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**Innovative Mosque Management Activities for Income Generation and
Community Inclusion**

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Abstract

Mosques play an important role in Malaysia's muslim communities. However, mosque management and upkeep depend on the committee members, location and the surrounding community. The paper aims at showcasing the innovative management strategies for income generation effectiveness in organizing community engagement activities towards poverty alleviation and inclusion in their *qaryah* or locality. These *qaryah* mosques are situated in the states of Perak and Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. Through a qualitative design study, the findings from this project will describe and discuss the mosques' management and strategies for continuity in ensuring income generation for the stakeholders' wellbeing and sustainability.

Keywords: mosque management; community engagement; inclusive society; sustainability

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1.0 Introduction

Communities in developing countries are still reeling from the coronavirus pandemic lockdowns. Efforts to recover economically have been tremendous but the results and impacts have been slow. Nevertheless, the lockdowns gravely affected the household finances of the rural communities in Malaysia. The reduced household incomes in the villages provided the additional impetus for mosques to organize and conduct community engagement activities for socio-economic sustenance and inclusiveness. Hence, to develop the Islamic economy in a community, the mosque can carry out various activities. However, support and cooperation from financial institutions such as the banking sector and related organizations can carry out these activities more professionally, efficiently, and effectively (Budiman & Sadewa, 2017). In the endemic phase, many mosques take on a role in helping the community to improve their standard of living, especially after the end of the COVID-19 epidemic. Better financial management that generates much cash can help increase society's productivity and improve its standard of living. This can be done by providing funds for a better farming system, such as a hydroponic plant. Moreover, it also can provide funds using a profit-sharing system (Bara & Pradesyah, 2021). The mosque economic empowerment can be conducted in better strategies to alleviate poor in community. (Muslim, Karsidi, Wihaya, Joebagio, 2014)

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Thus, the objective of this paper focus at providing insights on mosques' innovative management strategies for income generation to organize community engagement activities towards poverty alleviation in their *qaryah* or locality. These *qaryah* mosques were situated in the states of Perak and Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. Three of the mosques are located in Kota Setia, Kampung Gajah district, Perak while the fourth was from a village in the district of Rembau, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia.

2.0 Literature Review

The literature review section will provide substantial evaluation of similar published research outcomes and projects revolving around the study's objectives. The first part will describe the mosques setup in Malaysia followed by management strategies for income generation and the spill over towards community engagement and inclusion.

2.1 Mosques and mosque management in Malaysia

Mosques play an essential role as the basis for economic development and poverty eradication among the Muslim community. This is supported by the establishment of waqf and zakat and the halal industry as micro-financing to improve the community's living standard and equality. Therefore, the government should view the potential of the mosque as another alternative for social equality through empowerment (A. As-Salafiyah et al., 2021). Consequently, mosques have the potential to be a catalyst for the economic development of Muslims with the establishment of mosque cooperatives (Riwajanti, 2019). Many economic activities can be done if the financial fundamental through the mosque cooperative is established. However, it is pretty difficult if there is no cooperation among educated experts in forming this cooperative. Changing the mindset of people on the vital role of mosque cooperative development is a challenge to ensure the establishment of a mosque cooperative will bring economic power to the ummah (Muslim community) (Riwajanti, 2019).

Moslems all over the world congregate at their respective mosques to pray and socialize. Mosques upkeep depends on the elected committee members led by the *imam* or mosque leader. Many mosques in Malaysia are built with careful considerations on the location and capacity to the worshippers and the community (Asyraf Mohd Rodzi et al., 2022; Bakri et al., 2018). Currently, there are 6,829 mosques in Malaysia (JAKIM, 2023) followed by 18,369 *surau*, 13,687 *imam* (religious leader), 7,841 *bilal* (mosque member who calls for prayers) and, 11,157 *siak* (mosque member responsible for the cleanliness and other infrastructure) (Enakmen2011, 2023). From these numbers, the committee members that drive the mosques every day operations are important for community activities which require substantial budgets for sustainability (Pohan & Sirait, 2020). But How are the mosques' committee members appointed? Abun-Noor (2021) stated that the selections by the community are based on the individual's qualities and responsibilities. Another guided reference to the appointment is based on Surah Al-Tawbah, verse 18, '*Only those uphold the Mosques of Allah who believe in Allah, and the Last Day, and keep Salah established, and pay Zakah, and fear no one except Allah*'; hence, it is necessary that the committee members possess certain important qualities so that the *Masjid* or mosque can be populated in accordance to the principles of the Qur'an (Abun-Noor, 2021).

