Masjid-based Disaster Management: How *Masjids* in Malaysia Support the Needy

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic and the great flood of 2021 significantly impacted society. However, *masjids* have proven effective institutions in disaster management efforts, particularly in social welfare. This study examines the role of *masjids* in managing disasters in Malaysia, specifically during the 2021 great flood and the COVID-19 pandemic. The qualitative research involves in-depth interviews based on case studies, with the results analyzed thematically. A total of 14 *masjids* as informants were selected from across Malaysia, including nine of the best *masjids* in 2021 and five with disaster management experience. The findings reveal that *masjids* are crucial in disaster management, encompassing services, health, placement, incentives, and infrastructure. These contributions help effectively manage the community during disasters. The study highlights two key factors contributing to the success of *masjids* in disaster management: the core concern of *maqasid sharʿiah* and the synergy of *da'wah* in strengthening the relationship between *masjids* and the community. The implications of this study contribute to both theory and practice, particularly in designing ideal *masjid* management, preserving community welfare, and maintaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Keywords: Faith-based Institutions (FBO), COVID-19, great flood, *maqasid sharʿiah*, *masjid*-based management disaster, synergy of *da'wah*, social welfare, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

INTRODUCTION

The word *"masjid"* (mosque) is derived from the Arabic root *"sa-ja-da"* (سَجَدَ), which means a place of prostration (*mauḍiʿu al-sujud*). Prostration is an external practice involving placing the forehead, the tip of the nose, palms, knees, and toes on the ground, a pillar of prayer (Syafe'i, 2016). Therefore, the *masjid* is commonly understood as the

center of Islamic religious worship. In Malaysia, there are 6,808 *masjid*s registered with the religious department, along with 18,364 *suraus* (small *masjids*) (Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia [JAKIM], 2023). The distribution of *masjids* and *suraus* by state is as follows: Johor (843), Kedah (593), Kelantan (600), Melaka (201), Negeri Sembilan (305), Pahang (652), Penang (215), Perak (705), Perlis (106), Selangor (438), Terengganu (514), Sabah (1,133), Sarawak (408), Kuala Lumpur (74), Putrajaya (3), and Labuan (17). This number reflects the significant presence of the Muslim community, which continues to grow each year.

As the population grows and new cities and housing estates are built, the number of *masjids* also increases. It is important to manage and administer these institutions efficiently to provide a comfortable place of worship and human development and help create a harmonious, advanced, competitive society. While many newly built *masjids* have modern and magnificent structures, many still have weaknesses in their management and maintenance. According to Ashaari and Mokhtar (2018), seven factors lead to low attendance at the *masjid*: limited functionality, individual problems, imperfect basic facilities, suboptimal location, weak administrative and financial management, and issues with the personality of *imams* and *masjid* officials.

Managing a *masjid* can become challenging when unexpected moments of anxiety arise. One such moment was the outbreak of COVID-19, which had

caused concern worldwide. Malaysia was also affected by the spread of this disease, with the first case detected on January 25, 2020 (Shah et al., 2020). The pandemic has significantly impacted *masjids*, with several in Putrajaya and the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur temporarily closed in the early stages of the outbreak. Masjid Putra and Masjid Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin in Putrajaya, as well as Masjid Wilayah Persekutuan in Kuala Lumpur, were closed to non-Muslim tourists due to concerns about the COVID-19 outbreak ("Coronavirus: Masjid Putra", 2020). The situation became even more worrying when positive COVID-19 cases were detected among residents of a *masjid*, leading the government to implement a Movement Control Order (MCO) that temporarily closed all *masjid* institutions. In light of these circumstances, developing effective management strategies and long-term actions is crucial to ensure that the *masjid* and the community are not neglected (Remly et al., 2022).

In addition to COVID-19, Malaysia was hit by flood disasters in almost every state at the end of 2021. While floods are a common natural disaster in Malaysia, the situation has become more challenging due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Floods have damaged various infrastructures, including *masjids*, in some areas, creating additional pressure on *masjid* management and the community. Consequently, *masjids* need to develop an immediate action plan that includes mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery measures to alleviate the

pressure experienced by the community and the *masjid's* management structure (Sheikhi et al., 2021).

