

Changing Urban Mosques in the City: The Role of Communal and Intercultural Spaces in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, most mosques have lost their social characteristics, especially the ones in cities. In other words, it seems that mosques in the present times are operated simply as a house of worship for Muslims, rather than being used as a whole community place. Considering the current situation in Malaysia, it has been stated that the majority of the mosques are only extensively used during the five time congregational prayers and this situation has limited the functions of the mosques outside prayer times. Furthermore, mosque designs nowadays have generated spaces that are more exclusive spaces rather than inclusive. Today, important spaces, such as courtyards, are not incorporated into the mosque designs, and this also affects the declining roles of the open spaces around the mosque. Historically, mosque designs came with courtyards, which played the role of communal spaces for the emergent community during that particular time. However, far too little attention has been paid to the importance and functions of the mosque open spaces as a platform to encourage social and cultural interactions. Hence, the aim of the paper is to provide a conceptual theoretical framework based on 'how the provision of the mosque open spaces could achieve the intercultural spaces concept and meet the needs of a multicultural society' and investigating if 'urban mosque open spaces encourage diverse intercultural activities and interactions' in Malaysian context. The methodology adopted for this study is a mixed-methods approach, incorporating several techniques, which include systematic observation with behaviour mapping, focus group discussions and interviews. The value of this study lies in investigating whether or not the mosque open spaces in Malaysia encourage communal and intercultural interactions, and, also, in generating new understandings, evidence and knowledge pertaining to the functions and utilisation of the mosque open spaces as communal and intercultural spaces.

Keywords: Urban Mosque Open Spaces, Communal Spaces, Intercultural Spaces, Social Interactions

1. INTRODUCTION

Religious institutions are among the significant places within urban areas that function as fundamental platforms for communal activities and social organisation (Ramsay, 2000; Amira Mohyuddin and Hasanuddin Lamit, 2008). Distinctively, institutions, such as mosques, chapels, churches, synagogues and temples, have the most evident physical manifestation of religious and cultural identity in cities (Shipps, n.d; Cisneros, 1996). For a Muslim community, the significant religious place that represents the community is the mosque, or known in Arabic as the masjid. According to Mohamad Tajuddin (2010), the mosque can be expressed as a central and sacred worship place, which holds physical, spiritual and communal responsibilities in Islam. Historically, as well as functioning as a religious and spiritual institution for Muslims, the original idea and concept of the mosque is very close to the notion of public or community togetherness, functioning as a public space for education, discussion, social interaction, recreation, community services and other activities (Omer, 2011). This fits in with the view of Ward Thompson (2002), in that the public, or people, spaces should be perceived as spaces in the community area which offer a wide range of social activities. This view is strengthened further by Moudon (1987), who states that public spaces should embolden publicness, diversity and participation. In other words, public spaces should provide opportunities and freedom for users from various backgrounds to use the spaces without any domination of a selected group, and should encourage users' participation for social development and cultural growth. Based on this notion, it is believed that the utilisation of the mosque as a community place should be all-encompassing, being not only confined to the Muslim community themselves, but also allowing the non-Muslim community to engage with the activities for the sake of social integration and development (Ismail, 2002; Ahmad Izzuddin, 2011; Najafi and Mustafa Kamal, 2011).

In recent years, there has been a considerable amount of research and interest in understanding the importance, functions and roles of the mosque as a community place. This is evident from various scopes of research, such as the mosque architectural design implications towards the community (Mohamad Tajuddin, 2010), place attachment and users' experience of the mosque (Najafi and Mustafa Kamal, 2011; Amira Mohyuddin and Hasanuddin Lamit, 2008) and spiritual meanings of the mosque spaces towards the community (Dewiyanti and Kusuma, 2012). In spite of the far-reaching studies emphasising the importance of the mosque architectural designs, functions and roles to the community, little attention has been placed on the importance, utilisation and functions of the mosque open spaces as intercultural spaces (public spaces for multicultural community, be it Muslims or non-Muslims). Therefore, this study will explicitly focus on that particular research area, in the context of urban mosques in Malaysia, which is a multicultural country with a 26 million demographic population, consisting of various religions and ethnicities. This study is significant to discover differing viewpoints and to provide evidence in the context of mosque-based research, as well as to fill the gap in 'how the provision of the mosque open spaces could achieve the intercultural spaces concept and meet the needs of a multicultural society', as suggested by Morshidi Sirat and Atikullah Abdullah (2008).

