STRENGTHENING FINANCIAL LITERACY AND INVESTMENT DECISION-MAKING THROUGH DIGITAL MARKETING CAPABILITY FOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT IN THAILAND.

Naili Amalia[1*], Mutya Paramita Pratita[1], Andi Subhan Husain[2], Yulianti Keke[3], David Pandapotan Sirait[3]

[1]2Department of Management, Faculty of Economics and Business, Slamet Riyadi University
Jalan Sumpah Pemuda No. 18, Kelurahan Kadipiro / Joglo, Kecamatan Banjarsari, Kota Surakarta, Jawa Tengah - Indonesia
[2]Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok - Thailand
[3]Institut Transportasi dan Logistik Trisakti, DKI Jakarta - Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: nailiamalia96@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT This study aims to strengthen financial literacy and investment decision-making through digital marketing capability for community empowerment at Masjid Prasert Islam in Thailand. The program was conducted using a participatory approach through training and mentoring activities involving mosque administrators and the surrounding community. The intervention focused on enhancing participants' understanding of financial management, improving their ability to make rational investment decisions, and developing digital marketing skills to support community-based economic activities such as UMKM bazaars. The effectiveness of the program was evaluated using a pre-test and post-test approach, which indicated a significant improvement in participants' knowledge and practical skills. Participants demonstrated better financial planning, increased awareness of productive investment, and the ability to utilize digital platforms for marketing purposes. The findings highlight that integrating financial literacy, investment awareness, and digital marketing capability can create a synergistic effect in strengthening community economic resilience. This program also reinforces the strategic role of mosques as centers for socio-economic empowerment beyond their religious functions. Therefore, this model can be considered as a replicable approach for community empowerment in similar contexts, particularly within Muslim minority communities in Thailand and other Southeast Asian regions.

KEYWORDS: *Financial Literacy, Investment Decision-Making, Digital Marketing.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of Muslim communities in Thailand is an important part of the social and economic dynamics in Southeast Asia, which continues to transform towards a community-based and inclusive economy. As a minority group, Muslim communities in Thailand face challenges in accessing economic resources, financial education, and integration into the digital economy ecosystem. Nevertheless, in the last few decades, there has been an increase in the role of religious institutions such as mosques and community organizations in promoting the economic independence of the community through community-based development approaches (Santi, 2025). This phenomenon aligns with the trend of grassroots economic growth at the Asian level, where the strengthening of the informal sector, SMEs, and social entrepreneurship becomes an important pillar in creating inclusive and sustainable economic growth (Canton, 2021). In this context, mosques are no longer only functioning as religious centers but also as social and economic change agents capable of mobilizing the local potential of the community.

Strengthening community-based economic capacity is a crucial issue in sustainable development, particularly for Muslim minority communities in countries like Thailand. Mosques serve not only as centers of worship but also hold strategic potential as centers for the social and economic empowerment of the community. The Prasert Islam Mosque, located in Tambon Bang Talat, Pak Kret District, Nonthaburi, demonstrates a progressive role as a center for community activities. With a management team of approximately 20 people and adequate facilities, the mosque actively hosts various activities such as MSME bazaars, regular Koran readings, and training sessions involving the surrounding community. These activities reflect efforts to develop a community-based, people-oriented economy, in line with the concept of community empowerment in international literature (Kurniawan et al., 2023; Mubarok et al., 2024). The mosque management's collaboration with various parties to improve managerial capabilities, including financial management, asset management, and development funds, demonstrates an effort toward more professional organizational governance. However, this significant potential still requires strengthening in financial literacy and more focused and sustainable investment decision-making. This is in line with the concept of community-based economic empowerment which emphasizes active community participation in the economic development process (Robinson-Pant, 2023).

