



Revitalizing Mosques Across the Ages: Historical Roles, Contemporary Issues, and Post- Pandemic Empowerment Strategies

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ABSTRACT

Mosques are vital faith-based organizations (FBOs) that significantly contribute to the spiritual, social, educational, and economic welfare of communities—not only in Muslim-majority countries but also in regions where Muslims are minorities. While traditionally centered on worship, mosques today have evolved into multi-functional institutions that address diverse community needs. This study examines the historical roles of mosques from the era of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) through the Caliphates to the modern era, highlighting current challenges and strategies for empowerment, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected from 425 participants across eight prominent mosques in major Indonesian cities through surveys, observations, interviews, and secondary sources. Key findings reveal that mosques play an essential role in promoting moderate Islam, social cohesion, and inclusive community services. During and after the pandemic, mosques adapted by expanding digital outreach, enhancing women's participation, and launching economic and health initiatives. The study underscores the strategic importance of revitalizing mosques as inclusive, resilient institutions that foster both religious devotion and community empowerment. Insights from the Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta demonstrate best practices that may inform mosque development globally.

Keywords: *Improving welfare; Indonesian mosques; revitalizing.*

INTRODUCTION

In their daily life, Muslims are connected to mosques where they hear adzan (calling for ṣalāt), a place to pray together (ṣalāh al-jamā'ah), follow religious teaching (majelis ta'lim), and engage in other activities that express their obedience and compassion—reflected through vertical connectedness to the Creator (Allah SWT) and horizontal relationships

with fellow human beings and the environment (Wulandari & Ahmad, 2023). The word masjid in Arabic derives from the verb sajada, which means to prostrate. The idea of a mosque as a center for the community has also been expressed architecturally, and its development has paralleled the expansion of Islam (Alnaim & Noaime, 2023).

Historically, two significant events illustrate how the Prophet Muhammad used the mosque as a foundation for building a just and spiritual society (Husni, 2022). The first is Isrā' and Mi'rāj—the spiritual journey from Masjid al-Ḥarām in Makkah to Masjid al-Aqṣā in East Jerusalem. Through this journey, the Prophet received the divine command of ṣalāt directly from Allah SWT. Both mosques became symbols and starting points for spiritual discipline, obedience, and self-transformation—roles that remain relevant today (Husni, 2022).

The Prophet established the mosque in Madinah not only as a place of worship but as a multi-functional institution that addressed both spiritual and material needs (Alnaim & Noaime, 2023). As faith-based organizations (FBOs), mosques are expected to go beyond ritual practice by engaging in community welfare and socio-economic development. According to Asif et al., (2023), the Prophet's mosque carried ten functions: (1) worship, (2) consultation and communication of social, economic, and cultural matters, (3) education, (4) social welfare, (5) military training, (6) treating war victims, (7) conflict resolution, (8) hospitality, (9) temporary detention, and (10) religious information and defense.

As followers of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), Muslims are called to preserve and revitalize the mosque's multifaceted roles. A Hadith warns, "A time will come for my followers when they will take pride in building mosques but will neglect to make them truly prosperous." The Qur'an also states, "The mosques of Allah are only to be maintained by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day, establish prayer, give zakat, and fear none but Allah" (At-Tawbah: 18), affirming that true mosque vitality lies in action and impact—not just physical form (Alnaim & Noaime, 2023).

Several studies have explored the evolving roles, functions, and activities of mosques across time and regions (El Boujjoufi, Mustafa, & Teller, 2023; Hoelzchen, 2022), showing that mosques—especially as FBOs—have functioned not only as spiritual centers but also as catalysts for education, economic upliftment, gender equity, and interfaith engagement.

