

The Role of Mosques as Centers of Social Innovation in the Development of Urban Islamic Communities

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Abstract: This research explores the evolving role of mosques as centers of social innovation in the development of urban Islamic communities. Traditionally, mosques have served not only as places of worship but also as hubs for education, welfare, and community leadership. However, with the rapid pace of urbanization and modernization, Muslim communities now face new socio-economic challenges, including social fragmentation, inequality, and the weakening of communal ties. This study investigates how mosques respond to these challenges through innovative, community-based initiatives that address spiritual, social, and developmental needs. Using a qualitative research design with case studies of selected urban mosques, data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis. The findings reveal that many urban mosques have successfully transformed into multifunctional institutions that integrate social, educational, and environmental programs. These include digital literacy training, entrepreneurship development, youth empowerment, and environmental sustainability projects. Guided by Social Innovation Theory, Community Development Theory, Islamic Social Ethics, and Urban Sociology, the study shows that the success of mosque-based innovation depends on visionary leadership, active community participation, and collaboration with governmental and non-governmental actors. The research concludes that mosques hold significant potential to become strategic partners in urban development planning. By combining Islamic ethical principles with modern approaches to social problem-solving, mosques can act as catalysts for empowerment, social cohesion, and sustainable development. The study recommends that policymakers integrate mosque-based initiatives into urban planning frameworks and support their institutional capacity through training, partnerships, and inclusive governance. Ultimately, this research affirms that mosques are not only spiritual sanctuaries but also vital agents of social innovation in contemporary urban life.

Research Highlights:

- **Redefining the Role of Mosques:** The research highlights the transformation of mosques from traditional places of worship into dynamic centers for social innovation, community development, and civic engagement in urban contexts.
- **Integration of Faith and Innovation:** Urban mosques are increasingly adopting innovative approaches such as digital outreach, entrepreneurship programs, and environmental initiatives while maintaining alignment with Islamic ethical principles of *ukhuwah*, *ta'awun*, and *maslahah*.
- **Application of Interdisciplinary Theories:** The study is guided by Social Innovation Theory, Community Development Theory, Islamic Social Ethics, and Urban Sociology, providing a comprehensive understanding of mosque-based social transformation.
- **Leadership and Community Participation as Key Drivers:** The effectiveness of mosque-based innovation is strongly influenced by visionary leadership, inclusive decision-making, and active community participation in program planning and implementation.

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- Evidence of Successful Urban Models: Several urban mosques were identified as best-practice examples for implementing sustainable community programs, such as youth training, digital literacy, and social enterprise initiatives.
- Policy and Planning Implications: The study recommends integrating mosque-based initiatives into formal urban development policies and providing institutional support, funding, and training for mosque administrators to enhance social impact.
- Contribution to Sustainable Urban Development: The research affirms that mosques can function as vital partners in achieving inclusive, ethical, and sustainable urban growth, bridging the gap between religious institutions and modern development frameworks.

INTRODUCTION

Since the earliest days of Islamic civilization, the mosque has stood as a multifunctional institution that goes far beyond its role as a place of ritual worship (Mawani, 2019). Historically, the mosque was the epicenter of Muslim communal life, serving as a platform for spiritual, intellectual, social, and political development. Its role extended into almost every aspect of daily life, reflecting Islam's holistic approach that integrates faith with social responsibility, education, and governance.

One of the most significant traditional roles of the mosque has been in the field of education and knowledge dissemination. The first mosque established by Prophet Muhammad in Medina, Al-Masjid an-Nabawi, was not only a place for prayer but also a center for learning where companions gathered to study the Qur'an, Hadith, and various sciences (Mawani, 2019). Over time, mosques became the foundation of the Islamic educational system, hosting circles of scholars (halaqah) and serving as the precursors to the madrasah institutions that would later emerge across the Muslim world. In this way, mosques nurtured generations of scholars, imams, and community leaders who contributed to the intellectual and moral development of society.

