
The Mosque as an Intermediary Institution for Muslim Community Economic Empowerment: Evidence from Nurul Jannah Mosque at Petrokimia Gresik

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the role of Nurul Jannah Mosque at Petrokimia Gresik as an intermediary institution in the economic local growth of the mosque. Data collection was carried out using a qualitative case study design, through in-depth interviews with mosque administrators and MSME operators, observation and documentation, and data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman interactive model. The findings show that the mosque transforms previously informal economic activities into a more formalized business ecosystem by leveraging hybrid resources, including corporate assets, community donations, mosque leadership, facilities, marketing, and program management, using the Resource-Based View. The program has a positive effect on community livelihoods, but the economic impact is varied. For some MSME operators, it boosts income, provides market access, and supports business growth; for others, the benefits are more obvious in terms of business stability, legality, convenience, and livelihood sustainability. This study underscores the importance of mosques as adaptive, socio-religious entities integrating religious beliefs, local resources, and community economic demands.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Local economic development in Indonesia still has many obstacles, especially related to the economic growth, which leads to community welfare. While national and regional economies continue to grow, the fruits of progress are not always equitably distributed at the grassroots level. For example, the economic growth of Gresik Regency in 2023 is 4.62%, which is slightly below the national economic growth rate of 4.94% (BPS, 2023). Meanwhile, the local economy of Gresik is still very dependent on the manufacturing sector, which provides a big contribution to the area's economic activity. The condition demonstrates that economic growth per se does not necessarily translate into inclusive welfare, particularly for small-scale economic actors who often need access to strategic locations, social networks, and institutional support.

In this environment, local economic development demands not only macroeconomic growth but also community-based institutional arrangements that can mobilize local resources and generate more accessible economic opportunities. Local development is not just about boosting output or income at the regional level, but also about how communities, institutions, and local actors work together to improve livelihoods, increase economic participation, and reduce vulnerability among small-business actors. Hence, local economic development should be understood as a process of organizing resources, forming social networks, and creating productive spaces closer to the everyday demands of the community (Mulauddin et al., 2025).

The mosques and prayer halls across the country are an important socio-religious asset of Indonesia. These religious institutions are not simply sites of ceremonial worship but also function as social spaces within the fabric of everyday life in Muslim communities. The broad reach, moral legitimacy, and connection to community life of mosques position them well to address social and economic challenges. Today, mosques are progressively becoming socio-religious institutions promoting education, philanthropy, social solidarity, community organization, and economic development in the Muslim society. This broader role offers the opportunity to see mosques as potential agents of local economic growth, not just religious sites (Afifah, 2025).

From of resource mobilization perspective, the role of mosques in economic empowerment is particularly significant. Mosques have a variety of resources, including physical buildings, social trust, congregational networks, financial donations, moral authority, and institutional legitimacy. If these resources are well organized, mosques can be centers of communal development, linking religious principles with practical economic requirements. From the perspective of the Resource-Based View (RBV), the strategic function of an institution depends not only on the resources it owns but also on its capacity to organize, integrate, and turn those resources into sustainable value. Therefore, mosque-based economic empowerment can be conceived as a transformation of religious and social capital into actual economic support for the local community.

The case of Nurul Jannah Mosque at Petrokimia Gresik is a noteworthy example of this procedure. The mosque is located in an industrial area of PT Petrokimia Gresik. The mosque has a unique institutional character. Nurul Jannah Mosque is not a typical community mosque. It is located in a business environment, yet is open to the public. This place combines resources in a distinctive way: corporate assets, mosque governance, community involvement, strategic access, and the economic demands of small company actors. A food court has been built around the

mosque to empower the community economically, particularly micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) that traditionally did business informally in less organized areas.

The economic empowerment program of Nurul Jannah Mosque was a product of actual community needs. Some MSME actors first peddled their items at various informal spots near the mosque and on roadsides bordering the mosque. The mosque management then re-arranged these activities by offering business stalls and establishing a more structured culinary center. This effort demonstrates that the mosque's economic role is not only normative but has also been translated into tangible institutional activity. The program also earned public attention, including an award from the Indonesian Mosque Council of East Java in 2023 for mosque-based congregational economic development. This acknowledgment is a manifestation of the change of informal economic practices into a more organized business ecosystem for the mosque.

