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MOSQUE-BASED ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AT THE AL-MASHUN MOSQUE SITE: A Perspective on the Development of the Islamic Community

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Abstract: *This research is motivated by the limited number of studies on the economic empowerment of the community in historic mosques that integrate aspects of worship, religious tourism, and economic empowerment of the community. This study aims to examine the role of the Al-Mashun Mosque in Medan as a historical heritage and a religious tourism object that has the potential to encourage economic empowerment of the community in the surrounding area. This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type. Data collection was carried out through several techniques, namely observation, interviews with various informants including mosque administrators, local residents, and visitors, and supported by relevant documentation, then tested for validity through source triangulation. All data obtained were then analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana which includes data condensation, data presentation, and drawing and verifying conclusions. The results of the study indicate that the Al-Mashun Mosque plays a role as an initial driver of community economic activity through increased visits to religious tourism that opens business opportunities such as culinary, small trade, and supporting services. However, economic empowerment is still dominated by the utilization of tourism opportunities (indirect economic empowerment) and has not been fully supported by a structured business development program. This research contributes to the development of a mosque-based economic empowerment model that integrates the roles of the BKM (Bandung Community Empowerment Agency) as a manager, religious tourism as a source of economic potential, and the community as business actors. Strengthening MSME development, business mentoring, area planning, and collaboration among stakeholders are needed to enable the Al-Mashun Mosque to develop as a center for sustainable religious tourism-based economic empowerment.*

Keywords: *Community Economic Empowerment; Religious Tourism; Al-Mashun Mosque; Mosque-Based Empowerment Tourism; Local Economy.*

INTRODUCTION

Poverty remains a critical social issue that demands tangible solutions, particularly in countries with Muslim-majority populations. In this context, Islamic economics offers the principles of justice, ethics, and social solidarity as alternative tools for promoting societal well-being through sustainable empowerment systems (Panca et al., 2021; Mundir, 2025). To achieve this goal, an empowerment strategy is needed that can sustainably optimize the community's potential.

Economic development is an effort to improve people's living standards by optimizing their existing potential (Suwito, 2022). One tangible manifestation of this concept is the strengthening of the community's economy through the optimization of the mosque's functions. Mosques are no longer merely places of worship but have transformed into business incubation centers through entrepreneurship training, the development of the creative economy, and the strengthening of local SMEs in religious tourism areas (Syaffi et al., 2023). However, the magnitude of this potential has not yet been fully matched by optimal management.

Despite its great potential, mosque-based economic empowerment still faces various obstacles, such as a lack of professional governance, weak inter-institutional synergy, and low community participation (Asyidah & Darwis, 2021). On the other hand, these challenges do not diminish the importance of the mosque's role as an institution that serves a strategic function in community life. Amid current social dynamics, mosques also serve social, educational, cultural, and economic functions that can support community empowerment (Anora, 2024). Therefore, strengthening the role of mosques must be accompanied by improved muamalah literacy and an empowerment approach that positions the community as agents of development, not merely as beneficiaries (Dwiaryanti, 2024). From an Islamic perspective, Allah the Almighty states in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Jum'ah, verse 10:

فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَانْتَشِرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَابْتَغُوا مِن فَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ (10)

Meaning: When the prayer has been performed, spread out across the earth; seek Allah's bounty and remember Allah often so that you may prosper. (QS. Al-Jumu'ah: 10).

This verse indicates that Islam encourages its followers to strive to earn a living after performing their religious duties. In line with this, the mosque serves not only as a place of worship but also plays a strategic role in improving the quality of human resources and the well-being of the community. Historically, the mosque has played a crucial role as a main pillar in educating the congregation and producing influential figures in Islam (Habibi & Riyadi, 2024). Al-Qardhawi (2019) also emphasizes that the mosque is the House of Allah, established so that people may constantly remember Him, give thanks, and serve Him. This aligns with the revelation in Surah An-Nur [24]: 36–37, which honors those who do not let worldly affairs distract them from establishing prayer and paying zakat.

To support public welfare, mosque management must be underpinned by financial governance that adheres to Sharia principles in order to build a strong economic ecosystem (Lubis et al., 2023). Community involvement in financial management can also foster a more accountable and transparent organizational environment (Mahmud, 2023). Furthermore, mosques can optimize their socioeconomic functions by managing zakat, infaq, and sadaqah funds as instruments for community empowerment.

