

CHILDREN FRIENDLY MASJID: PHYSICAL LAYOUT AND PERSPECTIVE OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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ABSTRACT

Children friendly masjid is a concept of masjid design that welcomes children and their families. Masjid is one of the important institutions to know and love Allah SWT, gain knowledge, empower, and unite the ummah. However, the current masjid design may have overlooked on the needs of children and their family as can be seen from several masjid design guidelines such as the Garis Panduan dan Peraturan bagi Perancangan Bangunan 2015 from Jabatan Perdana Menteri (JPM), Deraf Garis Panduan Perancangan Masjid dan Surau 2011 from Jabatan Perancangan Bandar dan Desa Semenanjung Malaysia (JPBD), and the Architecture and Asset Management of Masjid from Malaysian Standard (MS2577:2014). The implication of these guidelines possibly causes the current design of masjid that might be less children friendly. Hence, it could lead to the discouragement for this group of people in coming to the masjid. Muslim youth can be shaped with good morality if they become close and familiar to masjid at the earliest stage. This study aims to identify the holistic design approach of masjid that addresses the needs of families with young children mainly. Taking the Masjid Al-Ridhuan (MAR), Hulu Kelang as the case study site, the spatial arrangement of the masjid, the behavior of children and their space utilization, and the perspective from the parents and children regarding the needs on spaces at the masjid are being identified by applying methods such as site inventory, observation, and a semi-structured interview. The finding indicates that MAR demonstrates some criteria for a children friendly environment. This study offers new insights into formulating new design approach and guideline towards children friendly masjid (CFM).

Keywords: Masjid design, Children-friendly masjid, Design guidelines, Perception study, Children and families

INTRODUCTION

The general meaning of masjid is a Muslim place of worshipping (The Oxford dictionaries - online). The word masjid refers to sajada in Arabic which means prostration. In other words, the masjid is the place specifically for the Muslim to worship Allah SWT. Masjid provides education from the basic knowledge of Islam to the good manners, and Islamic virtue formally and informally. Many masjids have been designed to provide the best "meditative" ambience to perform the prayer (Mohd Nawawi et al., 2016).

However, the current design guidelines for masjid might be not be focusing on the holistic need of the children and their family. There are several guidelines concerning building design and development. In the *Garis Panduan dan Peraturan bagi Perancangan Bangunan 2015* by Jabatan Perdana Menteri (JPM), it briefly mentions the types of spaces needed for masjid and surau and their size. Religious school and kindergarten are briefly mentioned and to be referred to the education section. None is being mentioned on the needs of families with young children or children in masjid per se.

The Department of Town and Country Planning has been working on the *Deraf Garis Panduan Perancangan Masjid dan Surau 2011*, and it is yet to be finalised. Overall, it is more comprehensive than the *Garis Panduan dan Peraturan bagi Perancangan Bangunan 2015*. It states the role of masjid as the centre for education and knowledge, and human development generally but still without specific mention on the needs of children physically and spiritually. The Architecture and Asset Management of Masjid by the Malaysian Standard (MS2577:2014) also gives general perspectives on the children's need such as safety, Islamic kindergarten, and baby's changing room. The lack of emphasises towards CFM might cause the children, and their parents are not optimally encouraged to go to masjid because of the inappropriate design for children that may disturb or annoy other *jamaah* (the congregational members) by their presence in the masjid.

CFM is essential in bringing and supporting the presence of children at the masjid. Then teaching the children about Islam would be made possible at the masjid. The fundamental of Islamic knowledge needs to be instilled during childhood, as to set a strong base in them so that they can differentiate between good and bad things. Children refer to someone below the age of 18 years (UNCRC, 2001). Meanwhile, Wehmier (1991)(see Sazali, 2010, p.16), defined children as "*a young human being below the age of puberty and an unborn or newborn human being*". Allah SWT creates children to be full of enthusiasm, passion, and energy. It is the nature of the children where they are still developing physically, morally, and spiritually that they make mistakes from time to time as they are not matured enough to differentiate between right and wrong. They are yet to be able to control their behavior

and to evaluate the situation of how to behave. Therefore, in a masjid, the possibility of children to disturb other *jamaah* is there and could be high.

Thus this might create an uneasy feeling among the *jamaah*. Not understanding the nature of children can lead to intolerance between the *jamaah* and children. However, the *jamaah* and children cannot be blamed entirely. A CFM would be the answer to this where children and their parents, and other *jamaah* can be comfortable toward each other presence in the masjid.

