

THE ROLE OF MOSQUE ADMINISTRATION BOARD IN ENHANCING MOSQUE VITALITY

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the role of the Mosque Administration Board or ‘takmirul masjid’ and its inhibiting factors in enhancing mosque vitality. This research is necessary as the commitment of the Mosque Administration Board to fostering mosque vitality needs to be reassessed. The most visible indicator is the non-participation of worshippers in both religious and social matters. Considering that the Muslim population is a majority and mosques, besides being places of worship, play a crucial role in shaping the character and cultural identity of Muslims, the role of the Mosque Administration Board is highly significant. This research employed a field study using a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. Data were obtained through field observations, interviews with research informants, and document analysis. Data collection techniques included observation, structured interviews, and documentation. Data analysis used inductive analysis techniques. The findings of this study indicate that the role of the Mosque Administration Board in enhancing mosque vitality is not optimal, as evidenced by the lack of involvement of worshippers in various obligatory and recommended prayers, as well as other religious activities. This situation arises due to several factors, including inadequate coordination and consolidation among the Mosque Administration Board, insufficient government support and attention, limited financial support, inadequate socialization and consolidation among worshippers, and the need for streamlining the number of personnel in the Mosque Administration Board.

Keywords: mosque administration board; mosque; worship; social; religious

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran Badan Takmirul Masjid serta faktor-faktor penghambatnya dalam memakmurkan masjid. Penelitian ini perlu dilakukan karena dewasa ini komitmen Badan Takmirul Masjid dalam memakmurkan masjid perlu dibenahi kembali. Ketidakikutsertaan jamaah dalam perkara ibadah maupun sosial menjadi acuan yang paling nampak. Sementara mengingat jumlah penduduk Muslim adalah mayoritas dan masjid selain sebagai tempat ibadah memiliki peran penting dalam membangun karakter dan identitas kebudayaan umat Muslim, maka peran Badan Takmirul Masjid sangat dibutuhkan. Jenis penelitian ini merupakan penelitian lapangan menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif. Data penelitian diperoleh dari hasil pengamatan lapangan, interview dengan informan penelitian, dan pembacaan terhadap dokumen. Teknik pengumpulan data menggunakan teknik observasi, wawancara terstruktur dan dokumentasi. Teknik analisis data menggunakan teknik analisis induktif. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa peran Badan Takmirul Masjid dalam memakmurkan masjid belum berjalan optimal, yang dapat dibuktikan dengan kurangnya keterlibatan jamaah dalam berbagai pelaksanaan ibadah mahdah dan sunah, serta kegiatan keagamaan lainnya. Hal ini terjadi karena beberapa faktor, yakni koordinasi dan konsolidasi Badan Takmirul Masjid tidak berjalan dengan baik, minim dukungan dan perhatian pemerintah, minim dukungan dana, minim sosialisasi dan konsolidasi kepada jamaah, serta perlunya perampingan jumlah personel dalam kepengurusan Badan Takmirul Masjid.

Kata kunci: takmirul masjid; masjid; ibadah; sosial; keagamaan

Introduction

A mosque is a place of worship and a space for Muslims to engage in activities demonstrating their obedience and submission to Allah SWT (Adriani et al., 2022; Verousi & Allen, 2021; Sunier, 2005). Generally, a mosque is characterized as a position of surrender (prayer) that signifies a place of supplication, prostration, and devotion to Allah SWT (Sudarma et al., 2023; Jensen & Kofoed, 2022; (Yar, 2022).

During the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the mosque was the centre of progress for the Muslim community (Talib, 2022; Tabroni & Sari, 2022). Shihab (1996) stated that the mosque functions as a place of worship, consultation and communication, education, social welfare, military training, healthcare, peace and justice, assembly and receiving guests, incarceration, and a centre for enlightenment and defence of the Islamic faith. This indicates that besides being a place of worship, the mosque also functions for individual development (Hasanain & Muslimatusshalihah, 2021; Hoelzchen, 2021).

