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# Model for microeconomic empowerment: islamic microfinance institutions (Imis) in East Java

*Modelo para el empoderamiento microeconómico: instituciones islámicas de microfinanzas (Imis) en Java Oriental*

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### ABSTRACT

East Java is one of the provinces in Indonesia in which the government has strongly supported the development of Islamic economics. The implementation of Islamic economics is expected to contribute to the economic development of East Java. Therefore, this research examines the economic empowerment of micro-enterprises conducted by Islamic Microfinance Institutions. Qualitative research methods were used, with particular reference to case studies. The results showed that Islamic Microfinance Institutions financing channeled towards microenterprises was capable of empowering them.

**Keywords:** Empowerment, Financing, Islamic Microfinance Institutions, Microenterprises.

### RESUMEN

Java Oriental es una de las provincias de Indonesia en las que el gobierno ha apoyado firmemente el desarrollo de la economía islámica. Se espera que la implementación de la economía islámica contribuya al desarrollo económico de Java Oriental. Por lo tanto, esta investigación examina el empoderamiento económico de las microempresas realizadas por las instituciones islámicas de microfinanzas. Se utilizaron métodos de investigación cualitativa, con referencia particular a estudios de casos. Los resultados mostraron que el financiamiento de las Instituciones Islámicas de Microfinanzas canalizadas hacia las microempresas fue capaz de empoderarlas.

**Palabras clave:** empoderamiento, financiamiento, instituciones islámicas de microfinanzas, microempresas.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Implementation of Islamic economics includes the establishment of microfinance institutions that appropriate to Islam, i.e., (IMIS). According to (Sudarsono: 2007), IMIS is Islamic microfinance which aims to support the business activities of the people based on Islamic jurisprudence. These efforts are part and parcel of IMIS as a supporter of small community economic activities based on Sharia, in which its primary purpose is to ease the economic problems confronting fellow Muslims in order to achieve more significant benefit.

IMIS has a critical role in empowering microenterprises as businesses that have significant problems, namely capital. Various types of financing are offered by IMIS to meet the needs of capital for microenterprises, and *mudharaba* financing is one of them. *Mudharaba* is a form of business organization in which someone provides capital to others in order to do business; then, they split the profit between themselves according to an agreement. Capital providers are called *shahibul maal* and the fund manager known as *mudharib*. In this regard, *mudharaba* financing is provided to customers or applicants. IMIS grants funds with a profit-sharing system where IMIS acts as *shahibul maal* and the customer acts as *mudharib*. The purpose of *mudharaba* financing performed by IMIS is to increase microenterprise development, which can be seen in the success of microenterprises, namely in the form of increased income and also in their sales after obtaining financing. *Mudharaba* financing is a profit/loss sharing system and is appropriate for financing channeled towards microenterprises, which is a hazardous endeavor (Sutawi: 2008). An increase in financing of IMIS can be expected to increase business development. As stated by (Grönroos: 1996), the increasingly strong relationship between small businesses and financial institutions leads to better performance. In the process of disbursing financing, IMIS must have a visible role in developing efforts, especially in the field of microenterprises.

Alam et al. (2008) similarly stated that microloan funds received from financial institutions would encourage good performance in the financial institutions that are proactively engaging with the venture. Thus, after obtaining IMIS financing, it is expected that venture capital or facilities needed by micro-entrepreneurs are fulfilled so that they are able to improve their performance, namely facilitating production activities and marketing of the product in order to increase their business profits.

The focus of this research is to provide an in-depth description of how the empowerment model of microenterprises functions in IMIS in East Java. This study uses qualitative research methods, which are the scope is the financing role of IMIS in developing microenterprises. The purpose of this research is expected to generate output in the form of the Islamic business model based on the role of IMIS in developing efforts. The value of this research is related to the urgent need to review in-depth the success of IMIS in developing microenterprises. As for the benefits of the study, the findings can be used as constructive input for related parties, in this case, the IMIS micro-entrepreneurs and the government, among others, as well as the Department of Cooperatives and Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs), and Disperindag.

The primary of sharia financing is:

1. The principle of profit-sharing, if applied in *kaffah* will lead the SMEs independently in the financing; in other words, reduce the dependence of SMEs on debt.
2. Based on Al Qur'an, Hadith, *ijma'* thus guaranteed of the world and the hereafter.
3. There is a product based on *qard* virtues, regardless of profits. Warranty exists if deemed necessary, not for the results but only for voluntary contributions; administrative expenses or origin are not exchanged at the time the marriage contract is made.
4. There is *zakah*, which can be distributed.
5. The benchmarks of the faith in the determination of the *mudharib* candidate will reduce the occurrence of a default or Non-Performance Financing (NPF).

