INTEGRATION OF THE BASIC DYNAMICS OF MOSQUE MANAGEMENT: EXPERIENCES OF SOME OUTSTANDING MOSQUES

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Abstract. As an Islamic institution, the mosque plays a general role consistent with the wide concept of worship in Islam. The mosque's function should not be limited to only a place of worship, such as for performing prayers, but should also be regarded as a place for general worship, such as a centre for community development, educational activities, administration, uniting the ummah, and activities related to national interest, economy and social etc. Empowering the mosque as an Islamic institution requires a transformation in management that leads to an efficient and effective management that is in line with the Syariat and contemporary needs. This study focused on forming the mosque management's organisational structure by identifying the expert background of selected members as well as their experience in mosque management. Respondents comprised management representatives from the most outstanding mosques in each state in West Malaysia. Findings show that all the selected mosques had Committee Members (AJK) from various fields of expertise. Combining these members who possess various expertise has led to a dynamic mosque management that has always maintained its relevance to society. It is hoped that the findings of this study can be a guide to other mosque committees in the country as well as related agencies when transforming a mosque into an Islamic institution that acts as place of worship and a platform for social integration

Keywords: transforming mosque management, Islamic institutions, best mosque.

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Introduction

According to statistics posted on the JAKIM website, there were 6510 mosques throughout Malaysia registered with JAKIM as of September 2021. These mosques fall into four categories, namely government mosques, state mosques, district or territory mosques and county/parish mosques. As for the mosque's staff, there were 12,080 imams with 9919 of them receiving remunerations and 2161 of them not receiving any remuneration from JAKIM. Besides the imam, there were 6835 *bilal* and 6499 *noja* (http://masjid.islam.gov.my/index.php?data=c3RhdGlzdGlrLnBocA==), whose duty are to manage matters related to worship, mainly the mandatory prayers. In regard to matters pertaining to development management and enlivening of mosques, the Chairman and Committee members are appointed for a specific period. The mosque, as an institution and symbol of Islam's majesty, should be the epicentre of Islamic worship, a role model and a catalyst that leads to goodness in the overall life of Muslims.

The mosque's function is not limited to specific worship practices, such as prayers, but rather it is also a place for general worship, such as a centre for community development, education, administration, unifying the ummah, *siyasah*, economy etc. Empowering the mosque to become an Islamic institution and a platform for the community's social integration initiatives must be consistent with the management's dynamism by combining various expertise qualities that are complimentary, efficient and in line with contemporary needs and the Syariah.

1. Problem Statement

The mosque is an Islamic institution should be managed and administered efficiently in order to provide a comfortable place of worship and human development that successfully creates a harmonious, progressive and competitive community according to various aspects. Allah S.W.T exhorted in Surah *al-Nur* verse 36 to 37, meaning:

"That light shines˺ through houses ˹of worship˺ which Allah has ordered to be raised, and where His Name is mentioned. He is glorified there morning and evening by men who are not distracted—either by buying or selling—from Allah's remembrance, or performing prayer, or paying alms-tax. They fear a Day when hearts and eyes will tremble"

Ibn Katsir (*t.t.*) mentioned that mosques are one part of the earth that is well-liked by Allah S.W.T as it is a dwelling where HE is worshiped and extolled. He cited the views of Qatadah, who said that houses are mosques and Allah S.W.T instructed that they be built in increasing numbers as well as to be consecrated. Sayyid Qutb (1994) stated that "with the permission of Allah S,W.T" refers to something that should be implemented as per His instruction. In other words, the mosque, as an Islamic institution, is not solely a place for performing prayers but plays a significant role in moulding a community that understands the religious needs and drives towards a better life while abstaining from misdeeds. The breath of its scope and role is in line with the dual role of humans as subjects (*al-Dhariyat* (51): 56) and vicegerents or *khalifah* (*al-Baqarah* (2): 30) of Allah S.W.T on this earth. This dual role does not bind the scope of worship in Islam to specific acts of worship, rather it is inclusive of the daily behaviour that is aimed at nurturing goodwill that is implemented in the name of Allah S.W.T.

