

AL-ITQĀN

JOURNAL OF ISLAMIC SCIENCES AND COMPARATIVE STUDIES

Volume: 6

Issue No. 1

February 2022

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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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Youth and Mosque: Exploring the Views of Youth on Mosque Activities in Gombak, Selangor

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Abstract

This article analyses the views of youth on mosque activities in Gombak, Selangor. As the future leaders and movers of a nation, youth must be well grounded with knowledge. In any Muslim society, mosque is seen as an important centre of education. In order to ensure the future leaders to be well educated religiously mosque must be ready at all times to discharge the responsibility. This study aims to understand the views of youth on programmes offered by mosques in the Gombak district, Selangor, Malaysia. It is a qualitative study that utilizes the deductive and inductive methods derived from interviews, surveys, and literature studies. Data collected from respondents will be evaluated and analysed according to its appropriation. The result of this study indicates that there are several suggestions and comments from the respondent that could be look into and implemented by the mosque as well as local and state religious authorities to improve the mosque programmes and to make it more impactful to the Muslim youth particularly in Gombak, Selangor.

Keywords: Youth, mosque, mosque programmes, youth activities, Gombak.

Introduction

Mosque holds a special place in the heart of Muslims since the inception of Islam. It is also called *masjid*, which means “a place of prostration” in Arabic. It is not only a place for ‘*ibādah* (religious rituals), but also functions as community center in the Muslim society. It is also a symbol of the Oneness of Allah *syā’āirallah* (شعائر الله) as well as a place of belonging and identity for Muslims. As worshipping of Allah SWT is the core of Islamic teaching, it comes to no surprise that mosques play an essential role in the daily lives of all Muslims due to its *raison d’être* as Islam place of worship. The Kaabah, built by the Prophet Adam, was the first site of worship ever constructed in the history of the religion. The Qur’an says:

“Undoubtedly the first House for the worship of Allah ever built for mankind is the one at Bakka (Makkah), a blessed site and a guidance for all the worlds” (Āli ‘Imrān, 3:96)

The mosque symbolises the inauguration of a Muslim community; it is the core that shapes Muslim society’s distinction. It is a crucial component in the development of any Muslim community and the Islamic state. The mosque’s importance in the Prophet Muhammad’s life may be seen in the fact that one of his first acts after immigrating from Mecca and arriving in Madinah was to build a mosque.¹ To maintain the

* This research has been sponsored by IIUM Mosque Flagship Grant in which consist of researchers as mentioned above.

continuous functionality of the mosque is one of the characteristics of a good Muslim, as the Qur'ān says:

“The only ones who should tend God’s places of worship (mosques) are those who believe in God and the Last Day, who keep up the prayer, who pay the prescribed alms, and who fear no one but God: such people may hope to be among the rightly guided” (Al-Tawbah, 9:18)

This verse highlights that only those who possess characteristics of pious Muslims should be entrusted to manage the mosque. Indeed, the verse is providing important guiding principles to Muslim societies in selecting the most qualified individual to helm the roles of mosque administrators.

Youth and Mosque

Youth and their relationship with the mosque institution also are given important focus in Islam. The glory of Islamic civilization will not be achieved without the support of youths who are characterized by their strong obedience to Allah SWT and upstanding morality in their dealing with people. This situation can be manifested through the development of “God-centric” youth through the mosque institution. The formation of spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical of a Muslim youth must be done concurrently and founded on the teaching of Islam guided with the revealed text. The Prophet PBUH said:

“There are seven whom Allah will shade in His Shade on the Day when there is no shade except His Shade: a just ruler; a youth who grew up in the worship of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic; a man whose heart is attached to the mosques; two men who love each other for Allah’s sake, meeting for that and parting upon that; a man who is called by a woman of beauty and position [for illegal intercourse], but he says: ‘I fear Allah,’ a man who gives in charity and hides it, such that his left hand does not know what his right hand gives in charity; and a man who remembered Allah in private, and so his eyes shed tears.”¹

This hadith mentions several characteristics of people that will get protection from the difficulty and discomfort on the day of judgement. Among them are youths who grew up in the worship of Allah and men

¹ Zakariyya Mohamed Abdel-Hady, *The Masjid, Yesterday and Today* (Qatar: Center for International and Regional Studies, Georgetown University, 2010), <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/122833/AbdelHadyBriefCompleteFile.pdf>.