According to the Guidelines for Mosque Management issued by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, mosques serve not only as places of worship but also fulfill social, educational, da'wah, and community empowerment functions. Therefore, the Al-Mashun Grand Mosque, as a site of Islamic historical heritage, has the potential to be developed not only as a center for worship and religious tourism but also as a means of economic empowerment for the Muslim community through commercial activities, community-based microenterprises, and congregation-based economic development (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, Guidelines for Mosque Management, Jakarta: Directorate of Islamic Affairs and Sharia Development).

This potential is all the more relevant given that the Al-Mashun Grand Mosque not only holds historical and religious value but also serves as one of the religious tourism destinations in the city of Medan. This potential is all the more relevant given that the Al-Mashun Grand Mosque not only holds historical and religious value but also serves as one of the religious tourism destinations in the city of Medan (Daulay, 2024). In line with this, the Medan Grand Mosque represents a fusion of colonial and Islamic architecture in North Sumatra and has evolved into a public space that supports the community's social activities (Daulay, 2025).

The growth of the tourism sector in Medan has further bolstered these opportunities. The Al-Mashun Grand Mosque ranked as the second most-visited tourist destination in Medan in 2024, with a total of 648,000 tourist visits (Zega, 2025). In 2025, data from the mosque's management showed that in March 2025, a total of 219 international tourists and 5,560 domestic tourists visited the Al-Mashun Grand Mosque. These numbers increased in April 2025 to 513 international tourists and 5,700 domestic tourists, while in May 2025, the number of international tourists rose again to 761, with domestic tourist visits reaching 5,400 (Uchie, 2025). This high volume of visitors indicates that the Al-Mashun Grand Mosque has significant potential to drive local economic activity, such as trade, microenterprises, services, and the informal sector in the area surrounding the mosque.

However, the increase in tourist visits does not automatically mean that the Al-Mashun Grand Mosque has been able to fully optimize the economic empowerment of the community. Accelerating tourism in the city of Medan requires an integrated approach, encompassing infrastructure modernization, optimization of digital campaigns, strengthening of local capacity, and cross-sectoral synergy to create a competitive destination on the global stage (Asmirandah et al., 2025). This situation indicates that the

significant potential of religious tourism still requires more effective management so that the local community can sustainably benefit economically from it.

A number of previous studies have examined the relationship between mosques, religious tourism, and community economic empowerment. The first line of research focuses on the social and economic functions of mosques as centers of community empowerment. Mardi (2024) demonstrates that mosques contribute to community development through education, health services, humanitarian aid, microenterprise training, cooperative management, and the utilization of zakat funds. Mutalib (2023) also explains that mosques play a strategic role in community economic empowerment through the development of community cooperatives, food businesses, printing services, health clinics, facility rentals, and the management of Baitul Mal.

The second trend positions mosques as institutionally-based economic institutions. Hana (2024) demonstrates that the Al-Akbar National Mosque in Surabaya has successfully transformed the mosque's function into that of a socio-economic institution through the management of street vendors, the establishment of a Mosque-Owned Enterprise (BUMM), the management of productive zakat, and the mentoring of microenterprises using a sharia-based economic approach. Meanwhile, the third trend places greater emphasis on the implementation of economic empowerment at the local mosque level. Basya (2023) found that the Al-Bayyinah Mosque in Jenu, Tuban, has implemented various economic empowerment programs, such as the "one pesantren, one product" initiative and canteen management; however, the mosque's role in the socioeconomic development of its congregation has not yet been fully optimized.

Based on these three trends, it can be observed that previous studies generally still focus on the socioeconomic functions of mosques, economic empowerment models, or the institutional development of mosques in isolation. These studies also tend to examine the implementation of empowerment programs without linking them to the potential of religious tourism as a driver of the local economy. To date, there remains a very limited number of studies that specifically examine the effectiveness of the Al-Mashun Grand Mosque as both a religious tourism destination and a center for community economic empowerment based on empirical field conditions. Thus, there is a research gap regarding the integration of religious tourism functions, mosque governance, and community economic empowerment at the Al-Mashun Grand Mosque.

