



## THE ROLE OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND MOSQUES IN COMMUNITY-BASED DISASTER RISK REDUCTION: IMFO AND AT-THOHIR MOSQUE LOS ANGELOS CALIFORNIA UNITED STATES\*

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### Abstract

Education is not only a teaching and learning process limited by four walls but also a process in which humans consciously capture, absorb, and appreciate natural events throughout the ages. IMFO was established in 1997 to coordinate the activities of the Indonesian Muslim Community in the Los Angeles area and its surroundings. The establishment of the At-Thohir Mosque began with the problems of Indonesian Muslims in the United States and in most other countries, who do not have a permanent place of worship. So, the lack of permanent places of worship is an obstacle for the young generation of Indonesian Muslims, especially in their efforts to learn and understand their place of origin. From an Islamic Religious Education perspective, this study explores the tactical steps IMFO and the At-Thohir Mosque took in addressing the current fire disaster. In this study, the researcher used the library research method, where the study used various literature, both books, notes, and reports from previous studies in collecting data, and also conducted direct interviews regarding the steps taken by IMFO and the At-Thohir Mosque in Los Angeles, United States in dealing with natural disasters such as fires. The study's results found that the mosque must also serve as a community-based disaster risk reduction centre and a place for Islamic education in the community, and the existence of the Mosque as a cultural heritage of our ancestors should continue to be preserved in community life.

**Keywords:** Islamic Religious Education; Mosque; IMFO

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## A. INTRODUCTION

Mosques can be critical in disseminating early warning information to their communities. Imams and mosque administrators can leverage their networks to spread awareness about potential hazards and provide guidance on safety measures. In addition, mosques can serve as communication hubs, facilitating information sharing and coordination among community members. As community focal points, providing social, religious, and educational services, mosques can serve as essential mitigation tools in enhancing disaster resilience and reducing vulnerability, especially in areas prone to natural disasters.<sup>1</sup>

In times of disaster, mosques can serve as gathering places for affected individuals and families, offering vital support and assistance. Mosques can also act as distribution centres for relief supplies, coordinate relief efforts, and provide temporary shelter. building a mosque, Structural Concrete Requirements for Building Structures and Their Explanations. Mosques can serve as training centres for disaster preparedness and response. Mosques can equip community members with the skills to respond effectively to emergencies by hosting workshops and training sessions. These training programs can include first aid, search and rescue, and disaster preparedness planning. Developing a mosque-based disaster preparedness and response plan can significantly increase community resilience. This plan should outline the roles and responsibilities of mosque officials, community members, and relevant government agencies in the event of a disaster and include evacuation, emergency response, and recovery strategies. As a focal point of the community, providing social, religious, and educational services, mosques can be an essential mitigation tool in increasing disaster resilience and reducing vulnerability, especially in areas prone to natural disasters.<sup>2</sup>

The United States is a large country known as a superpower in the world. The United States consists of various tribes and races of the world. The United States is the world's attention not only in education, politics, and economics, but its religious life has also been in the spotlight of many parties. That is what makes all religions able to live on American soil with their streams.

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<sup>1</sup> Ali, A. H. (2024) 'Community-based Economic Development and Partnership Cooperation: The Economics Strategy for Prosperity of the Ummah.', *Samarah: Jurnal HUKUM Keluarga Islam*, 8(20), pp. 1280–1300. doi: <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v8i2.22925>

<sup>2</sup> Indriya, Feril Hariati, T. K. (2024) 'Role of Masque as A Community-Based Climate Change Adaption and Disaster Risk Reduction Centre', in. Solo Indonesia: ISIM Proceeding.