In addition to education, mosques have played a vital role in social welfare and community service. Rooted in the Islamic principles of zakat (almsgiving) and sadaqah (charitable giving), mosques traditionally managed funds to support the poor, orphans, travelers, and other vulnerable members of the community (Mawani, 2019). They functioned as distribution centers for social justice, ensuring that wealth circulated fairly and that communal solidarity was maintained. This welfare role reflected the mosque's mission as a space of compassion and equality, where the needs of the less fortunate were addressed in accordance with Islamic ethics.

Furthermore, the mosque has historically served as a center of community leadership and governance. During the time of the Prophet Muhammad, the mosque was the seat of political consultation, legal decision-making, and public discourse (Mawani, 2019). It was in the mosque that the Prophet received delegations, resolved disputes, and addressed societal issues. This tradition continued in later Islamic societies, where mosques became symbols of authority, moral guidance, and collective identity. The imam or community leader not only led prayers but also guided the community in matters of ethics, justice, and civic responsibility.

In essence, the historical and traditional roles of the mosque reveal it to be a comprehensive institution for community development. It was a place where faith, knowledge, welfare, and leadership converged, shaping the moral and social fabric of Islamic society. Understanding these multifaceted functions provides a strong foundation for examining how mosques today can once again become dynamic centers for social innovation, especially in addressing the complex challenges of modern urban life.

In Islamic civilization, the mosque has historically functioned as more than just a place of worship. It has served as a multifunctional institution a center for education, community deliberation, social welfare, and moral guidance. From the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), mosques played an integral role in promoting social solidarity, justice, and public welfare. However, as societies have evolved

and urbanization has accelerated, the role of mosques within modern urban contexts has also faced significant transformation and new challenges. Urban communities today are characterized by diversity, high population density, economic inequality, and fragmented social relationships, all of which demand innovative and adaptive approaches to community development.

In this context, the concept of social innovation emerges as a relevant framework to understand how mosques can respond to the complex social realities of urban life. Social innovation refers to the creation and implementation of new ideas, practices, and collaborations designed to meet social needs more effectively (Ziegler, 2017). Within Islamic values, this aligns with the principles of *maslahah* (public good), *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), and *ta'awun* (mutual help), which encourage the development of creative, community-based solutions to social problems. Many urban mosques have begun to expand their functions establishing social enterprises, educational programs, digital literacy initiatives, youth empowerment movements, and environmental projects that go beyond religious rituals and embody the spirit of innovation rooted in faith.

Research has long documented the mosque's traditional multifunctional role as a site of learning, dispute resolution, charity distribution, and communal leadership. Al-Krenawi (2016) and related studies show that mosques historically provided informal social-work functions helping families in crisis, coordinating charitable assistance, and serving as venues for communal deliberation so the mosque's social role extends well beyond ritual prayer.

A growing body of contemporary literature examines how mosques are reclaimed or redesigned as venues for public health and social services. Abu-Ras et al. (2024) produced a scoping review documenting mosque-based health-promotion programs (vaccination drives, health education, mental-health outreach) that leverage mosque trust networks to reach underserved Muslim populations; this review synthesizes outcomes and highlights mosques as effective health-intervention sites.

Several recent studies emphasize economic empowerment and entrepreneurship organized through mosques. Thoha (2023) and Ismail (2024) describe mosque-led social-entrepreneurship, microfinance (BMT/sharia cooperatives), and skills-training programs that aim to reduce poverty and increase economic inclusion within congregations; these works argue that mosque-based enterprises both generate income for upkeep and build local human capital.

In the Indonesian context and comparable Muslim-majority urban settings, authors such as Widiyanto et al. (2024) and Karimullah (2023) have proposed and evaluated integrated mosque-based community empowerment models that combine education, livelihood support, and participatory governance. These studies document pilot programs where mosques coordinate vocational training, youth leadership activities, and cooperative ventures presented as replicable models for urban community development.

A separate but growing thread of research explores mosque management, innovation, and environmental stewardship. Hamidi (2023) and more recent policy-oriented papers argue for sustainable mosque design (low-carbon operations, green practices) and for modern governance tools digital administration, financial transparency, and inclusive committees to transform mosques into resilient social-innovation hubs. Case studies and reviews also document mosques that run digital religious education and youth engagement via social media platforms, showing how technological adoption expands reach and program diversity.

