiative developed better community ties between the library and its patrons which established the institution as an educational and cultural center; (iii) Give2UKM system secured lasting funding through its digital transparency feature that sustained donor backing for upcoming Waqf projects.

The librarian explained that the integration of Islamic principles with digital innovation created a perpetual funding system which respected traditional values and contemporary accountability standards. This initiative demonstrates Waqf institutions' ability to operate both as academic and cultural program providers while supporting United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) and transforming the library into a contemporary community center (UNESCO, 2022).

Waqf funding transforms institutions through the process depicted in Figure 5 which starts with donor contributions and follows with transparent management systems. The academic resources become better while community involvement grows and cultural preservation advances through a feedback loop that strengthens trust for ongoing contributions.

**Figure 5:** *Impact Pathway of Waqf-Based Initiatives on Academic Libraries and Community Trust*



Source: Author

Note: Transparent digital platforms mediate the transformation of community contributions into tangible outcomes, reinforcing public trust through a cyclical feedback process.



## **Metrics on Fund Allocation and Utilization**

The method of usage and management of funds in academic libraries through the Waqf or PBRF models is different from one model to the other and is provided for by certain performance metrics.

### **Waqf Model Metrics**

The model that has been adopted for ethical stewardship, community accountability and Islamic values. The fund allocation has in the past been made on the basis of social and economic effectiveness while at the same time being consistent with the spiritual goals. DEA is one of the tools that is used to assess efficiency in this regard, which measures the relationship between inputs (for instance, funds, infrastructure) and outputs (for example, community benefit, academic access) (Hasan et al., 2020).

Besides the financial returns, the performance indicators of Waqf include Maqasid Waqf metrics such as the number of beneficiaries, long-term sustainability, and the impact on society (Arshad et al., 2018). For an example, in West Java, studies have proposed that endowments should be channeled towards economic empowerment in order to increase both the sustainability and the impact (Supriatna et al., 2024).

### **PBRF Model Metrics**

On the other hand, the PBRF model in New Zealand is more measurable and result oriented as the funding is based on academic performance. Some of the important metrics include research quality, publication output, and institutional rankings. Multifactor performance models are used by Yin et al. (2024) to assess how well institutions are able to manage the resources that are granted to them.

The usage of funds under the PBRF model is the same as that of other financial instruments such as mutual funds. Some studies for instance Galagedera et al. (2020) have come up with positive results in some institutions in terms of efficient allocation and good academic returns. However, others have argued that these metrics are quite narrow and may not be fit for interdisciplinary or community-based projects (Jones & Sipe, 2017).

### **Comparative Insights**

This study reveals three core distinctions between the Waqf and PBRF models in how they manage and evaluate institutional performance. These differences reflect deeper philosophical, structural, and cultural divergences that influence funding logic, institutional behavior, and long-term sustainability.

## **Community Involvement and Social Orientation**

The Waqf model places strong emphasis on community well-being, societal benefit, and collective spiritual responsibility. Its performance indicators align with social goals such as inclusivity, educational equity, and ethical engagement. Metrics often include the number of beneficiaries, community partnerships, and alignment with social impact values (Ali et al., 2021; Usman & Rahman, 2022). In contrast, the PBRF system prioritizes quantifiable academic productivity, particularly in the form of research outputs, citation metrics, and institutional rankings (Jones & Sipe, 2017; Roberts, 2013). While this supports competitiveness and academic visibility, it often sidelines libraries' civic missions and limits broader public accessibility.

