



Effectiveness of Infaq and Shodaqoh Empowerment in Religious Tourism Areas: A Study on the Menara Kudus Mosque

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Abstract. Menara Kudus Mosque in Central Java was established by Sunan Kudus in 1549 AD (956 H). The site merges Hindu and Islamic cultural influences and attracts a growing number of worshippers and tourists, resulting in higher infaq and shodaqoh contributions that require effective management to benefit the surrounding community. This study examines the effectiveness of infaq and shodaqoh fund empowerment at the Menara Kudus Mosque using a qualitative approach based on interviews with mosque administrators, local residents, tourists, and MSME actors. The findings show that fund allocation focuses on four major areas: mosque prosperity, facility maintenance, da'wah programs, and cultural heritage preservation. Interview data also indicate stronger religious engagement, expanded economic opportunities for local MSMEs, and improved visitor experiences. The synergy among the community, mosque administrators, and tourists creates an environment that integrates worship, heritage conservation, and economic empowerment. These results highlight the strategic role of infaq and shodaqoh in fostering social, economic, and cultural development within a religious tourism setting.

Keywords: Religious Tourism, Empowerment, Infaq, Shodaqoh, Menara Kudus Mosque

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INTRODUCTION

Religious tourism has become a growing phenomenon in the socio-economic context of Indonesian society (Hidayah, 2021). As a country with the largest Muslim population in the world, Indonesia has various religious tourism destinations that are not only spiritual centers but also have an impact on the local economy (Marsono et al., 2018). Menara Kudus Mosque is one of the famous religious tourism destinations in Central Java. The mosque complex built by Sunan Kudus in 1549 AD (956 H), has unique historical and architectural value, reflecting the harmonious acculturation of Hindu-Islamic culture (Akhmad, 2019). Every year, this mosque becomes a magnet for thousands of pilgrims and tourists, not only functioning as a place of worship, but also as a center of social and economic activities for the surrounding community (Indrahti, 2022).

In religious tourism areas such as the Menara Kudus Mosque, the phenomenon of the surge in the number of worshippers and visitors has had an impact on increasing the amount of infaq and shodaqoh (Antonio, 2022). The increase in visitors from both within and outside the country provides a great opportunity for raising funds for the community (Khairuddin and Ishak, 2022). However, without an effective empowerment strategy, this potential can be wasted (Amalin et al., 2023).

This potential requires effective management and empowerment in order to provide maximum benefits for the surrounding community and wider development of the community (Thompson, 2022). The effectiveness of empowering infaq and shodaqoh in religious tourism areas is crucial considering the high expectations of the community regarding the positive impacts that can be generated from the management of these funds (Fahmi and Zulhamdi, 2023). The empowerment of infaq and shodaqoh in religious tourism areas faces various challenges that require special attention. Effective fund management is essential to maximize benefits for local communities. (Rarasati and Priyadi, 2024). Weaknesses in the existing system, such as transparency in management, optimization of distribution, and development of sustainable empowerment programs, are expected to create a more effective fund management model, which can improve the welfare of local communities as a whole (Wulandari, et al., 2024).

Empowerment of infaq and shodaqoh requires comprehensive management and involves various parties (Alifia, 2023). This includes Menara Kudus Mosque administrators, the surrounding community, and the government/stakeholders. The goal is to design programs that are in accordance with the needs of the community and local potential. Ideally, infaq and shodaqoh funds can finance religious programs, such as maintaining mosque facilities for the comfort of pilgrims, pengajian activities with the aim of continuing the struggle for da'wah, and other religious programs (Murni et al., 2023). Effective empowerment does not only depend on the amount of funds collected, but also on how the funds are implemented for targeted programs (Muda et al., 2024). Empowerment strategies must pay attention to optimization of distribution, and development of sustainable programs (Fatony et al., 2024). Thus, infaq and shodaqoh are not merely instruments for collecting funds, but become concrete mechanisms to improve the welfare of local communities and create positive synergy between religious activities and socio-economic development (Adibah et al., 2024).