In this case, it creates a special attraction, especially for Muslim intellectual figures to carry out da'wah and develop science there.<sup>3</sup>

## B. METHODS

This study uses a type of library research. Library study can be interpreted as a series of activities related to collecting library data, reading and recording, and processing research materials. Not only that, but library studies can also review various books used as references and the results of previous similar studies, and help obtain a theoretical basis for the problem to be studied. Another opinion is that library studies are studies of theories, references and other scientific literature related to culture, values, and norms that develop in the studied social situation.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, an intuitive approach and heart cleansing are also carried out, resulting in new findings under the conditions of the soul and society.<sup>5</sup>

## C. RESULTS

### 1. Islamic Education

Education is not only a teaching and learning process confined within the four walls of a classroom, but it is a lifelong and comprehensive journey through which humans consciously capture, absorb, reflect upon, and internalise various natural, social, cultural, and spiritual events that unfold throughout history and personal experience. This process shapes a person's character, expands their intellectual horizons, and instils deep awareness of life's core values, such as justice, compassion, and responsibility. In the context of Islamic Religious Education, education is more than the transmission of knowledge; it is a spiritual and moral journey. This is reflected in three key concepts: *ta'lim*, which focuses on imparting knowledge; *tarbiyah*, which emphasises nurturing and developing the human soul and personality; and *ta'dib*, which centres on instilling *adab* or noble character. These three pillars form the holistic foundation of Islamic education, aiming to create individuals

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<sup>3</sup> Indriya, I. (2021) Masjid At-Thohir Los Angeles, Masjid Kebanggaan Indonesia di Pantai Barat Bumi Amerika. Bogor.

<sup>4</sup> Shihab, M. Quraish; Wirjawan, G. (2022) 'Benahi Hati, Baca Alam Raya', Endgame. Endgame.

Available at: <https://open.spotify.com/episode/59SPHERISRXSZeCLv5kRoI?si=9b391692206745ab>.

<sup>5</sup> Muhyani (2019) Metodologi Penelitian: Cara Mudah Melakukan Penelitian. Bogor: UIKA PRESS.

who are not only knowledgeable but also morally upright and socially responsible. Thus, education in Islam is a process that harmonises intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of human life in pursuit of a meaningful existence aligned with divine guidance.

## 2. Mosque

The mosque serves as Muslims' central place of worship, where they perform prayers and engage in various religious rituals to strengthen their connection with Allah. Beyond its primary worship role, the mosque is a vital hub for Islamic religious education. It provides a space for the community to deepen their understanding of Islamic teachings, enhance moral values, and cultivate spiritual well-being. Mosques often host study circles, lectures, and educational programs that nurture faith and knowledge among all age groups.<sup>6</sup>

However, the role of the mosque does not stop there. In the modern era, mosques have evolved into dynamic community centres that provide spiritual guidance and serve as platforms for disseminating vital information to the congregation and surrounding residents. Due to their strategic locations and accessibility, mosques are increasingly expected to fulfil dual functions, including acting as early mitigation centres in the face of natural disasters. This multifunctional role strengthens community resilience and promotes social preparedness.<sup>7</sup>

## 3. IMFO

IMFO was founded in 1997 to coordinate the activities of the Indonesian Muslim Community in and around Los Angeles. In August 2017, IMFO purchased a 100-year-old church (built in 1920) at 1200 S. Kenmore Ave., Los Angeles. It is strategically located in the heart of Los Angeles, the Entertainment Capital of the World and one of the world's most visited and celebrated cities. It is approximately one mile (1.6 KM) from the Consulate General of Indonesia (KJRI) Los Angeles headquarters. In addition, due to its age and architectural beauty, the building has been designated by the Los

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<sup>6</sup> Esposito, J. L. (2003). *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>7</sup> Abdullah, M. (2020). *The Mosque and Community Empowerment in the Modern Era*. Jakarta: Pustaka Ilmu.

Angeles Cultural Heritage Commission as a Historic-Cultural Monument worthy of preservation.<sup>8</sup>

IMFO converted the building that was previously a church into a mosque and named it "Indonesian Muslim Community Centre, At-Thohir Mosque." It is currently under renovation. This renovation is needed not only to facilitate worship and classrooms but also to improve security. After being renovated, this mosque will be a much-needed and significant additional place of worship for Muslims in the Los Angeles area and beyond. Because of its beauty, it will become a new Islamic Landmark in the City of Los Angeles.<sup>9</sup>

#### D. DISCUSSION

Allah says, "Say, 'What will happen to us is only what Allah has ordained for us.'" (QS. at-Taubah [9]: 51), "There is no disaster that befalls on earth or (nor) on yourself except that it has been written in the book (Lauhul Mahfuzh) before We created it. Indeed, this is easy for Allah." (QS. Al-Hadid [57]: 22).

