



Islamic Community Development through the TRENDI Movement: Empowering Sugarcane Farmers in West Sumatra

Mahlil Bunaiya¹, Zelfeni Wimra²

¹² Imam Bonjol State Islamic University of Padang, Indonesia

Correspondence Email : mahlilbunaiya@uinib.ac.id

| Recieved: 29 - April - 2026 | Recieved: 30- Mei - 2026 | Published: 03 - Juni - 2026

ABSTRACT

This study examines the model of Islamic community development based on local commodities through the TRENDI (Tebu Aren Indonesia) movement in Nagari Bukik Batabuah, Agam Regency. The research employs a qualitative inquiry and research design with a case study approach conducted over three months (January–March 2026). Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation involving community producers, traditional actors, innovators, and institutional leaders. The findings reveal that the main challenges faced by sugarcane farmers are structural dependency on middlemen, limited innovation, and low economic literacy, which hinder value creation. The TRENDI movement addresses these issues through an integrated approach combining traditional values, empowerment, and literacy, leading to increased capacity, product innovation, and improved bargaining position. This study formulates a model of Islamic community development based on three pillars: strengthening communal values, innovation-based economic empowerment, and capacity building. The study concludes that sustainable economic independence can be achieved through the integration of social values, knowledge, and innovation within a community-based framework.

Key Word: Islamic community development; local commodity; empowerment; sugarcane farmers; TRENDI.

INTRODUCTION

The paradox of rural development remains an inescapable reality: communities live amidst abundant natural resources, yet have not yet been able to convert these into sustainable economic prosperity (He & Chen, 2024). This situation is commonly found in communities reliant on local commodities that remain trapped in conventional production patterns, with limited innovation, market access and management capacity. As a result, communities tend to rely on external parties such as middlemen, which weakens their bargaining position and limits opportunities for economic value addition

(Bondy et al., 2025; Grant & Startz, 2022). This phenomenon is evident among the sugarcane farming community in Nagari Bukik Batabuah, Canduang Sub-district, Agam Regency, West Sumatra. Sugar cane, which is processed into brown sugar (*saka tabu*), is the main source of livelihood; however, production practices lacking in innovation mean that the product's value-added remains low. Reliance on middlemen as the primary distribution channel results in unstable selling prices that tend to be determined unilaterally, leading to stagnant farmer incomes.

Preliminary research data gathered through interviews on 24 January indicates that the issue is not only structural in nature, but is also linked to limited capacity and economic literacy. Salmi revealed that *Farmers have no alternative but to sell their produce in its raw form at unpredictable prices*. Meanwhile, Syafri emphasised that *limited knowledge regarding further processing and market access are the main obstacles to increasing the added value of sugarcane*. From an institutional perspective, Miftahul Khairi, Director of the TRENDI Cooperative, *stressed that the main issue lies not solely in production, but in the weak integration between knowledge, innovation and market access, which prevents local potential from developing to its full extent*. These initial findings suggest that the problems faced by the community are multidimensional, encompassing structural, capacity, and local economic system aspects.

From the perspective of Islamic community development, this situation reflects a gap between the potential of resources and the community's ability to manage them productively and sustainably. Yet, values such as *ta'āwun* (cooperation), *tamkīn* (empowerment), and economic self-reliance are fundamental principles in building collective well-being (Alenaizi & Stachowicz-Stanusch, 2024; Srivastava & Agarwal, 2024). Therefore, an approach is required that is not only focused on increasing production, but also on strengthening the community's capacity, literacy, and socio-economic structures.

In response to these conditions, a community-led initiative has emerged through the TRENDI (Tebu Aren Indonesia) organisation, which integrates traditional values, empowerment and literacy into the development of an economy based on local commodities. Through product innovations such as palm sugar and community capacity-building, TRENDI seeks to drive a transformation from dependency towards community-based economic self-reliance. Although numerous studies have been conducted on community empowerment, the majority remain top-down in nature and have not yet integrated local commodities, socio-religious values and empowerment strategies into a single operational model (Fanani & Pohl, 2024; Lubis et al., 2020; Surbakti et al., 2026). This article therefore proceeds from the hypothesis that the development of Islamic communities based on local commodities can serve as an effective model for enhancing economic self-reliance, provided it is underpinned by the integration of traditional values, empowerment and literacy.

The novelty of this research lies in the formulation of a community-based model for the development of Islamic society that integrates these three elements in a contextually appropriate manner. Consequently, the aim of this study is to analyse the model for the development of Islamic society implemented through the TRENDI movement and to examine its contribution to enhancing the economic self-reliance of sugarcane farmers in Nagari Bukik Batabuah.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative inquiry and research design using a case study research strategy, as outlined by John W. Creswell (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018), which aims to gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon within a real-world context. This method was used to analyse a model of Islamic community development based on local commodities through the TRENDI movement in Nagari Bukik Batabuah. The research was conducted over a three-month period, from January to March 2026, to capture the dynamics of community empowerment and economic transformation. Informants were selected using purposive sampling in line with the characteristics of qualitative research, taking into account their direct involvement in production and empowerment activities. The informants comprised Salmi and Syafri as palm sugar producers, Muslimin and Yurnita as practitioners of traditional production, Miftahul Khairi as Director of the TRENDI Cooperative, and Helmitar Yulia as the innovator of the Saka Boba product. This diversity of informants enabled a comprehensive exploration of the phenomenon from various perspectives.