Based on this gap, this study offers a novel contribution by analyzing the effectiveness of community economic empowerment through religious tourism at the Al-Mashun Grand Mosque in an integrated manner, through the integration of religious functions, religious tourism management, and the economic empowerment of the surrounding community. This study aims to examine the role of the Al-Mashun Grand Mosque as a historical site and religious tourism destination in promoting the economic empowerment of the Muslim community based on empirical field data. The findings of this study are expected to serve as a foundation for developing more effective and sustainable mosque-based economic empowerment strategies, while also enriching the body of research on economic empowerment based on religious institutions and religious tourism.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive design to gain an in-depth understanding of the economic empowerment of the Muslim community through religious tourism at Al-Mashun Grand Mosque in Medan. The material object of this study is the economic empowerment of the Muslim community developed through religious tourism activities at Al-Mashun Grand Mosque, while the formal object is the process, strategies, and effectiveness of the economic empowerment efforts carried out by the mosque's management, along with their impact on the surrounding community. The research was conducted at the Al-Mashun Grand Mosque in Medan, which was selected because it is both a historic mosque and a religious tourism destination with the potential to drive community economic activity.

The research data sources consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly through field observations, interviews with informants, and documentation during the research process. Secondary data were obtained from documents, archives, or journals relevant to the research focus. The unit of analysis in this study is the process of economic empowerment of the community carried out through the management of the Al-Mashun Grand Mosque.

The subjects involved in this study are individuals or groups directly relevant to economic activity in the vicinity of the Al-Mashun Mosque. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, taking into account their level of knowledge, involvement, and experience with economic empowerment activities in the mosque's vicinity. The informants consisted of members of the Mosque Prosperity Board (BKM), MSME operators in the surrounding area, local residents, and religious tourists. The criteria for selecting informants included: (1) being directly involved in the management or economic activities in the mosque's vicinity, (2) having experience or knowledge regarding the economic empowerment activities being carried out, and (3) being willing to provide in-depth information. Data collection continued until data saturation was reached—that is, when the information obtained became repetitive and no new significant themes or information were found.

Data collection techniques included semi-structured interviews, observation, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain in-depth data and allow flexibility in exploring information based on developments in the field. Non-participatory observation was used to observe social and economic activities around the Al-Mashun Mosque without direct involvement. Documentation is used to supplement research data through archives, official records, and various sources of literature relevant to the research subject.

The collected data is then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The data analysis stage involves data reduction by sorting and focusing information according to the research problem, systematic data presentation to understand the relationships

between phenomena, and the verification and drawing of conclusions based on empirical findings related to the economic empowerment of the community around the Al-Mashun Mosque. Data interpretation was conducted inductively by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under study.

To ensure data validity, source triangulation and method triangulation techniques were employed. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information from research informants, while method triangulation was carried out through observations, interviews, and documentation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The Al-Mashun Mosque in Medan is recognized as a historic monument that exudes both religious charm and profound historical significance. Most visitors express admiration for its visual grandeur, which is a harmonious fusion of Middle Eastern, Indian, and European architectural styles. As a noble legacy of the Deli Sultanate, this mosque serves not only as a house of worship but also as a representation of the glory of Islamic civilization and a vital cultural asset in the city of Medan. These aspects provide a spiritual experience as well as a lesson in history for every traveler who visits.

For its management (BKM), the Al-Mashun Mosque is an icon of Islamic civilization in Medan that has carried its historical identity since the era of the Deli Sultanate. Its location is highly strategic; it is not merely a physical structure for rituals but serves as a center of community identity and a hub for religious activities that remain very active. Therefore, this mosque fulfills a multidimensional role: as a sacred space for worship, a center for social and religious development, and a religious tourism destination with great potential to stimulate the local economy.

1. Religious Activities at Al-Mashun Mosque as a Religious Tourism Attraction

The research findings indicate that the religious role of Al-Mashun Mosque is not only reflected in worship activities but also serves as a key factor driving visits by worshippers and tourists. Based on observations, congregational prayers, Islamic study sessions, celebrations of major Islamic holidays, and religious activities during Ramadan serve as catalysts for increased visitor traffic to the mosque area. One activity that draws the public is the Ramadan Fair held throughout the month of Ramadan, where people come not only to worship and break their fast but also to enjoy the atmosphere and beauty of the Al-Mashun Grand Mosque.

