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MOSQUES IN THE MALAY WORLD: FAITH, PROSPERITY, AND MAQĀṢID AL-SHARĪ'AH PERSPECTIVE ON WOMEN-FRIENDLY PRACTICES

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Abstract

This paper explores the historical trajectory and contemporary functions of mosques in the Malay World by conceptualizing them as multifaceted socio-religious institutions. By emphasizing the multiple roles and functions of mosques, the study examines the dynamic intersections of religious authority, socio-economic practices, and gender responsiveness. Methodologically, this study employs a qualitative research design, drawing on participant observation, in-depth interviews, and the analysis of secondary sources. Data were collected from four mosques in Indonesia and Malaysia, representing both national and community-based mosque models. The findings show that mosques in these contexts operate across religious, educational, social, health-related, and economic domains through initiatives oriented toward community empowerment, with particular attention to women's participation and women-friendly mosque practices. The novelty of this study lies in its cross-national comparative analysis of mosques in Indonesia and Malaysia, which connects the historical and contemporary functions of mosques with the principles of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah and gender-responsive institutional practices. Theoretically, this study contributes to mosque studies by proposing that mosques can be understood as community welfare institutions that integrate the protection of religion, intellect, life, wealth, and social dignity through inclusive and context-sensitive governance. In addition, the mosques examined in this study play a significant role in fostering moderate religious discourses, advancing inclusive religious practices, strengthening community prosperity, and enhancing gender responsiveness in the Malay World.

Keywords: Mosques; Malay World; Maqāṣid al-sharī'ah; Women-Friendly Mosque

Abstrak

Studi ini mengeksplorasi lintasan historis dan fungsi kontemporer masjid di Dunia Melayu dengan mengonseptualisasikannya sebagai institusi sosial-keagamaan yang tidak hanya berperan sebagai ruang ibadah, tetapi juga sebagai pusat pembentukan iman, pemberdayaan sosial-ekonomi, dan penguatan responsivitas gender. Dengan menekankan berbagai peran dan fungsi masjid, studi ini menganalisis dinamika otoritas keagamaan, praktik sosial-ekonomi, serta praktik masjid ramah perempuan dalam perspektif maqāṣid al-sharī'ah. Secara metodologis, penelitian ini menggunakan desain kualitatif melalui observasi partisipan, wawancara mendalam, dan analisis sumber sekunder. Pengumpulan data dilakukan pada empat masjid di

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Indonesia dan Malaysia yang merepresentasikan masjid nasional dan masjid berbasis komunitas. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa masjid-masjid di kedua negara beroperasi dalam ranah sosial-keagamaan, pendidikan, kesehatan, ekonomi, dan pemberdayaan masyarakat, dengan perhatian khusus pada partisipasi perempuan serta penyediaan ruang dan layanan yang lebih inklusif. Kebaruan studi ini terletak pada analisis komparatif lintas negara yang menghubungkan fungsi historis dan kontemporer masjid dengan prinsip maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah dan konsep masjid ramah perempuan. Secara teoretis, studi ini menawarkan pemahaman bahwa masjid dapat diposisikan sebagai institusi kesejahteraan komunitas yang mengintegrasikan perlindungan agama, akal, jiwa, harta, dan martabat sosial melalui praktik kelembagaan yang inklusif. Dengan demikian, penelitian ini memberikan nilai tambah bagi kajian masjid, pemberdayaan masyarakat, dan gender dalam Islam, khususnya dalam konteks Dunia Melayu.

***Kata kunci**: Masjid; Dunia Melayu; Maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah; Masjid Ramah Perempuan*

مستخلص

تستكشف هذه الدراسة المسار التاريخي والوظائف المعاصرة للمساجد في العالم الملاوي، من خلال اعتبارها مؤسسات اجتماعية دينية لا تقتصر على كونها أماكن للعبادة فحسب، بل تتعداها لتكون مراكز للتنشئة الإيمانية، والتمكين الاجتماعي والاقتصادي، وتعزيز مراعاة البُعد الجندري. وبالتركيز على الأدوار والوظائف المتعددة للمساجد، تحلل هذه الدراسة ديناميكيات السلطة الدينية، والممارسات الاجتماعية والاقتصادية، وممارسات المساجد المراعية للمرأة، من منظور المقاصد الشرعية. ومنهجياً، تستخدم هذه الدراسة منهجاً نوعياً من خلال الملاحظة بالمشاركة، والمقابلات المعمقة، وتحليل المصادر الثانوية. وقد جُمعت البيانات في أربعة مساجد في إندونيسيا وماليزيا، تمثل المساجد الوطنية والمجتمعية. وتشير النتائج إلى أن المساجد في كلا البلدين تعمل في المجالات الاجتماعية الدينية، والتعليمية، والصحية، والاقتصادية، وتمكين المجتمع، مع إيلاء اهتمام خاص لمشاركة المرأة وتوفير مساحات وخدمات أكثر شمولاً. تكمن جدة هذه الدراسة في تحليلها المقارن العابر للحدود الوطنية، والذي يربط بين الوظائف التاريخية والمعاصرة للمساجد ومبادئ المقاصد الشرعية ومفهوم المساجد المراعية للمرأة. نظرياً، تقدم هذه الدراسة فهماً مفاده أن المساجد يمكن اعتبارها مؤسسات رعاية مجتمعية تدمج حماية الدين والعقل والحياة والممتلكات والكرامة الاجتماعية من خلال ممارسات مؤسسية شاملة. وبذلك، يُضيف هذا البحث قيمةً لدراسة المساجد وتمكين المجتمع وقضايا النوع الاجتماعي في الإسلام، لا سيما في سياق العالم الملاوي.

الكلمات الرئيسية: المساجد; العالم الملايوي; مقاصد الشريعة; المساجد المراعية لاحتياجات النساء

A. Introduction

An area stretching from Sumatera in the west to the Spice Islands in the east, and from the island of Java in the south to the plains of Kampuchea in the Indo-Chinese Peninsula in the north, is identified as the Malay world, or sometimes fondly referred to as "*Nusantara*" or

the world of islands.[1] In the modern era, the Malay World broadly encompasses Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, Southern Thailand, Southern Philippines, and some parts of Singapore. Historically, the countries have served as meeting points of cultural, religious, and economic exchanges. Their positions along global trade routes have connected traditions, religions, and cultures, creating opportunities for regional dialogue and cooperation.[2] This study emphasizes that Islam shaped the Malay World through trade, scholarship, and local adaptation.[3]

Additionally, the development of Islamic civilization in the Malay World cannot be separated from the central role of the Malay language. The Islamization of the Malay World was therefore not an abrupt or uniform process, but a gradual and locally mediated transformation. Islam was introduced through trade, scholarship, Sufi networks, and interaction with existing cultural traditions.[4]

As central Islamic institutions, mosques play important roles in Malay societies beyond ritual worship. Examining these roles helps explain how Islamic practices contribute to intellectual, cultural, and social development. Mosques are therefore important sites for investigating the relationships among faith, welfare, and gender inclusion.[5]

This study examines mosques as sites of faith, prosperity, and gender inclusion in the Malay World. It addresses three questions: (1) How have mosques historically shaped Islamic faith in the Malay World? (2) How do mosques contribute to social, educational, and economic well-being? (3) How do mosques function as gendered spaces, particularly through women-friendly practices interpreted in the light of maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah? These questions situate mosque practices within debates about religious diversity, contemporary social challenges, and regional development. The term mosque refers to a broader scope including leaders, organization (management, programs and activities), congregations, and

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[1] Bagoes Wiryomarto*no, Historical Mosques in Indonesia and the Malay W*orld (Springer, 2023); John Thomso*n, The Straits of Malacca, Indo-China, and China. Or, Ten Years' Travels, Adventures, and Residence Ab*road (BoD–Books on Demand, 2025).

