
KEY DRIVERS OF SUSTAINABLE FACILITIES MANAGEMENT (FM) PRACTICE FOR MOSQUES IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract

Within Islamic studies, mosque is the place for worshipping, a centre of excellence for knowledge, economic pursuit, community services, giving religious instruction and political discussions. Mosque plays a crucial role in various aspects of the life of Muslims and has great potential to ensure that the welfare of surrounding society is well-taken care of. Therefore, it is of urgency to the management of mosque to uplift and sustain its multi-functionality in today as modernisation era. In order to comprehend to this inspiration, mosque should have good facilities management (FM) practice to support its primary business for the long run. A good start to a good FM practice in an organisation is to identify the key drivers of FM practice in supporting the achievement of its core objectives. Hence, this paper explores the key drivers for sustainable FM practice of mosques in Malaysia. A focus group discussion was conducted involving experts in FM and the mosque management committee members to identify the key drivers in developing and implementing a sustainable FM practice for mosques. Based on the findings, they agreed that the top management support, teamwork, training, financial performance and development of policies directly contribute to sustainable FM practice of mosques.

Keywords: *facilities management (FM), FM key drivers, sustainable FM practice, mosque, management of mosque*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Facilities management (FM) is a science that integrates people, place, processes and technology in supporting the organization core objectives at optimum cost. This field has a great impact on the success of any organisation (Chotipanich, 2004; Alexander, 2003; Amaratunga and Baldry, 2000), either profit or not-for-profit generating (Shah, 2008; Elmualim *et al.*, 2012). Through this approach, the fifth resource of the organisation (i.e. facilities) can be managed efficiently and effectively to contribute to the improvement of the quality and productivity of organisations (Sapri *et al.*, 2009; Elmualim *et al.*, 2009).

Changes in the needs of the market for good facilities and services to the customers have demanded for effective and efficient FM practices. Furthermore, the significance for achieving best value in meeting the requirements of customers has also pressed for excellent FM practices (Sapri *et al.*, 2009; Wan Hamdan *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, the need for sustainable FM practice in assisting an organisation to achieve its primary objectives is becomes crucial.

For profit generating organisations, effective and efficient FM practice can be viewed as a stepping stone to ensure that the organisations can compete in maintaining customer loyalty to their products and services offered. However, an effective and efficient FM is also important that it should not be taken lightly for not-for-profit

organisations such as mosques, higher education institutions and hospitals. The reason is that such organisations depend highly on the level of facilities and services offered to maintain customers' loyalty. Based on the principles of FM, customer satisfaction is an output that helps the organisation achieves its main objectives at optimal cost (Amaratunga, 2001; Balachandran, 2004; Sapri, 2005). Therefore, FM functions should be placed at the strategic level so it can potentially play its roles proactively to the fullest.

Based on review of literature, the research on FM practice is widely discussed in various case studies such as in higher education institutions, health care services, commercial buildings and office buildings. However, it is discovered that the study which focusing on religious buildings such as mosque is still infancy. This is not surprising, as information on the potential of FM in supporting not-for-profit organisation to achieve its core business objectives is still lacking. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to discuss the potential of FM approach in supporting mosque functions and propose the key drivers for sustainable FM practice for mosques.

2.0 CONCEPT OF MOSQUE

A mosque is a sacred place of worship for Muslims. The word mosque is a conversion of the Arabic word *masjid* (in plural - *masajid*) (Mahazan, 2013). The word *masjid* is derived from the Arabic root *sajada* which means to prostrate (Rasdi, 1998; 1999). As prostration is the most honourable act in prayer and because of the proximity of the worshipper to Allah S.W.T, it has been chosen to indicate the act of prayer itself. Therefore the mosque is literally the location of prostration (*sujud*) (Rasdi, 1998; 1999).

From Islamic literature, the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) in a hadith as recorded by Imam Bukhari has stated that "The whole earth is made as a place of worship and a means of cleansing for me" (Rasdi, 2004). Thus, within the Islamic legal framework, a Muslim can pray almost anywhere. However, a mosque is purposefully built or adapted building which facilitates collective ritual worship in the form of

the daily congregational prayers.

Mosque is a religious building classified as a not-for-profit institution. The function of mosque was recognised as a place to perform worshipping. However, it is multi-faceted which not only serves as a sacred and clean space for prayer, but also providing counselling, education and other services associated with the life of a community (Mokhtar, 1997; Rasdi, 1998; 1999). The role of mosques is without doubt central and crucial to the well-being of the Muslim community (Mokhtar, 1997; Rasdi, 1998; 1999).