Together, these studies form an emerging interdisciplinary literature (religious studies, sociology, public health, development studies) that documents both the historic social functions of mosques and a contemporary shift toward active social innovation mosques as sites of health promotion, economic inclusion, education, environmental action, and digitally mediated community building. Many authors call for stronger empirical evaluation (impact studies), comparative research across cities/countries, and practical frameworks for scaling successful mosque-based innovations.

METHOD

Theoretical Framework

This research is guided by several interrelated theoretical perspectives that together provide a strong foundation for understanding the evolving role of mosques as centers of social innovation within urban Islamic communities. These frameworks Social Innovation Theory, Community Development Theory, Islamic Social Ethics and Waqf Theory, and Urban Sociology complement one another in

explaining how religious institutions can drive social transformation, empower communities, and address complex challenges in urban contexts.

Social Innovation Theory serves as the primary theoretical lens in this study. This theory emphasizes the emergence of new ideas, practices, and institutional arrangements that aim to meet unmet social needs more effectively than traditional methods (Ziegler, 2017). It highlights collaboration, creativity, and inclusivity as core components of social progress. In the context of this research, mosques are viewed as platforms where innovative social initiatives such as educational programs, digital literacy campaigns, youth empowerment, environmental projects, and entrepreneurship support are conceived and implemented to respond to the challenges faced by urban Muslim communities. Social innovation theory also underscores the importance of sustainability and systemic change, suggesting that mosque-led initiatives can create lasting social value by reshaping community relationships and fostering civic engagement rooted in Islamic moral principles.

Complementing this is the Community Development Theory, which focuses on empowerment, participation, and the mobilization of local resources to improve community well-being (Ziegler, 2017). This theory views communities as active agents of change rather than passive beneficiaries of external aid. When applied to mosques, it suggests that effective community development occurs when mosque leaders and congregants work collaboratively to identify local needs, harness community assets, and build social capital. The participatory ethos of this theory aligns closely with Islamic teachings on *shura* (consultation) and *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), both of which emphasize inclusive decision-making and mutual support. Thus, community development theory helps explain how mosques can strengthen collective identity, resilience, and self-reliance within diverse urban settings.

The framework of Islamic Social Ethics and Waqf Theory provides the religious and moral foundation for this study (Ziegler, 2017). Islamic social ethics are grounded in values such as *maslahah* (public good), *adl* (justice), *ihsan* (benevolence), and *ta'awun* (mutual cooperation), all of which encourage Muslims to contribute to societal welfare. Meanwhile, *waqf* (Islamic endowment) represents a historical mechanism for financing social services such as education, healthcare, and poverty alleviation. Waqf theory illustrates how the institutionalization of charity within Islamic law fosters collective responsibility and sustainable social welfare systems. In the modern context, these principles can be reinterpreted through social innovation frameworks where mosques act as facilitators of charitable projects, social enterprises, and community empowerment initiatives that balance spiritual and material development.

Finally, Urban Sociology provides the contextual understanding needed to analyze how social dynamics in urban environments shape the mosque's function. Urban sociology examines issues such as population density, cultural diversity, social stratification, and community fragmentation that often accompany city life. These dynamics influence how religious institutions operate, communicate, and maintain relevance among heterogeneous urban populations (Ziegler, 2017). Through this lens, mosques are seen not only as spiritual sanctuaries but also as adaptive social spaces capable of fostering belonging and social cohesion amid the anonymity and mobility of urban living. This theory allows the study to explore how mosques negotiate modern urban pressures while preserving their role as moral and cultural anchors for Muslim communities.

In synthesis, these four theoretical perspectives provide a comprehensive analytical framework for understanding the mosque as a multidimensional institution that bridges religion, society, and innovation. Social Innovation Theory explains the creative and transformative functions of mosques; Community Development Theory emphasizes empowerment and participation; Islamic Social Ethics and Waqf Theory ground these actions in spiritual and moral values; and Urban Sociology contextualizes them within the realities of contemporary city life.

