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ROLE OF MOSQUE LEADERS AND ITS IMPACT TOWARDS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: A STUDY IN KEDAH

Azfahanee Zakaria^{1*}, Kamarudin Ngah²

¹ Faculty of Business and management, UiTM Kedah, Malaysia.
Email: azfa292@uitm.edu.my

² Government, UUM College of Law, Government and International Studies, Universiti Utara Malaysia.
Email: kamarudinngah@uum.edu.my

* Corresponding Author

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Abstract:

Leaders are people who influence and direct activities of a group of followers the intended achievement. However, this can only be done if the leaders are aware of and fully understand their role. This study aims to understand the depth of the reader's understanding of their role and its impact on community building. This research adopts a qualitative study where twelve mosque leaders and four officers from the Islamic Religious Department would share their views. The findings of the research would then be used as a guide for the Islamic Religious Department to further be enhanced on the selection process and training which need to be drawn for mosque leaders to build a strong community.

Keywords:

Leader, Mosque, Roles, Community Building

Introduction

Leaders holds an important function in any organization which they lead, may it be a multinational organization, a small organization, a school or even a mosque. This is because the leaders would be the ones, who would direct, communicate and ensure that the organization will achieve its goals with the assistance of the followers of the leader (Mc. Shane S.L & Von Glinow M.A., 2015). Besides, leaders are also entrusted to motivate, and clear the path for employees or team to proceed their work effectively for the organization success. In today's competitive era and competitive business environment, leaders now shoulder a heavier responsibility to safeguard the organization in achieving success and effectiveness

(Martiskainen, 2016). However, this can only be done if the leaders are aware of their roles and expectation.

The Mosque And Mosque Management

The same goes for the leaders in the mosque management, whereby the mosque itself is an organization and the mosque leaders are expected to manage it to the most optimum level. However off late, there were many instance and reports where the mosque has been under-utilized and the attendees for the daily congregational prayers are only recorded as only between 5-10% of the total population in the area (Ashaari, 2018). Besides, it was mentioned that the attendees to the mosque are being dominated by pensioners and veterans. However, from past research it was mentioned that attendance to the mosque do record a higher percentage during Friday prayers, religious celebration (Rizam Tambi Chik & Maimun Aqsha Lubis, 2010) and talks by prominent speakers.

In the days of Prophet Mohammed s.a.w, the mosque functions as a place for development and administration centre which includes the syariah court, hospitals, area where travellers stop to rest, an area for social activities and many more. According to (Adha Abd Hamid N A & at el 2015) the function of the mosque does not confine to serve worshipers or qaryah members on religious matters only, but it also serves as a place for community institution or centre for community building. This is seen as a platform for the Muslim community to unite and assist with the development of the economy (Tajudeen Yusuf & Lukman AbdulRaheem, 2004). Understanding the importance of a mosque to the Muslims community, therefore it is a must that the mosque leaders manage the mosque effectively.

However, off late, there are many feedbacks being obtained indicating that mosque is having many challenges due to unprofessional management (Muhammad Sabri M.F., & Tonot H., 2017). This has led to the question on what are the reasons that the leader is being labelled as unprofessional management. Would it be the lack of understanding on the role entrusted to them as one of the reasons that the leaders have been claimed and unprofessional?

These has also sparked the curiosity as of why the numbers of attendees are low. Where are the teenagers and why are they not at the mosque during prayers as well during other social activities? Understanding this is indeed important as the mosque is a centre for both religious and community building are not being fully utilised. Should this situation prolonged, the teenagers whom would later be an adult and leader to the mosque would not be able to assist the community which he is living in. What is more alarming is when there were many incidents reported that social ills by teenagers are of the rise? According to Pillay, (2017) there is an increase of social ills in Malaysia by 16 per cent, from 21,256 in 2015 to 24,821. And in 2017, Malaysian were shocked and alarm when Muslim teenagers set fire and blazed 23 *tahfiz* boys due to un control anger. In 2018, Malaysian were once again caught off guard when a cadet officer of a public university in Malaysia was bullied to death in his university dormitory. And this has led to six students aged 21 from the same university were accused of murdering their fellow navy cadet officer using a steam iron (Kumar, 2017). Ironically, should the teenagers be equipped with religious belief and Al Quran teaching, such incident could have been avoided.

Community Development

Community development is basically a manner where members of the community would participate in making decisions together for the benefits if the community. This is also supported by D'souza (2017), where he mentioned that the most significant factor in ensuring continuous economic progress is the participation and togetherness of the members in the

community in making decisions. Beside the togetherness and strong relationship among the community members, the members also need to ensure that they are continuously increase their skills and knowledge which would be an added advantage for the community to keep abreast with fast demanding change. For the Muslim community, the skills and knowledge could be obtained through various activities and talks should it is being held in the mosque as part of their knowledge transfer programme. And for the bond and the strong participation, both can be obtained should the community members or *qaryah* members do participate and be part of the activities in the mosque. However, with the attendees are low and only dominated by the veterans, some actions need to be done to rectify the situation.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative method with twelve mosque officers and four officers from the Islamic Religious Office are involved as informants. According to (Mike, 2017), informants are persons who has specialized knowledge and/or expertise on a specific culture or a person who is a member of the group which we are studying on. Therefore, in this context, the mosque leaders are the most appropriate person to be an informant. The informants are twelve mosque officers which represent both mosque which have been awarded with Best Mosque Award in the state of Kedah and also mosque which have been identified as not very active by the officers from the Islamic Religious Office of the district. According to Denzin (1978), qualitative research is done with the intention to understand the social reality of individuals, groups and cultures. Additionally, qualitative research has now become a noticeable approach within social science as it allows the researcher to understand people feel and sense King N., &, Horrocks C., (2010). Information would be collected and gathered through in-depth interview session with the informants.