In Islam, masjid also plays critical roles in the spiritual upbringing of the children. It can influence and shapes their personality. This study is to identify the holistic design guideline of masjid that addresses the needs of children and their families towards establishing the CFM. The Masjid Al-Ridhuan (MAR) is used as the case study site to identify the perspectives of children and their parents regarding the needs of spaces for the children at the masjid. In establishing the background of the research, topics on masjid design, space for children, and masjid for children and the society are covered.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Masjid Design

History of Masjid

Miftahi (1997), mentioned that Masjid Al-Haram is the first ever masjid and the first house in the world as stated in Qur'an (3:96), "*The first house established for mankind is the one at Bekka; blessed, and guidance for all people*". Masjid Al-Haram is the *Ka'ba* and *Qibla* (focal point) as the place of blessings as well as the centre of spiritual, religious,

and moral education for Islam. The exalted House (*Baitullah*) was built in the time of Prophet Adam a.s., and it is significantly affected following the flood during the time of Prophet Noah a.s. It was rebuilt by Prophet Ibrahim a.s. with Jibril's help (Miftahi, 1997). Masjid Al-Aqsa, the second masjid was said to be built forty years later. Masjid acted as the centre of the community back in Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. time. Throughout Islamic history, masjids have always played crucial roles such as the place for

worship, and also acts as the centre of educations, politics, socials, and economics.

The Guidelines of Masjid Design in Malaysia

Masjid nowadays is mostly used for worshipping and informal Islamic education. Saabin (2001)(see Aini and Yahaya, 2015), admits that most of the masjid in Malaysia are not fully utilised and usually used during prayer time only.

Table 1: The number of masjid in Malaysia in 2018.

CODE	STATE	MASJID CATEGORIES					SURAU CATEGORIES		
		GOVERNMENT	STATE	DISTRICT	MUKIM	TOTAL	SURAU	SURAU (FRIDAY PRAYER)	TOTAL
01	JOHOR		2	21	779	802	1,966	77	2,043
02	KEDAH			11	560	572	2,051	23	2,074
03	KELANTAN			9	573	583	1,015	0	1,015
04	MELAKA			3	181	185	843	10	853
05	N. SEMBILAN			11	278	290	1,117	20	1,137
06	PAHANG			28	535	564	1,765	33	1,798
07	PULAU PINANG			5	203	209	432	0	432
08	PERAK			13	596	610	1,869	63	1,932
09	PERLIS			1	97	99	184	3	187
10	SELANGOR	5		9	393	408	1,912	257	2,169
11	TERENGGANU			8	454	463	1,846	0	1,846
12	SABAH			20	992	1,013	1,025	36	1,071
13	SARAWAK			35	330	366	812	20	832
14	FT of KL	1		1	60	63	420	81	501
15	FT of LABUAN		0	0	15	15	26	15	41
16	FT of PUTRAJAYA	2	0	0	0	2	67	14	81
TOTAL		8	15	175	6,046	6,244	17,350	662	18,012

(Source: JAKIM- online, reproduced)

There are 6244 masjids in Malaysia (Table 1). With approximately 60% Muslim from a total of about 30 million populations in Malaysia, (Islam in Malaysia – online), it will be a significant impact to the society if all these masjids are in line with a children friendly environment.

The *Garis Panduan Masjid and Surau* (2011), stated that the design of the masjid must consider space organisation so that it functions correctly. The spaces of masjid can be categorised into two (Figure 1):

a. Outdoor Space

The outdoor space is the space around the masjid building including the green spaces, the resting area and parking area, including facilities for the Person with Disabilities (PWD). Mini garden, gazebo, and shaded trees are highly encouraged to be provided too.

b. Indoor Space

Indoor space is the central space for masjid where prayer and most of the masjids' activities are conducted. The design of indoor space must be attractive and has a pleasant ambience. The entrance of male and female must be separated, and the smooth circulation between the spaces is essential.

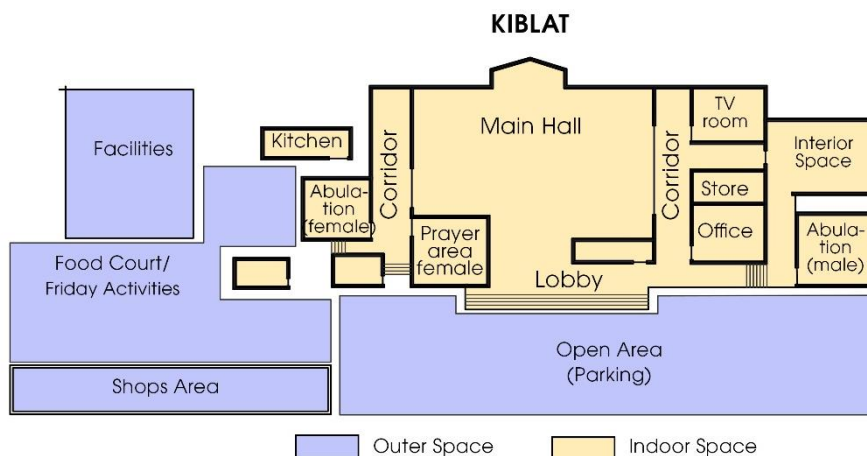


Fig.1: The relation of the space and Masjid components. (Source: *Guidelines for Masjid and Surau, 2009, p. 16-reproduced*)