[2] Mahmuluddin Mahmuluddin, "Bridges of Peace: The Role of Symbols and Rituals in Peacebuildin*g," Journal of Contemporary Rituals and Tradit*ions 2, no. 1 (2024): 61–72; Dr Ashutosh Kumar Pandey and Popelka Mitra, "Sacred Corridors and Strategic Connectivity: Buddhist Geographies and India–ASEAN Cooperatio*n," GeoJou*rnal 91, no. 2 (2026): 27.

[3] Shaheen Amid Whyte, "The Ulama: History, Institutions and Modernity," *in Islamic Religious Authority in a Modern Age: Australian and Global Perspect*ives (Springer, 2024), 29–53; Ahmet Kılınç, "The Influence of the Ottoman State on Islamic La*w," Yıldırım Beyazıt Hukuk Der*gisi, no. 2022–2 (2022): 547–80; Abeer Allahham, "Beyond Dynasties: An Alternative Periodization of Islamic Built Environments—Interplay of Power, Jurisprudence, and Knowledg*e," Journal of Urban His*tory, 2025, 00961442251371580.

[4] Azhar Ibrahi*m, Contemporary Islamic Discourse in the Malay-Indonesian World: Critical Perspect*ives (Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, 2022); Wiryomarto*no, Historical Mosques in Indonesia and the Malay W*orld; Syarul Azman Shaharuddin, "Islamic Civilization in the Age of Globalization: An Introductio*n," Al-Irsyad: Journal of Islamic and Contemporary Is*sues 7, no. 2 (2022): xiii–xxii.

[5] Hasnah Haron et al., "Values in an Islamic University in Malaysia: Analysis from Western and Islamic Perspective*s," The Journal of Muamalat and Islamic Finance Rese*arch, 2022, 86–105; Muhammad Choirin et al., "Historical Development of Islamization in the Nusantara: Trends and Scholarly Contribution*s," Journal of Al-Tama*ddun 20, no. 2 (2025): 301–17.

communities. Applying Islamic and social welfare perspectives, this study discusses and provides recommendations to enhance the roles and functions of mosques in the contemporary Malay World including Indonesia and Malaysia.

B. Mosques in the Islamic History

Mosques in Islamic history have functioned as more than places of ritual worship.[6] Since the period of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in Madinah, the Prophet's Mosque served as a central socio-religious institution for worship, religious instruction, communal consultation, welfare distribution, conflict resolution, reception of delegations, and social protection for vulnerable groups, including women and the poor.[7] This multifunctional role continued during the period of the Companions and the early caliphates, in which mosques became closely connected to the educational, legal, administrative, charitable, and communal life of Muslim societies.[8] Table 1 summarizes several key roles, functions, and activities associated with the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah, which provide a historical foundation for understanding contemporary mosque-based practices in the Malay World.

Table 1. Mosques' Roles in Early Islam

No.	Roles	Functions	Activities
1.	Centre for religious activities	Improving the quality of faith and obedience	- Praying together and performing *dzikir* and *du'a*
2.	Centre for learning and teaching	Teaching sciences	- Running classes on sciences (philosophy, astronomy, arts, economics, etc.)
		Having a library	- Having Islamic book collections and other facilities
		Promoting spiritual and academic learning	- Learning and teaching al-Qur'an and Hadits - Providing religious consultation
3.	Centre for improving economy	Establishing "*Baitul Maal*"	- Collecting zakat, infaq and shadaqah
		Facilitating community economic development	- Providing business training - Destination for religious tourism
4.	Centre for welfare and charity	Providing space for gatherings or *silaturrahim*	- Inviting the congregation to come and get involved in the activities
		Providing social services	- Distributing social assistance - Providing "shelter" for people without homes

[6] Wiryomarto*no, Historical Mosques in Indonesia and the Malay W*orld; Essam Ayyad, "What Made a Place Holy in Early Islam? An Inquiry into Meaning and Doctrinal Modalitie*s," Journal of Al-Tama*ddun 19, no. 1 (2024): 25–46.

[7] Minako Sakai, "Exemplifying Muslim Mompreneurs in Indonesia," *in Women Entrepreneurs and Business Empowerment in Muslim Count*ries (Springer, 2022), 169–206.

[8] Jacob Alexander Perkins, "Living in Convivencia: Intertwined Communities of Christians, Jews, and Muslims in Al-Andalus during the Caliphate of Córdoba" (JSTOR, 2022).

			- Providing funeral services
		Conducting interfaith Dialogue	- Facilitating visits and dialogue among religious leaders and congregations
		An eating place for the hungry and needy	- Providing free food (bread and meat)
5.	Centre for Government	Conducting diplomacy	- Welcoming delegations from other countries
		A section of the Department of Information and Culture	- Consultation and training to prepare plans and equipment for Mujahidin (who fight in the way of Allah) and strategies for the campaigns and diplomacy
6.	Centre for Justice	Having judiciary court	- Resolving disputes and conflicts
7.	Centre for detention and rehabilitation	Security and empowerment	- Assisting prisoners during the period of detention
8.	Centre for medical and nursing	Having health facilities and services	- Treating patients
9.	Centre for entertainment	Providing a platform for oratory, eloquence and poetry	- Performing arts, music and sport activities

Additionally, the historical account above presents the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah as having functioned as a central hub for religious learning, social interaction, welfare provision, and community protection, including support for Muslims, women, the poor, and other vulnerable members of society.[9] Contemporary studies of mosque communities and social support provide complementary perspectives on these welfare functions. Studying mosques also provides a framework for examining Islamic history and civilizations.[10] In the context of Islamic civilization during the classical period, mosques served not only as houses of worship, but also as multipurpose institutions connected to wider networks of religious authority, education, social welfare, political administration, and trade. They also functioned

[9] Ashker Aroos et al., "The Prophetic Approach To Diversity And Inclusion: A Model For Muslim Minorities," *Al-Burhān: Journal Of Qur'ān And Sunnah Stu*dies 9, no. 1 (2025): 108–30; Mohamad Bazli Md Radzi, Salmy Edawati Yaacob, and Azlin Alisa Ahmad, "The Impact of Mosque-Based Economic Activities on Local Communities: A Case Study in Sarawak," *El-Usrah: Jurnal Hukum Kelu*arga 7, no. 2 (2024): 581–601.

