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Analysis of Roles and Functions of Islamic Centers as Hubs: Three Locations Case Study

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Abstract

The Islamic Center stands as a multifaceted complex of Islamic facilities, strategically designed to function as a central hub for a wide array of religious and community needs. Its role extends significantly beyond that of a traditional mosque, offering dedicated spaces that foster comprehensive religious learning, encourage vibrant community interaction, and promote social development, all deeply rooted in core Islamic values. This study undertakes a thorough analysis of the diverse functions and critical roles performed by Islamic Centers. Employing a comparative case study approach, it examines three distinct locations, each characterized by unique facility configurations and varying patterns of religious activities. This methodology aims to achieve a holistic understanding of the operational dynamics of Islamic Centers and the specific community needs they effectively address. The core of the analysis is dedicated to identifying the essential facilities that underpin the successful operation of these centers. It further investigates the prevailing structures of activities organized within them and assesses their tangible contributions to both religious enrichment and broader social development within their respective communities. The findings derived from this research offer valuable insights into the fundamental components necessary for establishing and maintaining an effective Islamic Center. These essential elements include adequate worship spaces, robust educational facilities, well-developed da'wah (outreach) infrastructure, accessible social areas, and dedicated spaces for community empowerment initiatives. Collectively, these components form the foundational framework for planning Islamic Centers that are not only comprehensive and adaptive to evolving societal needs but also deeply relevant to their specific local contexts.

Kata kunci: Islamic Center, Islamic Education, Da'wah, Social Activities, Case Study.

1. Introduction

An Islamic Center is a complex of Islamic facilities designed to accommodate a wide range of religious and community activities in an integrated manner, including worship, Islamic education, da'wah (religious outreach), community development, and various forms of social engagement. In contemporary discourse, the concept of an Islamic Center extends beyond the traditional function of a mosque, as it serves not only as a place of ritual worship but also as a hub for intellectual development, social interaction, and community empowerment grounded in Islamic values. This expanded role reflects the evolving needs of Muslim societies, particularly in the context of modernization, urbanization, and increasing socio-cultural complexity.[1] In many academic studies, Islamic Centers are conceptualized as comprehensive institutions that integrate spiritual, educational, and social dimensions into a single spatial and organizational framework.

The multifunctional character of these centers distinguishes them from conventional religious buildings and highlights their importance in addressing the broader needs of contemporary Muslim communities. For instance, research conducted in Bantaeng Regency demonstrates that Islamic Centers are intentionally designed to incorporate multiple functions including worship, education, social services, healthcare, economic activities, and da'wah within a unified and cohesive environment. [2] This integrated approach allows for more efficient use of space and resources, while also enhancing accessibility and participation for the community. By bringing together diverse activities within one location, Islamic Centers create opportunities for continuous engagement, fostering a sense of belonging and collective identity among users.

Furthermore, the presence of such facilities contributes to the strengthening of religious values in everyday life, as individuals are able to access not only places of worship but also spaces for learning, interaction, and social support. As a result, the Islamic Center emerges as a vital institution in promoting holistic community

development, where religious devotion is closely linked with intellectual growth and social well-being. The diversity of Islamic Center development across Indonesia illustrates the adaptability and contextual nature of this concept, as each facility is shaped by the specific socio-cultural, economic, and spatial conditions of its environment. Various case studies reveal that there is no single standardized model for Islamic Centers; instead, their design and function are tailored to respond to local needs and community characteristics.[3]

In many urban contexts, where social fragmentation and individualism may be more pronounced, Islamic Centers play a crucial role in fostering collective engagement and reinforcing shared values. For example, in the development of an Islamic Center in Jambi Province, the planning strategy focuses on providing facilities that support Islamic education, da'wah activities, and social interaction within a well-organized and integrated complex. [4]This approach emphasizes the importance of spatial organization in facilitating efficient circulation and functional relationships between different program elements. Similarly, research conducted in Medan City highlights the role of Islamic Centers as central nodes for worship, religious education, Islamic studies, and social development, contributing to the strengthening of Islamic identity and the creation of a cohesive community environment.[5]

The flexibility inherent in Islamic Center design allows these institutions to adapt to changing needs over time, whether through the expansion of facilities, the introduction of new programs, or the reconfiguration of existing spaces. This adaptability is a key factor in ensuring the long-term relevance and sustainability of Islamic Centers, as they must continuously respond to evolving patterns of use and community expectations. Consequently, the study of Islamic Centers requires a contextual understanding that takes into account not only physical design but also social dynamics, cultural values, and patterns of behavior within the community. By observing patterns of use and activity distribution, research can identify how these centers support various aspects of community life, including religious practice, education, and economic engagement.