The sense of empowerment is linked to the effort of making the economy strong, large, modern, and highly competitive (Mardi: 2009, p.11). Chambers (as cited in Kartasmita: 1996) explained that community

empowerment is the concept of economic development which encapsulates social values. This concept shows the existence of a new paradigm of development, namely, the construction of that which is "people-centered, participatory, empowering and sustainable". In the concept of empowerment, a human being is a subject of themselves. The process of empowerment places emphasis on the process, which gives the ability to society to be empowered and encourages or motivates the individual to be empowered to determine choices in his/her life.

According to (Sumodiningrat: 1998), community empowerment is an attempt to stand alone in society through the realization of the potential of one's ability. Empowerment is an effort to build up power itself, by encouraging, motivating, and raising the awareness of one's potential, as well as working to improve it.

The main targets of empowerment are fulfilling basic needs (clothing, food, housing, education, and health), ensuring the right to productive employment, creating self-employment, and developing the means of enabling production. Thus, empowerment is essential to transform the community into the role of active development actors, rather than passive recipients. The concept of a community empowerment movement in development prioritizes initiative and creation in society, with the primary strategy being to give power to the community. Communities that have understood their problems are empowered so that they are better able to recognize their needs, formulate plans, and implement development independently and self-reliant.

Empowering the community can be seen from three perspectives (Kartasasmita: 1996):

1. Encourage, motivate, and awaken awareness of the potential they have and strive to develop it.
2. There needs to be a unique program for people who are less empowered because the general programs that apply to all cannot always touch the empowered community.
3. Protecting can be seen as an effort to prevent unfair competition and strong party exploitation of the weak.

Empowerment does not make the community more dependent on various programs of giving (charity), because what they have can be generated by their efforts. Thus, the ultimate goal is an independent society that is capable of advancing members towards a better life in balanced

In general, some underlying assumptions have emerged in the empowerment discourse (Mosedale: 2006). First, to be "empowered", microenterprises previously must be in a "disempowered" condition. Second, empowerment is not a gift from other parties but must be achieved by the parties who want to be empowered. Third, empowerment is a process that is dynamic, not static, and that concerns the continually changing pattern of relationships among individuals, groups, and institutions.

Implicitly, the empowerment of SMEs is an effort to establish SMEs, including the mastery of technology, capital ownership, as well as access to the market and sources of information and management skills. In terms of capital, directed to SMEs can make capital fertilization sourced from his effort and in turn, generate income that can be enjoyed by microenterprises.

In Islamic economics, the Islamic commitment to empowerment is explicitly explained, especially economic empowerment, which means that Islam requires its people to uphold justice and economic empowerment and to hate injustice. Thus, in the economic review of Islam, the empowerment of microenterprises can also be indicated as the ability of *zakah*, *infaq*, and *shodaqoh* payment.

Thus, the indicators of the realization of empowerment are the existence of administrative completeness, liveliness in business groups, development of design or technology, modern management, the motivation of group members or employees, and access to Islamic banks or government agencies. In terms of empowering SMEs by Islamic financial institutions, the results obtained emerged from the creation of capital capabilities, technological capabilities, modern management, the motivation of members of the group or employees, access to Islamic financial institutions or government agencies, and employment.

Previous research related to the present study was conducted by Giamartino (1991). The author explained that in the development effort, SMEs need capital or financing, but it still difficult for them to access formal financial institutions, so not infrequently, their capital requirement is financed by the loan shark.

Alam et al. (2008) Discussed the creation of business groups, new technology, trends, and employment, and explained that capital or financing problems could be answered by Islamic economics by empowering *zakah*, *shadaqah* through sharia microfinance institutions, such as Islamic Microfinance Institutions or sharia

cooperatives. Some research and case studies have suggested that a model for microenterprise development based on a sharia economy is required. Shariah microfinance institutions should be seriously empowered, especially by the government, because they are relatively easy to access by SMEs. Paseková et al. (2010) explains about SMEs willing to report under IFRS. Gavalas & Syriopoulos (2014) and Strouhal et al. (2015), explain about bank credit risk in the business cycle.