[10] Pernille Friis Jensen and Kamilla Amalie Bech Kofoed, "Gendered Muslim Stigma and Mosques as Spaces of Collective Coping," *Mental Health, Religion & Cul*ture 25, no. 8 (September 14, 2022): 789–801, https://doi.org/10.1080/13674676.2022.2109142; Hasan Yar, "An Invisible School: Social-Cultural Work of the Mosque Organizations," *Religi*ons 14, no. 1 (2022): 62; Sara Ali et al., "Role of Mosque Communities in Supporting Muslims with Mental Illness: Results of CBPR-Oriented Focus Groups in the Bay Area, California," *Psychiatric Quart*erly 93, no. 4 (2022): 985–1001.

as locations for charitable giving, legal interpretation, education, and occasionally political legitimation.[11]

Furthermore, mosques have historically represented both political theology and religious devotion, especially in the spatial arrangement of Islamic polities' royal and courtly centers.[12] The congregational mosque (*Jāmiʿ* or *Masjid Raya*) was purposefully placed next to the palace complex in many premodern Muslim kingdoms, creating a symbolic axis between temporal and spiritual authority. As a result, the mosque served as a location for the ceremonial affirmation of sovereignty, particularly during the Friday prayer known as the khuṭbah, in which the ruler's name was called as a symbol of acknowledged power.[13]

Unlike the monumental congregational mosque, the surau often operated as a flexible space for Qur’anic recitation, Sufi instruction, and communal deliberation.[14] In this case, mosques and surau fostered communal solidarity while simultaneously reinforcing the ideological legitimacy of Sultanates and other Islamic polities.[15]

Although women have historically participated in mosque-centered religious life, their spatial inclusion and institutional participation have varied across regions, periods, and cultural contexts.[16] Contemporary mosques continue to negotiate inherited religious forms with new social expectations concerning gender equity, accessibility, and women’s participation, as reflected in diverse arrangements of women’s prayer spaces, facilities, and

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[11] Asif Mohiuddin, “Religious Authority in Islam: Resilient Patterns of Evolution from the Formative Period to Contemporary Times,” *in Navigating Religious Authority in Muslim Societies: Islamist Movements and the Challenge of Globalisa*tion (Springer, 2023), 117–63; Asif Mohiuddin, “Mapping the Terrain of Islamism and Religious Authority: Insights from the Middle East, Southeast Asia and South Asia,” *in Navigating Religious Authority in Muslim Societies: Islamist Movements and the Challenge of Globalisa*tion (Springer, 2023), 165–202; Dietrich Jung, “Islam and the Modern ‘World Culture’: Organizations, Institutions, and Social Actors,” *in Islam in Global Modernity: Sociological Theory and the Diversity of Islamic Moderni*ties (Springer, 2023), 161–95.

[12] Pouyan Kashani and Hamid Reza Kashani, “Architectonics and Ornamentation in Safavid Sacred Architecture: A Comparative Evaluation of Structural Design and Tile Aesthetics at the Sheikh Safi Al-Din Ardabil Complex and the Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque,” *in Development Engineering Conferences Center Articles Data*base, vol. 2, 2025.

[13] Noha M Hussei*n, The Role of Qur’anic Calligraphy and Epigraphy in Contemporary Mosque Architecture: Cases from Australia, Slovenia, and the United Kin*gdom (Nottingham Trent University (United Kingdom), 2023); Shafiul Islam, “Human Role on Environmental Protection: A Comparative Study between Islam and Buddhism” (© University of Dhaka, 2022); D T Potts, “From the Accession of Shah Ashraf to His Death (1726–1730),” *in Agreeable News from Persia: Iran in the Colonial and Early Republican American Press, 1712*-1848 (Springer, 2022), 121–83.

[14] Alfurqan Alfurqan et al., “Harmony and Divergence: Unraveling the Influence of Surau in Minangkabau Religious Landscap*e,” Cogent Arts & Humani*ties 12, no. 1 (2025): 2510057; Khairudin Aljuni*ed, Contemplating Sufism: Dialogue and Tradition across Southeast* Asia (John Wiley & Sons, 2025).

[15] Mohd Murat Bin Md Aris, “When Dispute Threatens Harmony in the Public Sphere: Discerning the Dynamics of State-Religion Relation with Particular Reference to Singapore’s Muslim Scholars,” 2022; Azmil Tayeb and Meredith L Weiss, “Islamist Government in Malaysia under PAS: Ideology, Policies, and Competitio*n,” Asian Studies Re*view 49, no. 2 (2025): 234–54; Alfurqan et al., “Harmony and Divergence: Unraveling the Influence of Surau in Minangkabau Religious Landscape.”

[16] Selcuk Uygur et al., “Revisiting the Spirals of Silence: The Case of Intra-faith Discrimination at Work in Two Muslim Majority Countrie*s,” Human Resource Management Jou*rnal 35, no. 3 (2025): 766–82; Samar Green and Momen El-Husseiny, “From the ‘Neoliberal’ to the Human-Centred City: Examining the Street Tactics of Syrian Refugees in Repairing Cairo’s Periphery*,” Archnet-IJAR: International Journal of Architectural Rese*arch, 2026, 1–22; Petek Onur, “Islam and the Traditional Gender Hierarchy: 1983–1992,” *in Ethnographic Discourses on Women and Islam in Turkey: A Critical Rea*ding (Springer, 2024), 109–45.

services. However, existing studies have often discussed mosque architecture, women's participation, and gendered religious spaces separately, with limited attention to how different mosque models translate gender responsiveness into governance, welfare programs, spatial design, and community empowerment.[17]

This study addresses this gap by comparatively examining national and community-based mosques in Indonesia and Malaysia through the perspectives of mosque functions, women-friendly institutional practices, and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. Its novelty lies in conceptualizing women-friendly mosques not merely as spaces with gender-specific facilities, but as inclusive socio-religious institutions that integrate dignity, access, participation, welfare, and empowerment. Finally, the study builds on previous scholarship showing that mosques reflect an ongoing negotiation between local adaptation and broader Islamic expressions[18]. Based on this background, the following section explains the research method used to examine national and community-based mosques in Indonesia and Malaysia.

C. Method

This study employed a qualitative comparative case study design to examine the role of mosques in advancing faith formation, community prosperity, and gender-responsive religious practices in the Malay World. [19] The comparative case study approach was selected because this research focuses on four mosques in two national contexts, namely Indonesia and Malaysia, and compares two institutional models: national mosques and community-based mosques, locally known as Masjid Kampung or Masjid Qaryah. This design enables the study to identify similarities and differences in mosque governance, religious programming, socio-economic initiatives, and women-friendly practices across different institutional and cultural settings.

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[17] Alparslan Nas, "'Women in Mosques': Mapping the Gendered Religious Space through Online Activis*m," Feminist Media Stu*dies 22, no. 5 (2022): 1163–78; Ayşenur Şenel and Bülent Batuman, "Ambivalent Spaces/Moving Bodies: Gender Politics of Mosque Design in Turke*y," Gender, Place & Cul*ture 33, no. 1 (2026): 112–37; Asmaa AL-Mohannadi, Raffaello Furlan, and Michael Grosvald, "Women's Spaces in the Vernacular Qatari Courtyard House: How Privacy and Gendered Spatial Segregation Shape Architectural Identit*y," Open House Internati*onal 48, no. 1 (2023): 100–118.