In everyday discussions, mosques are commonly known as places of worship for Muslims, often called the house of Allah SWT, where congregational prayers are performed. Mosques are also utilized for learning and teaching processes (Jaya, 2022; Marzuki et al., 2023; Tharaba & Noviyanti, 2022; Ilyas, 2022). In this context, mosques improve the lives and quality of the Muslim community. Besides serving as places of worship, mosques benefit Muslims in various fields. Therefore, mosques need to be managed effectively and efficiently. The role of mosques aligns with their function during the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), which served as centres for worship and community activities (Khairuni & Widyanto, 2018).

In the teachings of creed, Sharia, and ethics, the mosque is indeed a structure of life that can guide individuals in establishing a noble relationship with God (Murod et al., 2023). The capacity of the mosque as an institution for social improvement can be observed from the historical accuracy of the battles led by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) (Rusdi & Rubino, 2023; Qodim, 2023), where he previously established social and political life in the city of Madinah by utilizing the mosque. This was essential in fostering a highly developed and cultivated society in Madinah. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is considered to have established the mosque as a medium for social-political, social, financial, and even military techniques (Öcal & Gökarkısel, 2022).

In a place of great clarity, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) received numerous verses from the Qur'an, which were then recorded, memorized, understood, and recited following his guidance and the instructions of his followers to devise strategies under his leadership, addressing religious, societal, individual, family, and even government-related issues.

The mosque serves as the guardian and last bastion for Muslims, especially in times of crisis when individuals are distanced from Islamic teachings (Ahmad, 2022; Batul, 2022). Various forces influence the mosque's capacity as a space for Muslims, intentionally or unintentionally, ranging from its limited capacity as a focal point for worship to the emergence of tendencies to engage in new activities. Interpersonal development also plays a role in effectively utilizing the functions of the mosque, which serves as a centre for worship and extends beyond that, particularly as a cultural and 'muamalah' - transactional hub (Sofyansyah & Anom, 2023; Nurjuman et al., 2022; Fahmi et al., 2023).

Currently, the crisis in the lives of Muslim communities stems from the fact that mosques have lost their intended functions, being utilized solely to achieve personal goals and interests, devoid of spirituality. This means mosques are no longer expected to be a standard and of general importance in shaping Islamic culture. However, the solid and comprehensive development of the Islamic community cannot be achieved without the framework of Islamic principles, creed, and Sharia (Saefudin et al., 2023), which can only be fostered through the essence of the mosque.

In line with this, the mosque holds a vital position for Muslims, particularly in fortifying and strengthening their Islamic identity, implying that mosques should be created to nurture the souls and communities of Muslims. The Mosque Administration Board is an entrusted assembly responsible for managing all aspects related to the mosque, including its structure, maintenance, and development. The Mosque Administration Board is crucial in promoting non-formal education for the Muslim community. Naturally, the board members must be capable and accepted by the community.

Various studies indicate that the role of the Mosque Administration Board in enhancing mosque vitality has not reached its full potential (Faizal et al., 2023; Sulaiman & Fadhilah, 2022; Najmudin & Bayinah, 2022; Falah et al., 2022; Putri & Nursikin, 2023). Therefore, this research aims to analyze the role of the Mosque Administration Board and the inhibiting factors in enhancing mosque vitality.

Method

This research was conducted at Masjid At-Tawwab in Genggulang Village, North Kotamobagu, North Sulawesi, from May to July 2022. This study employed a field research design using a qualitative approach with a descriptive method (Mihas, 2019; Lambert & Lambert, 2012). Data were collected through field observations, interviews with research informants, and document analysis (Creswell, 1998). The data collection techniques involved observation, structured interviews, and documentation (Thomas, 2016; Natow, 2020). The data analysis technique used was inductive analysis (Strauss, 1987).

Results and Discussion

Enhancing Mosque Vitality

Enhancing mosque vitality involves building, repairing, restoring, paying attention to, maintaining, and other beneficial activities for the Muslim community (Ruggles, 2011). The development of a mosque goes beyond mere luxurious aesthetics; it should serve as a central hub for congregational prayers, remembrance of Allah, supplications, and spiritual retreats (*I'tikaf*). Utama et al. (2018) state that a thriving mosque has successfully evolved into a focal point of community attention. In line with this, the mosque truly functions as a centre of worship and a focal point of Islamic culture from a broader perspective. When implemented effectively, this approach can lead to tangible and profound development of the mosque.