The number of worshippers to the mosques are important for the mainstay and upkeep, that is, the more worshippers there are, the better maintained the mosque will be (Jaafar et al., 2013). Hence, congregation numbers and activities depend on the location of the mosques. In Malaysia, places of worship for moslem are divided into seven types (Hussin et al., 2019):

- i) The National Mosque which represents the main mosque for Malaysia
- ii) National main mosques, for example, the Putrajaya Mosque and the Sultan Mizan Mosque also in Putrajaya
- iii) State mosques such as the Jalan Duta Provincial Mosque, the Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Mosque in Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia and others.
- iv) District mosques that usually are built in every district throughout Malaysia.
- v) Village mosques where in some places are considered *jamek* mosques
- vi) Friday prayer *surau* that has been given permission by the religious department to hold Friday prayers due to certain considerations
- vii) *Surau* or *musalla* that are built in small villages or remote areas for congregational prayers

For the purpose of this study, only the first five mosques are considered as the scope for investigation. However, due to time constraint, only district and village mosques' officials consented to the interviews.

On a different note, the general management and operations of a mosque have been documented by the mosque Management Division, Federal Territories Department of Islamic Religion or JAWI (JAIWP, 2023) and, the Perak Mosque Management Division . Some of functions include (JAIP, 2023):

- Managing the appointment and commissioning of Qaryah Committee Members and mosque officials
- Manage programs and training for the Qaryah Committee and mosque officers
- Managing *Takmir* study classes in mosques and *surau*s
- Managing the administration and maintenance of the district mosque

Henceforth, the number of qaryah mosque officials averaged four *imams*, four *bilals* and two *siaks* (JAIP, 2023). The appointments conform to the Islamic Religious Administration Enactment 1992, *Kaedah Jawatankuasa Kariah 1998* and, *Kaedah Pegawai-pegawai Masjid 1998* (JAIP, 2023). For the qaryah mosques, the number of committee members average ten officers; one chairman, one deputy chairman, one secretary, one assistant secretary, one bursar and ten committee members (JAIP, 2023).

Moving on, most mosques depend on donations from the worshippers. The monies are commonly collected via donation boxes located in the mosques. In keeping with the times, QRC (Quick Response Code) are also strategically located at the entrances and exits

of mosques for easy transactions. The accumulated contributions are then collected by the appointed mosque official, the bursar. Hence, this study is guided by the following research objectives:

- To explore the mosques' income generating activities
- To assess the mosque management strategies for community engagement

2.2 Mosques Administration, internal and external issues

From time immemorial, all human-centric entities are plagued by internal and external issues or politics, regardless of faith (Henne, 2020). The internet and social media have provided the tools for communication whether on a positive or negative note. Although *mufitis* and *imams* have repeatedly advocated mosques for religious studies and faith building, there will always be parties who will politicize matters (Collins, 2011) including the mosque's architecture (Ismail & Rasdi, 2010) and economics (Aisyah As-Salafiyah et al., 2021). Nonetheless, these interferences should be tackled in a mature and professional manner as the mosque administration impacts the community (Glover, 2000). The discourse on mosque politics is not new. According to Jamal (2005), studies on civic and political engagement and the role of religious institutions in community inclusion as mosques promote and foster a sense of group consciousness among the communities. Even in the western world, mosques activities have significantly impacted civic engagement (Oskooii & Dana, 2018). Much of the events were cultural differences but from one faith (Humphrey, 1987). In Malaysia, culture and faith were not prominent in mosque administration; rather lack of leadership skills are reflected in different mosque administration and sustainability (Harjin et al., 2009). Mosques have the potential to be a catalyst for the economic development of Muslims with the establishment of mosque cooperatives. Many economic activities can be done if the financial fundamental through mosque cooperative is established. However, it is quite difficult if there is no cooperation among those who are educated and expert in the formation of this cooperative. Changing the mind set of people on the importance role of the mosque cooperative development is a challenge to ensure the establishment of a mosque cooperative will bring the economic power to *ummah*. (Riwajanti N I, 2019)

2.3 Mosques activities and community inclusion

As noted in the mosque activities, community engage plays an important role to increase the number of worshippers to the mosque. Nowadays, many mosques take on a role to help the community to improve their standard of living, especially after the end of the covid19 epidemic. A better financial management that generates a lot of cash can help the increase the society's productivity of society and improve their standard of living. For instance, it can be done by providing funds to a better system in farming such as hydroponic plant system. And it also can provides funds using profit sharing system. (Bara & Pradesyah, 2021). To develop the Islamic economy in a community, various activities can be carried out by the mosque. However, support and cooperation from financial institutions such as the banking sector and related organizations will carry out these activities more professionally, efficiently and effectively. (Budiman, Sadewa, 2017)

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research design

By using the exploratory, qualitative approach in the fieldwork, primary data were recorded through interviews with five mosques' officials or committee members and a chieftain. The interviewees were identified through purposive sampling, that is, only members of a mosque's management committee were selected. The interviews were guided by a semi-structured guideline. Also, data were collected through observations and documentations as secondary data. The perspectives of the respective mosques' operations, functions and, activities which included community engagement projects for income generation were also supported by the feedbacks from the village chieftain or *Penghulu* and the village head or *Ketua Kampung*. The village head assisted with calling the respondents to assist with the focus group interview.