## **Evaluation Tools and Value Framing**

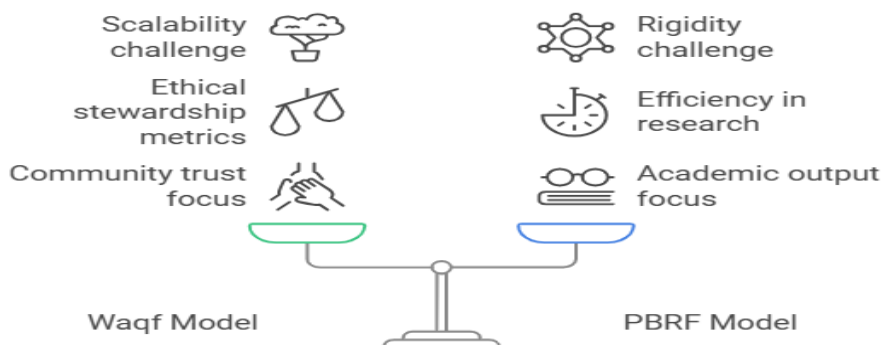
Waqf institutions increasingly adopt tools such as Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA) to measure the efficiency of social value creation, particularly in assessing how funds are translated into community-driven outcomes (Hasan et al., 2020). These tools consider broader dimensions such as trust, transparency, and ethical stewardship. Conversely, the PBRF model employs multifactor performance measures rooted in output-based assessments, emphasizing cost-effectiveness and research excellence at a national scale (Jones & Sipe, 2017). While effective for accountability, this framing may neglect multidimensional academic values such as equity, cultural relevance, or local impact.

## **Flexibility versus Standardization in Performance Logic**

Waqf-based performance metrics are more adaptable and context-specific, allowing academic institutions to tailor indicators to local values, donor objectives, or project intentions (Usman & Rahman, 2022). This flexibility is particularly valuable in multicultural or under-resourced settings where centralized benchmarks may be misaligned with institutional realities. However, the lack of uniform standards can hinder comparability or strategic coordination at national levels. In contrast, the PBRF model provides a highly standardized framework across institutions, ensuring consistency in funding allocation and performance monitoring (Roberts, 2013). While this promotes transparency and benchmarking, it may disadvantage smaller or less conventional institutions that contribute in diverse or interdisciplinary ways (Gustafsson, 2017).

These differences are visualized in Figure 6, which illustrates the contrasting logic of value creation between the two funding models. Waqf reflects a social capital logic, emphasizing inclusivity and community engagement, while PBRF embodies a performance capital logic, centered on research metrics and institutional competitiveness. Understanding these differences is critical for informing the development of hybrid models that can balance excellence with equity in academic library funding.

**Figure 6:** *Contrasting Allocation Logics and Outcome Priorities in Waqf and PBRF Funding Models*



Source: Author

Note: This conceptual comparison illustrates how Waqf prioritizes community trust and ethical stewardship, while PBRF emphasizes institutional efficiency and research productivity. Both models encounter distinct structural limitations.

### Community Engagement: Waqf vs. PBRF

Waqf operates through a model which establishes community participation as its fundamental principle. The model promotes inclusive practices together with ethical fundraising while building better relationships between academic institutions and their communities. Waqf initiatives demonstrate the model's cultural and social acceptability by funding infrastructure projects which serve academic institutions and the wider public. Waqf initiatives demonstrate the integration of academic development with social needs which produces mutual advantages and sustained trust according to Ali et al. (2021).

The PBRF model in New Zealand operates primarily through research initiatives without placing significant emphasis on community engagement. Practice Based Research Networks (PBRNs) serve as an exception because they promote academic institution-local clinic partnerships for research participant recruitment (Spears et al., 2014). According to Cargill et al. (2024) the PBRF framework lacks essential structures to develop meaningful university-community partnerships. Both models serve institutional goals but implement different methods of engagement. Waqf centers its funding mission on community requirements and works to establish ethical and inclusive involvement. The research-focused PBRF system restricts community-

based initiatives through its specific evaluation criteria even though it aligns better with institutional research priorities (Joosten et al., 2015).