The definition of education in the context of Islamic education is synonymous with the words *ta'lim*, *tarbiyah* and *ta'dib*. However, the phrase *tarbiyah* is often used to mean Islamic education. First, using the word *ta'lim*, a masdar from the word '*allama*, ' means teaching, which gives or conveys understanding, knowledge and skills as Allah says in QS. Al Baqarah verse 31, "And He taught Adam the names of all (things), then He showed them to the Angels and said: 'Tell me the names of these things, if you are truthful people!'"

Based on the understanding given by the word *ta'lim* and the verse above, it can be seen that the intended understanding of education contains a meaning that is too narrow. In other words, the experience of *ta'lim* is limited to transferring knowledge between humans about cognitive and psychomotor values without effective values. This means that it only provides knowledge without involving personality development. Meanwhile, according to Abdul Fatah Jalal, the understanding of *ta'lim* implicitly instils effective values, because the understanding of *ta'lim* also emphasises good morals (*akhlaq al karimah*). In this case, Allah SWT says in QS. Yunus verse 5, "He is the One who

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<sup>8</sup> Patel, F. (2019). The transformation of worship spaces: A case study of Masjid At-Thohir in Los Angeles. IMFO Publications.

<sup>9</sup> Patel, F. (2019). The transformation of worship spaces: A case study of Masjid At-Thohir in Los Angeles. IMFO Publications.

makes the sun shine and the moon shine, and He has appointed manzilahs (places) for the cycles of the months, so that you may know the number of years and the calculation (of time). Allah does not create anything like that except by His right. He explains the signs (of His greatness) to a people who know."

According to Abdul Fatah Jalal, the meaning of the verse shows that the knowledge developed by humans will always benefit the welfare of the people, as long as it is not separated from the values of divinity and is always directed towards the primary goal, namely, worshipping Allah SWT. In this context, *al-ta'lim* is seen as an uninterrupted learning process as a continuous spiritual and intellectual journey from when humans are born until the end of their lives.<sup>10</sup>

Second, the word *al-tarbiyah* is used, as Allah stated in QS. Al Isra' verse 24: "And be humble towards both of them with full affection and say: O my Lord, have mercy on both of them, as they have educated me when I was little". The word *al-tarbiyah* comes from the word *rabba*, which means to maintain, educate, and maintain. Essentially, the word *al-tarbiyah* has two meanings: (1) is the process of changing something until it reaches the limit of perfection (maturity) and is done gradually. This assumption is based on the fact that humans are born in a state of not knowing anything, and Allah SWT gives them the potential for hearing, sight, and heart so that they can receive influences from outside themselves. As stated by Allah SWT in QS. An Nahl verse 78, which reads: "And Allah brought you out of your mother's wombs in a state of not knowing anything, and He gave you hearing, sight, and hearts, that you might be grateful."

This is also found in the story of Prophet Adam, who initially had no abilities. Then, after he received lessons from Allah, namely the Prophet Adam (AS), who could name objects and other things that the angels themselves did not know. In QS Al Baqarah verse 31, he says: "And He taught Adam the names (of objects) of all of them, then showed them to the Angels, saying: 'Tell me the names of these objects, if you are truly truthful people.'"

The word *al-tarbiyah* comes from the word *Rabba* which means to maintain, educate, and care for. Essentially, the word *al-tarbiyah* has two meanings: it is the process of changing something to the limit of perfection (maturity) and is done gradually. This assumption is based on the fact that humans are born in a state of not knowing anything, and Allah SWT gives them the potential for hearing, sight, and heart so that they can receive influences from outside themselves. As the word of Allah SWT in QS. An Nahl verse 78,

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<sup>10</sup> Jalal, A. F. (2004). Ilmu dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an. Jakarta: Pustaka Al-Kautsar.

which reads: "And Allah brought you out of your mother's wombs in a state of not knowing anything, and He gave you hearing, sight and hearts, that you might be grateful."

This is also found in the story of Prophet Adam, who initially did not have any abilities, then after receiving lessons from Allah, Prophet Adam as was able to name objects and other things that the angels themselves did not know. As He says in the QS, Al-Baqarah verse 31 reads: "And He taught Adam the names of all things, then He showed them to the angels, and said: 'Tell me the names of all things.'"