Masjid as Education and Community Center

The functions of the masjid during the Prophet SAW time is shown in Table 2 (MS2577:2014 Architecture and Asset Management of Masjid):

Table 2: The role of masjid in Prophet SAW time.

No.	Roles of Masjid	The Prophet's SAW model
1	<i>Ibadah</i>	Congregational prayer, Friday prayer, <i>Iktikaf</i> , <i>Zikr</i> , and <i>Tahajjud</i> Prayer.
2	Community development	Informal gathering, consultation and discussion, children's and woman's programs, legitimate recreational activities, sport activities, funeral prayer, and wedding ceremony.

3	Education	Learning of Qur'an and hadith, Intellectual debates, Training courses for preachers, study circle, higher learning institution, training in oratory, poetry declamation, and Islamic art.
4	Administration	Instillation of Islamic thought, Islamic state's center of administration, reception of state delegation, congregation of leaders, delivery of speeches, informing center, planning of defense strategies, and prison and detention center.
5	Judicature	Judgement and hearings, implementation and penal codes, and implementation of sentences or punishment.
6	Economy	Formulation of economics concept and ideas, trade business center, business transactions, and control over market.
7	Welfare	Shelter poor or needy and travelers, hospital, place for relaxation and siesta, and collection and distribution of donation and zakat.

(Source: Malaysian Standard MS2577:2014)

Masjid al-Nabawi served for various purposes and became the first place providing education that formally managed for the Muslim after the *hijrah* to Madinah took place. The knowledge delivered at that time was on Islamic laws and regulations, faith, and Qur'an (Kinnany, 1980)(see Bani Hidayat et al., 2012). Masjid still acts as a centre of activities for community development of the contemporary Muslim and reliving the multi-functional nature of the Prophet's SAW masjid during his lifetime is very important (Mohamad Rasdi, 1998). Masjid has critical roles than just a mere symbol that the emphasis should not only focus as a place of prayers functioned (Kamus, 1981). The Prophet's SAW also built masjid to unite the early Muslim in a single brotherhood. Ahmad (1985), also support the idea of masjid as the place for the development of Islamic society.

Space for Children

The Nature of Children

It is the nature of children to change over time and place as they are developing. However, most of the developmental psychologists found that the reason why children differ from each other was merely due to nurture, not because of nature. Nature is referring to the environment of the upbringing of the children and nurture is particularly the influences of the parents in rearing the child, which are becoming the main reason behind the children's behaviour (Harris, 2002). Smidt (2006), mentioned that human infant viewed as no more than blank slates or empty vessels as many studies showed what an active learner they are. She also emphasised that young children are born with the ability to adapt and learn from the environment

which the result of the interaction between the child and the atmosphere is acquiring knowledge.

Young children assimilate on every experience countered and adapted to their understanding, in which it is essential to provide proper guidance and knowledge for them as a Muslim, especially moral upbringing. In line with Islamic teaching, it is vital to develop the virtues of morality and character from a strong faith and correct religious training. There is a hadith narrated by Tirmidhi stated that "*Among the gifts a father gives his son, none is better than an excellent etiquette and elegant manners*" (Mukhtaar, 2005, p.64). He also mentioned that it is essential to provide proper educations and ensure them to develop praiseworthy sentiments and kindness to all as children are the treasures given by Allah SWT for all parents. Even a western educator and reformers are also impressed by the healthy relationship between faith and manners, and the operative connection between practice and belief. They made a clear understanding that to obtain peace of mind, ineffective reformation and morals can be moulded with religion.

Childhood Education

Mohd Hamidin et al. (2017), mentioned that early education is vital to shape the children's future. Prophet SAW said "*no babe is born but upon Fitra. It is his parents who make him a Jew or a Christian or a Polytheist*" (Sahih Muslim, 33:6426). In other words, every child born in a state of holy soul and free from sins, and it depends on the parent's hand to teach and shape them. Parents and educator are responsible for patterning their life and give an excellent education to the children. Seven aspects of children's education that need to be instilled by every parents and educator towards children which are faith, morality, physical, mental, emotions, social, and sexual (Nasih Ulwan, 2015).