One of the main challenges faced by mosque and community managers is a limited understanding of comprehensive financial literacy, particularly regarding productive fund management and sound investment decision-making. Although various economic activities, such as bazaars, have been running, financial management still tends to be conventional and is not fully supported by systematic financial planning. Furthermore, the ability to utilize digital technology, particularly in marketing (digital marketing), is still suboptimal. In today's digital era, digital marketing skills are key to expanding market reach and increasing the competitiveness of MSME products (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). The lack of integration between financial literacy, investment behavior, and digital technology utilization has the potential to hinder optimal community economic growth. Previous studies have shown that financial literacy has a significant influence on the financial behavior and investment decisions of individuals and groups (Atkinson & Messy, 2012; Lusardi & Mitchell, 2013).

Based on these issues, this community service activity offers a solution in the form of strengthening financial literacy and investment decision-making skills integrated with increasing digital marketing capacity for mosque managers and the community. This approach is carried out through training, mentoring, and practical simulations that focus on simple financial management, identifying productive investment opportunities, and social media-based digital marketing strategies. By integrating these three aspects, it is hoped that mosque managers will not only be able to manage funds more effectively and transparently but also be able to develop community business units sustainably (Fahmi, 2018). This approach aligns with the concept of social entrepreneurship, which emphasizes the creation of economic and social value within the community (Khatiwada, 2014). Thus, this capacity building is expected to encourage the economic independence of the Prasert Islam Mosque community and increase the mosque's contribution as a center for sustainable economic empowerment of the community in Thailand.

Through this capacity building, it is hoped that the Prasert Islam Mosque can become a model for mosque-based economic development that is not only relevant locally but also replicable in other Muslim communities in Thailand and across Southeast Asia. By leveraging the community's significant potential, providing adequate facilities, and strengthening managerial and digital capacity, the mosque can play a strategic role in driving inclusive, sustainable, and Islamic-based people's economic growth.

2. METHOD

This community service employed a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach integrated with capacity building and community empowerment frameworks to enhance financial literacy, investment decision-making, and digital marketing capability among mosque administrators and the surrounding community in Thailand. The PAR approach was selected due to its iterative and collaborative nature, allowing active involvement of participants in identifying problems, designing interventions, implementing solutions, and evaluating outcomes (Grimm & Shaw, 2007). This approach is widely recognized as effective in fostering sustainable community development and social change (Baum et al., 2006). The implementation of this program followed six systematic stages, namely: (1) problem identification, (2) program design, (3) training and mentoring, (4) field implementation, (5) monitoring and evaluation, and (6) reflection and sustainability planning.

The initial stage involved identifying existing conditions, potentials, and challenges faced by the mosque management and community. Data collection was conducted through direct observation, informal interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs). This stage aimed to explore key issues related to financial management practices, investment awareness, and digital marketing utilization. The participatory nature of this stage ensured that the identified problems genuinely reflected the needs of the community, thereby increasing the relevance and effectiveness of the intervention (Roth et al., 2008). Indicators applied in this stage are as follows: Identification of key financial literacy gaps among participants, Mapping of existing economic activities (e.g., UMKM bazaar), Level of participant engagement during discussions, Documentation of baseline conditions (before intervention).

Based on the findings from the identification stage, a structured program was designed collaboratively with stakeholders. The program focused on three core areas: financial literacy, investment decision-making, and digital marketing capability. The design process considered participant characteristics, local economic potential, and available resources. This co-creation approach ensured that the program was contextually appropriate and aligned with community expectations, consistent with community-based development principles (Santi, 2025). Indicators applied in this stage are as follows: Availability of a structured training module, Alignment between program content and identified needs, Stakeholder agreement on implementation plan, Feasibility of program schedule and resources

The implementation phase began with training and mentoring sessions delivered through interactive methods such as workshops, case studies, and simulations. The learning process adopted an experiential learning approach, where participants actively engaged in practical exercises such as preparing simple financial records, analyzing investment options, and developing digital marketing content. Mentoring was conducted to provide continuous guidance and ensure participants could apply the knowledge effectively (Oronje et al., 2022). Indicators applied in this stage are as follows: Increased participant understanding (measured through pre-post evaluation), Active participation during training sessions, Ability to perform basic financial recording, Ability to design simple digital marketing content

