The Systematic Approach in Revitalizing the Role of Mosques as Community Empowerment Centers

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ABSTRAK
Mosques, aside from serving as places of worship for Muslims, also function as institutions for education, social interaction, economic activities, and community empowerment. However, in reality, many mosques only serve as “ivory towers” amidst community life, limited to religious roles such as places of worship and religious instruction. This article aims to discuss the revitalization of the mosque’s role as a center for community empowerment through a systemic approach. The research method applied is qualitative, utilizing a literature review model. The data used is derived from a review of relevant literature focused on the research objectives. The findings of this study indicate that the revitalization of the mosque’s role requires a systemic approach, where mosques establish strategic partnerships with external institutions in spiritual, intellectual, social, and economic aspects. Human resource development and economic collaboration with economic development institutions are identified as crucial elements. Synergistic coordination in mosque management, through the formation of specialized teams at the high level, divisions at the mid-level, and implementation teams at the lower level, is viewed as a crucial step to ensure the effective management and implementation of programs. This study emphasizes that through a systemic approach, mosques can play an integral role in holistic community empowerment, making the systemic approach a necessity in revitalizing the mosque’s role as a center for community empowerment.

Keywords: Revitalization, Mosques, Community Empowerment, Systematic Approach

1. INTRODUCTION
The mosque, as a religious institution, not only serves as a place of worship but also has a significant impact on shaping and advancing society[1]. In the historical context of the mosque’s existence, the mosque is not just a physical building (with all its beauty), but it also reflects the image and identity of Muslims around the world[2]. In other words, to measure the level of progress in a region, it can be seen how far the mosque plays a role during society. A mosque is a tangible foothold for assessing the prosperity and empowerment of the people in a region.

During the time of Prophet Muhammad, mosques were not only used as places of ritual but also as centers of activities involving all aspects of community life, such as education, economy, social, and cultural activities[3], [4]. In fact, the mosque is a measure of the progress of Islamic civilization itself [5]. However, so far, the role of mosques tends to be limited to religious functions such as places of worship and religious teaching[5], [6]. Although it cannot be denied that today there are mosques that have actively contributed to the empowerment of the people, there are still many facts that show that the existing mosques in various regions of Indonesia are still minimal in function.

Historically, mosques have long been the center of community activities, including education, politics, the economy, social life, and culture. This tradition was maintained until the era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs and the caliphs thereafter. During the time of Prophet Muhammad, the first mosque was built in Medina as a fortress, a place to educate the people, and a place to devise defense strategies and the progress and prosperity of the people[5]. The mosque not only serves as a place of worship but also as a center of activities that become two factors of strength for Muslims, namely spiritual strength related to the Creator, social strength in society, and statehood as a balance of life in the world and the hereafter. During the Abbasid Dynasty, the city of Baghdad became the center of Islamic civilization. The caliphs after al-Mansur built the city of Baghdad by establishing worship, education, and knowledge facilities. In 800 AD, the city of Baghdad had transformed into a large city that became the center of education, science, economy, and politics[7].

In this context, there is indeed no standard guideline or model that can be used as an absolute reference in functioning the mosque as a place for community empowerment. There is no obligation, for example, to follow mosques A, B, and so on. Each mosque, due to different local conditions and contexts, can develop an empowerment model that suits the needs and potential of the community. Here, revitalization patterns and innovations can be carried out.

It should be underlined that Muslims have no obligation to imitate one mosque with another. For
example, when a mosque is active in empowering its community’s economy, other mosques are not obliged to imitate it because a mosque is active and contributes based on the condition of its community. Perhaps the local community’s economy is indeed recognized as being able to empower other communities, so the mosque is the channel for it. It is possible that the mosque that is active in empowering the community’s economy has weaknesses in the aspect of Islamic education.

The life of the community in various regions tends to be very different, and therefore, the effective approach to empowering the people will also vary. The success of a mosque in empowering the community cannot always be transferred directly to a different context due to differences in social, economic, and cultural conditions. However, the principles and ideal ideas of a successful mosque can be a source of inspiration, then adjusted to the potential resources in the local environment[8].