The passage discusses two challenging situations faced by Malaysia - COVID-19 and the great floods of 2020 and 2021. These situations are concerning due to the country's determination to address the implications of natural disasters and diseases and restore severely impacted socio-economic conditions. The government has implemented various initiatives to assist affected communities, including collaborations with NGOs and volunteer activists to provide welfare assistance. Amid these demanding times, *masjids have* also played a significant role by contributing to charitable efforts, utilizing private savings funds, or donations collected from agencies and external communities. Therefore, *masjids* are considered essential components of disaster management and could serve on the front lines to assist communities during emergencies.

The *masjid* plays a crucial role in disaster management by fostering lifelong humanization in this century. It serves as a worship center for Muslims and becomes a hub for developing such values. In Malaysia, *masjids* are easily found in every district and village, allowing for frequent *da'wah* (preaching) programs and community welfare initiatives. The Muslim community trusts the *masjid* and sees it as a suitable place to organize activities that promote human well-being. As a result, the *masjid* has two strengths in developing human civilization based on disaster management.

Firstly, the core concern of a *masjid* is the *maqasid sharʿiah* (goals for humankind by Islamic law), which guides the *masjid's* actions for the community. According to Mahmud (1979), the purpose of building a *masjid* is to preserve human well-being, meet basic human needs such as food, clothing, shelter, health, and education, ensure fair distribution of income and wealth, preserve human freedom, and promote cooperation and justice for all. Wartoyo et al. (2022) found that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Mosque-based Sharia Cooperation (MbSC) greatly contributed to society. MbSC provides a cheap financing system with *qardhul hasan* (sincere loan) contracts, offers a policy of deferring payment of receivables for those affected by the epidemic, implements social services by distributing masks and hand sanitizers for free, provides direct assistance in the form of basic daily needs, and conducts socialization of the importance of maintaining health and cleanliness. This study shows that integrated cooperatives with *masjids* will accelerate their functions in assisting members and communities in need.

Secondly, the synergy of *da'wah* can strengthen the relationship between the *masjid* and the community. When linking the *masjid* with *da'wah*, it is important to have a dynamic and humane approach that considers changing times. In this context, it is important to mention the opinion of Hamka (1984), who suggested that *da'wah* activities in the *masjid* should not only focus on *fardu ʿain* knowledge (obligatory acts)

but should also include programs related to the development of human well-being. Synergy in *da'wah* can occur when there is cooperation between various agencies to address the various problems that occur in society. Al-Tabbaa (2014) describes this approach as innovative in diversifying efforts to tackle societal social problems. Certain philanthropic efforts demonstrate that this collaborative approach is more effective and straightforward in charitable activities (Selsky & Parker, 2005).

In this type of *da'wah* synergy, cooperation is a platform to achieve common social goals. All parties involved demonstrate commitment to enhance each other's capacities (Austin & Seitanidi, 2014). This theory suggests that every activity carried out as a joint effort has greater potential and impact compared to individual efforts (Austin, 2000). This principle holds true during natural disasters such as great floods and pandemics like COVID-19, where *masjids* are crucial in assisting affected communities and supporting government aid missions for the victims involved.

Therefore, this study aims to discuss the role of *masjids* in disaster management in Malaysia by examining their response during the 2021 great flood and the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. The justification for selecting *masjids* stems from their actions during COVID-19 and the 2021 great flood in Malaysia, demonstrating their credibility in assisting the government and affected communities through various welfare initiatives. Furthermore, their widespread presence in various locations ensures easy accessibility during future disasters. Thus, *masjids* are considered capable of aiding the country in addressing the challenges faced by communities in need, particularly during disaster situations. This assertion will be elucidated based on insights from experienced informants.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The *masjid* serves not only as a place of worship but also as a hub for social activities and the dissemination of knowledge. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, many *masjids* in Malaysia are still actively involved in facilitating educational activities, according to a study by Wahidin et al. (2020). Similarly, Mohamed and Muhamat (2019) explained that imparting knowledge is a joint activity between the *masjid* and the community. Additionally, other studies have highlighted *masjids'* role in establishing community relationships. Ibrahim et al. (2020) described the *masjid* as a welcoming place for teenagers and youth, while Remly et al. (2020) emphasized the importance of *masjids* in building ties with different segments of society.

