



# Mosques-Based Community Empowerment in Developing Sustainable

Rafika Afriyanti<sup>1</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> Universitas Terbuka, South Tangerang, Banten, Indonesia  
Rafika.afriyanti@ecampus.ut.ac.id

**Abstract.** Mosques, traditionally centers of worship, have historically served multi roles in Muslim communities, encompassing education, social welfare, and economic activities. In contemporary, mosques are increasingly recognized for their potential in community empowerment and sustainable development. This study explores the role of mosques as religious institutions and community empowerment hubs, emphasizing their potential in advancing sustainability amidst global challenges like climate change and energy security. The study aims to investigate the role of mosques in fostering community empowerment and contributing to sustainable development, addressing the gaps in existing literature and identifying best practices and barriers. The study method applied is qualitative, utilizing a literature review model. The data used is derived from a review of relevant literature focused on the research objectives. The literature review reveals three primary themes: (1) Mosque initiatives in community empowerment, (2) Contributions to sustainable development, and (3) Barriers and challenges. Mosques have implemented various empowerment initiatives align with broader sustainability goals, addressing economic, social, and environmental needs. However, challenges hinder the effectiveness of these programs. Although mosques play a crucial role in community empowerment, additional empirical research is required to explore the specific mechanisms through which these initiatives contribute to sustainability and to develop best practices for addressing common challenges. Mosques have a substantial potential to contribute to sustainable community development through their empowerment initiatives. While these programs have demonstrated positive outcomes, addressing challenges and expanding research is essential for optimizing their effectiveness. By leveraging their traditional roles and addressing contemporary sustainability challenges, mosques can significantly advance sustainable development goals.

**Keywords:** Community Empowerment, Empowerment Initiatives, Mosques, Socio-Economic Impact, Sustainable Development.

## 1 Introduction

A mosque is generally a place of worship [1]. However, it has served as cultural practices and community gathering in many societies. In the historical context of the mosque's existence, the mosque is not just a physical building (with all its beauty) [2], It has long been the center of community activities, including education, politics, the economy, social life, and culture [3]. During the time of Prophet Muhammad, mosques were not only used as places of ritual but also as centers of activities involving all aspects of community life [4]. Mosques have historically played a pivotal role in Muslim communities. They also act as the life centre of Muslims, where they act as a reference, knowledge, and social activities centre for communities[1].

The role of mosques have extended beyond the realm of spirituality, encompassing social welfare, education, and community cohesion. The mosques are not only limited to a worship place but also as a place to empower the communities, a place where poor people can enhance their knowledge and skills [5], a place to create employment, build purchasing power within the communities, improve the standard of living of the communities and many others. They also served as platforms for social reforms [6]. As places of congregation and influence, mosques hold substantial potential to foster community empowerment and contribute to sustainable development initiatives. This significant number of mosques, which have the capacity to bring people together, offers a promising avenue for developing sustainable initiative.

The world community currently faces two significant challenges, namely the issue of climate change and energy security [7]. The rise of many devastating impacts of this problem such as global warming, rising sea levels, extreme weathers, etc. requires us to take actions immediately [8]. The concept of sustainability has gained prominence, emphasizing the need for environmental stewardship, social equity, and economic stability. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is the international agenda which becomes a continuation of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), this agenda was made to answer the demand from word leadership in overcoming poverty, gap, and climate change in the form of real actions [3]. In the implementation effort of sustainable development, the initial phase has to be started through the community empowerment as the determinant of success [9].

Despite the significant influence of mosques in the communities, their potential role in advancing sustainability through structured community empowerment programs remains underexplored. Many mosques today are perceived as mere places of worship, neglecting their broader social and economic functions. This perception has led to a decline in the effectiveness of mosques in addressing community needs, particularly in sustainability. There is a lack of comprehensive research on how mosques can be strategically utilized to foster sustainable development. Therefore, there is a pressing

need to reassess the roles of mosques in community empowerment and to develop effective strategies that can optimize their contributions to sustainable development. Previous studies predominantly focus on the religious, social functions, and potential of mosques in community empowerment, with limited exploration into their capacity to drive sustainability and empower communities systematically. There are some studies highlight the sustainability design of mosques architecture [7] [10] [11] while others focus on fostering their roles in economy empowerment [1]. However, there is a gap in literature regarding their specific contributions to sustainable development through mosques- based community empowerment. This study aims to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis/ a nuanced understanding of how mosques can be utilized as catalysts in developing sustainability through community empowerment. By synthesizing the findings from various studies and incorporating new insights from case studies, this research will offer a state-of-the-art approach to mosque-based community empowerment in developing sustainability.