The above statement explains that in an effort to revitalize the role of a mosque, ideally, a system approach is needed in its governance. Johnson, Kast, and Rosenzweig (1973) suggested that the system approach is a way of thinking to organize tasks through a framework that describes internal and external environmental factors so that it constitutes an integrated whole. The system approach is a series of stages carried out to solve various problems; each step is understood and produces alternative solutions to be applied[9].

Based on the explanation above, this article aims to discuss the revitalization of the role of the mosque as a community empowerment center through a system approach. The urgency of this study lies in the need for a deep understanding of the importance of a system approach in revitalizing the role of the mosque because, basically, the mosque not only serves as a place of worship but also as a center for community empowerment. The system approach, as a concept proposed by Johnson et al.[10], opens the door for a way of thinking that organizes tasks through a framework that includes internal and external environmental factors, creating an integrated whole. The authors argue that the importance of a system approach is evident in the series of stages involved, where each step is designed to be well understood, thus producing alternative solutions that can be implemented. Analysis conducted through the lens of a system approach views social reality as a system that has integrity, involves various components, and therefore creates holistic interventions. In the context of revitalizing the role of the mosque, the system approach is not just an option but a necessity capable of bringing substantial changes to the traditional role of the mosque, which is limited to religious functions. This opens up opportunities to understand and design comprehensive interventions, viewing the mosque as a system with interrelated elements such as worship, education, social, and economic. Revitalization of the mosque with a system approach can be understood as a comprehensive transformation that impacts all aspects of life, supporting the development and welfare of Muslims as a whole.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study uses the qualitative method of the literature study model. The data used in this research comes from the results of a literature review relevant to the focus of the study. The analysis process is carried out exploratively and descriptively to gain a deep understanding related to the context, current conditions, as well as potentials and obstacles to revitalizing the role of the mosque as a community empowerment center. This approach allows the author to identify patterns, trends, and relationships between variables through conceptual analysis. The results of the data analysis are interpreted to compile conclusions and recommendations about concrete steps that can be taken to further optimize the role of the mosque as a community empowerment center through a system approach.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 The Existence of Mosques

The mosque is an integral part of the spiritual, social, and cultural life of the Muslim community [11]. The term ‘mosque,’ the place of worship for Muslims, is mentioned twenty-eight times in the Quran [12]. The word “mosque” originates from the Arabic language, specifically from the roots “sajada, yasjudu, sujudan,” which literally mean ‘to bow down with devotion’ [13]. From these roots, the term ‘mosque’ is derived as a noun signifying a place of prostration (ism makan from fi’il sajada). Prostration is a fundamental aspect of prayer, serving as a means for worshippers to draw closer to Allah (God). Hence, the term for the prayer space is derived from ‘sujud,’ ultimately becoming the word “mosque.”

The history of mosques begins shortly after the migration of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to Medina. His first action in Medina was to invite his followers to build a mosque. The mosque that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) built in Medina, formerly known as Yathrib, served as the cornerstone of Islamic civilization according to Allah’s divine plan. Indeed, the place where this mosque was built truly became Medina, as its literal meaning is “the place of civilization,” or at the very least, the birthplace of the seeds of civilization [3]. Mosques should ideally be built on the basis of piety and not for any other reasons (Quran, At-Tawbah: 108–110).

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) built the mosque as the “house of Allah,” a place where Muslims worship, glorify, and remember Allah (Quran, An-Nur: 36). In Surah Al-Jinn, verse 18, Allah says: “And [He revealed] that the masjids are for Allah, so do not invoke with Allah anyone.” The jinn asked the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon...
him): “O Messenger of Allah, allow us to participate in prayer in your mosque,” which led to the revelation of this verse. In response, Allah revealed this verse, emphasizing that mosques are the property of Allah [14].