¹ Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī* (Beirut: Dār Ṭawq al-Najā, 2001), No: 660.

whose heart are attached to the mosques. Inevitably, youths who grew up in the worship of Allah SWT will always be attached to the mosque, as the mosque is a place where their faith will increase, and their souls will be calm. The mosque is also a place of meeting for pious people, and from where a pious youth to have his circle of friends thus in relation to another characteristic from the hadith: “two men who love each other for Allah’s sake, meeting for that and parting upon that.”¹ All attributes mention in the hadith are related to one another and characterized an ideal Muslim quality.

History has proven that the Prophet PBUH has succeeded in producing companions who can inherit and continue his legacy after the Prophet PBUH himself passed away.² These companions had given their all to ensure that Islam is able to survive until the end of time. They traveled and preached many people from the far east and the far west into Islam. These early companions of the Prophet PBUH who embraced Islam were among the youths who had a high fighting spirit and perseverance. These youths sacrificed their age, wealth, and strength alongside the Prophet PBUH for the sake of Islamic *da’wah*. The Muslim youths of today need to take inspiration from them and improving themselves through the teachings of the Qur’an and the Prophetic traditions. They need to be exposed to true Islamic teaching and *taşawwur* (worldview) to protect themselves against this rapid and challenging current modernization. The mosque institution plays a crucial part in this mission, particularly in coordinating and shaping critical and creative programmes for the youth. Thus, this research explores the views of Muslim youth on mosque study curriculum in Gombak, Selangor. Responses from them could be used to evaluate and improve the existing initiatives undertaken by mosque including its study curriculum.

Methodology

The research’s primary purpose is to explore the views of youth on mosque study curriculum, especially in the Gombak district. Thus, surveys were conducted among youth in selected mosques located in Gombak between April to May 2019. The surveys were based on three research objectives, which are:

No.	Research Objectives
1.	To understand the ideas and opinions of the youth on the mosque study curriculum
2.	To explore favourable and unfavourable youth perceptions towards the mosque study curriculum.

¹ Al-Bukhāri, No: 660.

² Bani Hidayat Mohd. Shafie et al., “Masjid Menjana Pembentukan Belia Rabbani,” *Malaysian Journal of Youth Studies* 5 (2011): 128.

3.	To understand the solutions and suggestions that can enhance youth interest in the mosque study curriculum.
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The primary data collected consists of interviews with youths at selected mosques in Gombak, Selangor. A set of preliminary questions based on those research objectives was asked to the youth, followed by an open-to-all sharing session. The interview includes discussing issues, problems, and solutions of mosque programmes from the perspective of the youth. The interview was later expanded based on the importance of the issues raised by the respondents. The youth was given the freedom to voice out their opinions and understanding.

Results

The results are divided according to the research objectives. The first research objective output is as follows:

Research Objective 1:

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 1: TO UNDERSTAND THE IDEAS AND OPINIONS OF THE YOUTH ON THE MOSQUE CURRICULUM.	
THEMES	EXPLANATION
1. Mosque as a holy place for Muslim	The mosque is a place to learn <i>al-Qur'ān</i> , worship Allah, and learn other classical Islamic texts (<i>kitāb</i>).
2. Mosque is an informal religious educational institution	Increase religious knowledge

Table 1

Youth have perceived two leading image brandings for the mosque: a sacred place for Muslim and as a place for informal religious educational institution. These two image brandings are related to one another as it is connected with the role of the mosque as a place to increase religious knowledge. Some of the activities might include learning the Qur'ān and the other classical Islamic texts (*kitāb*). The image of the mosque as a holy place for Muslims might include its specific roles as a place for worship. Allah SWT has created humankind to worship Him; the Qur'ān says:

“We have not created jinns and mankind except to worship Me” (Al-Dhāriyāt, 56:51)

The meaning of worship is vast. Muslim scholars have included all good actions that are done sincerely for the sake of Allah SWT are parts

of worshipping Allah SWT. It includes the act of seeking and disseminating knowledge in the mosque. The function of the mosque as a place for knowledge dissemination has started since the time of Prophet PBUH. The mosque was a place of learning where various educational activities were held.