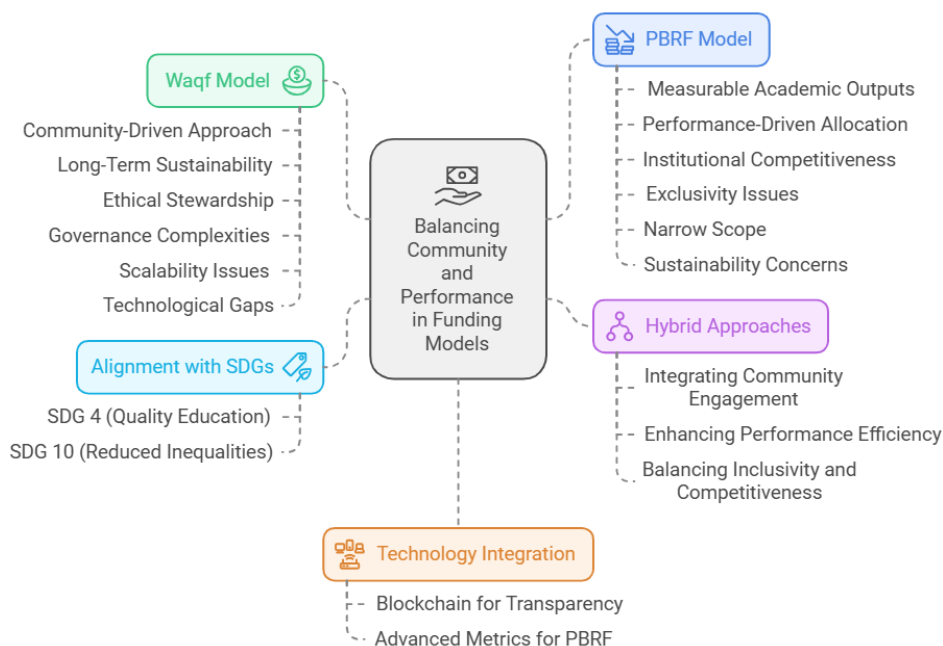
### **Hybrid Funding Models: Balancing Community Engagement and Performance Accountability in Academic Libraries**

Figure 7 presents a conceptual framework that integrates the complementary strengths of Waqf and PBRF funding models. It illustrates how a hybrid approach—blending ethical, community-based values with performance-driven mechanisms—can enhance financial sustainability, inclusivity, and academic excellence in library systems. This framework aligns with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and highlights the role of digital technologies such as blockchain in improving transparency and operational efficiency.

Hybrid models offer a practical pathway to overcome the limitations of standalone systems by balancing community engagement with measurable performance. By integrating the ethical stewardship and cultural relevance of Waqf with the structured accountability of PBRF, institutions can develop resilient funding mechanisms that support both institutional competitiveness and social responsibility.

Community engagement remains central to the Waqf model, which emphasizes inclusivity, trust-based fundraising, and strong ties between academic institutions and their surrounding communities. This culturally embedded approach is evident in initiatives like cash waqf linked to infrastructure development, demonstrating how Waqf funding simultaneously addresses educational and societal needs. Such projects foster mutual benefits and long-term trust among stakeholders (Ali et al., 2021).

**Figure 7:** *Conceptual Framework for Balancing Community-Centric and Performance-Oriented Funding Approaches in Academic Libraries*



Source: Author

Note: The model illustrates the complementary integration of Waqf and PBRF mechanisms through hybrid and technological strategies, with alignment to selected Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4 and SDG 10).

## Challenges

The Waqf and PBRF funding models have their own strengths and weaknesses in terms of sustainability, adaptability, and fit with the broader academic and societal challenges. The subsequent subsections highlight certain problems that are relevant to each model, followed by the general shortcomings identified in both models.

### Challenges in Waqf

Waqf-funded academic libraries, particularly in Malaysia, have their limitations rooted in the traditional approach to fundraising and the rather strict governance mechanisms. Even though the Waqf model is based on ethical considerations and community involvement, it takes time to adapt to the institution's new requirements. Central committees or religious councils that govern Waqf funds usually do not provide the flexibility required for the ever-changing nature of academic institutions (Cizakca, 2000).

Another barrier lies in technological capacity. This is because there is low investment in digital tools such as AI-driven donor engagement or automated fund tracking, which could have otherwise enhanced the impact of Waqf initiatives. As pointed out by a CASE A librarian, the Sistem Give2UKM platform has increased transparency, but there is a need for more sophisticated tools to enhance efficiency and donor involvement. This conclusion is consistent with the views of Hussain et al. (2023), who opine that digital transformation is crucial in the reduction of educational inequalities in developing countries.

### **Challenges in PBRF**

The PBRF model in New Zealand focuses on research excellence, but the model has been regarded as creating a competitive funding environment. This model is closely aligned with KPIs that, in turn, tend to disadvantage interdisciplinary or community-oriented projects (Jones & Sipe, 2017). The model is in line with the mission of the CASE C library, but it does not provide much freedom for activities that are not related to research.