According to the western education theory, a mother is the best early educator for the children. Applying the technique of memorising and remembering are not suitable for children that children must be educated through the self-discovery (Pestalozzi, 1746-1827)(see Mohd Hamidin et al., 2017). However, in Islam, the approach of memorising and remembering at the earliest stage is encouraged in the learning process along with self-discovery which is guided by the parents (Nasih Ulwan, 2015). Children at the young age are like sponges where they absorb all the new things, and everything that happens to them (Gordon et al., 1989). It is very imperative for the parent to guide the children in their learning processes.

Children Friendly Space

Children are not the same as the adult. They have different motivation, desires, and expectation. A researcher needs to understand children and how they feel like children in their environment (Druin et al., 1999)(see Read et al., 2009). Read et al. (2009), mentioned that having fun is the nature of the children. It is the nature of children that more attracted to the outdoor space rather than indoor (Stephenson, 1998)(see Meade, 2006).

Mohd Hamidin et al. (2017), explained that Froebel (1904), who is called as Father of Kindergarten, said that children need to learn in the planned environment and through play they can learn better. Froebel (1904) also outlined ideas for kindergarten design as follows:

- Selection of bright colour painting;
- The room where the sun can penetrate;
- The place with a garden;
- The use of specific equipment for children (chair, table); and
- The room must be comfortable and cannot be a narrow space.

Masjid for Children and the Society

Mohamad Rasdi (1998, 2007), mentioned that the institution of the masjid is unfriendly towards Muslim community and non-muslim community from the architectural point of the masjid. He listed out several aspects as follows:

- Masjid should be located at the centre of the community that provides systematic accessibility to the users. He suggested that it is better to walk to masjid within five to 10 minutes than drive within five to 10 minutes;
- The use of fences, make the community feel not welcome to the masjid. He gives the example of Malaysia's National Masjid that does not have the fence; and
- The use of masjid compound for parking where it should be used to cater the activity and facilities of masjid such as seating, playground facilities for children, or a compound veranda (roofed, open-air gallery or porch).

He also strongly recommended for children spaces at masjid at this will encourage social interaction. He foresees the importance of children to be in the environment of the masjid as they would indirectly learn and experience the activities at the masjid. Creating children friendly space also encourages parents to bring their children to the masjid. He also stated the most suitable area for children is either the single-function spaces or

the outside spaces depending on the age of the children. Therefore, CFM is crucially needed by the parents and society to support in shaping children morally, spiritually, and physically.

METHODOLOGY

In achieving the aim of the study, Masjid Al Ridhuan (MAR), Hulu Kelang, Selangor Darul Ehsan was chosen as the case study site. Table 3 outlines the methods of data collection and their objectives of this study.

Table 3: Methods of data collection and their objectives

No	Methods of data collection	Objectives	Time/remarks
1	Site Inventory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical attributes Safety aspect Management system. 	To identify the layout and spatial arrangement of the masjid in order to understand their functions, safety aspect, and its facilities management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The first data collection to take place before others.
2	Non-participant Observation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children's behavior Children's usage of the space (physical). 	To observe the children's behavior and utilization of space by children. The spatial arrangement and quality may affect the space utilization and children's behavior.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weekends - <i>Kuliah dhuha</i>, <i>ceramah</i> and <i>Zohor</i> prayer. Weekdays - <i>Friday</i> prayer.
4	Semi-structured Interview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children's perception Parents' perception. 	To identify the needs and preferences of the children and their parents at the masjid. Input from the users themselves is very important to identify the genuine needs of these groups of people at masjid.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weekends - <i>Kuliah dhuha</i>, <i>ceramah</i> and <i>Zohor</i> prayer.

MAR's committee provided secondary data such as the layout plan, the organisation charts, and the activity schedule. A checklist was prepared to guide the site inventory process. Type of spaces was recorded, and their pictures were taken for spatial analysis. There were three main areas identified from the spaces which are: the prayer hall which is the main area inside the masjid; the right corridor, and the left corridor.

The non-participant observation was carried out in observing the children's behaviour and how they utilise the three main areas within the masjid. By using the layout plan and an observation checklist, the location of children was mapped; their behaviour and activities were recorded and photographed.

The semi-structured interview was conducted at the case study site, where it involved two categories: children, and parents. The interviews were

recorded using a recorder. It was then transcribed for analysis purpose. A set of questions was prepared. Due to the nature of the semi-structured interview, further relevant questions were also asked during the interview. Children between the age of four to seven years old were targeted as respondents. They were approached upon permission granted by their parents or guardian.

