



The Transformation of the Role of Mosques as Social Economic Institutions: an Empirical Study at the Al Akbar National Mosque in Surabaya

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Mosques in the modern era not only serve as places of worship but also have great potential as centres for social and economic empowerment of the community. The majority of Indonesian mosques have not yet fully utilized this strategic role. The purpose of this study is to examine how the National Al Akbar Mosque in Surabaya integrates social, economic, and religious empowerment to create a mosque-based business model. Field observations, in-depth interviews with mosque administrators, business owners, and attendees, as well as written documentation, were used to gather data for this qualitative case study. Through three primary strategies—the relocation and organization of street vendors (PKL), the creation of a Mosque-Owned Business Entity (BUMM), and the execution of community economic empowerment initiatives based on Islamic spirituality—the National Mosque Al Akbar Surabaya has effectively developed an innovative mosque-based economic model, according to the research findings. By creating jobs, providing access to sharia-compliant financing, and allocating productive zakat, this strategy has had a real impact on enhancing the welfare of worshippers and the local community. The study's conclusions suggest that, with proper management and adherence to Islamic principles, mosques can serve as hubs for socioeconomic change. In order to guarantee the sustainability of mosque-based economic models in Indonesia, this study suggests bolstering mosque economic institutions, digitizing banking systems, and encouraging cross-sectoral synergies.

Keyword: Mosque Economy, Mosque, Economic Empowerment of The community, BUMM, Al Akbar Mosque Surabaya.

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A. INTRODUCTION

The mosque has millions of benefits as a place of worship for Muslims. Not only does it function vertically as worship to God (*hablum minallah*), but also horizontally, serving social and community goals (*hablum minannaas*) (Rusanti et al., 2021). Beside its strategic position as a center for human development, the mosque also plays a role in protecting, empowering, and uniting the community to provide quality, modern, and tolerant empowerment. Therefore, mosques function as centers for social, cultural, educational, and economic activities, in addition to being places of worship for people in general (Maknun, 2018).

Ultimately, the mosque is understood not only as a place where human bonds with God are strengthened (worship), i.e., *hablum minallah*, but also as a place where humans can realize very close relationships with each other as long as those relationships are realized within the framework of obedience to Allah SWT (Asif et al., 2021). This is evident from the role of the mosque during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon

him), which was to foster national unity in addition to being a place for congregational prayer. This is the foundation upon which the empowerment of the community is based. When it came time to debate the welfare of the people thru the mosque, there was no such thing as a taboo as long as it was beneficial, and the mosque developed into a center of activity during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (Ramadhanti & Abbas, 2020).

Throughout the era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, mosques served the community for various purposes. Even the issues facing the country and the nation at that time were discussed in the mosque, therefore, every problem faced by the community must be brought back there. In addition, mosques are also used as meeting places for officials and ambassadors. Including military training centers and war victim care in mosques. Although buying and selling in places of worship is prohibited, the study and discussion of muamalah fiqh and economic strategy planning continue in mosques (Santika et al., 2019). Islamic history shows the centrality of the mosque in the lives of Muslims. The Prophet's Mosque in Medina during the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is one example. Mosques play an important role in community life and serve as a means of spreading and teaching the Islamic religion, including the mosques found in Indonesia. Mosques have evolved into public educational facilities in addition to being places of worship for Muslims. Muslims receive extensive education and supervision thru mosques, enabling the production of outstanding scholars (Yusuf, 2021).

However, while mosques are places of worship for Muslims, they are often tarnished by various "begging" phenomena that are carried out in the name of mosque activities. After the mosque was built, many more mosques were constructed, even more magnificent than the houses attached to its left and right sides. As a result, the congregation that usually fills the mosque experienced difficulties when the mosque, although quite magnificent, was not as lively as the mosque's activity organizers. Considering that mosques are religious institutions with an important social role in society, the management of these facilities is something that needs careful attention. Worshipers might be drawn to a professionally managed mosque without compromising the core principles of a mosque. Lower and middle-class members of the community will feel pressured when they learn that the mosque's management will be holding an event and they are constantly asked for donations at each of these events.

This naturally affects how often the mosque holds activities, and some community members might feel more comfortable when there are no activities at the mosque, which means the mosque's role doesn't have a beneficial impact on the community. This condition will be different from mosques that have implemented economic empowerment. The community can worship peacefully and carry out religious activities according to Islamic norms because a mosque that effectively manages its finances will truly make the mosque's activities active without burdening the community.

