

# AL-ITQĀN

JOURNAL OF ISLAMIC SCIENCES AND COMPARATIVE STUDIES

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**Special Issue**

**No. 3**

**December 2021**

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eISSN:26008432

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Published by:  
IIUM Press, International Islamic University Malaysia  
P.O. Box 10, 50728 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
Phone (+603) 6196-5014, Fax: (+603) 6196-6298  
Website: <http://iiumpress.iium.edu.my/bookshop>

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## **Important Notes**

The first six articles of this Special Issue were contributed by the Group of Researchers of professional bodies such as architects, planners, surveyors and others. Therefore, their writings differed from the normal social sciences literature. The rest of the articles were contributed by those who are specialized in Islamic Social Sciences area.

## Roles of Masjid's Management on Children in Masjid

Aniza Abu Bakar\*

Zur Atiqa Zulkifely\*\*

Nur Faradilla Roza Shazalee\*\*\*

Nur Syafiqah Md. Lani\*\*\*

### Abstract

Masjid is an important institution – established by the Prophet Muhammad SAW. It brings people together. This is the place where everyone would be at par – worshipping Allah SWT. Masjid is the place where people would want tranquility in order to be focused on their ibadah. However, the issues concerning children who are seen as a nuisance to some of the congregational members due to the loud sound they produce and active activities have been discussed in various platforms. Some are with the extreme opinion that children should not be in the masjid. Thus, this study is conducted at the Masjid Al Ridhuan (MAR), Hulu Kelang, to investigate the roles of management of a masjid in creating a harmonious environment where children can be encouraged and welcome to the masjid. In doing so, site inventory and analysis of the physical layout of the masjid was performed. Observation of the locations and activities of children at masjid was conducted. Semi-structured interviews with staff of MAR were carried out. The results indicate that MAR seems to be a children-friendly masjid with a great physical layout and great support from the management through their initiatives in facilitating children at this masjid.

**Keywords:** Children-friendly masjid, management of masjid, congregational members, children's activity in a masjid

### Introduction

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To administer masjid well, understanding its role first is very important [1]. Apart from the place for *'ibādah*<sup>1</sup> (worship), a masjid is also as a place for bonding *ukhuwah*<sup>2</sup> (brotherhood) among Muslim to create Islamic culture, to spread the *da'wah*<sup>3</sup> to educate them according to the Islamic teaching. There are several roles of masjid that established since the Prophet Muhammad SAW's days which are as a place for education, socialisation, worship, court, da'wah, political, and military centre. The administration and management system of the masjid in the context of Islam has a link with the faith towards Allah S.W.T. Every action taken is purposely done for the benefits of society [1]. One of the roles is to form the society based on great *'aqīdah*<sup>4</sup>, from their tender years. Hence, the masjid is a suitable place for the community to obtain relevant knowledge and to develop the right attitude so that they can live in harmony. The administration of masjid should be wise in making a decision, be patient in dealing with the community, dedicated to performing the given tasks, being just and others. Thus, the person in charge must be a wise person that understands religious, sociology, and community matter well to establish competent management of masjid. It can be said that a better society can be developed when the administration executes the role of masjid thoroughly, professionally, and systematically.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Seyyed Hossein Naṣr, "*'ibādah*" denotes "service", worshipping God entails serving Him. Its significance extends from simple acts of worship to loving and knowing God. Seyyed Hossein Naṣr, *The Heart of Islam* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers Inc, 2004) p.185.

<sup>2</sup> The word "*ukhuwah*" is derived from the Arabic word "أخ", that signifies "brother and friend". Both of them are God's creation and subject to God, therefore, all humans are brothers since they are descended from the same progenitor. The community is a brotherhood, and Muslims are brothers to one another. A thorough explanation of this word has been provided by Moh. Syarifudin and Nur Kholis in "Towards Rahmatan lil 'Alamin Economy (Analysis of Ukhuwah Islamiyah and Ashabiah for Economic Development in Medina)" *Iqtishoduna: Jurnal Ekonomi Islam*, no. 14 (April 2021): 60.