2. ISSUES AND BACKGROUND

Nowadays, it can be said that, sadly, most mosques have lost their social characters, especially the ones in cities (Maqbool Farhat, 2008), meaning that the present mosques are simply operated for a basic use (as a house of worship for Muslims), rather than being used as a whole community place. Considering the current situation in Malaysia, it is said that the majority of the mosques are extensively used only during the five time congregational prayers (Nur Athirah Khalit, 2011; Ab. Halim Tamuri, et al., 2012). This situation has limited the functions of the mosques outside prayer times, and is in line with the views of Maqsood (2005) and Kareem Adel

(2010), which are that globalisation has resulted in the loss of the mosque identity, especially where the active and dynamic roles of the mosque, played in the life of the community since the period of Prophet Muhammad and the Caliphates era, have become limited to religious and worship ritual uses only. Indirectly, it can be viewed that the original concept of the mosque as a public and community place in Malaysia has declined through time. Mohammad Tajuddin (1998) also mentions that the issue regarding the declining mosque roles and functions has been caused by little appreciation and grasp towards the historical and contemporary context of the mosque itself. This issue can be resolved through a clear understanding of the initial conception of the mosque. The Prophet's conception of the mosque is fundamental, because it exemplifies the spirit of the ideal way of shaping society through a place.

Furthermore, nowadays, mosque designs have generated spaces that are more exclusive spaces (limited usage for certain groups of people) rather than inclusive spaces (Morshidi Sirat and Atikullah Abdullah, 2008). It is said, nowadays, that important spaces, such as courtyards, are not incorporated into the mosque designs, which also affects the declining roles of the open spaces around the mosque. Historically, the mosque designs came with courtyards, which were not only constrained as a symbol of remembrance to God, but also played the role of communal spaces for the emergent community during that particular time (Ziad Aazam, 2007; Morshidi Sirat and Atikullah Abdullah, 2008). The courtyards that adjoined the mosque were fundamentally used as communal spaces, where social and civic activities were normally conducted by all sectors of the local community. As such, it can be presumed that, without those elements, the mosque itself could not possibly function as a communal and intercultural space for the local community. Nevertheless, it is evident that, even in the absence of the courtyards, the qualities and characters of communal and intercultural spaces do seem to exist at the mosques in Malaysia, particularly in the Kuala Lumpur area (Morshidi Sirat and Atikullah Abdullah, 2008). This shows that, in Malaysia, the types of communal or intercultural spaces associated with the mosque are often varied, not necessarily being a courtyard. They may include other open spaces around the mosque, adjacent to the mosque and other influential spaces that may not formally be part of the mosque. In relation to this, Mohamad Tajuddin (2010) raises an issue regarding the mosque open spaces in Malaysia being frequently designed and ornamented with sculptures, decorative gardens and car parks. In other words, it can be said that there were little attempts to transform the mosque open spaces into attractive and valuable public openspaces, which would encourage intercultural interactions among the community. In spite of merely being beautified for aesthetical reasons, the mosque open spaces should be acknowledged and appreciated for their distinctive environmental and societal functions. As stated by Morshidi Sirat and Atikullah Abdullah (2008), the provision of such spaces should meet the needs of multicultural and multi-ethnic societies, as there is no legislation that forbids the non-Muslim community to play a part in social activities in the compounds or any spaces around the mosque.