Several studies have been conducted on the management of *masjids* using various related theories. Among the theories used are the Kaizen Management System (KMS model) by Jaafar et al. (2013) and the Attention, Interest, Desire and Action (AIDA model) by Yusof (2015). Jaafar et al. (2013) and Yusof (2015) suggest that *masjids* must implement management system models like KMS and AIDA to ensure efficiency and

attract more Muslims. Meanwhile, Abdullah and Aini (2017) discuss the primary management of *masjids*, including planning, implementation, monitoring, control, evaluation, and amendment. Sabri and Tonot (2017) explain that *masjids* should apply management concepts used by corporations to improve their management. Professionals should lead *masjids* to ensure significant improvement in specific management areas such as human resource management and documentation. Additionally, Muhammad et al. (2020) explain internal control involving the separation of duties of committees, maintenance of *masjid* buildings and assets, activities, and financial records. However, these studies do not explain the theoretical aspects practiced in disaster management.

Places of worship worldwide, including *masjids*, often provide emergency aid during disasters. This role is supported by a systematic review conducted by Sheikhi et al. (2021), which collected and analyzed various studies, manuscripts, books and theses discussing the role of religious institutions in disaster management. The review encompassed countries such as the United States of America (USA), New Zealand, Indonesia, and Japan. The study identified 11 themes related to the involvement of religious institutions in disaster management, such as their potential for disaster management, level of preparedness for disasters, response, recovery, social capital, partnership with stakeholders, collaboration and communication between mental health professionals and faith-based organization leaders, unity of information and message, religious institution shelters, dealing with disasters using old and new approaches, and barriers and challenges. However, the studies reviewed fail to explain the situation within the context of Malaysia.

Meanwhile, in Malaysia, studies have discussed the role of *masjids* as places of refuge during natural disasters, such as floods. Zainol et al. (2022) debated the importance of *masjids* in protecting flood victims. The *masjid* serves not only as a place of worship for the Muslim community but also as a center for welfare and safety, regardless of religious background. Additionally, some studies have explored the role of *masjids* during the COVID-19 outbreak through initiatives aimed at assisting the community. Mahat et al. (2022) and Ikhmal et al. (2020) explained the role of *masjids* in Malaysia during the period of the Restriction Movement Control Order (RMCO) due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, Remly et al. (2021) discussed the important roles and responsibilities that must be taken by the *masjid* management and congregation members to address the COVID-19 outbreak, ensuring the safety of the *masjid* for congregational visits. The study highlighted the critical relationship between *masjid* administrators and congregations in controlling the risk of infection. However, these studies are limited to certain areas and do not elaborate on specific aspects of disaster management. The data discussed in these studies primarily derives from observational field studies.

Some studies suggest combining the concept of cooperation, known as *taʿāwun*, with the management practices of *masjids*. According to Matandra et al. (2020), implementing *taʿāwun* in *masjids* can assist in reducing the economic crisis faced by poor communities, as the *masjid* can function as a center for civilization. Meanwhile, Dahlan et al. (2021) conducted a welfare aid project through Masjid al-Syakirin Gombak, Selangor, which served as the main platform for executing aid based on the practice of *taʿāwun* between donors and recipients. The project involved the community around the *masjid* and included various welfare aids such as food donations during the RMCO period of COVID-19.

It is widely recognized that *masjids* play an important role in their communities, particularly in providing relief aid and managing disasters. Specifically, this study focuses on the role of *masjids* in Malaysia during the COVID-19 pandemic and the great flood. While there have been some studies on similar topics, they are limited and require more in-depth research (such as Ikhmal et al., 2020; Mahat et al., 2022; Sheikhi et al., 2021; Zainol et al., 2022). One area that needs further exploration is the role of *masjids* in providing community welfare assistance during disease outbreaks and natural disasters. A study by Dahlan et al. (2021) has similar goals to this study, but it focuses only on one *masjid* and its experience in providing basic food items. Therefore, it is possible that the roles of other *masjids* in different locations could differ.

