

‘Mosque for Women’: History, Concept and Gender Spatial Use

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Abstract

This study examines the concept of the “mosque for women” to explore women’s participation in mosques from the early Islamic period to the present and to assess how women-friendly mosque initiatives contribute to women’s empowerment. It addresses two research questions: (1) how has women’s participation in mosques evolved over time, and (2) how do contemporary women-friendly mosques support women’s empowerment and inclusive community development? The study draws on Islamic perspectives on gender relations, women’s empowerment theory, and the framework of *maqāṣ id al-shari’ ah*. Using a qualitative approach, the research combines historical analysis, literature review, and comparative case studies of women-led and women-friendly mosques in different national contexts. Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and secondary document analysis conducted between 2020 and 2024, with the Grand Mosque of Istiqlal in Jakarta serving as the primary case study. The findings indicate that mosques in early Islam functioned as inclusive spaces that enabled women’s participation in religious, educational, and social activities. Contemporary women-friendly mosque initiatives, particularly at Istiqlal Mosque. This study contributes to the literature on faith-based development by demonstrating how women-friendly mosques can foster gender-inclusive participation, social inclusion, and women’s empowerment within Muslim communities.

Keywords: women friendly mosque, history, concept, practice.

Background

As a space dedicated to religiosity, peace, and humanity, mosques have played a crucial role in enhancing welfare and prosperity. In various countries, mosques have been studied from multiple perspectives, including Islamic studies, sociology, anthropology, and social work. These studies focus on aspects such as the mosque’s history, architecture, roles, functions, and programs. In the period and aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, mosques and other religious institutions have contributed significantly to community support by facilitating vaccination drives, social aid, and interfaith dialogue. They have used religious language to

educate people about prevention and coping strategies related to the virus.

Historically, two key events illustrate how the mosque was utilized by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as a foundation for building a desirable society. The first is the event of Isra’ and Mi’raj, which established the mosque as the starting point for performing prayers and empowerment. The second event is the Prophet’s migration to Medina, known as Hijrah, where his initial activity was to construct the Quba Mosque. This was followed by the establishment of the Prophet’s Mosque, which houses the holy graves of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his companions Usman bin Affan and Umar bin Al-

Khattab. Both mosques continue to attract numerous visitors, especially during Umrah and Hajj pilgrimages.

The mosques in the holy cities of Madinah and Makkah hold significant virtues in the lives of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), his companions, and his followers. These mosques were not only places of worship but also multifunctional centers where important discussions took place and where both material and spiritual needs were addressed.¹ Beyond the construction of mosques, Muslims are encouraged to promote societal wealth and invigorate Islamic da'wah. The Prophet cautioned against merely building mosques without ensuring their prosperity, stating, "That will come to my followers on the day that they exaggerate to build a mosque, but they have little to make it prosperous". In the holy al-Quran, it is also explained: "Those who prosper the mosque are those who believe in Allah and the last day, establish prayers and pay zakat, and fear nothing except the wrath of Allah".

Salat (prayer), one of the Five Pillars of Islam alongside the declaration of faith (syahadat), fasting during Ramadan, giving alms (zakat), and performing Hajj, is particularly rewarding when performed in congregation. Muslims are thus tasked with advancing their mosques by organizing diverse religious, social, and economic activities that enhance the quality of life for the entire community, with particular

attention to women, children, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities.²

Few studies have comprehensively explored the participation of women in mosques from the early Islamic era to the present including the need for addressing women's aspiration, potential and empowerment. This study aims to investigate the concept of the "Mosque for Women," focusing on two key models: women-led mosques found in various countries (both Muslim and non-Muslim) and women-friendly mosques, particularly prominent in Indonesia and Malaysia. The study also examines the women-friendly mosque initiatives conducted by Indonesian mosques, with a specific case study of the Great Mosque of Istiqlal in Jakarta. By doing so, it seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of both models of mosques designed to support and empower women.

Mosques in Early Islamic History

The long history of Islam as a worldwide civilization makes it not only identifiable and beneficial to the community, but also lively and captivating, enabling Muslims to establish strong roots and leave a lasting impact wherever the religion exists. Muslims have a duty to carry out the roles that mosques are supposed to play, as the Prophet Muhammad previously illustrated during his lifetime (see table 1). The mosques' roles, functions and activities in early Islamic history, developed more throughout the caliphate's eras.³ The mosque served a far wider

¹ Nayeem Asif et al., "Mosque Institution and Building: Evaluating Sustainable Space, Function, Program, and Activities," in *Advances in Civil Engineering Materials: Selected Articles from the 6th International Conference on Architecture and Civil Engineering (ICACE 2022), August 2022, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia* (Springer, 2023), 139–51, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-8024-4_11; Mohammed M Alnaim and Emad Noaime, "Mosque as a Multi-Functional Public Space Destination: Potential Breathing Space in Dense Urban Fabrics of Hail City, Saudi Arabia," *Open House International* 48, no. 3 (September 7, 2023): 450–71, <https://doi.org/10.1108/OHI-08-2022-0214>; Betül Alaca, "The Role of Mosques in Promoting Well-Being in Muslim Communities" (University of Toronto (Canada), 2022).

² Syazwan Nazri Amir et al., "Impact of Religious Activities on Quality of Life and Cognitive Function among Elderly," *Journal of Religion and Health* 61, no. 2 (2022): 1564–84; Sehrish Shikarpurya and Shailen M Singh, "Value Them as Members of the Community: Existing Support Structures in Mosques for South Asian Muslim Families of Children with IDD Living in the United States," *Journal of Disability & Religion* 25, no. 2 (2021): 159–80.

³ Amer Alnajjar and Tuğba Erdil Dinçel, "Changing Forms and Functions: The Transformation of Mosque Architecture from The Early Islamic Period to The Present," *Mekansal Çalışmalar Dergisi* 1, no. 2 (2024): 94–106.

range of purposes in the early days of Islam than it does now.⁴

Islam has historically demonstrated a profound inclusiveness, embraced diverse ethnicities and reflected the cultural richness of the civilizations it has encountered. Wiryomartono (2023) highlights that the fundamental principles of Islamic architecture can be traced back to the Prophet Muhammad’s transformation of his mosque in Madinah.⁵ The Islamic architecture, for example, serves as a testament to this adaptability, showcasing its cultural relevance across various peoples, regions, and periods. Consequently, Islamic architecture can appear distinctly Arabian in the Arabian Peninsula, African in Mali, and Chinese in China, among other examples.