The primary research instrument was the researcher as a human instrument, supported by semi-structured interview guidelines, observation and documentation. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews, field observations and documentary studies. Initial interviews were conducted on 24 January as a pre-research phase, followed by further interviews to deepen the data. Observations were carried out on a limited participatory basis to understand production practices and empowerment activities, whilst documentation was used as supporting data. Data analysis was conducted inductively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data was categorised into main themes, namely socio-economic problems, traditional practices, product innovation, and the TRENDI empowerment model, and then analysed to establish patterns of relationships between categories. Furthermore, data validity was ensured through triangulation of sources and methods, as well as cross-confirmation among informants to ensure consistency of findings. Hypothesis testing was conducted interpretatively by assessing the alignment between the initial hypothesis and the empirical data. Similarly, data presentation was carried out thematically in the form of descriptive-analytical narratives, emphasising the formulation of a model for the development of Islamic communities based on local commodities, derived from the practices of the TRENDI movement.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the Village of Bukik Batabuah and the Economic Structure of Sugar Cane Farmers

The village of Bukik Batabuah, situated in Canduang Sub-district, Agam Regency, West Sumatra, is an agricultural area whose economy is centred on the farming sector, particularly the sugarcane industry. Geographically and socially, this village retains a strong community structure that upholds communal values, such as mutual aid and collective work, which are hallmarks of Minangkabau society. However, in economic terms, the potential of these local commodities has not yet been fully converted into sustainable prosperity (Asyari et al., 2024).

Sugar cane, as a primary commodity, has long been processed into brown sugar (saka tabu) using traditional production methods passed down through the generations. This process generally involves the stages of sugarcane pressing, cooking the sap, and moulding the sugar into a solid form. Although this process is relatively simple and does not require advanced technology, these limitations are actually one of the factors hindering improvements in the quality and quantity of production. The small, household-based scale of production means that the resulting products tend to be non-standardised, both in terms of quality and packaging, making it difficult to compete in wider markets (Novitri & Midawati, 2024).

The economic structure of sugarcane farmers in this village reveals a pattern of considerable dependence on middlemen. In practice, middlemen act not only as buyers, but also as price setters and the primary link to the market. Farmers generally lack direct access to end consumers, leaving them in a weak bargaining position. This situation is exacerbated by short-term economic pressures that force farmers to sell their produce immediately, even at relatively low prices (Novitri & Midawati, 2024). Consequently, the economic relationships that develop tend to be asymmetrical and disadvantageous to farmers. Field findings show that traditional production methods remain the dominant choice among the local community. Muslimin and Yurnita, as practitioners of traditional sugarcane production, state that *the method currently in use is a legacy from previous generations and is considered the most feasible option given the existing constraints* (Interview with Muslimin and Yurnita, sugarcane farmers from Bukik Batabuah, 20 February 2026). They acknowledge that, although there is potential to develop products, limited access to technology, capital and information remains a major obstacle. Furthermore, the risk of failure when trying new methods is also a factor that leads people to tend to stick to old ways.

From an economic perspective, this traditional production model results in low value added for sugarcane. The products are generally sold as raw brown sugar without any differentiation or innovation. Consequently, the selling price of the products is heavily dependent on market fluctuations controlled by external parties. This indicates that the community has not yet been able to internalise the value creation process (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2018) in the production chain, with the result that commodities which actually have high potential do not have a significant impact on increasing income. In addition to factors of production and distribution, economic literacy is also a key aspect in understanding the economic structure of a community. Based on field observations, the majority of business operators do not yet have a sufficient understanding of marketing strategies, product packaging, or business diversification. Knowledge of broader market opportunities, including modern and digital markets, remains very limited. This situation indicates that the challenges faced are not merely technical in nature, but also relate to the community's cognitive capacity and access to information.

From a development analysis perspective, this situation can be categorised as a form of low-level equilibrium trap (Chakraborty & Chakraborty, 2018; Hembram et al., 2019), where communities find themselves trapped in a cycle of stagnation due to limited resources, capacity and access. These constraints reinforce one another and create structural barriers that are difficult to overcome without systematic external or internal intervention. In other words, the significant potential of local commodities does not automatically lead to prosperity without transformative mechanisms capable of reshaping the existing economic structure. Nevertheless, despite these limitations, there

is considerable social potential that serves as a foundation for community development. The communal values that remain intact open up opportunities to build a collective-based empowerment model. This is important because, in many cases, the success of community development is determined not only by economic factors, but also by the social and cultural forces that underpin the process of change.

Thus, the profile of Nagari Bukik Batabuah reveals two contrasting sides: on the one hand, there is significant potential in terms of commodities and social strength; on the other, there are structural limitations and capacity constraints that hinder economic transformation. It is this tension between potential and limitations that subsequently became the starting point for the need for a community development model that is not only production-oriented, but also focuses on empowerment, innovation, and the comprehensive strengthening of community capacity.