The primary aim of this research is to appraise the roles, functions and utilisation of the urban mosque open spaces, as being a part of the communal and intercultural spaces. This research is worthwhile in depicting the importance of the mosque open spaces as being a significant element in enhancing cultural and social integration among the community, in revitalising the understanding towards the original notion and concept of the mosque during historical times and, also, in generating new knowledge and evidence about to what extent the mosque open spaces can produce successful communal and intercultural spaces. The main research question addressed in this study is 'do urban mosque open spaces encourage diverse intercultural activities and interactions?' To provide further detail in addressing this, the research will, also, aim to achieve a series of research objectives; (i) to investigate whether or not the mosque open spaces are used by multicultural users, (ii) to examine and investigate users' behaviour and activity patterns, as well as their preferences in using the mosque open spaces,

(iii) to understand why users behave in certain ways, why they like or dislike certain spaces and how they feel (welcomed or restricted) when they use the spaces for intercultural activities, and (iv) to examine the Muslim users', mosque committees' and key officers' views about the intercultural activities and interactions at the mosque open spaces, and to examine the users' experiences (especially the non-Muslim users) and whether or not they face any conflicts (difficulties, restrictions, etc.) when they use the spaces.

3. CONCEPT OF THE MOSQUE TO THE COMMUNITY

The term mosque will be widely used in this study as it indicates the primary subject matter for the whole research. The mosque signifies of the key components of Islamic architecture and built environment (Mohamad Tajuddin, 2010). Initially, the mosque or known as the 'masjid' in Arabic can be defined as a place where people prostrate to God (Harlina and Hazman, 2004). The mosque represents the establishment of the Muslim community; it is the nucleus that created the characteristics of the Muslim society. The mosque has a very significant responsibility in the Islamic community since the historical Islamic era. It was seen as an ultimate centre for the Muslim community where social activities and community integration were occurred (Omer, 2011; Ab.Halim Tamuri et al., 2012). Furthermore, the mosque has been viewed as an important communal place in town or city settings (Mohd. Ismail and Kamarul Azmi, 2008; Fukami and Sato, 2012). Basically, communal place is apprehended as an outdoor room within a neighbourhood or community centre, and it offers a place for relaxation, urban environment enjoyment platform for wide range of social activities, and most importantly of all a place for movement – walking, sitting and etcetera (Ward Thompson, 2002). It stands as a reflection of a city's spatial and social organization and which may contribute to social reproduction and change (Vasilevska, 2012). Thus, it can be seen that, the mosque could be a great communal place where it can turn to be a great society meeting point to enjoy more than religious activities. According to Kareem Adel (2010), a main set of criteria has been developed to identify the relationship between mosque as a design element and its spiritual and social function in the Islamic community. This set consists of two subsets which are design aspect set and functional aspect set (Figure 1):

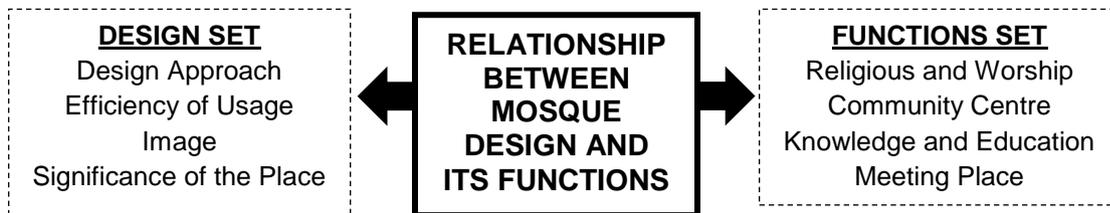


Figure 1: Relationship between Mosque Design and Its Functions (Kareem Adel, 2010)

Based on the previous diagram, it can be seen that the design aspect set consists of several criteria such as mosque design approach, efficiency of its usage, image including artistic features, and the significance of the place. Meanwhile, the second set contains functional aspect which is based on the multifunctional uses of the mosque - as a worship house, a centre of community service, a centre of knowledge, as well as a meeting place or also known as *syura* in Arabic. This relationship has established a base understanding on how mosque should be designed to meet the expectations of the spiritual and social functions. This is in line with 'The Place Diagram' concept (Figure 2) developed by Project for Public Space (PPS), in which the successful people or communal place should possess four key qualities: great accessibility; encourage good social engagement and activities; comfortable spaces; and finally, it is a sociable place: one where people meet each other and take people when they come to visit.