<sup>3</sup> Depending on the context, the term *da'wah* in the Qur'ān can be defined in a variety of interpretations. It is generally described as "calling people to the way of Allah". According to Abdul Salam, the name and meaning of *da'wah* include the fulfillment of our personal devotion and service to God, which has become the purpose of our life in this world. Abdul Salam Muhamad Shukri, "An Overview of the Concept, Meanings, Nature and Significance of Islamic Da'wah", *Al-Itqān*, no. 5 (February 2021): 61.

<sup>4</sup> According to Taha Jabir, *'aqīdah* or creed, may be perceived as a clear understanding of life and the world based on the concept of pure *tawhīd* (Allah's Oneness), in accordance with the *fiṭrah* (the pattern on which Allah has created humanity). Shaykh Taha Jabir Al-Alwani, *Issues in Contemporary Islamic Thought* (Herndon: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2005) pp. 71-72.

The existing guidelines concerning masjid and *surau/musolla*<sup>1</sup> which are the Malaysian Standard (MS) 2577:2014) – Architecture and Asset Management of Masjid – Code of Practice<sup>2</sup>, the Draft Garis Panduan Perancangan Masjid dan Surau<sup>3</sup> and Garis Panduan dan Peraturan Bagi Perancangan Bangunan – 2015<sup>4</sup> may have overlooked on the physical spaces needed by families with young children. Thus, most masjids might be without specific facilities for them to be in masjid comfortably, and it could affect the comfort of other congregational members. It is the nature of children to play. They may perceive masjid as suitable to place to play too. Thus, somehow the masjid’s management is also involved in “controlling” the children’s behaviour apart from the parents themselves. Masjid Al-Ridhuan, Hulu Kelang was selected as a case study to investigate the role of the masjid in encouraging children to come to the masjid. The methods applied are site inventory and analysis (on the physical attributes of MAR); observation (activities and locations of children at MAR), and semi-structured interview (the role of MAR’s management in facilitating children).

## Literature Review

Narrated by Abdullah bin Abi Qatada - *My father said, “The Prophet said, ‘When I stand for prayer, I intend to prolong it, but on hearing the cries of a child, I cut it short, as I dislike troubling the child’s mother’*”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In general, *surau* and *muşollā* are defined as a site of prayer, a location to carry out religious activities, and a space for debate and discussion about Islam that is supervised by the instructor. M. H. D. Natsir, Achmad Hufad, “The Function of Surau in Minangkabau Culture”, *Atlantis Press: Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research, volume 214 (2019): 122.*

<sup>2</sup> Malaysian Standard: Architecture and Asset Management of Masjid - Code of practice. MS 2577:2014. Department of Standards Malaysia, 2014 Nasih Ulwan, A. Tarbiyatul Aulad Fil Islam. Batu Caves, Selangor: PTS Publishing House, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Draf Garis Panduan Perancangan Masjid dan Surau, Jabatan Perancangan Bandar Dan Desa Semenanjung Malaysia, Kementerian Perumahan Dan Kerajaan Tempatan, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Garis Panduan dan Peraturan bagi Perancangan Bangunan oleh Jawatankuasa Kecil Piawai dan Kos bagi JPPN, Unit Perancang Ekonomi, Jabatan Perdana Menteri, Edisi 2015.

<sup>5</sup> This hadith is mentioned in Sahih al-Bukhari: 707, Book 10: Call to Prayers (Adhaan). SUNNAH.COM, *Chapter: Whoever Cuts Short As-Salat (The Prayer) on Hearing the Cries of a Child*, accessed December 7, 2021. <https://sunnah.com/bukhari:707>

Masjid is meant for all, including women and children. The hadith described that the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. welcomed the women and children in the masjid. The children are also entitled to be given space and opportunity to *'imārah*<sup>1</sup> the masjid in cultivating the *akhlāq*<sup>2</sup> and offering a good education for their futures. Since the era of the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W, masjid plays a significant role in the Islamic community. Planning for the Islamic community development was conducted at the masjid such as the community centre, and education centre, apart from being a place for worship.