Following the training, participants applied the acquired knowledge in real-life contexts. This included implementing structured financial management practices, managing community-based business funds, and utilizing digital platforms (e.g., social media) for product promotion. This stage emphasized action-oriented learning, transforming theoretical knowledge into practical outcomes that directly impact economic activities. Indicators applied in this stage are as follows: Adoption of financial recording practices by participants, Initiation or improvement of community business activities, Increased use of digital platforms for marketing, Evidence of improved financial decision-making behavior

Monitoring and evaluation were conducted to assess the effectiveness of the program and measure its impact. Monitoring involved continuous observation of participant progress, while evaluation included comparing pre- and post-intervention conditions, as well as collecting participant feedback. This stage ensured that the program outcomes were measurable and aligned with the initial objectives (Organización para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Económicos [OCDE], 2020). Indicators applied in this stage are as follows: Improvement in financial literacy, Positive participant feedback and satisfaction levels, Observable behavioral changes in financial management, Increased confidence in investment decision-making

The final stage involved reflection and sustainability planning through discussions with stakeholders. This stage aimed to evaluate the overall process, identify strengths and weaknesses, and formulate future strategies for program continuation (Yang et al., 2025). The reflection process also explored opportunities for scaling and replicating the model in other communities. This aligns with the sustainability principle in community empowerment and social entrepreneurship (Yang et al., 2025). Indicators applied in this stage are as follows: Identification of follow-up programs or collaborations, Commitment from stakeholders for program continuation, Development of a sustainable community-based economic model, Potential for replication in other mosque communities.

Figure 1 shows the presentation of material as part of the community service program implemented by mosque managers and the community in Thailand. The following figure shows the presentation:

Figure 1. Mentoring session on digital marketing practices, where participants learned to create promotional content for community-based products.

In Figure 1, the community service team delivered material focused on strengthening financial literacy, investment decision-making, and utilizing digital marketing to support community-based economic development. The material was delivered interactively through discussions and questions and answers, allowing participants to understand the concepts more deeply and apply them. Participants' enthusiasm was evident through their active engagement throughout the session, demonstrating their interest in the material presented and its relevance to the needs of financial management and business development within the Prasert Islam Mosque in Thailand. Figure 2 shows a joint photo documentation session between the community service team and the activity participants consisting of mosque managers and the community in Thailand after the implementation of the program as follows:

Figure 2. Photo documentation session between the community service team and the activity participants

This group photo served as part of the final documentation, representing the participants' active involvement and the successful implementation of the community service program. The moment also reflected the strong relationship between the community service team and partners, demonstrating the participants' enthusiasm and participation throughout the event. Beyond documentation, this group photo served as a symbol of collaboration and shared commitment to supporting the sustainability of the community-based economic empowerment program within the Prasert Islam Mosque in Thailand.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of this community service program at Masjid Prasert Islam in Thailand demonstrates a significant contribution to strengthening community-based economic empowerment through the integration of financial literacy, investment decision-making, and digital marketing capability. The program was designed not merely as a knowledge transfer initiative, but as a transformative process aimed at improving participants' financial behavior and economic productivity within a mosque-based community setting.

The findings indicate that the initial level of financial literacy among participants was relatively limited, particularly in terms of structured financial planning, differentiation between consumption and investment, and understanding of risk-return trade-offs. Prior to the intervention, financial activities such as bazaar participation and small-scale business operations were conducted without systematic financial recording or strategic allocation of funds. This condition aligns with previous studies suggesting that low financial literacy often leads to suboptimal financial decisions and limited economic growth at the community level (Lusardi et al., 2017). Through the training sessions, participants were introduced to fundamental financial concepts, including budgeting, cash flow management, and the distinction between needs and wants, which serve as the foundation for rational financial decision-making.