The concept of the mosque during the time of Prophet Muhammad is not limited to being just a place for prayer or the gathering of specific community groups (tribes). Instead, the mosque served as the central hub for all Islamic activities, functioning as the main center for educational, political, economic, social, and cultural activities [15]–[17]. Based on this practical foundation, the mosque extends beyond being a mere gathering place for Muslims to perform worship; it becomes a crucial part of the development of the Muslim community [18]. Some functions of the mosque during the time of the Prophet include [19]:

- A place of worship for Muslims, including prayers, remembrance (dhikr), and other religious activities.
- A place for the pursuit of knowledge by Muslims, encompassing religious and general education.
- George Makdisi [20] refers to the mosque as an institution of Islamic education.
- A venue for issuing legal opinions (fatwas) for the Muslim community, especially in resolving contemporary issues.
- A place for adjudicating legal matters.
- A venue for welcoming guests, delegations, or envoys.
- A place for conducting marriages, with Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) stating that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, “Announce this marriage and hold it in the mosque, then beat the drums” (narrated by Turmuizdi).
- A center for social services and military training.
- A place for the pursuit of knowledge by Muslims, including prayers, recitation, and study of Islamic texts.

In Indonesia, mosques have evolved and transformed with the passage of time [21]. However, the existence of mosques as centers for preaching and community development often faces challenges, especially in this modern era [22]. The history of mosques in Indonesia traces back to the ancient Mataram Kingdom, with the Saka Tunggal Mosque in the village of Cikakak, West Java, and the Banyumas Regency, Central Java Province, being its precursor [21]. Since then, mosques have undergone development and transformation, both in terms of architecture and function [22].

Historically, mosques have played a significant role in developing the intellectual capabilities of the community, engaging in social and community activities, boosting the economy, and providing a space for discussions to find solutions to contemporary issues. While these roles are undeniable, the strategic functions of mosques have gradually shifted with time, giving way to artificial conditions, particularly the competition for grandeur in their architectural aspects.

3.2 Community Empowerment

Empowerment is a process that enables an individual to have sufficient strength to actively participate in events and institutions that influence their life [23], [24]. The term “empowerment” originates from the English language, specifically “empowerment,” consisting of the base word “power,” referring to the ability or capacity to perform, achieve, or enable an action. The prefix “em” in “empowerment” adds nuance, indicating that the power comes from within the individual or a specific source of creativity [25]. In Indonesian, the term “pemberdayaan” comprises the base word “daya,” which refers to power. With the addition of the prefix “ber-” and the infix “-m-” and the suffix “-an,” the term forms the concept of “pemberdayaan,” which can be interpreted as a process or action to provide strength or power to an entity.

Thus, in the context of community empowerment, the concept involves giving strength or capability to individuals or groups in society to take control of their lives, achieve their full potential, and actively contribute to community development. Community empowerment focuses on human resource development, capacity building, and creating an environment where each individual feels they play a significant role in the process of development and positive change [26].

Based on the above statement, community empowerment is a series of activities aimed at providing strength or empowerment to vulnerable and weak groups in society, including individuals facing poverty. Through empowerment, it is expected that they will have the ability to meet their needs, both physically, economically, and socially.

Regarding the role of mosques as centers for community empowerment, a series of activities should ideally be designed to strengthen these groups, including individuals facing poverty. Mosques should organize holistic programs covering physical, economic, and social empowerment aspects, with the goal of enhancing the self-confidence, independence, and active participation of individuals and improving the overall social welfare of the community.

According to Agus Afandi et al. [27], there are at least three aspects of empowerment that need emphasis. First and foremost, there is a need to strengthen the spiritual dimension in light of the moral decline in society, especially among the younger generation, who are more susceptible to the detrimental “Western” culture that is at odds with Islamic values. Second, a focus on empowering the intellectual dimension is considered crucial, given that Muslims in Indonesia lag behind in the progress of science and technology. Therefore, education is key to guiding society towards intellectual development and entrepreneurship. Third, empowerment of the economic dimension is a necessity, considering that the majority of Muslims in Indonesia still experience declines in economic aspects.
Hence, there is a need for appropriate strategies and policies to address economic lag and inequality.

3.3 System Approach

A system can be defined as an organized or complex whole, consisting of a collection or combination of objects or parts that work together to form a larger unity [10]. The term “system approach” signifies an effort to practice systematic management. By implementing a system approach, an organization or individual can achieve synergistic effects, where actions from various parts of the system, when combined, will have a greater impact. This approach encourages coordination and collaboration among the system’s components, creating added value through planned and coordinated interactions [10]. The system approach can be applied in various contexts, such as organizational management, computer science, product development, and community empowerment by an organization or institution. Through the system approach, the role of a mosque will achieve optimal results through effective coordination of its diverse elements.