Concisely, a mosque provides social service to the community and historically it had four major roles: a place of worship; a centre of education; a judicial court; and a centre for political and administrative decision making (Mohammad *et al.*, 2011; Mustari *et al.*, 2008). Hence, mosque was developed not only to perform worships, but includes all aspects of a Muslim's life. Concluding, mosques have function as one stop centre for the community to carry out their daily activities.

3.0 THE NEED FOR TRANSFORMATION IN MANAGEMENT OF MOSQUES

In Islamic literature, mosque is the house of Allah. The importance of this institution could be seen through the roles and functions as a place of worship, a spiritual centre for the Muslim community, and a focal point for Islamic activities. Furthermore, mosque or *masjid* is considered as the most important sacred structure in cultivate fundamental human values and enrich human soul within Islamic culture (Najafi and Mohd Shariff, 2014). Therefore, the mosque deserves to be respected and given the honour, and should be functional strictly accordance with the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (p.b.u.h).

3.1 Issues in Management of Mosques

Muslims being the largest population in Malaysia, therefore, there are vast numbers of mosques dispersed all over in the urban and rural areas all over the country (Najafi and Mohd Shariff, 2014). However, over times, the

functions of the mosques have become narrow and well-known only as a place for worshipping among today's generation. Based on previous studies, this phenomenon is due to several factors as listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Issues in the management of mosques identified in previous studies

Author	Issue
Mahazan (2013), Ali and Mat Said (2007)	Lack of competencies in leadership
Rasdi (1998;1999)	Less vigorous activities and programs
Khalit (2011), Mohamed (2008), Safar (2008), Muda and Omar (2008), Haron <i>et al.</i> (2007), Rasdi (1998; 1999)	Lack of attention of conducive physical environment
Siraj <i>et al.</i> (2008), Bahrom (2008)	Poor financial management to implement mosque community activities
Jamsari <i>et al.</i> (2010), Ali Khan <i>et al.</i> (2008), Rasdi (1998),	Community development approach is not user or youth or family or community-friendly

Source: Author (2016)

Recommendations from the above studies stated that there is a requirement to transform the management of mosque to be more professional, so that it will uplift its functions. The above researchers suggested that this is a time for mosques should be managed as a corporate body. Through this strategy, the mosques should not only be great with its physical but also its content which must be able to give impact to the development of the community (Mohammad *et al.*, 2011; Najafi and Mustafa, 2012). This effort is aimed at improving the size of the congregation at every prayer, religious and community related events. In the context of this paper, the congregation can involve two groups, i.e. the local community and visitors from outside the surrounding areas.

According to Mohamed Adil *et al.* (2013), even though mosques are no longer used as state administration centres, their role in shaping the society still continues. The key challenge of managing the mosques today is to ensure efficient and proper management practices

(Mohamed Adil *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, in order for mosques to uplift their multi-functionality in today's modernisation era, and to be sustained into the future, the issue of professional management is among those topics that need to be addressed. Mosques should be operated with a more professional management system, in order to meet current needs and demands (Rasdi, 1998; Mohamed, 2008; Jaafar *et al.*, 2013).

According to Jaafar *et al.* (2013), the right management practices will contribute to improving the performance of a mosque. Their research has identified that the management of the facilities of mosques is becoming crucial, as it contributes to the success in delivering the core functions of mosques to the community. Therefore, facilities management (FM) is seen to be the approach that is relevant for the mosques. As mentioned by Amaratunga and Baldry (2000), FM is a subset of general management. Hence, it will help to improve the processes through which organisations can be managed, in order to support their effectiveness, and to make a positive contribution to organisations' success.

4.0 POTENTIAL OF SUSTAINABLE FM APPROACH IN SUPPORTING THE FUNCTIONS OF MOSQUE

In providing social services, the mosques are attached to the community (Rasdi, 1998). They are normally managed by a local independent committee that takes responsibility for the appointment of an Imam (religious leader of the Muslim community) including other paid and volunteer staffs. The committee members themselves are volunteers giving their time out of a sense of civic responsibility. In appreciation to today modernisation era, the mosque as a building that is used for Muslim religious services has to extend its functions to not only as the place for worshipping by Muslims, but also as a place for the community to carry out their activities. For the mosques to live out with this aspiration, the services that meet the needs and expectations of the community should be taken into account.