DATA ANALYSIS, RESULT, AND DISCUSSION

Case Study

Masjid Al-Ridhuan, Hulu Kelang (MAR) was built in 1985, located in Ampang within the '*khariah*' Gombak. This masjid is capable of holding around 2000 Jamaah and registered under the *Jabatan Agama Islam Selangor* (JAIS) as '*kariah*' masjid category (e-masjid JAIS-online). It is adjacent to the Middle Ring Road 2 highway and in between of Wangsa Maju and Ukay Perdana. Most of its Jamaah come from these areas.

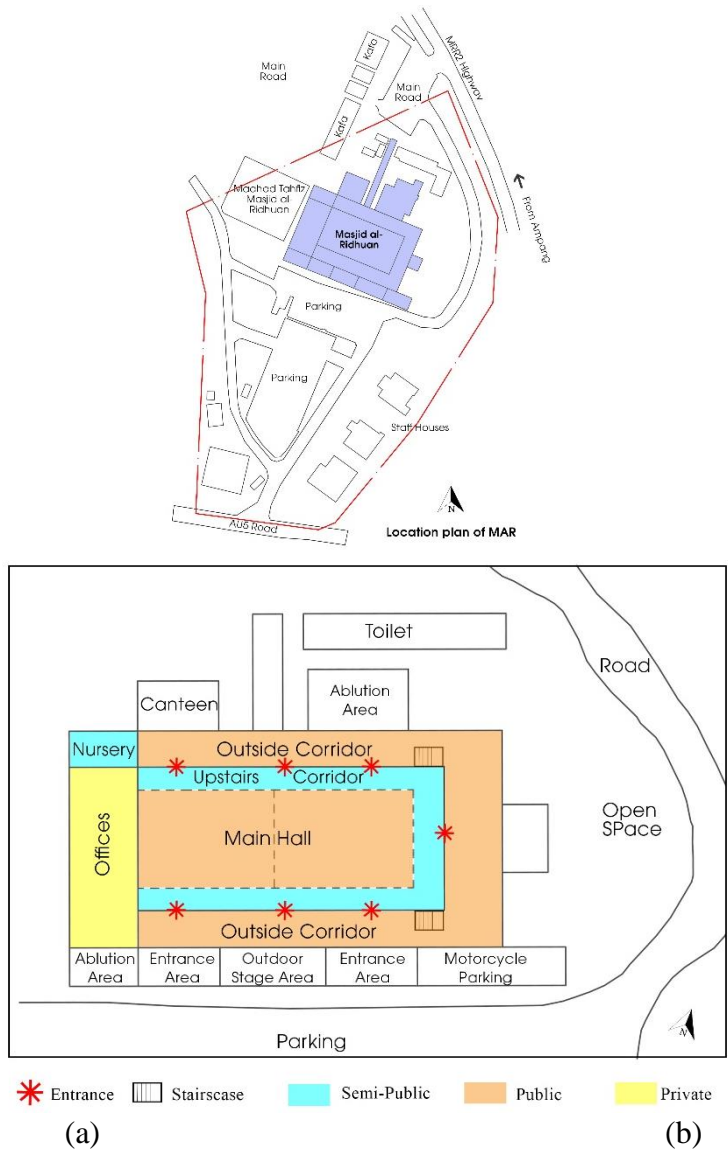


Figure 2 The overall layout of Masjid Al-Ridhuan (a), and the detailed layout of the masjid (b).

(Source: MAR-reproduced)

Physical Attributes

Based on the layout of MAR, the function of spaces, and level of accessibility by the staff, invited speakers, and the general public/Jamaah were identified. Figure 2a shows MAR surrounded by the Maahad Tahfiz MAR, KAFA

buildings, and staff houses. The staff houses consist of a house for the Imam, the security personnel, and a homestay. Meanwhile, figure 2b shows the spaces inside the masjid. The spaces are divided into three categories:

- **Semi-Public**
Nursery and corridor at the upper level are categorised as semi-public spaces because they can be accessed by the public at a particular time only. For the nursery, it is open during big events and activities with the presence of many Jamaah for instance during Ramadhan. The upper corridor is open during Friday prayers and Ramadhan.
- **Public Spaces**
The public spaces which can be accessed by the Jamaah at any time are the main hall area and its corridor.
- **Private Space**
The private spaces of MAR such as the office, meeting room, guest's room, sound system room, the office of MAR committee, and the office of Nazir can be accessed by certain people only such as the staff and invited speakers.