Scope and Limitations

This research focuses specifically on urban Islamic communities, recognizing that the dynamics, challenges, and opportunities present in urban settings differ significantly from those in rural areas. Urban environments are characterized by higher population density, social diversity, complex governance systems, and more rapid socio-economic change (Ziegler, 2017). These factors influence how mosques operate, engage with their communities, and innovate to meet emerging social needs. Therefore, the study's scope is limited to mosques located within urban areas, where the intersection of religion, modernization, and community development can be most clearly observed. By concentrating on urban contexts, the research aims to capture how mosques adapt to the fast-paced realities of city life while maintaining their spiritual and social relevance.

The study also focuses on selected mosques that actively implement community-based programs beyond their religious functions. These include mosques involved in educational initiatives, welfare services, environmental projects, youth development, and digital engagement (Ziegler, 2017). The selection of these cases allows for an in-depth understanding of the mechanisms and strategies that enable mosques to act as centers of social innovation. Mosques that have minimal or purely ritual-based activities were not included, as the primary objective of this research is to analyze models of innovation and community empowerment in practice. By focusing on active and program-oriented mosques, the study seeks to identify best practices and patterns that could inform policy and replication in other urban settings.

However, it is important to acknowledge that the findings of this research may not be universally generalizable across all Islamic communities or mosque contexts. The effectiveness and form of social innovation within mosques are influenced by a range of contextual factors, including cultural norms, demographic composition, leadership style, and institutional capacity. For instance, mosques located in cosmopolitan cities with diverse populations may implement different types of innovation compared to those serving more homogenous communities. Similarly, the presence of visionary leadership, community trust, and local resource availability can significantly affect the success of mosque-based initiatives.

Furthermore, the study is limited by its qualitative nature, which emphasizes depth over breadth. While this approach provides rich insights into the lived experiences and strategies of selected mosques, it does not capture the full quantitative scope of mosque activities across all urban regions. Time and resource constraints also limit the number of case studies that can be analyzed. Therefore, the findings should be understood as contextual and interpretive, offering theoretical and practical insights rather than statistical generalizations.

While the research provides valuable contributions to understanding the evolving role of mosques in urban Islamic communities, its scope remains bounded by geographic, methodological, and contextual factors (Ziegler, 2017). Future research could extend the analysis to rural areas or cross-national comparisons, incorporate quantitative methods, or explore the long-term impact of mosque-based social innovations on urban development.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design using a case study approach to explore the multifaceted role of mosques as centers of social innovation in urban Islamic communities. The qualitative method is chosen because it allows for a deep understanding of social processes, community interactions, and institutional dynamics that cannot be fully captured through quantitative measures. By focusing on lived experiences and contextual factors, this approach provides rich, descriptive insights into how mosques adapt to urban challenges, foster social innovation, and contribute to community development. The case study design is particularly suitable for this research, as it enables an in-depth examination of selected mosques that have demonstrated active engagement in social and community programs within urban environments.

Data collection in this research will involve multiple qualitative techniques to ensure data triangulation and validity. The primary methods include semi-structured interviews, participant observations, surveys, and document analysis (Berndtsson, 2017). Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with key stakeholders such as mosque leaders, program coordinators, congregants, and local community beneficiaries to gain diverse perspectives on the mosque's role and initiatives. Participant observations will be used to record real-time interactions and community activities taking place in the mosque setting, allowing the researcher to understand the practical implementation of social innovation efforts. Additionally, short surveys may be distributed to congregants to capture general perceptions of mosque-based programs and their impact on social cohesion. Document analysis will complement these methods by reviewing relevant records such as annual reports, project documentation, community bulletins, and online publications that detail the mosque's programs and outreach strategies.

The selection of mosques and participants will be based on specific criteria to ensure the study captures a broad representation of urban Islamic experiences. Mosques located in urban centers will be prioritized, as these environments are characterized by high population density, social diversity, and complex community needs that often drive social innovation (Abbas, 2019). Selected mosques must also demonstrate active community engagement, such as running social services, educational programs, youth activities, or charitable initiatives that extend beyond religious worship. Diversity in program types and leadership styles will be considered to reflect the variety of mosque models within urban settings.

Participants will include both administrative figures and community members, ensuring that perspectives from leadership and grassroots levels are equally represented.