Figure 2: The Place Diagram (PPS, 2012)

By looking into this diagram, it can be seen that the place itself cannot be disassociated with those criteria. This is important to be well-applied in the mosque open space design, so that there will be a balance space utilization between mosque indoor space and outdoor space. Besides, a good people place also emphasizes on several supporting criteria such as: (i) equity: evenly distributed for the use of all society; (ii) vitality: challenge to explore, develop and improve social interest; (iii) identity: challenge to accentuate specific place character; (iv) safety: a safe and peaceful place for community; (v) diversity: open for all users from various background; as well as (10) sense of belonging: challenge to keep the originality of the place (Vasilevska, 2012). In relation to importance of the mosque a communal place, Omer (2009) has suggested that a mosque should serve various functions such as (i) place for religious activities, (ii) place for learning activities, (iii) place for charitable activities, (iv) place for detention and rehabilitation, (v) place for medical treatment and nursing as well as (vi) place for leisure activities. This idea also fits to a view by Bianca (2000) that unique symbiosis between religious, educational, social and commercial functions is expressed in the integration of the mosque building into the central compound.

4. THE ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE MOSQUE FOR THE WHOLE COMMUNITY

Historically, the mosque during the Islamic era functioned as the main pulse to the Muslim community as a whole. It was the first urban element that Prophet Muhammad introduced to the city of Madinah, Saudi Arabia (Omer, 2009). The mosque at that time was respected, celebrated and admired not only by the Muslims community but also by the non-Muslims; the Jews and the Christians (Al-Faruki and Al-Faruki, 1996; Talha, 2001; Abdul Malik Mujahid, 2003; Nur Athirah Khalit, 2011). Historically, the architectural design of mosques would normally include a main prayer hall and a courtyard. While the prayer hall was meant for the conduct of prayers, the courtyard was used for social activities which were normally conducted and attended by all sectors of the local community. There is no restriction to other sectors of population in terms of participation (Morshidi Sirat and Atikullah Abdullah, 2008). Traditionally, the mosques were the venues for debates. Debates and other community activities were normally inclusive in nature and conducted in the courtyards (Darsh, 1996). Comparing the present situation with the past, there was a dynamism and activity that is absent from many of the mosques of the Muslim world today (Abdul Malik Mujahid, 2003). The following table shows the difference between the traditional functions and the contemporary functions of the mosque:

<u>FUNCTIONS OF MOSQUE</u>	TRADITIONAL FUNCTIONS	CONTEMPORARY FUNCTIONS
1. Place for congregational prayers (5 times daily prayers, Friday prayer, special prayers)	/	/
2. School/learning centre/madrasah/place for sermons delivery/library	/	/
3. Courthouse	/	x
4. Military camp (spaces for weapons storage and treasury)	/	x
5. Hospital	/	X
6. Shelter for the homeless	/	x
7. Place for holding celebrations/events (solemnization, fasting in Ramadhan, Eid celebrations, Hijri new year and etcetera)	/	/
8. Daily businesses, administrative and financial centre	/	x
9. Place for charity and giveaway	/	/

Table 1: Traditional Functions and the Contemporary Functions of the Mosque
Source: (Omer, 2009)

Based on the above table, it can be seen that the mosque in historical time were comprehensively utilized as community development centre. It was not merely being used as place for the Muslim rituals, prayers and worshipping activities, but it was functioned as an educational centre, a military camp, a judging and debating venue, a place for festive celebrations, an economic and trading centre, as well as a place for charity to the needy. On the contrary, it can be seen that the roles and functions of the mosque are declining in the present time. It is no longer being used for several significant functions which affect the original notion of the mosque as a community centre. According to Mosque and Imams Advisory Boards (2011), it is very vital to understand the roles of mosques in relation to local communities. A project named 'The Mosque in Community' has been done by this organization, and they have come out with significant recommendations in reviving the roles of mosques in the local community:

- i) The mosque should engage with other faith communities, but also do so with a range of denominations within faith communities to ensure diversity of activities and engagement;
- ii) The mosque should promote classes and trainings, such as, health and well-being classes; as well as sports and fitness classes as part of the healthy social activities;
- iii) The mosque should be connected to the wider non-Muslim community through (i) inclusive interaction and inviting followers of other religions to visit the mosque, (ii) taking mosque users and committee members to visit other places of worship, and (iii) welcoming the local non-Muslims to the mosque to join any events or celebrations.