Table 1. shows that the Prophet’s Mosque in Madinah

Roles	Functions	Activities
Center for religious activities	Improving the quality of faith and obedience	Praying together and performing dzikir and du’a
Center for learning and teaching	Teaching sciences Having a library Conducting spiritual academic excellent	Running classes on sciences (philosophy, arts, economics, etc.) Having Islamic book collections and other facilities Learning and teaching al-Qur’an and Hadit Providing religious consultation

⁴ David A King, “Science in the Service of Religion: The Case of Islam,” in *Astronomy in the Service of Islam* (Routledge, 2024), 1–245; Shahed Saleem, “The Mosque in Britain Finding Its Place,” in *Religious Architecture* (Routledge, 2025), 185–204; Mohamed El Boujjoufi, Ahmed Mustafa, and Jacques Teller, “Does Mosque Location Matter? Mosque and Islamic Shops in the European Context,” *Journal of Islamic Marketing* 14, no. 2 (January 26, 2023): 465–83, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIMA-01-2021-0007>.

⁵ Bagoes Wiryomartono, “Mosque Architecture: The Roots and Sources Of,” in *Historical Mosques in Indonesia and the Malay World: Roots, Transformations, and Developments* (Springer, 2023), 15–36.

Roles	Functions	Activities
Center for improving economy	Establishing “Baitul Maal” Facilitating for community-economic development	Collecting zakat, infaq and shadaqah Providing trainings for having business Destination for religious tourism
Center for welfare and charity	Providing space for gatherings or <i>sillaturrabim</i> Providing social services Conducting interfaith Dialogue An eating place for the hungry and needy	Inviting the congregation to come and get involved in the activities Distributing social assistance Providing “shelter” for people without homes Taking care for funeral services Facilitate for visits and dialogue among religious leaders and congregations Provide free food (bread and meat)
Center for Government	Conducting diplomacy A section of the Department of Information and Culture	Welcoming delegations from other countries Consultation and training to prepare plans and equipment for Mujahidin (who fight in the way of Allah) and strategies for the campaigns and diplomacy
Center for Justice	Having judiciary court	Making decisions for dispute cases and conflict
Center for detention and rehabilitation	Security and empowerment	Assisting prisoners during the period of detention
Center for medical and nursing	Having health facilities and services	Treating patients
Center for entertainment	Provide a platform for oratory, eloquence and poetry	Performing arts and music Sport activities

Table 1 shows that the Prophet’s Mosque in Madinah fulfilled multiple roles beyond its primary function as a religious center. It served as a hub for social activities, welfare, health, and security, as well as an educational institution and the seat of the Muslim government. Additionally, the mosque addressed the needs and interests of women, a topic that will be discussed further in the next section.

Women's Participation

In early history of Islam, mosque accommodate women's presence and participation in mosques led by the Prophet's wives called 'Ummahat al-Mu'mininun' (Mother of the Believers). Their roles and contributions are mainly in learning and teaching specific fields of Islamic knowledge, namely exegesis (tafsir), hadith scholarship, and jurisprudence (fiqh). Two wives of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) that are 'Aishah and Hafsa (the third and the second daughters of Caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (d. c. 656 AD) played important roles in transmitting, authenticating and teaching Islam.

Some studies have explored the roles of Aishah and Hafsa, focusing on methodological approaches to enhance the portrayal of women in religious traditions and promote their engagement with primary religious sources. For example, Aishah was a source of 1,210 hadith narrations of the Prophet, with 174 of these authenticated in two of the most prominent hadith collections: Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim. Her contributions to Islamic scholarship are significant and highlight the important role women have played in the preservation and dissemination of religious knowledge.⁶

The construction of Muhammad's home began swiftly with the courtyard serving both as a mosque and a venue for organizing neighbourhood affairs. The shared wall between the mosque and his house allowed the Prophet to easily fulfil his responsibilities as the religious and political leader of the Muslim community. In essence, the Prophet's mosque became the central hub for all religious and communal activities. Furthermore, the mosque serves as a place for celebrations, socializing, and amusement. Hadiths

from Bukhari and Muslim narrate instances that illustrate this. 'A'isha recounted, "The Messenger of Allah (saw) once covered me while I was watching the Abyssinians playing with their spears in the mosque." She also reported, "A black girl who lived in a small room in the mosque used to come to talk to me, and every time she sat, she recited a verse of poetry." These hadiths indicate that it is permitted to sleep and rest in the mosque.

Bashir (2025) noted that during the reign of Caliph Umar (634–644 H), policies became particularly restrictive for women, both in private and public life. He aimed to confine women to their homes and discouraged their attendance at mosques. When women did gather for prayers, he mandated segregated spaces.⁷ However, it is significant that the Prophet Muhammad appointed a woman, Ummu Waraka, to serve as imam for her entire household. After the Prophet's death, prominent women like Aisha and Ummu Salama also led prayers for other women. Under the third caliph, Uthman bin Affan (644–656 H), men and women were once again permitted to attend the mosque together, though women prayed in separate groups and left after the men. This practice persists today, with men and women continuing to share spaces in mosques. Additionally, even in some non-Muslim countries, mosques have been established specifically to address the unique needs and concerns of women. The following section explored these two models of mosques for women.

In conclusion, early Islam shows that mosques were essential, providing spaces and opportunities for both men and women to participate in activities, develop their spirituality, enhance their skills, and find leisure. The next section examines two models of mosques for women, which have been practiced for centuries in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries,

⁶ Jens Koehrsen, "Muslims and Climate Change: How Islam, Muslim Organizations, and Religious Leaders Influence Climate Change Perceptions and Mitigation Activities," *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 12, no. 3 (2021): e702; Ahmad Faisal et al., "Strengthening Religious Moderatism through the Traditional Authority of Kiai in Indonesia," *Cogent Social Sciences* 8, no. 1 (2022): 2150450.

⁷ Arshi Bashir, "The Governance System And Policy Framework Of Hazrat Umar Ra: A Historical Review," *Journal of Media Horizons* 6, no. 2 (2025): 693–702.

addressing the needs and emphasizing the importance of women's leadership and responsibilities.

Two Models of 'Mosque for Women'

Mosques serve as the central places where Muslims perform the five pillars of Islam: shahada (faith), salat (prayer), sawm (fasting), zakat (charity), and hajj (pilgrimage).⁸ To gather and perform these acts of worship, Muslims utilize a masjid or mosque, demonstrating their obedience and submission to Allah (SWT). This "vertical spirituality bond" is crucial in Islamic teachings, guiding Muslims in both this life and the hereafter. Additionally, salat, or prayer, extends beyond personal devotion to encompass a "horizontal relationship" with one's surroundings. Muslims are encouraged to reflect the values of salat in their interactions with others, promoting peaceful coexistence and maintaining high standards of cleanliness and hygiene, both within the mosque and in all areas of daily life.⁹ This section delves into two types of mosques for women: women's mosques and women-friendly mosques, examining their programs, events, facilities, services, leadership, and participation to gain a deeper understanding of their roles and functions.