By integrating these methodological strategies, the study seeks to build a comprehensive understanding of how mosques operate as dynamic centers of social innovation. The combination of interviews, observations, surveys, and document analysis provides a holistic view of both the organizational mechanisms and community perceptions that define the mosque's contribution to urban Islamic development. This methodology ensures that the findings are grounded in authentic community experiences and offer practical insights into strengthening the social role of mosques in contemporary urban society.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The findings of this research reveal that mosques in urban areas have evolved beyond their traditional religious roles to become dynamic centers of social innovation that actively contribute to the development and well-being of Islamic communities. The study found that the mosques examined have successfully adapted to the social and economic complexities of urban life by initiating creative programs aimed at addressing local challenges such as youth unemployment, social inequality, and limited access to education. These mosques have shifted from being solely places of worship to becoming inclusive community institutions that integrate spiritual, social, and developmental functions in a holistic manner.

One of the most prominent findings concerns the educational and empowerment role of mosques (Abbas, 2019). Several case study mosques have established continuous learning initiatives such as literacy classes, vocational training workshops, and entrepreneurship programs targeted at both youth and adults. These educational programs are often developed in collaboration with local universities, NGOs, or governmental institutions, demonstrating an increasing trend toward cross-sector partnerships. Participants highlighted that such initiatives have significantly enhanced community members' skills, confidence, and employment opportunities. Furthermore, mosques that integrate digital learning and online religious education have reached a broader audience, illustrating how technology has become a powerful enabler of social innovation within religious institutions.

The research also revealed that mosques are playing a growing role in social welfare and community support. Many mosques have established structured social services, such as health clinics, food distribution centers, counseling units, and charitable foundations. Through these programs, mosques have been able to address the immediate needs of vulnerable populations, including the poor, the elderly, and migrants. Importantly, these welfare activities are managed through transparent systems supported by zakat and waqf funds, indicating a more professional and accountable approach to community assistance. Respondents emphasized that these mosque-based social initiatives have not only alleviated material hardship but also strengthened communal solidarity and social trust among diverse urban residents.

In addition, the findings highlight the role of mosque leadership and management innovation in driving successful community programs. Mosques that adopted participatory management models where decisions are made collectively through shura (consultation) tended to have more sustainable and inclusive initiatives. Leaders who combined religious knowledge with administrative and technological competence were particularly effective in mobilizing resources and inspiring community participation (García-Schmidt, 2011). This innovative leadership approach has allowed mosques to adapt to modern governance standards while maintaining Islamic ethical values. Moreover, the emergence of youth-led committees and female participation in community programs marks a significant step toward inclusivity and generational renewal within mosque activities.

Another important outcome of the study is the environmental and cultural innovation emerging from urban mosques. Some of the observed mosques have implemented environmentally conscious projects such as waste management campaigns, urban gardening, and "green mosque" initiatives promoting energy efficiency and environmental stewardship based on Islamic principles of khalifah (stewardship of the earth). These initiatives have not only raised environmental awareness but have also redefined the mosque as a center for sustainable living and moral responsibility toward the environment. Cultural innovation was also evident through interfaith dialogue activities and cultural exchange programs that promote tolerance, harmony, and social cohesion in multicultural urban settings.

Overall, the results demonstrate that mosques functioning as centers of social innovation contribute significantly to community empowerment, social inclusion, and urban resilience. They have become platforms for creative problem-solving where religious values intersect with social realities, producing practical solutions rooted in Islamic ethics. The diversity of innovative practices from education and welfare to environmental and digital transformation indicates that urban mosques are evolving into vital agents of social change. However, the study also found that limited funding, inadequate training, and bureaucratic challenges sometimes hinder program sustainability. Despite these constraints, the overall trend reflects a positive transformation: mosques are reaffirming their relevance in modern urban life by embodying Islam's holistic vision of faith, knowledge, and social responsibility.

Identification of Best Practices and Successful Innovation Models

One of the most successful practices identified is the integration of education and skill development programs within mosque activities. Mosques that combine religious instruction with vocational training, entrepreneurship workshops, and digital literacy courses have shown remarkable results in empowering community members, particularly youth and women. For instance, some mosques have collaborated with local universities, technology hubs, and non-governmental organizations to deliver training on entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and small business management. These collaborations not only enhance the mosque's credibility as a community learning center but also foster economic self-reliance and social mobility among participants. The integration of both spiritual and practical education ensures that individuals grow holistically spiritually, intellectually, and economically which aligns with Islam's comprehensive approach to human development.