This study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of

mosque history and roles—from the era of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), through the Caliphates, to contemporary times—while exploring the current issues, challenges, and empowerment strategies affecting the Muslim community (Hussain, 2024; Samier & ElKaleh, 2021). It highlights how Indonesian mosques have responded to dynamic socio-religious demands, especially during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

To capture diverse perspectives, a short survey was administered to 425 participants (n = 425) from eight prominent mosques located in major urban centers in Indonesia—Jakarta, South Tangerang, and Depok. Demographically, the respondents were 54% male and 46% female; 35% aged 18–30, 42% aged 31–50, and 23% over 50; and 70% held undergraduate or higher education degrees. In addition, field observations and interviews with 25 key informants, including mosque administrators and congregation leaders, were conducted. These sources revealed valuable insights into mosque-based strategies for community empowerment, digital religious engagement, and inclusive programming for women and youth in the post-pandemic context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mosques in Early Islamic Ages

At the beginning of Islamic history, the Prophet Muhammad established the mosque as a central hub for teaching the knowledge and revelations received from God. Usman and Kastrawijaya note that mosques also served as centers for community development and the creation of civilization, exemplified by the Quba and Madinah mosques in Saudi Arabia. Yamin, (2021) adds that the term "mosque" also refers to a place where all human activities that reflect obedience to God Almighty are carried out. The event when the Prophet Muhammad and his followers migrated from Mecca to Madinah, known as the 'Hijrah,' marks a significant transition from Islam as an individual practice to Islam as a communal and societal system. The two mosques built by the Prophet in Madinah carry distinct meanings when compared to the Haram Mosque in Mecca, which was constructed by Prophet Ibrahim (AS) (Nawawi, 2023).

The establishment of these early mosques underlines their importance not only as religious centers but as faith-based organizations (FBOs) engaged in holistic community building. This transformation of function was contextualized by socio-political conditions of the time, where

mosques served not only as places of worship but also as sites of learning, dispute resolution, political strategy, and social services (Safei & Armstrong, 2024). The various roles, functions, and activities conducted in early mosques are summarized below:

Table 1. Roles and functions of Mosques

Roles	Functions	Activities
Center for religious activities	Improving the quality of faith and obedience Improving knowledge and Islamic insight	Praying together and performing <i>dzikir</i> and <i>du'a</i> Learning and teaching al-Qur'an and <i>Hadit</i>
Center for Education	Teaching sciences Having a Library	Running classes on sciences (philosophy, astronomy, arts, economics, etc.) Having Islamic book collections and other facilities
Center for Improving Economy	Establishing “ <i>Baitul Maal</i> ”	Collecting <i>zakat</i> , <i>infaq</i> and <i>shadaqah</i>
Center for social activities	Providing space for gatherings or <i>sillaturrahim</i> Providing social services	Inviting the congregation to come and get involved in the activities Distributing social assistance Treating patients Providing “shelter” for people without homes
Center for Governance	Performing political activities	Welcoming delegations from other countries

Source: Author’s Observation, 2025

Table 1 illustrates that mosques have long operated as dynamic institutions fulfilling religious, educational, economic, and social functions. Historically, they were spaces that preserved collective memory and reinforced Islamic identity within the broader social fabric (Buljubasic, 2023; Husni, 2024; Noaime & Alnaim, 2023).

Understanding mosque architecture requires recognizing the socio-political context of its formation. In Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority country, mosque architecture reflects acculturation processes

between Islamic and local traditions (Buckingham, Hazrat, & Shah, 2022; Mohammed, 2024a). This acculturation is also visible in how mosques function, especially in combining religious practices with socio-cultural roles.

In Turkiye, the Ottoman Empire expanded mosque construction across its territories as symbols of civilization. According to Jensen & Kofoed, (2022); and Kulkul, (2022), mosques are public spaces for all, regardless of gender, class, or ethnicity. Senel, (2021) notes that since the 1990s, feminism and Islamism in Turkey have influenced mosque design, encouraging inclusive spaces for women and increasing female involvement in mosque architecture.