The above relates to the socio-economic empowerment of the community. The socio-economic activities of the community encompass all the ways people and organizations meet their needs. Similarly, mosques are good places to encourage social activities in the community, such as helping each other. To achieve socio-economic empowerment of the community, efforts need to be made to improve human resource (HR) capabilities and help people understand their place and function in social and community

life (Wasi et al., 2020). Thru economic empowerment of the surrounding community, business-oriented activities carried out by the mosque management can have a positive impact on community welfare and enable congregants or the community to achieve economic independence.

The mosque needs to have its functions and roles revived so that it can become a place that is more than just a place of pure worship. Programs like training need to be held so that society can become more prosperous and become entrepreneurs, who have the potential to become the next zakat payers and can easily realize the economic well-being of the community by obtaining capital for their businesses (Moh Arifin & Sahoria, 2024).

The number of studies on the theme of mosque economics is still considered important to research for the development of Islamic socio-economic civilization. The following table shows the number of publications on mosque economics from 1982-2021 (Aisyah & As-Salafiyah, 2021).

Table 1. Number of International Publications

No	Tahun	Jumlah Publikasi
1	2021	32
2	2020	27
3	2019	27
4	2018	23
5	2017	11
6	2016	12
7	2015	7
8	2014	2
9	2013	4
10	2012	2
11	2011	3
12	2010	2
13	2009	7
14	2008	1
15	2007	2
16	2006	1
17	2005	2
18	2004	2
19	2001	2
20	1997	1
21	1995	1
22	1994	2
23	1993	1
24	1990	1
25	1988	1
26	1986	1
27	1984	1
28	1982	1
Total		179

The meta-analysis showed that there weren't many publications on mosque economics in the 1980s, with an average of one article per year. Between 2009 and 2016, the number of publications grew to 7, then fell until 2015, when it shot back up to 7 and

kept rising until it reached 32 publications in 2021. In other words, this means that the number of articles and conversations about the financial position of mosques has gone more every year, but not by a lot (Aisyah & As-Salafiyah, 2021).

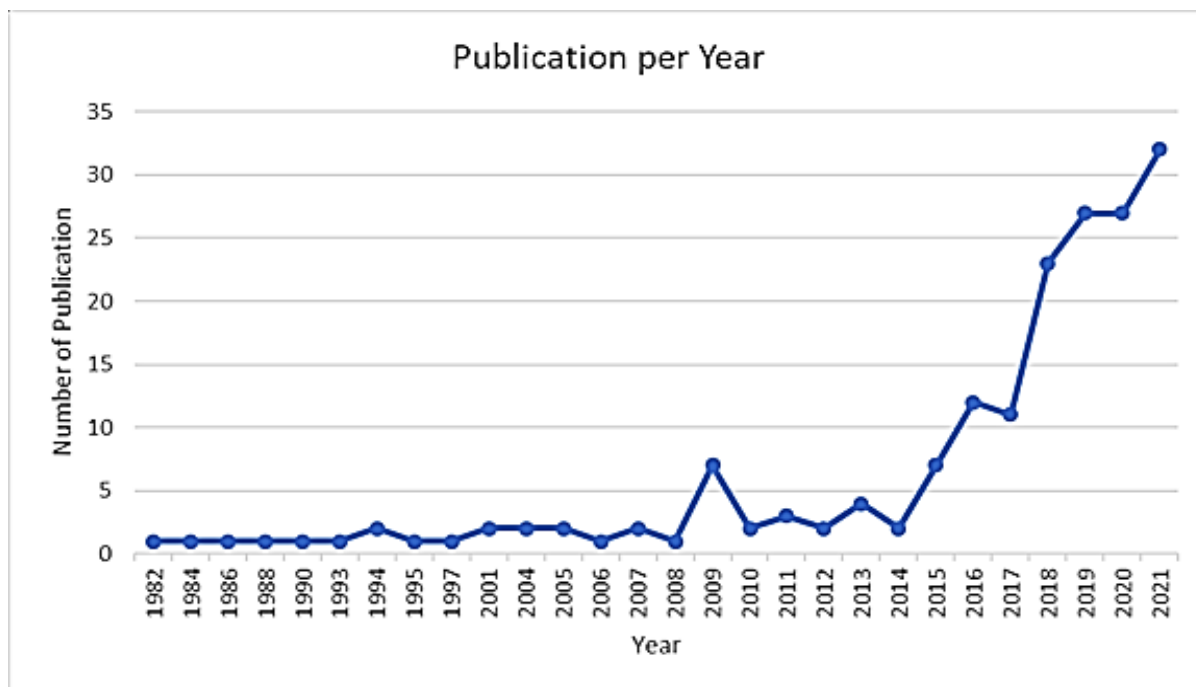


Figure 1. Publications Per Year

Aisyah's research also sorts research papers on the issue of mosque economy into groups based on the field of study that they are founded on. There are a lot of different areas of studies that fall under the theme of mosque economy. Five of the most prominent are Humanities, History and Archeology, Historical Studies, Philosophy and Religion, and Sociology. Most of the research on mosque economy is done in the Humanities, followed by Sociology, History, and Archaeology, which have 36 and 33 publications, respectively.