In Islamic history, mosque was the first structured educational place for men, women, and children.¹ The Prophet expounded and taught the words of Qur'ān there. The Prophet would sit in the mosque, surrounded by a halaqa, instructing his hearers, who would recite Qur'ānic passages and ḥadīth three times until they understood them.² The mosque in the past Islamic civilization served as a focal point for intellectual activity. Writers and researchers presented the findings of their research to audiences of young people, other scholars, and curious laymen in mosques, and because the intellectual activity's cultural foundation was shared by all, anybody and everyone could participate in the conversation.³

Moving on with the second research objective. It is divided into two parts. The first part is on "Youth Unfavourable Perception on the Mosque," while the is "Youth favourable Perception on the Mosque." The outcome for the first part on "Youth Unfavourable Perception on the Mosque," is as follows:

Research Objective 2 (First Part):

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 2: TO EXPLORE FAVOURABLE AND UNFAVOURABLE YOUTH PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS THE MOSQUE CURRICULUM	
First Part: Youth Unfavourable Perception on the Mosque	
THEMES	EXPLANATION
1. Behavioural	Laziness
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Depreciating the roles mosques <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Playing games while the <i>khātib</i> delivering sermon Sleeping while the <i>khatib</i> delivering sermon Misconception on the roles of the mosque <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mosque as a place to run religious program alone. The exclusiveness of topic - religion-related only
2. Family	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Family commitment
3. Socio-	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Peer-influence

¹ Abd al-Raḥmān Al-Naḥlāwī, *Uṣūl Al-Tarbīyah Al-Islāmīyah Wa Asālībuhā Fī Al-Bayt Wa Al-Madrasah Wa Al-Mujtam'*, 3rd ed. (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 2005), 1302.

² Muhammad ibn Ismail Al-Bukhari, "'Baab 8, 30, 35, 42' in 'Madrasa,'" in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. J. Pederson, vol. 5 (Leiden: Brill, 1986).

³ Ziauddin Sardar and Merryl Wyn Davies, *Distorted Imagination* (London: Grey Seal Books, 1990), p. 97.

Psychological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Substance abuse ● Clubbing
4. Time	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Job commitments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not able to join organized programmes. 2. Study commitments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Packed with homework.
5. Environmental	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Location of the mosque <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Far from home.
6. Mosque Operational Factors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of fund <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Unconducive facilities ● To run programmes - lack of manpower ● Unfriendly mosque's committees ● Not interesting /catchy sermon/preach 2. Dissemination of political agenda/propaganda 3. Not interesting/boring speaker 4. Exclusive entrance/participation to Muslims alone 5. Unsuitable programme conducted (E.g.: Car Showcase) 6. Inconvenient operating hours Particularly limited, even for the outside compound.

Table 3

The first part of the second objective narrates the youth's unfavorable perspective towards the mosque. The main focus of this part is to understand why the youth did not go to the mosque. This study found out six different themes from the output and discover that the majority of the reasons have come from the youth themselves rather than the issues in the mosque institution. Nonetheless, to a certain degree, the mosque institution could help to bring out the awareness and cater or facilitate this issue for the benefit of the youth. For example, the first theme indicated that the youth did not go to the mosque due to their laziness. Some youths also showed depreciating and disrespectful attitudes towards the mosque, such as playing games and sleeping during Juma'at prayer while the *khāṭib* was delivering his sermon. Inattentiveness and negligence on things related to religion showcased issues with one's faith as indicated the Qur'ān which says:

"Surely the hypocrites try to deceive Allah, whereas, in fact, He has reverted their deception to them; when they stand up for Salah they stand reluctantly, merely to be seen by people and do not remember Allah but a little" (Al-Nisā', 4:142)

Some youths also understand mosques as place with limited functions to religious programmes only. They limit the roles of mosque exclusively to

religious purposes and activities. Yet, this is not true at all. During the time of the Prophet PBUH and his companions, mosque institutions played various roles. These diverse roles undertaken by mosque institutions can also be seen even at the time of the Prophet PBUH and his companions. At the time of the Prophet PBUH, the Prophet mosque *Masjid al-Nabawī* served as a meeting place, a learning centre, a shelter for the *ṣuffah*, a meeting place for foreign diplomats, a place to treat the wounded in battle, a place for sporting competition, a place to discuss administration, a place to collect for the poor, a place to judge a dispute, and so on.¹

Some youths justify their actions of not going to the mosque due to family commitment. They need to give commitment and perform their responsibility to their family. Perhaps, there are sick elders or parents in their houses that require round the clock care and service. Hence, they are required to be available in their house at all times. The mosque's responsibility is to provide some help to these kinds of youth and reach them in some other possible medium. Several youths deemed that there are also socio-psychological factors that affected their presence in the mosque. For example, several youths in the area have been negatively influenced by their peers, took harmful substances, and lived a destructive and sinful lifestyle. The Prophet PBUH reminds us to look for a good friend; he said:

*“The example of a good companion (who sits with you) in comparison with a bad one, is like that of the musk seller and the blacksmith's bellows (or furnace); from the first, you would either buy musk or enjoy its good smell while the bellows would either burn your clothes or your house, or you get a bad nasty smell thereof.”*²

Friends mirror one another. A person's friends reflect who that person is. That is why youth needs to make sure that they have a good circle of friends, and the best way to find a good circle of friends is to find them at the mosque. Some other youths complain that they faced time constraints that affected their availability in the mosque. Some also complained that they are staying far from the mosque. For example, they are occupied with jobs and study commitments that obstruct them from regularly going to the mosque. They prefer to get back to the online religious lectures rather than spending time going to the mosque. In Islam, to spend time well for knowledge and working is also a part of *ibādah*. Allah SWT have reminded us of the importance of managing time in Sūrah al-‘Aṣr.

¹ Abdel-Hady, *The Masjid, Yesterday and Today*.

² Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*, No: 2101.

“By the time through the ages! Surely mankind is in loss, except those who believe and do good deeds; exhort one another to the truth and exhort one another to patience.” (Al-‘Aṣr, 103:1-3)

Several youths commented on the mosque's operational issues that contributed to the mosque becoming unattractive for the youth. For example, some mosques have uncondusive facilities and lack human resources due to lacking funds. Some mosque committees are not friendly and limit the mosque operating hours to the inconvenience of the mosque goers. The invited teachers also failed to attract the youth due to their bland and uninteresting presentation. There are also several cases of them promoting their political inclination backed by the mosque committees. Some mosques are not friendly to non-Muslim, and they restricted access to mosques exclusively for Muslims. Some mosques committees also organized unsuitable programmes on the mosque compounds such as car-showcase and so on.

On the operational issue, the mosque management must be managed systematically and in an orderly manner. The mosque management must become a role model to the community on their organizational and administration skills, being trustworthy, diligent, honest, steadfast, and transparent. This is important because the good governance of the mosque institution will improve the overall image of the sanctity of Islam. The mosque committees and the invited teachers also need to employ wisdom and good strategies to attract people to the mosque. They need to engage with “*ḥikmah*”, an act that is suggested in the Qur’ān:

“[Prophet], call [people] to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good teaching.” (Al-Naḥl, 16:125)

The Prophet PBUH personally employed this act of tactfulness, or “*ḥikmah*,” in his *da’wah*. The Prophet PBUH invited people to his lectures with “food” and “meals” in the early days of Islam.¹ This activity has the potential to soothe the hearts of the audience and draw them to Islam. In the case of inviting non-Muslims and promoting political agenda, the Qur’ān says:

“O mankind! We created you from a single pair of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes that you might get to know one another. Surely the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is he who is the most righteous. Allah is All-Knowledgeable, All-Aware.” (Al-Hujurāt, 49:13)

¹ Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, *Ḥayāt Muḥammad* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1966), p. 158.

The mosque should be a sanctuary of peace and harmony that symbolises Muslims' unity, not a place where division and hatred are spread. It is a place for Muslims to put away their indifference for Allah SWT's sake and for the non-Muslim to know better of Islam. It needs to be neutral and tends to people's needs. It needs to be the first to disseminate *rahmah* and harmony in the community. Many issues and hate speech started because people do not know each other well; thus, the mosque should take the role to mediate *ta'aruf* among the people regardless of their culture, religion, and political background.

In relation with the first part, the output for the second part, "Youth favourable Perception on the Mosque," is as follows:

Research Objective 2 (Second Part):

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 2: TO EXPLORE FAVOURABLE AND UNFAVOURABLE YOUTH PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS THE MOSQUE CURRICULUM	
Second Part: Youth Favourable Perception on the Mosque	
THEMES	EXPLANATION
1. An Informal Educational Institution	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Mosque as a place to learn or increase knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marriage courses. Knowledge Dissemination Workshops. The youths prefer to come to the mosque to listen to talk in 'leisure style.' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Religious talk – Instill inner peace.
2. Centre of Community Engagement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Mosque as a place to build up social networking engagement with the community; through activities such as convoy, workshops, family day and carnivals. The youths prefer to come to the mosque to meet and make new friends.

Table 4

The youth's favorable perspective towards the mosque in Gombak can be divided into two themes. The first one is on the role of the mosque as an informal educational institution, and the second would be on the mosque's role as the center of community engagement. The youths perceived mosque as a good informal educational institution that provides knowledge on religious matters such as marriage courses and other knowledge dissemination workshops. They are comfortable with the casual mode of presentation conducted in the mosque, where they can

come and hear the religious talk in a leisure and relaxed manner. This presentation method helps instill inner peace in them and allows them to understand the religion better.