Financial inclusivity is also a concern. Some of the challenges include small or newly established institutions that may not be able to meet the high standards that are required to be eligible for funding; therefore, the funds may not be distributed equitably. Additionally, PBRF's competitive ethos may be at odds with the broader social responsibility goals of higher institutions (Buckle & Creedy, 2019).

### **Shared Limitation Across Waqf and PBRF**

Both Waqf and PBRF libraries have their own specific challenges, and they are governance rigidity and underdeveloped entrepreneurial strategies. In CASE A and B, there is little diversification away from Waqf which restricts the possibility of other sources of income. In the same way, CASE C does not have any formal ways of incorporating community voices into its research-oriented culture.

The solution to these common problems demands flexible governance structures together with strategic capacity development and new funding approaches. The acceptance of technological innovation combined with entrepreneurial competencies development for librarians and blended financing approaches enables academic libraries to achieve research productivity while remaining responsive to their community needs.

The two models find equilibrium between academic success and social engagement and financial sustainability. Waqf demonstrates powerful ethical community-based funding practices yet shows weaknesses in scalability and digital integration. The PBRF system promotes high research standards yet disregards inclusiveness and social responsibility. The research demonstrates that hybrid funding frameworks should integrate beneficial elements from both models while overcoming their

respective weaknesses. Table 4 presents the main challenges and opportunities found in the Waqf and PBRF models.

**Table 4:** *Key Insights, Challenges, and Strategic Lessons from Waqf and PBRF Funding Models in Academic Library Management*

Theme	Description	Waqf (CASE A & CASE B)	PBRF (CASE C)	Lessons Learned
Community-Centric Fundraising	Emphasis on engaging stakeholders and fostering long-term funding support.	Initiatives like Tabung Wakaf Perpustakaan engage alumni, corporate sponsors, and community donors, reinforcing cultural ties.	Focuses on institutional funding tied to performance metrics, with limited mechanisms for direct local community engagement.	Leveraging community involvement fosters inclusivity and ensures long-term financial sustainability; performance-focused models need to expand their scope to include community-centric elements.
Strategic Use of Entrepreneurial Competencies	Leveraging strategic and adaptive skills to enhance funding sustainability.	Demonstrated through initiatives like Anjung Ilmu and establishment of specialized units like financial management teams.	Entrepreneurial planning focuses on allocating PBRF funds effectively for research but lacks application beyond academic productivity-focused goals.	Entrepreneurial skills, such as resource mobilization and strategic financial management, are critical to sustaining academic libraries in dynamic

Theme	Description	Waqf (CASE A & CASE B)	PBRF (CASE C)	Lessons Learned
Ethical Stewardship and Spiritual Transparency	Commitment to transparency and ethical fund management aligned with trust-based principles.	Waqf fund management is rooted in Islamic principles, seen as both a spiritual and professional duty, ensuring accountability to donors.	Performance-based accountability focuses on research metrics but lacks integration of trust-based principles.	funding environments.  Transparent and trust-based fund management builds credibility and fosters deeper donor relationships, a principle that can enhance the inclusivity of research-driven funding models.
	Resource Expansion and Innovation	Ability to expand resources and innovate to meet current and future demands.	Waqf funds support diverse projects, including infrastructure upgrades (Chancellor’s Pavilion) and digital platforms (Anjung Qurani).	PBRF prioritizes specialized academic resources, focusing on research productivity but limiting broader accessibility and interdisciplinary.
Building Credibility Through	Establishing trust by aligning	Transparent management and visible	Institutional credibility relies on academic	Building community trust through



Theme	Description	Waqf (CASE A & CASE B)	PBRF (CASE C)	Lessons Learned
Community Trust	funding practices with community and institutional values.	impact of Waqf projects foster stakeholder trust, strengthening donor relationships .	reputation but has limited stakeholder relationships or direct donor engagement.	transparent funding practices can enhance institutional credibility and attract diverse stakeholders in both funding models.
Dual Role of Service and Community Engagement	Balancing academic excellence with social and educational contributions.	Waqf promotes inclusive educational initiatives and community-driven values, bridging academic and societal goals.	Primarily focuses on enhancing research excellence, often at the expense of broader inclusivity and societal impact.	Balancing research excellence with societal engagement broadens the relevance of funding models, fostering a more holistic approach to academic and community development.