The study was conducted using a qualitative approach, utilizing literature review and secondary data analysis. Additionally, case studies of successful mosque-based empowerment programs will be analyzed to identify best practices and areas for improvement. By examining existing research and case studies, the study will identify best practices and propose a framework for mosque-based community empowerment in fostering sustainable development. The research will also explore the theoretical underpinnings of community empowerment and sustainable development, drawing on concepts such as social capital and participatory development.

Given the pressing global challenges of poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation, there is an urgency for innovative solutions. As communities worldwide face increasing pressure to find sustainable solutions, leveraging existing social and religious institutions becomes crucial. This study's findings will be timely and relevant for communities seeking to enhance their sustainability efforts through existing local structures. The innovation of this study then lies in its approach to the unique role of mosques in driving sustainable community development through empowerment. By exploring the dynamics of mosque-based community empowerment, this research can provide insights into how mosques as religious institutions can be utilized fostering sustainable development. The findings will also develop a framework for integrating mosque-based initiatives into broader sustainability strategies, offering significant recommendations for stakeholders, policymakers, practice, mosque management committees, and scholars interested in broader goal of achieving sustainable development.

## **2 Methods**

This study was conducted using qualitative research design, focusing on an in-depth exploration of the role of mosques in community empowerment and sustainability. Qualitative research is valuable for exploring the rich, contextual details and uncovering underlying patterns and themes that quantitative methods might overlook [12]. The data used in this research comes from the results of a literature review relevant to the focus of the study, and analysis involves systematically collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing existing academic literature, articles, and reports related to mosques-based community empowerment and sustainability. By synthesizing a broad range of scholarly articles, case studies, and policy reports, the literature review will provide a foundation for understanding the impact and potential of mosque-based initiatives in fostering sustainability.

This study is characterized as descriptive research, as it seeks to describe and interpret the roles and functions of mosques in community empowerment. The unit of analysis for this research will be the various empowerment programs and community development initiatives associated with mosques. This includes examining detailed case studies, program evaluations, and academic discussions that highlight the implementation and outcomes of these initiatives within different communities. By focusing on mosques as the primary unit of analysis, the research seeks to elucidate their distinct roles in promoting community empowerment. Data analysis will involve thematic analysis of the literature. Key themes and patterns will be identified and categorized to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of mosques in community empowerment and sustainability. The results of the data analysis are interpreted to compile conclusions and recommendations about concrete steps that can be taken to further optimize the role of the mosque as a community empowerment center through a system approach.

## **3 Results And Discussion**

### **3.1 Mosque initiative on Empowerment**

The word “Mosque” in English refers to all types of buildings dedicated for Islamic worshipping [5]. Shortly after the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) moved to Medina, the history of the mosque began. When he arrived in Medina, he invited his supporters to construct a mosque. The mosque that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) built in Medina, formerly known as Yathrib, served as the cornerstone of Islamic civilization according to Allah’s divine plan [3]. During the time of Prophet

Muhammad, mosques were not only used as places of ritual but also as centers of activities involving all aspects of community life, such as education, economy, social, and cultural activities [4]. In other words, mosques play a very important role for society.

In this context, there is indeed indication for utilizing mosques as centers for community empowerment. In the muslim country like Indonesia or Malaysia we can find mosques everywhere. In case, using mosques instead of classrooms because they are more accessible to poor communities, being widely available and enabling to offer entrepreneurship skill-building activities to a larger number of individuals[13]. In specific economic empowerment, mosques have some important role: (1) The mosque is the closest institution to the grassroots community [1]; (2) Funds from mosques can be utilized productively; and (3) Mosque is an institution that people relatively believe[14]. With those mosques role as its core, the mosque can evolve into an institution that not only strengthens religious beliefs within the community but also fosters socio-economic empowerment.