Two Applied Models

The primary mission of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is to be 'rahmatan lil 'alamin' (a blessing to the world), which is reflected in

⁸ Alaca, "The Role of Mosques in Promoting Well-Being in Muslim Communities"; Kirsten Wesselhoeft, "Islam—Communities and Practices," *Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics*, 2022, 792–801.

⁹ Muthoifin Muthoifin and Adnanda Yudha Rhezaldi, "Community Economic Empowerment through Mosque Management to Improve People's Welfare," *Multidisciplinary Reviews* 7, no. 8 (2024): 2024134; M I Jamail et al., "Sustainable Mosque Designs from the Perspectives of Social Inclusion: Comparisons of Four Mosques in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia," *International Journal of Sustainable Construction Engineering and Technology* 14, no. 5 (2023): 328–35; In-Ju Kim, "Safeguarding Public Facilities: A Study on Enhancing Safety in Mosque Amenities through Slip-Resistance and Surface Innovations," *Facilities* 42, no. 7/8 (2024): 709–28.

activities such as salat, learning Islam, and spreading its peaceful messages (Islamic syiar) through mosque programs and activities. Mosques welcome people from diverse backgrounds, including different religions, genders, ages, ethnicities, and social classes, fostering local and global collaboration and partnership. It is unacceptable to favour one group over another in a mosque based on their backgrounds or socio-economic status. In essence, mosques belong to everyone, offering services equally to all, serving those in need, and upholding diversity and gender equality.

The concept of mosques for women is implemented through two models: women's mosques and women-friendly mosques. These models differ in their approach to salat and other rituals, leadership and participation, programs, activities, and services that address women's needs. Women's mosques typically provide facilities such as wudhu (ablution areas), spacious prayer areas, and well-covered entrances. In contrast, women-friendly mosques offer wudhu and prayer spaces for female congregants. Both models are found in Muslim and non-Muslim countries, including regions such as China, America and Canada, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia, and they adapt to the respective cultures, dynamics of Muslim communities, and socio-political circumstances.

The first model of women's mosques offers female-only worship or women-led worship. While Islamic scholarship indicates that Muslim women have led prayers since the founding of Islam, there is ongoing debate among scholars about whether women can lead the Friday sermon (khutbah). Women's mosques can be found in various countries, including China, Canada, and the United States.

China is actually the first country to have provided women's mosques for several centuries. Hui Muslim communities began encouraging women to learn more theology for religious reasons. Consequently, some women who had received religious instruction started to

incorporate Islamic observances into their regular practices, leading to the creation of women's mosques. Wangjia Hutong Women's Mosque in Kaifeng, built in 1820, is the oldest women's mosque still in existence in China.¹⁰ By the 20th century, there were separate places of worship specifically for women, either as standalone women's mosques or as women-only sections attached to larger mosques. The women's mosques in China are managed by women, often the wives of the imam of the larger mosque. Two prominent figures in women's mosques, Du Ahong and Guo Ahong, have played significant roles as leaders, introducing innovative approaches to address the challenges of religious leadership, especially in areas where Muslims are a minority. Guo Ahong, in particular, has spearheaded educational reforms for people of all ages and literacy levels. She has enhanced the curriculum by incorporating traditional teaching methods, integrating relevant book excerpts, and maintaining a teaching style that combines moral and religious education.¹¹

Women began reclaiming mosque spaces as a response to patriarchal structures and the subordination of women, fostering alternatives to transform existing social norms. In the USA, women-only mosques emerged, while in the UK, Norway, and France, mixed-gender mosques where men and women prayed side by side became examples of this shift. Although less radical than these Western approaches. In Turkey, Islamic women seeking equality began

encroaching on the men's section of the mosque, while they still accepted praying behind men, they became part of the congregation and gained visibility. Turkish women actively oppose male-dominated interpretations of Islam and its applications. Women's mosques in Western countries reflect the growing Muslim populations and their evolving needs. In America, the first women's mosque, the Women's Mosque of America, was established in Los Angeles, California. It held its inaugural town hall meeting on August 23, 2014.

In recent years, there has been a significant movement within the United States to create women-friendly mosques that foster inclusivity and empowerment. These efforts are part of a broader trend to ensure that mosques reflect the values of equality and justice inherent in Islam. It was founded to create a space where Muslim women could feel comfortable and empowered to take on religious leadership roles. The mosque hosts women-only Friday prayers and offers a range of programs aimed at spiritual growth and community building.¹²

According to Nas (2022), women's groups and youths have specific needs when attending mosques in the United States.¹³ The Women's Mosque of America was founded to address the shortcomings of mosques established by recent Muslim immigrants, which often failed to meet the needs of American Muslim women due to restrictive cultural interpretations of Islam that misrepresented the teachings of the Qur'an.¹⁴ Currently, the Women's Mosque of America is developing an innovative Qur'an Literacy

¹⁰ Jing Wang, "Affective Matrilocality and Women's Voices: A History of Muslim Women Writers in China," in *Matrilineal, Matriarchal, and Matrifocal Islam: The World of Women-Centric Islam* (Springer, 2024), 113–44.

¹¹ Raqib Moslimany, Anzar Otaibi, and Frugo Shaikh, "Designing a Holistic Curriculum: Challenges and Opportunities in Islamic Education," *Journal on Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2024): 52–73; Badrah Uyuni and Mohammad Adnan, "Philosophical Foundations in Training Traditional Religious Educators: Bridging Past and Present," *Futurity Philosophy* 3, no. 2 (2024): 40–65; Mujahid Mujahid and Khoirunisa Nur Fajrina, "Integrating Traditional and Modern Educational Methods: An Analysis of Islamic Values in 'Aqidatu Al-'Awām and the Application of Problem-Based Learning," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 20, no. 1 (2023): 98–118.

¹² Afsana Akhter, "Women in Mosque: An Ethnographic Study of Muslim Women Experiences at Two Mosques in South Florida" (Florida Atlantic University, 2023); Ayşenur Şenel, "Claiming Mosque Space: Women's Agency in Mosque Architecture in Contemporary Turkey" (Bilkent University, 2022).

¹³ Alparslan Nas, "'Women in Mosques': Mapping the Gendered Religious Space through Online Activism," *Feminist Media Studies* 22, no. 5 (2022): 1163–78.

¹⁴ Alalddin Al-Tarawneh, "The Role of Quran Translations in Radicalizing Muslims in the West and Misrepresenting Islam," *Journal of Religion and Violence* 9, no. 1 (2021): 101–22.