Safety Aspect

On the safety aspect, the focus was given to three factors which are:

- **Surface materials**
Type of surface materials affects the safety the children in the masjid. The main area inside the masjid is covered with carpet (refer figure 3a), while all the corridors used marble tiles. In the central area, toddlers can crawl over because the carpet is thick and safe for baby to explore around. The corridor became an active space for children to play as it is spacious and adjacent to the main area. However, this material might be dangerous towards the children because it is slippery when it rain is wet and can lead to minor accidents such as falling or tumble.
- **Sharp edges**
Most of the sharp edges in MAR are located at the stairs as it is at the corner of each corridor (figure 3b). As the children like to run around the corridor, these edges are hazardous for them.
- **Staircase**
There are two types of staircases – the first one is leading to the upper corridor (figure 3b), and the second staircases is connecting the outdoor to the indoor (figure 3c). They become an attraction to the children particularly the first staircase which is located at the left-wing corridor as it is more open compared to the one at the right wing corridor. The

children often run up and down the second staircase. They perceive staircases as a play element.



Fig. 3: The safety aspect in MAR: The carpet in the main area inside the masjid (a), the sharp edges on the left wing corridor of the masjid (b), the stairs of the entrance area at MAR (c), and the warning signboard at the masjid (d).

Figure 3d shows signage that also reminds parents/guardians to watch over their children particularly on their safety aspect.

Management System

The management system can be discussed from two angles, which are:

- The physical management

The physical management is regarding the facilities, signage, notice board, and infrastructure of the masjid. The facilities are well arranged and kept – refer to figure 4.



Fig.4: The management of MAR: (a) Qur'an shelf, (b) money box, (c) woman's entrance, (d) extended woman's prayer area, and (e) woman's prayer area.

- The social management

Social management is focusing on the spatial arrangement for the *jamaah* especially the circulation, prayer areas, ablution areas, restroom areas, specific areas such as the offices and nursery, and the management of programs/activities of the masjid. MAR's circulation allows the *jamaah* to carry out their activities easily as spaces are well connected, and almost all spaces are on the same level. As for the program, MAR is an active masjid that provides many activities. MAR schedules for kuliah after *maghrib*, *zohor*, and *subuh* prayer, and also the monthly *Majlis Ilmu* (refer figure 5).

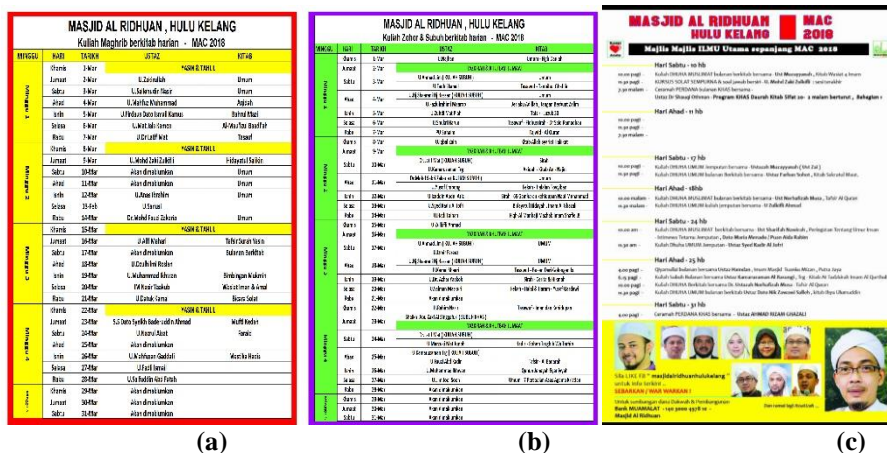


Fig.5: The program list of MAR: *Kuliah Maghrib* (a), *Kuliah Zohor and Subuh* (b), and *Majlis Ilmu Utama* in March 2018 (c).
(Source: MAR)

This masjid management also influences the presence of children in masjid. MAR always welcome children with an open arm and always reminds its *jamaah* not to scold them when they are loud, instead to advise them in a nice way. This is very important as they do not want parents/guardian of young children to shy away and do not get the opportunity to join and learn together at MAR.

Space and Children’s Behavior Pattern

Based on the observation, during activities such as *kuliah dhuha*, most of the children prefer to play at the left wing corridor, and inside the central area of MAR. The spaces can be categorised into three categories, which are the most active space, semi-active space, and the less active space (figure 6),

following the activities done by the children there. Most of the activities of the children differ from one space to another. The central area which is open and can be easily accessed become a semi-active play space for the children. Many children are comfortable to play actively at the left wing of the corridor as it is overlooking the open parking, brighter, and located at the main entrance. The female *jamaah* mostly occupies the right-wing corridor as it 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 6 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. However, the presence of the children in the area depends on their age too. Their parents would likely accompany babies and toddlers. Some of them are playing and staying in groups. Their activities there might disturb others as most of them are playing loudly. However, there are no complaints from the *jamaah*.