Based on newspaper reports from 2020 to 2021, it has been observed that *masjids* in Malaysia are striving to become centers for extending welfare, especially to the needy community and managing disasters. It is evident from the cooperation that was shown throughout the COVID-19 MCO period and during the floods in 2021, where various parties, particularly houses of worship of different religions, played a significant role in providing welfare assistance to the community ("Banjir: Masjid, kuil jadi pusat transit", 2021). It has led to the idea of conducting a study to understand the role of masjids in disaster management and how they can help the community prepare for future disasters. The study will focus on disaster management based on the experience of selected masjids across Malaysia, particularly during the COVID-19 MCO and the major floods that hit the country.

METHODS

This study utilized a qualitative method, focusing mainly on in-depth interviews. It was a case study, with the informants' experiences being the primary focus. The case studies were obtained by conducting in-depth interviews with 14 informants representing *masjids* from each state in Malaysia, as shown in Table 1. Most selected *masjids* were those that had won the Best Masjid award in Malaysia in 2021 (JAKIM, 2021). However, a few that were not among the best *masjids*, such as those in Malacca, Kuala Lumpur, Terengganu, and Sarawak, were also included. Each

transcription document was assigned a reference number to facilitate a more structured and systematic data analysis process. The reference number also helped the researcher code the discussion process without revealing the original name of the *masjid*.

The study used three methods to obtain interview data from *masjid* informants. The first method was face-to-face, where the researcher met the informant in person. The second method was virtual, conducted through Webex software, for informants from Sabah. The third method was through a questionnaire, which an informant from Sarawak completed. The reason for selecting these *masjids* was to gather informants' experiences in matters related to disaster management and to gain insights from *masjids* across every state in Malaysia.

After collecting field data, researchers used a thematic analysis approach to identify themes in the content of the interviews. This approach, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2022), helps to find themes through the collected interview data. The original transcriptions are not included in the study to ensure that the writer can clarify the real meaning conveyed by the informant. Instead, the researchers arranged all ideas according to themes, making them easier to understand than the original transcription, which can be too long or general. It is important to note that this study does not aim to make generalizations about a particular state or group.

Table 1
The demography of masjid informants

No.	Institution	State	Reference number	Date and time of interview
1.	Masjid Abdullah Fahim, Kepala Batas	Pulau Pinang	Inf01-M	22 February 2023 10.00 a.m. (Physical)
2.	Masjid Jamek Pengkalan Hulu	Perak	Inf02-M	7 March 2023 12.00 p.m. (Physical)
3.	Masjid Ar-Rahmah	Melaka	Inf03-M	15 March 2023 9.00 p.m. (Physical)
4.	Masjid Zaid Haritsah	Kuala Lumpur	Inf04-M	27 March 2023 10.00 a.m. (Physical)
5.	Masjid Kota Damansara	Selangor	Inf05-M	29 March 2023 3.00 p.m. (Physical)
6.	Masjid Putra Nilai	Negeri Sembilan	Inf06-M	31 May 2023 10.00 a.m. (Physical)
7.	Masjid Ismail Petra	Kelantan	Inf07-M	3 June 2023 11.00 a.m. (Physical)
8.	Masjid Pangkalan Pandan, Chukai	Terengganu	Inf08-M	7 June 2023 9.00 p.m. (Physical)
9.	Masjid Taman Temerloh Jaya	Pahang	Inf09-M	9 June 2023 10.00 a.m. (Physical)

Table 1 *(Continue)*

No.	Institution	State	Reference number	Date and time of interview
10.	Masjid Al-Jawahir	Johor	Inf10-M	21 June 2023 10.00 a.m. (Physical)
11.	Masjid Imam Haji Hashim	Sabah	Inf11-M	21 July 2023 9.30 a.m. (Online)
12.	Masjid As Sobirin	Perlis	Inf12-M	27 July 2023 5.00 p.m. (Physical)
13.	Masjid Sharifah Fatimah	Kedah	Inf13-M	28 July 2023 9.00 p.m. (Physical)
14.	Masjid Jamek Negeri Sarawak	Sarawak	Inf14-M	31 January 2024 (Report)

Source: Authors' work

RESULTS

The interview results in the field are summarized in a schedule.