Program, a co-educational initiative organized by women. This program aims to empower the global Muslim ummah by encouraging everyone to study the entire Qur'an in English within a year.¹⁵ The participants of the study as immigrants coming to America showed their concerns for assisting their needs including the need for improving language and accessing health programs like screening cancer.

For several years, community leaders discussed the concept of the Women's Mosque of Canada, which was initially conceived in early 2012. During this period, Imama and Co-Founder Farheen Khan conducted a series of surveys and in-person interviews with local academics and community leaders, yielding mixed responses. Traditionalists expressed concern about the lack of precedent for a space exclusively reserved for women. However, the need for an inclusive Islam, involving a nuanced examination of sacred texts through a lens of diversity and inclusion, ultimately outweighed these concerns. Progressives advocated for a dedicated sacred space, emphasizing its importance for fostering inclusivity. Then, the Women's Mosque of Canada was established in April 2019 and relocated to Toronto's Regent Park community in July 2019. The mosque was founded to uphold women's equal rights in Islam and society by actively opposing all forms of oppression and violence against women, including forced marriage, polygamy, domestic

abuse, sexual assault, human trafficking, and female genital mutilation.¹⁶

While some non-Muslim countries have established women's mosques, most Muslim countries in the Middle East and Southeast Asia implement women-friendly mosques. This includes the two holy mosques: Masjid al-Nabawi, which houses the grave of Prophet Muhammad, and Masjid al-Haram, home to the Kaabah (the sacred black cubic stone structure). In comparing the two, Masjid al-Nabawi generally offers better-managed amenities for women, including main entrances, ablution facilities, toilets, zam zam water, and designated prayer spaces both indoors and outdoors. However, certain rituals such as tawaf and sa'i are essential for umrah and hajj, can only be performed at Masjid al-Haram.

As Islam spread through the Caliphates to various parts of the world, many historic mosques were established, such as the Al-Azhar Mosque in Cairo, Egypt.¹⁷ The city, later known as "the City of a Thousand Minarets," saw the construction of its first mosque in 970 when it became the new capital of the Fatimid Caliphate. These developments gradually limited the mosque's role from being a comprehensive institution to one primarily focused on worship and seclusion.¹⁸

The Egyptian Islamic women show little interest in reinterpreting male-dominated traditions. Educating women in religion and

¹⁵ Ahmad Bukhori Muslim et al., "Indonesian Pesantren-Affiliated Higher Education: Universal Islamic Values to Develop Locally Engaged but Globally Oriented Multilingual Graduates," *Research in Post-Compulsory Education* 29, no. 1 (2024): 138–57; LGMZ Atsani et al., "Management of the Nahdlatul Wathan Lombok Qur'an Home Education Strategy in Creating Qur'anic Generations," *Al Hikmah: Journal of Education* 4, no. 1 (2023): 77–92; Agus Eko Cahyono, Yayuk Widyastuti Herawati, and Abdul Muntaqim Al Anshory, "Increasing Quality of Reciting Al-Qur'an by Using Ummi Method: Community Assistance & Empowering Al-Ihsan Mosque for Dhuafa," *International Journal of Social Science and Community Service* 3, no. 2 (2025): 98–113.

¹⁶ Justin Jones, "Acting upon Our Religion?: Muslim Women's Movements and the Remodelling of Islamic Practice in India," *Modern Asian Studies* 55, no. 1 (2021): 40–74; Salwa Bajabir, "The Role of Islamic Culture Curriculum in Saudi Universities in Promoting Women's Rights" (University of Birmingham, 2025); Iselin Frydenlund, "Protecting Buddhist Women from Muslim Men: Love Jihad' and the Rise of Islamophobia in Myanmar," *Religions* 12, no. 12 (2021): 1082.

¹⁷ Aliasger Najam Madraswala, "Masjid or Museum: Conservation in Pre-Modern Egypt," in *Religious Values and Restoration in Historic Cairo: The Ihya' of Al-Jami' Al-Anwar* (Springer, 2025), 19–46.

¹⁸ Abdul Jamil Wahab et al., "A Theological Approach to the Construction of Houses of Worship in Indonesia," *Cogent Social Sciences* 10, no. 1 (2024): 2356914.

integrating Islam into daily life is more emphasized rather than challenging masculine interpretations of the faith. Al-Azhar mosque's features designated spaces for women, including a main entrance and prayer areas, all set within a stunning architectural design characterized by light brown walls and dark wooden pillars. The mosque has a large open rectangular space surrounded by the mosque's terrace, divided and accessible for both female and male congregants. Some Indonesian students who became the participants of the study mentioned that they regularly visited the mosques to pray Jum'ah and listen to khutbah from well-known Syaikh of al-Azhar. A student explained "... It is such an honour for us to meet and directly learn kitab from the author or great ulama when we attend prayer at the mosque". The mosque also fosters a strong religious atmosphere through the recitation of the Qur'an, prayers, and sermons.

Turkiye is another country that is home to numerous fascinating mosques, many of which date back to the Ottoman Caliphate era and have now become popular tourist attractions. These mosques bring the nation's history to life and connect with people of all ages. According to Senel (2021), unlike global debates among Islamist feminists, which often focus on 'women-only,' 'gender-mixed,' and 'women-focused/women-led' mosques, the discourse in Turkey has centered on the shared use of mosque spaces by both genders.¹⁹

Boztas and Turkmen (2024) highlighted that the evolution of Turkey offers a unique opportunity to explore the role of space within a historical context and to discuss how social, cultural, and political spheres have transformed alongside Republican reforms.²⁰ With the

establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the roles of mosques in social, political, and physical aspects of society underwent significant changes. Public services once managed by mosques, such as education, health, culture, housing, and social support for the poor, were taken over by the new Turkish government and various organizations. One of the participants who work as lecturer of university in Istanbul explained "some mosque in Turkiye now manage fund from collected wakaf to support hospitals or health issues and empower economy through local business..". Another also added "Old famous mosques in Turkiye become for popular tourism destination where visitors can learn the history of Turkiye through magnificent mosque buildings..".

Unequal gender roles in mosques are both preserved and challenged. Women accepting sexually segregated spaces provides them opportunities for inclusion but also creates discrimination. In order to make mosques better places for themselves, women negotiate the gendering of space by quietly occupying the back seats of the men's section. Women transgressing the defined borders and appropriating the space by themselves is an excellent example of the actualisation of their agency.²¹

A radical space appropriation like in Western countries does not seem possible in Turkey. However, if women continue to claim space and render themselves active agents, there is great hope for Turkey that the patriarchal era in mosque spaces will be over. Even though the Turkish Islamist government tries to implement a better relationship for women with mosques, the aim has been the creation of a national identity. Women only played roles in the political ideologies and power struggles between men. Therefore, although it may help women's emancipation and provide them power through

¹⁹ Akhter, "Women in Mosque: An Ethnographic Study of Muslim Women Experiences at Two Mosques in South Florida"; Senel, "Claiming Mosque Space: Women's Agency in Mosque Architecture in Contemporary Turkey."