*Tarbiyah* education is a process of actualizing something gradually and planned until it reaches the limit of perfection (maturity). Thus, *al-tarbiyah* education does not only produce students in the form of material but seeks to develop the potential that exists within them as optimally as possible and directs the development of that potential in accordance with divine values.

Third, using the word *al-ta'dib*, which means "practice or habituation." The establishment of the *At-Thohir* Mosque began with the problem of Indonesian Muslims in the United States and in most other countries, who do not have their own permanent place of worship. So, the lack of permanent places of worship is an obstacle for the young generation of Indonesian Muslims, especially in their efforts to learn and understand their place of origin. Another concern is that with the increasing number of young Indonesian Muslims living in the United States, it will be increasingly difficult to set foot back in Indonesia. One of the main reasons is that most Indonesian Muslims prefer to gather with other non-Indonesian Muslim organizations in the United States, without being involved in the entire organization.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, IMFO feels the need to have its own place so that it can organize activities and religious events for Indonesian Muslims themselves. The hope is that it will not only be a place of worship, but also a gathering place for the Indonesian Muslim community. In addition, as a place of guidance for the next generation of the nation, and as an investment that will definitely bear sweet fruit in this world and in the hereafter. That is why it is very unfortunate if Indonesian Muslims, whose country has the largest Muslim population, have not been able to build a mosque on the west coast of the United States. Even if we trace Muslims from Bangladesh alone, a country that was considered to be

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<sup>11</sup> Indriya, Feril Hariati, T. K. (2024) 'Role of Masque as A Community-Based Climate Change Adaption and Disaster Risk Reduction Centre', in. Solo Indonesia: ISIM Proceeding.

behind Indonesia in the 1980s, it has many of its own places of worship that are comparable to places of worship established by other countries.

The lack of permanent places of worship is an obstacle for the younger generation of Indonesian Muslims, especially in their efforts to learn and understand their place of origin. Another concern is that more and more young Indonesian Muslims in America have never set foot on Indonesian soil. It is inevitable that the beautiful name of Indonesia will no longer be heard in future generations. This "lost generation" of Indonesian Muslims has become a major concern, and certainly something to be avoided.

One of the main reasons is that most Indonesian Muslims prefer to gather with other non-Indonesian Muslim organizations, without being involved in the overall operation of the organization. Therefore, IMFO feels the need to have its own place so that it can organize its own activities and religious events. Not only as a place of worship, but also as a place for the community to gather. A place of guidance for the next generation, and an investment that will surely bear sweet fruit in this world and the hereafter, God willing.

That is why it is miserable for Indonesian Muslims, whose country has the largest Muslim population, but has not been able to build a mosque on the west coast of the United States. Muslims from Bangladesh alone, a country that was considered to be behind Indonesia in the 1980s, have many of their own places of worship that are comparable to those built by Pakistan and other countries. There are about 3 Indonesian Muslim mosques in the United States. 1 mosque is located in New York City (Al-Hikmah Mosque), 1 mosque in Washington DC, and 1 mosque in Houston (Istiqlal Mosque). However, on the west coast of the United States, Indonesian Muslims do not have their own permanent place of worship, a place that allows the younger generation of Indonesians to learn and appreciate their native Indonesian heritage.

It all started with the founding of Nusantara Muslim California (NMC) in 1992 in San Bernardino, California. About 25 Indonesian Muslim families were living in the area. NMC was formed to answer the need to educate the basic teachings of Islam, and to foster a strong sense of togetherness among Indonesian Muslim families. Initially, NMC was called Nusantara Muslim Club but was later changed to Nusantara Muslim California the following year. NMC had the opportunity to share a place of worship with the local Muslim community that held weekly religious meetings, Sunday school, and other religious activities. However, in 2000 this place was no longer there for several reasons. Since then, NMC has held bi-weekly religious meetings from member homes to other homes. Nusantara Muslim California (NMC) has now grown to



more than 70 families throughout the Inland Empire, and is in synergy with the IMFO Indonesia Muslim Foundation. The bi-weekly halaqah is still held at the location. Some of the current activities include: Sunday School (reading the Qur'an/Islamic values (Ahklaq) for children from ages 3-18 from 11:00 am – 3:30 pm), Youth activities including basketball and martial arts, and Gatherings for Muslim Holidays, when a member of the community passes away, marriage ceremonies, aqiqah, and various other religious activities.