The existence of mosques symbolises Islam's splendour and acts as a symbol of unity amongst the ummah. This religious institution is a meeting place and not restricted solely to a place of worship, rather it is also a centre for community development, education, administration, unifying the ummah, *siyasah*, and socio-economy activities, etc. The appointed management must possess a well-designed plan that efficiently and systematically utilises existing resources in order to enliven the mosque not only from the context of performing specific worship but also fulfil the needs of the local and surrounding community. The level of enlivening the mosque is not only measured based on the number of worshipers present but also how successfully the institution has developed the enthusiasm and spirit of Islam as the community's *al-Din*.

In addition, physical development and infrastructure facilities without an enlivened environment hinders the overall development of a mosque. One unending and continuous issue is the stereotyping that most mosques have lost the attractiveness and are defined as a place specifically for worship activities that has inevitably abated other activities that attract community members to the mosque. Mosque management is still carried out in a traditional manner without any changes or amendments. Kristel Kessler (2015) stated that many mosques in this modern era have unfortunately lost their identity and original purpose of complimenting the community due to changes in the political and social structure among the modern Islamic society. Most mosques are built as an iconic building or landmark that showcases the grandness of the local ethnic group, the architecture and power by emphasising aesthetic values but the is negligence from the aspects of function and objective.

Based on a review of previous studies, Muhammad Faisal Ashaari and Firdaus Mokhtar (2018) concluded that there are seven factors that determine a diminished congregational attendance in a mosque, which are mainly the limited functions of a mosque, personal problems, inadequate basic amenities, a non-strategic location, weak administrative and financial management, as well as the personality of the imam and mosque officials.

Muhammad Firdaus Muhammad Sabri and Haliyana Tonot (2017) carried out a comparative study related to professional management that focused on several aspects such as management, enlivening, as well as infrastructure and environmental facilities, in several selected mosques that were recognised (awarded Stars) by the Selangor Islamic Religious Department. Findings indicate that the mosque management becomes more systematic if the mosque administrator or *nazir* is a corporate or professional figure. It also shows that the *nazir* and committee members' high level of commitment as well as adherence to the code of ethics issued by the State religious department also plays an important role in developing a good management system and the position of corporate and professional members. Hailan Salamun and Rofishah Rashid (2016) examined the leadership practices of numerous chairmen of the mosque committees from the whole of Terengganu and found that the level of leadership practices was at a moderately high level. It also found that the various mosque chairmen were capable of leading in matters related to spirituality and development of knowledge. Hence, the leadership practices of mosque chairmen are still lacking in aspects of professional knowledge and effective management. Similarly, Abg Mohammad Hamberie Abg Azemi and Hafizul (2018) found a low level of awareness among mosque committees who were supposed to manage mosques that act as a centre for knowledge development, namely the Masjid al-Mujahidin in Maludam, Sarawak. The study which used the interview method, also succeeded in identifying weaknesses in management practices, such as lack of awareness and skills among committee members when planning activities, lack of skills in preparing the mosque's program calendar and not being creative in various activities.

Abdul Munir Ismail (2018) mentioned that the success of a mosque lies in its professional and efficient governance that elevates the role of the mosque. He also stated that individuals involved in mosque governance must possess administrative and management skills besides having uncontested faith and piousness towards Allah S.W.T as well as noble ideals. He further explained that whether a mosque progresses or deteriorates depends on its financial capabilities. Efforts to create a prosperous mosque, based on technological advancements to deliver messages to its members, will be hindered due to the inability to bear the costs. Therefore, it would be unfortunate is the mosque possesses financial capabilities but does not use it for activities that enliven the mosque. Mosque funds will become meaningless except having the pride of a huge bank account as a sign of a mosque administrator's partial success.

The type of transformation that should be advocated in a shift in mentality among mosque administrators towards a more positive and progressive one is the willingness to provide services that satisfy clients or congregational members. The client satisfaction concept must be seen from a positive aspect so that the mosque is not presumed to be just a place of worship. There are various elements involved in the evaluation and gauging of a mosque to determine whether it practices the best level of management. Some of these elements are congressional prayer, response to the programs organised, comments or feedback from congregational members, minimum bureaucracy practiced, a satisfactory physical state of the mosque that is in accordance with current needs, continuous implementation of programs, proper use of time as well as strong financial resources.