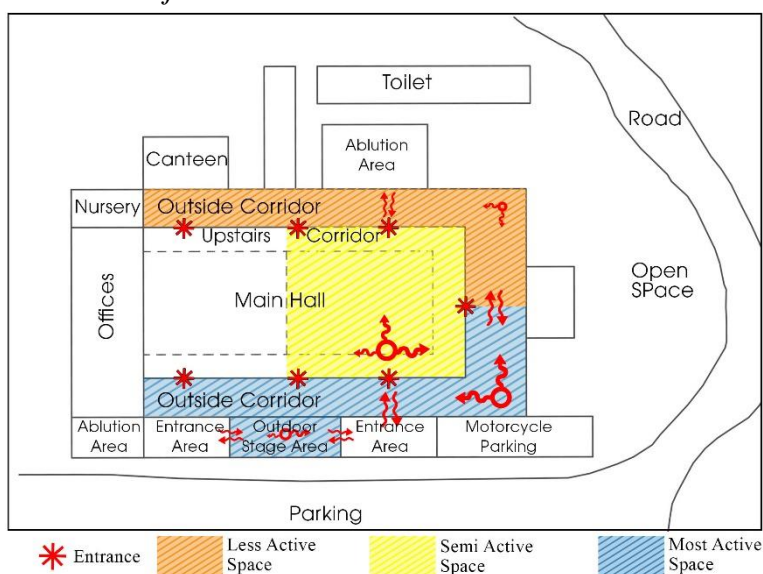


Fig.6: The use of space and the movement of children in MAR.

From the observation, it is clear that children who play in a group usually stay at the left wing corridor (blue area) and the children age 5 years and below tend to stay inside the central area (yellow area) of the masjid together with their parents or guardians. This shows that children have their preferences in choosing their space at MAR.

Perception studies

Perceptions of children of MAR

Semi-structured interview with eight children of the common *jamaah* of MAR was conducted. Their age ranged from six to nine years old. Only boys were able to be interviewed. The interview focused on their space preferences at MAR, space design, and materials used.

Table 4, shows that the children are comfortable staying at these areas - the central area inside the masjid, and the corridor area. The main area inside the masjid was chosen as the most preferred space compared to other spaces because the central area is cool and comfortable. When it comes to playing, they prefer to play in a group at the corridor because it is wide open and less disturbance to the *jamaah* that is following the MAR activities.

Table 4: The preferred area for children in MAR.

Spaces	Main Area	Outdoor Corridor
Percentages/No of Children	62.5% / 5 children	37.5% / 3 children
Reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The area is cold • Comfortable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide spaces • Comfortable • Can play at this area

On their preferred space design and materials used, these children were asked to choose based on the images shown in table 5.

Table 5: The images used during the semi structured interview with the children.



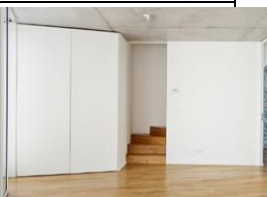


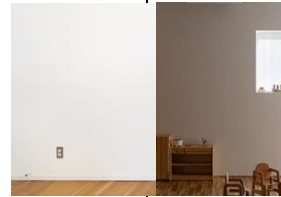

Question on the preferred color of wall.			
			
Bright colour	Multiple colour	Light colour	Plain colour
Question on the patterns design of wall			
			
Patterned	Wooden	Light colour	Plain wall
Question on the surface materials			



Figure 7 indicates the preferred design and materials by the interviewed children. The number of children who preferred the bright and non-colourful area is equal. 62% of the children choose the wall with patterns design. When asked to choose between the four types of surface materials, 44% of them selected carpet. They even stated that it is more comfortable than hard materials. The second most preferred material is rubber (25%). Tiles seem to be the least preferred material (12%). Hence, it can be said that children like soft materials for the floor surface. This could be due to their active activities, and the soft surface materials s comfortable for them with fewer chances of injury when an accident happens.

