

Management of the Mosque Prosperity Board (BKM) of Raya Al Husain Mosque in Martubung Subdistrict in Attracting Public Interest in Performing Fajr Prayer

Marwan Marwan^{*)}, Muhammad Putra Dinata Saragi

Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Medan

marwan0104212122@uinsu.ac.id

Abstract

This study examines the management practices of the Mosque Prosperity Board (BKM) at Raya Al Husein Mosque in attracting congregational participation in Fajr prayer. Despite the central role of congregational worship in Islam, participation rates remain relatively low, particularly in urban and semi-urban contexts. This research employs a qualitative case study approach, using observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation to explore how mosque management is experienced by congregants. Data were analyzed through coding procedures, including open, axial, and selective coding, to identify key themes. The findings reveal that participation is not solely influenced by religious obligation or facility availability, but emerges from a multidimensional experiential process. Four interrelated dimensions were identified: physical comfort, psychological and affective comfort, behavioral transformation, and experiential meaning. Comfort functions as a central construct that mediates the relationship between environmental conditions and congregational behavior. Physical improvements shape initial perceptions, which are then internalized into psychological comfort, fostering intrinsic motivation and leading to sustained participation. This study contributes by proposing an integrative model in which mosque management operates as a process of designing meaningful religious experiences. The findings highlight the importance of shifting from conventional management approaches toward more holistic and experience-oriented strategies to enhance congregational engagement.

Keywords: Congregational Participation, Embodied Religious Experience, Intrinsic Motivation, Mosque Management, Worship Engagement.

Introduction

Indonesia, as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, holds a strategic position in sustaining and actualizing Islamic values within everyday social life. Based on data from the Ministry of Home Affairs for Semester I of 2024, Indonesia's population reached approximately 282.47 million, with around 87 percent identified as Muslims. This demographic composition places a significant responsibility on Indonesian society to ensure that religious values are not only preserved but also actively practiced in communal life (Tandi & Bone, 2024).

One of the most central institutions in this effort is the mosque. Beyond functioning as a physical space for performing mahdhah worship such as prayer, mosques serve as centers for strengthening ukhuwah (Islamic brotherhood), religious education, and community empowerment (Rasyid, 2018; Pratama, 2020; Wahyudi & Basri, 2020). In this context, mosque management becomes a crucial factor in determining whether the mosque is able to function effectively as a living religious and social institution. The Mosque Prosperity Board (BKM), as the managerial body, is therefore required not only to manage administrative and operational aspects, but also

to design programs and environments that sustain congregational engagement (Arianto, 2021; Aziz, 2020; Huda, 2021).

However, in recent years, many mosques, particularly in urban and semi-urban areas, have experienced a decline in congregational participation, especially in the performance of obligatory prayers. This phenomenon indicates a gap between the normative expectations of Islamic practice and the actual behavior of Muslim communities (Halim & Rauf, 2020; Hasyim, 2022). Supporting this concern, data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs show that only about 30 percent of Muslims regularly perform obligatory prayers in congregation at mosques. Interestingly, participation in non-routine religious activities such as religious lectures or *tabligh akbar* tends to be significantly higher, suggesting that engagement is influenced not only by obligation but also by contextual and experiential factors (Ridwan & Setiawan, 2023; Said & Yusuf, 2021).

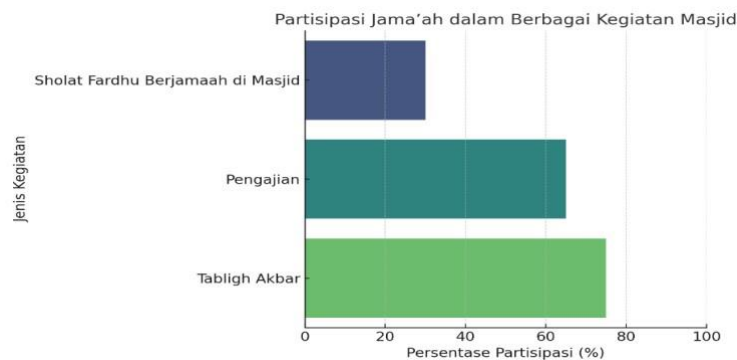


Figure 1. Ministry of Religious Affairs Survey on Mosque Activities in Indonesia
 Source: Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, Results of the Religious Participation Survey of Muslims (2023)

This disparity is further illustrated in Figure 1, which presents the overall pattern of mosque-based religious participation in Indonesia. As shown in Figure 1, routine congregational worship particularly obligatory prayers consistently attracts fewer participants compared to non-routine religious activities. This pattern indicates that participation is not solely determined by doctrinal awareness, but is closely related to how religious activities are experienced and perceived by congregants.