Mosques also serve as advocacy spaces in minority Muslim countries. In the U.S., they help combat discrimination and foster solidarity among Muslim communities. This communal consciousness turns the mosque into an ethnic identity center, where injustice to one Muslim is viewed as injustice to all (Alnojeidi, Capo-Lugo, Sturgeon, & Trost, 2025; Saleem, Morrill, Brodt, & Pagan-Ortiz, 2022).

In the Indonesian context, Abidin Kusno identifies a symbolic struggle in mosque construction between Middle Eastern and local Javanese influences. The Demak Mosque (1498 AD), for instance, fuses Islamic and traditional Javanese architecture (Wink, 2021). Historically, mosques also served civic functions: during the Dutch colonial era, trials and marriages were held in mosque courtyards (Nisanyan, 2024).

This multidimensionality continues today. In modern Indonesia, mosques are not only ritual spaces but also providers of community services (Yamin, 2021; Wiryomartono, 2023b; Sari & Cokrohadisumarto, 2024). This study found that mosques function in areas such as healthcare, education, philanthropy, arts, and child development (Adhani, Triani, Indainanto, & Safira, 2024; Aneesh et al., 2024; Daas, 2025).

Indonesian mosques—ranging from grand urban mosques to small rural musholla—have evolved into Islamic centers that support day-to-day social integration across socio-economic levels. In Jakarta, mosque programming includes lectures, family counseling, health checks, and entrepreneurship workshops. Conversely, in rural areas where infrastructure is limited, mosque activity remains primarily religious.

In summary, the mosque—as an FBO—functions as both a spiritual center and a community engine of transformation. Its influence extends beyond its walls, shaping socio-religious life, civic consciousness, and local

development initiatives.

Current Issues: Mosque as Muslim Identity and Gender Space

Several recent studies on mosques have analyzed them through the lenses of architecture, cultural integration, historical continuity, and gender dimensions (Alnaim, 2024; Nisha & Cheung, 2024a). Building on these perspectives, this study contributes to the discourse by focusing on the evolving roles of mosques in promoting peacebuilding, gender equity, and social empowerment—particularly in the context of both Muslim-majority and minority countries.

Theoretically, this analysis is grounded in the concept of religious institutions as agents of community transformation (Naragatti, n.d.; Öcal & Gökırıksel, 2022; Roels et al., 2022). Faith-based organizations (FBOs) like mosques are recognized not only for spiritual guidance but also for facilitating civic participation, promoting social inclusion, and addressing marginalization through structured programs. However, such roles are context-dependent and influenced by state policies, societal norms, and internal management capacity.

The dynamics between Muslim majorities and minorities are often marked by mutual tension and perceived threats. Minorities may feel excluded, while majorities may view minorities with suspicion. In such contexts, building mutual empathy and trust becomes critical but challenging (Afroogh, Esmalian, Donaldson, & Mostafavi, 2021; Lansing et al., 2023). In minority Muslim settings—such as in Western Europe and the United States—mosques struggle to serve their full potential due to socio-political constraints, surveillance, or marginalization.

With regard to Muslim identity, Al-Aqsa Mosque represents a profound spiritual and political symbol. The continuing dispute over Jerusalem—home to sacred sites of the three Abrahamic religions—is intensified by territorial conflicts between Israel and Palestine. From classical Islamic scholarship (e.g., Ath-Thabari, Ibn Kathir, Al-Qurthubi), Al-Aqsa's construction and legacy remain central to Islamic narratives of identity, resilience, and collective memory (Aftab, Shafiq, & Shoeby, 2023). Today, its complex houses 200 study rooms, smaller mosques, madrasas, and is managed by a Jordanian-Islamic commission under the supervision of the Palestinian Ministry of Waqf.

In the American context, Stallone, (2024) found that many second and third-generation Muslims feel alienated from mosques due to

unwelcoming atmospheres and outdated administrative models. This generational disconnect is compounded by a lack of culturally relevant programming, limited youth leadership engagement, and unclear strategic vision among mosque boards. Youth often feel disengaged, and women's participation remains limited. These issues are not unique to the U.S.; they reflect a broader pattern of underrepresentation of youth and women in mosque governance globally.