In this research, the focus is directed toward examining the functions and roles of Islamic Centers as hubs of Islamic activities through a comparative analysis of three different case study locations. Each site is selected based on its distinct characteristics in terms of facility provision, types of activities, and levels of utilization, thereby offering a comprehensive perspective on how Islamic Centers operate in diverse contexts. The comparative approach allows for the identification of similarities and differences between cases, providing valuable insights into the factors that influence the effectiveness of Islamic Centers in fulfilling their intended roles. Ultimately, this study aims to explore how spatial organization and programmatic structure contribute to the overall performance of Islamic Centers as multifunctional environments.

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative method with a descriptive approach to understand the needs, functions, and program structure of an Islamic Center suitable for the community of Subulussalam City. Data were collected from three case study objects through field observation, literature review, and site analysis, where the overall analysis is used as the basis for formulating spatial requirements and activity programs relevant to community needs. Data collection consists of both primary and secondary data, which are gathered systematically to ensure a holistic understanding of the project. Primary data were obtained through field observations, including the physical condition of the site, existing religious facilities, and patterns of community activities. Secondary data were collected through an extensive literature review, including theories of Islamic Center design, spatial standards, and references to Islamic architecture, with contextual architecture used as a supporting aspect. This literature review stage is crucial as it adopts the basic tenets of Islamic architecture that emphasize simplicity, sufficiency, and sustainability in the design process [2]. This stage aims to obtain a comprehensive understanding as the foundation for further analysis.

The collected data were then analyzed descriptively through an integrative approach to ensure all design variables are addressed. The analysis process includes three main aspects, starting with the social-cultural aspects of Islamic community life to define the social role of the center as a professional institution [1]. This is followed by an evaluation of site and environmental conditions such as accessibility, circulation patterns, and development potential, as well as the functional requirements of Islamic Center facilities. These aspects are interconnected and form the basis for identifying spatial needs and activity structures. In determining the technical requirements for the facility, the study also considers established national standards for building systems, such as plumbing and utility systems, to ensure the building's operational efficiency[6]. All these variables are synthesized to create a cohesive design program that serves both religious and social functions.

The results of the analysis are translated into a comprehensive design approach that includes spatial programming, activity planning, and contextual architectural responses. The approach emphasizes the integration of functional needs, local architectural identity, and adaptation to tropical climate conditions, while strictly adhering to the fundamental principles of Islamic architecture and its implications for modern structures [7]. This stage ensures that the design not only fulfills contemporary needs but also remains rooted in spiritual values. Furthermore, the design process integrates specific technical considerations such as natural ventilation strategies to enhance user comfort in a tropical environment [8]. The final outcome of this methodology is a conceptual framework for designing an Islamic Center that is contextual, adaptive, and responsive to the characteristics of Subulussalam City, which will serve as the basis for further design development.

3. Results and Discussion

The results of this study are derived from a comparative analysis of three distinct Islamic Centers, each representing a unique model of religious and social integration within its urban environment. This section synthesizes empirical evidence gathered from field observations and spatial mapping with established architectural theories to evaluate how these centers function as community hubs. The findings indicate that the effectiveness of an Islamic Center is significantly influenced by its ability to accommodate diverse activities beyond ritual worship, encompassing educational, social, and economic dimensions. This multifaceted role necessitates a professional management approach to ensure that the physical facilities can sustain the intensive patterns of community engagement observed across the case studies [1]. The analysis reveals that the spatial organization within these complexes plays a critical role in facilitating efficient circulation and functional synergy between different program elements.