Structural Problems and Community Capacity Constraints

The challenges faced by sugarcane farmers in Nagari Bukik Batabuah cannot be understood in isolation as merely a production issue; rather, they are the result of a complex interplay between economic structures, capacity constraints and limited access to strategic resources. These problems are systemic and multi-layered, creating a state of stagnation that is difficult to overcome without targeted intervention. In this context, stagnation is characterised not only by low productivity or income, but also by limited socio-economic mobility among farmers, a lack of innovation in cultivation and processing practices, and a weak bargaining position within the overall sugarcane value chain.

On closer inspection, the local economic structure reveals an imbalance in the relationship between primary producers (farmers) and downstream market actors. Farmers are in the most vulnerable position because they are dependent not only on crop yields, but also on price fluctuations that are opaque and often unfavourable. Limited capacity, in terms of technical knowledge, business management, and access to processing technology, further restricts farmers' opportunities to increase the value added of their products. On the other hand, access to strategic resources such as formal capital, market information, and wider distribution networks remains severely limited (Jovanovic & Menkveld, 2011). This leads farmers to tend to persist with traditional production patterns that are inefficient and uncompetitive. One of the main problems that has emerged is structural dependence on middlemen within the distribution chain. In practice, middlemen act not only as buyers, but also as actors who determine prices and the timing of sales; in some cases, they even provide capital loans to farmers. This relationship creates a pattern of long-term dependence, in which farmers lose their autonomy in determining the economic value of the produce they generate. The patron-client relationship that forms is not based solely on economic transactions, but also contains a social dimension that makes it difficult for farmers to break free, even though it is economically detrimental (Gautier et al., 2023).

According to an interview with Salmi, *the price of brown sugar often does not reflect the production and labour costs incurred, as it is determined unilaterally by the buyer. This situation is exacerbated by pressing daily economic needs, leaving farmers with no scope to delay sales or seek more profitable alternative markets* (Interview with Salmi, Coordinator of the Saka Palm Sugar Processing Group, 20 February 2026). In such circumstances, farmers tend to prioritise short-term liquidity over potential long-term

profits. This rational choice, whilst understandable from an economic survival perspective, ultimately merely reproduces the same cycle of dependency.

Furthermore, the lack of strong collective economic institutions, such as cooperatives or effectively functioning joint business groups, exacerbates farmers' bargaining position (Novitri & Midawati, 2024). The absence of such institutions means that farmers operate individually, and thus lack the collective strength to negotiate prices, access wider markets or secure fairer financing. Yet, in many cases, the existence of collective institutions has proven capable of breaking the cycle of dependence on middlemen and improving distribution efficiency. On the other hand, infrastructure and policy factors also contribute to this problem. Limited road access, a lack of storage facilities, and the absence of specific policy support for the development of small-scale brown sugar production have left farmers increasingly marginalised within the wider economic system (Asyari et al., 2024). Existing empowerment programmes are often temporary and unsustainable, and are therefore unable to bring about significant structural change.

In addition to distribution issues, limited production capacity is also a significant factor hindering the increase in the value added of commodities. Syafri emphasised *that the majority of business operators do not yet possess sufficient knowledge and skills to innovate their products. Production processes remain focused on conventional methods, with no diversification or significant improvement in quality. This results in products that struggle to compete, both in terms of quality and market appeal.* Even where there is an awareness of the importance of innovation, limited access to training, technology and information remains the primary obstacle to this transformation (Interview with Syafri, a sugarcane farmer, on 20 February 2026).

From the perspective of traditional producers, as expressed by Muslimin and Yurnita, *there is a tendency to stick to old ways as they are considered safer and better suited to their capabilities. The risk of failure when trying new methods, limited capital, and market uncertainty mean that innovation is not the primary choice* (Interview with Muslimin and Yurnita, traditional producers, on 2 March 2026). This phenomenon indicates a high level of risk aversion in the economic behaviour of the community, which ultimately reinforces structural stagnation (Elminejad et al., 2025). On the other hand, limited economic literacy is also a factor of no less importance. The majority of business owners do not yet have a sufficient understanding of marketing strategies, product packaging, or the utilisation of wider distribution networks. Access to modern markets, including digital platforms, remains very limited. This situation means that local products remain confined to traditional markets with low profit margins. In this context, the challenges faced are not only related to production, but also to the ability to identify market opportunities and manage businesses strategically.

On closer examination, the problems occurring in the village of Bukik Batabuah reflect structural constraints that hinder the process of community empowerment (Khan & Eversole, 2025). Limited access to capital, technology and information do not exist in isolation, but are intertwined to form systemic barriers that are difficult to overcome individually. In practice, farmers not only lack the funds to scale up their operations, but also lack access to more efficient processing technologies and accurate market information to determine production and distribution strategies. The combination of these factors creates a situation in which the economic options available to farmers are severely limited, and tend to stagnate over time.

Within the framework of the capability approach (Bartolomei et al., 2024), This situation indicates that the community does not yet possess sufficient capabilities to convert its available resources into tangible economic opportunities. In other words, the presence of extensive sugarcane fields, generations of experience in brown sugar production, and family labour are not sufficient to generate prosperity unless accompanied by the ability to access markets, manage businesses efficiently, and innovate products. In other words, the available resources have not yet been transformed into valuable outcomes due to the limited substantive freedoms enjoyed by the community. This underscores that the issues of poverty and underdevelopment in this region are more structural in nature than merely individual or cultural problems.