The role of the mosque as an informal educational institution begins in the early days of Islam. Many more mosques have been built throughout Islamic history since inception of the first mosque, the *Qubā'* Mosque which was built in the first year of Hijrah. Most of these mosques served with identical functions: a place of prayer that also serves as a centre for Islamic education.¹ Nonetheless, until particular programmes like the *Ṣuffah* or *Kuttāb* were incorporated into the mosque institution, the educational system was primarily informal.² The *al-Khulafā' al-Rāshidūn* established the *Ṣuffah* and *Kuttāb* systems to be more formal than they were previously. Its curriculum focus on the teachings of the Qur'ān, fundamentals of Islam, and other fields as well.³ Several mosques have been established to play a more prominent educational role during the following caliphates, such as the *Qayrawān* mosque in Tunisia, the *Qarawiyyīn* mosque in Morocco, and the al-Azhar mosque in Egypt.⁴ Along with various other educational institutions developed later, such as the madrasah and the *Bayt al-Ḥikmah*, these mosques became crucial to the diffusion of knowledge in the Muslim world.

These mosques do not limit their roles as worshipping places and educational institutions yet function as a centre of community engagement. The youth favours the mosque as a place to build up social networking engagement with the community; through various activities such as convoy, workshops, family day, and carnivals. They like to come to the mosque to meet and make new friends. The mosque in the past also functioned as a social and community place as one of its distinguishing features. The mosque connects all people, both men, and women, young and elderly. The mosque serves as a hub for political, social, cultural, and religious information. Aside from the *'adhān*, or call to prayer, the mosque is where all major news is announced.⁵ Likewise, the community also helped to

¹ S. M. Imamuddin, "Mosque as a Centre of Education in The Early Middle Ages," *Islamic Studies* 23, no. 3 (1984): 160, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20847268>.

² Zulkiflee Haron, Mohd Nasir Ripin, and Farahwahida Mohd Yusof, "Masjid Sebagai Institusi Pendidikan: Sorotan Abad Ke-3 Hingga Ke-5 Hijrah," in *Fungsi Dan Peranan Masjid Dalam Masyarakat Hadhari*, ed. Mohd Ismail Mustari and Kamarul Azmi Jasmi (Skudai, Johor Bahru: Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, 2008), p. 4.

³ Ahmad Syalaby, *Sejarah Pendidikan Islam* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang Press, 1976), pp. 37–45.

⁴ Haron, Ripin, and Yusof, "Masjid Sebagai Institusi Pendidikan: Sorotan Abad Ke-3 Hingga Ke-5 Hijrah," 8; 'Abd al-Hadi al-Tāzi, *Jāmi' Al-Qarawiyyīn*, vol. 1 (Rabat: Dār al-Nashar al-Ma'rifah, 2000), pp. 111–13.

⁵ Abdel-Hady, *The Masjid, Yesterday and Today*, p. 9.

improve the mosque. For example, the *Qarawiyyīn* mosque is noted for having a two-way, integrated interaction with the people of Fez. The people of Fez will donate money and provide valuable input to the mosque. On the other hand, the mosque will organise teaching programmes and other activities that will benefit the local community. The mosque serves as a learning centre and an endowment institution in addition to its primary roles as a place of worship. Its endowment has been used to promote mosque activities, establish a public library, build a psychiatric hospital, build homeless shelters, provide food for animals and their care, provide interest-free loans, and support the country's defense against invaders.¹

In Islam, once a mosque is constructed, it belongs to no one. Its owner is God; hence, the phrase “house of God” is figurative and legally correct in Islamic law. There is no such thing as mosque membership; every Muslim globally has the same right to attend all functions and utilise all mosque facilities. It is a practical effect of the mosque's status as a *waqf*—a perpetual trust over which the donor renounced all authority by entrusting it to God.

Research Objective 3: To understand the solutions and suggestions that can enhance youth interest in the mosque curriculum.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 3: TO UNDERSTAND THE SOLUTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS THAT CAN ENHANCE YOUTH INTEREST IN THE MOSQUE CURRICULUM AND ACTIVITIES	
THEMES	EXPLANATION
1. Provide Conducive Facilities in Mosque	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cafeteria located near to the mosque 2. Strategic ablution area 3. Barbershop 4. Bus station 5. Sports area 6. Children playground 7. Good security, parking space, cyber cafe, WIFI, canteen, rest area, conducive class, and good qualified teacher. 8. Put air conditioner 9. Build up the mosque near to the community
2. Avoid Any Related to Political Agenda Activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The speaker or programme organized should not include any political agenda in its activities.
3. Organise Beneficial Programmes for All	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organise interesting programmes like sports day, <i>gotong royong</i>, youth carnival, e-games

¹ ‘Abd al-Hadi al-Tāzi, *Jāmi‘ Al-Qarawiyyīn*, 1: pp. 454–58.