Lukyatawati (2011) Stated that the need for capital is essential for the continuity of SMEs from the process of establishment, SMEs need capital to meet the needs of raw materials and the production process until marketing, so that products come to the consumer. Capital is the main problem of UMKM. The majority of MSMEs do not have access to formal financial institutions due to collateral requirements. MSMEs are feasible but non-bankable for formal financial institutions, which is related to high transaction costs, availability of guarantee, and risk of return. The development of MSMEs with the strengthening of access to capital is expected to increase turnover and operating profit, as well as job opportunities, and thus ultimately reduce poverty.

## 2. METHODS

This research was conducted using the qualitative method of the case study. According to (Aberdeen: 2013, pp.69-71), "An empirical research study investigates the phenomena in the context of real-life, when the limits or the boundary between the phenomena with the context do not seem firm and multiple sources are used". The case study method was chosen because there are phenomena to be discovered by researchers, which are associated with the formulation of research problems, namely, how the empowerment model of microenterprises in East Java was performed by IMIS.

A thinking framework functions to explain the research steps that will be undertaken. IMIS has a high commitment to financing microenterprises. The presence of IMIS is of concern to microbusinesses, especially since disbursing financing is expected to help them be able to solve the problem of capital limitations in the business. After obtaining microbusiness financing, it is expected that the business will be able to empower itself so that the microenterprise can be independent. Micro-entrepreneurship independence is demonstrated by several indicators, such as the increased ability to obtain financing funds, and ukhuwah (togetherness) among fellow microbusinesses, as well as IMIS.

Figure 1 below shows that the financing of IMIS is expected to empower micro-enterprises. The empowerment indicators used in this study are a capital capability, the motivation of group members or ukhuwah, and access to IMIS or government agencies.

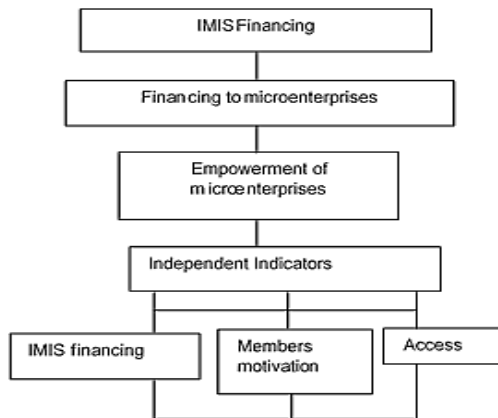


Figure 1. Frame of Mind

### 3. RESULTS

The following aspects will be discussed in relation to all the findings of researchers in the field, either through in-depth interviews or by observing the informant during the research process.

The Role of IMIS in Empowering Microenterprises:

The results of the in-depth interviews with informants whom the IMIS manager information obtained, that almost all vision of IMIS is to be trusted as a partner selection of microenterprises. Meanwhile, following the mission of IMIS, microbusinesses are realizing growth and sustainable profits, giving priority to the association's fund members and the channeling of funds for the microbusiness segment, as well as developing universal Islamic values (Obaidullah & Latiff: 2008).

On the next question about the development of the microenterprise financing per year, there was a trend of a significant increase for all types of financing. The role of IMIS financing, according to the informant, enhanced the empowerment of the microenterprise and continuously attempted to manifest the cooperation with relevant agencies, both the government and private agencies.

On the next question about the development of the microenterprise financing per year, there was a trend of a significant increase for all types of financing, with the largest percentage of *murabaha* financing. According to the informant, IMIS capability was more associated with financing, whereas to do coaching is so defenseless, IMIS microenterprises are lacking human resources. This is due to the number of clients who received hundreds of financing so that the existing IMIS employees are currently far from sufficient to perform the coaching. However, in an attempt to establish continuous cooperation and coaching for microenterprises, IMIS has not been intensively to do it.

Among some of the problems faced by microenterprises, the problem of capital is a crucial one, in addition to marketing issues and human resources. Islamic economics has offered a solution by providing IMIS financing or more sharia finance institutions. The indicator of the fulfillment of capital is the satisfaction of the needs of both the micro venture capital private equity or capital from IMIS or other financial institutions.

The results of the interviews conducted with the microenterprises showed that all informants stated that capital needs had been met after receiving financing from IMIS. Table 1 below shows a comparison of the fulfillment of the capital before and after obtaining financing from IMIS.