This is corroborated by an interview with a member of the Mosque Prosperity Board (BKM), who stated, *"It's certainly busy on regular days, but on Fridays, during Ramadan, or on major Islamic holidays, the number of worshippers and tourists is much higher. Usually, nearby vendors also feel the impact because visitors come to buy food, drinks, or souvenirs"* (BKM Interview, 2026). This statement was also supported by a vendor near the mosque,

who said, “*When there are a lot of activities at the mosque, our sales are pretty good. Many visitors stop by to buy food or drinks after praying or touring the mosque.*” (Vendor Interview, 2026)

The statements from these two informants indicate that religious activities serve as an attraction that reinforces the function of the Al-Mashun Mosque as a religious public space. The presence of worshippers and tourists during various religious activities fosters social interaction that not only strengthens spiritual values but also creates economic opportunities for the surrounding community. The combination of sacred and historical values inherent in Al-Mashun Mosque serves as the primary catalyst for strengthening the local economy. The growing enthusiasm of local worshippers and international tourists creates a lucrative niche market for residents in the surrounding area. Economic activities—ranging from food vendors and souvenir crafts to the parking services sector—are growing in tandem with visitor numbers. Furthermore, the spiritual values emanating from the mosque’s activities help foster a business ethic rooted in honesty and social solidarity, which serves as the moral foundation for community-based economic empowerment (Yuliasih, 2021).

As a prestigious spiritual tourist destination, the Al-Mashun Mosque attracts massive numbers of visitors, particularly during major religious holidays and on weekends. The high level of interaction in this area demonstrates that the mosque serves as a dynamic public space for social and cultural exchange. The presence of visitors from diverse regional backgrounds reinforces Islamic identity while fostering a collective sense of pride among the community regarding the preservation of historical sites in their neighborhood.

This finding aligns with Mardi’s (2024) research, which explains that mosques play a role in community development through their social and economic functions. However, this study highlights distinct characteristics of the Al-Mashun Mosque, as its religious role is reinforced by its status as a historic mosque and a religious tourism destination. Religious activities not only involve the local congregation but also attract visitors from various regions, thereby expanding the mosque’s social function in community life. Thus, the religious role of the Al-Mashun Mosque has become a key factor in attracting visitors while creating a space for social interaction that impacts local economic activity.

2. Al-Mashun Mosque as a Driver of the Community’s Economic Empowerment

Empirically, Al-Mashun Mosque’s status as a religious tourism destination has a tangible impact on financial activity in the surrounding area. Various small businesses—ranging from food and beverage vendors to tourism support services—have emerged as a natural response to visitor demand. Based on research findings, the Al-Mashun Grand Mosque holds strong appeal as a religious tourism destination in the city of Medan. The Al-Mashun Mosque in Medan is a tangible representation of a spiritual tourist attraction with significant historical appeal. Travelers come not only to fulfill their ritual obligations but also to immerse themselves in the profound atmosphere of piety and to explore the history of Islam’s spread in the North Sumatra

region. This positions the mosque as an institution capable of integrating spiritual reflection with the enrichment of religious knowledge.

This appeal is further enhanced by the uniqueness of its architectural aesthetics. The grandeur of the building's structure—which blends Middle Eastern, Indian, and European styles—serves as a visual magnet for tourists from across the region. Visitors' eagerness to document the beauty of the ornamentation and learn about its historical background underscores that this mosque is a site of Islamic cultural heritage that offers significant aesthetic and educational value.

Based on observations and documentation by the management, the growing appeal of Al-Mashun Mosque as a religious tourist destination is evident from the number of visitors throughout 2025. In March, there were 219 international tourists and 5,560 domestic tourists; this number rose in April to 513 international tourists and 5,700 domestic tourists; and reached 761 international tourists and 5,400 domestic tourists in May (Uchie, 2025). In addition, the Al-Mashun Mosque is also one of Medan's premier tourist destinations, with 648,000 visitors in 2024, ranking second among the city's four main destinations (Zega, 2025). These figures indicate that the Al-Mashun Mosque's role in religious tourism continues to grow and has the potential to generate both social and economic benefits for the surrounding community.

These findings are reinforced by an interview with an administrator from the Mosque Prosperity Agency (BKM), who stated, *"Many visitors come not only to pray, but also to experience the history of the Al-Mashun Mosque firsthand. Especially during the holiday season or weekends, when groups from out of town and even foreign tourists also visit quite frequently"* (BKM Informant). A similar sentiment was echoed by another tourist interviewed, stating, *"I came specifically because I wanted to see this historic mosque. The architecture is different from other mosques, so besides praying, I also wanted to learn about the history of the Deli Sultanate."* (Tourist Informant)

Based on the statements of these two informants, the high number of tourist visits creates opportunities for the local community to provide various visitor needs, such as food, drinks, souvenirs, and other supporting services. From a community empowerment perspective, Jim Ife (in Sudjarwo, 2026) explains that empowerment is carried out through the provision of resources, opportunities, knowledge, and skills so that communities can increase their capacity. Similarly, Friedmann (in Lapotulo, 2026) states that empowerment is the process by which communities gain access to resources, enabling them to develop their lives and environment. This situation demonstrates that the existence of religious tourism as a local asset can serve as social capital, encouraging communities to utilize the environment's potential as a source of livelihood.