Ages	competition, <i>Qurān</i> , KAFA and fiqh classes.
4. Use Media Social as A Platform to Attract People to Go to The Mosque	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Utilising social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, Telegram, and even TikTok to attract and spread the messages and information on mosque activities. 2. Using the warm approaches such as casual way and subtle approach to attract the interest of people from all ages.
5. The Role of Parents to Nurture the Youth	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Some of the respondents highlight the role of parents to attract youths go to attend mosque activities.
6. Appoint Mosque Committees Who Live Near to the Mosque	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To ease communication and mosque management.
7. Conduct More Activities with Non – Muslim	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To express or promote the beauty of Islam. 2. To establish a friendly relationship between Muslim and non–Muslim.
8. Good Funding Resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To keep the good maintenance of the available facilities. 2. To pay the allowance to the qualified teachers. 3. To fund suitable programmes for all ages.
9. Avoid Conducting Unsuitable Program	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Some of the respondents highlighted programmes. such as car showcase is not suitable to be conducted at the mosque.

Table 5

The youths in Gombak provided several solutions and suggestions that can enhance youth interest in the mosque curriculum and activities. Among those are to provide conducive facilities in the mosque, avoid any political agenda activities, hold beneficial programmes for all ages, use media social as platform to attract people to go to the mosque, the role of parents to nurture the youth, appoint mosque committees who live near to the mosque areas, conduct more activities with non–Muslim, good funding resources and to avoid conducting unsuitable program.

There are at least nine items that could make the facilities conducive, according to the youths. Among them are to build a cafeteria, barbershop, bus station, playground, and several other facilities located at the mosque compound. All of these facilities could attract the youths coming to the mosque. Having a resource center in the mosque could help students, teenagers, and the local community to make references to various religious and scientific materials. The government too should provide adequate financial allocation for the development of multi-

functional mosques in future. In every program conducted, the organizers need to make obligatory prayers as the main agenda because it is conducted in the mosque compound.¹

The mosque also needs to be a sacred place and treated with 'adāb and respect. It is a place for all Muslims to express their togetherness and not a place for discord. It is where they perform congregational prayers that symbolize oneness as servants of Allah SWT and put away differences in their political, social, cultural, and races. Qur'ān says:

"Places of worship (mosques) are for God alone, so do not pray to anyone other than God." (Al-Jin, 72:18)

This verse asserts the mosque's status and Allah SWT's total ownership of it.² Advocating sectarianism and favoritism in mosques for the benefit of one's political party, heretical group, or deviant philosophy should never be tolerated. There have been multiple instances of the "invisible hand" involving a political party and deviant ideas attempting to manipulate and transmit division inside the community, and the only defense that could protect the harmony within the society would be the mosque institution. It is the mosque's role to serve as a role model for the community and safeguard the institution against division and discord. They must be wary of appointing teachers with political or deviant agendas who may promote hate speech and identity politics. The duty of the authorities such as the mosque committee members in monitoring irresponsible teachers and contents and allowing only qualified teachers serving the mosque community - as stated by al-Imām al-Ghazālī RA - is also an element of promoting virtues and forbidding vices (*al-amru bi al-ma'rūf wa al-nahyu 'an al-munkar*).³ Mosque goers are expected to feel content and devotion, and able to remove their feeling of sorrow and emptiness when they are within the compound of the mosque. People are urged to connect with one another out of love, equality, cooperation, and a desire to please Allah. Each mosque goers strives to overcome the selfishness that separates him or her from others and achieve a level of social peace. The Qur'ān says:

"Certainly, the Masjid founded on piety from the very first day is more deserving that you should stand to offer Salah in it; for in it

¹ Mohd. Shafie et al., "Masjid Menjana Pembentukan Belia Rabbani," p. 137.

² Wahbah Al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Tafsīr Al-Munīr Fī Al-'Aqīdah Wa Al-Sharī'ah Wa Al-Manhaj*, vol. 29 (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'āshir, 1997), p. 179.