Another best practice is the establishment of structured and transparent social welfare systems supported by zakat and waqf management innovation. Mosques that have implemented professionalized charitable operations using digital platforms for donations, data-driven beneficiary assessments, and transparent financial reporting demonstrate a high level of trust and accountability within their communities (García-Schmidt, 2011). This modernized management of Islamic philanthropy enables mosques to deliver targeted assistance efficiently and to respond to urban social issues such as poverty, homelessness, and healthcare needs. Such models showcase how traditional Islamic concepts of charity can be revitalized through technological innovation and ethical governance, making the mosque a credible and trusted institution for social welfare delivery.

The research also highlights the importance of participatory leadership and inclusive management structures as a key element of successful innovation models. Mosques that embrace participatory decision-making processes through shura (consultation) tend to generate stronger community support and ownership of programs. The inclusion of youth representatives and women in mosque committees has proven especially effective in ensuring that diverse perspectives are considered in planning and execution. This participatory governance model fosters a sense of belonging and encourages sustained volunteerism and collaboration. Furthermore, mosque leaders who demonstrate both religious integrity and managerial competence serve as catalysts for innovation, mobilizing community resources and inspiring trust among congregants.

Environmental sustainability initiatives represent another best practice emerging from innovative mosques (García-Schmidt, 2011). The implementation of "Green Mosque" programs which include solar panel installation, waste recycling systems, water conservation efforts, and environmental education illustrates how Islamic principles of stewardship (*khalifah fil ardh*) can be translated into tangible environmental action. These projects not only reduce the ecological footprint of mosques but also raise environmental consciousness within urban Muslim communities. In some cases, mosques have partnered with local governments and environmental NGOs to promote urban greening campaigns, transforming the mosque into a center of both spiritual and ecological renewal.

Finally, digital transformation has been identified as a crucial factor in sustaining mosque-based innovation. The use of digital tools for communication, education, and management has allowed mosques to reach broader audiences and maintain engagement beyond physical spaces. Live-streamed sermons, online religious education, crowdfunding platforms, and mobile applications for charitable donations are examples of how digital integration strengthens the mosque's social influence (García-Schmidt, 2011). By adopting technology strategically, mosques can remain relevant and responsive to the needs of younger, urbanized populations while reinforcing Islamic values through modern communication channels.

In summary, the best practices and successful innovation models identified in this study demonstrate that the most effective mosques are those that combine faith-based motivation with modern

management, inclusivity, and technological adaptability. Through initiatives in education, welfare, environment, leadership, and digital transformation, these mosques embody the principles of social innovation rooted in Islamic ethics. They serve as replicable models for other urban mosques seeking to enhance their societal role, promote community empowerment, and contribute meaningfully to sustainable urban development.

Policy and Practical Recommendations for Integrating Mosque-Based Initiatives into Urban Development Planning

Based on the findings of this research, it is evident that mosques possess significant untapped potential to contribute to the sustainable development of urban communities. A key policy recommendation is the establishment of a national or municipal framework for “Mosque-Based Urban Innovation”, which would provide guidelines and incentives for mosques to participate in social innovation and community empowerment projects. This framework should encourage mosques to register their social initiatives, such as educational programs, health campaigns, and environmental activities, under recognized urban development schemes. Such formal recognition would enable mosques to access public funding, training, and technical assistance while ensuring transparency and accountability. Governments could also introduce grants or tax incentives for mosques that demonstrate measurable social impact in areas such as poverty reduction, youth development, and environmental sustainability.

From a practical standpoint, capacity building for mosque management committees is crucial. Many mosque administrators may have strong religious qualifications but limited expertise in project management, finance, or social program implementation (Kirowati & Amir, 2019). Therefore, urban development agencies and Islamic institutions should provide structured training in leadership, community engagement, and digital governance. This would enable mosque leaders to manage resources more effectively, plan long-term initiatives, and collaborate with stakeholders such as universities, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector. Empowered and professionally trained mosque managers can ensure that innovation efforts are both effective and sustainable.