[18] Aria Nakissa, "Liberalism's Distinctive Policy for Governing Muslim Populations: Human Rights, Religious Reform, and Counter-terrorism from the Colonial Era until the Presen*t," History Com*pass 20, no. 9 (2022): e12748; Zakaria Sajir, "A Post-Secular Approach to Managing Diversity in Liberal Democracies: Exploring the Interplay of Human Rights, Religious Identity, and Inclusive Governance in Western Societie*s," Religi*ons 14, no. 10 (2023): 1325; Lynette E Sieger, "Enhancing Legitimacy in International Organizations Through Citizen Inclusion and Normative Governance Reform" (Rutgers The State University of New Jersey, Graduate School-Newark, 2025).

[19] Elizabeth J Tisdell, Sharan B Merriam, and Heather L Stuckey-Peyr*ot, Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementa*tion (John Wiley & Sons, 2025); Stella R Taquette and Luciana Maria Borges da Matta Souza, "Ethical Dilemmas in Qualitative Research: A Critical Literature Revie*w," International Journal of Qualitative Met*hods 21 (2022): 16094069221078732.

Research Sampling

The research sites were selected purposively based on mosque type, management structure, funding sources, program diversity, community outreach, and the availability of facilities or services related to women's participation. Fieldwork was conducted at selected mosques in Indonesia and Malaysia representing both state-supported national mosques and community-based mosques. These cases were chosen to enable comparison between formal institutional mosque models and locally managed mosque models. The participants included Muslim leaders, mosque administrators, program coordinators, male and female congregants, and community members.

Data Collection

Data were collected between 2024 and 2026 through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and analysis of secondary sources.[20] To strengthen data validity, this study applied methodological triangulation by comparing data from observations, interviews, and documents. Source triangulation was also conducted by comparing information from mosque leaders, administrators, congregants, and community members.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis began with data familiarization, followed by coding, categorization, theme development, and interpretation. The coding process combined deductive and inductive strategies. The researcher's experience as a mosque administrator at the Grand Mosque of Istiqlal from 2020 to 2024 also provided contextual understanding of mosque governance and programming. However, reflexive awareness was maintained throughout the research process to minimize potential bias in data interpretation.

D. Mosques as Catalysts for Advancing Faith and Prosperity

This section presents the findings in accordance with the three research aims of this study: first, to examine how mosques contribute to faith formation in the Malay World; second, to analyze how mosques support community prosperity through social, educational, health-related, and economic initiatives; and third, to explain how mosque-based practices reflect gender responsiveness within the framework of maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah. By integrating a social welfare perspective and an Islamic institutional framework, the study evaluates how

[20] Margarithe Charlotte Schlunegger, Maya Zumstein-Shaha, and Rebecca Palm, "Methodologic and Data-Analysis Triangulation in Case Studies: A Scoping Revie*w," Western Journal of Nursing Rese*arch 46, no. 8 (2024): 611–22; David Victor Ogunkan and Olusegun Peter Akinpelu, "Methodology Mayhem in Urban Planning Research: A Call for Methodological Triangulatio*n," Quality & Quan*tity 60, no. 1 (2026): 1679–1704.

mosque-based initiatives respond to community needs and promote gender inclusion within differing governance structures. [21] In line with asset-based community development approaches, the findings underscore the importance of strengthening institutional capacities, including knowledge, skills, and experiential competencies, while mobilizing existing community assets and reinforcing shared social responsibilities among mosque management, congregants, and the wider community

Regarding the roles of mosques in the Malay World as part of Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia and Malaysia, this study conceptualizes mosques not merely as ritual spaces, but as dynamic socio-religious institutions embedded within broader political, cultural, and regulatory contexts. Grounded in an Islamic conceptual framework, the analysis examines mosques as arenas in which religious interpretation, social norms, welfare practices, and gender relations are actively constructed, negotiated, and institutionalized.

Following the research aims, the findings are presented in three interrelated dimensions. First, mosques function as central hubs for religious learning and spiritual formation, shaping moral discourse, Islamic knowledge transmission, and communal identity. Second, mosques contribute to community prosperity through social services, educational programs, health-related activities, Islamic social finance, and economic empowerment initiatives that address socio-economic needs. Third, mosques serve as important spaces for negotiating gender relations, where women's access, participation, and representation are influenced by leadership structures, interpretive authority, spatial arrangements, and program design.

Mosques for Advancing Faith

In Islam, religious practice is inseparable from knowledge, encompassing both ritual worship (*ʿibādah mahdah*) and social relations (*muʿāmalāt*). In addition, mosques are expected to support governmental agendas, particularly in promoting religious moderation, interfaith dialogue, and collaborative partnerships with diverse religious groups.[22]

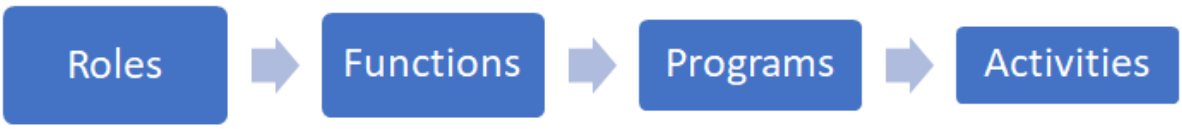
Applying a social welfare framework, this study found that mosques in the Malay world (Indonesia and Malaysia) remain deeply rooted in the institutional model of the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah, as discussed earlier. Their functions span social, cultural,

[21] Fiona Kun Yao et al., "Informal Institutions and Absorptive Capacity: A Cross-Country Meta-Analytic Study: Fiona Kun Yao et Al.," *Journal of International Business Stu*dies 53, no. 6 (2022): 1091–1109; Yves Steinebach, "Instrument Choice, Implementation Structures, and the Effectiveness of Environmental Policies: A Cross-national Analysis," *Regulation & Govern*ance 16, no. 1 (2022): 225–42; Shangrui Wang, Yiming Xiao, and Zheng Liang, "Exploring Cross-National Divide in Government Adoption of Artificial Intelligence: Insights from Explainable Artificial Intelligence Techniques," *Telematics and Informa*tics 90 (2024): 102134.

[22] Wasisto Jati et al., "Reevaluating Approaches to Religious Moderation at the Grassroots Level: The Role of Muslim Youth in Advancing Interfaith Dialogue," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Stu*dies 62, no. 1 (2024): 185–213; Syed Iftikhar Ali Gilani and Abdul Waheed, "Current Challenges in Interfaith Relations within the Muslim Ummah: An Analysis of Muhammad Hamidullah's Contributions," *Southern Journal of Arts & Humani*ties 3, no. 1 (2025): 78–116.

economic, and political domains, materialized through diverse programs and activities (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Framework of Mosque Roles



Source: Authors' own elaboration based on the findings of this study.