Furthermore, this situation can also be understood as a failure in the empowerment process, in which the community has not yet fully assumed the role of an active participant in the economic activities being carried out. Dependence on middlemen, limited innovation, and low economic literacy indicate that the community remains in a subordinate position within the local economic structure. They tend to be price takers rather than price makers, and react more to market conditions than actively shaping them. This situation results in weak bargaining power and limited ability to negotiate within the value chain, whether regarding price, quality, or product distribution (Grant & Startz, 2022). This state of subordination is further exacerbated by the absence of strong and representative economic institutions. Without cooperatives or effectively organised business groups, farmers operate individually and in a fragmented manner. This fragmentation hinders the formation of collective strength that could otherwise be used to improve bargaining power, reduce production costs through economies of scale, and open up access to wider markets. Consequently, the local economic structure remains dominated by intermediary actors who have greater control over distribution and price setting (Gautier et al., 2023).

However, it is important to note that these structural problems are not entirely deterministic. This means that, despite significant obstacles, opportunities for change remain open. The presence of local actors who are beginning to drive innovation, such as Helmitar Yulia with the development of the Saka Boba product, *demonstrates the potential for transformation from within the community itself. This innovation not only reflects individual creativity, but also demonstrates that when access to knowledge, networks and inspiration is open, communities are able to diversify their products and increase the value added of local commodities* (Interview with Helmitar Yulia, academic and driving force behind Saka Boba, on 3 March 2026).

Moreover, initiatives such as Saka Boba can be seen as a form of local agency that plays a vital role in the empowerment process. It serves as a concrete example that change does not always have to begin with large-scale external interventions, but can also grow from small, innovative and context-specific practices. If supported by the right ecosystem, such as entrepreneurship training, access to microfinance, digital marketing support, and product branding, such innovations have the potential to be replicated and their impact expanded to wider communities. Thus, the problems faced by the sugarcane farming community in Nagari Bukik Batabuah can be understood as a combination of structural dependence, limited capacity and low economic literacy, all of which reinforce one another. These three factors form a kind of vicious cycle, or a cycle of stagnation, that is difficult to break without strategic and sustainable intervention. Such intervention must not merely focus on increasing production, but must also address the

transformation of the local economic structure, the strengthening of individual and collective capacity, and the creation of fairer access to economic resources.

In this context, an integrated empowerment approach is crucial. Such an approach must combine capacity building, product innovation, and the expansion of access to markets and resources. Furthermore, it is also important to foster the development of strong local institutions as the foundation for the community's economic collective. This analysis also serves as a vital foundation for understanding why community-based interventions, such as those carried out by TRENDI, are relevant and strategic in the context of the development of Muslim communities. TRENDI acts not only as a programme facilitator but also as a catalyst for change, driving a transformation from dependency towards equitable economic self-reliance.

The TRENDI Movement as a Model for Community-Based Empowerment

The emergence of TRENDI (Tebu Aren Indonesia) in the village of Bukik Batabuah cannot be separated from the structural realities that have long constrained the economic dynamics of the sugarcane farming community. As outlined in the previous section, the community finds itself in a situation of considerable dependence on middlemen, with limited production capacity and a lack of innovation in commodity processing. In this context, the presence of TRENDI is not merely a technical economic intervention, but rather a representation of social transformation efforts rooted in a critical awareness of the importance of building self-reliance based on local potential. In other words, TRENDI serves as a response to the failure of the local economic structure to provide a space of justice for primary producers, whilst also representing an effort to reconstruct economic relations to make them more participatory and equitable.

Unlike conventional development approaches, which tend to be top-down and focused solely on technology transfer or capital assistance, TRENDI is a community-based initiative (Nagorcka-Smith et al., 2022) which places communities at the centre of the process of change. This approach emphasises that sustainable change cannot be imposed from outside, but must grow from within through the strengthening of the capacity, awareness and active participation of the communities themselves. From this perspective, communities are no longer viewed as mere beneficiaries, but as actors possessing local knowledge, experience and potential that can be developed (Larrieta et al., 2022). Thus, TRENDI functions not only as a production or economic entity, but also as a social space that facilitates collective learning, critical dialogue and a shift in consciousness towards self-reliance.

Historically and institutionally, TRENDI originated as an individual initiative that subsequently developed into a structured collective movement. Mahlil Bunaiya, as the principal initiator, conceived this idea against the backdrop of his academic background in Islamic economic law, which emphasises the importance of economic justice, equitable distribution, and the empowerment of the community as part of the *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*. This concept emerged from a critical reflection on the conditions of the sugarcane farming community, which possesses great potential yet has been unable to optimise its resources due to limited access and an unfair economic structure. During its development, the concept was strengthened through the role of Zelfeni Wimra, who acted as a mentor and provided guidance based on Islamic legal principles, particularly

regarding distributive justice, the prohibition of exploitation, and the importance of collective cooperation (*ta'āwun*) (Willya et al., 2024).

This collaboration between individual initiatives and academic support forms a vital foundation in shaping TRENDI's character as a movement that is not only practical but also has a strong intellectual basis. Within its operational structure, Miftahul Khairi serves as director, overseeing managerial aspects and empowerment strategies, particularly in integrating economic programmes with community literacy initiatives. This role is highly strategic as it bridges the gap between concept and implementation on the ground. Meanwhile, Jufri Ayub contributes to strengthening literacy through the development of community libraries and the provision of access to knowledge for the community. This leadership structure demonstrates that TRENDI operates not merely as an economic entity, but also as a socio-educational movement that simultaneously integrates economic, intellectual and cultural dimensions.