Furthermore, the architectural expression found in the studied locations demonstrates varying degrees of response to local identity and environmental conditions. The integration of traditional motifs and contemporary structural forms suggests a conscious effort to align the buildings with their regional context while fulfilling modern functional requirements [5]. In addition to spatial and aesthetic considerations, the operational efficiency of these centers is evaluated against established standards for building utilities and environmental comfort to ensure long-term sustainability [8]. The following discussion explores these findings in detail, examining the specific activity structures and facility provisions that characterize each location. By comparing the three case studies, the research identifies key spatial strategies that contribute to the overall performance of an Islamic Center as a responsive and adaptive hub for the community.

3.1. Analysis of UMA Islamic Center Mosque, Medan

The At-Taqwa Mosque at the University of Medan Area (UMA) functions as a campus facility that serves not only as a place of worship but also as a center for spiritual guidance and character development among students. Strategically located within the campus environment, this mosque is managed by the Mosque Management Board (BKM) as an integral part of the university's Islamic Center concept. The building has a capacity to accommodate approximately 1,000 worshippers, making it one of the central hubs for Islamic activities within the university area and open to the surrounding community, particularly for Friday prayers [9].

Various religious and social activities are centered in this location, ranging from daily congregational prayers, religious studies held regularly after Dhuhr prayer from Monday to Thursday, thematic discussions, to specific programs during the month of Ramadan. These activities actively involve university administrators, lecturers, students, and local residents, creating continuous social and religious interaction [9]. Conceptually, this mosque can be categorized as a campus-scale Islamic Center since it integrates functions of worship, education, da'wah, and social activities within one complex [3]. The distribution of activities carried out in this location is presented in detail in Table 1.

Tabel 1. UMA Islamic Center Mosque Activities

Sector	Work Program	Activities
Worship	Daily & Friday Prayers	Daily congregational and Friday prayer activities
Worship	Ramadan Programs	Night prayers, scripture reading, and lectures
Worship	Religious Studies	Regular daily and monthly study sessions

Worship	Collective Prayer	Group remembrance and prayer activities
Worship	Night & Early Morning Prayers	Strengthening night and dawn worship practices
Worship	Eid Celebration & Sacrifice	Holiday prayer and animal sacrifice program
Worship	Scripture Learning	Basic reading and improvement programs
Religious Events	Islamic Holiday Events	Commemoration of major religious days
Social	Charity Fund Management	Collection and distribution of charity funds
Social	Social Aid Programs	Support for orphans, poor, and disaster victims
Outreach	Campus Preaching	Religious guidance and campus activities
Outreach	Community Engagement	Public outreach and religious promotion
Facilities	Mosque Maintenance	Maintenance of mosque facilities
Facilities	Facility Provision	Procurement of equipment and tools
Facilities	Honesty Canteen	Self-service canteen management
General	Administration & Evaluation	Program management and evaluation
General	Campus Support	Supporting university-related activities

Source: bkmattaqwa.uma.ac.id

To support these diverse functions, the facilities provided are designed to meet the needs of worship, education, and community gathering. The physical components consist of primary facilities such as the main prayer hall, mihrab and pulpit, as well as supporting facilities including ablution areas, shoe storage, study rooms, and audio-visual systems. In addition, there are social facilities such as multipurpose areas, management offices, information boards, and supporting utilities such as toilets, parking areas, and open spaces[9]. Details of the facility components are shown in Table 2.

Tabel 2. UMA Islamic Center Mosque Facility

Category	Facility	Description
Worship	Main Prayer Hall	Main space for congregational prayers
Worship	Mihrab and Pulpit	Area for imam and sermon delivery
Worship	Ablution Area	Washing area before prayer
Worship	Shoe Storage	Storage area for footwear
Education	Study Room	Space for religious learning activities
Education	Scripture Learning Area	Area for reading and studying scripture
Education	Audio-Visual System	Sound system, projector, and screen
Social	Multipurpose Area	Space for gatherings and events
Social	Honesty Canteen	Self-service food and beverage area
Social	Management Office	Office for mosque management
Social	Information Board	Media for announcements and information
Support	Toilets	Sanitary facilities
Support	Parking Area	Space for vehicle parking
Support	Open Space	Outdoor and landscape area

Support	Storage Room	Space for storing equipment
Special	Sacrifice Area	Area for animal sacrifice activities
Special	Ramadan Activity Area	Space for fasting month programs
Special	Charity Distribution Area	Area for distributing donations