The review revealed that mosques implement a variety of empowerment initiatives aimed at enhancing community well-being.

Table 1. Mosques Innitative Empowerment

Inniative	Program Description
Educational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Islamic Classes[15]</li> <li>• Holding Business Training[13]</li> <li>• Holding skill training and visiting the field in business sites[13]</li> </ul>
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivering Zakat and Shadaqah (Charity)[15]</li> <li>• Cooperative [1][13]</li> <li>• Business capital loan [1][13]</li> <li>• Entrepreneur [1][13]</li> </ul>
Social Aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compensation for fatherless child,[13]</li> <li>• Indigent [ 1 3 ]</li> <li>• and School grant for disadvantaged congregations[13]</li> </ul>
Social Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• health clinics [13]</li> <li>• and counseling[13]</li> </ul>

These initiatives include educational programs, vocational training, and social services. Educational programs, such as literacy courses and religious education, are designed to improve individual skills and knowledge, fostering personal and professional growth.

Vocational training programs aim to provide practical skills that enhance employability and economic independence. Social services offered by mosques, including health clinics and counseling, address various community needs, contributing to overall empowerment. These initiatives demonstrate the potential of mosques to act as catalysts for positive change within their communities.

### **3.2 Empowerment On Sustainable Development**

The concept of "sustainability" is inherently complex, involving numerous interrelated factors that must be carefully considered from an operational perspective. Therefore, sustainable development integrates economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection. Thus, sustainable development is a process of change from the exploitation of natural resources, the direction of investment, the orientation of technological development and institutional changes to be built into an action that focuses more on future needs without ignoring the present [16]. In other word, sustainable development is essential to reduce the adverse environmental impacts associated with developmental activities.

The analysis highlighted the significant role of empowerment in developing sustainability. In the implementation effort of sustainable development, the initial phase has to be started through the community empowerment as the determinant of success [9]. Generally, empowerment means to enable or to permit or to leading people to learn to lead themselves[8].Then, empowerment must be orientated towards assisting the community in developing itself based on innovations already in place that are implemented in a participatory manner. In the case of fire prevention efforts by the Anti-Fire Community in Bukit Batu Sub-District, Bengkalis Regency, community empowerment takes place. Thus, empowerment is required to pursue effective collaboration between all parties to combat the impact of climate change, specifically combating air pollution and land fires in Bengkalis regency[8]. Given that conditions and social changes, there is a critical need for effective communication and community empowerment approaches.

The concept of sustainability development fundamentally, on three conceptual pillars, economic sustainability, social sustainability, and 'environmental sustainability [17]. As a developing country, Indonesia continues to grapple with severe poverty, which remains closely tied to its economic conditions; thus, efforts are needed to alleviate or at least reduce this economic sustainability issue. Muhammadiyah has positive and significant roles in sustainable development of Indonesia, including from the evaluation results of the restoration program of tropical forest ecosystem in East Borneo Province and social economic empowerment on vulnerable groups in Yogyakarta Province[9]. The Muhammadiyah approach, through its community empowerment program, has

effectively enhanced the knowledge, attitudes, and skills of the communities it has supported. The community empowerment approach was implemented by Muhammadiyah to encourage public participation in sustainable development [9]. This demonstrates that empowerment contributes in developing sustainability. Empowerment contributions align with broader sustainability goals and illustrate how religious institutions can play a vital role in achieving sustainable development outcomes.

### 3.3 Barriers and Challenge

Despite the literature highlights several positive impacts, it also identified various barriers and challenges on mosques based empowent or empowerment in developing sustainability. These aspects offer a thorough understanding of the impact of mosque-based initiatives on community empowerment and sustainability, while also identifying the challenges that must be addressed to enhance their effectiveness:

- The accessible, mosques should remain open 24 hours a day without restrictions, reflecting their role as continuous places of worship in the community [15].
- Although it cannot be denied that today there are mosques that have actively contributed to the empowerment of the people, there are still many facts that show that the existing mosques in various regions of Indonesia are still minimal in function [3].
- Lack in terms of the mosque management committee[1]. The committee members continue to discuss issues such as the absence of professional expertise, insufficient economic knowledge, and the lack of clear guidelines for monitoring and evaluating the mosque's economic projects. In cooperatives case, from a management perspective, there is insufficient support from the mosque's leadership, a lack of experience and proactive involvement in managing cooperatives, conflicts of interest, and minimal participation from the younger generation in sustaining the mosque cooperative's legacy[1].
- The cooperatives do not give any returns to the members, such as no common needs, limited modal and business resources, and non-existence of a comprehensive business plan[1].
- lack of support from the community, a lack of understanding towards the mosque's cooperation with the community, and a lack of exposure and awareness of the importance of cooperation [1].