Over time, TRENDI has taken the form of a cooperative-based socio-economic movement focused on strengthening the local economy through the optimisation of sugarcane and sago palm production. The choice of the cooperative model was not merely an administrative consideration, but was based on its alignment with the values of collectivity, justice, and equitable distribution of benefits. Cooperatives enable the formation of mechanisms for shared ownership, participatory decision-making, and a fairer distribution of profits compared to a market system dominated by intermediaries. Through this structure, TRENDI seeks to build a more inclusive and equitable alternative economic system, in which communities are no longer in a subordinate position within the value chain, but become actors who have control over production, processing, and distribution. Operationally, TRENDI develops a range of strategic programmes designed to comprehensively address the community's key challenges. These programmes include training in the processing of sugarcane by-products, capacity building for business groups, improving production quality through standardisation, and the development of community-based and digital marketing networks. In this context, TRENDI does not merely provide short-term technical training, but also offers continuous mentoring to ensure that the knowledge imparted is internalised and effectively implemented by the community. This mentoring covers aspects ranging from production and business management to marketing strategies, thereby creating a holistic learning process.

One of TRENDI's key contributions is driving the transition from conventional brown sugar production towards value-added products such as granulated sugar. This transition has significant implications, not only in terms of increased selling prices, but also in opening up access to wider markets, including modern retail outlets that require specific quality standards. Granulated sugar offers advantages in terms of shelf life, ease of distribution, and the potential for development into various product variants. This process demonstrates that product innovation is key to enhancing the competitiveness of local commodities. Furthermore, TRENDI has also begun to introduce aspects of packaging, branding, and network-based marketing, which had previously not been a primary focus for the community.

According to an interview with Miftahul Khairi, the empowerment model developed by TRENDI can be understood through three main dimensions: tradition, empowerment and literacy. The traditional dimension emphasises the utilisation of local values as social capital that has long been embedded within the community. Values such as mutual

cooperation, trust, and social solidarity form the foundation for building collective cooperation (interview with Miftahul Khairi, Director of TRENDI, on 5 March 2026). In this context, TRENDI does not seek to radically alter existing social structures, but rather to optimise them as an internal strength within the empowerment process. This is important because changes rooted in local values tend to be more readily accepted and sustainable.

The empowerment dimension focuses on enhancing the economic capacity of communities through innovation and the creation of added value. These efforts are not limited to improving production skills, but also encompass strengthening the community's bargaining position within the value chain. With access to simple technology, managerial knowledge and marketing networks, communities are gaining greater control over their economic activities. They are no longer entirely dependent on middlemen, but are beginning to have alternatives in determining product distribution channels. Meanwhile, literacy is a key element in ensuring the sustainability of the empowerment process. TRENDI believes that without improved literacy, whether economic, financial or general knowledge, communities will struggle to adapt to the dynamics of change. Therefore, literacy programmes are not positioned as an add-on, but as an integral part of the empowerment strategy. Through literacy, communities are encouraged to develop critical awareness, analytical skills, and the courage to make independent economic decisions.

Field findings indicate that the TRENDI intervention is beginning to yield significant changes, although it is still in its early stages. Salmi and Syafri, who previously only produced brown sugar using traditional methods, have now begun producing granulated sugar to higher quality standards and with a higher selling price. These changes have not only led to increased income but also transformed their perspective on economic activity, shifting from mere survival towards a business development orientation. On the other hand, product innovations such as Saka Boba, developed by Helmitar Yulia, demonstrate economic diversification that is opening up new opportunities in the creative economy sector based on local commodities. Even traditional practitioners such as Muslimin and Yurnita are beginning to show openness to innovation, although they are still in the adaptation and adjustment phase.

From a theoretical perspective, the TRENDI model reflects a community-based empowerment approach that emphasises the active role of the community in the development process. This approach is consistent with social capital theory (Any Urwatul Wusko & Eko Agus Alfiantoro, 2022; Romli & Nashihin, 2024), where the success of empowerment is heavily influenced by the strength of social networks, levels of trust, and the collective norms within society. TRENDI has successfully harnessed this social capital to create a productive economic force, whilst strengthening social cohesion at the community level. Furthermore, this model can also be understood as a hybrid model that integrates local values with modern economic strategies (Bakalo et al., 2025). This integration is important because it enables communities to preserve their cultural identity and traditional practices, whilst adapting to the increasingly complex and competitive demands of the market. From the perspective of Islamic community development, this model reflects the concept of *tamkīn*, which is a process of empowerment aimed at enhancing the capacity of the Muslim community to achieve economic self-reliance, social justice and sustainable well-being.

However, this empowerment process is not without its challenges, which must be taken seriously. Limitations in production scale, product quality consistency, and still-limited market access are the main obstacles that must be overcome to ensure the programme's sustainability. Furthermore, the sustainability of the model also depends heavily on institutional strength in maintaining a balance between innovation and community capacity. Without sound institutional management, there is a risk that the innovations introduced cannot be sustained in the long term.