This issue is also evident at Raya Al Husein Mosque, where preliminary observations indicate that Fajr prayer attendance remains relatively low, ranging from 20 to 30 congregants out of a capacity of approximately 300. This condition reflects a broader trend in which mosque attendance often ranges between 3% and 12% of capacity, with Fajr prayer showing the lowest participation levels (Zahrani & Kusnawan, 2022). Such findings highlight a critical challenge for mosque management in fostering consistent and sustained congregational engagement.

From a theoretical perspective, participation is closely related to individuals' sense of involvement, emotional connection, and perceived value within an activity or institution. This suggests that mosque management should not only focus on providing facilities or organizing programs, but also on creating meaningful experiences that encourage engagement (Fawri & Neviyarni, 2021). In other words, the issue of low

participation cannot be fully explained by structural factors alone, but must also be understood through the lens of experience, perception, and motivation.

Previous studies have explored various strategies to increase mosque participation, including community outreach, program development, and social engagement activities. However, most of these studies tend to emphasize program effectiveness and da'wah activities without sufficiently examining how mosque management is experienced at the psychological and behavioral levels (Hidayat, 2019; Muhammad Qadaruddin et al., 2019). In particular, limited attention has been given to the role of comfort, emotional experience, and perceived value in shaping congregational participation.

This study addresses this gap by examining the management practices of the BKM at Raya Al Husein Mosque and exploring how these practices are experienced by congregants in their daily worship. Rather than focusing solely on programs or attendance rates, this research seeks to understand the underlying process through which mosque management particularly in relation to comfort and experience shapes congregational participation.

The objective of this study is to analyze how BKM management strategies are implemented to increase participation in congregational obligatory prayers, especially Fajr prayer, and to identify the factors that influence such participation. By integrating physical, psychological, and behavioral dimensions, this study offers a more comprehensive understanding of mosque management as a process of designing meaningful religious experiences.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design to explore the dynamics of congregational participation in obligatory prayers, particularly Fajr prayer, within a specific mosque context (Faizal et al., 2025). The qualitative approach was selected because it allows for a deeper understanding of social and religious phenomena as experienced by participants in their natural setting. The focus of this study is not only to describe participation, but to understand how mosque management practices are experienced by congregants and how these experiences influence their engagement.

The research was conducted at Raya Al Husein Mosque in the northern part of Medan, which operates under the management of the Mosque Prosperity Board (BKM). This site was selected purposively based on its active management practices and observable variations in congregational participation. The study aims to capture how strategies implemented by mosque management are perceived and interpreted by different members of the community.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, involving BKM administrators, mosque imams, religious figures, community leaders, and congregants with varying levels of participation. This selection was intended to provide a range of perspectives related to mosque management and congregational behavior. Data collection was carried out until the information obtained was considered sufficient to describe recurring patterns in the field.

Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation (Pahleviannur et al., 2022). Observation was conducted to gain a general understanding of the mosque environment, including the condition of facilities and the atmosphere during congregational prayers. In-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-

structured manner, allowing participants to share their experiences and views regarding comfort, participation, and religious activities. Documentation, such as mosque activity schedules and available records, was used to support the interpretation of findings where possible.

Data analysis followed an interactive process inspired by Miles and Huberman, which was further developed through a coding-based approach (Schoch, 2020). The analysis began with identifying key statements from interview data, which were then organized into initial codes. These codes were gradually grouped into broader categories, such as physical comfort, psychological experience, and behavioral participation. From these categories, overarching themes were constructed to explain how comfort functions as an important element in shaping congregational engagement.

To enhance the credibility of the findings, the researcher attempted to relate and compare information obtained from different sources. Insights from interviews were considered alongside field observations and available documentation to see whether they reflected similar patterns. For example, participants' statements about improved comfort were interpreted together with observed conditions of the mosque environment, while indications of increased participation were considered in light of observable attendance patterns.