IMFO is now registered as a non-profit organization in the State of California. There is no formal membership. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to participate and contribute to this community by advancing the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. The main goal is to establish the first mosque on the West Coast of America, built by the Indonesian people themselves. The funds to acquire the property for this mosque were obtained through several fundraising events and also assistance from Indonesian businessmen. A strong commitment and ability to understand the spiritual impact that this future building will have on ourselves, others in the community, and future generations. Given the conditions that have been presented, it feels very feasible and necessary to establish the first Indonesian-built mosque on the West Coast of America on the proposed property. It was originally a church that was no longer functioning. Of course, with the purchase of Indonesian citizens, it can be converted into a mosque.<sup>12</sup>

To understand the spiritual benefits in this world and the years after. It is fitting to remind ourselves that no progress or change can occur, and there is no power or strength except through Allah, *Laa Haula Walaa Quwwata Illaa Billaah*, asking Allah to make this idea a reality.

As community focal points, providing social, religious and educational services, mosques can serve as important mitigation tools in enhancing disaster resilience and reducing vulnerability, especially in areas prone to natural disasters. Mosques can play a critical role in disseminating early warning information to communities. Mosque imams and administrators can leverage their networks to spread awareness of potential hazards and provide guidance on safety measures. In addition, mosques can serve as communication hubs, facilitating information sharing and coordination among community members. In times of disaster, mosques can serve as gathering places for affected individuals and families, offering vital support and assistance.<sup>13</sup> Mosques can

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<sup>12</sup> Indriya, I. (2021) Masjid At-Thohir Los Angeles, Masjid Kebanggaan Indonesia di Pantai Barat Bumi Amerika. Bogor.

<sup>13</sup> P., Mochammad, Rozikin., Wiwik, Utami., Kustyarini., Klara, K. (2023) 'Mosque-Based

also act as distribution centers for relief supplies, coordinate relief efforts, and provide temporary shelter.

Mosques can serve as training centers for disaster preparedness and response. Mosques can equip community members with the skills needed to respond effectively to emergencies by hosting workshops and training sessions. These training programs can include first aid, search and rescue, and disaster preparedness planning. Developing a mosque-based disaster preparedness and response plan can significantly increase community resilience. The plan should outline the roles and responsibilities of mosque officials, community members, and relevant government agencies in the event of a disaster and include strategies for evacuation, emergency response, and recovery.

While mosques can play a vital role in disaster resilience and mitigation, there are also challenges to consider. These may include limited resources, lack of training, and potential conflicts between religious and secular responsibilities. However, by addressing these challenges and harnessing the power of mosques, communities can significantly increase their disaster resilience. Pakistan and other countries in the United States.<sup>14</sup>

#### D. CONCLUSION

The results of the study show that mosques have a very important strategic role in people's lives, not only in spiritual aspects, but also social and humanitarian. First, mosques not only function as places of worship and centers for learning Islamic education that shape the character and morals of the people, but also have great potential to become centers for Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction (CDRR). In emergency situations such as natural disasters, mosques can be used as evacuation posts, aid distribution centers, and community information and coordination centers. This role makes mosques multifunctional institutions that are relevant to the needs of the times.

Second, mosques as ancestral cultural heritages not only have religious functions, but also contain high historical, social, and spiritual values. Therefore, the existence of mosques must be maintained, preserved, and prospered sustainably in community life. Mosques are a symbol of Islamic

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Disaster-Resistant Family Improvement Training in Sukopuro Village, Malang District. Asian Journal of Community Services', Asian Journal of Community Services, 2. doi: 10.55927/ajcs.v2i7.5057.

<sup>14</sup> Redaksi (2021) 'Masjid At-Thohir Los Angeles, Masjid Kebanggaan Indonesia di Pantai Barat Bumi Amerika'.

civilization that has been rooted since ancient times and reflect the identity and local wisdom of the people. Third, Islamic Religious Education taught in mosques instills noble values such as patience in facing trials, husnuzan or having good thoughts about Allah's destiny, the spirit of striving earnestly, and the importance of increasing prayer as a form of submission and hope to God Almighty.

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