These findings are consistent with Faizal's (2023) research, which states that mosques have the potential to be optimized as a means of community empowerment—in social, economic, and religious aspects—to improve the quality of life for the community. However, this study reveals distinct characteristics: empowerment at the Al-Mashun Mosque is not solely based on economic functions

but is also supported by the integration of religious, historical, and religious tourism values, which serve as drivers of social and economic activities for the surrounding community.

Nevertheless, the study's findings also reveal that the religious tourism potential of Al-Mashun Mosque has not yet been fully optimized. The identified challenges include suboptimal vendor management, limited supporting facilities, and a lack of training and guidance for MSME operators around the mosque. These conditions mean that the economic benefits stemming from high tourist visitation are still largely developing organically and are not yet supported by targeted empowerment strategies. Thus, religious tourism at the Al-Mashun Mosque has become a key factor in attracting visitors and creating economic opportunities; however, collaboration between the Mosque Management Board (BKM), the government, SME operators, and the tourism sector is necessary to ensure this potential develops into a sustainable instrument for the economic empowerment of the community.

3. Mosque-Based Economic Empowerment of the Community: The Role of the Al-Mashun Mosque Prosperity Board

Research findings indicate that the presence of the Al-Mashun Mosque as a hub for visitors indirectly stimulates social interaction and dynamic economic activity in the surrounding area. The consistent flow of visitors creates opportunities for the growth of micro-businesses and raises residents' collective awareness of the importance of maintaining a clean and comfortable environment. As a driving force for the community's economy, the mosque generates market demand for various visitor needs, such as food, souvenirs, transportation services, and parking. This provides opportunities for the local community to increase their income through small- and medium-scale entrepreneurship.

Based on observations, economic activity around the Al-Mashun Mosque has largely developed organically through community initiatives in response to the high number of visitors. One business owner stated: *"When there are many visitors—especially during Ramadan, major Islamic holidays, or weekends—there are also more customers. Usually, people who come to the mosque also buy food or drinks around here."* (Interview with a Vendor, 2026)

These findings indicate that religious tourism has an impact on increasing the economic activity of the surrounding community. However, this increase in economic transactions does not fully reflect a comprehensive economic empowerment process. This aligns with community empowerment theory, which states that empowerment is not only related to increasing economic activity but also an effort to empower communities to develop their potential. The ultimate goal of empowerment is to create individuals and communities who are independent in managing resources and improving their quality of life (Tresnawati, 2021).

Based on the research findings, the Al-Mashun Mosque Community Empowerment Agency (BKM) has implemented several community economic empowerment programs, albeit on a modest scale. These programs include managing donations and

alms to assist congregants in need, providing small business capital assistance to vendors around the mosque, and holding bazaars during special occasions such as Ramadan and Islamic holidays. Program implementation is carried out through data collection of community members in need, BKM management meetings, and transparent and collective fund management. The principles of trust and transparency are fundamental to program management to maintain congregant trust.

Furthermore, the BKM's role in community economic empowerment is more visible as a facilitator and coordinator. The BKM helps regulate merchant activities to ensure they are more orderly, provides space for MSMEs to operate their businesses, and coordinates with relevant parties, such as the local government and managers of the area surrounding the mosque. The BKM also strives to ensure that ongoing economic activities remain in accordance with Islamic values and do not disrupt the mosque's primary function as a place of worship. This demonstrates that economic empowerment at the Al-Mashun Mosque is carried out with a balance between economic and religious aspects.

Nevertheless, these empowerment programs still have limitations because they have not yet evolved into forms such as entrepreneurship training, MSME mentoring, broader access to capital, or the establishment of mosque-based economic institutions. Thus, the economic role of Al-Mashun Mosque is currently more evident as a form of indirect economic empowerment—namely, the creation of business opportunities resulting from religious tourism activities—while direct empowerment through community capacity building still needs to be developed.

This situation contrasts with Mutalib's (2023) research, which shows that mosques can play an active role in economic empowerment through various productive ventures such as community cooperatives, health services, culinary businesses, and the management of economic facilities. Meanwhile, the characteristics of Al-Mashun Mosque indicate an empowerment model that is more heavily influenced by the appeal of religious tourism and the flow of visitors, rather than through a structured mosque-based economic system.