A thriving mosque depends on the individual awareness of Muslims to engage in various activities (Hasyim, 2023). Firstly, there is the aspect of construction. The mosque's structure should be meticulously maintained. Any damages should be repaired or replaced, cleanliness should be prioritized, and the overall upkeep of the mosque should be ensured, presenting a state of proper maintenance, cleanliness, beauty, and excellence. The material well-being of the mosque reflects the virtues of life and the level of trust among the individuals residing in its vicinity. Conversely, a run-down, dirty, and damaged mosque indicates the low self-esteem of the individuals in its vicinity. Secondly, there is the aspect of worship. Worship activities encompass congregational prayers, performed by the congregation five times daily, Friday prayers, and Tarawih prayers. These congregational prayers hold great significance as they aim to foster solidarity and Islamic brotherhood among individual Muslims who gather at

the mosque. Other profound practices encouraged in the mosque include remembrance of Allah (*zikir*), supplications, *I'tikaf* (spiritual retreat), Quranic discussions, charitable giving, and acts of kindness. Thirdly, there are religious activities. These activities involve regular Islamic study circles, both specific and general, conducted to enhance faith quality and knowledge, observance of significant Islamic occasions, religious courses (such as Arabic language courses and preacher training courses), guidance and counselling on religious, family, marriage-related matters, testimonies of new Muslim converts, wedding ceremonies, and receptions. Lastly, there are educational activities. These activities encompass formal and informal education (Mokodenseho & Zamhari, 2021; Mokodenseho, 2020; Rohmah et al., 2023). Formal education, for instance, may include establishing schools or madrasahs within the mosque premises. Through these institutions, children and adolescents can receive an Islamic education (Wekke & Mokodenseho, 2017; Idris & Mokodenseho, 2021; Idris et al., 2021; (Wekke et al., 2017; Wekke et al., 2018). Informal or non-formal education can take the form of Ramadan fast-track Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren kilat*), Islamic youth training programs, language courses, and arts and culture programs, which can be feasibly organized (Idris et al., 2023).

From a historical perspective, mosques are considered positions of prostration intended as places for prayer. As a general rule, mosques are characterized as positions of surrender (prayer) that signify a space focused on prayer, prostration, and worship of Allah. Because its essence is submission and obedience, the substance of the mosque is solely a place for various acts of obedience to Allah SWT (Shihab, 2003). Therefore, in the context of Shariah, a mosque is a space designated for congregational prayers performed five times a day indefinitely. The mosque is a sacred place for Allah's servants to communicate directly with their Lord through prayer. In addition to fulfilling the obligation of prayer, mosques serve as spaces for social activities to assist the congregation and the community.

If we relate it to the demonstration of worship on earth, mosques are not just places of surrender and purification methods. It is said that mosques today do not merely carry the meaning of a building for prayer or even *tayammum* (dry ablution) as an alternative to bathing. Instead, the term mosque here also implies a place for all human activities that reflect submission to Allah SWT.

Based on the above descriptions, it can be reasonably stated that mosques are places to honour Allah SWT. Moreover, mosques can also be

utilized as spaces for social activities to benefit the congregation and the community or ummah (Triayudha et al., 2019).

Miharja et al. (2018) state that the fundamental capacity of a mosque is the position of surrender to Allah SWT, a place of supplication and worship to Him. Furthermore, a mosque can serve as a place for Muslims to honour and draw closer to Allah SWT, a place for Muslims to engage in I'tikaf (spiritual retreat), purify themselves, sharpen their minds to attain self-awareness and spiritual experiences, ensuring a balance between the soul and the body, and maintaining moral integrity; a space for Muslims to address emerging public issues; fostering unity among congregants and encouraging collective participation in communal progress; mosques with study circles serve as platforms to broaden the knowledge and information of Muslims; a place for nurturing and forming pioneering units in the community; a venue for gathering and distributing resources; and a location for completing social guidance and supervision.