This represents a unique situation with a combined corporate and Islamic social character. The program is not based solely on Islamic philanthropy, nor is it a purely business-oriented venture. Rather, it is developed through corporate support, mosque-based institutional management, and the involvement of MSME actors. Corporate assets provide an important structural foundation, mosque governance shapes the direction and mechanisms of the program, while community participation supports its daily operations. This hybrid character makes Nurul Jannah Mosque a highly relevant case for examining the role of Islamic religious organizations situated within a corporate/industrial environment in contributing to local economic growth.

Conceptually, the study places the mosque as an intermediary institution. The mosque is more than just a place for business activity. It is a nexus of religious ideals, institutional resources, corporate assets, and community economic demands. In this function, the mosque mediates between the many actors and their interests: the firm as a holder of resources, the mosque as a socio-religious manager, the MSME operators as the economic benefactors, and the larger community as consumers and active participants. This intermediary position is crucial in that it indicates that economic empowerment through the mosque is not merely about providing stalls or dispensing aid, but about constructing an institutional ecology that provides the basis for more secure, lawful, and dignified livelihoods.”

Previous research has revealed that mosques are progressively playing crucial roles in social and economic empowerment. For example, Hamidi, Setiawan, and Asutay (2025) explore mosques as faith-based organizations in the context of sustainability from the Quadruple Bottom Line perspective. According to their research, mosques are increasingly assessed not only as houses of prayer but also as social-religious organizations with tangible sustainability performance. Afifah (2025) analyses the economic and social empowerment tactics in mosques at Jogokariyan Mosque, Yogyakarta, and Al Falah Mosque, Sragen, revealing that such techniques are substantially influenced by local social settings. In the meantime, Rarasati and Priyadi (2024) examine the role of Jogokariyan Mosque in supporting MSMEs through zakat management, business training, and market development.

These studies demonstrate that the mosque has become an important subject of academic study of social welfare, economic empowerment, and community development. However, most of the existing research still focuses on broad-based community mosques and does not thoroughly examine mosques in business or industrial settings. In addition, the prior research has not elaborated in-depth on how mosques mobilize hybrid resources, organize informal economic activity, and build sustainable economic governance. This disparity matters because corporate

mosques may have different resource configurations, partnership patterns, institutional authority, and governance processes than regular community mosques.

This study seeks to address two primary research concerns arising from this gap. First, what institutional, social, and economic resources are being utilized at the Nurul Jannah Mosque of Petrokimia Gresik to assist local economic development? Second, how can local economic growth rooted in mosques boost the economic activities and livelihoods of the surrounding Muslim community? The questions aim to explore not only the role of the mosque as a provider of business space, but also as an intermediary organization that organizes resources and forms a community-based economic ecosystem.

This study makes three contributions to the literature. Theoretically, it extends the debate on mosques by conceptualizing mosques as mediatory institutions in local economic development and using the Resource-Based View to explain how mosque resources are mobilized and turned into socio-economic value. Empirically, it is a unique example of a mosque situated within a corporate context that supports community-based economic empowerment through a food court approach. In practice, it provides information to mosque administrations, corporate organizations, and local communities to build more structured, inclusive, and sustainable economic empowerment programs. In this situation, the paper proposes that mosques could play an adaptive role in linking religious ideals, local resources, and community livelihood demands within a more organized development framework.

2. METHODS

The present study used a qualitative case study design. This approach was selected to provide an in-depth explanation of how the Nurul Jannah Mosque at Petrokimia Gresik mobilizes institutional, social, and economic resources to support local economic development. It also seeks to explain how mosque practices contribute to local economic activities and the livelihoods of the surrounding community. The case study design is suitable because it allows the researcher to explore the phenomenon in its real-life context, where the phenomenon is of interest (Yin, 2014).

This research was conducted at Nurul Jannah Mosque in Petrokimia Gresik, within the complex of PT Petrokimia Gresik, Gresik Regency, East Java. The site was chosen because the mosque runs a community-based economic empowerment program for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) through a culinary center. The institutional aspect of the mosque is unique. It is located in a business environment but remains open to the general public. This makes Nurul Jannah Mosque a useful case to examine mosque roles in local economic development, especially its hybrid resource mobilization involving corporate assets, mosque governance, and community engagement.