³ Abū Hāmid Muḥammad bin Muḥammad Al-Ghazālī, *Ayyuha Al-Walad*, ed. al-Lajnah al-'Ilmiyyah bi Markaz Dār al-Minhāj li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Taḥqīq Al-'Ilmī (Jeddah: Dār al-Minhāj, 2013), p. 71.

there are men who love to be purified; and Allah loves those who purify themselves.” (Al-Tawbah, 9:108)

The mosque is urged to provide beneficial programmes for all participants with different age background. Activities such as sports, recreation, entertainment, extreme activities that are appropriate and not contrary to Islamic teachings should be allowed in the mosques compound. These activities could help to attract youths in getting closer with the mosque institution. The mosque can organize youth activities in collaboration with other youth associations, organizations, and groups and infuse Islamic contents in their activities. They must take into account the aspects of customs, culture, and elements of *ḥikmah*. The youths who were given Islamic teaching in an indirect and fun manner can easily be pulled to join other Islamic programs later on.¹

Introducing new activities by the mosque to accommodate the needs of the local community is nothing new in Islam. The “*al-Karāsī al-‘Ilmiyyah*” program in *al-Qarawiyyīn* mosque encompass the teaching of poetry, ethics, language, philosophy, mathematic, history, navigation, geography, astronomy, governance, sports, engineering, medicine, and pharmaceutical as well. These hundreds of years of ongoing educational programmes are not just limited to areas in Islamic studies.² Youth, a significant age group in every society, need to bond closeness to the mosque institution. Mosques must also accommodate and care for their needs and provide suitable activities for them on mosque grounds. Mosques may play a critical role in combating extremism and terrorism by educating them, occupying their free time with productive activities, listening to and addressing their concerns, caring for their needs, and providing qualified Imams to answers to their questions.³ Mosques must attract, or at least welcome, youth and children and encourage them to participate, study, and enjoy the mosque’s surroundings and teach them proper social manners and respect for their elders. There is no better example than the Prophet PBUH, who allowed youngsters to participate in mosque events. While he conducted prayers, his grandkids played

¹ Mohd. Shafie et al., “Masjid Menjana Pembentukan Belia Rabbani,” p. 12.

² ‘Abd al-Hadi al-Tāzī, *Jāmi‘ Al-Qarawiyyīn*, 1: pp. 127–28.

³ Abdel-Hady, *The Masjid, Yesterday and Today*, p. 20.

near him, and he tried not to disturb them. He would, on the other hand, prolong his prayer so that they may enjoy their game.¹

Mosque also needs to be creative in attracting the youth by utilizing social media. Face-to-face lectures, debates, conversations, and sermons are the traditional methods of *da'wah* communication to convey Islamic messages, information, skills, and teachings to the society which are mostly at the moment insufficient to attract them.² The advent of social media has altered the style of *da'wah* and Islamic education in the modern era. A channel, media/medium, means, or tool used in mass communication, which is communication directed at a large group of people, is known as mass media (channel of mass communication).³ Almost everyone in the world has access to new media, and 4.2 billion people use social media.⁴ The mosque institution needs to be technology savvy, delve into the social media medium, and utilize it to increase the mosque influence further. They could utilize Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, Telegram, and even TikTok to attract and spread the friendly message and program that the particular mosque will hold. Utilizing mass media are cheaper than following the traditional way.⁵ Social media such as Facebook and YouTube could also generate consistent revenue for the mosque through advertisement and donation, particularly in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. Social media could promote the mosque branding through friendly utilization and a subtle approach with its audience.

According to some of the respondents, parents play an essential role in encouraging youth to attend mosque activities. On this issue, the Prophet PBUH mentions the importance of parents in moulding their children: "Each child is born in a state of "*Fitrah*," then his parents make

¹ Abdel-Hady, p. 20.

² Aris Saefulloh, "Cyberdakwah Sebagai Media Alternatif Dakwah," *ISLAMICA: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 7, no. 1 (2012): p. 141.

³ Abdul Manaf, "Peran Media Dakwah Dalam Pembangunan Manusia," *Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah* 38, no. 2 (2018): p. 196.

⁴ H. Tankovska, "Social Media - Statistics & Facts," Statista, 2021, <https://www.statista.com/topics/1164/social-networks/>.