Based on Balachandran (2004), the analysis of the needs and expectations of the customers is important to ensure the organisation will sustain

in the competitive world. When services offered by organisations meet the needs and expectations of their customer, then it will facilitate value creation to the customer (Barnes, 2001; Chan, 2005; Lowenstein, 1995). Balachandran (2004) argued that the quality of services delivered to the customers is important in order to satisfy customers and to retain them. Quality is continuously expected and need to exceed the requirements and expectations of customers (Lowenstein, 1995). In service organisations, measuring performance is also essential for the success of the business of the organisation (Sapri *et al.*, 2005; 2008).

Sapri *et al.* (2009) postulated that the customers have significant impact on the business performance of organisations. According to Mahazan and Wan Mohd Fazrul (2012), the performance of the mosques can be measured through an attachment of the congregation to the mosques. In Islamic literature, the attachment of the congregation is seen through the concept of *imarah* where people keep coming and engage with the mosque not only to worship, but also to perform their daily activities such as recreation, place for meetings, educational institutions, etc. (Rasdi, 1999). However, the management of the mosque should have a framework in sequence to managing the facilities effectively and efficiently to succeed in delivering services.

Hence, the holistic approach in managing mosque is significant in order to sustain its functions for the long term consequences, through customer satisfaction. Wilkinson *et al.* (2001) postulated that sustainability as a concept can become devalued if customers' engagement with the services is not satisfactory. This situation occurred when the customers' needs and expectations are ineffectively assessed (Balachandran, 2004; Barnes, 2001).

For the above reasons, there is a need to integrate sustainable FM practices into the organisational strategy for managing mosque. Islamic literature claimed that mosque is a unique and extraordinary building compared to other buildings and social services industries (Rasdi, 1998; 1999). Its profit to the organisation is not monetary based but, it definitely desires for reward from Allah, The Almighty. This is the reason why mosque as a special building

should be focused in respect of improving its performance and sustaining its functionality. Therefore, the FM functions have the ability to incorporate sustainability issues into the management of mosques. FM supports and ensures that organisation should be cost effective and is able to deal with current climate change issues as well as improve flexibility, which can subsequently lead to quality improvement and competitive advantage of the organisation.

FM principles of integrating people, place, process and technology will play as a central role in sustainable FM (Amaratunga and Baldry, 2003; Koukiasa; 2011; Daily and Huang, 2001). There is the possibility of contribution on the role of sustainable FM practices in order to meet the objectives of the mosques. Hence, this paper aims is to identify the key drivers for a sustainable FM practice among the mosques. Results of the findings will benefit the stakeholders who are either directly or indirectly involve in the management of the mosques. It is anticipate that the drivers will act as an enabler in order to play an important role in achieving a mosque that is prosperous.

5.0 KEY DRIVERS FOR SUSTAINABLE FM PRACTICE

FM is a field that has a great impact in supporting the achievement of goals of organisations, effectively and efficiently. For that reason, the profession has experienced a dramatic growth especially in the United Kingdom (Myeda and Pitt, 2014). In contrast, FM is still infancy in respect of its practices in the Asian countries, particularly in the South-East-Asia region (Kamaruzzaman and Ahmad Zawawi, 2010; Syed Mustapa *et al.*, 2008).

Research by Syed Mustapa *et al.* (2008) found that the lack of understanding of the FM definitions and roles has contributed to be part of the reasons why FM is not proactively practiced. Ballesty in Kamaruzzaman and Ahmad Zawawi (2010) pointed out that challenges faced by FM include the lack of recognition, education and training, professional status, career pathways, information standard, performance benchmarking, cost value versus

value in service procurement and, corporate and community contribution of FM. These challenges will remain a barrier in the development of effective FM, for if the key drivers have not been explored (Kamaruzzaman and Ahmad Zawawi, 2010). Furthermore, Elmualim *et al.* (2012) claimed that identifying the key drivers of effective FM practice will lead to the improvement and development of sustainable practice within the FM industry. For that reason, the key drivers for sustainable FM practice are discussed generally in the next sub-section.

5.1 Top Management

Elmualim *et al.* (2010) emphasised that senior management's leadership style and commitment may be a key driver for sustainability in organisations. Senior management commitment contributes to support the performance and goals of the entire organization (Daily and Huang, 2001).