In the context mentioned earlier, mosques symbolize the significance of Islam. They serve as indicators or proportions of the hypothesis about the state of Muslim communities. The condition of a mosque affirms the condition of the Muslim community itself. Likewise, the presence of organizations and institutions around the mosque represents the manifestation of brotherhood among Muslims, making the life of the Muslim community dependent on harmonious social and communal methodologies. Cheema (2022) suggests that mosques have various functions or capacities. Firstly, mosques can be used for the needs of the Muslim community, such as recitation gatherings (tahlilan), charitable activities, and more. Secondly, mosques can serve as spaces for social organization, such as meetings and administrative tasks related to the interests of the Muslim community. Thirdly, mosques can become hubs for social movements. Fourthly, they provide a foundation for peaceful and harmonious relationships with neighbouring communities.

The Role of the Mosque Management Board (*Badan Takmirul Masjid*) in Enhancing Mosque Vitality

In general, the members of the Mosque Management Board are aware of their respective duties and functions. Aside from their involvement in establishing the Mosque Management Board, they also participate in various meetings, including program discussions, financial report meetings, scheduling meetings for prayers (imam and khatib), fundraising meetings, mosque facility development preparation meetings, and mosque renovation meetings.

The Mosque Management Board plays a crucial role in enhancing mosque vitality. A mosque can be considered thriving if it has successfully become a central community dynamics hub. Without activities within the mosque, the mosque management board cannot fulfil its duties and responsibilities as leaders. This study found several types of activities carried out by the Mosque Management Board, including the mosque and facility improvements, communal work or community work or maintenance of the mosque, *Halal bi-Halal* gatherings, meetings, fundraising events, Prophet's birthday celebrations (*Maulid Nabi*), and Isra Miraj celebrations.

Although the Mosque Management Board has been performing its role, some of the activities mentioned above have not been fully optimized. Therefore, it is necessary to add other equally important activities, such as preacher lectures, the development of Quranic education centres (TPQ), religious studies, regular Islamic study circles, youth activities, congregational prayers, and collective remembrance of Allah (*zikr*).

To enhance the performance of the Mosque Management Board, several recommendations should be considered, including evaluating the performance of the Mosque Management Board, establishing a work program, active participation in all religious activities, having knowledge about mosque management, fostering closeness with the community, providing incentives for board members, selecting board members who are not committed to other organizational duties, fostering cooperation among the Mosque Management Board members, increasing the number of activities in the mosque, ensuring transparency, streamlining the organization, involving the community in activities, and prioritizing the interests of the congregation.

Factors Hindering the Role of the Mosque Management Board in Enhancing Mosque Vitality

One of the main factors contributing to the suboptimal implementation of the Mosque Management Board's role is the crisis of community or congregational involvement. A crucial crisis that serves as an important benchmark is the lack of community participation in activities organized within the mosque, essential for fostering mosque vitality. This situation arises due to obstacles that hinder achieving a prosperous mosque life, such as the lack of coordination and consolidation among mosque administrators, inadequate government support or attention, insufficient financial support, and inadequate socialization and consolidation efforts within the community.

However, as mentioned earlier, the circumstances are not insurmountable, and mosque vitality can still be achieved. Several measures can be taken to attain a thriving mosque life, including selecting personnel who demonstrate a high dedication to mosque-related issues and community affairs, providing training on mosque management, adopting an individualized approach towards congregants, incorporating congregational aspirations to cultivate their love for the mosque, introducing innovative fundraising initiatives, ensuring governmental guidance regarding organizational and financial management, implementing continuous monitoring of activity implementation and financial management responsibilities, and streamlining the number of Mosque Management Board members by choosing individuals with the requisite skills and willingness to contribute to mosque affairs. These efforts align with the viewpoint expressed by Yani (2018) who states that ideally, mosque administrators should be Muslims possessing an Islamic personality characterized by various traits, broad insights encompassing Islamic, mosque-related, societal, and organizational matters, as well as managerial skills to oversee all mosque activities.

Yani (2018) identifies several common crises that hinder the role of the Mosque Management Board in enhancing mosque vitality. *Firstly*, there is the crisis of management. Ideally, every mosque should have a management board with a solid and unquestionable capacity. However, we witness and experience today that many mosques lack cohesive management. This is evident from the ineffective functioning of various sections, programs being dependent on only one or two individuals with their limitations, and limited and monotonous activities, ultimately resulting in a lack of trust from the congregants towards the mosque administration. This situation can be attributed to various factors, including (1) low commitment and responsibility among board members, (2) a lack of understanding of how to effectively run the management board and align it with the mosque's intended functions, (3) a lack of clear job descriptions and authority for board members, (4) insufficient time, energy, and attention from board members leading to a simple approach to management, and (5) conflicts within the management board or among its members.