This study focuses on the empowerment of infaq and shodaqoh funds at the Menara Kudus Mosque as a religious tourism site for several key reasons.. First, the Menara Kudus Mosque

has historical value and social function (Hildayanti and Wasilah, 2023). Second, the strategic position as a religious tourism destination, the potential for collecting infaq and shodaqoh funds in this area tends to be high (Praatmana and Arsyad, 2022). Third, the empowerment potential of infaq and shodaqoh funds is not yet fully known by the community (Wulandari, et al., 2024). In this context, the study aims to determine the effectiveness of empowering infaq and shodaqoh funds in religious tourism areas, with a focus on implementation at the Menara Kudus Mosque. Given the important role of religious tourism areas as centers of economic and social activities that can encourage community participation in philanthropic activities, which ultimately lead to increased welfare of the local community (Markhamah et al., 2021). Thus, the Menara Kudus Mosque is not only a place of religious tourism, but also an example of professional and effective management of community funds for the benefit of the surrounding community.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Religious Tourism Area

Religious tourism areas are defined as areas or locations with religious and spiritual potential and appeal (Olsen and Timothy, 2022). These places have sites or locations with significant historical and religious cultural value that are of interest to visitors seeking a deeper spiritual experience (Huang et al., 2019). Religious tourism areas are not just centers of religious activities but rather multifunctional spaces where religious and cultural values interact to create a unique tourism experience (Ayorekire et al., 2020).

The main attraction of religious tourism areas is often found in historical buildings or artefacts with high religious value (Iliev, 2020). Mosques, churches, temples or monasteries are symbols of the area, where unique architecture and artistic details can attract the attention of visitors (Hammo and Al-Salam, 2023). These buildings are of interest not only to religious people but also to historians and cultural figures who wish to understand the historical and cultural context that surrounds them (Pillai, 2020). Social interaction in religious tourism areas plays a significant role in strengthening social cohesion and relationships between communities (Arizkha et al., 2023). Rituals, celebrations of holy days, and religious gatherings provide a space for people to share spiritual experiences. More than just a place of worship, this area has the potential to strengthen tolerance and understanding across religions and cultures, ultimately contributing to social harmony (Piramanayagam and Seal, 2021).

Religious tourism areas also have positive economic implications for the surrounding community. The increase in the number of visitors opens up new economic opportunities such as jobs in the tourism sector - from tour guides, facility managers, to souvenir traders (Junaedi et al., 2023). Revenue from visitors can be used to preserve religious sites, ensuring that historical and cultural values are maintained over time (Merciu et al., 2021). Thus, religious tourism areas play a central role not only in preserving religious and cultural values, but also in advancing the economic welfare of local communities.

Infaq

Infaq is a concept in Islam that is related to giving or donating property (Nasution and Aryanti, 2023). Derived from the root word "*nafaqqa*" which means to spend or expend wealth, infaq is basically the act of giving some of one's wealth for the purpose of goodness (Silastia et al., 2023). This concept is more than just giving material things, but rather a spiritual manifestation that strengthens the relationship between humans and God, carried out voluntarily without any specific quantity limits (Ja'far et al., 2023).

The scope of infaq is very broad and is not limited to just giving material things. Infaq includes all forms of sacrifice of wealth spent in the way of Allah, with a focus on awareness of social and spiritual benefits (Abdullahi et al., 2023). Infaq can be applied in various areas of life such as education, health, and social welfare, making it an important instrument in the redistribution of welfare and economic equality. (Hamzah, 2024). The main characteristic of infaq is its non-coercive nature (Umaima et al., 2020). Unlike zakat which has specific provisions, infaq is flexible and not bound by minimum amount rules. Sincerity is an essential element in the practice of infaq, where a Muslim is expected not to expect worldly rewards, but rather rewards and blessings from Allah SWT (Silastia et al., 2023).

In a socio-economic context, infaq is an important indicator of social concern and responsibility (Masyhuri et al., 2023). Its success can be measured by the increasing participation of society in distributing wealth for good purposes. Through proper implementation, infaq contributes significantly to improving social welfare, reducing poverty, and creating solidarity between people, thus becoming an important pillar in realizing justice and social welfare (Pahala, 2023).

Shodaqoh

Shodaqoh is a fundamental concept in Islamic teachings that refers to giving something to others in order to get closer to Allah (Kailani and Slama, 2020). This concept is not only limited to financial assistance, but also includes all forms of good deeds that benefit others. The uniqueness of shodaqoh lies in the intention of the giver which must be based on sincerity and without expecting anything in return, making it more than just a social act, but also a spiritual act to purify wealth (Munandar, 2024). Shodaqoh has various prominent dimensions, including moral and social aspects that are interrelated (Nur'aini et al., 2022). The moral aspect focuses on the importance of intention and sincerity in sharing, while the social aspect is closely related to the role of shodaqoh in advancing community welfare (Rogahang, 2024). This is reflected in the practice of giving zakat, infaq, and sedekah aimed at reducing poverty and social inequality, showing that shodaqoh is not just an individual act, but an integral part of a larger social system (Rosidi et al., 2023).

