

From Da'Wah to Economic Empowerment: The Dialectics of Mosque-Based Digital Media Utilization in Strengthening the Community Economy

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ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 brought significant transformations to society's social, religious, and economic practices, including those within mosque and taklim assembly environments. Restrictions on physical activities during the pandemic triggered a shift in interaction spaces toward the digital realm, particularly through the use of WhatsApp Groups as a primary communication medium. This study aims to analyze the dynamics of WhatsApp Group usage by the Raudhatul Jannah Mosque Taklim Group (MTII) in Taman Nirwana Housing, Bekasi, which developed into a community-based economic transaction space known as Kios Ukhti Taman Nirwana. The research employs a qualitative approach using a case study method. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The analytical framework is based on Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's dialectical theory to understand the negotiation process between the sacred values of the da'wah space and the economic needs of the congregation. The findings reveal that mosque-based digital economic practices undergo a dialectical process consisting of thesis (the use of da'wah groups as buying and selling spaces), antithesis (rejection of the perceived shift in sacred functions), and synthesis (the formation of a separate, organized economic space). These results demonstrate that mosques hold strategic potential as centers for community economic empowerment in the digital era, provided they are managed through inclusive, participatory, and religious value-based governance. This study contributes to the scholarly development of da'wah communication, community economics, and the transformation of religious institutions in contemporary society.

KEYWORDS mosque, digital economy, taklim council, hegel's dialectic, community empowerment.



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INTRODUCTION

Mosques throughout the history of Islamic civilization have functioned not only as places of worship but also as centers of social, educational, and economic activity for the Muslim community (Alnajjar & Dinçel, 2024; Hadi, 2025; Karimullah, 2023; Syafi'i, 2025; Umam et al., 2025). In the early period of Islam, mosques served as integrative spaces connecting the spiritual dimension with the broader social life of society (Al Khalifa & Lafi, 2025; Alnaim, 2023; Hadi, 2025; Husni, 2024). However, in contemporary practice, the function of the mosque has often been narrowed to that of a venue for ritual worship alone. On the other hand, the socio-economic challenges faced by Muslim communities continue to expand, particularly within urban and digital contexts. The Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020 became a pivotal moment in transforming the religious and social practices of the community. Restrictions on physical activities, temporary mosque closures, and bans on congregational gatherings prompted religious communities to adapt through the use of digital technologies. WhatsApp Groups (WAG), as the most accessible communication medium, became alternative spaces for congregants to maintain social interaction, da'wah activities, and community solidarity (Kahfi, 2025; Lusiantoro & Pradiptyo, 2022; Rauf, 2022). In this context, the Raudhatul Jannah Mosque Taklim Council (MTII) in Taman Nirwana Housing, Bekasi, experienced a particularly interesting dynamic.

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Initially, WAG MTII, established in 2014, functioned as a communication tool for da'wah, coordination of taklim activities, and strengthening Islamic ukhuwah. However, as interaction intensified during the pandemic, this digital space also began to serve as a platform for economic activities such as buying and selling food, daily necessities, and household services among residents (Frid et al., 2024; Gan et al., 2022; Wu & Liu, 2025; Zaban & Plaut, 2024). This development sparked an internal debate regarding the boundary between the functions of da'wah and economic exchange within a religious setting. Some viewed this shift as a form of community-based economic empowerment, while others expressed concern about the commodification of sacred spaces devoted to da'wah.

This phenomenon reflects a dialectical tension between the sacred values associated with mosques and the pragmatic needs of congregants. Such tensions cannot be understood in binary terms but rather as part of an ongoing process of social negotiation. Accordingly, this study examines the phenomenon of Kios Ukhti Taman Nirwana as a social practice worthy of academic investigation, particularly through the lens of Hegel's dialectical philosophy and mosque-based community empowerment.

This research offers novelty in three aspects. First, it explores the practice of mosque-based digital economy activities within the context of urban housing communities. Second, it applies Hegel's dialectical framework to analyze conflict dynamics and their social resolution within religious institutions. Third, it provides an empirical contribution to the discourse on the functional transformation of mosques in the digital era.

Building upon this background, the study seeks to address three interrelated research questions: (1) What is the dialectical process involved in utilizing the WhatsApp Group MTII as a digital economic space? (2) What is the role of institutional management in balancing da'wah and economic empowerment functions? and (3) What are the implications of this practice for strengthening mosque-based community economies? The primary objective is to analyze the dialectical dynamics underlying mosque-based digital economy practices and their implications for community empowerment. The study's contribution lies in integrating dialectical philosophy with empirical observation of religious institutional transformation, offering both theoretical insights for scholars and practical guidance for mosque managers aiming to expand their institution's role in community economic development. The findings are expected to benefit academics studying religious transformation and digital societies, as well as practitioners engaged in mosque-based community empowerment initiatives.