Dubem *et al.* (2013) found that senior management officers should be at the forefront of championing improvement of the level of commitment for effective FM practice within organisation. Findings also indicated that FM can only appreciate the impacts in an organisation if the FM principles are fully embedded in the strategic function of organisation. Therefore, this factor can be the key driver for effective FM as it has the ability to acclimatize the changing environment.

5.2 Team Work

An ultimate aim of FM in delivering good service quality is customer satisfaction. As FM plays a pivotal role between demand and supply, thus the FM team must provide a clear and unambiguous brief, ensuring that FM is part of the strategic planning process (Alexander, 1992). According to Hallam (2000), a successful FM team will be able to embrace the language of the core organisation they serve, clarify and serve their strategic contribution in terms of business relevant outcome. Therefore, an effective FM practice is essentially a team effort (Hamilton, 2000).

In the context of FM, teamwork is a balance

between technical, managerial and business acumen that may be related to operational, tactical and strategic decision-making processes (Kamaruzzaman and Ahmad Zawawi, 2010). Teamwork can be formed when the operational activities are concerned with the effective functionality of service, the tactical with the organisation and administration procedures and the strategic with the match between facilities and corporate objectives (Kamaruzzaman and Ahmad Zawawi; Amaratunga, 2001).

5.3 Training

FM knowledge is very important to carry out the best of FM practices (Firdauz *et al.*, 2015; Pathirage *et al.*, 2008; Nutt, 2000). Therefore, to ensure that the FM moves actively, FM knowledge is crucial to be developed within the organisations. As a part of knowledge management process, effective knowledge sharing is pivotal as it could foster innovation by encouraging the free flow of ideas (Mohammed Fathi *et al.*, 2010).

According to Firdauz *et al.* (2015), training is a highly useful tool that can bring an employee into a position where they can do their job correctly, effectively, and conscientiously. Training is the act of increasing the knowledge and skill of an employee for doing a particular job (Syed Mustapa *et al.*, 2008). Hence, an effective FM training should specifically design to cover the required skills and knowledge of what is expected from the facilities managers.

6.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was designed to solicit the views and opinions of experts and mosque management committee members on the key drivers in developing and implementing a sustainable FM practice at mosque. Hence, qualitative research design was used to elaborate the key drivers.

The focus groups approach of data collection was adopted. The dual moderator focus group was applied. A moderator ensured the session progressed smoothly, while another ensured that all the topics were covered. Seven respondents including an expert from the FM

industry, academician and mosque management committee members participated in the focus group interview.

Furthermore, the approach helps to get clear picture of what are the key factors that needed to be considered in order to boost the implementation of sustainable FM practice in mosques. Most of the selected respondents are directly involved in managing mosques. Meanwhile, three of them are also involved in researches regarding on the adoption of sustainable FM approach in tackling several issues of the management of mosques.

This focus group interview was conducted during International Conference of Mosque Facilities Management (ICMFM) on 22-23 April 2015. The conference was organised by the Centre for Real Estate Studies (CRES), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia and Warisan Facilities Management (the event managers) in collaboration with the National Real Estate Research Coordinator (NAPREC) and Institut Penilaian Negara (INSPEN). The questions asked in the interview seek for professional opinions and validation regarding key drivers for sustainable FM practice for mosques.

Focus group approach was selected due to its advantage in providing insights into how people think and also provides a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Williams, 2013). Moreover, group interactions and non-verbal communications are primary benefits of focus group. The interactions among members of the target population during focus group meetings may inspire participants to make connections to various concepts through the discussions which may not occur during individual interviews (Williams, 2013; Creswell, 2012). Nevertheless, non-verbal communication is also another form by which data can be captured during focus group discussions. It may initiate intense discussion among participants and will produce additional information for the research. Therefore, focus group interview was adopted in this study. It is purposely to find out the important issues from the target population.

To identify the individual view from the group view, participants were asked to share their experience and opinions on how FM should be practice effectively in mosque. The data was analysed using content analysis approach.

Qualitative content analysis highlights an integrated view of speech or texts and their specific contexts. It goes beyond basically counting words or extracting objective content from texts to examine meanings, themes and patterns that may be visible or latent in a particular text (Wildemuth, 2013).