From an Islamic economic perspective, mosque-based economic development is not only oriented toward increasing income but also toward creating public welfare through strengthening community self-reliance. Therefore, the economic potential that has emerged around the Al-Mashun Mosque needs to be channeled through more planned management so that commercial activities can develop into a sustainable system for community empowerment.

4. The Historical and Cultural Value of Al-Mashun Mosque as the Foundation for Religious Tourism and Community Empowerment

Research findings indicate that the historical and cultural value of the Al-Mashun Mosque is one of the key factors that enhance its appeal as a religious tourism destination while simultaneously shaping the identity of the Muslim community in the city of Medan. The mosque serves not only as a place of worship but also holds

significant historical and cultural value in the lives of the community. Its existence often serves as a marker of the historical journey and the development of Islamic civilization in a region. In the context of the Al-Mashun Mosque in Medan, this historical value is evident in its founding, which is closely tied to the government of the Deli Sultanate. This mosque is one of the historical relics from the heyday of the Islamic kingdom in the North Sumatra region. Therefore, the existence of the Al-Mashun Mosque not only serves as evidence of the development of Islam but also constitutes a cultural heritage with educational value that must be preserved. This is reinforced by an interview with the manager of the Al-Mashun Mosque, who stated, *"The Al-Mashun Mosque is not just a place of prayer, but also a part of Medan's history. Many people come because they want to see the legacy of the Deli Sultanate and learn the story behind the construction of this mosque."* (Interview with BKM, 2026)

This statement indicates that the historical function of the Al-Mashun Mosque serves as a factor in fostering an emotional connection between the community and the mosque's presence. Based on observations, visitors not only engage in worship but also study the building's history, document its architectural details, and gain an understanding of the cultural values inherent in the structure. Al-Mashun Mosque also serves as a symbol of the journey of Islamic civilization and political history in Medan, particularly through its connection to the golden age of the Deli Sultanate. As authentic evidence of past Islamic governance, this mosque is a noble heritage that serves to preserve the collective memory of current generations regarding their cultural roots.

According to Widodo (2024), the preservation of cultural resources is not only aimed at safeguarding the heritage of the past but also requires community participation so that cultural potential can be developed and provide benefits for the social life of the community. This demonstrates that community empowerment is not solely focused on economic aspects but also encompasses the strengthening of social identity, the enhancement of cultural awareness, and community involvement in preserving and developing local values.

The findings of this study are consistent with Hana's (2024) research, which shows that mosques can evolve into social institutions with roles that extend beyond their religious functions. However, unlike that study—which placed greater emphasis on the economic management of mosque institutions—this study demonstrates that the distinctive characteristics of the Al-Mashun Mosque lie in the strength of its historical and cultural values, which serve as the foundation for the development of religious tourism and social interaction within the community.

The cultural values that can be observed and conveyed are clearly evident through the physical design, which represents the acculturation of Malay culture with foreign influences. The uniqueness of the dome and its ornamental details are not merely decorative elements but a visual identity that showcases the richness of Islamic art of its time. Thus, the historical and cultural value of the Al-Mashun Mosque is not only a symbol of Islam's past glory but also serves as social capital that can be developed to support religious tourism and community empowerment. Through proper

management, the Al-Mashun Mosque can serve as an educational resource for the public, students, and researchers in understanding the evolution of local culture and strengthening a sense of pride in the legacy of Islamic civilization in North Sumatra, without compromising its primary function as a center of religious life for the community.

Discussion

The Integration of Religious Tourism and the Economic Empowerment of the Community: The Role of the Al-Mashun Mosque Prosperity Board in Medan

The presence of the Al-Mashun Mosque as a religious tourism destination provides significant economic opportunities for the surrounding community, particularly through the informal sector, such as small-scale trade, parking services, and food businesses. The high volume of tourists and worshippers creates demand for various products and services, thereby opening business opportunities for the community to earn additional income. However, based on the research findings, this economic contribution remains at the stage of capitalizing on tourism opportunities (economic opportunity) and has not yet fully demonstrated a structured process of economic empowerment. This indicates that religious tourism serves as an initial catalyst for the growth of community economic activity but does not automatically lead to economic empowerment.