The system approach is a framework that encompasses “a way of thinking,” “methods or analytical techniques,” and “managerial style” [10]. As a way of thinking, the system approach involves a systemic philosophy that considers phenomena in the context of the whole, emphasizing the interrelationships between parts and subsystems. As an analytical method, this approach involves scientific techniques for problem-solving and decision-making, focusing on problem exploration, identification of relevant variables, and analysis and synthesis of factors. As a managerial style, the system approach includes the application of system theory in organizational management, emphasizing the relationships between subsystems and the holistic management of organizational input and output.

By integrating these three aspects, the system approach provides a comprehensive and integrated perspective on managing the complexity and dynamics of an organization. The revitalization of the mosque’s role in community empowerment through a system approach based on these aspects is an effort to contextualize the mosque’s role in the present based on empowerment concepts and the synergy and coordination among stakeholders. In other words, in the system approach, the mosque functions as a large unit embodying a philosophical system and hierarchically and synergistically accommodating internal and external elements of the mosque.

3.4 Revitalizing the Role of Mosques in Empowering Communities with a System Approach

Mosques, as centers for religious and social activities, play a strategic role in shaping the character and well-being of communities. However, their role often remains confined to ritual aspects and is suboptimal in developing other facets such as intellectual, social, and economic dimensions. Therefore, there is a need for revitalizing the role of mosques in community empowerment through a systemic approach. The systemic approach views the mosque as a system consisting of various interacting components that influence one another. Through this approach, mosques can collaborate with external institutions to enhance their positive impact on society. The revitalization efforts include:

First, collaboration with external institutions in the spiritual aspect, mosques form close partnerships with religious institutions, organizing joint activities such as worship and religious studies to deepen the spiritual meaning of the community. This collaboration is crucial to ensuring that the values of life align with religious teachings [28]. In the intellectual aspect, mosques actively collaborate with educational institutions to conduct training, seminars, and intellectual activities to provide holistic knowledge. The goal is to impart comprehensive knowledge to the community, enabling them to understand and apply religious teachings in their daily lives [29]. In the social aspect, mosques collaborate with social organizations in implementing community welfare programs, social assistance, and other social activities to provide a comprehensive positive impact. The aim is to positively influence society as a whole, especially those who are less privileged [30]. In the economic aspect, mosques establish strategic relationships with financial institutions and local businesses to support economic programs, entrepreneurship training, and joint ventures that can enhance economic well-being [31]. The objective is to improve the economic well-being of the community and help mosques become economically self-reliant [32].

Second, partnership with community economic development institutions. Mosque management needs to establish partnerships with community economic development institutions, such as Community Self-Help Groups (KSM), Islamic Banking Financial Institutions, and SME consultants supported by the Bank of Indonesia. This partnership aims to support the planning and implementation of empowerment programs [32]. Additionally, mosques with financial institutions like Baitul Qiradh and cooperatives need to enhance Human Resources (HR) through training in management, business accounting, and entrepreneurship organized by various entities, including the cooperative and small business departments, and other institutions.

Third, synergistic Coordination in Mosque Management Synergistic coordination efforts in mosque management, both within the same mosque and hierarchically with mosque organizations, are crucial [29]. In this regard, revitalization efforts include:

1. High Level (Mosque Management): Establishing a specialized high-level team responsible for the management and
collaboration with external institutions in various aspects.

(2) Middle Level (Divisions): Appointing divisions overseeing the implementation of spiritual, intellectual, social, and economic programs, ensuring effective coordination of each aspect.

(3) Low Level (Implementation Team): Forming implementation teams at the low level, focusing on executing programs according to their respective divisions, and ensuring effective implementation.

Based on the conceptual presentation above, the revitalization of the mosque’s role in community empowerment is illustrated in the following diagram:

**Diagram:**

**Revitalization System Approach to Enhancing the Role of Mosques in Community Empowerment**

Based on the presented image, mosque administrators implement a structured approach aimed at community empowerment. This approach encompasses various dimensions, including leadership and management, education, social and economic dimensions, women’s and youth participation, cooperation, and collaboration, as well as readiness for adaptation and flexibility. The objective is to create a coordinated system to achieve holistic community empowerment. At the leadership and management level, a comprehensive team structure is formed at high, medium, and low levels to oversee and implement empowerment programs. For instance, Masjid Al Bariyah Hajimena, adopting an academically based approach, serves as a tangible example of enhancing community empowerment through effective management. Mature mosque management involves effective planning, organizing, directing, and monitoring [29].