²⁰ Asena Boztas and N Ceren Turkmen, "An Interdisciplinary Analysis of Turkiye's Space Policy: An Economic and Political Perspective," *Space Policy*, 2024, 101664.

²¹ Parichehr Kazemi, "Subverting Patriarchal Control and Re-Signifying Space with Social Media Images: The Case of 'My Stealthy Freedom,'" *Gender, Place & Culture*, 2025, 1–24.

space, it still renders them passive actors. Women have agency in how they use mosque spaces, but that agency is constrained by the masculine norms that govern space.²²

The second model, women-friendly mosques, is also prevalent in Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia. These mosques are typically large, with designated smaller spaces for women, including areas for prayer, breastfeeding, accessing toilets, and participating in women's programs.²³ Women play a significant role in these mosques, particularly in educating female congregants through majelis ta'lim, where some serve as teachers and assistants. Moreover, women's leadership and participation in mosque programs and activities are focused on enhancing their knowledge, skills, and experiences.

In conclusion, women's mosques offer greater support for female leaders to make decisions for their congregations, while women-friendly mosques are led by male Imams or leaders. The following section delves deeper into the concept of women-friendly mosques, with a focus on the initiatives undertaken by Great Mosque of Istiqlal as an example of Indonesian women friendly mosque.

Gender Spatial Use at Women Friendly Mosque

Mosques are public spaces that serve specific religious purposes and play a crucial role in fostering social integration, cohesion, and improving the quality of life within a community. To support this role, governments, organizations, and individuals involved in sponsoring and establishing mosques should ensure that the

facilities and services are gender-responsive, meeting the needs of all congregants and community members.²⁴ This includes providing separate spaces, changing rooms, and designated entrances to help women maintain their modesty, privacy, and dignity while participating in mosque activities.

According to gendered space theory, spaces are socially produced in accordance with cultural norms and gender roles. Commonly, male and female congregants perform prayers (*salat*) in separated spaces in many mosques by walls, separate entrances, balconies, or sections set apart for prayer. These differences are mostly in reflection on religious interpretation.

Scholars explain that mosque as a social and political site where power relations are negotiated.²⁵ According to Nyhagen (2019), women both submit to and defy dominating. Then, the discussion raise questions of examines how women negotiate inclusion, who controls religious space, and how architectural design either supports or contradicts gender inequity in mosque studies.

A study by the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU) found that approximately 66% of American mosques offer separate spaces for women, which are sometimes of lower quality than those provided for men.

As previously mentioned, this study focuses on the model of women-friendly mosques, primarily implemented in Indonesia. The implementation of the concept of women-friendly mosque can be seen from figure 1 below:

²² Samina Rehman, "Muslim Women in the Discourse of Space in Leh District of Ladakh," *Gender, Place & Culture* 32, no. 6 (2025): 960–79.

²³ Rosita Tandos, "Historical Approach And Analysis Of Roles And Functions Of Indonesian Mosques," *Asian Social Work Journal* 9, no. 3 (2024): e00295–e00295; Lama Akmeel et al., "Intersecting Landscapes of Exclusion: Mothers' Perceptions and Spatial Tactics in the Public Spaces of Amman Downtown," *Sustainability* 17, no. 4 (2025): 1424.

²⁴ Bakhoh Jatmiko et al., "The Gender-Responsive Church: Models of Religious Community in Realising Alignment for Women," *Acta Theologica* 45, no. 1 (2025): 86–105.

²⁵ Aryanti, T., Megayanti, T., Susanti, I., & Fitria, D. (2024). Gender and socio-spatial assemblage at Masjid Al-Irsyad Kota Baru Parahyangan, Indonesia. *Journal of Islamic Architecture*, 8(2), 371–379. <https://doi.org/10.18860/jia.v8i2.23476>

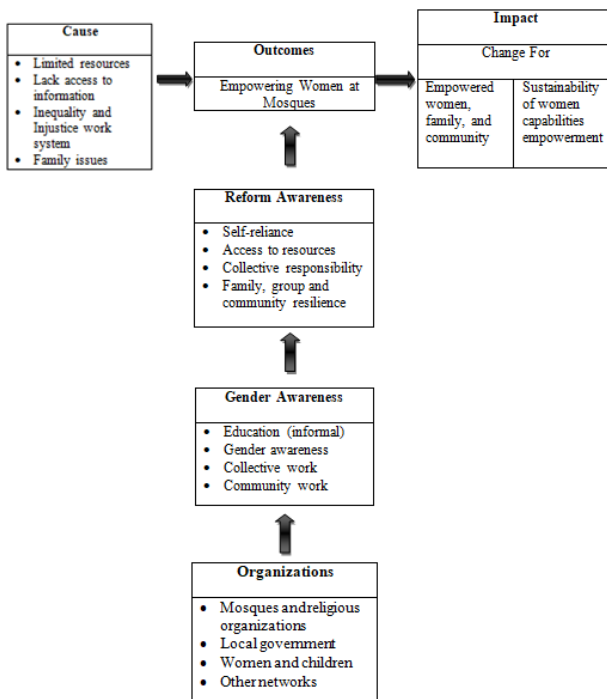


Figure 1. The Conceptual Framework of Women Friendly Mosque

The figure illustrates the conceptual framework for gender awareness and empowerment, how women-friendly mosques have empowered female congregants.²⁶ The empowerment should be measured through a participatory approach, as the most accurate assessment comes from the subjects themselves. The study found that using a participatory method to measure women's empowerment in mosques primarily correlates with improvements in quality of life, especially in areas such as gender

²⁶ The concept of gender spatial use underscores the importance of women-friendly mosques, which encompass several key aspects: 1) Equitable access to worship by ensuring that women have equal access to the main prayer hall is fundamental to women-friendly mosques; 2) Leadership and representation through inclusive mosques providing opportunities for women to assume leadership roles; 3) Educational opportunities showing women-friendly mosques that offer a variety of educational programs tailored to women; 4) Family-friendly facilities that means providing amenities that support families particularly for children and elderly; 5) Safety and respect by implementing policies to prevent and address harassment and abuse, training staff and volunteers in gender sensitivity, and fostering a culture of respect and inclusion.

awareness, relational empowerment, and economic change.

One of the key outcomes of women friendly mosque is not only the ability of women to access various programs helped them develop their capacities. They also benefited from enhanced facilities and services that improved their knowledge, skills, and experiences across religious, social, educational, health, and economic domains. For instance, at Great Mosque of Istiqlal located in Jakarta, some women might engage in group activities such as the women ulama education program (formal education), majelis taklim (informal education), mosque-based organizations, and training for capacity building such as skilful in accessing online resources and social media platforms.