In this study, the key drivers of sustainable FM practice for mosques were derived from the speech in which the data are read word by word to derive codes. The exact word was highlights from the text that appear to capture key thoughts or concepts.

7.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the interview, the respondents agreed that FM approach is one of the strategies to assist in inspiring mosque to uplift and sustain the multi-functionality of mosques in today's modernisation era. Followings are the results and discussions on the key drivers derived from the focus group interview.

7.1 Top Management

According to one of the respondents from Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura (MUIS), top management support is an important driver to ensure the effectiveness of sustainable FM in mosques. He added that its success is by promoting employee empowerment to effect changes, through the affecting organisational culture to support changes, instituting systems to promote desired behaviours such as rewards or incentive programs, provide training, and increase communication throughout the organisation.

The view was supported by the Facilities Manager of Masjid Asyikirin, Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC) who was also involved in research on mosques. He stressed that top management needs to understand its own organisational culture in order to implement sustainable FM effectively.

From literature review, this key driver is supported by Daily and Huang (2001) who mentioned that "Commitment is about generating human energy and activating the human mind. Without it, the implementation of

any new initiatives or idea would be seriously comprised". Thus, in the context of mosques, commitment from top management such as Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM), Jabatan Agama Islam Negeri (JAIN) and Majlis Agama Islam (MAI) are highly required.

7.2 Team Work

On the other hand, the mosque leader of Masjid As-Salam Puchong stated that teamwork is a necessity of a successful sustainable FM practice at mosque. He explained that teamwork places overall accountability for quality of team, enhancing information sharing and cooperation within the group for improvement. He stressed that for mosque to succeed in long run, it is important to develop "green teams".

In this context, the green team is referred to a group of green-minded between mosque committee members and staff that can provide guidance and direction on sustainability initiatives within the mosques. Thus, the development of the teams will be used to generate ideas, enhance learning experiences, explore issues, identify conflicts and focus actions to enhance understanding about why, what, how, where and when to pursue the best practicable FM options.

7.3 Training

Two of the respondents who are academician of Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) shared the same opinion that one of the ways that mosque institution can work through the transformation is by educating and training for its committee members. The mosque management committee members would become more aware of the needs for quality control, increase adaptability to change and change to a proactive attitude in managing mosque.

7.4 Financial Performance

From the perspective of mosque management committee members themselves, they claimed that strong financial performance is one of the main drivers to increase the chances of success for sustainable FM practice in mosques. They postulated that strong financial performance

facilitates the mosque to conduct more quality and quantity of program in order to develop interest and involvement from the Jumaah. Moreover, the mosque committee members need to create an effective internal control strategy to improve financial performance. This enhances transparency of the mosques which improve donors' confidence to contribute more funds to the mosque.

7.5 Development of Policy

Apart from that, development of policy will motivate all parties to support towards the achievement of sustainable FM practice at the mosque in Malaysia. If there were no formal documented policies, then mosque management personnel at any level would have no guidance on how to make decisions regarding FM practice. Policy development could benefit in order to help mosque management staff to make decisions more efficiently and providing instruction on how to do tasks. Moreover, policy development will create confidence and reduce bias in decision-making that indirectly it will improve effective FM practice at the mosque.

8.0 CONCLUSION

Mosque refers to an action of devotion to Allah, The Al Mighty. It does not refer to the building itself. Thus, mosque building should be efficient in functions as well as the main purpose for which it was built. Mosque should be prospering through various religious activities. The process to implement those activities requires the support of facilities to make it operational. It highlights the need for FM approach to be considered. In other words, in order to reinforce the mosque as a robust and unified institution as the place for community centre, a comprehensive plan should be formulated with emphasis on the practice of sustainable FM. This will drive the best practice in managing mosque for the better indication in providing good facilities in the future and guarantee that a long-term effort for the benefits is worth the waiting.

A focus group discussion has identified five key drivers for sustainable FM practice for mosque comprising of top management, team

work, training; financial performance and development of policy. Based on the above key drivers, it can be concluded that a sustainable FM practice in mosques is crucial since it requires a transformation of practice or a change of mind set among mosque management committee. For this transformation to successfully implemented, the mosque management should be provided with a proper guideline, providing consistent training and recognition of FM approach into mosque organisation structure. After all, providing training has been classified as one of the key drivers for sustainable FM practice for mosque. Training is essential to enhance the level of competencies to raise sustainable FM practice in the management of mosques.

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