In the context of Islamic economics, shodaqoh has an important function in the distribution of wealth and reducing economic inequality (Saini, 2024). Its main goal is to ensure that every individual has access to basic needs and opportunities to improve their standard of living (Putra et al., 2024). The connectivity between moral and economic aspects explains why shodaqoh is highly emphasized in Islam as a way to build a just and equal society, making it an important instrument in efforts to achieve human welfare (Kunhibava et al., 2024). The implementation of the shodaqoh concept requires good understanding and management to achieve maximum effectiveness. This requires awareness and responsibility from every individual and institution in implementing shodaqoh according to its basic principles (Usman et al., 2024). With a comprehensive understanding of the definition and purpose of shodaqoh, it is hoped that a more effective and sustainable empowerment strategy can be created, which will ultimately be able to create a wider positive impact on society (Fuaidi, 2024).

Empowerment

Understanding the concepts of infaq and shodaqah serves as the foundational starting point for effectively implementing their empowerment system (Cokrohadisumarto and Sari, 2019). Infaq and shodaqah are concepts of giving in Islam that aim to help individuals or groups in the socio-economic sphere, where infaq refers to a form of obligatory and voluntary charity, while shodaqah is more directed at generosity without any time or amount limits regulated by law (Khasanah, 2021). A deep understanding of this definition is important because it is the

basis for formulating empowerment strategies that are in accordance with Islamic values and principles (Sarib et al., 2024).

The emphasis is placed on the utility aspect of infaq and shodaqah within the religious tourism ecosystem. In this context, empowerment can be defined as systematic efforts aimed at enhancing the capacity of individuals and communities to effectively utilize available resources (Syamsuri and Moka, 2021). The keyword empowerment here implies a process of active community participation in efforts to optimize infaq and shodaqah so that they have a real and sustainable impact (Nurachmadi et al., 2024). Thus, the effectiveness of this empowerment is highly dependent on how the definition of infaq and shodaqah is understood and applied in a broader context.

The definition of infaq and shodaqah empowerment also contains dynamic aspects that depend on the socio-cultural context of a society. In situations where religious tourism areas play a central role, empowerment can be interpreted as the distribution of spiritual and material resources to facilitate the welfare of the surrounding community (Markhamah et al., 2021). This aspect must be truly observed because the success of empowerment is closely related to effective and collaborative management between existing social elements, including mosque administrators, micro small and medium enterprises actors, tourists, and the community. This collaborative keyword explains the importance of multi-party cooperation in achieving the social mission of infaq and shodaqah as a whole.

The definition of infaq and shodaqah empowerment is not only determined by theory alone, but also by the practices that take place in society. The implementation of this concept is realized through various means, such as the development of education, health, and local economic infrastructure around religious tourism areas (Suryatmodjo et al., 2023). The presence of these programs has a positive impact on the quality of life and is able to increase active participation from the community as a form of real empowerment. The keyword active participation comes from the understanding that the community is not just a beneficiary, but also participatory in developing the potential for infaq and shodaqah managed in the area (Chowdhury, 2023).

Previous Studies on Empowerment of Infaq and Shodaqah

Several studies have examined infaq and shodaqah as tools for economic empowerment. Syahril et al. (2019) analyzed BAZNAS Makassar's participatory approach in fostering self-sufficiency among mustahik, while Arisnawati (2021) highlighted how BAZNAS

Pekalongan's qardhul hasan-based infaq program enhanced SME growth despite ongoing financial constraints. While these studies focus on institutional infaq management within zakat organizations, this research specifically examines infaq empowerment within a religious tourism setting, where interactions between worshippers, local businesses, and philanthropic institutions create a unique ecosystem.

Kalbarini and Gunawan (2022) examined Lazismu West Kalimantan's MASTER (*Skilled Community*) Program, emphasizing precise beneficiary selection and sustained mentorship to enhance economic mobility. Similarly, Putra and Rusdianto (2023) evaluated the OHM DARMAN initiative at BMT Artha Amanah Sanden, demonstrating how targeted zakat, infaq, and shodaqoh funds support creative economies. While these studies focus on structured empowerment programs within formal institutions, Sahman et al. (2023) explored a tourism-based village development model utilizing infaq and shodaqoh funds, showing positive impacts on mustahik welfare through increased household income, expanded business opportunities, and job creation. Unlike these studies, which focus on structured financial models, this research investigates the organic and multifunctional use of infaq within a religious tourism area, where mosque prosperity, community welfare, and cultural preservation intersect.