In addition, Mohd Ridhuwan Remly *et al.* (2020) found that the activeness of a mosque does not solely lie on the shoulders of the management but involves other segments of society, mainly government and private agencies as well as NGOs, who should be active and combine all their resources to enliven the mosque. Furthermore, the mosque's administration and management personnel should be properly appointed and organised in order for the management and enlivening of the mosque. The capability of the mosque management to strike a balance between enlivening and physically developing the mosque will indirectly attract more community members to visit the mosque. This study intended to determine members' area of expertise in the management structure of the best mosques in Peninsula Malaysia. Selecting committee members who possess a combination of various types of expertise will create a mosque management that is more dynamic, effective and multi-skilled.

2. Methodology

This study intended to identify the organisational structure of various mosque managements that were awarded the Best Mosque Award in Malaysia. The successful mosques received the Best Mosque Award for each respective state for the period beginning in 2017 to 2019. Criteria for becoming a member of

the organisational structure is important because these members are the main initiators of managing and enlivening the mosques.

This explorative-qualitative study used the interview method involving selected representatives of mosque management committees, which comprised chairmen, secretaries, and imam, depending on their suitability and willingness to participate in the interview. The items in the interview were related to the process of forming the management committee and the criteria for selecting individuals to become members of the mosque management committee

3. Analysis and Discussions

This study only selected mosques that were not in the government or state mosques category. The best mosque chosen was from the district or territory and county or parish categories. The mosque management committee is more independent and possesses the autonomy to manage and develop their mosque. The list of mosques selected according to the respective states are Masjid al-Ariffin, Kangar (Perlis), Masjid al-Abrar, Kuala Muda (Kedah), Masjid Saidina Abu Bakar As-Siddiq, Taman Guar Perahu (Pulau Pinang), Masjid an-Nur, Ulu Kinta (Perak), Masjid Ibrahimi, Pasir Puteh (Kelantan), Masjid ar-Ridhwan, Setiu (Terengganu), Masjid Saidina Ali bin Abi Talib, Kuala Lipis (Pahang), Masjid al-Mukminun USJ 2, Petaling (Selangor), Masjid Kariah Kampung Paya (Negeri Sembilan), Masjid al-Rahmah, Taman Bukit Rambai (Melaka) and Masjid Taman Sri Lambak (T6), Kluang (Johor). Following are findings from the interview with representatives from the various mosque managements involved.

Table 1: Findings of the Interview with Representatives of Mosque Management

State	Mosque	Background of the management
Perlis	Al-Ariffin	- Combination of members who are still working and those who have retired - Professionals in the private and public sector - IPTA and IPG lecturers and teachers - Religious Officers - Involves women representatives
Kedah	Al-Abrar	- Combination of members who are still working and those who have retired - Professionals like accountants, doctors, Telekom personnel, teachers, police and army personnel. - Involve women representatives
Pulau Pinang	Saidina Abu Bakar As-Siddiq	- Combination of members who are still working and those who have retired - Professionals from various fields (private and public sectors) - Army and police personnel and teachers - Has a Youth Bureau and women representative
Perak	Al-Rahmaniah	- Combination of members who are still working and those who have retired - Professionals from various fields (private and public sectors) - Army and police personnel and entrepreneurs - Involves women representatives
Kelantan	Ibrahimi	- Combination of members who are still working and those who have retired - Professionals from various fields (private and

		public sectors) - Doctors, lecturers, religious officers, police personnel, teachers, entrepreneurs and self-employed. - Involves women representatives
Terengganu	ar-Ridhwan	- Combination of members who are still working and those who have retired - Professionals from various fields (private and public sectors) - Headmasters, teachers, estate managers, GLC personnel and entrepreneurs - Involves Youth and women representatives
Pahang	Saidina Ali bin Abi Talib	- Combination of members who are still working and those who have retired - Professionals from various fields (private and public sectors) - IPG lecturers, consultants, army personnel, teachers and entrepreneurs - Involves women representatives
Selangor	Al-Mukminun	- Combination of members who are still working and those who have retired - Professionals from various fields (private and public sectors and religious field) - Consultant, entrepreneur, GLC management, accountants - Involves women representatives
Negeri Sembilan	Kariah Kampung Paya	- Combination of members who are still working and those who have retired - Professionals from various fields (private and public sectors) - Religious teachers, headmasters, principals, contractors, local council officers - Involves women representatives
Melaka	Al-Rahmah,	- Combination of members who are still working and those who have retired - Professionals from various fields (private and public sectors and religious field) - Teachers, army and police personnel and GLC - Involves women representatives
Johor	Taman Sri Lambak (T6)	- Combination of members who are still working and those who have retired - Professionals from various fields (private and public sectors) - Religious field, entrepreneur, estate managers, GLC, teachers, headmaster sand self-employed. - Involves women representatives