An overview of how these different sources of data were related in the analysis is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Relation of Data Across Sources and Methods

Theme	Interview Data	Observation Data	Documentation Data	Interpretation
Physical Comfort	Informants described improvements in facilities (ANS concept)	Clean and comfortable prayer space observed	Limited supporting records	Physical conditions contribute to initial impressions
Psychological Comfort	Congregants expressed feeling more comfortable	Calm atmosphere during prayer observed	Not directly documented	Comfort is experienced internally
Behavioral Impact	Increased willingness to attend reported	Attendance appears relatively consistent	Partial attendance notes	Comfort relates to motivation to attend
Experiential Meaning	Congregants express attachment to mosque	Social interaction observed	Activity schedules	Mosque functions as meaningful space

Rather than treating each data source separately, the researcher sought to understand how these different forms of evidence relate to one another. This approach helps to build a more grounded interpretation, even though the data may not always be perfectly aligned. In addition, informal member checking was carried out by confirming several interpretations with participants during follow-up conversations. The use of coding also allows the analysis to be traced back to participants' original statements,

providing transparency in how conclusions were developed. All research procedures were conducted with attention to ethical considerations. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and their consent was obtained before interviews were conducted. Their identities were kept confidential, and the data were used solely for academic purposes. Through this approach, the study seeks to present findings that are both analytically meaningful and grounded in actual field experiences.

Results and Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the management practices of the Mosque Prosperity Board (BKM) at Raya Al Husein Mosque cannot be understood merely as technical or administrative efforts. Instead, they constitute a multidimensional system in which physical arrangements, psychological experiences, and spiritual meanings interact to shape congregational participation, particularly in Fajr prayer. Through a systematic qualitative analysis involving open coding, axial categorization, and thematic integration, the data reveal that congregants' experiences are constructed through layered processes. These processes begin with material improvements in the mosque environment, develop into psychological and emotional responses, and ultimately lead to behavioral and perceptual transformation. In this regard, participation is not simply an observable outcome but a manifestation of deeper experiential and interpretive processes.

From the coding analysis, four interrelated categories were identified: (1) physical comfort, (2) psychological and affective comfort, (3) behavioral impact, and (4) experiential transformation. These categories converge into a central theme: comfort as an embodied religious experience that drives congregational engagement.

1. Physical Comfort as the Foundational Dimension

The first dimension emerging from the analysis is physical comfort, which serves as the initial interface between congregants and the mosque environment. This dimension is reflected in the BKM's efforts to improve facilities and create a supportive physical setting for worship.



Figure 2. Word Cloud of Core Concepts in Comfort-Based Mosque Management

Figure 2 illustrates the dominant concepts emerging from qualitative coding, where *comfort* appears as the central theme, closely associated with *motivation*, *participation*, *experience*, and *emotional* dimensions. The prominence of these terms indicates that comfort functions as a core mechanism linking physical facilities with

psychological and spiritual experiences. Supporting words such as *safe*, *clean*, and *facilities* highlight the role of environmental quality in shaping perception. The figure confirms that comfort operates as a multidimensional construct influencing congregational engagement and sustained participation in worship activities.

This is evident in the statement of the key informant:

“First, we cover the deficiencies of the mosque, especially for comfort in accommodating. That is why here I apply ANS: Safe, Comfortable, and Cool for accommodating.”

This statement reflects an intentional managerial orientation toward improving environmental conditions, which, at the coding level, includes elements such as facility enhancement, environmental quality, and spatial comfort. These efforts are not incidental but represent a structured attempt to design a conducive worship environment (Putra et al., 2024; Hayati & Susatya, 2020).

Further evidence from congregants reinforces this finding:

“Now the ablution area is already good and comfortable... the carpet is clean and soft...”

These expressions indicate that physical improvements such as clean ablution areas and comfortable prayer spaces play a crucial role in shaping initial perceptions of the mosque (Al-Khalifa & Ghasrah, 2025; Hasbi & Hamat, 2020). The analysis suggests that physical comfort functions primarily as an enabling condition rather than an endpoint. It provides the foundation upon which deeper experiential processes are built.

2. Psychological and Affective Comfort as a Mediating Layer

Beyond the physical dimension, the findings reveal a second layer of experience, namely psychological and affective comfort. This dimension represents the internalization of environmental conditions into subjective experiences of safety, calmness, and emotional ease.