Informant	Financing Fulfillment		Percentage Increase (%)
	Before	After	
Microenterprise 1	Rp 1,000,000	Rp 3,000,000	300
Microenterprise 2	Rp 1,000,000	Rp 4,000,000	400
Microenterprise 3	Rp 500,000	Rp 3,000,000	600
Microenterprise 4	Rp 5,000,000	Rp 20,000,000	400

Source: Data processed

**Table 1.** Microenterprise Financing Fulfillment Indicators Before and After Receiving IMIS Financing

As can be seen from Table 1, all types of microenterprises obtained financing from IMIS so that the capital requirements were relatively met. Microenterprise informant 1 obtained financing information from a friend of his fellow traders' market. Through financing by IMIS, microenterprise informant one obtained loan funds of Rp 3 million, without a guarantee. This type of financing has been obtained for two years. The type of financing received is the *mudharaba*.

The mechanism of payment is a daily payment after trading. The experience of obtaining IMIS financing felt more profitable than with Bank "Thithil" which was perceived as having higher costs due to interest expenses of Bank "Thithil". The progress of his business proved more blessed by using IMIS financing, it can

be perceived by their ability to buy a motorcycle that makes it easy to transport, making it easy to sell, if not exhausted in the market he could trade around the village to sell the fish by coming to the customer, so that the relative increased sales results.

Microenterprise informant 2, obtained information about IMIS financing from his friend's fellow traders' market. Through the financing from IMIS, informant 2 obtained a loan of Rp 4 million, without collateral. This type of financing has been obtained for two years. The type of financing received is the *mudharaba*.

Microenterprise informant 3, obtained information about IMIS financing from his father. Through financing provided by the IMIS, informant three obtained loan funds of Rp 3 million, with a motorcycle as collateral. This type of financing has been obtained for two years. This type of financing received is *murabaha* that was used to buy a machine. The mechanism of payment was a monthly payment. The experience of obtaining IMIS financing felt more profitable than with a conventional bank, which was perceived as having higher costs due to interest expenses. The progress of his business quite significantly by the presence of a coveted machine for this job, tire retreading production can meet the demand. Sales distribution is increasing, especially in the area of cities in East Java, or outside, that marketing felt pretty good, so the perceived growing financing needs. This has resulted in increased sales turnover assets, and the employees absorbed increases.

Microenterprise informant 4, learned information about IMIS Sharia financing from his companion. Through financing provided by IMIS, the informant received a loan fund of 20 million rupiahs with collateral of house certificate. This type of financing has been obtained for one year. This type of financing received is *murabaha* that was used buying pick up the car. The mechanism of payment was monthly installments. The experience of obtaining financing IMIS felt more profitable than with conventional banks felt the installment higher due to interest expenses. The progress of his business gets quite significantly by the presence of financing its business, guaranteeing the smooth performance of IMIS, particularly in supplying fruit at shopping malls. This has resulted in increased sales turnover assets, and the employees absorbed increases.

Member Motivation Indicators (Ukhuwah):

The empowerment of microenterprises by IMIS is indicated by the ability of microenterprises to motivate their members, both fellow employers, and employees. This means that microenterprises have invited business friends and employees to promote their activity through business cooperation, for example, when this is done, especially after obtaining financing from IMIS. In summary, the empowerment of microenterprises indicated by technological innovation is shown in Table 2.

Informant	Member Motivation		Note
	Before	After	
Microenterprise 1	Yes	Yes	Increased Performances
Microenterprise 2	Yes	Yes	Increased Performances
Microenterprise 3	Yes	Yes	Increased Performances
Microenterprise 4	Yes	Yes	Increased Performances

Source: Data processed

**Table 2.** Indicator of Member Motivation of Microenterprises Before and After Receiving IMIS Financing

Table 2 shows that microenterprises 1 and its partners have motivated employees and fellow business partners to advance the business both before and after obtaining IMIS financing. After receiving IMIS financing, this activity was done more intensity.

Empowerment of microenterprises, as indicated by the existence of access to IMIS or other institutions, means that microenterprises are able to access financial institutions, especially IMIS, or are able to have

intensive relations with the government or private institutions when this is done especially after obtaining financing from IMIS.

Informant	Creating Network		Note
	Before	After	
Microenterprise 1	Unable	Unable	-
Microenterprise 2	Unable	Unable	-
Microenterprise 3	Able	Unable	-
Microenterprise 4	Able	Unable	-

Source: Data processed

**Table 3.** Indicator of IMIS Access and Other Institutions

#### Before and After Microenterprise Acceptance of IMIS Financing

Table 3 above shows that microenterprise 1 and microenterprise 2 have not been able to access other agencies, either governmental or private, to advance their business both before and after obtaining IMIS financing. Microenterprise 3 and microenterprise 4 have accessed IMIS effectively, but have not been able to establish relationships with other institutions before and after obtaining IMIS financing.