According to the research findings, one vendor near the Al-Mashun Mosque earns a gross income of approximately Rp2,000,000 per day, with a net income of around Rp700,000 per month after deducting operational costs. This vendor has been running their business for approximately eight years, demonstrating business sustainability, although their income remains somewhat volatile. Transaction volumes generally increase on Fridays, weekends, during Ramadan, and on major religious holidays, while they tend to decline on weekdays. This situation indicates that the sustainability of local businesses remains heavily dependent on the number of tourists and pilgrims visiting the area, meaning that the resulting economic activity is seasonal in nature and does not yet reflect sustainable economic self-reliance.

Regarding economic contributions to the mosque management, vendors routinely provide daily alms or donations. The amount of alms given is IDR 10,000 per day from Monday to Thursday, and IDR 15,000 per day on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, with adjustments based on visitor traffic levels. Vendors in the area around the mosque have obtained official permission from the Mosque Welfare Agency (BKM) of the Al-Mashun Mosque in Medan. The area used for trading activities is part of the mosque's land, so all economic activities are under the management and supervision of the BKM, the managing authority.

This situation indicates that religious tourism is linked to the economic activity of the surrounding community. However, increased transactions do not fully reflect the success of economic empowerment from a community development perspective. According to Rahman (2025), from an economic perspective, community empowerment is carried out through increasing business capacity, such as entrepreneurship training, local product

development, and expanding market access to improve community welfare. Similarly, Karsidi (in Setyawan, 2025) explains that community empowerment is an effort to provide motivation and encouragement so that people can explore their potential and take bold action to improve their quality of life. Thus, while the presence of visitors to the Al-Mashun Mosque has created economic opportunities, its impact is still predominantly in the form of increased trade activity rather than increasing the community's economic capacity and independence.

Fahmi (2023) explains that in modern management, mosques need to expand their role in supporting the economic well-being of their congregations through entrepreneurial and economic activities. This indicates that mosques have the potential to become centers for the management of social resources by strengthening productive enterprises, Islamic social funds, and congregation-based economic development. In line with this, Mutalib (2023) states that mosques can serve as institutions for economic empowerment through the development of productive enterprises and community economic services. However, unlike previous studies that emphasized the economic institutionalization of mosques, the results of this study indicate that the economic role of the Al-Mashun Mosque is driven more by religious tourism activities and high visitor traffic.

Based on the research findings, the BKM has implemented several economic empowerment programs for the community, although they are still on a modest scale. These programs include the management of infaq and sadaqah to assist economically disadvantaged congregants, the provision of small business capital grants to vendors around the mosque, and the organization of bazaars during specific occasions such as the month of Ramadan and major Islamic holidays. Program implementation is carried out through the identification of those in need, deliberations among BKM administrators, and transparent, collective fund management. The principles of trustworthiness and transparency serve as the main foundation for program management to ensure that the congregation's trust is maintained.

The role of the BKM in community economic empowerment is more of a facilitator and coordinator. The BKM helps regulate orderly vendor activities, provides space for MSMEs, and coordinates with relevant parties such as the local government and managers of areas surrounding mosques. Furthermore, the BKM strives to ensure that ongoing economic activities align with Islamic values and do not disrupt the solemnity of worship. This demonstrates that community economic empowerment is carried out with attention to the balance between economic and religious aspects.

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of the BKM's economic empowerment program is still in its early stages. Capital assistance programs, alms management, and bazaars have provided benefits in maintaining business continuity and opening economic opportunities for the community. However, when viewed in terms of increased income, MSME development, business sustainability, and increased community economic capacity, the program's impact is still not optimal. Increased vendor income is more influenced by high tourist visits, especially during Ramadan and Islamic holidays, rather

than by structured empowerment programs. Furthermore, the lack of entrepreneurship training, business mentoring, or business development evaluation has resulted in the BKM program playing a more central role in providing economic access and opportunities rather than building sustainable community economic independence. Therefore, program strengthening through MSME development, business mentoring, and collaboration with the government and relevant institutions is needed to ensure long-term impact on community economic empowerment.

Meanwhile, the impact of the Al-Mashun Mosque as a historical site has had a positive impact on improving the economic well-being of the surrounding community, although not yet optimal. The increase in visitor numbers has opened up business opportunities for small traders and service providers around the mosque. In addition to increased income, there has also been a shift in community mindset, who are beginning to view the mosque as a center of social and economic activity, rather than simply a place of worship. This change indicates a transformation in the mosque's function into a center for broader community empowerment. This change demonstrates a broader transformation of the mosque's function as a space that integrates religious, social, and community empowerment values (Hana, 2025).