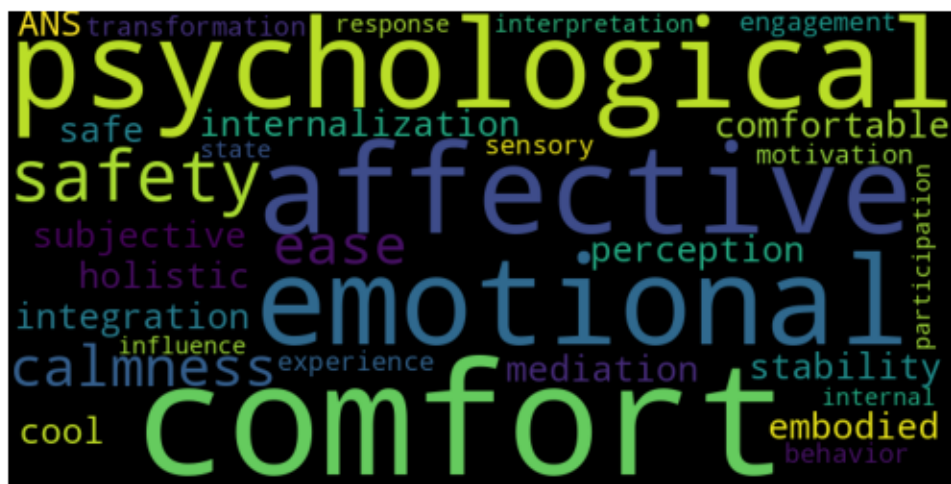


Figure 3. Psychological and Affective Dimensions of Comfort

Figure 3 the word cloud highlights *comfort*, *psychological*, and *emotional* as dominant concepts, indicating that comfort is primarily experienced as an internal and affective state. Supporting terms such as *safety*, *calmness*, *internalization*, and *perception* reinforce the idea that environmental conditions are translated into subjective experiences. This confirms that comfort operates as a mediating mechanism linking physical settings with behavioral outcomes through psychological and emotional processes.

This is reflected in the continuation of congregants' statements:

“...I feel more comfortable...”

At the coding level, this generates categories such as subjective comfort, emotional stability, and sense of safety. These elements indicate that comfort is not merely an external condition but becomes an internal state experienced by the individual (Balandier, 2020). The ANS concept (*Safe, Comfortable, and Cool*) further illustrates this multidimensional approach, as it integrates physical, psychological, and affective elements into a unified experiential framework (Rohde et al., 2020; Sharifkazemi et al., 2025). Thus, comfort evolves into a holistic condition that engages both the sensory and emotional dimensions of congregants.

This stage functions as a mediating layer. Physical improvements are translated into psychological experiences, and it is this subjective interpretation that ultimately influences behavior. Without this transformation, material enhancements alone would have limited impact on participation.

3. Behavioral Impact: The Emergence of Intrinsic Motivation

The third dimension identified in the analysis concerns the behavioral implications of comfort, particularly its role in shaping congregational attendance.



Figure 4. Behavioral Impacts of Comfort on Congregational Participation

As illustrated in **Figure 4**, the word cloud highlights *intrinsic motivation*, *participation*, and *behavior* as dominant concepts, reinforcing the interpretation that comfort functions as a catalyst for behavioral transformation. The prominence of terms such as *voluntary*, *engagement*, and *meaningful* further indicates a transition from compliance-based participation to experience-driven engagement.

This is clearly articulated in the following statement:

“...I feel more comfortable and want to attend congregational prayers more often.”

This statement reflects a shift from external obligation to internal motivation. The phrase “want to attend” indicates that participation is driven by intrinsic desire rather than normative pressure (Salamon et al., 2021; Wright et al., 2025). From the coding perspective, this generates categories such as increased motivation, voluntary attendance, and behavioral engagement. These findings suggest that comfort acts as a catalyst for behavioral change by activating internal motivational processes.

Importantly, this transformation highlights a critical shift in religious practice:

- from compliance-based participation
- to experience-driven engagement

Thus, comfort contributes not only to increased attendance but also to the quality of engagement, as participation becomes more intentional and meaningful.

4. Experiential Transformation and Meaning Construction

The final dimension identified in the analysis is experiential transformation, which represents the deepest level of meaning-making. At this stage, repeated experiences of comfort lead to a redefinition of the mosque itself.

The data indicate that:

- physical comfort leads to emotional comfort
- emotional comfort fosters spiritual receptivity
- spiritual receptivity transforms perception

As a result, the mosque is no longer perceived merely as a formal place of worship but as a space that provides meaningful and enjoyable spiritual experiences. This transformation is reflected in coding categories such as embodied experience, perceptual change, and spiritual meaning. The mosque becomes an experiential environment where individuals not only perform rituals but also develop emotional attachment and a sense of belonging (Al-Khalifa & Ghasrah, 2025; Sabouri & Barati, 2025). Comfort ultimately contributes to the reconstruction of the mosque as a lived religious space, where physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions are integrated.

The findings of this study reveal that congregational participation in Fajr prayer cannot be adequately explained through a single-dimensional perspective, such as religious obligation or facility provision alone. Instead, participation emerges as the outcome of a multi-layered experiential process, in which physical environment, psychological internalization, behavioral transformation, and meaning construction interact in a structured and sequential manner. This indicates that mosque management operates not merely at an operational level but at the level of experience design and meaning production (Amin & Muhammadah, 2024).