Thus, the TRENDI movement can be understood as a community-based empowerment model that is not only oriented towards economic improvement but also towards broader social transformation. This model demonstrates that community economic self-reliance can be achieved through the integration of local values, innovation, and literacy within a framework of sustainable empowerment. Furthermore, the TRENDI experience offers an important lesson that effective development must be rooted in local realities, actively involve the community, and be supported by synergy between academic knowledge and field practice.

A Model for Islamic Community Development Based on Local Commodities

The empirical findings of this study indicate that the process of economic transformation among the sugarcane-farming community in Nagari Bukik Batabuah did not proceed in a linear fashion, but rather through a dynamic interplay between local potential, institutional interventions and changes in community capacity. This process is evolutionary, whereby every small change occurring in one aspect reciprocally influences other aspects. Thus, the transformation that takes place cannot be understood as the result of a single factor, but rather as an accumulation of various intertwined interventions within a specific socio-economic context. Based on an analysis of the practices developed through the TRENDI movement, this study formulates a model for the development of Islamic communities based on local commodities, grounded in the integration of social values, empowerment strategies, and the strengthening of literacy as an inseparable whole.

This model not only explains the process of economic growth in the narrow sense, but also reveals how social and cognitive changes within society are key prerequisites for achieving self-reliance. Sustainable economic transformation, in this context, is only possible when society undergoes a shift in perspective, from a subsistence mindset towards an entrepreneurial orientation, from dependence towards self-reliance, and from a passive to a proactive attitude in identifying and capitalising on opportunities. Consequently, sugarcane is no longer positioned merely as a source of production, but as a medium of transformation linking the economic, social, and Islamic values dimensions in the community's daily life

Sugarcane serves as an entry point to drive broader change, including in the formation of a work ethic, social solidarity, and value-based economic awareness. In practice, the model developed in this study comprises three main pillars, namely (1) strengthening communal values (traditional values), (2) innovation-based economic empowerment, and (3) literacy and capacity building. These three pillars do not operate in isolation, but rather interact with one another to form a holistic empowerment ecosystem. Weaknesses in one pillar will impact the effectiveness of the others, meaning the

model's success is highly dependent on the balance and integration between all three. The following diagram illustrates the working mechanism of TRENDI:

Figure 1. Diagram of the TRENDI Empowerment Programme for Sugarcane Farmers in Bukik Batabuah Villageh



Firstly, the reinforcement of communal values serves as the social foundation for the empowerment process. Values such as mutual aid, trust and collective work, which are deeply rooted in Minangkabau society, constitute a form of social capital that acts as a powerful lever in driving economic collaboration. In TRENDI's practice, these values are not merely preserved symbolically, but revitalised through mechanisms of collective work in production, distribution, and decision-making. This revitalisation is crucial because, in many cases, local values tend to erode under the pressures of the modern economy. By reviving these values within a productive economic context, TRENDI has succeeded in transforming local culture into a strategic asset, rather than merely a social legacy. This aligns with the Islamic concept of *ta'awun*, which emphasises cooperation as a means to achieve justice and shared prosperity.

Secondly, innovation-driven economic empowerment has become the primary driver in enhancing the value added of local commodities. The transition from conventional brown sugar production to innovative products such as palm sugar and Saka Boba demonstrates a fundamental shift in the community's economic orientation. Whereas economic activity was previously focused on meeting basic needs (a subsistence economy), through innovation, the community has begun to enter a phase of a value-added economy. This innovation not only impacts increased selling prices but also

creates product differentiation, enabling access to broader and more diverse market segments. Furthermore, innovation drives the emergence of new practices such as quality standardisation, modern packaging, and the use of network-based and digital marketing strategies. In this context, communities are undergoing a transformation of roles, from mere producers of raw materials to business operators with greater control over the value chain.

Thirdly, strengthening community literacy and capacity is a key element in ensuring the sustainability of the transformation. Literacy in this context is not merely understood as the ability to read and write, but encompasses economic literacy, financial literacy and market literacy. TRENDI regards literacy as a tool for fostering critical awareness among communities regarding their position within the economic structure. Through improved literacy, communities are beginning to understand the importance of production efficiency, financial management, business diversification, and marketing strategies. Field data indicates that communities involved in this programme are developing a long-term perspective in managing their businesses, including maintaining product quality, building brands, and developing distribution networks. These changes demonstrate that literacy acts as an enabler, allowing communities to optimise their potential.

When analysed theoretically, this model demonstrates a strong alignment with the concept of *tamkīn* in the development of Islamic society (Ridwanullah & Herdiana, 2018), namely an empowerment process aimed at enhancing the capacity of communities to achieve economic and social self-reliance. *Tamkīn* emphasises not only the end result of well-being, but also the process of capacity-building and liberation from structural dependence. Furthermore, this model reinforces the capability approach, whereby the success of development is measured not only by an increase in income, but also by an increase in the community's ability to access, choose and utilise available opportunities. In this regard, an increase in community agency serves as a key indicator of the success of empowerment.

Furthermore, this model can be understood as a form of integration between a bottom-up approach and community-based development (Khairi et al., 2025), where the community acts as the primary agent of change, whilst organisations such as TRENDI serve as facilitators that build capacity and open up access. The interaction between community members, local innovators such as Helmitar Yulia, and collectively managed organisations demonstrates that economic transformation occurs through multi-stakeholder collaboration grounded in local potential. In this context, the role of the facilitator is not to replace the role of the community, but to accelerate the learning process and create space for innovation.