In the realm of education, mosques develop a holistic curriculum at the high level, design learning programs at the medium level, and implement educational programs within the mosque environment at the low level. This reflects the mosque’s role in initiating changes in life values, religious practices, and nurturing the community through social and economic righteousness programs [28].

Social and economic aspects are emphasized through collaboration with external institutions at the high level, while welfare programs and local economic projects are initiated at the medium level, involving active community participation at the low level. For example, Lazis Masjid Al-Muhajirin plays a role in transforming disadvantaged communities into empowered ones through the management of zakat, infaq, and sedekah [30].

Involvement of women and youth is integrated through inclusive policies at the high level, special programs at the medium level, and encouragement of participation in daily activities at the low level. This reflects how mosque administrators collaborate with the community and youth mosque administrators in implementing religious, educational, and social programs. Partnerships and collaborations are realized through special teams at the high level, cooperation protocols at the medium level, and joint program implementation at the low level. This reflects how mosques adapt to changes and community needs, as well as how mosques play a role in optimizing their functions and roles in response to community needs. This approach creates a coordinated system to achieve holistic community empowerment, demonstrating how mosques, as centers of Islamic activities, can contribute to community empowerment through various aspects, ranging from leadership and management to education, social and economic aspects, women’s and youth involvement, partnerships and collaborations, as well as flexibility and adaptability.

In addition to the above efforts, the revitalization of the mosque’s role as a center for community empowerment can be systematically carried out through the following practical efforts: First, enhancing religious activities, such as religious studies during Ramadan, focusing not only on religious dimensions but also positively impacting societal values and norms Second, implementing effective mosque management through planning, organizing, directing, and monitoring, as well as collaborating with community leaders and youth for religious, educational, and social programs, Third, utilizing religious donations, such as Zakat, Infaq, and Sedekah, for transforming disadvantaged communities into empowered ones, restoring the mosque’s role as a facilitator of worship and community empowerment. Finally, integrating technology, such as user-centric information systems, to support services to the community, improve living standards through the sale of community products, and manage mosque activities Through this approach, mosques can once again become centers of...
community empowerment, combining religious aspects, effective management, donation utilization, and technology integration into a dynamic and relevant unity.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the presented analysis, it can be concluded that the revitalization of the mosque’s role as a community empowerment effort with a systematic approach requires concrete actions in several key aspects. Firstly, strategic partnerships with external institutions become a crucial point that needs to be emphasized. Mosques should adopt a systematic approach by forging close partnerships in spiritual, intellectual, social, and economic aspects with institutions such as religious institutions, educational organizations, social organizations, financial institutions, and local businesses. The goal of these partnerships is to enhance the overall positive impact of the mosque on society.

Furthermore, there is a need for the enhancement of human resources (HR) and economic cooperation as an inevitable step in the revitalization process. This includes the development of human resources through training in management, business accounting, and entrepreneurship. Mosques with financial institutions need to establish partnerships with community economic development institutions, such as Community Self-Help Groups (KSM), Islamic Banking Financial Institutions, and SME consultants, to support the planning and implementation of economic empowerment programs.

Finally, synergistic coordination in mosque management is key to achieving holistic community empowerment. Synergistic coordination in mosque leadership and management is required, involving the formation of specialized teams at the high level, the establishment of divisions at the middle level, and the formation of implementation teams at the lower level. This coordination will ensure the effective and well-coordinated management and implementation of spiritual, intellectual, social, and economic programs. These findings indicate that the mosque’s role involves deep involvement in various aspects of community life. By adopting a systematic approach, mosques establish strategic partnerships with external institutions in spiritual, intellectual, social, and economic aspects. These findings also affirm that mosques play an integral role in empowering communities and creating a coordinated system to achieve holistic positive impacts.

REFERENCES