Gender awareness is another crucial indicator that should be incorporated into women-friendly mosque programs. It involves a woman's ability to express her views on existing gender inequalities and discrimination in society.²⁷ In the implementation of the women-friendly mosque initiative, gender awareness was evident in the support and activities that included not only women, but also men who assisted women in attending training sessions and meetings. This combination of knowledge, critical understanding, self-confidence, and gender awareness provides a powerful impetus for action and change.

Furthermore, the women demonstrated a collective awareness by building networks and supporting each other. For example, they developed economic programs utilizing facilities like canteen, koperasi, and mart (small business facilities usually available at great mosques at provincial level or big cities). Women who could produce food collaborated with these businesses to market their products both offline and online. Such cooperation in business activities is a

²⁷ Nasrina Siddiqi, "Gender Inequality as a Social Construction in India: A Phenomenological Enquiry," in *Women's Studies International Forum*, vol. 86 (Elsevier, 2021), 102472.

significant aspect of the women-friendly mosque that should be emphasized. In the context of family life, the rationale for economic empowerment programs (EEP) targeting female congregations is to improve their position in two key ways: reducing their dependence on their husbands' income and enabling them to contribute to the economic well-being of their families.

Lastly, creating women-friendly mosques has far-reaching benefits for the entire community. When women feel welcomed and valued, they are more likely to participate actively in religious and community activities. This increased participation can lead to a more vibrant and dynamic community life, with women contributing their skills, knowledge, and perspectives. Moreover, women who are engaged in the mosque community can serve as role models and mentors for younger generations, fostering a culture of inclusivity and empowerment. This can help break down barriers and challenge stereotypes, promoting a more equitable and justice in society. The next part provided an example women friendly mosque, the largest mosque in Indonesia called Great mosque of Istiqlal that have variety of programs, activities and services available not only for women and other specific needs (children, elderly and diffable).

Method

This study applied a qualitative research method to explore the history, the concept of the notion of mosque for women, and gender spatial use within contemporary mosque architecture and religious practices. Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and secondary data analysis covering the period from 2020 to 2024. Participant observation was conducted through direct involvement in activities at Istiqlal Mosque, allowing the researcher to examine spatial arrangements, worship practices, and gender interactions within the mosque environment. In addition, the researcher's personal experience as part of the

community of Istiqlal Mosque contributed valuable contextual understanding in elaborating the topic of mosques for women. This insider perspective supported a deeper analysis of the historical trajectories, religious concepts, and contemporary practices of women-friendly mosques implemented in various Muslim countries.

Women Friendly Mosque of Istiqlal Mosque

In Indonesia, the construction of mosques is undertaken not only by the government or institutions but also by individuals or groups. These mosques must be registered with the Ministry of Religious Affairs.²⁸ Additionally, Indonesian great mosques "Masjid Raya" are located in the capital city of provinces and have sufficient facilities for congregations and visitors. They serve as places of worship and welcome guests to appreciate the stunning architecture and utilize amenities tailored to their interests, needs, and backgrounds without fear of violence or exclusion.²⁹

The concept of a women-friendly mosque is well-established in Indonesia, ensuring that the

²⁸ Indonesian mosque types are categorized by area by Minister of Religion Decree No. 391 of 2001. First, there is the state mosque, which is run by the central government and for which the state provides all funding. One such instance is the state-only funding of Istiqlal Mosque. The national mosque comes in second. Specifically, mosques at the province level that are recommended for national status by the Minister of Religion after being recommended by the local governor. The magnificent mosque comes in third. Currently, this kind of mosque is also seen in province. Nonetheless, the Governor receives these from the regional Ministry of Religion. The fourth is the large mosque, which is situated in a city or area. Fifth, there are sizable mosques that function at the subdistrict level. The sixth is the Jami mosques, which are concentrated at the village or regency (*kelurahan*) level.

²⁹ Suraqua Fahad and Rahil Kazmi, "Architectural Design As A Catalyst For Social Inclusion Analyzing Islamic-Inspired Structures In Multicultural Urban Environments," *Available at SSRN 5026210*, 2023; Amanda Dakin, "The Subtle Art of Exclusion: An Examination of Hostile Urban Design in Guelph, Ontario" (University of Guelph, 2021).

mosque fulfills its primary function as a place of worship while also promoting justice, moral values, and human development that are in line with the goals of Maqasid Shari'ah (Purposes of Islamic Shari'ah). This section focuses on the programs and activities offered to women at the Great Mosque of Istiqlal.³⁰ The mosque is the best representative for Indonesian women friendly mosque as it examines how gender, religious, and cultural identities intersect with women's access to the mosque, their involvement and experiences. The discussion centers on three main topics: the programs, activities, and services available to women in correlation with the congregants' age, education, occupation and ability.

Located in the heart of Jakarta, the Great Mosque of Istiqlal is a prominent example of a mosque that embraces women's participation. With a capacity for up to 200,000 worshippers, the Istiqlal Mosque is the sixth largest mosque in the world and the largest in Southeast Asia. The name "Istiqlal," meaning "Independence," reflects the gratitude of the Indonesian people - predominantly Muslims - for the independence they achieved after more than 350 years of occupation. After major renovations in 2021, the Istiqlal Mosque launched 41 new programs under the initiative called "New Istiqlal". These changes aimed to maximize the mosque's roles and functions in empowering its congregations and the whole community members.

In discussing the new vision for the Istiqlal mosque, the Grand Imam, Prof. Dr. Nasaruddin Umar emphasized the need to shift the paradigm. He explained:

“.. with the new vision of Istiqlal, the paradigm of empowerment should be

³⁰ The author has worked at Great Mosque of Istiqlal for 4 years (2020-2024) as Manager of Women Ulama Cadre Education and the Director of Voice of Istiqlal. This period is well known as “New Istiqlal” with 41 significant and innovative programs involved multiple stakeholders (governmental and non-governmental organizations, private sector, media and international institutions).

changed from ‘communities empowering mosques to mosques empowering communities.. It means that the Istiqlal Mosque must focus on expanding its programs, enhancing its facilities and services, and strengthening partnerships to realize this vision.

Considering the position of Istiqlal mosque as state mosque, it is highlighted the importance of the mosque becoming a trendsetter in the evolution of Islamic societal civilization, aspiring to serve as a national model and a leading force in shaping Islamic global partnership and civilization.

A Vision for Gender Equality

The Istiqlal Mosque aims to be a hub for promoting moderate Islam and community development, managed and administered by the Istiqlal's Mosque Management Agency, commonly known by its abbreviation BPMI. This agency focuses on developing four key areas through various strategic activities: organizing worship and da'wah, providing education and training, promoting social and economic empowerment, and ensuring the security and maintenance of the mosque (Setneg, 2024).