In both countries, the national mosques examined here—Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta and Masjid Negara in Kuala Lumpur—operate within formal government frameworks and receive public funding. Their prominent urban locations reflect their national institutional roles. This spatial arrangement reflects a historical pattern from the early Islamic period, when key structures such as the palace, mosque, and market were situated near one another to facilitate accessibility and serve the community efficiently. Other major congregational mosques, including those known as Masjid Jami or Masjid Agung, also reflect local histories and institutional traditions.[23]

The structure of national mosque (*Masjid* Istiqlal) in the capital city of Jakarta is run by central government (Ministry of Religious Affairs) that also regulate mosques at provincial level (*Masjid Raya*). Similarly, Masjid Negara in Kuala Lumpur is administered by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia, JAKIM), alongside Masjid Putra and Masjid Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin in Putrajaya. The latter is also known as Masjid Besi, or the Iron Mosque. A public relations representative of Masjid Negara described their shared management arrangements and government funding:

> *"We are under the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia, I believe. Within this department, there are three mosques like this one: the National Mosque, the Putra Mosque, and the Tuanku Mizan Mosque (also known as the Iron Mosque) in Putrajaya. These three mosques share a common management system, and we operate using government funding. Our operational and utility expenses are covered by government funds, with all payments made through state financing."*

From a state – religion perspective, such positioning highlights how mosques function as bureaucratically managed institutions that connect religious authority with state governance, thereby facilitating administrative oversight and coordination. The selection process for the Grand Imam in both national mosques follows a similar pattern. In Indonesia, the President of the Republic Indonesia appoints the Grand Imam of the national mosque,

[23] Wiryomarto*no, Historical Mosques in Indonesia and the Malay W*orld; Abbas Langaji et al., "Crafting Civilization from the Mihrab: The Vital Role of Palopo's Historic Jami'Tua Mosque*," Journal of Al-Tama*ddun 20, no. 2 (2025): 23–35.

whereas in Malaysia, the appointment is made by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong in his capacity as the Head of Islam at the federal level (*Ketua Agama Islam Peringkat Persekutuan*).

Another category of mosques comprises those managed by local communities in terms of governance, funding, and provision of facilities. These mosques tend to operate with a relatively high degree of autonomy in designing and implementing religious programs, social activities, and community services. The first community-based case is *Masjid* Jogokariyan (*Masjid Kampung*), located in Yogyakarta, Indonesia - a special administrative region governed by a Sultan who also holds recognized cultural and religious authority, distinguishing it from other provinces in the country. Originating from a small neighborhood prayer house (*langgar*) in the southern outskirts of Yogyakarta, the mosque has undergone significant transformation over time and is now situated within a densely populated residential area.[24]

Additionally, *Masjid* Jogokariyan is known for its creative programs and use of technology. The mosque's development reflects not only physical expansion but also the growing role of the mosque as a center for religious, social, and community empowerment, particularly in an urban context characterized by close-knit neighbourhood dynamics. A member of the management team explained:

> *"…This mosque is managed independently by maximizing the roles and contributions of congregants and the surrounding community. The management also develops various initiatives to sustain the continuity of programs and activities within the mosque".*

Furthermore, mosques in Indonesia are established and managed through a variety of institutional and community-based arrangements. Certain mosques are also established by community organizations that acquire land and oversee their construction and management. Some mosques are founded by individual benefactors who donate land and finance the construction process. Others are developed and maintained collectively by local residents through community-based self-help initiatives.[25]

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[24] Diana Ayudya, Wiendu Nuryanti, and Muhammad Sani Roychansyah, "The Morphology of Urban Tourism Space (Case: Malioboro Main Street as Cosmological Axis of Yogyakarta City, Indonesia*)," International Journal of Tourism Ci*ties 10, no. 4 (2024): 1266–90; Agung Zainal Muttakin Raden and Atie Ernawati, "Urban Villages as Serendipity in the City: The Case of Indonesia and Malaysia," i*n The Urban Vernacular in Southeast Asia: Settlement as Serendipi*ty, ed. Nor Zalina Harun and Shireen Jahn Kassim (Routledge, 2025), 55–68, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003413868-6; B Sumardiyanto, "Dynamics Of Spatial Planning Regulation In Protecting Cultural Values Case Study: Yogyakarta–Indonesia," 2025.

[25] Mohamed El Boujjoufi, Ahmed Mustafa, and Jacques Teller, "Does Mosque Location Matter? Mosque and Islamic Shops in the European Contex*t," Journal of Islamic Marke*ting 14, no. 2 (January 26, 2023): 465–83, https://doi.org/10.1108/JIMA-01-2021-0007; Mohammed M Alnaim and Emad Noaime, "Mosque as a Multi-Functional Public Space Destination: Potential Breathing Space in Dense Urban Fabrics of Hail City, Saudi Arabi*a," Open House Internati*onal 48, no. 3 (September 7, 2023): 450–71, https://doi.org/10.1108/OHI-08-2022-0214; Nor Hazirah Hasri, Abu Bakar Abd Hamid, and Muhammad Danial Ismail, "An Analysis on Prayer Room Design in Shopping Complexes: Significance and Function of Ablution Area," *in Selected Proceedings from the 1st International Conference on Contemporary Islamic Studies (ICIS 2*021) (Springer, 2022), 59–70.

The second community-based mosque is *Masjid* al-Hasanah (*Masjid Qaryah*), located in Bangi, Selangor (Malaysia). Its architectural design reflects the historical influence of the Ottoman Caliphate, incorporating spatial elements reminiscent of Ottoman palace layouts, including the arrangement of interior spaces and surrounding landscaped areas. In addition, the mosque has predominantly green domes, similar in color to those of the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah.

As mentioned previously, the two mosque models differ primarily in management systems, funding sources, and program design within their respective regulatory contexts.[26] The religious programs and activities of both mosque models (national and community-based) in Indonesia and Malaysia are described in the following table:

Table 2. The Mosques for Spirituality

No.	Programs	Activities / Services	Mosques
1.	Worship	- Five daily obligatory prayers - Jum'ah prayer - Idul Fitr and Idul Qurban Prayers - I'tikaf (the last 10 days of the holy month of Ramadan) - Reading Muslim Scholars' Books - Providing iftar and break fasting in Ramadan month	All the mosques (National mosques and community-based) **Masjid* al-Hasanah provides meal after Taraweh prayer during Ramadan month.
		- Preach and Qiyamul Lail (every Thursday night)	Istiqlal Mosque
		- Islamic funeral rites	All the mosques
2.	Da'wah	- Celebrating the Prophet's Birthday - Isra Mi'raj - Halal bi Halal (after Idul Fitr) - Mu'allaf consultation - Interfaith Dialogue - Sharing information on Islam	All the mosques
		- *Ulama* Cadre Education (postgraduate program)	Istiqlal Mosque
		- World Imam Dialogue	Istiqlal Mosque and *Masjid* Negara

As Table 2 illustrates, both national and community-based mosques share notable similarities in their religious programs and activities, particularly in their emphasis on the performance of obligatory and voluntary acts of worship (*wajib wa sunnah*). These include regular congregational prayers, Qur'anic recitation sessions, and additional devotional practices that aim to strengthen the spiritual lives of worshippers. The study found that *Masjid*

[26] Abubakar Sadiq Mohammed et al., "Facilities Managers vs. Mosque Management Committees: Evaluating the Need for Professional Facilities Management in Mosque Operation*s," Facili*ties, 2025; Wan Roshaini Wan Ali et al., "The Implementation of Internal Control in Mosque Institutions: A Case Stud*y," Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Rese*arch, 2025.

al-Hasanah in Selangor provides well-equipped classrooms for congregants who wish to study the Qur'an, including both recitation and the understanding of Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsir*).

In the aspect of *da'wah*, all mosques organize activities that promote Islamic teachings and community engagement. These initiatives include the commemoration of significant Islamic events such as the Prophet's Maulid and Isra Mi'raj, which are widely celebrated in Muslim communities, particularly in Indonesia and Malaysia. Furthermore, both mosque models support *da'wah* efforts by facilitating programs for *muallaf* (new converts), as well as by providing educational information about Islam and the historical and religious significance of the mosques to visitors.