All the microbusinesses interviewed stated the importance of fulfilling financing or capital needs. Microenterprises expressed ease in the process of obtaining financing by IMIS. The margin load was lighter than the interest expense on renters and conventional banks.

By obtaining IMIS financing, the majority of *murabaha* financing is constructive for the sustainability of microenterprises. However, it is expected that more financing will be obtained with a contract other than *murabaha*, such as *mudharaba*, or *musharaka*. Thus IMIS financing can fulfill micro-business capital.

#### Indicator of Member Motivation (Ukhuwah):

Member motivation indicators are intended as the ability of a microenterprise to motivate members of its group, or fellow entrepreneurs in the same line of business, or its employees to be eager to advance the business. This motivation is essential, especially in the face of possible business failures and also to achieve business opportunities that lead to business progress.

The results of this study indicate that all types of microenterprises have motivated their fellow business partners and employees to develop their business. The majority of them did so independently without the assistance of IMIS and government agencies.

IMIS access indicators and other agencies are intended as the ability of microbusinesses to access IMIS or establish relationships with other agencies. This access is essential not only in funding but also in establishing relationships with other agencies, especially in obtaining information essential to the progress of microenterprises, for example, in marketing.

The results of this study indicate that all kinds of micro business have got funding from IMIs with easy process. The problem is with access to the government. Not all micro-businesses establish relationships with government agencies such as Cooperatives and SMEs and the Office of Trade.

Based on the analysis above, the relation between IMIS and its function to realize economic welfare and sustainability of microenterprises is illustrated in the model in Figure 2.

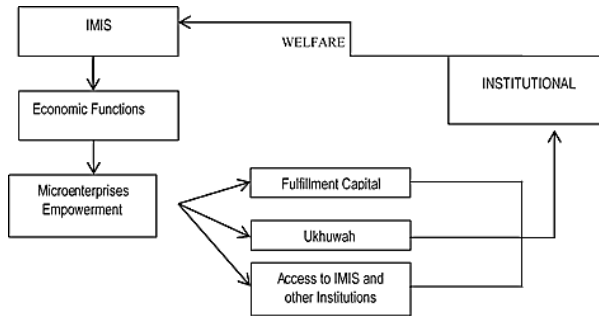


Figure 2. Model of Microenterprise Empowerment by IMIS

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the data collected and the analysis that has been done, the following results have emerged:

1. IMIS in East Java empowered both members and non-members in society. This can be seen from the vision and mission of IMIS, as well as the purpose of establishing it. The presence of IMIS has reduced the losses of people who are trapped in loan shark. Also, it can be concluded that from the financing process disbursed to members or non-members or communities around IMIS, the majority of financing is *murabaha* financing, but not a few are *mudharaba* financing.
2. Microenterprises face various problems, but the main problem is financing. With the fulfillment of financing for microenterprises from IMIS, there is the possibility to empower microbusiness, although sometimes without assistance from IMIS or from other related institutions. Indication of empowerment of microbusiness, among others the fulfillment of financing, freed from a loan shark, giving motivation to members, to IMIS or related institutions. Microbusinesses still need to be empowered from the management side and have the ability to maintain business continuity.
3. Although IMIS is only capable of supervising and assisting microbusiness, the financing distributed by IMIS is very helpful for the smoothness of microbusiness, because, without financing, the microbusiness has difficulty in maintaining the sustainability of its business activities.

Suggestions:

Based on the analysis and the discussion of the findings of this study, the following suggestions may be made for the benefit of concerned parties:

1. The ability of IMIS to empower microenterprises is more related to financing and supervision to carry out the development effort for microenterprise empowerment; IMIS lacks sufficient manpower. This is because the number of customers who receive financing hundreds, whereas existing employees are far from sufficient to do, but in the effort to establish sustainable cooperation and coaching to microenterprises, IMIS should conduct cooperation with related institutions both government and private sector more intensively.
2. The government should be aware of the limitations of IMIS, and proactively and intensively cooperate with IMIS in designing microenterprise development programs. Likewise, they should maintain the trust of IMIS that its existence is to encourage the success of microbusiness, not vice versa.



3. For future research, there are many issues related to IMIS that can be further investigated in the field of economics, management, and accounting. Thus, to be more comprehensive, the next research could be expanded by integrating quantitative methods.

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