Based on the table above, all the mosque managements selected in this study involve a combination of individuals who are still working, either from the private or public sectors and those who have retired. Meanwhile, in the context of type of work, management committees in all the mosques comprised individuals with a combination of various fields of expertise. Location of these mosques also influenced the background of the committee members who were chosen and appointed. Mosques in urban areas comprised mostly professionals, such as doctors, accountants, consultants, management personnel attached to *Government Linked Companies* (GLC) and others. Whereas, mosques in rural areas comprised teachers, army personnel, police personnel and others.

It would impart a positive effect if all the mosques involve women representatives in their organisational structure in order to manage women-related issues. There were two mosques, namely Masjid Saidina Abu Bakar as-Siddiq and Masjid ar-Ridhwan, which involved youth representatives who could plan various activities for the youth. Combining various types of expertise, designations and experiences does facilitate the mosque management committee when making strategic plans for managing and enlivening the mosque as well as providing benefits to the society. The process of a successful strategic plan will be made easier and smoother if management members form a social network with various departments, institutions and other interested parties.

In other words, the organisational structure that helps form the leadership is the main initiator of managing and enlivening the mosque. A leadership that comprises various human resource elements could spark numerous strategic plans to be shared amongst members of the parish and local community. Sharing expertise and experiences is translated through various activities like knowledge-based events, providing accurate and latest information, financial management, documentation, good facilities and infrastructure as well as caring for the society. The sharing process can fulfil the spiritual and materialistic needs of the congregational members and the local community. The presence of many congregational members at each prayer session or any type of activity organised by the mosque can be presumed to be a manifestation of members' feeling of satisfaction towards the mosque. Indirectly, the financial standing of the mosque will get stronger due to the contributions of the members. This study observed that the mosques selected in this study possessed all three elements.

4.   Recommendations

Based on the findings, the mosque management committee should involve individuals from various fields of expertise or vocation. This variety will help form a good type of management, which is consistent with its function as an Islamic institution. Until today, the role of the mosque as a driver of economic activity and an agent of socio-economic development for the Islamic community has been absent from the list of functions related to mosque management and enlivening. At the same time, the Islamic community is somewhat left behind in their country's economic progress. Hence, the mosque administration and management committee should be well organised by involving the integration and participation of religious scholars, professionals, economists, educationists, security personnel, retirees and so forth without neglecting members of the local mosque community. The integration of individuals with a variety of expertise and experiences into the organisation's structure will make the mosque management committee more dynamic, caring, of better quality as well as always relevant to society.

In order to empower the mosque management committee, the appointed members must be given regular professional management training by the State Islamic Religious Department with the cooperation of various related government agencies or training institutions on topics concerning leadership, Islamic understanding, strategic management, ICT literacy, economy, financial management, effective communication skills etc. Besides that, regular assistance and monitoring is required so that the management is always prepared to properly implement the entrusted tasks. The mosque is not only a place of worship but it also acts as a *one stop centre* for obtaining knowledge and participating in community and societal activities.

5.   Conclusion

Overall, mosque management has seen much change from time to time. However, those changes depend on the mosque management and its location. Mosque development in villages and rural areas is not the same as in urban areas as the former experiences various limitations in the form of financial,

expertise and social networking. Mosques such as these need special attention from the State Islamic religious department as well as assistance in the form of an 'adopted mosque' scheme implemented by other big mosques so that these smaller mosques are better maintained and function properly. As an Islamic institution, mosques should play a comprehensive role in society as a centre for worship, propagating knowledge and information, administration, socio-economic activities as well as activities involving the community and society at large. Findings could act as a guide for mosque committee members all over the country as well as related agencies to assist in managing the enlivening of the mosque in a holistic and relevant manner that positively affects various areas of human life. This is because the mosque management committee is the main agent involved in a more comprehensive (*syumul*) and dynamic transformation of the mosque. Although the mosque cannot solve all the problems faced by the Islamic community; however, its role as a provider of benefits to the community is sufficient and adequate.

6. Acknowledgement

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