The main supporting factors for the economic empowerment of the community at the Al-Mashun Mosque include the mosque's strategic location, strong historical and religious values, high visitor numbers, and support from the congregation and community leaders. These conditions have encouraged the development of various economic activities, such as culinary businesses, souvenir businesses, parking services, and other tourism support services. However, its development still faces several obstacles, including limited funding, human resources, coordination between stakeholders, lack of community participation, suboptimal vendor arrangement, limited supporting facilities, and the absence of an integrated area management system. Therefore, BKM plans to develop a more structured economic empowerment program through congregation-based MSME development, business skills training, trade area development, and strengthening cooperation with local governments, zakat institutions, and the private sector so that the Al-Mashun Mosque can function optimally as a center of worship, religious tourism, historical preservation, and economic empowerment of the community.

This study offers new insights into the economic management of mosques through the role of the Mosque Prosperity Board (BKM). The study by Nurhafni and Susanti only discusses the economic impact of religious tourism in general, while Hana (2024) focuses on the socioeconomic functions of mosques, and Mutalib (2023) examines economic empowerment through mosque economic institutions. In contrast to these studies, this research demonstrates that economic empowerment at Al-Mashun Mosque has developed through the integration of the BKM's role, religious tourism activities, and community participation in the mosque's vicinity. These findings reveal that the BKM not only serves as the administrator of worship but also as a facilitator that organizes economic activities through the management of productive infaq and sadaqah, the

provision of small business capital assistance, the regulation of vendors, and plans for the development of mosque-based MSME capacity building.

Furthermore, this research provides a novel contribution by identifying supporting factors and constraints in developing a community-based economic development based on historical mosque sites. Factors such as strategic location, religious and historical value, and high tourist influx represent key potential areas that have not been thoroughly explored in previous research. Furthermore, this study found that constraints in area management, limited facilities, lack of vendor management, and the absence of an integrated management system are key challenges in optimizing community economic empowerment. Therefore, this study proposes a concept for developing mosque areas based on the integration of worship, religious tourism, historical preservation, and community economic empowerment in an integrated and sustainable manner.

To optimize the potential for community economic empowerment, a planned and sustainable development strategy is required. This can be achieved through synergy between the BKM (Bandung Community Empowerment Agency) as the manager, religious tourism as a source of economic potential, the community as business actors, and improving welfare as the ultimate goal. In this model, the BKM manages the mosque program and area, while the potential of religious tourism drives the growth of community economic activity. Therefore, strengthening MSME development, business area management, and collaboration with local governments and other stakeholders are necessary for sustainable economic empowerment.

Theoretically, these findings reinforce the concept of community empowerment and the Islamic economy, which positions the mosque not only as a center of worship but also as a socio-economic institution capable of managing local potential to promote the common good of the community. In practice, the BKM needs to develop programs for MSME development, entrepreneurship training, and ongoing business mentoring, while local governments and other stakeholders can provide support by providing tourism facilities, strengthening access to capital, and collaborating on the development of religious tourism areas based on community economic empowerment.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the Al-Mashun Mosque in Medan serves not only as a place of worship but also as a religious tourism destination and a historic site that impacts the economic activities of the surrounding community. Religious activities, historical significance, and high tourist visitation are the main factors driving the growth of local businesses, such as food vendors, souvenir shops, and parking services. However, the economic empowerment that has occurred is still dominated by indirect economic empowerment—that is, economic opportunities arising from religious tourism activities—while the BKM empowerment program has not yet fully enhanced the community's economic capacity and self-reliance.

These findings indicate that the primary factors supporting economic empowerment include the mosque's strategic location, its religious and historical value, and the high number of visitors. Conversely, limited support for MSMEs, suboptimal area management, and the lack of integration of empowerment programs act as constraining factors. This study fills a gap in previous research by demonstrating that economic empowerment at historic mosques depends not only on the mosque's economic institutions but also on the integration of the roles of the BKM, religious tourism, and community participation.

This study enriches the field of Islamic economics and community empowerment by demonstrating that, at historic mosques, religious tourism can serve as a catalyst for the development of economic activity through the integration of worship, historical preservation, and economic activities. These findings address a gap in previous research, which tended to examine the economic impacts of religious tourism or the economic institutions of mosques separately, by highlighting the role of the BKM as a bridge between the potential for religious tourism and community economic empowerment. This study also has limitations, namely that it was conducted at only one historic mosque using a qualitative approach; therefore, future research is recommended to evaluate the effectiveness of BKM programs, develop mosque-based economic empowerment models, or conduct comparative studies at other historic mosques.

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