From these results, it's evident that there have been a lot of studies published on mosque economics in a lot of different sectors. Each study looks at the subject from a different angle, depending on what it is. Also, this shows that the economics of mosques is wide enough to be investigated in a number of scientific domains.

According to research by (Saputra & Agustina, 2021), mosques are very useful and important for solving public concerns, notably economic challenges in local communities. According to a study by (Adnanda Yudha Rhealdi et al., 2023), community development that makes the most of the mosque's financial circulation can help mosques play a bigger role in the community. (Amri, 2023) did a thorough assessment of how halal tourism might help the economy of mosques by training people to run enterprises through Islamic financial institutions.

Next, (Aisyah & As-Salafiyah, 2021) did a meta-analysis of research on mosque economy themes and came to the conclusion that there aren't enough studies on mosque economy themes yet because there aren't enough Scopus-indexed studies yet. In the meantime, (Amri, 2023) looks at the possibilities for developing mosque economy. This is seen in sites that visitors visit strategically and in asset management for the growth of economic activities that create other places for economic activity.

This study starts with a number of important topics that need to be looked at in depth in the context of mosque economics and its social roles. First and foremost, we need to know how the business idea is used at the National Al Akbar Mosque in Surabaya to help the community's economy grow. Next, we need to look at how the mosque helps the area around it grow socially and economically. Lastly, we need to look at how the mosque's economic model was put into action at the National Al Akbar Mosque in Surabaya and how this model helps the economy.

Masjid Nasional Al Akbar Surabaya has certain special features and strategic benefits that other mosques in Indonesia don't have. This mosque is one of the biggest in Indonesia. It has a complicated area that lets spiritual, social, and economic activities happen at the same time. Masjid Al Akbar is also a model for how to develop mosque economic ideas that focus on three main areas: organizing street vendors (PKL), starting Mosque-Owned Enterprises (BUMM), and giving congregants more economic power based on their Islamic spirituality.

Compared to other mosques, the National Al Akbar Mosque Surabaya has better management skills, works with various sectors, and has a more open and up-to-date system for managing its finances. This mosque has gone above and beyond its conventional function by giving the community access to Sharia-compliant funding, suitable business locations, MSME training, and the ability to digitize the business information of its members.

This study aims to systematically look at the business idea of the Al Akbar National Mosque in Surabaya, explain the different ways it helps the community's well-being, and look at and describe the mosque's economic model, especially in terms of how it connects the business idea with the mosque's social and economic role.

B. THEORETICAL STUDY

Mosque and Economic Empowerment of the Community

Quraissy Shihab said that the main purpose of the mosque is to worship Allah SWT. Now, the mosque is seen as a center of worship that helps the community's economy and even helps human civilization move forward (Yusuf, 2021). Human resource development through the economic empowerment of the community is the process of improving the role and function of mosques by their managers and implementers in order to help the Muslim community thrive (Wulandari et al., 2021). By boosting the economy of the area around the mosque, Muslims can keep a balance between their worldly and spiritual objectives. This will help the mosque do well (Ahmad Mu'is, 2020).

Giving Muslims around the mosque power is very significant because it gives them a very excellent idea of how they can use the mosque's resources. Muslims who live near the mosque are not only a passive group that uses its services; they are an engaged group that works in their own areas of specialization. This empowerment is done by giving help, including telling Muslims at the mosque to share what they know and organize their resources that are helpful, building networks, and spreading the word (Mubarak et al., 2021).

Mosques and Socioeconomic Contributions

People's perspectives on religion and social life are greatly affected by mosques. This is done by supporting programs that assist people grow socially and economically, such the spiritual spirit shown by mosque members through philanthropic acts like zakat, infaq, shodaqoh, and volunteering to aid other Muslims who have been afflicted by natural catastrophes. The mosque is a place for people to get to know each other better and work together for the good of everyone. It is also a place for social control and supervision (Ulum, 2022).