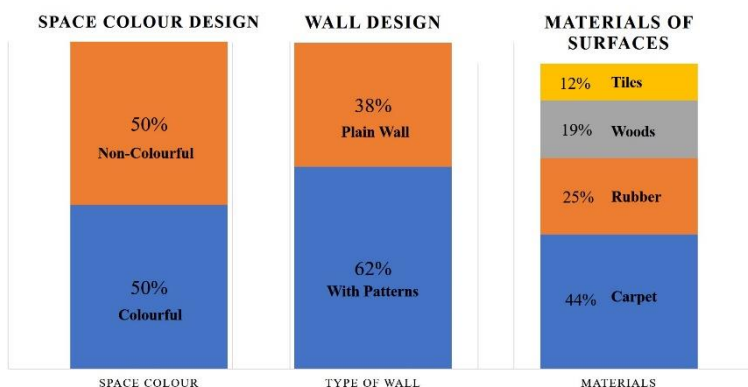


Fig. 7: The percentage of preferred design space for children in MAR.

The result indicates that these children are aware of their physical surrounding and needs. A relaxed and comfortable environment is preferred. This also explains why most of the children were at the central area inside MAR when observed (refer table 4).

Perceptions of parents of MAR

The result shows that most parents prefer their children to play at the corridor compared to other places due to safety reason and also less disturbance to

other *jamaah*. Figure 8 shows the suggested play area by parents for their children in MAR.

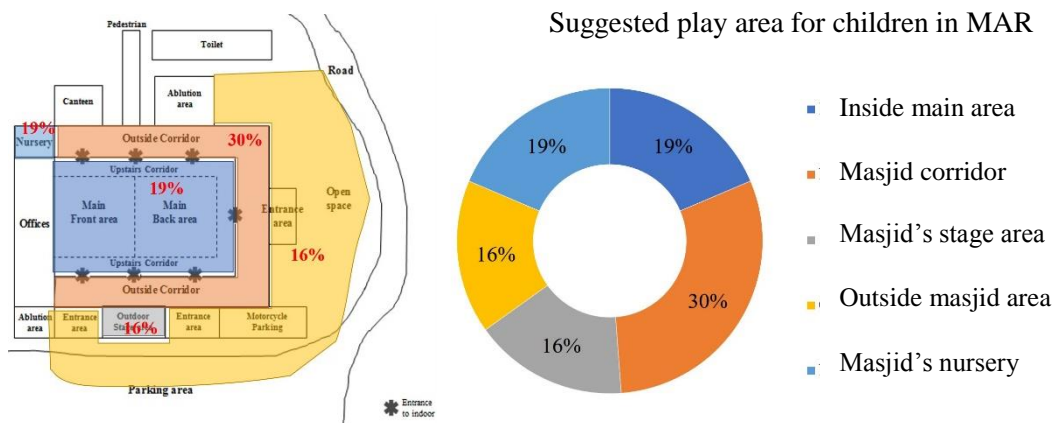


Fig. 8: The layout and percentage of suggested play area for children in MAR.

The age of the children also become a primary factor in suggesting their suitable play area. Bigger children who can handle themselves better, who require less attention from adults are suggested to play at the corridor and outside the masjid, while a toddler is suggested to be at the central area under the full monitoring of their parents/guardians

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the site inventory, it can be said that having most of the primary spaces on one level (which is on the ground floor for the case of MAR) creates good connectivity among spaces and ease the movement of the users. Management of the facilities and safety aspects are made easy too due to this physical factor.

It is found that the result from the observation is in line with the interview as most of the children like to stay on a soft surface, cold, and wide-open areas. This could be due to their active nature.

On the perceptions of children and parents/guardians, both parties would want a safe and comfortable space, with less disturbance on others. Playing is natural to children, and it is important to them. The parents/guardians are well aware of this and so do the management of MAR. Thus, the corridor area is somehow 'dedicated' to the children for them to have fun while safely being in the masjid. MAR may not be a whole children-

friendly masjid at the moment regarding its physical aspects, but it is vital to emphasise that its management welcomes children. Some of the invited speakers have been consistently advising the *jamaah* to welcome and treat children nicely and with respect so that masjid would be their chosen place. Thus, children can be consistently seen at MAR during various programs and the five-time prayers.

This study highlights the importance of the physical design of masjid that considers the needs of children and their families. The design elements, surfaces materials, and spaces that suits them should be included in the design guideline, which is not stated now. Holistic approach in masjid design is crucially needed as masjid is a fundamental institution in Islam that unite the *ummah* from all walks of life.

Several recommendations for children-friendly masjid are:

- to provide designated space for the family with young children so that they can follow the masjid's activities comfortably;
- to provide children with scaled facilities, for example, chairs, racks, and sinks for the restroom;
- to provide an optimum size for children's outdoor play space;
- to provide a specific area for children as a play area with passive play features such as colouring books, reading storybooks, and intellect play equipment;
- to provide a nursery for young children with well-trained child-minder; and
- to provide specific programs for children to encourage parents to bring their children to the masjid.

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