The data sources in this study are both primary and secondary. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with 12 purposively recruited participants. The informants included mosque management and MSME operators actively involved in the economic empowerment program. They were chosen based on their knowledge, involvement, and relevance to the implementation of the program. Secondary data were drawn from mosque documents, program reports, financial records, and other supporting documents about the program.

Table 1 presents the characteristics of informants to increase the transparency of informant selection.

Table 1. Profile of Research Informants

Code	Informant Category	Role/Business Type	Length of Involvement/Business	Main Information Explored
I1	Mosque management	Mosque management representative	[to be adjusted based on field data]	Program background, institutional policy, mosque empowerment orientation
I2	Program management	Program/financial management representative	[to be adjusted based on field data]	Resource mobilization, financial reporting, program governance
I3	MSME operator	Food stall operator	[to be adjusted based on field data]	Business development, income change, facility benefits
I4	MSME operator	Beverage stall operator	[to be adjusted based on field data]	Market access, customer growth, business expansion
I5	MSME operator	Culinary MSME operator	[to be adjusted based on field data]	Business stability, operational challenges, program benefits
I6	MSME operator	Culinary MSME operator	[to be adjusted based on field data]	Income dynamics, competition, customer access
I7	MSME operator	Culinary MSME operator	[to be adjusted based on field data]	Facility use, legality, comfort, business sustainability
I8	MSME operator	Culinary MSME operator	[to be adjusted based on field data]	Program contribution, promotional support, business constraints
I9	MSME operator	Culinary MSME operator	[to be adjusted based on field data]	Livelihood support, operational stability, market dynamics
I10	MSME operator	Culinary MSME operator	[to be adjusted based on field data]	Experience before and after joining the food court
I11	MSME operator	Culinary MSME operator	[to be adjusted based on field data]	Business adaptation, income fluctuation, program expectations
I12	MSME operator	Culinary MSME operator	[to be adjusted based on field data]	Perceived benefits, challenges, and recommendations

Data were gathered using three methods: in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted to gather information on program administration, resource mobilization, governance procedures, and the contribution of the program to the MSME operators. The author had a first-hand perspective on the implementation of the program in the field through participatory observation, including interactions among mosque administration, MSME operators, consumer dynamics, and the use of business facilities. Observations were made during normal operating hours and during relatively busy periods to capture variations in economic activity, client traffic, and the operational use of the culinary center. Documentation is used to reinforce and verify data gathered from interviews and observations, especially in terms of program history, institutional support, financial management, and food court facility improvement (Moleong, 2019).

The data were analyzed by the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which includes three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction was achieved through selection, categorization, and condensation of data pertinent to the research topics, specifically data pertaining to resource mobilization, mosque governance, business facilities, experiences of MSMEs, and livelihood results. Then, the data of narrative descriptions, thematic categories, and tables were provided to clarify the relationship between field findings and analytical concepts. The final stage was coming to the conclusion step by step and regularly

checking the consistency of conclusions with interview data, observation results, and supporting documentation (Miles & Huberman, 2014).

In this study, the validity of the data was tested using source triangulation by comparing the information acquired from the mosque administration, MSME operators, observers, and secondary documentation. Triangulation was done to validate the consistency of the findings on program implementation, resource mobilization, financial management, business benefits, and issues faced by MSME operators. This method was used to verify that the data were not only descriptively rich but also sufficiently dependable to address the study questions.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Result

The results of this study reveal that the emergence of local economic development based on the Nurul Jannah Mosque, Petrokimia Gresik, was due to the practical demands that were seen in the surrounding environment, and not a fully formalized program design from the beginning. The program was initiated because there were tiny vendors selling under trees, on vacant lots, and along the roadside around the mosque area without proper facilities. In response, the mosque management began an effort to convert the mosque from a place of worship into a socio-religious institution that could provide a safer, better-organized, and more lawful business space. These results suggest that the contribution of the mosque to local economic growth was the result of specific institutional reactions to concrete difficulties faced by minor business operators.