If mosques do their jobs well, they can help solve a lot of social problems in the community. Also, the mosque has programs to help with the social difficulties that people are having right now, which will help the mosque do its job better. For instance, a payment plan that helps the underprivileged get out of poverty (Arsyad et al., 2021). As a result, the mosque becomes the major place where people go to solve problems in the community.

Economic Welfare of the Community

The term shalaha, which signifies goodness, the antithesis of evil or corruption, is the source of the word mashlahah. And its verbal noun form is shalahun, which means benefit or free from harm. The word mashlahah in Arabic means an action that encourages people to do good (Fauzi, 2021).

According to the above definition, the concept of mashlahah in the Quran is focused on social benefits or commonly known as collective benefits (al-mashlahah al-ammah). Because to achieve social welfare, the achievement of individual welfare is necessary, which does not always align with social welfare. In fact, if individual welfare contradicts the welfare of society, then that welfare must be abandoned (Zulfikar, 2021).

C. METHODOLOGY

This type of research uses qualitative research with a case study approach to collect relevant data and information. This method requires primary and secondary data sources. Primary data sources are collected thru informants or people like interview subjects, which are conducted by the researcher. Additional data in primary data includes field observation reports, interview transcripts, and relevant information about the informants. Additionally, it can also be recorded in audio or video format. The observation was conducted at the Al Akbar National Mosque in Surabaya and the surrounding community.

Meanwhile, secondary data comes from written materials that can be used to supplement the research analysis process, such as books, papers, statistical data, and scientific journals. Secondary data can currently be obtained both offline and online, starting with previous studies conducted on government and mosque websites. This data can also be in the form of hard files or soft files.

The steps in this research method are as follows:

1. **Topic Identification** The first step is to identify a specific research topic, namely the economic model of mosques in business orientation and the socio-economic contribution to society, the process of the relationship between the Al Akbar National Mosque Surabaya, specifically the Mosque Executive and Management Body, and the congregation or community in the Al Akbar National Mosque Surabaya environment.

2. Informant Selection In this stage, Purposive Sampling technique is used with the following criteria: a. Chairman of the National Al Akbar Surabaya Mosque Executive and Management Body. b. Treasurer of the National Al Akbar Surabaya Mosque. c. Secretary of the National Al Akbar Surabaya Mosque. d. Chairman of the BUMM (Mosque-Owned Enterprise) of the National Al Akbar Surabaya Mosque. e. Local residents who have businesses around the National Al Akbar Surabaya Mosque location. f. Active congregants of the National Al Akbar Surabaya Mosque.
3. Data Processing and Analysis Descriptive analysis is used as the data analysis method in this study. This is based on findings from direct observation, interviews, and well-documented and easily understood research (Sugiyono, 2012).

After data collection, the findings are presented in the form of written summaries and tables, which are further explained to generate qualitative data. The results of the fact-checking conducted on the responses of the informants are presented in this description. The descriptive qualitative analysis approach is generally used in all analysis methods to answer each study objective. By using this qualitative descriptive analysis technique, it is hoped that it will be able to explain the mosque economic model, business concepts, and socio-economic contributions at the Al Akbar National Mosque in Surabaya.

D. RESULT

The Process of Street Vendor Migration to the Al Akbar National Mosque Area in Surabaya

The process of street vendor migration to the Al Akbar National Mosque area in Surabaya is based on the need to manage the area in a regular, religious, and economically beneficial manner. Before this relocation initiative, many street vendors set up stalls around the mosque without clear regulations. Their presence often causes problems, such as traffic congestion, hygiene issues, and conflicts with the mosque's primary function as a place of worship.

The mosque management is collaborating with the Surabaya City Government and other relevant parties to assist street vendors through socialization, open dialog, and guidance. This method is participatory, and traders are encouraged to understand the long-term benefits of moving to a designated area within the mosque complex, which is equipped with a halal food center and neat and hygienic stalls for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The mosque management acts as a bridge between the government and the vendors, ensuring minimal resistance during the relocation process.

This program is more than just moving people; it will also transform how the community's economy operates. Street vendors who used to work without permits now have legal status, business premises representing them, and the opportunity to develop their businesses through training and guidance in Sharia business. Therefore, this relocation process is part of the religious institution's efforts to economically empower the community.

Business Concept at Al Akbar National Mosque Surabaya

The business concept implemented at Al Akbar National Mosque Surabaya is an innovative model that combines the religious function of the mosque with its socio-economic role in improving community welfare. The mosque is not only positioned as a place of worship, but also as a catalyst for the economic development of the community

based on Islamic values. This concept was strategically designed by the Mosque Management Agency and formulated thru a sustainable business approach that still upholds Sharia principles.