In operational terms, this model of Islamic community development based on local commodities can be described in three dynamic stages, namely: (1) the identification of local problems and potential, which involves mapping structural constraints as well as available economic opportunities; (2) community-based interventions through the reinforcement of values, product innovation, and improved literacy; and (3) transformation towards economic self-reliance, characterised by increased value addition, business diversification, and the strengthening of the community's bargaining position in the market (Zaki et al., 2022). These three stages do not proceed in a linear fashion, but are cyclical and adaptive in nature, with ongoing evaluation and learning to adjust strategies to the dynamics on the ground. The main contribution of this model lies in its ability to bridge the gap between normative approaches to the development of

Islamic societies and contextual empirical practices. This model demonstrates that Islamic values, such as justice, cooperation and empowerment, are not merely normative, but can be operationalised in the form of concrete and practical strategies (Efrina, 2022). Consequently, this study not only provides an empirical description of the empowerment process, but also offers a conceptual framework that has practical relevance and the potential to be replicated in various community contexts with similar characteristics.

Nevertheless, the sustainability of this model continues to face a number of challenges that cannot be ignored. Consistency in product quality is a key issue in maintaining market confidence, whilst limited access to wider distribution networks remains a barrier to business expansion. Furthermore, institutional strengthening is a crucial factor in ensuring that the empowerment process does not depend on specific individuals, but can operate in a systemic and sustainable manner. Therefore, sustained support is required, both from within the community in the form of collective commitment, and from external parties such as the government, academia, and the private sector. Thus, the model for the development of Islamic communities based on local commodities, as developed in this study, confirms that a community's economic self-reliance is determined not only by the availability of natural resources, but also by the ability to integrate social values, economic innovation and literacy within a single framework of sustainable empowerment. Furthermore, this model demonstrates that transformation rooted in local potential and Islamic values possesses greater resilience in the face of change, whilst paving the way for the realisation of more inclusive and equitable well-being.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the problems faced by sugarcane farmers in Nagari Bukik Batabuah are structural and multidimensional, encompassing dependence on middlemen, a lack of innovation, and limited economic literacy, which result in low value-added commodities. The study's findings confirm that the TRENDI movement is capable of driving economic transformation through community-based empowerment by integrating tradition, empowerment and literacy. This integration has been shown to enhance community capacity, encourage product innovation, and strengthen bargaining power within the local economic structure. This study formulates a model for the development of Islamic communities based on local commodities, resting on three pillars: strengthening communal values, innovation-based economic empowerment, and improving literacy and capacity. This model emphasises that economic self-reliance is determined by the ability to integrate social values, knowledge, and innovation. Thus, the research hypothesis has been empirically validated. The recommendations put forward include the need to strengthen the model's sustainability through improvements in production quality and scale, as well as the expansion of market access, including the utilisation of digital technology. Further research is recommended to test the model's replicability in different contexts and to measure its economic impact quantitatively.

REFERENCES

- Alenaizi, R., & Stachowicz-Stanusch, A. (2024). How the United Arab Emirates is Using Artificial Intelligence to Enhance Social Responsibility Practices. In *Corporate Social Responsibility in the Practice and in the Classroom* (pp. 123–134). Emerald Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/979-8-88730-690-220251012>
- Any Urwatul Wusko, & Eko Agus Alfiantoro. (2022). Pengaruh Social Capital dan Human Capital Terhadap Kinerja UMKM yang Tergabung pada Sukorejo Smart. *Sketsa Bisnis*, 9(1), 91–101. <https://doi.org/10.35891/jsb.v9i1.2794>
- Asyari, A., Awaluddin, A., & Sumarni, N. (2024). Analisis Ekonomi Petani Tebu Melalui Pengembangan Kapasitas Kelembagaan Badan Usaha Milik Nagari (Bumnag) Di Nagari Bukik Batabuah Kecamatan Canduang Kabupaten Agam. *Jesya*, 7(2), 1214–1227. <https://doi.org/10.36778/jesya.v7i2.1630>
- Bakalo, N., Makhovka, V., Krekoten, I., Glebova, A., & Kulakova, S. (2025). Local tourism as financial and economic development driver of the community: Management aspect. *World Development Perspectives*, 38, 100693. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wdp.2025.100693>
- Bartolomei, L., Blundo-Canto, G., & De Muro, P. (2024). How is the Capability Approach Applied to Assess Well-being Impacts? A Systematic Review. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 25(3), 367–399. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19452829.2024.2369502>
- Bondy, A. S., Maggor, E., & Tassinari, A. (2025). Putting wage growth back on the table: Labour incorporation, political exchange, and wage-boosting policies in advanced peripheral economies. *Competition & Change*, 29(3–4), 437–464. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10245294241226733>
- Chakraborty, K., & Chakraborty, B. (2018). Low level equilibrium trap, unemployment, efficiency of education system, child labour and human capital formation. *Journal of Economics*, 125(1), 69–95. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00712-017-0585-x>
- Efrina, L. (2022). Efforts to Improve Community Welfare Through Farming Group Empowerment from an Islamic Economic Perspective. *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Economics and Finance*, 2(2), 95–109. <https://doi.org/10.37680/ijief.v2i2.1799>
- Elminejad, A., Havranek, T., & Irsova, Z. (2025). Relative Risk Aversion: A Meta-Analysis. *Journal of Economic Surveys*, 39(5), 2315–2333. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joes.12689>
- Fanani, M., & Pohl, F. (2024). Fiqh-Based Social Transformation in Farmer Empowerment: A Participatory Action Research Approach. *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 62(2), 305–335. <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2024.622.305-335>
- Gautier, P., Hu, B., & Watanabe, M. (2023). Marketmaking Middlemen. *The RAND Journal of Economics*, 54(1), 83–103. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1756-2171.12431>
- Grant, M., & Startz, M. (2022). *Cutting Out the Middleman: The Structure of Chains of Intermediation*. <https://doi.org/10.3386/w30109>