3.1.1. Mosques as responsive institutional actors, not merely places of worship

Preliminary findings show that the economic function of the Nurul Jannah Mosque does not derive from a formal program design from the outset, but rather from the institution's response to real-world concerns of the mosque's real-world concerns. The mosque committee chairman said the mosque is meant to be "more than just a place of worship" but a "center for empowerment" with commercial facilities that are "safe, organized, and legal." "This was not formally planned at first," the program coordinator also shared. It was crowded, and street vendors began stopping here to sell their wares under the trees. The mosque management committee agreed to give a small space of plaster then." This comment is important because it points out that local economic development in the mosque's neighborhood is rooted in real-life problems: informality in commerce, insufficient facilities, and the demand for organized economic spaces for the community.

This shows analytically that mosques are adaptable institutional actors. Mosques do not wait for empowerment plans to come from outside but proactively recognize socio-economic problems in their communities and translate them into tangible interventions. This is an intriguing pattern from the standpoint of local economic development, since it demonstrates that religious institutions may be communal problem-solvers rather than simply providers of ceremonial activities. That is, the food court program was not a function of the logic of the project, but of the logic of a socio-religious response to the informal economy. The first major finding of this study is that corporate mosques can serve as centers of community economic incubation precisely because they can convert local difficulties into institutional programs that are phased, adaptable, and suited to the context.

3.1.2. Resource mobilization takes place through a hybrid approach: corporate assets, contributions from MSMEs, and mosque governance

The second finding suggests that this program's success is made possible by the mobilization of multiple resources. "It all started with a CSR partnership with Petrokimia, because this land is actually a company asset," noted Takmir. He further said, "Operational funds are provided by MSME owners as donations. The finance manager said that "CSR of Petrokimia and monthly donations from MSME operators" are the main financing sources, from a financial point of view, which are managed through a "single-point financial reporting system" and are regularly accounted for. On the managerial side, the programme coordinator mentioned that significant policies are adopted "top-down" but MSME operators are still involved through "regular discussions" to keep the programme adaptable.

Analysis of the data demonstrates that mosques are not run on the logic of charity but on the logic of hybrid resource management. Corporate assets, community donations, and mosque institutional management converge within a single ecosystem. This means that in this place, mosques are intermediary institutions: they connect corporate resources with the economic needs of tiny communities. Interestingly, the infaq system not only serves as a source of cash but also fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility among the business owners of shared facilities. Thus, the second important result is that mosque-based local economic development in this case is done through a hybrid governance, not purely social aid nor strictly commercial, but a synergy of corporate partnership, mosque management, and MSME participation.

3.1.3. The program's tangible economic impact

The third finding shows that this program does contribute to the community economic activity, but not in the same way for all business owners. On the one hand, some MSME entrepreneurs have seen considerable growth. A meatball vendor said he can sell "around 200 servings a day" and that his turnover of "around Rp3 million in normal times". A seller of Es Juice indicated that their revenue at their previous location was just "around Rp1–2 million per month," while at the food court, their daily revenue was "Rp2–3 million. The proprietor of Silver Juice also said they had expanded from three to six branches after opening a branch in the food court. These results reveal that for some business owners, the food court has become a location for market expansion, income stabilization, and even business growth.

On the flip side, not all business owners have experienced a revenue uptick. "I actually made more money when I was still selling at the old location," said a beef tendon vendor, but his current business space is "much better," "more organized," and "more comfortable." He says he can still sell "50 to 100 portions per day" with a turnover of "Rp1.2 million to Rp2 million," but that it is a decrease from his previous sales. This implies that the program's success cannot be reduced to a simple increase in revenue. From an analytical point of view, this program can be better understood as an enhancement of the company environment that provides legal status, facilities, comfort, and a more stable market. The economic outcome depends on the nature of the goods, flexibility, competition, and the existing client base. Third, local economic development around the mosque has resulted in concrete, yet diversified, economic consequences. Success is measured not only of turnover but also in terms of business stability, the quality of commercial spaces, and livelihood sustainability.