To remain relevant, mosque leaders must rethink their approach. [Stallone, \(2024\); and Tandos, \(2024\)](#) emphasize the importance of inclusive mosque management, competent leadership, and programs tailored for millennial and Gen Z audiences. In several cases, successful mosque revitalization involves integrating digital platforms, mental health support, social enterprise models, and partnerships with civil society groups.

The growing role of women in challenging patriarchal mosque structures represents another important shift. In response to exclusionary norms, women in Turkey, the U.S., and parts of Europe have reclaimed mosque spaces and redefined their religious roles. [Lybarger, \(2021\)](#) describes this as a "new piety" movement—where visibility, participation, and reinterpretation of Islamic texts become tools for social change. [Dutta, \(2022\); and Hammer, \(2022\)](#) show how Islamic feminists navigate both religious and secular paradigms to advocate for gender-just mosque spaces.

In the U.S., women-only mosques have emerged; in countries like the UK, Norway, and France, mixed-gender mosques now exist where men and women pray side-by-side. While these models are still debated, they reflect shifting norms around gender and mosque access. In Turkey, women have begun attending Friday prayers more frequently and engaging in mosque-based education. Conversely, in Egypt, women's mosque activism centers on religious learning and self-empowerment, often without overtly confronting traditional male authority ([Akalu, 2022](#)).

This study fills a literature gap by providing a comparative empirical overview of mosque functions in Indonesia with references to global experiences—especially in the areas of youth engagement, women's empowerment, digital da'wah, and community resilience post-COVID-19. While much research has focused on architectural symbolism or political tension, this paper highlights how programmatic innovations and inclusive governance can reposition mosques as modern community hubs.

Importantly, while previous literature discusses the ideological influence of certain religious movements (e.g., Wahhabism) in state-linked

mosques, this study refrains from normative labeling without sufficient empirical verification. Instead, it emphasizes the need for moderate and context-sensitive religious education across all mosque types (Gunaratna, 2021a).

In summary, identity, peace, and gender remain core issues affecting mosque functionality in modern times. As mosques continue to expand in size and visibility across Muslim societies, ensuring inclusive access to their services and programs becomes an ethical and institutional imperative (Abu-Ras, Gheith, & Cournos, 2008; Abdur Rehman Cheema, 2022). The next section elaborates the research methods used to explore these dynamics empirically.

Qualitative Analysis of Mosque Roles, Programs, and Empowerment Efforts

As previously mentioned, this article focuses on an examination of eight prominent mosques in Indonesia. The study aimed to explore the roles and functions of these mosques in enhancing the welfare through their programs, activities and services. The qualitative data analysis is detailed in table 2 below:

Tabel 2. Steps of Qualitative Phases

Main Point	Research Question	Source of Data	Data Analysis
1. Roles of the mosques	What roles are carried out by the mosque	Jama'ah/Congregation Mosque management	Reflexive analysis (determine and reflect the perspective and position of the participants' own values)
2. Programs implemented by the mosques to play their roles	What programs are provided for congregations	Jama'ah/Congregation Mosque management	Literal analysis (reviewing references, reading memos and transcripts, and coding data.
3. Efforts to improve the roles of the mosques	What efforts need to be made to improve mosque policies and programs	Jama'ah/Congregation Mosque management	Literal analysis and interpretive analysis (checking participants' words and behavior / expressions)

Source: Author's Observation, 2025

Table 2 outlines the three key focus areas of this study: the roles and functions of mosques, the programs and activities designed to fulfill these roles, and the necessary efforts to enhance these programs. The information was gathered from respondents, including both congregation members and mosque management (Wan Zakaria & Ilias, 2023). Moreover, interview transcriptions and participants' expressions were analyzed through a reflective process that employed both literal and interpretive document analysis. These methods were used to examine the findings and inform the discussion. The following section presented the qualitative findings and explores participants' perspectives on solutions and strategies to strengthen the roles of mosques.