The main business unit is operated by the Mosque-Owned Business Entity (BUMM), which covers various sectors: a halal culinary center, rental of Islamic event spaces, Islamic retail stores (books, Muslim fashion, Hajj/Umrah souvenirs), and official parking services. Each business line is developed with modern management, transparent governance, and Sharia-based accounting systems. The profits earned from BUMM are not intended for individuals, but are fully returned to support the mosque's operations and social programs.

In its development, BUMM has forged strategic partnerships with various Islamic financial institutions, such as Islamic banks, mosque cooperatives, and zakat institutions. This collaboration strengthens the economic ecosystem of the community, provides access to capital, and promotes sharia financial inclusion for congregants and the surrounding community. In other words, the Al Akbar National Mosque in Surabaya is developing a community-based business ecosystem that aligns with spiritual values and aims to achieve common good.

Socioeconomic Contributions of the Al Akbar National Mosque Surabaya

The socioeconomic contributions of the Al Akbar National Mosque Surabaya are reflected in various programs aimed at improving the overall quality of life for the surrounding community, encompassing spiritual, educational, and economic aspects. This mosque is not only a place of worship but has also transformed into an active and inclusive community center.

Socially, mosques provide a space for empowerment thru community-based programs, such as skills training (crafts, culinary arts, digital marketing), health education, and regular religious studies that discuss contemporary Islamic issues. The mosque also provides family counselling and youth mentoring services, which help reduce social delinquency and strengthen family resilience.

From an economic perspective, the management of zakat, infaq, and sadaqah (ZIS) is carried out professionally, accurately, and transparently. ZIS funds are distributed not only in a consumptive form (food aid and donations), but also productively, namely thru business capital assistance and microbusiness mentoring. This encourages the congregation to rise economically and transform into capable recipients, and even become donors in the future.

The mosque's contribution is also evident in the creation of new jobs in the mosque's economic sector, ranging from halal food vendors and parking managers to BUMM management staff. Indirectly, the mosque becomes the driving force behind the local economy, capable of reducing unemployment and increasing the purchasing power of the surrounding community.

E. DISCUSSION

The mosque economic model applied at the Al Akbar National Mosque in Surabaya is an integration of spiritual values, professional governance, and community empowerment. This model was born from the understanding that mosques are not merely

religious entities, but also effective instruments for socio-economic development if managed correctly.

The first approach is the spiritual-social approach, which positions the mosque as a source of Islamic business values and ethics. Every economic activity is carried out based on the principles of honesty, justice, trust, and benefit. Business ethics serves as the main compass in every economic policy adopted by the mosque administrators.

The second approach is Islamic economic institutions, where the mosque initiates the formation of BUMM as an official business instrument with an organizational structure, SOPs, and an accountable Islamic financial system. This addresses the challenges of mosque management, which has long been considered informal and unprofessional.

The third approach is community empowerment, which actively involves the congregation in the process of planning, implementing, and evaluating economic activities. Training programs, capacity building, and collaboration with MSMEs are a form of the congregation's participation in building the community's economy.

Overall, this model is capable of creating a system that is inclusive, sustainable, and based on the principles of social justice and the common good (*al-mashlahah al-'ammah*). The mosque becomes a center of civilization that not only prospers the place of worship but also prospers its congregation.

D. CONCLUSION

This research shows that the Al Akbar National Mosque in Surabaya has successfully transformed the traditional role of a mosque as a place of worship into a socio-economic institution that has leverage over the welfare of the community. Thru the process of migrating and organizing street vendors (PKL) into the mosque area, the mosque is able to create a more orderly, clean, and competitive business space. The business concept developed thru the Mosque-Owned Business Entity (BUMM) is designed with a sharia approach and institutional professionalism, so it is not only profit-oriented, but also focused on the values of blessings and welfare.

The socio-economic contribution of the mosque is very evident thru community empowerment activities, the management of productive zakat funds, and training and mentoring for small businesses. The mosque economic model implemented combines spiritual, Islamic economic institutional, and community empowerment dimensions. The mosque emerges as an inclusive and solution-oriented agent of transformation in addressing the socio-economic issues of the community.

Thus, this mosque economic model is worthy of being an example for other mosques in Indonesia. However, the success of this model requires commitment, accountable management, and cross-sector collaboration. The role of the mosque in community development becomes increasingly relevant in the modern era when balanced with sound economic management based on Islamic values.

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