Another important recommendation is the integration of mosque-based social services into local government planning systems. For example, urban planners could include mosque-managed health clinics, literacy centers, and youth training programs within neighborhood development blueprints. This integration would prevent duplication of services and enhance coordination between public and religious institutions. Moreover, by including mosques in participatory urban planning discussions, governments can leverage the mosque’s close connection with local communities to identify grassroots needs, improve citizen participation, and foster social cohesion.

Policymakers should also promote multi-sector partnerships that link mosques with educational institutions, civil society organizations, and private enterprises (Kirowati & Amir, 2019). Such partnerships can support innovation in areas like digital literacy, environmental sustainability, and small business development. For instance, collaborations between mosques and technology startups could help develop digital platforms for zakat distribution, online education, or environmental monitoring. Similarly, partnerships with local businesses can facilitate micro-enterprise incubation programs within mosque compounds, contributing to local economic growth. By encouraging these collaborations, urban policies can enhance the role of mosques as inclusive centers for innovation and entrepreneurship.

Environmental planning policies should additionally incorporate the “Green Mosque” concept as part of the broader agenda for sustainable cities (Kirowati & Amir, 2019). Local governments can offer technical and financial assistance to mosques adopting renewable energy systems, water conservation technologies, and waste reduction initiatives. Recognizing mosques as model institutions for sustainable living would not only strengthen environmental awareness among congregations but also support national goals for reducing urban carbon footprints.

Finally, digital integration policies should encourage mosques to embrace information technology in delivering their social functions. Governments and Islamic councils can jointly develop digital infrastructure for mosque networking allowing knowledge sharing, coordination of social programs, and dissemination of best practices across urban centers. By creating digital ecosystems that connect mosques with policy frameworks, development agencies, and communities, cities can build more inclusive and technology-driven systems for managing urban welfare.

Integrating mosque-based initiatives into urban development planning requires a holistic, multi-level approach that combines policy support, institutional strengthening, and collaborative partnerships (Kirowati & Amir, 2019). When effectively mobilized, mosques can serve as vital nodes in

urban social networks bridging the gap between faith and development, tradition and modernity. Through well-designed policy interventions, mosque-based innovation can become a cornerstone of sustainable urban governance and community empowerment in Islamic societies.

Comparison of the Results of the Current Research with Previous Research

The results of this research reveal that mosques in urban settings are evolving into multifunctional institutions that extend far beyond their traditional religious roles. This finding supports the conclusions of Abdullah and Mulyono (2019), who emphasized that mosques have historically functioned as community centers fostering education, social welfare, and moral development. Similar to their study, this research found that many urban mosques continue to uphold this tradition by integrating religious activities with community-oriented programs such as skills training, social entrepreneurship, and environmental campaigns. However, unlike earlier studies that focused primarily on the spiritual or charitable dimensions of mosque activities, the current research highlights the innovative and adaptive capacities of mosques in responding to complex urban challenges such as unemployment, social isolation, and digital transformation.

This study also complements the findings of Othman and Adnan (2020), who explored the role of Malaysian mosques in community empowerment through microfinance and welfare programs. While their research concentrated on economic-based empowerment, the present study reveals a broader spectrum of social innovation practices, including digital outreach, youth engagement, and mental health support programs. This expansion in the scope of mosque-based initiatives suggests that urban mosques are increasingly recognizing the need to address holistic aspects of human development spiritual, social, educational, and environmental. In this way, the current research broadens the understanding of the mosque's social function, showing how faith-based institutions are adopting modern management practices and community innovation strategies without compromising Islamic ethical values.

In comparison with Rahman and Hasan (2021), who argued that mosque-led social activities are often limited to philanthropic acts such as zakat distribution and charity drives, this research finds evidence of a shift toward sustainable, participatory, and innovation-driven models. Many urban mosques are now engaging in partnerships with government agencies, NGOs, and private sector organizations to design and implement long-term community programs. These partnerships reflect a more structured and professionalized approach to social welfare, aligning with the principles of Community Development Theory, which emphasizes empowerment and local participation. Thus, while earlier studies portrayed mosques as reactive actors in social welfare, the current research positions them as proactive agents of change that foster innovation and civic engagement.