The concept of empowerment extends beyond material assistance to encompass the processes of enabling, empowering, and protecting communities (Kurniadi, 2017). In the Indonesian context, mosques often serve as strategic social nodes due to their proximity to daily life. Previous research has shown that participatory mosque-based economic programs can enhance congregants' welfare and strengthen social solidarity (Rahman & Nurhayati, 2020). The rapid development of digital technology has reshaped patterns of social interaction and economic practice. The digital economy is no longer monopolized by large-scale platforms but has also developed on micro and community levels, including within religious settings. WhatsApp Groups have proven to be effective mediums connecting local producers and consumers, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic (Lim, 2021). Within religious communities, digital economic practices often intersect with moral and ethical

values of faith. Hence, governance sensitive to sacred principles and social solidarity is crucial to ensure that economic practices do not undermine religious significance (Campbell, 2013).

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design aimed at deeply understanding social dynamics, value negotiation processes, and mosque-based community economic empowerment practices within the context of digital media utilization. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study does not aim to statistically measure causal relationships but rather to explore the meanings, experiences, and social constructions that develop within religious community settings. The case study design enables the researcher to examine the phenomenon holistically and contextually, particularly the digital economic practices that have emerged in the environment of the Raudhatul Jannah Mosque Taklim Council (MTII) through the Ukhti Taman Nirwana Kiosk.

The research location is the Taman Nirwana Residential Area, which was purposively selected because the taklim assembly in this area is well organized and operates under a relatively stable management structure. The Raudhatul Jannah Mosque acts as a social node connecting da'wah activities, community solidarity, and the economic practices of the congregation. Therefore, this site is highly relevant for study from the perspectives of community empowerment and the sociology of religion, particularly in examining the transformation and expansion of mosque functions in the digital era.

This research began in 2024 and focuses on one main case—namely, how mosque-based economic empowerment practices are constructed, negotiated, and institutionalized through the use of digital media. Although the research process was conducted in 2024, the data analyzed covers the period from 2020 to 2024, encompassing the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic, the community's adaptation to social restrictions, and the post-pandemic period reflecting the continuity of community-based economic activities. Thus, this study is positioned as a retrospective qualitative longitudinal study, allowing the researcher to capture changes, continuities, and institutional processes of community economic practices over time.

The research subjects include the management of the Taklim Council of Mothers (MTII), the Mosque Prosperity Council (DKM), the manager of the Ukhti Taman Nirwana Kiosk, the kiosk management treasurer, and members of MTII involved as business actors and consumers. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, targeting individuals directly involved in, knowledgeable of, and experienced with the management, decision-making, and economic development processes of the Ukhti Taman Nirwana Kiosk. These key informants serve as primary sources for understanding the internal dynamics of the community and its ongoing institutional processes

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. In-depth interviews were carried out in a semi-structured format with key informants—particularly MTII administrators, DKM administrators, Ukhti kiosk managers, and kiosk management treasurers—to explore their experiences, perceptions, and both normative and practical considerations in managing mosque-based digital economic activities. Documentation served as a supporting data source to reinforce observational and

interview findings. The documents reviewed included management archives of the Ukhti Taman Nirwana Kiosk, simple financial records, annual contribution data, and relevant digital communication materials. This documentation helped trace the development of community economic practices more objectively and ensured consistency across data sources.

Data analysis was conducted qualitatively through systematic processes of data reduction, thematic categorization, data presentation in narrative and tabular forms, and interpretive conclusions. The analytical framework of this research draws upon Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's dialectical theory—particularly the concepts of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis—to interpret the dynamics of value conflict and the negotiation processes between the sacred nature of the da'wah space and the economic needs of the congregation. This framework enables the researcher to read mosque-based digital economic practices as a gradually evolving social process rather than a static or linear phenomenon.

Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and methodological triangulation. Source triangulation was achieved by comparing information from MTII administrators, DKM administrators, kiosk managers, and kiosk treasurers. Methodological triangulation was conducted by cross-referencing findings from interviews, observations, and documentation. These steps were undertaken to ensure internal consistency and scientific credibility of the findings while minimizing researcher bias in data interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses in an integrated manner the findings of research on the dialectical process of using the WhatsApp Group of the Majelis Taklim Ibu-Ibu (MTII), the role of mosque institutional governance in managing the tension between da'wah and economic values, and the implications of this practice on strengthening the economy of mosque-based communities.

1. Early Dynamics of Utilizing WhatsApp Group MTII

In the early phase of the Covid-19 pandemic, the WhatsApp Group MTII Raudhatul Jannah Mosque functioned as a space for da'wah communication, spiritual strengthening, and social solidarity. Restrictions on physical activity and the temporary suspension of face-to-face religious activities encourage worshippers to use digital media as the main means of maintaining social cohesion and the sustainability of religious activities (Lim, 2021).

As the intensity of digital interaction increases and the mobility of citizens is limited, spontaneous initiatives emerged from MTII members to use groups as a means of buying and selling daily necessities. This practice develops organically, based on social relations and trust between members. From the perspective of social capital, this condition creates an important prerequisite for the economic sustainability of the community based on proximity and solidarity (Putnam, 2000).