Table 2 explains the list of *masjid* roles arranged according to themes of services, health, placement, incentives, and infrastructure related to *masjid* management. These themes are based on informant interview data. The themes presented are adaptations from several studies collected by Sheikhi et al. (2021), which gather studies on aspects of disaster management. Based on the findings, it can be said that the themes identified are common practices in most *masjids* in Malaysia. Observations in related *masjids* support this explanation and have been widely discussed in academic literature (e.g., Sheikhi et al., 2021; Ikhmal et al., 2020; Mahat et al., 2022; Zainol et al., 2022). However, the unique aspect of

Table 2
The role of masjid in disaster management

Role (Adapted from Sheikhi et al., 2021)	COVID-19 (Informant experience)	Great flood (Informant experience)
Services	Masjid volunteers to the field. Sending aid to homes. Managing the deceased. Helping hospitals.	Pick up and deliver to the Temporary Placement Center (TPC). Providing lifeboats. Masjid volunteers to the field. Collaboration with safety agencies (e.g., police, firefighters).
Health	Health equipment (e.g., wheelchairs, walking sticks). Critical illness assistance. Basic medical assistance. Counseling sessions. Hospital collaboration.	Basic medical assistance. Health equipment (e.g., wheelchairs, walking sticks). Counseling sessions.

Table 2 *(Continue)*

Role (Adapted from Sheikhi et al., 2021)	COVID-19 (Informant experience)	Great flood (Informant experience)
Placement	Food aid transit center.	Transit center for flood victims.
Incentives	Financial assistance. Clothes. Cooked food. Help with essential goods (e.g., sugar, rice, oil, clothes) Food bank.	
Infrastructure	Restroom. Toilet and bathroom. Women's and men's rooms. Multipurpose hall Kitchen. Expansive yard.	

Source: Authors' work

this study, as referenced in Table 2, is the combination of the COVID-19 disaster and the great flood. This combination is summarized based on the experience of the study informants to produce a discussion that is different from previous studies.

DISCUSSION

The role of *masjids* in disaster management is crucial in managing the community's situation during emergencies. Therefore, the discussion of these findings will be detailed according to the themes identified.

Services

The service a *masjid* provides involves implementing programs and initiatives by the *masjid's* administrators or committee. In simpler terms, it refers to the management provided by the *masjid* committee in handling community activities, including disaster management matters (Yusof et al.,

2023). In this study, services are viewed as initiatives involving human resource management. The *masjid* committee plays a crucial role in handling welfare aid, encompassing material assistance and physical efforts (Radwan, 2020).

Informant *masjids* provide services as part of their welfare initiatives for the community. These services are implemented during emergencies such as floods and the COVID-19 MCO. *Masjids* assist those in need and deploy volunteers to the field. For instance, during the COVID-19 MCO period, volunteers delivered food directly to recipients' homes and supported hospitals by providing free meals. They also collect special welfare funds and disseminate information to the community (Inf03-M; Inf04-M; Inf05-M; Inf06-M; Inf08-M; Inf09-M; Inf11-M; Inf12-M; Inf13-M; Inf14-M). In addition, some *masjid* informants volunteer to assist hospitals in

handling the corpses of COVID-19 patients. (Inf01-M; Inf02-M; Inf03-M; Inf05-M; Inf07-M; Inf11-M; Inf12-M; Inf13-M).