Governance and public trust in Islamic philanthropy were explored by Sunardi and Al-Kamal (2024), while Rarasati and Priyadi (2024) assessed mosque-based community development, particularly at the Jogokaryan Mosque LAZ. Turyadi (2024) further analyzed mosque-based LAZIS empowerment within Mosque Prosperity Councils (*DKM*), focusing on vocational training and capital assistance. While these studies emphasize structured mosque-based financial empowerment, this research uniquely explores how infaq and shodaqoh are managed in a mosque that also serves as a religious tourism destination, integrating economic activity and social development.

At a broader level, Syarifuddin and Trimulato (2024) examined zakat and infaq trends in Indonesia, linking their growth to crisis-driven awareness, while Sania et al. (2024) explored Lazismu's post-pandemic MSME empowerment. While these studies focus on macroeconomic and institutional aspects, this research centers on the localized dynamics of infaq and shodaqoh within a historic religious tourism site, where economic transactions between tourists and local businesses influence the sustainability of mosque-based philanthropy.

Unlike previous studies that focus on structured institutional programs, mosque-based initiatives, or tourism-driven community projects, this research provides a new perspective by

analyzing infaq and shodaqoh empowerment in a religious tourism area. Using the Menara Kudus Mosque as a case study, this study integrates mosque prosperity, facility maintenance, da'wah sustainability, and cultural heritage preservation into a holistic framework that aligns religious, economic, and social dimensions. By assessing the interactions between mosque administrators, local MSMEs, and tourists, this research contributes to understanding how religious philanthropy operates within tourism-driven economic settings.

METHOD

The research method used in this study is a qualitative approach. Qualitative research focuses on descriptive questions that aim to describe phenomena that occur in reality (Anggito and Setiawan, 2018). The qualitative approach also allows for changes to occur during the research process (Abdussamad, 2021). This research is categorized as qualitative because its main objective is to observe objects naturally without any manipulation, and the expected results are not based on quantity, but rather on the meaning and quality of the observed phenomena (Hermawan and Amirullah, 2016).

This study provides a detailed description of the phenomenon, specifically examining the effectiveness of empowering infaq and shodaqoh within the religious tourism area of the Menara Kudus Mosque. The qualitative descriptive method was chosen to obtain a comprehensive picture of how infaq and shodaqoh are used and allocated, as well as their impact on community welfare and local economic development. This qualitative research method allows researchers to explore in-depth aspects of infaq and shodaqoh empowerment by obtaining detailed data and information from participants who are considered relevant. Data collection techniques used in this study include in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis (Chatra et al., 2023).

In implementing this method on the research object, the main focus is on identifying existing empowerment models, as well as assessing their effectiveness based on sustainability criteria and socio-economic impacts. Researchers also consider various variables that influence the effectiveness of empowerment, such as local policies, community participation, and access to resources. Understanding these data sources is important because the research subjects are the parties who are directly involved and feel the impact of the empowerment process being studied, so they can provide accurate and contextual data on the phenomena being studied.

Primary and secondary data are used in this study. Primary data is obtained from interviews with research subjects, observations, and documentation as presented in Table 1. Researchers interviewed seven people, consisting of 1 administrator of the Menara Kudus mosque, 2 pilgrims or tourists, 2 local communities, and 2 MSME actors in the Menara Kudus area. Secondary data is obtained by researchers from sources or data that is processed from then provided by other parties. This study is sourced from journals related to the effectiveness of infaq and sedekah, information on the effectiveness of ZIS (Zakat Infaq Sedekah) fund management can be traced with secondary data.

Table 1. Informant Selection Criteria

No.	Type of Informant	Reason
1.	Management of Menara Kudus Mosque	To obtain primary insights on the effectiveness of empowering infaq and shodaqoh within religious tourism areas.
2.	Visitors to Menara Kudus Mosque	To explore tourists' perceptions of existing facilities supported by the empowerment of infaq and shodaqoh in religious tourism areas.
3.	Community surrounding Menara Kudus Mosque	To gather information on the benefits experienced by the local community resulting from the empowerment of infaq and shodaqoh in religious tourism areas.
4.	MSMEs in the Menara Kudus Mosque area	To assess the impact of infaq and shodaqoh empowerment on income generation for local MSMEs within religious tourism areas.