Pre-Covid 19 Pandemic

In Indonesia, many mosques are built by individuals or groups rather than by government or organizational initiatives. However, they must be registered with the Ministry of Religious Affairs at both local and national levels (Sarkissian & Wainscott, 2024). From a management perspective, mosques in Indonesia are categorized into three types. First, there are government mosques, where the management is appointed by the government, such as the Jakarta Islamic Center Mosque in Kramat Tunggak. Second, there are private mosques, which are managed by private institutions. An example is the Bimantara Mosque in the Kebon Sirih Tower building, which is well-maintained, features a "hanging garden," and is funded by the Bimantara Foundation. Under this category, mosques of universities are developed. Third, there are public mosques, where management is carried out through community-driven fundraising efforts. The Grand Mosque of Villa Inti Persada in Tangerang, Banten, which is notably large, is an example of this type.

The Indonesian mosques sampled in this study, located in major cities such as Jakarta, South Tangerang and Depok, have conducted a wide range of programs and activities that span from religious to community-oriented. Most of these mosques focus on daily religious activities (42%), including the five daily prayers and Islamic teachings (31%), such as reciting the Qur'an, studying the traditions and history of the Prophet, and training future leaders and scholars. Additionally, they run social activities (12%), such as fundraising for building, renovating, and maintaining mosque facilities. Economic activities (10%) are also conducted to empower the congregation or community, in line with Islamic philanthropy principles

through charity forms like *infaq*, *shadaqah*, and *waqf* (A'yun, Saptaningtyas, & Widiyanto, 2022; Fatah, Andriani, & Nur Hidayat, 2023). The remaining activities (5%) include preventive health programs such as providing medical check-ups for pregnant women and infants, screening for cervical cancer, and testing for sexually transmitted diseases. Additionally, mosques regularly celebrate religious holidays, including Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Qurban, and the birth of the Prophet Muhammad. These celebrations often incorporate local Indonesian cultural practices, such as creating colorful decorations with paper, eggs, and traditional foods. The festivities also feature artistic performances, including Islamic music, singing, and dance.

To summarize, mosques' programs and activities are designed to foster religious harmony, strengthen social cohesion, and promote prosperity through philanthropy and economic initiatives. This study also provided data on participants' perception to develop roles and functions of mosques as shown in the first table below:

Table 3. Respondents' perceptions on areas for improvement for mosques and programs/activities

No.	Area of Work	Effort to Improve	Programs / Activities
1.	Education	Improving <i>majelis taklim</i>	Daily and monthly programs Short sermon after praying Learning <i>tajwid</i> (reciting al-Qur'an) Content to counter intolerance, hate, and radicalism Training and inviting moderate preachers Promoting programs of mosques
2.	Worship	Improving the quality of worship	Training to improve the quality of Imam (prayer leader) Participation of congregations in prayers, especially at dawn.
3.	Facilities and services	Improving the mosque's services in the area of: Cleanness Security	Places for praying, <i>mudhu</i> , and toilets - Lockers for bags and shoes

No.	Area of Work	Effort to Improve	Programs / Activities
4.	Youth and children's participation	Facilities	Clothes for praying, al-Qur'an Clean water Technology use (internet, solar energy, etc.) Air conditioners and fans
		Garden	Beautiful plants and flowers
		Involving youths and children	Capacity building Reciting al-Qur'an Youth mosque organizations Sport activities
5.	Organizational management	Improving mosque management	Professional and compatible staff Promoting mosque programs Transparent and accountable Being a productive organization Being a center for Islamic civilization
6.	Social empowerment	Developing as a center for community engagement	Having social activities (e.g. wedding ceremonies) Competitions for reciting al-Qur'an, art, Islamic music, etc. Fundraising (charity/philanthropy, donations, and <i>zakat</i> , etc.)
		Establishing an economic center	Mini-market Bazaar events Economic and entrepreneurship training
		Conducting formal education	Education from elementary to university levels
		Other social activities	Improving human resources Taking care of orphans Celebrating holy and national days Working with interfaith groups