The two mosque models in both countries conduct similar programs and activities to improve religiosity through education. The study found that the Grand Mosque of Istiqlal provides formal Islamic education (from pre-school to postgraduate programs called "*Ulama* Cadre Education"). These facilities are located inside the building of Istiqlal mosque. The first or basement floor is provided for the management office, schools, classes and halls. Interestingly, some embassies have their small libraries and reading corner (the United States, China, and Australia). The program called "Voice of Istiqlal" supports activities for cross-cultural understanding, research and training, and community engagement purposes. Similarly, in response to the growing demand for Islamic education, *Masjid* Negara has established daily instructional programs focused on the study of the Qur'an, offered in both morning and evening sessions. This expansion has had spatial implications for the mosque, as the increasing number of participants has necessitated the provision of a substantial number of classes from beginner to advanced levels.

The two community-based mosques gain strong trust and support from the community through their professionalism, high-quality programs, and openness in welcoming others to visit and learn from their success. For instance, *Masjid* Jogokariyan in Yogyakarta has become a role model for empowering the *ummah* through mosque-based community development.[27] Interestingly, it has a legal aid office that assists those in need by providing legal consultation and support, for example in matters such as inheritance distribution, divorce, and child custody. The mosque also provides classes in Qur'anic reading, comprehension, and interpretation.

[27] Neneng Nadila Kurniawati, Afief El Ashfahany, and Mohammad Zahid Khan, "The Mosque as an Agent of Social Welfare: Philanthopic Programs at Jogokariyan Mosque," *Suhuf: International Journal of Islamic Studies* 37, no. 2 (2025): 14–24; Nurul Fauziyah and Kamaruddin Abdy, "Repositioning Mosques as Centers for Islamic Socio-Economic Empowerment: Lessons from the Jogokariyan Mosque in Indonesia," *Munazzama: Journal of Islamic Management and Pilgrimage* 5, no. 2 (2025): 159–75.

Finally, both types of mosques serve as important institutions for the transmission of Islamic values and ethics (*akhlaq*). Through worship and *da'wah* programs, they foster social responsibility, strengthen bonds among congregants, and cultivate a sense of communal piety (*kesalehan sosial*). These roles can be understood within the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, which emphasizes the preservation and promotion of fundamental human well-being, including religion (*din*), intellect (*'aql*), life (*nafs*), and wealth (*mal*).[28] While mosques play a central role in nurturing faith, they also contribute meaningfully to improving the social and economic well-being of their communities.

Mosques for Enhancing Prosperity

This section examines how four mosques in Indonesia and Malaysia have successfully empowered their congregants and surrounding communities. Moving beyond their traditional roles as sites of worship, these mosques function as key actors in developing community and social welfare provision. As illustrated in Table 3, their programs cover three main domains: capacity building, healthcare, and economic empowerment.

Table 3. The Mosques for Prosperity

No.	Programs	Activities / Services	Mosques
1.	Capacity building	- IT training - Entrepreneurship training - Waqif training - Libraries	All the mosques **Masjid* Negara conducted one off program for developing skills in IT and applications. *Library of Istiqlal Mosque also supported by several Embassies called "Voice of Istiqlal"
2.	Healthcare	- Clinic for health services	All the mosques *Some clinics operate daily; others operate on selected days each week. *Masjid Negara has a program for preventive health.
		- Exercises "Olah Raga" facilities	All the mosques *Istiqlal Mosque has sophisticated gym.
3.	Economic empowerment	- Center for Zakat, Infaq, Sadaqah (ZIS) and Waqaf - Office for mosque's business - Stalls for small businesses	All the mosques

[28] Zohora Azmin Shompa, Mohamed Aslam Akbar, and Hazwani Mohd Mohadis, "Harmonizing Maqasid Al-Shari'ah with Sustainable Waste Management Practices: A Conceptual Framework for Principles and Implementation," *International Journal of Islamic and Middle Eastern Finance and Manage*ment 18, no. 1 (2025): 142–65; Muhammad Nooraiman Zailani, Nurul Huda Mohd Satar, and Roza Hazli Zakaria, "Maqasid Al-Shariah Based Index of Socio-Economic Development: A Literature Review," *The Journal of Muamalat and Islamic Finance Rese*arch, 2022, 47–62.

	- Mart, halal restaurant - Souvenir gallery	Istiqlal Mosque
	- ATM Beras	Masjid Jogokariyan
	- Distributing micro-credits for small enterprise	Istiqlal and Jogokariyan Mosques

As shown in Table 3, mosques extend their spiritual functions by promoting the social and economic well-being of their congregants and surrounding communities. From the perspective of empowerment theory, these initiatives enhance both individual capabilities and collective agency.[29] In terms of capacity building, the National and community-based mosques organize training to strengthen leadership, knowledge, practical skills, and experience, thereby strengthening human capital and fostering active community participation. National mosques receive financial support from the governments, ZIS (*zakat, infaq*, and *sadaqah*) and *waqf* (endowments).

At *Masjid* Jogokariyan, innovative programs such as the "Rice ATM" (machine for providing rice) demonstrate a structured approach to community welfare, supported by clear mapping of da'wah activities, defined service areas, and systematic documentation of congregants to ensure accountability. The management explained:

> *"… Through the Social Welfare Bureau, the Rice ATM program is designed to assist the poor and orphans in meeting their daily food needs. Beneficiaries can collect rice from the "ATM" machine every Friday, with each person receiving up to two liters. The machine uses technology donated by Masjid Salman. Community members and congregants can contribute through donations in the form of* infaq *rice, or, at times, the supply is supported by funds from the* Baitul Maal *of Masjid Jogokariyan.*

In addition, the mosque also implements a "Zero Infaq Balance Policy," whereby donated funds are promptly redistributed to the community through enhanced services and facilities. These initiatives reflect the Islamic concept of *falāḥ*, encompassing both material and spiritual well-being.

Furthermore, the Istiqlal Mosque serves as a prominent example of mosque-based economic empowerment. Within its administrative structure, a dedicated unit known as the Istiqlal Global Fund is responsible for delivering entrepreneurship training and managing the

[29] Amy E Lansing et al., "Building Trust: Leadership Reflections on Community Empowerment and Engagement in a Large Urban Initiative," *BMC Public Health* 23, no. 1 (June 28, 2023): 1252, https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-15860-z; Karen R S Hamann et al., "Believing That We Can Change Our World for the Better: A Triple-A (Agent-Action-Aim) Framework of Self-Efficacy Beliefs in the Context of Collective Social and Ecological Aims," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 28, no. 1 (2024): 11–53; Najla Mouchrek and Mark Benson, "The Theory of Integrated Empowerment in the Transition to Adulthood: Concepts and Measures," *Frontiers in Sociology* 8 (2023): 893898.

mosque's business activities.[30] A comparable capacity-building effort can be observed at *Masjid* Negara, which has implemented targeted, one-off programs aimed at enhancing skills in information technology and digital applications.