During the interview session, two main questions would be asked to the informants. The questions are:

1. How do you get to understand your role as a mosque leader?
2. How do you portray that you fully understood your role as a mosque leader?
3. How do you plan your activities for the benefits of the community?

Discussion

In discussing question 1, all twelve officers mentioned that they understood their roles as leaders through the job description which was stated in the enactment issued by Kedah Islamic Affairs Department. In the enactment, task and list of responsibilities as mosque leaders were stated and the enactment is made available at all mosque. Additionally, eight out of twelve (8/12) informants mentioned that their experiences where they frequent the mosque ever since they were teenagers, allows them to understand the role of mosque leaders better. Besides, all twelve mentioned that additional information on the roles as mosque leaders were shared and mentioned during their interview session held previously.

In addition to that, all twelve mosque leaders are fully aware that they shoulder a huge responsibility as to ensure that the mosque is to restore the function of the mosque as required by Shariah and as a centre for the Muslim in the community to meet up and socialize. However, four informants (4/12) admits that 60% of the activities lined up at the mosque are talks focusing on religious matter only. These phenomena are supported by Ashaari (2018) and Kawangit (2006), where it was mentioned that some Muslim have tend to segregate the function of the mosque as only a religious centre and not as a one stop centre for Muslims. The four informants also mentioned that the turnout rate during congregational prayers are low and the community itself records a high population rate of retirees and old folks in the area. Low

turnout issue is being supported by previous research where Ashaari (2018) mentioned that the attendance of *solat jemaah* records a low of 5-10 percent of the Muslim population in the area.

However, eight other informants shared their activities which they and their team have organized previously such as carnivals, camps for kids, collaboration with NGOs in organizing Free Market activities for the community, cooking classes for mothers, cooking in a big scale for mothers who wish to generate side incomes and many more. One of the informants mentioned that it was a challenge to start organizing the social activities previously as the community in his area perceived that mosque should only focus on religious activities only. He also shared his view whereby he and his team have planned activities ahead however felt demotivated as at times the activities are only attended by the same *qaryah* members only.

In discussing question # 2, all mosque leaders agree that they as mosque leaders need to portray good moral and values. All twelve leaders agree that they are the role model for the community as well. However, they also agree that some mosque leaders tend to have low interpersonal skills whereby they are rude and do not have communications skills as leaders. These leaders tend to be abrupt and not sensitive to the needs and feedbacks of the other mosque leaders and community members. These behaviours would be one of the factors on why the community or *qaryah* members are avoiding the activities in the mosque itself. One of the informants mentioned that as role models, leaders need not be afraid to admit their mistake if there is. According to the informant, this would create higher respect and the trust towards the leaders would increase. Another informant also shared his view whereby he mentioned that as leaders, one need to ensure that they are willing to assist in any manner to ensure that the people around him would be able to complete their task smoothly.

This situation is supported by McShane, S.L., & Von Glinow, M. (2015) whereby leaders who practise servant leadership qualities would allow team members to complete their task successfully and effectively. According to Mc Shane, servant leaders are leaders who are sensitive and humble towards the needs of the team and willing to assist in ensuring that all item needed to complete the task is made available.

And in discussing question # 3, all twelve informants mentioned that they do discuss on the activities with other leaders. All twelve informants also allow for members of the community to give feedback and ideas on what are the activities which they wish to attend and have. However, three informants mentioned that they would decide on which activity to organize. In this context, they would make the final decisions based on the suggestions given by the team.

Additionally, five informants mentioned that he and his team established and created a youth social group where teenagers in the area are part of the group itself. This group of teenagers would gather and create activities which are of their interest. One of the informants mentioned that the number of teenagers who attended the activities has increased however it is still low as compared to the number of youths in the community. The activities which the youth have organized are E-sports friendly games, futsal and hiking in the nearby area. According to the informant, the youths also have started to gather at the mosque before Asar prayer to do revision on the studies. Having youth who frequent and utilize the mosque not only for religious activities is a positive sign as now the mosque acts as a center for both religious and social activities in the area. However, in allowing and getting the youth to plan activities on their own will only be successful if the leaders of the mosque are willing to empower their authority to the youth leaders itself. Should empowerment be not being practise in the leaders, successful creative activities would not be materialized (Allan Lee , Sara Willis & Amy Wei Tian, 2018).

This is supported by LaMarco (2018), it mentioned that empowerment is very much needed by the frontlines as they are closer to the actions needed.

Findings

In any situation, having a clear role and objective would be an added advantage for the person to complete his task. Therefore, mosque leaders need to ensure that they follow the job description stated in the enactment and not just by observing what the previous leaders have done. Besides, training and discussion between both the mosque leaders as well as the officers from the Islamic Religious Office should be held on a continuously basis as to allow for frequent discussion on any matters arising to mosque management. Understanding the function of the mosque fully would also allow for the mosque to be a centre for all activities in the community. The participation of the community in social activities as well as religious activities would have an indirect change towards the behaviour of the community. However, leaders need to be sensitive and have level of openness in their management style as to allow for them be accepted as a leader in the community.

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