3.1.4. The mosque's economic program is integrated with its social outreach efforts

The fourth finding indicates that this program does not function as an economic project separate from the mosque's religious mission. The head of the mosque management committee emphasized that "the mosque's da'wah in this context is indirect"; business owners are not strictly required to stop operations during the call to prayer, but are encouraged to take turns praying, invited to attend religious study sessions, and engaged in the mosque's social and religious activities. At the same time, the mosque also provides tangible economic opportunities through facilities such as space, electricity, water, social media promotion, and even delivery services during the pandemic. Thus, what is taking place is not merely buying and selling on the mosque grounds, but the formation of a socio-economic ecosystem centered on the functions of da'wah and community service.

3.2. Discussion

3.2.1. Mosques as Drivers of Local Economic Development

In many urban areas, mosques and informal economic activity are often seen as two sectors that coexist but are not necessarily institutionally linked. Mosques are sites of prayer. Small merchants are part of the everyday life of a community that frequently operates on the fringes of administration. These seemingly different fields are brought together in the same social arena for the Nurul Jannah Mosque at Petrokimia Gresik. The vendors who work under the trees, on empty lots, and along the roadsides of the industrial complex are not merely an ordinary economic phenomenon but a social problem that requires an institutional response. Therefore, the mosque committee's claim that the mosque is intended to be "not just a place of worship" but also "a centre for empowerment" by providing business facilities that are "safe, organised and legal" actually indicates a major change: the mosque is no longer outside local economic issues but participates in them as an actor that both defines the problems and seeks their solutions (Mulauddin et al., 2025).

What is significant at this juncture is not only that the mosque helps out small sellers but also the manner in which the mosque builds its institutional function. The program coordinator said this initiative was in fact "not formally planned" from the start, but rather arose from an assessment of a concrete situation in which itinerant vendors would stop in a crowded area and sell their goods under a tree, and the mosque management would provide a simple, plastered shelter before the facility was further developed. In this sense, the role of the mosque in local economic growth did not originate from a top-down project logic, but rather from the institutionalization of local difficulties. The mosque views the informal economy not as a nuisance but as a social reality that needs to be organized to be more orderly, more dignified, and more sustainable. This is when the mosque acts as an actor, not just providing space but also renegotiating the framework of economic chances for small-business organizations who were previously in a disadvantaged position (Afifah, 2025).

In theory, these characteristics reinforce the conceptualization of the mosque as a socio-religious institution that goes beyond the ritual. This article conceptualizes the mosque as a multifunctional institution facilitating social, economic, and community-organizing activities. Indeed, philosophically, the mosque is perceived as a part of the local institutional environment that arises from the religious reasons but operates through the social activity to respond to the

community problems. In the context of local economic development, the role of local actors is not always associated with that of the state or the market, but can also be played by religious institutions if they have moral legitimacy, social proximity, and the capacity to mobilize collective action. Thus, the Nurul Jannah Mosque can be read as an actor in local economic development, as it provides a mediating function that bridges religious values, community needs, and the structuring of commercial activity within a single operational institutional framework (Hamidi et al., 2025).

This case also shows that the agency of the mosque is not only symbolic or moral but also more material and structural. What is taking place, in fact, is a process of spatial transformation, in which street sellers, formerly dispersed along the roadway, are brought onto the mosque grounds, provided with basic facilities, and incorporated into a more orderly management structure. The mosque courtyard is no longer simply a religious space, but also a zone of social and economic creation, extending the full meaning of the mosque's wealth. In this sense, the mosque is not just a place for commercial activity but also an institution that transforms a prayer space into a center of empowerment. The analytical relevance of this conclusion is that mosque-based local economic development is not simply about helping small enterprises, but about how religious institutions construct a communal economic order that is more lawful, more orderly, and more dignified.

3.2.2. Resource Mobilization and Economic Management of Mosques

In many empowerment programs, the main issue is not actually a lack of good intentions, but rather the inability of institutions to transform scattered resources into effective capacity. This is where the case of the Nurul Jannah Mosque becomes particularly interesting. The mosque's economic program does not rely on a single type of capital, but is built upon the convergence of corporate assets, community contributions, and the mosque's institutional governance. The mosque management states that "all of this began with a CSR partnership with Petrokimia, where this land is actually a company asset," while operational funds come from "donations by MSME operators" used to maintain the facilities. Thus, from the outset, this program has been built on a hybrid resource configuration: there is structural support from the company, financial participation from business operators, and management functions carried out by the mosque (Nasution et al., 2026).