Observation technique is a data collection technique carried out by direct observation at the research location (Sujarweni, 2015). In a qualitative approach, observations cover various aspects such as behavior, actions, and interaction patterns that are relevant to the focus of the research (Hamzah, 2019). In this case, the researcher conducted direct observation where the empowerment of the program was implemented at the Menara Kudus Mosque. Observations were conducted by the researcher to evaluate the effectiveness of empowering *infaq* and *shodaqoh* funds in developing the Menara Kudus Mosque as a religious tourism area, as well as to identify factors supporting or inhibiting this empowerment process.

Interviews were also employed as a data collection method, involving the researcher directly asking questions to respondents, whose responses were documented through notes and audio recordings. According to Thoriquddin (2015) this method represents an interview technique. Interviews are categorized into two types: unstructured interviews, which involve broadly defined questions related to the research topic (Sedarmayanti and Hidayat, 2002), and structured interviews, in which the researcher asks a predetermined set of questions systematically based on a prepared research instrument (Indriantoro and Supomo, 2002).

This study utilized structured interviews, with research instruments consisting of a notebook for recording answers, a tape recorder to capture audio conversations, and a camera to document visual evidence of the interview process (Bungin, 2008). Interviews were conducted with seven selected informants who met the research criteria: management of the Menara Kudus Mosque, tourists, the surrounding community, and MSME actors around the mosque. Each informant was asked a series of questions designed to collect detailed information and to complement data obtained through documentation.

RESULTS

This study has conducted interviews with the management of the Menara Kudus Mosque, the surrounding community, visitors and MSME actors around the Menara Kudus Mosque with the following results presented in Table 2. The findings of this study indicate that the Menara Kudus Mosque has successfully implemented a structured and multifunctional approach in managing infaq and shodaqoh funds, integrating them into religious, social, economic, and cultural aspects. This result is based on the perspectives of four key groups: mosque administrators, religious tourists, MSME actors, and local residents.

Mosque Management Perspective

The mosque administrators emphasized that the empowerment of infaq and shodaqoh funds is structured into four main pillars: mosque prosperity, facility maintenance, da'wah programs, and cultural heritage preservation. The public relations officer of the Menara Kudus Mosque stated:

"We base our management of infaq and shodaqoh funds on four main aspects: ensuring the prosperity of the mosque, maintaining facilities, supporting da'wah programs, and preserving cultural heritage,"

This model is applied to ensure that the mosque functions not only as a place of worship but also as a religious tourism destination that benefits the local community. The administrators also emphasized the role of collaboration between stakeholders in optimizing the empowerment process. The informant added:

"Mosque administrators, local government, tourists, and the surrounding community all play a role in ensuring that the funds collected are distributed effectively."

Additionally, the historical and religious significance of the mosque serves as a key factor in its sustainable development.

"Considering its status as a cultural heritage site, maintaining the mosque's Islamic-Hindu architectural identity is just as important as strengthening its role as a da'wah center."

Tourist Perspective

Religious tourists visiting the Menara Kudus Mosque expressed appreciation for the improvements in spiritual and physical facilities, supported by infaq and shodaqoh funds. One of the visitor from Kudus stated:

"I really appreciate how the mosque management consistently presents quality ustadz in every study. They not only understand religion deeply but can also convey the material in a way that is easy to understand."

In addition to in-person religious activities, the mosque has also leveraged digital platforms to expand da'wah efforts. Another visitor from Kudus stated:

"What impressed me was how this mosque adapted technology for preaching. They have a YouTube channel for streaming religious studies and are active on social media. This really helps young people like us to stay connected with mosque activities."

In addition, the same visitor also stated that the structured economic zones within the mosque's surroundings provide convenience for visitors.

"I am happy to see how the environment around the mosque has become more lively. Local MSMEs are growing but are still neatly arranged. There is a special culinary zone, a souvenir zone, and everything is kept clean,"

Apart from religious activities, the well-maintained facilities were also highlighted as a significant improvement. The last interviewed visitor stated:

"Worship facilities are always in prime condition. The ablution area and toilets are kept clean 24 hours a day, and the prayer room is cool and comfortable."