Source: Author's Observation, 2025

The top three priorities for developing the roles and functions of

mosques are in the fields of religious education, worship, and facilities and services. Lastly, the other points that need improvement include youth and children's involvement, mosque management, and social empowerment. In other words, the mosques are supposed to develop their programs, activities, and services to assist specific groups (youth and children, management, congregations, and communities as a whole) (Abu-Ras et al., 2008; Amri & Bemak, 2013).

During the Covid 19 pandemic

As mentioned previously that the study was conducted in 2018 to 2022 showing the issues and challenges at eight mosques located in some place in Jakarta, East Tangerang and Depok (Kamil & Darojat, 2021; Tzu-Chien, 2024). The three main points explored and asked (adjustment for worships and Islamic moderation) responding the issues existed prior to the covid 19 pandemic and when the virus corona hit the country.

Disseminating Moderate Islam

The worship activities were restricted especially at mosques located in the most populated areas. At the beginning of the pandemic, the situation and condition were more challenged as people still felt scared, lack of knowledge, information and health amenities to cope with about the corona virus.

Mosques play a crucial role in raising awareness about preventing radicalism and violent extremism. Sermons and religious speeches delivered during Friday prayers or the holy month of Ramadan are effective tools for this purpose. Recruiting moderate preachers is essential to counteract radicalism and extremism. A research in Indonesia has shown that radicalism can spread through mosque sermons. For example, a 2019 study by the National Intelligence Agency (BIN) revealed that mosques within government institutions are not immune to radical influence. Of the 41 mosques identified as having radical connections, 17 were found to be severely affected (Schnabel, 2023a, 2023b). These mosques were found to use distorted Quranic verses to promote violent agendas, including calls to fight in places like Syria and Marawi in the Philippines.

In addition, a study by the Association for the Development of Islamic Boarding Schools and Communities (P3M) and Rumah Kebangsaan categorized 41 government-linked mosques into high, medium, and low levels of radicalism. High-radical mosques actively incited negative actions against other religious communities, medium-radical

mosques showed doubt and negativity towards other religions, and low-radical mosques exhibited milder forms of intolerance (P3M; Rumah Kebangsaan, 2018). Radicalism is often found in government mosques due to a lack of moderate preaching and lectures. This vacuum has allowed Wahabi groups to dominate these mosques, leading to sectarianism where radical ideologies take hold. The previous moderate groups, which were more passive in their roles, were eventually replaced by hardliners (Perletta, 2022). Additionally, the spread of radicalism in faith-based organizations is an ongoing concern that needs to be addressed (Golicha, 2022; Ishaku, Aksit, & Maza, 2021; Thiemann, Herring, & Perabo, 2021).

During the Covid-19 pandemic, violent extremism and terrorism have been major concerns for the Indonesian government. Numerous webinars hosted by National Agency for Countering Terrorism “*Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terrorism*” (BNPT) and civil society organizations have highlighted issues related to violent extremism, particularly concerning women (Gunaratna, 2021b). This concern is illustrated by terrorist attacks, including a March 28, 2021, attack at the Central Police Office in Jakarta carried out by a woman. This trend indicates a rise in violent extremist activities in Indonesia (Macfarlane, 2024a).

In 2020, Indonesia had 175.4 million internet users, a 17% increase (25 million new users) from the previous year. With a total population of 272.1 million, 64% of Indonesians had internet access. This represented an increase of 10 million active social media users compared to 2019. The top five social media platforms in use were YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (Perifanou, Tzafilkou, & Economides, 2021; Pourazad, Stocchi, & Narsey, 2023). Islamic outreach, or da’wah, is increasingly conducted through social media, particularly YouTube. The rise of the internet has made religious knowledge more accessible, with online platforms offering a wide range of Islamic content. Social media facilitates “clicktivism,” where Islamic discourse is shared via online texts, allowing users to learn about Islam at their convenience and explore topics relevant to their daily lives (Whyte, 2022a).