Secondly, there is the crisis of congregational involvement. The level of congregational participation in mosque activities is still remarkably low compared to the Muslim population around the mosque. This is a concern felt by many mosque administrators. Even when there is a large number of

congregants, their presence is usually limited to unexpected events such as the commemoration of the Prophet's birthday, Isra Mi'raj, and specific worship activities like Friday prayers, Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, and early nights of Tarawih prayers. In contrast, routine activities are attended by only a few congregants.

Thirdly, there is a financial crisis. Many mosques experience financial challenges, which hinder their ability to develop activities and even construct necessary physical facilities. Mosque funding often relies on meagre sources, such as Friday donation collections, which are insufficient to meet the needs of the mosque.

To overcome these challenges, positive efforts can be made in various areas. *Firstly*, in terms of management, it is crucial to select individuals who are highly dedicated to mosque-related issues and community affairs. They should be willing and capable of working within the mosque management board, actively contributing to fostering unity among fellow administrators, devoting their potential to mosque affairs, and continuously enhancing their managerial skills. To improve the quality of mosque administrators, it is advisable to provide mosque-specific training or involve them in training programs conducted by Islamic propagation and mosque institutions. Additionally, organizing an initial period of management training (*TC kepengurusan*) ensures that administrators share a common vision, perception, and steps towards achieving mosque vitality. The training content should focus on enhancing the personal qualities of mosque administrators, increasing their understanding of mosque affairs, and developing their managerial abilities.

Secondly, regarding congregational involvement, mosque administrators need to engage congregants in various activities. One important approach is individualized engagement, wherein administrators establish personal connections with congregants, engage in heartfelt discussions about the mosque, and seek their evaluations and suggestions for mosque development. This approach aims to thaw any coldness in the relationship between administrators and congregants, allowing congregants to express their aspirations openly and freely. Ultimately, a sense of ownership and belonging towards the mosque is expected to grow among the congregants (Yani, 2018).

Thirdly, alternative halal and non-binding revenue-generating endeavours can be explored in terms of finances, such as handling utility bill payments, telephone services, water supply, and engaging in commercial ventures. Additionally, mosque administrators should transparently report

income and expenditures related to mosque funds to instill confidence among congregants that their contributions are solely used for the benefit of the mosque. This is important as some congregants may be hesitant to donate significant amounts due to a lack of trust in the financial management of the mosque.

Lastly, governmental support and attention are crucial. The government can provide regulation, guidance, supervision, and nurture (Sutarmadi, 2012). It is necessary for the government to directly review and assess the capabilities and credibility of mosque institutions, ensuring that when mosques are well-managed and adhere to agreed-upon frameworks, the government, along with Muslim community leaders, can provide motivation and blessings. This will lead to progress, prosperity, and the well-being of society and mosques.

Conclusion

Overall, the performance of the Mosque Management Board has not been optimal, and the mosque can be considered lacking in vitality. This is evident from the need for more congregational involvement in almost all aspects, including obligatory prayers, voluntary prayers, and other religious activities. The factors hindering the implementation of the Mosque Management Board's role include poor coordination and consolidation within the board, minimal support and attention from the government, insufficient financial support, inadequate socialization and consolidation efforts with the congregants, and the need to streamline the number of personnel within the Mosque Management Board. This study suggests various measures to address these challenges, starting with selecting personnel with a high level of dedication to mosque-related issues and community affairs. Training programs on mosque management should be conducted to enhance the board's understanding of mosque affairs. Individualized approaches should be adopted to engage with the congregants, considering their aspirations. Innovative fundraising initiatives should be explored, and the government should provide guidance and support to the Mosque Management Board through mentoring and supervision. In conclusion, it is essential to address the existing challenges and improve the Mosque Management Board's performance to enhance the mosque's vitality. This can be achieved through effective coordination, increased government and congregants support, streamlined personnel management, and continuous training and development initiatives

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