MSME Perspective

The MSME actors around the mosque acknowledged that the empowerment of infaq and shodaqoh funds has significantly impacted their businesses. One trader mentioned that since the Menara Kudus Mosque's management improved, their small shop, which initially only sold

prayer beads and peci, was able to expand its offerings to include a wider variety of religious items to meet growing tourist demand.

The structured zoning system for MSMEs has contributed to better organization and increased sales. A vendor noted that:

"The impact is very noticeable for traders. In the past, visitors were only busy on certain days, but now, almost every day, there are always groups of tourists. Income has increased two to three times, especially during holidays or religious events at the mosque."

Similarly, food vendors in the mosque area have also experienced significant economic benefits. A local seller explained:

"The Menara Kudus Mosque is like a magnet for tourists. Every day, many visitors come to see the uniqueness of its architecture. Since the management of infaq and shodaqoh funds was used to better maintain the mosque facilities, the number of visitors has increased."

The rise in tourist numbers has directly contributed to the growth of local MSMEs. Another trader shared their perspective, saying:

"In the past, there were only dozens of visitors per day, but now there can be hundreds on busy days. What makes me happy is not only that the income has increased but also that the Menara Kudus Mosque is better maintained."

Community Perspective

The local community around the Menara Kudus Mosque acknowledged a significant shift in how infaq and shodaqoh are perceived and managed. A resident explained:

"The management of infaq and shodaqoh funds has become more professional. The significant impact of this program is a change in the community's perspective, where infaq is now understood as an investment for development, rather than just a donation to the mosque."

This shift in perception has led to higher participation in mosque programs. One community member observed and said:

"Religious programs that were previously limited to congregational prayers and weekly religious studies have now become more diverse and structured."

The enhanced quality of mosque facilities has also encouraged greater community involvement. Another resident stated:

"The ablution areas are always clean and well-maintained, and the prayer rooms are comfortable, creating a conducive atmosphere for worshippers."

The empowerment of infaq and shodaqoh has not only improved religious activities but has also strengthened socio-religious ties within the community.

Table 2. Summary of Informant Opinion Results

No	Sources	Key Opinions	Solution
1.	Management of Menara Kudus Mosque	The mosque implements a Four Integrated Pillars model, focusing on mosque prosperity, facility maintenance, da'wah programs, and cultural heritage preservation. Collaboration with local government, tourists, and the community ensures effective fund distribution. The mosque's Islamic-Hindu architecture is maintained alongside religious activities.	The “Four Integrated Pillars” model is applied: 1. Integrated Management: Proportional allocation of funds for the prosperity of the mosque, maintenance of facilities, da'wah struggle, and cultural preservation. 2. Multi-party Involvement: Involvement of mosque administrators, government, tourists, and the surrounding community in the empowerment program. 3. Preservation of Historical-Spiritual Values: Maintaining historical heritage while developing da'wah. 4. Local Economic Development: Optimizing religious tourism as an economic driver for the surrounding community.
2.	Kudus Tower Mosque Tourists	Tourists appreciate high-quality religious studies, digital da'wah expansion via YouTube and social media, and well-maintained facilities (ablution areas, toilets, and prayer rooms). The structured MSME zones contribute to a clean and organized tourism environment.	1. Spiritual and Educational Empowerment: provision of quality studies with competent ustadz, and utilization of technology (YouTube, social media) for preaching. 2. Facility Empowerment: Consistent maintenance of worship facilities (ablution places, toilets, prayer rooms). 3. Economic Empowerment: development of local MSMEs, creation of neatly arranged culinary and souvenir zones. 4. Cultural Preservation: education about the history of Sunan Kudus, and balance between modernity and tradition.
3.	MSMEs in the Menara Kudus Mosque Area	MSME actors report significant income growth (2–3 times higher) due to increased visitors. The zoning system ensures structured and accessible business spaces. Traders have expanded their product range beyond traditional religious items.	1. Management of infaq & shodaqoh funds: used for the maintenance of mosque facilities with transparency. 2. Preservation of historical values: maintaining the unique Islamic-Hindu architecture as a tourist attraction. 3. Economic empowerment: arrangement of trader zoning and support for local MSMEs. 4. Sustainable management system: maintaining consistent service quality and cleanliness.

5. Integration of Cultural Values - Making cultural uniqueness the main selling point.

Positive impacts generated include: increase in tourists from tens to hundreds per day, 2-3 times growth in MSME income, diversification of MSME products, stability of trader income.