- He, M., & Chen, S. (2024). Breaking the resource curse for sustainable growth and transforming rural economies. *Resources Policy*, 90, 104730. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resourpol.2024.104730>
- Hembram, S., Maji, S., & Haldar, S. K. (2019). Club Convergence among the Major Indian States During 1982–2014: Does Investment in Human Capital Matter? *South Asia Economic Journal*, 20(2), 184–204. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1391561419850300>
- Jovanovic, B., & Menkveld, A. J. (2011). Middlemen in Limit-Order Markets. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1624329>
- Khairi, Hidayat, N., Ainul Yaqin, M., Yaqin, A., Alam, B., Fairus, J., & Putri Utami, R. (2025). Penguatan Sumber Daya Manusia dengan Pendekatan Asset Based Community Development (ABCD). *Ngaliman: Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat*, 4(2), 86–97. <https://doi.org/10.53429/ngaliman.v4i2.1795>
- Khan, S., & Eversole, R. (2025). Reproducing poverty through participation: examining the constraints of community development strategies in fostering empowerment and social change. *Community Development Journal*, 60(3), 548–566. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsae045>
- Larrieta, J., Miguel Esponda, G., Gandhi, Y., Simpson, N., Biriotti, M., Kydd, A., Eaton, J., & Ryan, G. K. (2022). Supporting community-based mental health initiatives: insights from a multi-country programme and recommendations for funders. *BMJ Global Health*, 7(5), e008906. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjgh-2022-008906>
- Lubis, H., Rohmatillah, N., & Rahmatina, D. (2020). Strategy Of Tourism Village Development Based On Local Wisdom. *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Humaniora*, 9(2), 320. <https://doi.org/10.23887/jish-undiksha.v9i2.22385>
- Nagorcka-Smith, P., Bolton, K. A., Dam, J., Nichols, M., Alston, L., Johnstone, M., & Allender, S. (2022). The impact of coalition characteristics on outcomes in community-based initiatives targeting the social determinants of health: a systematic review. *BMC Public Health*, 22(1), 1358. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-022-13678-9>
- Novitri, S., & Midawati, M. (2024). Gula Tebu Saka: Industri Tebu Rakyat di Nagari Bukik Batabuah, Kecamatan Canduang, Kabupaten Agam (1975-2021). *Analisis Sejarah: Mencari Jalan Sejarah*, 14(1), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.25077/jas.v14i1.118>
- Ramaswamy, V., & Ozcan, K. (2018). What is co-creation? An interactional creation framework and its implications for value creation. *Journal of Business Research*, 84, 196–205. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.11.027>
- Ridwanullah, A. I., & Herdiana, D. (2018). Optimalisasi Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Berbasis Masjid. *Ilmu Dakwah: Academic Journal for Homiletic Studies*, 12(1), 82–98. <https://doi.org/10.15575/idajhs.v12i1.2396>
- Romli, A., & Nashihin, M. (2024). Urgensi Teori Sosiologi Dalam Pengembangan Pendidikan Agama Islam. *Darajat: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 7(1), 11–26. <https://doi.org/10.58518/darajat.v7i1.2775>
- Srivastava, N., & Agarwal, D. N. (2024). Consumer and Employee collaboration platform:

Co-creation of Sustainable Innovations and Consumptions. *International Journal of Emerging Knowledge Studies*, 03(12), 1041–1049. <https://doi.org/10.70333/ijeks-03-12-017>

- Surbakti, J. B., Lahmuddin, L., Fridiyanto, F., Arfan, A., Berliana Difa, A., & Juwita, N. (2026). Mainstreaming Ecotheology: Empowering Women Activists in Jambi City. *Abdimas Galuh*, 8(1), 866. <https://doi.org/10.25157/ag.v8i1.23218>
- Willya, E., Idris, M., & Wahid, A. (2024). The Debate Between Religious and Minangkabau Traditional Figures About Pagang Gadai (Pawn) Land in Agam Regency, West Sumatra, Indonesia. *AHKAM: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah*, 24(1), 67–82. <https://doi.org/10.15408/ajis.v24i1.32101>
- Zaki, I., Zusak, M. B. F., Mi'raj, D. A., & Hasib, F. F. (2022). Islamic community-based business cooperation and sustainable development goals: a case of pesantren community in Indonesia. *International Journal of Ethics and Systems*, 38(4), 621–632. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOES-12-2021-0218>