3.2 Sampling and sample size

The technique used to identify the respondents for this project is purposive sampling. The main criterion is that the respondents is an active mosque official. Based on this criterion, the interviewees for this project are shown in Table 1. The sample size for the study was ten current mosque officials for the states of Perak and Negeri Sembilan, however after interviewing the four officials plus one chieftain, saturation of data was achieved. The identification for these respondents were the consent from them as mosque officials to be interviewed within a specified timeframe as well as the convenience of the locations that coincided with other fieldworks.

Table 1. Breakdown of respondents

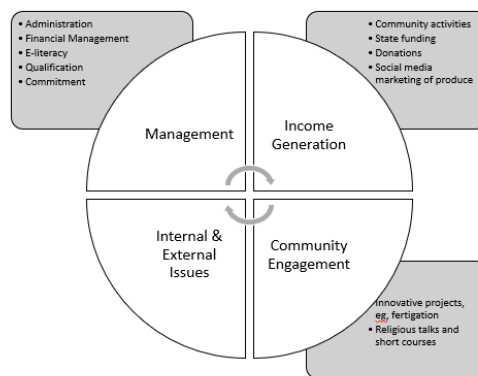
Management status at the mosque	Unit	Mosque Name	State
Bursar	1	Masjid Jamek Sungai Mangkok, Kota Setia	Perak
Secretary	1	Masjid Nurul Saadah, Sungai Ranggam, Kota Setia	Perak
Secretary	1	Masjid Jamek Sungai Mangkok, Kota Setia	Perak

3.3 Data analysis

The thirty-minute interview sessions were transcribed and were initially analysed manually before using the software, NVivo Release 1.7.1. The responses were compared using the questions in the interview guidelines. This procedure is made possible as there were only four respondents to analyse including the feedbacks from the chieftain. Reconfirmation of the responses were also conducted via telephone calls. The output after the analyses include themes and narratives.

4.0 Findings

The data analyses revealed four emergent themes as shown in Figure 1. All the respondents were males and the organization of the mosques showed that the higher rank posts were held by male officials while the committee members included several females from the community.



. Fig. 1: Themes and sub-themes on mosque management, income generation, community engagement and internal/external issues

As shown in Figure 1, the issues are divided into four themes, namely, management, income generation, community engagement and, internal and external issues. The sub-themes from the management include administration or administrative skills, financial management, e-literacy, qualification and members' commitment. The income generation sub themes include community activities, state funding, donations, social media marketing. The third them is community engagement or inclusion for innovative projects, religious talks and short courses. The fourth theme is internal and external issues. The description of these themes will be elaborated in the discussion section.

5.0 Discussions and Implications

Drawing from the findings, strategic choice for future mosque's community engagement with certain types of valuable district-based economic activities. Likewise, these ongoing administrative matters remain the same over the years as evidenced from Harjin et al. (2009) research project where Islam encourages the moslem community to increase activities for the mosque prosperity. "A good mosque is one that is managed and administered systematically" (Harjin et al., 2009).

The implications from this study's findings showed that the management of the four mosques revolve around leadership skills of the officials led by the chairman. Further and continuous training workshops are suggested so that the officials stay current with the state and federal government's agenda to ensure that socio-economic development and community inclusion is achieved. In doing so, community sustainability will increase in tandem with the mosques' activities. The attitude of the community that reluctant to participate in the mosque activities also be a factor to the failure of making a mosque as a center to improve the rural economy.

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

The research project evidenced similarities in the mosque officials' abilities to manage their respective entities. Similarly the ultimate goals are to ensure that the mosques's goals are achieved. Although there is no specific or formal key performance indicators to ensure that maximum activities are conducted, the management and committee members are committed to ensure that the mosques' events are communicated to the communities that they serve.

Findings showed that all three mosques have ongoing community engagement activities in collaboration with the chieftain's office, the district office through the state government's allocations. However, the income generation activities depend on the location and finances of the mosques and how active the mosques' management committees were. Communities depend on the mosque to organize the activities which increase significantly during the holy month of Ramadhan. The findings also showed that income generation for the

mosques were limited, thus the mosque management committee need to network and liaise more with the relevant agencies. Community engagement activities should also include more youths to be involved in the locality's socio-economic growth and succession planning. Drawing from the findings too, strategic choice activities for future mosque's community engagement with certain types of valuable district-based economic activities are suggested. Keeping up with the current matters on poverty alleviation plans by the federal government green economic agenda is also recommended. The participation of more mosque's committee is strongly encouraged for future studies to gain more information and opinion of these party in order to use mosque as a catalyst for poverty alleviation.

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Paper Contribution to Related Field of Study

This paper contributes to the field of management.

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