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| 4. | The community around the Kudus Tower Mosque | The community perceives infaq as an investment for development, leading to higher engagement in mosque activities. Improved mosque facilities foster stronger socio-religious bonds and encourage participation in structured religious programs. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Professionalization of Fund Management: Changes from traditional management to a more structured and professional management system, thereby increasing public trust. 2. Transformation of the Infaq Paradigm: Changing the public's view of infaq from mere donations to community development investments, increasing a sense of ownership and participation. 3. Improving the Quality of Facilities: Utilization of funds to ensure that mosque facilities (ablution areas, prayer rooms) are always well maintained, thus creating a comfortable worship environment. 4. Community Involvement: Strengthening community participation in various mosque activities, thus creating closer socio-religious interactions. |
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DISCUSSION

Empowerment of infaq and shodaqoh has a strategic role in managing sustainable development in the Menara Kudus Mosque area. Based on the results of an interview with Mr. Denny as the public relations of the Menara Kudus Mosque, funds collected from infaq and shodaqoh are effectively allocated for the maintenance of mosque facilities, development of supporting infrastructure for religious tourism, and support for socio-religious activities. This empowerment aims to encourage active community participation in managing and maintaining religious tourism areas as a source of economic and spiritual benefits. This approach allows local communities to participate in the development of the potential of the tourism area, thereby accelerating local economic growth.

According to Siregar and Andriani, (2024) the empowerment of infaq and shodaqoh is not only determined by theory, but also by practice in society. Community contributions are not only of ritual value, but also become instruments of sustainable empowerment. The community around the Menara Kudus Mosque is very enthusiastic about supporting religious programs held at the mosque. This can be seen from the active participation of the community in religious study activities, commemoration of the night of Isra' Mi'raj, and other religious programs. This community support is very important in maintaining the sustainability of da'wah activities in the mosque and also as a form of concern for religious activities carried out by the mosque management.

Active participation from the community, as stated by Kahfi and Zen, (2024), makes them not just beneficiaries of religious activities, but also improves the quality of society in understanding religion more deeply. Based on interviews with the community around Menara Kudus, namely Mr. Ahla and Mrs. Afifah, the management of infaq and shodaqoh funds at the Menara Kudus Mosque is not only used to fund religious activities, but also contributes to improving the quality of religious understanding of the community and the development of moral values, ethics, and ethics. In addition, these funds are used to maintain and repair mosque facilities. This responsible management makes the community feel safe and confident to continue donating their funds, thus creating a positive reciprocal relationship between the mosque management and the surrounding community.

In this context, it is important for mosque administrators to continue to improve the quality of religious programs held in the mosque. This can be done by inviting competent speakers who

have a deep understanding of Islam, as well as organizing activities that are relevant to the needs of the community.

In the spiritual dimension, this program has succeeded in increasing awareness of worship among the community, which is reflected in the increasing number of worshipers for the five daily prayers and Friday prayers. Strengthening religious understanding is also realized through routine study programs and religious studies held by mosques, as well as the development of Islamic preaching and propagation activities that reach various levels of society.

The development and maintenance of the Menara Kudus Mosque facilities have the potential to make this location an attractive tourist destination, which in turn can increase the flow of tourist visits and encourage economic transactions in the surrounding area. This is reinforced by statements from tourists such as Mrs Dina from Kudus and Sister Rizma from Kudus, who appreciate the quality of the facilities and consistent maintenance from year to year.

Empowerment of infaq and shodaqoh funds in the development and maintenance of the Menara Kudus Mosque facilities, which in turn can increase the flow of tourist visits, is able to create economic opportunities for local communities to engage in small and medium business activities to support tourist needs. As expressed by Mrs. Ani (MSMEs quail martabak) and Mrs. Lajib (MSMEs Worship Equipment Shop), MSME actors around the Menara Kudus Mosque, their income tends to increase along with the increasing number of tourist visits. Public awareness and education about infaq and shodaqoh play a key role in building shared awareness about the effectiveness and socio-economic benefits of distributing charitable funds.

From an economic perspective, empowerment of infaq and shodaqoh has been proven to have an influence in increasing the income of religious tourism areas (Sriyono et al., 2024). This empowerment also provides space for local communities to actively contribute to preserving the cultural and historical heritage of Islam at the Menara Kudus Mosque. This contribution is considered to be able to strengthen the solidarity of the local Muslim community and encourage comprehensive progress in aspects of sustainable development, as identified in previous research by Humam and Hanif, (2024) regarding the management of tourism-based infaq and shodaqoh, this study shows that the management of tourism-based infaq and shodaqoh has great potential in improving the welfare of local communities, strengthening the economy of the people, and supporting sustainable development in the region.