Source: Author

Note: Table developed by the authors based on primary data and published sources cited in the manuscript.

Conclusion

This paper presents a comparative analysis between Waqf and PBRF funding systems in academic libraries. Waqf, which is grounded in ethical governance and community values, provides meaningful support for inclusive educational development through culturally relevant and trust-based mechanisms. It promotes community participation, enhances donor relationships, and enables targeted improvements in infrastructure

and digital access. However, it is important to reaffirm that Waqf, in the context of this study, operates as a complementary financial mechanism rather than a primary institutional source of funding. It is typically applied to selected initiatives, particularly in areas underserved by core government or university allocations. This distinction is critical when evaluating its scalability and role in strategic institutional development. The PBRF model in New Zealand applies structured performance-based allocations that have enhanced academic output and strengthened institutional rankings. Its strength lies in its ability to reward measurable research productivity and create competitive incentives across higher education institutions. Nonetheless, its limited emphasis on community engagement and social inclusivity has raised concerns about equity and broader educational responsibility. Both models are shaped by different cultural and policy environments, and each display specific structural limitations in governance flexibility and stakeholder inclusiveness. The findings of this study support the development of a hybrid model that combines the community trust and ethical stewardship found in Waqf with the strategic performance accountability associated with PBRF. This integrated approach can help academic libraries achieve both institutional excellence and equitable community service. The hybrid model aligns with the principles of Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4 on Quality Education and SDG 10 on Reduced Inequalities. By merging ethical values with performance-based planning, institutions can design more adaptable and resilient funding frameworks. The ethical principles embedded in Waqf such as transparency, stewardship, and trust; offer useful benchmarks for building inclusive and sustainable academic finance systems. Incorporating these principles into modern, metric-based models provides a more balanced and impactful path forward for academic libraries worldwide.

## **Future Research Directions**

The academic libraries involved in this study declined to share detailed financial information, making it difficult to evaluate the actual potential and long-term prospects these funding systems. The following directions are proposed for future research:

### **Enhancing Transparency in Financial Reporting**

Waqf and PBRF funding operations require library-specific financial reporting standards which will enable detailed documentation of fund allocations and usage. The combination of policymakers' collaboration with institutional leaders alongside researchers will develop protective data guidelines which maintain academic value while preserving sensitive information.

### **Analyzing Long-Term Sustainability Metrics**

Upcoming research projects need to use longitudinal approaches to evaluate the economic and social effects of both funding systems across multiple time periods. The research needs to develop financial models which examine hybrid funding structures that merge community-based with performance-based funding systems.

### **Investigating Cross-Cultural Adaptability**

Future study should discover how Waqf-based systems function in secular or non-Muslim-majority societies as well as how performance management principles from the PBRF model could be implemented within Islamic funding structures. Research must focus on evaluating how different cultural institutional and governance factors influence model efficiency when comparing regional performance.

### **Integrating Advanced Analytical and Digital Tools**

Both systems can benefit greatly from advanced technologies including blockchain and machine learning together with predictive analytics which enhance transparency and performance tracking. The research needs to evaluate how crowdfunding combined with donor engagement platforms affects operational efficiency.

### **Focusing on Stakeholder Perspectives**

The two funding frameworks need quantitative studies to determine how donors and librarians along with fund managers and beneficiaries perceive transparency and trust as well as accountability. The comparison between Waqf donor motivations and motivations presents an opportunity for research.

### **Evaluating Alignment with SDGs**

The research provides an opportunity to evaluate which specific SDGs receive support from each model including SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). Research studies can identify best practices from around the world to enhance SDG alignment in these two models.

### **Piloting Hybrid Funding Models**

Future research should perform academic library pilot studies to analyze how Waqf-PBRF integrated funding systems affect sustainability and academic productivity alongside social engagement. Multiple implementation settings need to evaluate these experiments to create effective and scalable strategies.

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