### **Management of masjid**

The management of masjid can be perceived as the host while the congregational members as the guests. The host would carry their duties to maintain the masjid to be physically clean and comfortable physically and socially harmonious and to plan and conduct programs apart from the five times a day congregational prayers. The guests are also expected to reciprocate positively in order to make masjid a place to be. Both entities should support each other to enliven it so that the masjid can be truly functional for the community.

The administration and management system of a masjid in the context of Islam has a link with the faith towards Allah S.W.T because every action or decision making by the organisation of masjid was purposely done for the benefits of society. For example, accomplished all the duties as Allah's servant, do *Amal Ṣāliḥ*<sup>3</sup>, to build a civilisation which is blessed by Allah S.W.T. based on the great *aqidah* (to which something is done), to do a just in a community and to achieve the

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<sup>1</sup> In Qur'ān, Allah mentioned about *'imārah* of the mosques in Surah Taubah, verse 18: "The mosques of Allah are only to **be maintained** by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day and establish prayer and give zakāh and do not fear except Allah, for it is expected that those will be of the [rightly] guided.

<sup>2</sup> The word *akhlāq* is an Arabic term which derived from the word *khuluq*, which means "ethics". It is also can be defined as "moral code, morals, morality, values, rights and wrongs, principles, ideals, standards (of behavior), value system, virtues, and/or dictates of conscience". Mohammed Muneer'deen Olodo Al-Shafi'i, Mohd Safri Ali, Engku Ibrahim Engku Wok Zin & Abdulsoma Thoarlim, "Al-Akhlāq (Ethics) Perceptions in Islam: A Textual Interpretation through Imam Muhammad Al-Ghazali", *Research Institute for Islamic Product and Malay Civilization (INSPIRE)*, (October 2017): 435.

<sup>3</sup> Sayyed Hossein Naṣr defined "*'amal ṣāliḥ*" as "good works".

Sayyed Hossein Naṣr, *The Heart of Islam*, p.165.

success in here and hereafter. He also mentioned that one of the roles is to form the society based on great *aqidah*, which are supposed to build it since they were children. Thus, the masjid is a suitable place for the whole community to receive knowledge and to develop the right attitude so that they can live in harmony. Referring to the role of the masjid, the administration/management itself should have the character such as wise in making a decision, be patient in dealing with the community, dedicated on performing the given tasks, being just and others. These are the pre-condition to reach progress in management and administration of masjid institution. Therefore, the line-up of the masjid's management should be those wise people that understand Islam, with the aspiration to see the masjid is enlivened by all walks of life and would want to help support and develop a healthy society – among others.

Masjid is meant for all and Islam emphasises that prayer in congregation at masjid is obligatory for healthy men. It can be said that masjid is one of the best places for people to gather to perform prayers, to obtain knowledge and understanding of Islam, to get together, and so on. Prominent Muslim scholars – Dr Abdullah Nasih Ulwan mentioned that children could be taught in their home, school, and masjid. Hence, a masjid is also a great place for children. It can be understood that from the hadith narrated earlier that the Prophet SAW was trying to accommodate both the mother and child when he (SAW) heard the crying of that child while leading the prayer. This story also reflected that children were welcome to the masjid. Thus, a masjid is also the place for children.

Quite many comments and complaints can be read and heard from time to time on children at masjid – particularly on their active activities and noises that they are making, which seem to create uneasiness to others. Most of the complaints are from the congregational members. The masjid's management would be the one that these congregational members would turn to in order to get the solution to the issue. Hence, studying the role of the masjid's management in handling the children in masjid would shed some lights towards creating a comfortable and harmonious environment for the benefits of all.

## **Methodology of Research**

In investigating the role of the management of a masjid in encouraging and welcoming children to come to masjid, with Masjid Al Ridhuan Hulu Kelang as the case study site, the methods applied are site inventory and analysis on the physical attributes of MAR; observation on activities and locations of children at MAR, and semi-structured interview with the three staff of MAR on the role of the management in facilitating children. The site inventory and analysis were performed to check the existing of physical attributes of the masjid, such as the spatial arrangement of the masjid, transition area, and the external and internal circulation. The non-participant observation method was conducted during programs such as talks.