In terms of health promotion, the mosques play an important role by organizing physical activity programs such as regular aerobics sessions, basketball or futsal matches, particularly in mosques equipped with sports facilities. The initiatives not only promote physical well-being but also foster social cohesion among congregants. For instance, Istiqlal Mosque provides a modern fitness centre that is freely accessible to the public.

As noted earlier, the two community-based mosques must make additional efforts to secure financial sustainability. They strengthen their capacity through philanthropy, fundraising initiatives, and small-scale business development. The funds generated are then used to support program development and to finance their ongoing activities and services. A member of Masjid Jogokariyan's management stated:

> *"Our mosque is self-sufficient … we do not accept funding from the government or corporate CSR of corporates - only from ZIS (zakat, infaq, and sadaqah) and donations from contributors, which are managed through the mosque's Baitul Maal… This is because God has promised that 'whoever prospers the mosque, God will provide for them' … Our mosque also has its own business ventures .. We also run training programs to produce our mosque's signature batik peci (traditional caps), which are sold through the mosque cooperative."*

Moreover, it can be understood that for *Masjid* Jogokariyan, effective management requires creativity in developing a diverse range of business and income-generating units. These initiatives are sustained by optimizing the mosque's assets, such as cooperatives, lodging facilities, and hotels. A similar approach is seen at *Masjid* al-Hasanah, where the management secures financial support from ZIS (*zakat, infaq,* and *sadaqah*), donations, and shared income from business tenants operating around the mosque courtyard. As one of its administrators explained:*"…The mosque also operates businesses such as a café and the Al-Hasanah mart, and also receives a share of profits from MAIS that have small business connected to the mosque courtyard."*

On the other hand, the extent to which these roles are effectively realized varies considerably. While mosque-based initiatives are often framed as practical expressions of

[30] Hung-Chieh Chen, Tzu-Chao Lin, and Ying-Hui Chen, "The Impact of Social Capital and Community Empowerment on Regional Revitalization Practices: A Case Study on the Practice of University Social Responsibility Programs in Wanli and Jinshan Districts," *Sustainabi*lity 17, no. 10 (2025): 4653; Samuel Adomako and Mai Dong Tran, "Stakeholder Integration, Inclusive Innovation, and Social Value Creation: Moderating Effect of Social Capital From Community Leaders," *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Manage*ment 32, no. 6 (2025): 8082–93; Nur Baiti Ingga Wulandhari et al., "Exploring the Role of Social Capital Mechanisms in Cooperative Resilience," *Journal of Business Rese*arch 143 (2022): 375–86.

maqāṣid al-sharī'ah, the integration of religious, social, and economic dimensions is not always systematic or sustained. Charitable activities and community support programs may contribute to the protection of wealth (*ḥifẓ al-māl*) and, indirectly, the preservation of life (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), particularly for vulnerable groups.

In the health sector, mosque-based initiatives - such as free medical check-ups, health awareness campaigns, and community clinics - demonstrate a complementary role to state welfare systems, particularly in reaching underserved populations. This aligns with broader discussions on the role of faith-based organizations in filling gaps in public service provision. This practice aligns with a growing body of literature emphasizing the effectiveness of faith-based organizations in promoting public health.[31]

In conclusion, the findings indicate that mosques can function as significant institutional platforms for facilitating income generation, promoting financial inclusion, and mitigating socio-economic vulnerability, thereby contributing to the development of sustainable livelihoods. The effectiveness and continuity of such initiatives are strongly contingent upon the active engagement of both internal and external stakeholders, which enhances program sustainability and institutional capacity.

E. Women-Friendly Mosques in the Light of Maqāṣid al-sharī'ah

In early Islam, women actively participated in mosque life, particularly through the leadership of the Prophet's wives, the *Ummahat al-Mu'minun*.[32] As reflected in hadith accounts, the Prophet's Mosque functioned as a multifunctional space for worship, learning, and community life. Women participated in mosque activities and wider communal life.[33] Furthermore, Muslim women's religious agency is impacted by specific political and theological environments, shaping discussions of women-only and mixed-gender mosques in Western settings. These debates also arise in Muslim-majority societies, where the

[31] Wahiba Abu-Ras et al., "Mosques and Public Health Promotion: A Scoping Review of Faith-Driven Health Interventions," *Health Education & Beha*vior 51, no. 5 (2024): 677–90; A Abdul Khader Aneesh et al., "Role of Mosque Management Committee in Empowering the Muslim Community in India: A Systematic Review," *in Technology-Driven Business Innovation: Unleashing the Digital Advantage, Volu*me 1 (Springer, 2024), 329–40, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-51997-0_28; Betül Alaca, "The Role of Mosques in Promoting Well-Being in Muslim Communities" (University of Toronto (Canada), 2022).

[32] Dina Hosni, "Women's Religious Agency and the Positioning of the Mosque: A Case Study of State-Sponsored Female Preaching in Egypt," *Middle East Law and Govern*ance 16, no. 2 (2024): 165–91.

[33] Ashraf Booley, "Unveiling Islamic Perspectives on Women's Rights in the Family: Duty, Honour, Equality and Human Dignity.," *Manchester Journal of Transnational Islamic Law & Prac*tice 20, no. 2 (2024); Sa'diyya Shaikh, "Friendships, Fidelities and Sufi Imaginaries: Theorizing Islamic Feminism," *Religi*ons 14, no. 9 (2023): 1082.

relationship between religious agency, piety, and gender reform depends on the institutional and political context.[34,35]

This study examines the relationship between women's empowerment and social change across families, groups, communities, and organizations. It also aims to examine how national and community mosques in Indonesia and Malaysia address gender equality through their programs and activities, as outlined in Table 4. It also explores how gender equality is reflected in spatial design, leadership roles, and service provision, linking these aspects to broader processes of women's empowerment and social transformation. This focus is significant because mosques serve as multifaceted institutions that influence not only religious practices but also the social and economic life of their communities.

Table 4. The Mosques for Gender Equality

No.	Programs	Activities / Services	Mosques
1.	Worship	- Prayer space - Lactation room - Ablution and toilet - Women's funeral rites	All the mosques **Masjid* Istiqlal divides the prayer space equally between men and women **Masjid* al-Hasanah has a special division to handle women's funeral
2.	Education	- Learning al-Qur'an	All the mosques
		- *Majelis Ta'lim*	All the mosques
		- Women *Ulama* Cadre Education (scholar training program)	**Masjid* Istiqlal
3.	Economy	- Providing spaces or stalls for small businesses to operate	All the mosques
		- Kitchen and cooking skills	*Both *Masjid* Jogokariyan and *Masjid* al-Hasanah have their own kitchens.

As shown in Table 4, the arrangement of prayer rows and women's worship facilities varies across the mosques, reflecting different institutional interpretations of gender-responsive religious space. From the perspective of *ḥifẓ al-dīn* within the framework of maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah, these facilities should not be understood merely as technical provisions, but as institutional mechanisms that protect women's right to worship, enhance religious participation, and ensure dignity, comfort, and accessibility within the mosque environment. The availability of comfortable prayer areas, adequate ventilation, clear audio systems, clean

[34] Mona Tajali, "Women's Substantive Representation in the Islamic Republic of Iran: The Potential of Women Critical Actors," *Politics & Gen*der 19, no. 1 (2023): 66–96; Detlef Pollack, Sarah Demmrich, and Olaf Müller, "Religious Fundamentalism: New Theoretical and Empirical Challenges across Religions and Cultures," *Zeitschrift Für Religion, Gesellschaft Und Poli*tik 7, no. 1 (2023): 1–11.