As a center for community empowerment, the Istiqlal Mosque is dedicated to creating an inclusive environment. This includes being welcoming to women, children, elderly people and diffable. Efforts to implement this vision include providing adequate facilities, offering worship services in accordance with sharia, and employing modern mosque management practices. Female congregants of the Istiqlal Mosque's taklim (educational assembly) expressed great comfort and satisfaction, noting that the mosque meets nearly all of their needs. The mosque plays a critical role in establishing a welcoming environment for women, serving as an exemplary model of inclusion and consideration for the needs of its entire congregation, particularly women groups.

In performing salat, the arrangement of the rows (shaf) differs from the typical setup in most

Indonesian mosques. Female worshipers pray alongside male worshipers, separated by a low barrier that only obstructs the view when seated. The prayer area is clean, cool, and remarkably spacious, with impressive architecture, ornaments, and lighting that add to its grandeur (see figure 2).



Figure 2. Praying Room of Istiqlal Mosque

Beyond offering facilities that ensure women's comfort during worship, the Istiqlal Mosque is dedicated to nurturing religious continuity by supporting women in their da'wah efforts. This support is provided through the mosque's taklim council, which assists female congregants who have attained a certain level of religious education and qualifications in preaching. This initiative empowers women to actively share the religious knowledge they have acquired and to disseminate Islamic teachings. Additionally, the da'wah materials and sermons at the Istiqlal Mosque address themes specifically related to women, reflecting the mosque's commitment to gender-specific issues.

The Istiqlal Mosque serves as a powerful symbol of women's empowerment, extending its support beyond preachers to ensure women have equal opportunities to engage in da'wah activities both nationally and internationally. As part of its ulama cadre education program, the mosque offers the Women Ulama Cadre Education (PKUP), a specialized initiative focused on gender studies within Islam. This program is designed to cultivate female scholars who are deeply rooted in Islamic knowledge, uphold strong moral values, and champion gender

equality and child protection. One of the alumni of the PKUP explained “.. our knowledge and experiences in joining the program could open more opportunity for future career and contributed to create more changes for Indonesia women life...”. Moreover, the students are prepared to take on influential roles across various sectors, including family, community, national, and international arenas.

The Mosque also has been offering a majelis taklim specifically for mothers since 1970. This assembly provides women, particularly mothers, with a well-rounded education that includes Quranic studies, women's jurisprudence, and discussions on the social roles of women. Additionally, the mosque regularly organizes seminars and special activities for women, addressing key topics such as spiritual aspirations, analyses of influential texts on women, and broader discussions on women's social roles.

While this program is open to all Muslims, it is particularly advantageous for women entrepreneurs, providing them with valuable resources and support. They have access to capacity-building programs, such as seminars and entrepreneurship trainings, as well as opportunities through the mosque's mart, cooperatives, and canteen (small businesses around the mosque). This comprehensive approach highlights the mosque's dedication to economic empowerment, reinforcing its role as a center for worship, education, economic development, and social engagement.

In the broader context of preserving religious continuity, the mosque also actively promotes interfaith dialogue. In this event, religious top leaders and figures from various faiths to deepen their understanding through dialogue at the mosque. According to the Grand Imam of Istiqlal Mosque, Prof. Dr. KH. Nasaruddin Umar, while the mosque is primarily a place of worship for Muslims, it also allows people of other religions to visit for interfaith discussions and works. Such efforts follow what practiced at the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)'s

Mosque in Madinah in thousands of years ago. This approach also reflects the mosque's commitment to religious freedom and inclusive values.

Analysis of Purposes of Islamic Shari'ah

The Istiqlal mosque's commitment is evident in everything from the mosque's physical amenities to its empowering mission. The overarching goal of all the mosque's efforts is to create a welcoming, encouraging, and inclusive environment for people of all backgrounds. This aligns with religious principles and greatly benefits the community. To achieve the benefit and welfare of all its congregants, especially women, the Istiqlal Mosque is establishing a women-friendly environment based on the principles of Purposes of Islamic (Maqasid al-Shari'ah) that aim to regulate and guide people's actions while preserving and sustaining the Maqasid Shari'ah: religion (deen), the self (nafs), the intellect (aql), descendants (nasl), and wealth (maal). Transforming mosques to be women-friendly is a tangible effort to achieve these five essential goals.

First, from the perspective of hifdz al-din (protection of religion), Istiqlal Mosque has prepared various women-friendly facilities to support women's participation and comfort in worship. This encourages women to participate in worship, ensuring that their practice of religion remains in high quality of services. Numerous amenities have been set up, such as equal access to the entry adjacent to the Istiqlal Mosque's main door. There is also accessibility for those with impairments, primarily at the Al-Fattah entrance, which faces the Cathedral Church and the pedestrian entry. The entrance at the gate of Al-Fattah consists of a level area without stairs, an elevator with audio guidance, and a guiding floor leading to the lift that takes worshippers to the first and second floors of the main prayer area. These amenities make it easier for women to attend the mosque and engage in prayer.

The primary prayer space for women is also a great source of comfort. The interior's

comfortable, moderate climate maximizes concentration on worship. The prayer guide's voice is clear thanks to the excellent audio system. Careful consideration is given to lighting, ensuring adequate illumination to create a relaxing atmosphere. One of female congregant, Aminah mentioned that clean, well-organized female prayer garments, known as mukenah, are very important to be provided. She said: "as not all of the congregant bring prayer clothes, sometimes we need to wait others to finish their prayers due to limitation of the clothes, especially when the mosque is crowded with congregants".

In addition, at Istiqlal mosque, the rows for women are set up parallel to those for men, indicating equality and unity in worship, even though the space allocated to women is smaller. This area is also divided by movable walls that can be adjusted as needed. Additionally, the space is consistently maintained in a tidy condition, providing a sense of coolness and peace for everyone who worships there.

The Istiqlal Mosque also pays special attention to the needs of female worshippers by providing closed and designated bathrooms and ablution areas specifically for women. Unlike men, women often require more time in the bathroom, especially those with babies or toddlers who cannot be left unattended. Mothers must bring their small children into the bathroom, attend to their needs, and ensure their cleanliness. Therefore, the number of bathrooms in the women's area must be at least twice as many as in the men's area to accommodate this additional time and effort. Given that purity and ablution are prerequisites for worship, ample facilities are essential.

To enhance comfort and tranquility during worship, the Istiqlal Mosque has also equipped its facilities with a children's playroom and a lactation room. These rooms are specifically provided for female worshippers who bring small children, allowing them to perform their religious duties without worrying about the comfort and safety of their children. The presence of these

facilities helps prevent potential disturbances from children's activities, maintaining the focus and concentration of the congregation during worship.