Such an inventory of resources should be interpreted not merely as an indication of the availability of facilities, but as an indicator of the mosque's institutional capacity. The financial manager explained that the management of program funds is "highly organized," with allocations for operational and facility maintenance costs, while all income and expenditures are "properly recorded to ensure transparency." Furthermore, the mosque employs a "single-point financial reporting system," and these reports are regularly submitted to the director of Petrokimia and accounted for to the congregation through an annual report. These data indicate that the program's success is not solely due to the availability of funding, but rather to the existence of administrative mechanisms, accountability, and controls that enable these resources to function sustainably. From a Resource-Based View perspective, this situation demonstrates that an institution's competitive advantage is not determined merely by asset ownership, but by the organization's ability to integrate, manage, and convert those assets into tangible socio-economic value (Chaniago et al., 2024).

From this, it is evident that the strategic role of the mosque lies in its ability to serve as an intermediary institution. The mosque not only receives external resources but also reorganizes the flow of these resources so that they can be accessed and utilized by small business groups. In more analytical terms, the Nurul Jannah Mosque functions as a hub connecting corporate logic, the ethos of community philanthropy, and the daily economic needs of the community. It is at this point that the mosque's economic program transcends the pattern of short-term aid. It moves toward a more substantive development governance model: resources do not remain as passive assets but are transformed into business infrastructure, funding mechanisms, accountability systems, and continuously reproduced economic opportunities. Thus, the most significant contribution of this case is the affirmation that resource mobilization in mosque-based local economic development is only effective when accompanied by governance capable of maintaining a balance between institutional legitimacy, operational sustainability, and the real needs of the community (Pahlevi).

3.2.3. The Program's Contribution to Community Livelihoods

The success of mosque-based economic programs cannot always be simply gauged by whether or not vendors' incomes have increased. In the context of the Nurul Jannah Mosque, what appears to be more important is the shift in the livelihood conditions of MSME operators: from businesses that initially operated in vulnerable, disorganized conditions with minimal facilities, to businesses that now operate in a more stable, legally recognized environment and are connected to broader markets. This is where the program's contribution becomes significant. It does not merely create new economic activities but reorganizes how small communities sustain and develop their livelihoods. Therefore, an assessment of the program's impact must be framed in the context of livelihoods, not merely by short-term indicators of increased revenue (Mulyandi et al., 2024).

To a certain extent, this program has indeed generated quite tangible economic benefits. Some business owners report increased revenue, a growing customer base, and even business expansion. A meatball vendor, for example, noted that sales can reach around 200 servings per day, with revenue of approximately Rp3 million under normal circumstances. A vendor from Es Juice Petro stated that when they were still selling in Bojonegoro, their revenue was only around Rp1–2 million per month, whereas after joining the food court, their daily income increased to around Rp2–3 million. A vendor from Silver Juice even noted that having a branch in the food court helped expand their business from three to six branches. These data indicate that, for some business owners, the food court is not merely a sales venue but also an economic hub that opens opportunities for business growth and diversification. In this sense, the mosque contributes to expanding market access and strengthening the community's economic capacity by providing a more strategic space, collective branding, and a more established business environment (Imari & Ramadhan, 2025).

3.2.4. From Business Accommodation to Professional Empowerment

The success of an empowerment program often reveals the very limits of its own success. In the early stages, the Nurul Jannah Mosque appeared to successfully fulfill an accommodative function: providing a legal, relatively safe, and more organized business space for small vendors who had previously operated under entirely informal conditions. However, as the program became sustainable, populated by a diverse range of business operators, and established a collective

identity as Pujasera Petro, new needs emerged. At this phase, the issue is no longer merely about providing business space, but rather about managing that space more professionally so that the institutional capacity matches the complexity of the businesses developing within it. Therefore, the dynamics evident in this case indicate a crucial transition: from the logic of accommodating the informal economy toward the need for the professionalization of empowerment (Rambe et al., 2023).