During the flood, the informant *masjid* actively participated in the rescue missions. They collaborated with rescue agencies such as the police and firefighters and also operated independently using boats provided for emergency needs (Inf05-M; Inf08-M). Volunteers were sent to help flood victims stranded and facing difficulties moving due to the floodwaters (Inf01-M; Inf04-M; Inf05-M; Inf06-M; Inf09-M; Inf10-M; Inf11-M; Inf12-M). This situation illustrates that the informant *masjid* does not focus on a single aid initiative but diversifies the types of aid services it offers to ensure the community's welfare is consistently supported.

Health

Health is a necessity that *masjids* need to address. It coincides with the role of the *masjid* as a center of community gatherings, aiming to minimize the risk of infection among attendees. In addition, prioritizing health ensures the community's overall well-being, encompassing physical, mental, and social aspects, thus transforming the *masjid* into a healthy environment where community members can interact safely. Although traditional *masjids* were not venues for specialized medical care, especially for high-risk diseases, nowadays, many *masjids* have taken the initiative to offer health assistance to their communities (Mustafa et al., 2017).

Regarding the case of the informant *masjids*, some assistance was provided in the form of medical aid, health equipment, and counseling sessions. During the COVID-19 MCO and floods, several informant *masjids* provided equipment to assist with medical needs. The *masjid* acted as a 'middleman' to help health institutions provide necessary medical assistance. Some informant *masjids* provided medical equipment for minor illnesses or specific medicines to particular patients, as requested by the hospital (Inf02-M; Inf06-M). The hospitals permitted the *masjid* to distribute special medicines for certain patients with high blood pressure, diabetes, and other ailments. Patients could visit the *masjid* to obtain their medicine directly. The *masjid* also provided emergency preparedness medicines for minor illnesses required by the community.

The second example involves health equipment such as wheelchairs, beds, and canes for patients (Inf01-M; Inf12-M). Sometimes, certain communities require such equipment, but obtaining it can be challenging during disasters. In such cases, the *masjid* takes the initiative to store the equipment for those in need, allowing them to use it at home until they recover or no longer require it.

Thirdly, the *masjid* offers counseling sessions by an informant with expertise in conducting such sessions (Inf05-M). Some individuals may have experienced trauma due to floods or feel stressed during the COVID-19 MCO. Therefore, the *masjid* conducts sessions to listen to expressions

and provide useful advice to those in need. These counseling sessions are open to anyone requiring support, whether it pertains to disaster-related or personal matters such as family issues.

Placement

The *masjid* provides a place for the community to rest temporarily and acts as a transit center for those traveling or in an emergency (Asif et al., 2019). Travelers can stop at the *masjid* to rest during their long journeys, while those in an emergency, such as those affected by floods or fires, can use the *masjid* as a temporary shelter (Bangsawan et al., 2019; Utaberta & Nasif, 2017). Thus, this study focuses on the second situation, where the *masjid* is a transit center during disasters. The *masjid* serves as a place for the community and as a center for emergency assistance. The informant's experience at the *masjid* provides insight into this situation.

The informant *masjid* initiative exemplifies a community coming together to assist those who lost their homes during a flood disaster. They provided temporary sites, rooms, and spaces to accommodate those affected by the flood (Inf05-M; Inf07-M; Inf08-M; Inf12-M). The informant *masjid* transformed into a Temporary Placement Center (TPS) as it was not severely affected by the flood and still could help the community. Some *masjid* informants volunteered outside their immediate area to assist other flood-affected regions. Moreover, informant *masjids* provide special rooms or spaces for individuals who lost their homes due to other disasters such as fires (Inf01-M).

During the COVID-19 Movement Control Order (MCO), an informant *masjid* was established as a food transit center to distribute food aid to the community. This initiative was undertaken by various informants based on experiences gained during the MCO nationwide. Unlike the flood situation, where only a few informants were involved, the informant *masjid* took the lead in becoming a food transit center. It was accomplished through sponsors' donations or the *masjid's* initiatives to assist the community.

Incentives

Incentives can take the form of material gifts or rewards given to someone in exchange for specific work or services. In this study, incentives refer to the contributions made by *masjids* to support the community's needs, such as providing financial aid, food, or necessities (Rijawanti & Fadloli, 2019). The nature of these incentives can vary depending on the *masjid's* ability and capacity to provide support based on the community's needs.