Although various facilities to support women's comfort have been provided, according to one of the Istiqlal Mosque's congregants, several additional facilities are needed, such as special women's rooms. The female congregants of Istiqlal Mosque expressed a desire for a designated space to rest during i'tikaf. At certain times, women wish to enhance the quality of their worship by spending extended periods in silence at the mosque. However, because the prayer room is open, women sometimes feel uncomfortable resting there due to the constant passage of other worshippers.

Additionally, other female congregants have expressed the need for better directions to access the various spaces within the Istiqlal Mosque. Many women feel they have low navigation skills and would appreciate clear recommendations for directions, room location instructions, a map of the mosque, and other information that can facilitate easier access to all areas. Improved accessibility and information services would also benefit other mosque visitors who need assistance, such as the elderly, pregnant women, and children.

From the Perspective of hifdz al-nafs (protection of life), Istiqlal Mosque prioritizes the protection of life by implementing stringent security measures. Security guards are stationed at every entrance and exit to ensure the safety of all visitors, particularly women. Women are actively involved in these security efforts, providing valuable recommendations to further enhance safety. The mosque also emphasizes respect and equality, ensuring that women, as worshippers, receive a warm welcome and are treated with dignity.

Additionally, to facilitate safe and convenient access to the mosque, Istiqlal Mosque has partnered with Indonesia Railways Enterprise (PT KAI), providing transport buses for

worshippers due to its strategic location near Gambir Train Station. The mosque is also equipped with 140 high-definition CCTV cameras and advanced biometric systems, ensuring that any criminal activity is promptly detected and addressed.

From the perspective of hifdz al-'aql (protection of intellect): As the largest mosque in Asia, the Istiqlal Mosque plays a crucial role in educational development. It serves as a hub for various educational activities, including congregational prayer training, conversion education, special programs for teenagers, and taklim assemblies for mothers. The mosque offers formal education from playgroup to Madrasah Aliyah, teaches classical Islamic texts like the Hawamisy and provides resources such as a library. It also supports the development of religious scholars, offers archery and silat (traditional sport) training, and organizes educational events related to Friday sermons and study activities. These initiatives contribute significantly to enhancing public education and intellectual growth.

The Istiqlal Mosque's activities go beyond merely providing access. They are designed to foster an environment that supports the development and enhancement of women's roles in religious contexts. These initiatives represent a significant effort to ensure that women have equal opportunities to contribute to and spread religious values and good practices within the community. This approach aligns with the religious principle of preserving the intellect by continually enhancing its function.

From the perspective of hifdz al-nasl (protection of lineage), Istiqlal Mosque plays a crucial role in supporting family integrity and welfare through its Marriage Development and Preservation Advisory Board (BP4). The Grand Imam of the Istiqlal Mosque, who also serves as the general chairman of BP4, has emphasized the mosque's collaboration with the Indonesian Ministry of Religion in managing this institution.

BP4 is actively involved in providing marriage consultation and legal advice services.

The services offered by BP4 are particularly valuable for women seeking guidance on marriage-related issues. The board aims to enhance the quality of Muslim marriages across Indonesia by offering support, coaching, and counseling to families. Notably, BP4 provides online services, including remote consultations, which are accessible to Indonesian citizens both domestically and abroad who require assistance with marriage and divorce matters. Additionally, BP4 extends its support to children affected by divorce. One of management of the organization explained “the BP4 has successfully resolved numerous family disputes, including those involving women, often helping couples resolve issues before they reach the courtroom”. Such proactive approach is vital in addressing family problems and maintaining household harmony and stability.

Fifth, from the perspective of *hifdz al-mal* (protection of wealth), the Istiqlal Mosque has made notable strides in economic empowerment through its MSME (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) development initiatives and the Istiqlal Indonesia Halal Center (IIHC) program. This initiative focuses on mentoring, training, and accelerating MSME entrepreneurs to produce products that meet halal certification, BPOM standards, and retail and export requirements. The goal is to enhance human resources and product quality, enabling them to compete effectively in the global market.

As part of this effort, Istiqlal Mosque has established a Halal Product Gallery, showcasing Indonesian products that have achieved halal certification for distribution permits. This gallery not only displays these products but also supports their marketing. Additionally, the mosque provides a dedicated sales area for halal products, including food, crafts, and creative industries. To further bolster business activities, the Istiqlal Mosque offers a Shared Office Area designed to facilitate collaboration among

Indonesian Islamic business actors, foster synergy, and develop a cohesive halal ecosystem.

Through these efforts, the Istiqlal Mosque demonstrates its significant role in creating a women-friendly environment. The mosque serves as a hub for diverse Muslim activities, embodying inclusiveness and attention to the needs of its congregation, especially women. It not only fosters community development but also protects, empowers, and unites people, aligning with the principles of *maqashid al-syari'ah* and embodying high humanitarian values. Finally, the mosque is expected to develop more programs and activities, improve facilities and services for empowering its congregations and communities at local, national and international levels by addressing specific needs including women groups.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Mosques vary in their ability to meet the needs and concerns of female congregants, often providing smaller spaces for women compared to men. The concepts of women-friendly mosques represents a vital step toward creating inclusive and equitable spaces within Muslim communities. By addressing the needs and concerns of female congregants, mosques can foster greater participation, enhance community cohesion, and promote social justice. This effort requires a commitment to listening, learning, and making tangible changes, but the rewards - a more vibrant, dynamic, and inclusive community - are well worth the effort.

By fostering an environment of inclusivity and respect, women-friendly mosques have a profound impact on the broader communities and help to break down barriers and challenge stereotypes. They also provide a supportive space for women to explore their faith, develop leadership skills, and engage in community service. Moreover, the presence of women in visible leadership roles within the mosque can inspire younger generations and promote a more equitable and just community. The involvement

of women in mosque administration and decision-making processes ensures that their perspectives and needs are considered, leading to more comprehensive and effective community programs. The Great Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta serves as a model for women-friendly mosques, providing a supportive environment that promotes women's development and active participation in religious life.

Despite the progress made, there are still challenges to achieving widespread acceptance of women-friendly mosques. Some communities resist changes to traditional gender roles and mosque structures. However, continued advocacy and education can help to overcome these obstacles. Engaging both men and women in the conversation about inclusivity and demonstrating the benefits of women-friendly policies can foster greater acceptance. The commitment reflects a significant effort to ensure that women have equal opportunities to contribute to the dissemination of religious values and the well-being of the community. In this way, the mosque fulfills the religious obligation to preserve and enhance intellectual capacity, aligning all efforts with the broader objectives of Islamic teachings.

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