- iv) The mosque should organise social action days for local areas, which can help to support relationships with wider communities. This might include social action days or in other words, charity session for helping the homeless and many more.

5. THE MOSQUE: MALAYSIAN CONTEXT

According to Department of Urban and Rural Planning Malaysia (1997), there are several types of Muslim worship place in Malaysia. The following tables present the different typology, level of development, settlements hierarchy, general functions of each type of mosque, design criteria and capacity, as well as open space considerations:

TYPOLOGY	LEVEL	SETTLEMENTS HIERARCHY	FUNCTIONS
1. National Mosque	National	City Centre Capital City	Muslims' house of worship and social integration centre
2. State Mosque	State	National Federal Territory State Federal Territory	
3. District Mosque	District	Main Local District	
4. Sub-district Rural Mosque	Sub-district/Rural Area	Rural Development Area Villages Neighbourhood	
5. Surau Madrasah Musolla	Small Neighbourhood Area Village Housing Area Commercial Area Government Offices Airports Bus Hub	Villages Small Neighbourhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Surau: as worship place and religious education centre. ▪ Madrasah: as religious education centre with students accomodations. Also known as 'monastic mosque'. ▪ Musolla: as worship place only.
6. Prayer Room	Individual Housing	-	-

Table 2: Types of Muslim worship place in Malaysia
Source: Department of Urban and Rural Planning Malaysia (1997)

Based on Table 2 and Table 3 (on the following page), it can be seen that there are different layers of mosques exist in Malaysia. These mosques serve different functions at different level of development and settlement hierarchy. Based on this categorization, the case study areas for this study were selected. Three urban mosques are selected for this study purposes –National

Mosque, Kuala Lumpur (national level); Abu Ubaidah Al-Jarah Mosque, Kuala Lumpur (district level); and Al-Ghufran Mosque, Kuala Lumpur (sub-district/neighbourhood level). These mosques are chosen as the study areas because they act as landmarks and focal points for the public activities. These points of references act as important aspects for certain activities in urban areas as highlighted by Lynch (1960). They are strategically located in the heart of big cities which accommodate different layers and groups of community as well as local and foreign tourists. According to Ghafani Awang Teh (2008), these mosques are among the most attractive mosques which attract many tourists, local and foreign. He further mentioned that, based on year 2007 statistics, National Mosque itself had been visited by 255,800 foreign tourists.

TYOLOGY	SETTLEMENTS HIERARCHY	FUNCTIONS	DESIGN CRITERIA AND CAPACITY	OPEN SPACE CONSIDERATIONS
National Mosque	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Centre/Capital City 	Muslims' house of worship and social integration centre	Should be located on 10 hectares land – so that it can accommodate large numbers of users for multi-activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good pedestrian and vehicular circulation Sufficient car parks for users and visitors – to avoid traffic congestion It is good to have a mosque which is nearby to the public transportation hub – therefore, car park provision can be minimized Should cater the needs of disabled people (ramps, railings and etc.) Landscape development should be done from the earlier stage. Landscape design should be easy to maintain, provide shades to users and could act as buffer zone for the mosque.
State Mosque	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Federal Territory State Federal Territory 		Should be located on 3 to 5 hectares land – the role of state mosque is smaller than national mosque	
District Mosque	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Main Local District 		Should be located on 1.5 to 3 hectares land – which can accommodate 2000 users	
Sub-District/ Jamek/ Rural Mosque	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural and Villages Neighbourhood Area 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural mosque should be located on minimum 0.25 hectare land – which can accommodate 41-200 users Suburban neighbourhood mosque should be located on minimum 0.5 hectare land – which can accommodate up to 1000 users Neighbourhood mosque with higher population density should be located on minimum 1 hectare land – 1000 to 1500 users or more than 5000 Muslim residents 	