A study on social media for learning about Islam revealed that most respondents (79%) prefer to follow popular preachers on YouTube and other social media platforms. These preachers, often younger and known as millennial da’i, present their sermons in an engaging, humorous, and relatable manner. In contrast, 16% of participants preferred more academic preachers who offer serious and advanced discussions, while 5% were open

to listening to any preacher. This trend indicates a preference for online learning from popular da'i, with the added convenience of accessing sermons during free time. The challenges of delivering da'wah at mosques are evident, as congregations have specific needs regarding sermon topics, preachers, and timing.

Worship Adjustment

The years 2020 to 2022 highlighted the severe impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on social and economic life globally. The World Health Organization (WHO) reported that the corona virus affected people worldwide, severely disrupting religious practices as worship services were often restricted or halted entirely. Faith-based organizations, religious leaders, and communities have been crucial in saving lives and mitigating Covid-19 pandemic's effects. They provide essential support, comfort, guidance, and health services, and by disseminating clear, evidence-based information, they help prevent the spread of the virus, reduce fear and stigma, and encourage health-promoting behaviors (Barmania & Reiss, 2021; Salmani, Mousavi, Navardi, Hosseinzadeh, & Pashaeypoor, 2022).

Studies indicate that mosques have played significant roles in community support during this period. For instances, in England, the e-Ghosia mosque served as a hospital by provided health services and 55 beds for Covid-19 patients (Tandos, 2024). In response to the pandemic, Indonesian authorities implemented policies such as lockdowns, quarantines, social distancing, and self-isolation to curb virus transmission. Moreover, reinterpretation of Islamic teachings responding to the condition was taken including worship practices at mosques. The Indonesian officials and Muslim leaders have advocated for home worship to reduce covid-19 cases, reflecting the Islamic principle of preserving human life (Shabana, 2021). However, during Ramadan, maintaining home worship proved challenging due to the tradition of communal prayers at mosques.

The government's restrictions on congregational worship were intended to protect lives, yet the adherence to religious obligations of safeguarding the soul created tension between public health measures and religious practices (Adil & Huda, 2023). Notably, the first national Covid-19 vaccination was conducted at Istiqlal Mosque in February 2021, targeting religious leaders and the elderly. Using religious languages is important to counter misunderstanding about the vaccination and the

imperative to collective work to cope with the risks and damages after the pandemic affecting health, education, social and economic aspects.

Post Covid-19 Pandemic: Lessons from Istiqlal Mosque

A study of Indonesian mosques revealed that significant strategic efforts have been implemented, particularly in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Great Mosque of Istiqlal, a state and national mosque in central Jakarta, has launched various programs to support both congregational and community life (Aryanti & Achmadi, 2024). This study demonstrates that the Istiqlal Mosque effectively integrates religious, social, educational, and economic programs (Wiryomartono, 2023a). Overall, mosques have played a crucial role in supporting their communities during and post covid-19 pandemic ages.

As the largest mosque in Southeast Asia and the third largest in the world, the Istiqlal mosque plays a pivotal role in addressing social and religious challenges exacerbated by the pandemic. The mosque's main initiatives focus on enhancing the roles of religious institutions to tackle social issues and assist those most impacted by the crisis (Chy, 2025). These efforts include webinars, training sessions, social services, and support programs that foster a comprehensive understanding of Islam and promote peace, harmony, and tolerance across different faiths, genders, ages, social classes, and nationalities.

Another important program from the Istiqlal mosque is program to empower women groups. In South East Asia countries, there is a term called 'Women-Friendly Mosque' aimed to ensure equitable access to worship, particularly to the main prayer hall (Senel, 2021). This includes providing clean, comfortable, and appropriately sized spaces for women to pray, without relegating them to less desirable areas such as basements or poorly ventilated rooms.