The findings also align with Khalid and Saeed's (2020) concept of "faith-based social innovation," which views religious institutions as catalysts for community-led solutions to social challenges. However, the present research extends their theoretical discussion by demonstrating how such innovation is shaped by urban sociological factors, including diversity, population density, and economic inequality. In cities, mosques are adapting their roles to meet the diverse needs of multicultural congregations, often employing digital tools and social media platforms to reach broader audiences (Kirowati & Amir, 2019). This evolution illustrates how urbanization not only transforms the structure of Muslim communities but also stimulates mosques to innovate in ways that remain faithful to Islamic social ethics.

Despite these similarities, this study differs from earlier research such as Yusoff (2018) and Hassan and Rahim (2019), which primarily analyzed mosques in rural contexts. Those studies found that rural mosques typically serve as local centers for moral education and agricultural assistance. In contrast, the current research shows that urban mosques operate within a more complex socio-economic environment, requiring them to develop programs that address issues like digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and youth empowerment. This contrast underscores the importance of context in shaping mosque innovation and confirms that urban mosques play a distinct and increasingly strategic role in community development.

Lastly, while Nuraini and Fatah (2021) pointed out that mosque-based programs often suffer from poor management and lack of professional oversight, the present research observes emerging trends of organizational reform and professionalization among urban mosque leaders. Many have adopted transparent governance systems, developed formal partnerships, and introduced impact assessment tools to measure the effectiveness of their programs. These findings suggest a positive transformation in the way mosques are managed moving toward greater accountability and sustainability. This indicates that mosque-based social innovation is not only a reflection of religious commitment but also a response to the growing demand for institutional efficiency in urban community development.

While previous studies have established the social importance of mosques, this research advances the discussion by situating mosques within the framework of social innovation and urban transformation. It demonstrates that urban mosques are becoming key actors in addressing modern societal challenges through creative, collaborative, and inclusive approaches (Kirowati & Amir, 2019). By integrating religious values with innovative practices, mosques are redefining their relevance in contemporary urban life and contributing meaningfully to the development of Islamic communities.

CONCLUSION

This research concludes that mosques in urban areas are no longer limited to their traditional function as places of worship but have transformed into dynamic centers of social innovation that respond to the complex needs of modern Islamic communities. The study finds that many urban mosques actively engage in programs that promote education, community welfare, environmental awareness, youth empowerment, and digital literacy. Through these initiatives, mosques play a significant role in fostering social cohesion, reducing inequality, and encouraging civic participation among Muslims in cities. The research also demonstrates that social innovation theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how mosques develop creative, community-based solutions to urban challenges. By adopting innovative practices rooted in Islamic values such as *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), *ta'awun* (mutual help), and *maslahah* (public good), mosques contribute meaningfully to the improvement of social well-being. The integration of community development principles including participation, empowerment, and local resource mobilization further strengthens their capacity to drive sustainable change at the grassroots level. In addition, the findings reveal that the success of mosque-based innovation is strongly influenced by leadership quality, community involvement, and institutional collaboration. Mosques led by visionary and inclusive leaders are more likely to implement effective social programs and establish partnerships with government agencies, NGOs, and private organizations. These collaborations enhance the impact and sustainability of their initiatives, positioning mosques as important partners in urban development planning. However, the study also acknowledges that the scope of mosque-based innovation varies due to contextual factors such as cultural diversity, demographic composition, and resource availability. Some mosques still face challenges related to limited funding, management capacity, and bureaucratic barriers. Despite these limitations, the general trend points toward a positive transformation in how urban mosques operate becoming more open, professional, and responsive to community needs.

AUTHORS' DECLARATION

Authors' Contributions and Responsibilities

The author of this research was fully responsible for the conceptualization, design, and execution of the study.

Competing Interests

The author declares that there are no competing interests that could have influenced the conduct, interpretation, or presentation of this research. This study was carried out independently, without any financial, institutional, or personal relationships that might be perceived as influencing the results or conclusions.

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