Table 3: Garis Panduan Perancangan Tempat Ibadat Islam
Source: Department of Urban and Rural Planning Malaysia (1997)

6. METHODOLOGY

6.1 Research Design

This study involves a case study design with a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection (mixed-methods). According to Bryman (2012), case study research can be defined as research that is associated with a particular location and setting, a community or an organisation. He also states that the use of a mixed-methods approach is suitable for case study based research. According to Yin (2003), research with multi case studies has an advantage, compared to a single case study research. Multi case studies research provides more solid, reliable and convincing findings at a later stage. Regarding this study, three different methods are proposed to conduct the data collection. They are (i) systematic observation with behaviour mapping, (ii) focus group discussion and (iii) semi-structured interview. However, there is an additional proposed method which is online questionnaire survey. This method will be used as a contingency strategy if there is more information need to be obtained. A pilot study has been done to test each method and the primary data collection and fieldwork is now on-going.

6.2 Systematic Observation and Behaviour Mapping

Systematic observation with behaviour mapping is a part of the quantitative data collection for this study. Systematic observation, also known as structured observation, can be defined as a technique where the researcher employs formulated rules and protocols for the observation and recording of behaviour (Bryman, 2012). These protocols are developed in an instrument called observation schedule. This type of observation also involves touring the open spaces several times (within the proposed time intervals), whilst documenting the tour by photographing key spaces, landscape elements and activities found in the spaces (Salama, 2008). Together with the observation, behaviour mapping is used to compile, or record, the users' location and behavioural patterns in a given space (Moore and Cosco, 2010; Salama, 2008). This technique provides researchers with an innovative method of assessing behaviour linked to the detailed physical characteristics of open spaces and outdoor areas (Cosco et al., 2010). This study will utilise a combination of behavioural mappings, being place-centred mapping and individual-centred mapping. According to Salama (2008), place-centred mapping involves using plans or diagrams to record actions in particular locations or settings, while individual-centred mapping is used to record the activities and movements of the users of the spaces. In the context of this study, the observation and behaviour mapping will be conducted at the mosque open spaces, based on the decided time intervals. The researcher needs to observe the users and activities at the mosque open spaces, simultaneously mapping them on the plan. This process will be conducted during a time sequence in which the Muslim five daily prayer times will be taken into account. The mapping data collected will be transferred and digitised into Geographical Information System (GIS) software. According to Lee et al. (2008), the GIS offers a great extension of data absorption capability, allowing various types of social, cultural and natural factors to be transferred into a single interpretation format or map. It also has the ability to collect and design, in parallel with satellite images, a CAD dataset and scanned images to be converted into features based data, with their attributes and locations within the study area. The results of the observation and mapping data will then be analysed by the use of statistical analysis (SPSS software), in order to demonstrate significant quantitative data.

6.3 Focus Group Discussion

Focus group discussion is a part of qualitative data collection for this study in which small groups of people are selected from a wider target population and being asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes towards particular topics that are relevant to the research through moderated discussions (Menter, et al., 2011). In relation to this research, few groups are selected from different target populations. This include mosque

administrators and managers; Muslim community; and non-Muslim community. The mosque administrators and managers are selected from each case study area. For the Muslim community, approximately three small groups consist of five persons each group are formed for the discussion. Meanwhile, the non-Muslims community are categorized based on their ethnic background. Similar to the Muslim community, three small groups are formed from each ethnic. Three different set of questions are used for these unique groups. The discussion might take approximately about an hour depending to the level of participants' cooperation and sufficiency of information obtained during the discussions. This is because different groups have different background and needs, hence they might provide different information that the researcher wish to obtain.