[35] Kareema Mitha, "The Alchemy of the Dhikr Ritual: South African Sufi Women Experiences," 2025; Zora Kostadinova, "Edep: Ethical Imagination and the Sunna of the Prophet Muhamme," *Contemporary I*slam 18, no. 1 (2024): 87–109; Aidana Alken, "Seeking Knowledge: Muslim Women, Islamic Education, and a Guénonian Critique of Secular Anthropology" (Nazarbayev University (Kazakhstan), 2025).

and well-organized mukenah, adjustable partitions, private ablution areas, and dedicated women's facilities demonstrates how mosque management translates religious objectives into concrete spatial and service practices.

The empirical data show that each mosque adopts a different model of gendered spatial organization. At the Grand Mosque of Istiqlal, men and women pray in a shared prayer hall with relatively equal spatial allocation and side-by-side row arrangements, indicating a more parallel model of spatial inclusion. This arrangement suggests that women's presence in the mosque is institutionally recognized as integral to congregational religious life rather than positioned as secondary or peripheral. In contrast, *Masjid* al-Hasanah places women's rows behind men's rows, reflecting a more conventional model of gender separation in mosque space. However, this arrangement is accompanied by dedicated women's facilities, indicating that gender separation does not necessarily imply exclusion when supported by adequate access, comfort, and services. Thus, the comparison between these mosques demonstrates that women-friendly mosque practices are shaped not only by spatial layout, but also by the extent to which mosque governance operationalizes maqāṣid al-sharī'ah through inclusive, dignified, and context-sensitive religious services.

Meanwhile, *Masjid* Negara allocates a smaller prayer area for women on the ground floor and a larger space on the upper level. A comparable arrangement is found at *Masjid* Jogokariyan, where female congregants pray on the second floor, providing a greater degree of privacy. Overall, this form of spatial separation between male and female worshippers is commonly observed in many mosques across Indonesia.

All of the mosques provide facilities that support women's needs, including private ablution areas, dedicated toilets, and spaces for conducting funeral rites for women. To improve comfort and maintain a calm atmosphere during worship, *Masjid* Istiqlal and *Masjid* al-Hasanah provide dedicated facilities such as a children's playroom and a lactation room. In addition, three mosques (*Masjid* Istiqlal, *Masjid* Negara, and *Masjid* al-Hasanah) provide playgrounds for children, helping create a more welcoming and inclusive environment for families at the mosques. The spaces are designed to support women who attend with young children, enabling them to carry out their religious practices without concern for their children's comfort and safety. At the same time, these provisions help minimize disruptions from children's activities, thereby preserving the congregation's focus and attentiveness during prayer.

Women actively participate in educational programs, particularly in learning the Qur'an. These activities are common in mosques across Indonesia, Malaysia, and other parts

of the Malay world. Women attend to listen, read, and deepen their understanding of Islamic teachings, while also engaging with one another in *majelis ta'lim* (religious study circles).

These programs are held at varying intervals - daily, weekly, or monthly - depending on the subject matter, such as *Iqro*, *tahfidz*, *tahsin*, and the study of classical Islamic texts. At *Masjid* al-Hasanah, participation in these activities is predominantly female, whereas in other mosques, the number of male and female participants tends to be more balanced.

From the perspective of *ḥifẓ al-'aql* (the protection of intellect), *Masjid* Istiqlal plays a central role in advancing education. As one of the largest mosques in Asia, it functions as a hub for diverse learning activities, including training in congregational prayer, programs for converts, youth-focused initiatives, and *majelis ta'lim* for women. The mosque also provides formal education from playgroup to *Madrasah Aliyah*, offers instruction in classical Islamic texts such as the *hawamisy*, and maintains facilities like a library. In addition, the mosque serves as an important platform for women's empowerment. In addition to supporting female preachers, the mosque promotes equal opportunities for women to participate in *da'wah*, by providing "Women *Ulama* Cadre Education" (PKUP). The program seeks to develop knowledgeable and ethically grounded female scholars who advocate for gender equality and child protection.

In terms of economic activities, all the mosques provide opportunities for women to engage in small-scale businesses by renting stalls within or around the mosque courtyard. They may also participate in skills training programs, particularly in preparing culinary products. Applying the perspective of *ḥifẓ al-māl* (protection of wealth), *Masjid* Istiqlal has demonstrated significant efforts in economic empowerment.

During the month of Ramadan, women play an active role in supporting communal iftar by preparing meals in mosque kitchens, contributing both their time and culinary skills to serve the congregation. This practice is particularly prominent at *Masjid* Jogokariyan and *Masjid* al-Hasanah, where food is typically cooked on-site, fostering a strong sense of community participation and shared responsibility. In these settings, the preparation process itself becomes a social and spiritual activity, strengthening bonds among congregants. In contrast, *Masjid* Istiqlal and *Masjid* Negara generally distribute iftar through donated meal boxes. This approach reflects a more centralized and large-scale system of provision, enabling the mosques to accommodate a higher number of worshippers efficiently while still ensuring access to meals for breaking the fast. Together, these differing practices illustrate the variety of organizational models adopted by mosques in facilitating communal worship and social support during Ramadan.

In conclusion, mosques play an important role in fostering inclusive environments that respond to the needs of all congregants, particularly women, through both spatial design and institutional practices. This demonstrates a broader commitment to creating welcoming and empowering spaces rooted in religious values and community well-being. Taken together, these findings show how women-friendly facilities and programs can be interpreted through maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah as contributions to congregational welfare.

F. Conclusion

This study investigates the historical development and contemporary functions of mosques in the Malay World by situating them as central institutions that both shape and reflect faith, prosperity, and gender relations. Guided by three main questions, the study examined how mosques contribute to the formation and continuity of Islamic belief, practice, and communal identity; how they advance broader notions of prosperity through social cohesion, education, health services, and economic empowerment; and how they operate as gendered spaces in which access, participation, and representation are negotiated through institutional practices.

The findings show that mosques should not be understood merely as physical sites of worship, but as dynamic socio-religious institutions. The comparative analysis of national and community-based mosques in Indonesia and Malaysia shows that mosque functions are shaped by different governance models, funding structures, leadership orientations, and community needs. National mosques tend to operate through more formalized institutional systems and state-supported programs, while community-based mosques demonstrate stronger grassroots participation, local innovation, and direct community engagement. Despite these differences, both models contribute to faith formation, community prosperity, and women’s participation through diverse institutional strategies.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in its proposal of a *Maqāṣid-Based Women-Friendly Mosque Welfare Model*. This model conceptualizes the mosque as an integrative community institution in which worship, education, welfare, economic empowerment, and gender responsiveness are connected through the ethical objectives of *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*.

The novelty of this study is not only empirical and contextual, but also conceptual, as it offers a framework for understanding how mosque-based practices can integrate *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*, community empowerment, and women-friendly institutional governance. In this sense, mosques serve as arenas of ethical formation and bridges between Islamic normative

ideals and everyday lived realities, offering important insights into contemporary Islamic thought and the pursuit of gender justice in Southeast Asia.

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