Source: bkmattaqwa.uma.ac.id

Architecturally, the building reflects a fusion of Islamic architectural values with a contextual approach that incorporates tropical and local Nusantara elements [10]. This adaptation is evident in the use of wide openings equipped with Islamic geometric ornamentation, which allows natural light to enter while creating a serene atmosphere. Inside, the curved mihrab is adorned with Arabic calligraphy and non-figurative decorative patterns that embody Islamic aesthetic principles, further enhanced by strategic lighting [4]. Meanwhile, the roof design adopts a tiered shape resembling traditional Limasan structure without a dome, which is a typical characteristic of local architecture and an effective response to the tropical climate [10]. The visual appearance of the building, its structural details, and surrounding facilities are presented in the following images.



Figure 1. Mosque Exterior, Mosque Interior, Parking, Toilet.

Overall, this mosque successfully embodies the concept of contextual architecture by integrating religious functions, Islamic aesthetic values, and environmental adaptation, making it comfortable and functional for the campus community [10].

3.2. Analysis of Jakarta Islamic Center

The Jakarta Islamic Center is located on Jalan Kramat Jaya Raya, North Jakarta, occupying a vast area of approximately 10 to 11 hectares. Historically, this location was transformed from a former restricted area into a comprehensive complex serving as a center of Islamic civilization. The functions developed here are very diverse, covering worship, education, social services, economy, and community development. Various programs are routinely held, including daily and Friday prayers, Ramadan activities, regular Islamic studies, Quranic education, public lectures, seminars, and digital da'wah. In addition, the center also manages social services such as the collection and distribution of zakat, infaq, and sadaqah, as well as assistance for the needy and disaster victims [3].

To support these comprehensive activities, the facilities provided are very complete and complex. The main components include a grand mosque, classrooms, library, and training center. Social facilities are available in the form of multipurpose halls and convention halls, while economic activities are supported by the presence of a business center and sharia cooperative units. Supporting facilities include management offices, parking areas, toilets, information centers, guest houses, and extensive open spaces that serve as landscape areas [3].

Architecturally, the building presents a monumental style that blends classical Islamic architecture with a modern approach. The design is characterized by a large dome, Islamic geometric ornamentation, arches, calligraphy, and star motifs that reflect Middle Eastern aesthetic values [7]. The massing is arranged symmetrically, creating a balance between horizontal and vertical proportions that gives an impression of grandeur and openness. The building is also highly responsive to the tropical climate through the application of wide openings, natural ventilation systems, and large open spaces [10]. In terms of color selection, the building is dominated by shades of blue, green, and golden yellow, which symbolize tranquility, Islamic identity, and glory, integrated with geometric ornaments that symbolize order and unity.



Figure 2. Jakarta Islamic Center

3.3. Analysis of Lhokseumawe City Islamic Center

The Islamic Center in Lhokseumawe is strategically located in the city center along Jalan Medan-Banda Aceh, serving as a vital landmark and primary destination for religious activities and tourism. Constructed on an area of approximately 16,475 m², this complex functions not only as a place of worship but also as an integrated hub for education, culture, and economic activities for the local community [11].

The scope of activities is very diverse, covering spiritual, educational, social, and economic dimensions. Regular programs include daily and Friday prayers, Quranic education, and various Islamic studies. In addition, the center actively facilitates skills training, community empowerment, cultural arts performances, commercial activities, and sacred ceremonies such as marriages and religious holidays, making it a dynamic center for community interaction [11].

To support these comprehensive functions, the facilities provided are designed to be complete and well-integrated. The main components consist of a two-level grand mosque, a library, educational units, and dormitories. Supporting facilities include an Islamic museum, meeting rooms, exhibition halls, commercial areas, parking lots, and extensive courtyards capable of hosting large-scale events [6].

Architecturally, the building adopts a classical Islamic style with strong Middle Eastern influences, characterized by a large central dome, symmetrical forms, and large columns [12]. The facade is decorated with detailed arabesque ornaments, geometric patterns, and calligraphy that reflect high aesthetic values and Islamic identity [7]. The interior design creates a spacious and majestic atmosphere with high ceilings, stained glass decorations, and good natural lighting, while the use of bright colors combined with gold accents produces an atmosphere that is calm, solemn, and luxurious at the same time.