6.4 Semi-Structured Interview

The interview is one of the methods utilised to collect primary data for this study. According to Bell (1993), an interview is a conversation between the interviewer and the responder, with the purpose of eliciting certain information from the respondents. An interview is also the best way to elicit information, particularly about people's demographic information, perceptions, attitudes and meanings (Menter et al., 2011). There are several types of interviews, such as structured interviews, ethnographic interviews, unstructured interviews and semi-structured interviews. This study has utilised the semi-structured interview, in order to explicate the interviewee's understanding of the research topics and, thus, produce qualitative information. Menter et al. (2011) state that a semi-structured interview is used when the researcher already has some thoughts about the main research topics that will address the questions in, and objectives of, the study. This type of interview is more relaxed and flexible, in that the questions are used as reminders for the interviewers to cover the key topics. The interviewer has flexibility in asking questions and adapts them to suit what the interviewee is saying or replying. In other words, the interviewer's questions are not limited and restricted to the interview guide or checklist only (Bryman, 2012). Additional questions can, also, be introduced if necessary, to obtain new opinions from the interviewee. Bryman (2012) also states that, with this type of interview, the interviewee may be interviewed on more than one occasion, and the interviewer may, also, interview more than one interviewee at the same time. This method is very useful for this study, to obtain information that would be difficult to obtain with the observation method. The questions put to the interviewees are very similar, making it is easier to analyse and differentiate the answers, or content, from each of the interviewees. The content of the interview is then transcribed and analysed with the use of qualitative analysis software (NVivo software). This method is essential to address several questions regarding the factors that influence the users' behaviour, preferences and experiences in the mosque open spaces and, also, the possible challenges and conflicts that may occur with regards to the mosque open spaces. Indirectly, this will assist the researcher in achieving the third, fourth and fifth objectives of the research.

6.5 Questionnaire Survey

A questionnaire survey is adopted as one of the means of obtaining significant quantitative information for this research. According to Creswell (2005), a questionnaire is a form used in a survey design that participants in a study or research complete and return to the researcher. Menter et al. (2011) state that a questionnaire survey is one of the most frequently used methods in social research and may focus on obtaining opinions or factual information, depending on its purpose. This view is, also, strengthened by Babbie (2002), who states that questionnaire surveys may be utilised for descriptive, explanatory and exploratory purposes. Babbie (2002) further mentions that it involves administering questions to respective individuals. Furthermore, the use of questionnaires may provide some benefits and advantages to both the research and the researcher. A questionnaire is,

also, relatively easy to administer and can be used to collect large amounts of data in a short period of time, as it can be distributed to many people simultaneously (Menter et al., 2011). The use of questionnaires can allow a person a considerable amount of time to think about the appropriate answers before responding, and the questionnaire data can be analysed more easily than the data from oral or verbal responses. Moreover, there are several ways, or mediums, of collecting questionnaire data. The researcher may use the questionnaires on the telephone, or distribute them by post, by digital and electronic mediums and, also, by handing them out face to face (Creswell, 2005; Menter et al., 2011). Each of these mediums has its own strengths in encouraging the response rate during the data collection stage. In relation to this study, the questionnaires will be distributed by handing them out to the respondents (the mosque open space users) in person, face to face. The selected sample for this study is determined by the use of a simple random sampling technique. A simple random sampling enables each unit in the population to have an equal chance of being selected (Menter et al., 2011). For this study, the questionnaires were divided and distributed randomly to the mosque open space users at the case study areas. The purpose of the questionnaire survey is important to achieve the first, third, fourth and fifth objectives. Although selected randomly, the samples were the most probable samples to provide some information pertaining to the scope of the research. The survey results are analysed with the use of statistical analysis (SPSS software).

7. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper has outlined the conceptual theoretical framework of the research and reviewed the proposed methodologies that are undertaken for this study. Since the primary data collection and fieldwork is still on-going at the moment, it is hoped that this paper may give an added value to the mosque-based research particularly the ones which are relating to the community integration. Findings of this research will be generated in the near future and it is hope that it may provide significant contribution and new knowledge to the roles and functions of the mosque as an intercultural integration platform.

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