In terms of social and economic aspects, the empowerment program has created a positive impact that can be seen from the opening of new jobs through the management of religious

tourism and other empowerment programs. This increase in welfare is inseparable from the management of infaq and shodaqoh funds used to maintain mosque facilities, so that they are able to attract tourists from various regions and even abroad who are interested in the unique architecture of the Menara Kudus Mosque which combines Islamic and Hindu elements. This shows that good mosque management is not only beneficial as a place of worship, but also a source of income for the surrounding community through the development of the MSME sector that supports religious tourism activities.

Overall, the empowerment of infaq and shodaqoh at Menara Kudus Mosque represents a holistic social transformation model that is able to strengthen the solidarity of the Muslim community and function as an instrument of sustainable development. With the support of previous theories and research, it can be concluded that the management of infaq and shodaqoh in this religious tourism area plays a strategic role in facilitating the sustainability of the development of religious destinations, while increasing the economic welfare of the local community.

Despite significant achievements, the empowerment of infaq and shodaqoh faces a number of challenges. Internally, limitations of the digital management system, low human resource capacity, and minimal program innovation are the main obstacles. External factors such as gaps in public understanding, low economic literacy, and regulatory complexity also affect the effectiveness of the program.

The structural challenges faced include the complexity of the bureaucracy in coordination between the management of the Menara Kudus Mosque and the Kudus Regency Tourism and Culture Office, limited operational funds to develop empowerment programs according to standards set by the local government, and minimal institutional support in integrating empowerment programs with regional tourism development plans. Analysis of these factors is important to determine how local government policies can more effectively support the infaq and shodaqoh empowerment program, as well as identify solutions to overcome various obstacles in the development of the Menara Kudus Mosque religious tourism area in line with the regional development vision.

The success of infaq and shodaqoh empowerment is supported by a number of significant internal and external factors. Internally, the solidity of the organizational structure, the commitment of the mosque management, and the capacity of competent human resources are the main foundations. External support in the form of high religious awareness of the

community, strong social solidarity, and support from the local government also strengthen the implementation of the program. The historical location of the Menara Kudus Mosque, the potential for religious tourism, and the accessibility of the area also contribute positively to the success of the empowerment.

CONCLUSION

Research on the empowerment of infaq and shodaqoh at the Menara Kudus Mosque has revealed very interesting findings. Infaq and shodaqoh funds, which were initially considered ordinary donations, have actually undergone a significant transformation. Through the right empowerment program, these funds have transformed into a real force capable of driving community development. The results of this study indicate that with effective management, community funds can make a significant contribution to the common welfare. Through an intelligent approach, these funds are able to drive various aspects of life, from increasing religious knowledge, mosque prosperity, to preserving culture around the Menara Kudus Mosque area.

This study found that infaq and shodaqoh funds have four main functions that are very strategic. First, supporting the prosperity of the mosque so that it remains alive and dynamic. Second, helping to maintain historic building facilities so that they are well maintained. Third, continuing the struggle for da'wah or the spread of Islamic values sustainably. And fourth, preserving cultural heritage that has high historical value. In optimizing the empowerment of infaq and shodaqoh funds.

With this comprehensive approach, infaq and shodaqoh funds are no longer seen as merely funds that are managed partially, but have become a real force for community development. The Menara Kudus Mosque has succeeded in proving that social religious funds can be a driving force for meaningful social transformation, where every contribution from the community has a real impact on building a better life. This research opens up new insights that social empowerment is not just about distributing funds, but how these funds are managed intelligently, and sustainably. It is hoped that the empowerment model at the Menara Kudus Mosque can be an inspiration for other religious tourism areas in optimizing the potential of infaq and shodaqoh as instruments of community development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author would like to thank all parties, including administrators, the community, tourists and MSMEs around the Menara Kudus mosque who have provided data and information related to the empowerment of infaq and shodaqoh in the religious tourism area. And the author would also like to thank BAZNAS (National Zakat Agency) for providing the 2024 Baznas Research Scholarship so that this research can be completed and be beneficial for all parties.

FUNDING

This research was funded by Baznas Research Scholarship No. B/4150/DPPD-DPDS/KETUA/KD.02.18/X/2024.

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