### Analysis of the physical attributes of Masjid Al Ridhuan

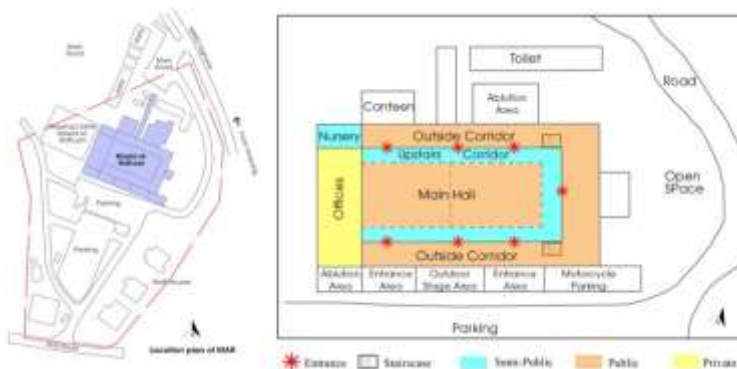


Fig. 1. The overall layout of Masjid Al-Ridhuan (left), and the detailed layout of the masjid (right) (Source: MAR-reproduced)

Referring to figure 1, MAR is surrounded by the Maahad Tahfiz, KAFA buildings, and staff houses. The staff houses consist of a house for the Imam, the security personnel, and a homestay. As for the internal spaces, they can be divided into three categories, which are semi-Public (accessible by the public at a particular time only) - nursery and corridor at the upper level. For the nursery, it is open during significant events and activities with the presence of many *Jamā'ah*, for instance, during Ramadhan. The upper corridor is open only during Friday prayers and Ramadhan.

1. Public Spaces (accessible by the jamaah at any time) - main prayer hall and its corridor.
2. Private Space (accessible only to the staff of MAR) - the office, meeting room, guest's room, sound system room, the office of MAR committee, and the office of *Nazir*.

### **Analysis of the activities and locations of children at Masjid Al Ridhuan**

Based on the observation, MAR can be seen as lively with children apart from adults that attend the masjid. The *tahfiz* centre and primary school nearby may be contributing to this scenario.

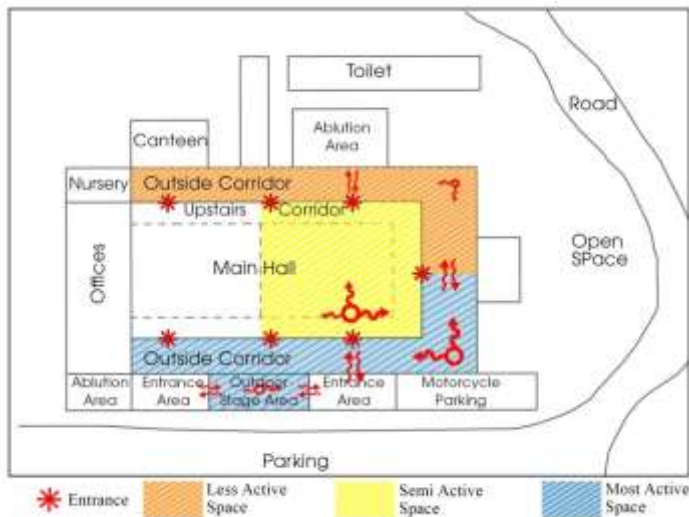


Fig. 2. The locations of children at MAR and categories of activities

Referring to figure 2, based on the observation, most of the children seem to prefer to play at the left-wing corridor and the back of the main prayer hall of MAR. The spaces can be categorised into three categories, which are the most active space, semi-active space, and the less active space, based on the activities carried out by the children there. The activities of the children differ from one space to another. The main prayer hall area is open and can be easily accessed that it becomes a semi-active play space for the children. Many children are comfortable to play actively at the left-wing of the corridor that is overlooking the

open parking as it is bright, and located at the main entrance. The right-wing corridor is also the access to the toilet and ablution area. It is semi-enclosed, not really visible and not directly accessible to the public. The children seem to be less active when staying within this area. The arrows in figure 2 indicate the number and the movement of the children - the larger the size of arrows, the larger the number of the children using the area. Age seems to influence the presence of children in certain areas. Parents would likely accompany babies and toddlers. Some of them are playing and staying in groups.