Throughout the disaster, the informant *masjids* extended several types of incentives to the community, including financial assistance, goods, and food. The method of providing incentives varied, whether through direct gifts, coupons, or similar means. The type of incentive provided also depended on the community's circumstances and current needs. Financial incentives were the most common and easiest form

of assistance provided by most informant *masjids*, as money allows for easy allocation based on specific needs (all informants). The informant *masjids* offered financial incentives in two significant situations: first, during disasters such as floods or the COVID-19 MCO, and second, as monthly incentives given in the form of money to the main beneficiary groups such as the *asnaf* group, orphans, and others. Along with helping the community in need, the executors and volunteers of the *masjid* were also given coupons or tokens in place of cash for their contributions and devotional services (Inf01-M; Inf06-M; Inf13-M). Some informant *masjids* opted to provide coupons as monthly assistance instead of money to the *asnaf* group (Inf06-M).

Informants have reported providing incentives in the form of goods such as clothing, bedding, basic food items, and others, in addition to financial incentives, depending on the current situation (all informants). For instance, financial assistance may be less effective during disasters like floods, prompting *masjids* to offer goods that better meet the local community's needs. Similarly, during the COVID-19 lockdown and floods, *masjids* served as locations where the community could access cooked food. Community members visited the *masjid* to collect pre-prepared food packages, given the restricted movement outside homes during lockdowns. *Masjids* also distributed cooked meals to flood victims, whether temporarily staying in the *masjid* or their safe homes. Additionally, a food bank was established at the *masjid* with essential items such as oil, rice, and fast food to meet the needs of those in distress.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure is a crucial aspect of any *masjid*. It is meant to provide the necessary facilities and comforts to those who visit the *masjid*. These facilities are not only for those who come to perform their prayers but also for people who use the *masjid* for social gatherings and other ceremonies. Moreover, the infrastructure is designed to cater to the needs of the elderly, disabled, and children (Aji et al., 2022). Some facilities typically found in *masjids* include prayer rooms, toilets, ablution rooms, women's rooms, and multi-purpose halls. Providing such facilities is essential for creating a comfortable and convenient environment for the community. It makes the *masjid* a focal point for the community to gather, pray, and strengthen relationships (Hoelzchen, 2022). It is noteworthy that *masjid* infrastructure can also be used during emergencies, especially in *masjids* that have never previously experienced calamities. This observation stems from the experiences reported by the informants at their *masjids*.

Based on the informants' experiences at their *masjids*, the existing infrastructure and equipment serve not only for comfort but also prove highly useful during emergencies (all informants). For instance, during the COVID-19 MCO and floods, the community utilized all facilities, including multi-purpose halls, rooms, boarding houses, kitchens, and large areas of the *masjid* grounds. During the

COVID-19 MCO, for example, volunteers used the kitchen to prepare food distributed to the community. Similarly, basic food items such as rice, oil, sugar, and others were stocked in a food bank for distribution to those in need. During the flood season, the utilization of infrastructure becomes even more significant. *Masjids* serving as temporary shelters utilize numerous rooms, halls, open spaces, and kitchens to temporarily accommodate affected individuals. Therefore, the availability of this infrastructure is essential not only during normal times but also during emergencies such as disasters.

The management of informant *masjids* is not a new finding; however, it has become more common in Malaysia. This study examined the experiences of *masjids* who acted as informants and compiled the information to create a disaster management system. These systems are managed by experienced *masjids* who are aware of emergencies, especially during COVID-19 MCO and floods. Both disasters require different methods of societal management. For example, during the COVID-19 MCO, people were restricted from leaving their homes, whereas during floods, affected communities had to relocate to safer areas. Thus, the *masjid* becomes the frontline and intermediary for agencies assisting the community in both scenarios. Therefore, this study combines these two situations and proposes "*masjid*-based disaster management" as a beneficial action plan. This approach aims to ensure the long-term prosperity of communities in the face of any disaster.