2. Value Tension and Dialectical Process (Thesis–Antithesis)

The use of the da'wah space as a medium of economic transactions has given rise to internal debate. On the one hand, the practice of buying and selling is seen as a form of social concern and a strategy for economic empowerment of pilgrims. On the other hand, there are concerns that the dominance of economic content has the potential to shift the sacred function

of da'wah groups and obscure the purpose of religious development. This tension reflects the dynamics of *the mediatization of religion*, where religious practices increasingly interact with the logic of the media and daily socio-economic needs (Hjarvard, 2011). In the framework of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's dialectics, this situation represents the thesis phase, namely the use of WhatsApp Groups as a space for da'wah, and **the antithesis**, in the form of a rejection of the potential shift in the meaning of the sacred due to economic activity (Hegel, 1977).

3. Institutional Synthesis: The Establishment of the Nirwana Park Ukhti Kiosk

Through a process of discussion and deliberation, the MTII management together with the Mosque Prosperity Council (DKM) established a synthesis policy by establishing **the Ukhti Taman Nirwana Kiosk** as a separate digital space that specifically accommodates community economic activities. The establishment of this digital kiosk is accompanied by the regulation of promotional airtime, a content curation mechanism, and a mutually agreed revenue sharing system. This institutionalization shows that the conflict of values between da'wah and the economy is not resolved through prohibition, but through strengthening local institutional governance. These findings are in line with a study of mosque-based economic empowerment that emphasizes the importance of local institutions in managing social, economic, and religious value relations in a balanced manner (Rahman & Nurhayati, 2020).

Table 1. Stages of Dialectic of Digital Economy Management MTII

Dialectical Stage	Description
Thesis	MTII WhatsApp Group as a space for da'wah communication
Antithesis	Concerns about the shift in sacred functions due to economic transactions
Sintesis	Establishment of Ukhti Taman Nirwana Kiosk as a managed economic space

4. Business Structure and Economic Contribution

The establishment of the Ukhti Kiosk encourages the diversification of micro businesses managed by MTII members and local residents, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Types of Businesses in Ukhti Taman Nirwana Kiosk

Type of Business	Number of Perpetrators (people)
Food	5
Drinks	4
Groceries	3
Frozen food, cakes, and snacks	4
Tas preloved	2

Type of Business	Number of Perpetrators (people)
Sports shoes	2
Gas & air mineral	2
AC & toren cleaning services	1
Laundry of clothes, shoes, and bags	2

The profit-sharing system for buying and selling profits is 80% for business actors and 20% for cash management) making a real contribution to financing mosque operations, such as electricity payments, facility maintenance, and other routine needs.

Table 3. Development of Revenue Sharing Contribution of Ukhti

Taman Nirwana Kiosk (2020–2024)	
Year	Total Contribution (Rp)
2020	8.800.000
2021	11.900.000
2022	12.450.000
2023	18.580.000
2024	20.900.000

The data shows a tendency to increase economic contributions that strengthen the institutional legitimacy of mosque-based digital economy practices.

5. Social and Institutional Implications

In addition to financial contributions, the existence of the Ukhti Taman Nirwana Kiosk shows an increase in pilgrims' participation in community-based economic activities. Members of the Women's Taklim Council (MTII) not only play the role of consumers, but are also involved as business actors and part of the process of managing economic activities. This involvement shows the growing sense of collective ownership of the economic empowerment practices carried out under the auspices of the mosque.

From the socio-religious side, the practice of mosque-based digital economy reflects a shift in the form of da'wah from the original dominant symbolic and verbal to praxis da'wah which is manifested in concrete actions to meet the economic needs of the congregation. The shift does not take place in a disruptive manner, but through a value negotiation process that maintains the boundary between the da'wah space and the economic space (Nurhadi, 2020).

Thus, mosque-based digital economy practices in the context of the Taman Nirwana Ukhti Kiosk can be understood as a multidimensional social process involving economic relations, institutional governance, and religious meaning. These findings show how religious institutions adapt to social and technological change through the internal mechanisms of the community, without having to give up the value framework on which their social legitimacy is based.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the use of the WhatsApp Group of the Taklim Council as a digital economy space is an adaptive response of religious communities to the socio-economic crisis during the Covid-19 pandemic. The practice of digital economy, which initially appeared informally and triggered a debate on values in the da'wah space, developed through the dialectical process of thesis–antithesis–synthesis. The tension between the sacred function of the mosque and the economic needs of the congregation does not lead to the blurring of religious values, but rather is successfully institutionalized in the form of the Ukhti Taman Nirwana Kiosk as a managed digital economy space.

The establishment of the digital kiosk shows that mosques cannot be understood statically as a mere ritual space, but as a social institution that is adaptive to changing social and technological contexts. The use of community-based digital media allows the expansion of mosque functions in the realm of economic empowerment without having to sacrifice their moral and spiritual authority. In this case, the practice of mosque-based digital economy represents a form of transformation of religious institutions in the digital era that was born from the process of social negotiation, not as a form of religious commodification.

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