Images in figure 3 are examples of children's locations and activities. It is also interesting to see that the corridor is also used for children to learn to recite Al Quran monitored by their Ustaz (figure 3-d).



Fig.3. Children's activities - at the back of the main prayer hall (a – c), and at the corridor (d – e)

### **Analysis of the interview**

There are several components of the interview. The presentation of the analysis is reflecting these components.

#### **i. Activities conducted by MAR for children**

MAR planned and conducted several activities to address the needs of children and to attract them to come to the masjid. The following Table 1 is the programmes conducted. These programmes are further analysed to identify to which needs of the children they focused.

Table 1: Programmes for children by MAR

Activities	Children's needs			
	Intellectual	Spiritual	Physical	Social
Talks			-	
Motivational camp				
Self-development camp				
<i>Ibadah</i> camp			-	
Learning technique courses		-	-	
<i>Ramadhan</i> program			-	
Cleaning masjid area	-	-		
A special program such as <i>Nuzul Qur'an</i>			-	
Learning Qur'an			-	
Leadership camp		-		
<b>Total</b>	9	7	4	10

It can be seen that the programs highly address on the social, intellectual, and spiritual needs of the children. Specific activities that emphasis on the physical needs of children is relatively less as compared to the rest. However, during their mini carnival event, they conducted street soccer, explorace, *nasyeed*, as well as a colouring contest. MAR may want to re-look on the physical activity as children are known for being active in nature. Physical activities should be given due consideration, such as futsal, football, netball, and so on to attract them more. Perhaps these activities could be scheduled and carried out consistently.

Apart from the activities as mentioned above, the management of MAR took extra measures to encourage children to come to masjid by allowing them to be in the same as with other congregational members. This will create awareness that the children also have the rights to perform the prayer together with the congregational members. Goodies are given to those who are consistently coming to the masjid for Ramadhan programmes to appreciate and reward their effort. It is also interesting to know that MAR's management is being careful in selecting speakers that are friendlier to children for talks.

ii. Actions by MAR in handling complaints made on children (noise)

Based on the interview, it is found that received complaint on noise by children is not that alarming. One of the staff of MAR once mentioned that the people that come to MAR are generally from the middle to lower-income category. However, those from the high-income category also can be seen. These people seem to tolerate each other better and not that fussy.

The followings are the actions by MAR in handling complaints made regarding noise by children:

1. Reprimand children in a subtle way
2. Make an announcement to remind children to behave
3. MAR committee helps to monitor children during the Friday sermon.

The efforts of MAR in facilitating children should be applauded, and it has gone beyond the typical activities which can be typically seen in other masjids.

**Conclusion**

Based on the study conducted at the Masjid Al Ridhuan, Hulu Kelang, even though it has two levels (with the second level only open occasionally), most of the time it seems like a single storey masjid. The spaces within are close to one another. This help eases the movement of the congregational members as well as the children. It helps parents to monitor their children better too. The presence of children of various categories at the masjid indicates that they are welcome and they feel comfortable there. They can find their ways to amuse themselves if not joining the activities conducted for adults. The management of Masjid Al Ridhuan seems to put great effort in trying to encourage and facilitate children at their masjid. This can be seen from the programmes that they executed and the initiatives taken. Hence, it can be observed that for a children-friendly masjid, it takes the physical layout as well as the effort of the management in making it a success.

## Acknowledgement

This research is funded through the Research Initiative Grant Scheme of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), with the grant ID: RIGS17-151-0726. The researcher would like to thank the IIUM and the management of the Masjid Al-Ridhuan, Hulu Kelang for their great support and cooperation for this study.

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**December 2021**

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