Funding limitations frequently restrict the scope and sustainability of mosque-based programs, impacting their capacity to comprehensively address community needs.

Administrative challenges, such as insufficient infrastructure and limited management capacity, obstruct the effective implementation and coordination of these initiatives. Furthermore, resistance from community members or local stakeholders can hinder the advancement of empowerment efforts. Tackling these issues is essential for improving the effectiveness and reach of mosque-based empowerment programs and ensuring their successful contribution to sustainable development.

### **3.4 Discussion**

In this section, we discuss the results of this review on the mosques-initiative, empowerment, and developing sustainability. The review highlighted a variety of empowerment activities carried out by mosques, including educational and economic support programs. These initiatives are consistent with the broader objectives of sustainable development, as they address various aspects of community needs. The effects of those initiatives are apparent across multiple dimensions of sustainability. Economic development projects have demonstrated improvements in local economies, whereas social programs contribute to stronger community cohesion and social capital. These observations are consistent with existing literature on the role of religious institutions in advancing sustainable development.

Despite the positive outcomes, mosque-based initiatives encounter notable challenges. Constraints related to funding, administrative obstacles, and resistance from community members can hinder the effectiveness of these programs. Addressing these barriers is essential for improving the impact of empowerment efforts undertaken by mosques. Although existing literature offers important insights into the role of mosques in sustainable development, there is still a need for additional empirical research to elucidate the specific mechanisms through which these initiatives function. Future studies should investigate how different types of programs impact various aspects of sustainability and identify best practices for addressing common challenges. The findings enhance the theoretical understanding of the role religious institutions can play in supporting sustainable development. The data affirms that mosques, through their empowerment initiatives, can significantly contribute to achieving broader sustainability objectives. This theoretical perspective aligns with and enriches existing research on the intersection of religion and development. In summary, the literature review highlights the potential of mosque-based empowerment initiatives to advance sustainable community development. Nevertheless, overcoming the identified challenges and expanding empirical research are crucial for optimizing the effectiveness and scope of these initiatives.



## 4 Conclusion

The comprehensive review of literature underscores the significant potential of mosque-based empowerment initiatives to advance sustainable community development. Historically, mosques have functioned beyond their spiritual roles, serving as pivotal centers for education, social welfare, and community cohesion. This function as spiritual and socio-economic—positions mosques as crucial players in fostering sustainability within communities. Empirical evidence demonstrates that mosque-based initiatives, such as educational programs, training, and economic support, contribute to various dimensions of sustainability. These initiatives align with the broader objectives of sustainable development by addressing economic, social, and environmental needs. For instance, economic development projects supported by mosques have positively impacted local economies, while social programs have strengthened community cohesion and social capital. These findings support the existing literature on the role of religious institutions in promoting sustainable development and highlight the potential for mosques to act as catalysts for positive change.

However, despite these positive outcomes, mosque-based initiatives face significant challenges that hinder their effectiveness. Issues such as funding constraints, administrative hurdles, and resistance from community members impede the successful implementation and impact of these programs. Addressing these barriers is essential for enhancing the effectiveness and reach of mosque-based empowerment efforts. The literature review also identifies gaps in the current research. While existing studies have explored the religious and social functions of mosques, there is a need for further empirical research to investigate the specific mechanisms through which mosque-based initiatives contribute to sustainability. Future research should focus on understanding how different types of programs influence various aspects of sustainability and developing best practices to overcome common challenges.

In conclusion, while mosque-based empowerment initiatives hold significant promise for advancing sustainable development, optimizing their effectiveness requires overcoming identified challenges and expanding empirical research. By addressing these needs, mosques can more effectively contribute to sustainable community development, aligning their traditional roles with contemporary sustainability goals.

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