At the most fundamental level, the study confirms that physical comfort functions as the initial condition that enables engagement. Improvements in facilities such as cleanliness, ventilation, and spatial arrangement serve as the first point of contact between the mosque and its congregants. The analysis critically demonstrates that physical comfort does not directly lead to participation (O'Reilly et al., 2023). Rather, it operates as a necessary but insufficient condition, meaning that its effectiveness depends on subsequent processes of interpretation and internalization. This finding challenges reductionist assumptions in mosque management that equate infrastructure development with increased attendance.

Moving beyond the material dimension, the study highlights the crucial role of psychological and affective comfort as a mediating mechanism. Here, environmental conditions are translated into subjective experiences, such as feelings of safety, calmness, and emotional ease. This transformation represents a shift from objective reality to perceived reality, where the meaning of the environment is constructed through individual interpretation. In this sense, the mosque is not simply experienced as a physical space, but as an affective environment that shapes emotional states. The significance of this layer lies in its mediating function: without psychological internalization, physical improvements remain external and fail to influence behavior (Lin & Guo, 2024).

The analysis further demonstrates that this psychological layer activates a process of behavioral transformation, particularly through the emergence of intrinsic

motivation. The shift from obligation-based participation to voluntary engagement indicates that religious behavior is not solely governed by normative structures, but is significantly influenced by experiential satisfaction (Alsaad et al., 2021). Comfort, in this context, acts as a catalytic mechanism that converts passive compliance into active participation. This transformation is critical because it changes the nature of engagement from externally regulated behavior to internally driven action. As a result, attendance becomes more consistent, intentional, and meaningful.

More importantly, the findings reveal that repeated exposure to positive experiences leads to a deeper level of experiential transformation, where congregants begin to reconstruct their perception of the mosque itself. The mosque is no longer viewed merely as a site for ritual performance, but as a space that provides emotional fulfillment and spiritual resonance. This transformation aligns with the notion of embodied religious experience, in which religious practice is mediated through sensory, emotional, and cognitive processes simultaneously (Markum et al., 2024). At this stage, participation is no longer an isolated act, but part of a broader lived experience that integrates body, emotion, and belief.

From a processual perspective, the findings suggest a clear mechanism:

Physical Environment → Psychological Internalization → Intrinsic Motivation → Experiential Meaning → Sustained Participation

This sequence demonstrates that behavioral change in religious practice is not immediate but develops through a process of experiential accumulation. Each positive experience reinforces the next, gradually forming stable patterns of engagement. Over time, these patterns evolve into habitual practices, indicating that participation is sustained not by external enforcement, but by internally constructed meaning. Furthermore, the study highlights that the effectiveness of mosque management lies in its ability to synchronize these dimensions simultaneously. A failure at any stage whether inadequate facilities, lack of emotional comfort, or absence of meaningful experience can disrupt the entire process. This reinforces the idea that mosque management should be understood as a systemic and integrative practice, rather than a collection of isolated interventions.

In theoretical terms, this study contributes by positioning comfort not as a peripheral or supporting variable, but as a central mediating construct that connects environmental design with religious behavior. It expands existing perspectives by demonstrating that participation is shaped not only by structural or doctrinal factors but by the quality of lived experience within the religious space. The findings suggest that sustainable congregational participation is achieved when mosque management successfully transforms physical conditions into psychological experiences, psychological experiences into intrinsic motivation, and intrinsic motivation into meaningful and habitual engagement. This integrative process redefines the mosque as not merely a place of worship, but as a dynamic space for continuous social and spiritual transformation.

Conclusion

This study concludes that congregational participation in Fajr prayer at Raya Al Husein Mosque is not solely determined by religious obligation or facility availability, but by a multidimensional experiential process involving physical, psychological, and behavioral factors. Comfort emerges as a central construct, functioning both as a

foundational condition and a mediating mechanism. Physical improvements shape initial perceptions, but their impact depends on psychological internalization into feelings of safety, calmness, and emotional ease. This process subsequently fosters intrinsic motivation, shifting participation from obligation-based behavior to voluntary and meaningful engagement. Over time, repeated positive experiences reinforce consistent participation patterns. Furthermore, the mosque is reinterpreted as a lived religious space that provides emotional attachment and spiritual meaning. This study highlights that effective mosque management requires an integrative approach that connects physical environment, psychological experience, motivation, and meaning. Future research is encouraged to explore these dynamics across different contexts and examine innovative strategies to enhance congregational engagement.

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