The incorporation of investment decision-making material further enhanced participants' understanding of how financial resources can be allocated productively. The training emphasized simple and practical investment strategies relevant to the local context, such as reinvesting profits into small businesses, participating in community-based ventures, and managing risk through diversification. Participants demonstrated an increased awareness of the importance of long-term financial planning and the potential benefits of investment, rather than focusing solely on short-term consumption. This shift in mindset reflects the role of financial education in shaping more forward-looking and sustainable financial behavior (Organización para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Económicos [OCDE], 2020).

In addition to financial literacy and investment knowledge, the integration of digital marketing capability played a crucial role in enhancing the economic potential of the community. Prior to the program, the marketing of MSMEs products was primarily conducted through traditional methods, such as offline bazaars and word-of-mouth promotion. The introduction of digital marketing tools, including social media platforms, content creation strategies, and basic branding techniques, enabled participants to expand their market reach beyond the local community. This finding is consistent with the literature emphasizing the importance of digital transformation in improving the competitiveness of small and medium enterprises (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Participants were able to create simple promotional content and utilize digital platforms to increase product visibility, which has the potential to generate higher income and business sustainability.

Furthermore, the integration of these three components financial literacy, investment decision-making, and digital marketing created a synergistic effect in strengthening community empowerment. Financial literacy provided the foundation for effective resource management, investment decision-making enabled the productive allocation of resources, and digital marketing facilitated market expansion. This integrated approach aligns with the concept of community empowerment, which emphasizes the enhancement of both individual capabilities and collective economic capacity (Robinson-Pant, 2023). The mosque, in this context, functions not only as a religious institution but also as a socio-economic hub that fosters collaborative learning and economic development.

Another important aspect observed during the implementation was the role of participatory engagement in ensuring program effectiveness. The active involvement of mosque administrators and community members in discussions, simulations, and practical exercises contributed to a higher level of understanding and ownership of the program outcomes. This supports the argument that participatory approaches are essential in achieving sustainable development outcomes, as they encourage local ownership and continuous engagement (Baum et al., 2006).

Despite the positive outcomes, several challenges were identified during the implementation process. These include varying levels of participant readiness in adopting digital technology, limited time for intensive training, and the need for continuous mentoring to ensure long-term sustainability. Therefore, future programs should consider incorporating extended mentoring phases and developing structured follow-up mechanisms to reinforce the knowledge and skills acquired during the training.

Overall, the implementation of this community service program highlights the importance of an integrated and participatory approach in strengthening community-based economic empowerment. By combining financial literacy, investment decision-making, and digital marketing capability, the program provides a holistic framework that can be replicated in other mosque-based communities, both within Thailand and in broader Southeast Asian contexts. This approach not only enhances economic resilience but also contributes to the development of sustainable and inclusive community economies.

4. CONCLUSION

The implementation of the community service program at Masjid Prasert Islam in Thailand demonstrates that an integrated approach combining financial literacy, investment decision-making, and digital marketing capability can effectively strengthen community-based economic empowerment. The program successfully enhanced participants’ understanding of financial management, improved their ability to make more rational and forward-looking investment decisions, and increased their capacity to utilize digital platforms for marketing community-based products. These improvements were evidenced through pre- and post-evaluation results, as well as observable changes in participants’ practical skills and financial behavior.

Furthermore, the application of a participatory and experiential learning approach, supported by continuous mentoring, proved to be instrumental in ensuring that knowledge transfer was not only understood conceptually but also applied in real-life economic activities. The mosque, in this context, has demonstrated its strategic role as a center for socio-economic development, extending beyond its religious function to become a hub for community empowerment and collaborative economic initiatives.

Despite the positive outcomes, the program also identified several challenges, including varying levels of digital readiness among participants and the need for sustained assistance to ensure long-term impact. Therefore, future initiatives should emphasize continuous mentoring, the development of structured follow-up programs, and the strengthening of institutional collaboration to sustain and scale the impact of the intervention.

In conclusion, this program provides a replicable model for mosque-based community empowerment, particularly in minority Muslim contexts such as Thailand and other regions in Southeast Asia. By integrating financial literacy, investment awareness, and digital marketing capability, the program contributes not only to improving individual competencies but also to fostering sustainable and inclusive economic development at the community level.

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