Figure 3. Lhokseumawe City Islamic Center

Overall, this building successfully combines functional aspects, religious values, and visual aesthetics, positioning it not only as a place of worship but also as an icon of pride and a significant tourist destination for the region [5].

3.4. Comparative Analysis of Three Locations

Based on the observations and analysis of the three locations, distinct characteristics can be identified regarding their scale, function, facilities, and architectural expression. The comparison shows that the development of an Islamic Center is highly contextual, adapting to the scope of role, community needs, and local environmental conditions [3].

In terms of scale and coverage, the UMA Islamic Center represents a small to medium category with a specific focus on serving the campus community and the surrounding residential area. In contrast, the Jakarta Islamic Center demonstrates a very large scale with metropolitan coverage, functioning as a center of civilization that accommodates diverse activities from worship to economic sectors. Meanwhile, the Lhokseumawe City Islamic Center falls into the medium category but serves as a primary landmark and icon of the city with a broad scope of services[13].

Regarding functional aspects, all three locations integrate the main functions of worship, education, and social activities. However, the Jakarta Islamic Center is distinguished by its very complete facilities and complex management, covering social services, economy, and training centers. The Lhokseumawe Islamic Center emphasizes functions related to culture, tourism, and city identity, while the UMA Islamic Center focuses more on educational functions and spiritual development within the campus environment [14].

Architecturally, each location presents a unique character. The UMA Islamic Center adopts a contextual approach that blends Islamic values with tropical architecture and local Nusantara styles, prioritizing comfort and climatic adaptation. The Jakarta Islamic Center presents a monumental style with classical Islamic nuances combined with modern elements, creating a grand and majestic impression. On the other hand, the Lhokseumawe Islamic Center displays strong Middle Eastern characteristics through the dominance of domes, large columns, and classical ornaments that reflect glory and spiritual depth [15]. The summary of these comparisons is presented in detail in Table 7.

Tabel 2. UMA Islamic Center Mosque Facility

Aspect	UMA Islamic Center	Jakarta Islamic Center	Lhokseumawe Islamic Center
Location	Medan (Campus Area)	North Jakarta (Urban)	Lhokseumawe (City Center)
Land Area	± 2.5 Hectares	± 10 - 11 Hectares	± 1.6 Hectares
Scale	Small - Medium	Large	Medium
Main Role	Campus Religious Center	Center of Islamic Civilization	City Icon & Tourism
Main Function	Worship, Education, Social	Worship, Education, Social, Economy	Worship, Education, Culture, Economy

Facilities	Adequate, Focused on Basic Needs	Very Complete & Complex	Complete, Public Oriented
Architectura l Style	Contextual, Tropical, Nusantara	Monumental, Classic - Modern Islamic	Classic Islamic, Middle Eastern Nuance
Dominant Character	Simple, Functional, Adaptive	Grand, Spacious, Symbolic	Majestic, Aesthetic, Iconic

Source: Author Analysis

4. Conclusion

The study concludes that an Islamic Center functions not merely as a place of worship, but as an integrated facility that serves as a hub for religious, educational, social, and economic activities within the community. The analysis of the three locations demonstrates that there is no single standard model; instead, the form, facilities, and function are highly influenced by the context, location, scale, and specific needs of the community served. The ideal components required for an effective Islamic Center include adequate worship spaces, comprehensive educational facilities, adequate social interaction areas, and supporting infrastructure that can adapt to changing needs. Architectural aspects also play a crucial role, where the design must not only fulfill functional requirements but also reflect Islamic identity, aesthetic values, and adaptation to the local environment and climate. Differences in character between the three locations indicate that planning must be carried out with a comprehensive and flexible approach. A campus-scale Islamic Center such as in UMA tends to be simple and functional, while a metropolitan-scale center like in Jakarta requires complexity and completeness of facilities. Meanwhile, Islamic Centers built as city icons such as in Lhokseumawe place more emphasis on grandeur, visual strength, and cultural identity. These findings can serve as a basis and reference for the planning and design of future Islamic Centers that are more responsive, adaptive, and beneficial to the community.

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