The Istiqlal Mosque offers several programs specifically designed for women, including formal and informal education such as religious studies, language classes, and seminars on health and wellness. By creating an environment where women can learn and thrive, the mosque contributes to the upliftment of the entire community. Additionally, the mosque provides family-friendly amenities, such as designated areas for mothers with young children and women-friendly and accessible restrooms, making it easier for women to attend mosque events and engage in community life (Ahmed & McGee, 2024; Nisha & Cheung, 2024b).

Women-friendly mosques play a crucial role in creating inclusive and equitable spaces within Muslim communities (Mohammed, 2024b; Nisha & Cheung, 2024a). By addressing the needs and concerns of female congregants, these mosques can encourage greater participation, strengthen community bonds, and promote social justice. Achieving this requires a commitment to listening, learning, and implementing meaningful changes, but the outcome—a more vibrant, dynamic, and inclusive community—is well worth the effort.

Finally, efforts to enhance the roles and functions of mosques through programs, activities, facilities, and services should be strengthened with support not only from governments but also from non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and civil society. As faith-based organizations deeply embedded in the lives of congregations, society, and the state, mosques serve as vital resources in fulfilling religious, social, and economic needs (Abdur R Cheema, 2022; Olarinmoye, 2023). Their active involvement is crucial for advancing the development process, particularly in fostering human capabilities and promoting prosperity.

CONCLUSION

Mosques have historically played crucial roles in religious, social, educational, and economic spheres, as evidenced both in early Islamic history and in contemporary contexts, particularly in Muslim-majority countries like Indonesia. These institutions continuously adapt their programs to address current challenges. During covid-19 pandemic, mosques have not only fulfilled their religious functions but have also taken on significant social roles. They have facilitated vaccination programs, organized webinars to educate the public on health protocols such as mask-wearing, handwashing, and social distancing, and implemented measures to curb the spread of the virus. Additionally, mosques have adapted their worship practices by shortening prayer and sermon times, limiting the number of attendees, and ensuring adherence to social distancing guidelines.

This study concludes that mosques, as faith-based organizations (FBOs), have demonstrated adaptive resilience by integrating new roles—especially in the health, education, gender equity, and digital communication sectors. The post-pandemic context reveals mosque innovations such as hybrid da'wah platforms, women-friendly

infrastructure, social enterprise development, and interfaith outreach initiatives. These efforts signify a shift from mosques as ritual spaces to comprehensive community empowerment centers.

From a theoretical standpoint, this research supports the evolving discourse on religious institutions as catalysts of socio-cultural transformation. It affirms the notion that mosques are not static spaces but dynamic actors capable of influencing societal behavior, public health, and civic participation. The study also contributes to filling the literature gap regarding empirical mosque studies in Southeast Asia, particularly by exploring how mosques operate as localized responses to global crises.

Practically, the findings of this research provide valuable guidance for mosque managers, religious leaders, and policymakers. Recommendations include (1) institutionalizing inclusive leadership and decision-making processes; (2) developing programs that target youth and marginalized groups; (3) investing in digital infrastructure for online religious education; and (4) collaborating with government and civil society to enhance the mosque's social service delivery. Mosque governance should also adopt transparency and accountability mechanisms to build trust with congregants and the broader community.

Future research is recommended to expand this study into rural settings, where resource constraints pose different challenges. In addition, longitudinal studies on the sustainability of mosque innovations and their long-term community impact could offer deeper insights. Comparative studies between countries with diverse Islamic traditions (e.g., Southeast Asia vs. Middle East or diaspora Muslim communities) would further enrich our understanding of mosque-based models of social resilience.

In sum, mosques remain indispensable to both the spiritual life and the civic well-being of Muslim communities. Their evolving role during and after the COVID-19 pandemic affirms their strategic importance in promoting religious moderation, gender inclusivity, social justice, and public health.

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