The program managers themselves are well aware of this transition. The program coordinator explicitly expressed a desire to develop a system “like a food court with professional management, including branding for each stall and a centralized cashier system.” This statement is analytically significant because it indicates that the managers no longer view the program merely as a space of tolerance for small vendors, but are beginning to see it as a community economic unit requiring standardization, a clearer business identity, and more modern management mechanisms. In other words, professionalization here is not merely a technical issue, but a sign of a paradigm shift: the mosque is no longer sufficient merely as a facilitator of commercial space, but must evolve into a manager of a more structured business ecosystem (Ibrahim).

The push toward professionalization grows even stronger when viewed through the lens of on-the-ground challenges. The data indicate that the obstacles faced by business owners are no longer as simple as the need for a place to sell their goods. They face competition from similar vendors, income fluctuations, limited digital marketing capabilities, disrupted road access, and reduced parking space due to the construction of a hospital in the vicinity. Several informants also highlighted issues regarding environmental comfort, inconsistent facilities, and reduced customer access due to infrastructure barriers. This series of issues indicates that business sustainability can no longer be guaranteed merely by providing stalls, electricity, and water. Once the business ecosystem has been established, the next set of challenges shifts toward the quality of area governance, marketing support, service integration, and strengthening the competitiveness of individual business operators (Suhardina et al., 2025).

In this context, the demands of MSME operators are significant and should be interpreted as indicators of new institutional needs. Time and again, they have proposed training in digital marketing, business management, financial management, more intensive promotion, improved road access, expanded parking, and more conducive management of the food court environment. These aspirations indicate that empowerment, which was previously sufficient at the stage of providing facilities, is now required to move toward capacity building. Theoretically, this signifies a shift from facilitative empowerment toward capacity-based empowerment. If in the first stage the mosque played a role by opening up economic access, then in the next stage the mosque is required to strengthen the competence, efficiency, and sustainability of MSME businesses. Thus, professionalization does not mean shifting the socio-religious spirit of the program, but rather deepening its effectiveness so that the resulting economic contribution does not stop at stabilization, but develops toward strengthening competitiveness.

Therefore, the most important takeaway from this case is that the strength of the Nurul Jannah Mosque lies not merely in its ability to accommodate the informal economy, but in its potential to restructure the community’s economy toward a more professional and sustainable direction. The program, which originally emerged as a pragmatic response to the presence of small vendors, has now reached a point where its sustainability depends on the institution’s ability

to scale up. This is where the strategic significance of professionalization lies: not merely technical modernization, but a transformation of empowerment governance so that the mosque can function not only as a protector of small businesses but also as an incubator for a more mature community economy. In other words, the future of this program is no longer determined by the presence or absence of business spaces, but by the mosque's ability to build a more measurable, adaptive, and competitive empowerment system without losing the orientation toward the common good that forms the basis of its existence.

CONCLUSION

The Nurul Jannah Petrokimia Gresik Mosque has a role beyond the ritual function as a house of worship, but also has become the main player in local economic development, able to turn the informal economic problems of the community into a more structured institutional agenda. This function is reflected in the ability of the mosque to recognize the socio-economic needs of the community, mobilize the existing resources, and administer the empowerment programs based on a business hub in a gradual and sustainable manner. Supported by corporate assets, contributions from MSME actors, and generally well-organized mosque governance, this program has established a business ecosystem that provides a safer, more legal, and more decent trading space for small-business entrepreneurs. Thus, in this scenario, the mosque is not a place of economic activity, but an intermediary institution. It combines religious ideals, local resources, and community needs in a unified operational development framework.

Meanwhile, this study reveals that the impact of mosque-based economic programs on the livelihoods of the community is tangible, though not uniform across all business operators. For certain MSMEs, these programs provide wider market access, enhance revenue, and strengthen business sustainability. For others, however, the key benefits of the programs are more evident in the provision of stable business space, legal status, comfort, and facility support rather than in a linear increase in income. These findings suggest that the success of mosque-based local economic development is assessed not only by revenue growth but also by the degree to which it transforms previously vulnerable microeconomies into more stable and dignified ones. Therefore, the fundamental contribution of this paper is to assess the extent to which mosques can serve as effective socio-religious organizations in creating a communal economic ecology. These programs have yet to be strengthened in the field of professionalizing governance, business training, digital promotion, and the improvement of supporting infrastructure for business districts to have a greater and more permanent impact.

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