⁵ Fauziah Nasution, "Radio Komunitas Sebagai Media Dakwah," *HIKMAH: Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah Dan Komunikasi Islam* 6, no. 1 (2012): 43–55; Fitri Yanti, "Membangun Radio Komunitas Sebagai Media Dakwah," *Bina' Al-Ummah Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah Dan Pengembangan Komunitas* 7, no. 2 (2012): pp. 1–14.

him a Jew, Christian or a Zoroastrian.”¹ Parents are the first teacher for the children, the parent-teacher needs to be able to influence their children’s spirituality aspects (*al-ta’thīr al-rūḥī*) as what has been known in Sufism and to become the role-model for their children in practising the religion.² The parents need to enhance themselves with parenting and religious knowledge so that they could guide their family members in the best way possible. They need to be equipped with the understanding of the importance of religion and later spread that awareness to their family members. The respondents also suggested that the mosque to appoint the committee members among those who are living near the mosque locality. This could help ease communication with the surrounding community and improve the mosque’s management as they can immediately go to the mosque for emergencies.

The respondents also suggested that the mosque should conduct more activities with non-Muslim. It is also approved by the *Shāfi’ī* madhhab which is adopted by Muslims in Malaysia that non-Muslims are permitted to enter mosques with the approval of the Muslim community. Imam al-Rāfi’ī and al-Nawawī accepted this judgment.³ A narration from Sa’īd bin al-Musayyab informs us that Abū Sufyān attended the Prophet’s mosque in Madinah while still a non-believer, which is one of the strong evidence for this ruling.⁴ Living in the same community as the Muslims, the non-Muslim can be exposed to the beauty of Islam through programmes conducted by the mosque. It can also improve the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslim in the area. It is a part of *da’wah* that the mosque can take charge in the local community.

The respondents proposed that mosques require good funding resources, mainly to keep good maintenance of the facilities, pay the allowance for the teachers, and fund the programmes for the community. The mosque needs to be more creative in seeking out sponsorship, and among the means that can be utilized is through social media. They could also arrange programmes that can help increase the mosque’s funding, such as organizing annual activities, including organizing mosque carnivals, continuous class (*dawrah*), and sales booth. The

¹ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*, No: 2659a.

² ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd, *Al-Madrasah Al-Shādhiliyyah Al-Ḥadīthah Wa Imāmuhā Abū Al-Ḥasan Al-Shādhilī* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīthah, 1969), p. 338.

³ Abū ‘Abd Allāh Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad bin ‘Abd Allāh Al-Zarkashī, *I’lām Al-Sājid Bi Ahkām Al-Masājīd*, Ed.: *Abū Al-Wafā Muṣṭafā Al-Marāghī*, ed. Abū al-Wafā Muṣṭafā Al-Marāghī (Cairo: al-Majlis al-A’lā li al-Shu’ūn al-Islāmiyyah, 1996), p. 318.

⁴ Wahbah Al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Fiqh Al-Islāmī Wa ‘Adillatuhu*, vol. 4 (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu‘āṣir, 2004), p. 2690.

combination of public donation, government funding, and self-funding initiative could help the mosque to secure its funding resources and sustainability for the long term. Some respondents disagree for the mosque to organize showcase programmes such as “car showcase” as this might degrade the stature of the mosque as a sacred place. Nonetheless, these activities still can be done if the mosque committee could propose some guidelines that the organizers should follow to preserve their *'adāb* and conduct in the mosque compound. The mosque community implements these additional regulations and guidelines to ensure the mosque's seamless operation and administration. The mosque's rights include enacting regulations and guidelines for the greater good (*maṣlaḥah*) is considered a part of encouraging virtues and prohibiting vices (*al-amru bi al-ma'rūf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar*).¹

Conclusion

Indeed, Muslim youths are the future of the ummah. The youth's presence and attachment to the mosque activities would be an indicator of the success of Islam and the determining factor of the condition of the Muslim nation in the future. The task of attracting the youth to participate in the mosque activities today is very challenging; nonetheless, it is an important thing to do. The suggestions and comments made by the respondents in this research must be considered seriously by those in charge of Islam and Islamic affairs particularly in the State of Selangor and Malaysia as a whole. All parties need to play their role in re-establishing the mosque as a “*Markaz al-Ummah*” for the sake of the Muslim ummah in the future. Only by that will the continuation of Islamic culture that the Prophets and previous generation have pioneered before us will be passed successfully to the youth who are the torch of the glory of the ummah in the future.

*** Acknowledgement**

This research is supported by International Islamic University Malaysia Flagship Grant (RMC-IIUM) (IRF19-035-0035) for the flagship team *Mosque in the Post-Materialistic Era*.

¹ Al-Ghazālī, *Ayyuha Al-Walad*, p. 71.

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AL-ITQĀN

JOURNAL OF ISLAMIC SCIENCES AND COMPARATIVE STUDIES

Volume: 6

Issue No. 1

February 2022

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