CONCLUSION

Disaster is an unfortunate occurrence that cannot be foreseen or anticipated. Everyone must be prepared to reduce the risks involved, especially when it comes to human life. It underscores the significant role of *masjids* as part of institutions leading disaster management efforts within society. Malaysia's current experiences highlight various agencies and institutions' determination to curb the spread of COVID-19 and help flood victims by providing aid to those affected.

The role of a *masjid* in Malaysia is significant as a religious institution that helps the country alleviate community situations, either as a mediator to health and safety agencies or as a direct initiative from the *masjid* to the community because *masjids* are present everywhere, both in urban and rural areas, making it easier for people to access them. Although some *masjids* have been affected by disasters, many continue highlighting their functionality in supporting communities in times of need. This situation exemplifies the constructive relationship between the community and *masjids*.

Therefore, it is essential for *masjids* to be active in disaster management and use this opportunity to map out a more holistic strategy to prove that *masjids* can meet people's spiritual needs and also defend the fate of all parties through human empowerment actions to achieve economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

Research Implications

The study discusses the implications derived from the informants' experiences.

The findings indicate that aspects of *masjid* management can provide practical assistance at the grassroots level. *Masjid* management involves a systematic approach to coordinate, strategize, and monitor resource allocation, task execution, and operational functions within the context of a religious institution. It is important because the *masjid* links religious believers' spiritual mission and the institution's administrative system, which implements a strategy to achieve objectives. *Masjid* management encompasses organizational and administrative tasks that are performed to ensure the smooth operation of the institution. It extends beyond financial aspects to include action plans in which the community can actively participate. Therefore, *masjid* management involves various tasks similar to the experiences shared by the informants regarding the management of their *masjids* during emergency periods.

Secondly, the importance of preserving community welfare is highlighted. Welfare refers to efforts to provide a basic level of well-being through social services like healthcare, education, infrastructure, vocational training, and public housing. In a welfare state, the government assumes responsibility for ensuring these services' provision, thereby ensuring its citizens' well-being. Social work is crucial in achieving this objective, especially in assisting those in need during times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and floods. This study focuses on the efforts made by *masjids* to extend welfare assistance to the needy,

taking into account the needs and problems the target group faces. The implications of this study will depend on the effectiveness of the methods used to reach out to the community and address their needs.

Thirdly, realizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the role of *masjids* aligns with the core values of religion, which plays a vital role in advancing the mission of the SDGs. Religion has significantly shaped human thought and action since the beginning of human civilization and continues to strongly influence society today. The belief systems promoted by religions contribute significantly to addressing contemporary global challenges, exemplified by the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that form the spirit of the 2030 agenda. These goals, which include justice, peace, and unity, resonate across nearly all religious traditions. In Islamic tradition, *masjids* promote healthcare, reduce poverty, emphasize education, and preserve society's welfare for a long time. Based on the experiences of the study's informants, all informant *masjids* implement the 17 SDGs, reflecting the integral role of Islam in shaping society and tackling global challenges.

Limitations and Recommendations

This study has several limitations as it only focuses on disaster management related to the COVID-19 pandemic and floods. The findings obtained from the research only revolve around five themes that are related to the results of interviews conducted

with informants. These themes align with the experiences of selected *masjids* in handling disaster situations, adapted from Sheikhi et al.'s (2021) study as previously discussed. However, the research does not cover the entirety of Malaysia. Although the study takes information from all states, the experiences gained from one area may differ.

After analyzing the abovementioned limitations, the study proposes recommendations for future studies. Firstly, future studies should adopt a holistic, practical, and comprehensive approach. "Holistic" refers to emphasizing religious perspectives, "practical" suggests findings that can be put into practice at the field level, and "comprehensive" indicates long-term and multi-faceted effects. Secondly, future studies could expand the number of experienced informants to obtain more comprehensive and diverse data. For instance, each state could include five to ten experienced informants. Thirdly, *masjid* management could be expanded to include community welfare aspects. While this study focused on disasters, future research could explore *masjid* management in community welfare by examining implementation factors, initiatives, and aid recipient groups, potentially yielding more diverse and interesting findings.

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