

POTENTIAL FOR MOSQUE-BASED COMMUNICATION CONFLICT IN ACEH

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ABSTRACT

In Islamic literature, a mosque is generally understood as a sacred place used for gathering and worship. It is both a place of worship and a unifying medium for Muslims. There are no restrictions on any Muslim, regardless of ethnicity or race, from gathering and carrying out activities in a mosque—except those stipulated in Islamic law. Therefore, the mosque truly serves as a unifying symbol of the Islamic community across all regions and areas. Aceh is one of the regions with a large number of mosques. However, behind the abundance of mosques in Aceh, there are also potential conflicts within them, which can create space for the division of society into certain groups. The investigation into this potential conflict was conducted through a qualitative research approach. Data collection was conducted in 10 regencies/cities, starting from the provincial capital. Then, the data was relayed to three zones: representing the east coast, the west coast, and the central zone. The research results indicate several potential miscommunications that could lead to mosque-based conflicts. This is also triggered by several factors, including not all members of the community fully understanding Islamic teachings and the arrogance of religious elites in communicating differences, which has given rise to sectoral conflicts. Likewise, communication between elites/rulers is less than wise with mosque administrators, giving rise to vertical conflict, and there is less than transparent behavior from mosque administrators, giving rise to horizontal conflict.

Keywords: Potential for Conflict, Communication Conflict, Mosque-Based

INTRODUCTION

Mosques are sacred places and a unifying medium for Muslims. However, conflicts of interest are not uncommon, disrupting the spiritual atmosphere, vision, and mission of the mosque's construction. Conflict is a disagreement that arises from differing views between various parties in social life. Differences in perception and interests often give rise to conflict in the communication process. Disharmonious communication usually leads to broader conflicts of interest. Essentially, conflict has been an inseparable part of social life since the existence of humans on this earth. Theoretically, conflict is often motivated by the desire of certain parties to realize their ambitions, whether political, economic, socio-religious, or otherwise. Therefore, Elly M. Setiadi and Usman Kolip state that conflict is something inherent to humans that can occur in any space and time. Conflict can arise from several factors, such as differences in understanding something, or driven by differing interests (Elly M. Setiadi & Usman Kolop: 2010: 347). Kamanto cites Karl Marx's views on the differences in social classes that have given rise to the bourgeoisie and proletariat in Western society. Likewise with birth system economy socialists who are fruit from conflict interest with adherents teachings capitalist (Saifullah & Alfikri, 2025)

Conflict is a common occurrence in any society, both global and local, such as the political and religious conflicts that occurred in Aceh some time ago. Aceh is a region located on the western tip of Sumatra Island, with a population that has adhered to Islam since the time of the sultanate. The Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam, under the leadership of Sultan Iskandar Muda, established Islamic law as the state law. This is also the background to Aceh being called the Veranda of Mecca. Islamic law and the Acehnese people are like two sides of the same coin, inseparable to this day. Many colonial attempts were made to stifle Islam and separate it from the lives of the people, such as the one made by Snouck Hurgronje, but he failed to carry out his duties as a trusted Dutch official in Aceh (Snouck: 1906: Vol. 1 & 2).

Snouck's failure in Aceh was driven by the sociological conditions of Acehnese society, which had transformed Islamic values into daily life, crystallizing them into culture and customs. This is the distinguishing segment between the development of Islam in Aceh and that of Islam in Spain. When the Islamic Kingdom in Spain was conquered by European colonialists, Islam disappeared from Spanish society. This situation is the opposite in Aceh. Although *the* Aceh Darussalam kingdom was no longer in power (collapsed), *de facto* Islam continued to function normally in society (S. Dewi et al., 2026) .

After Indonesia's independence, Aceh continued to practice Islamic law. Islam is a unifying force in uniting the Indonesian nation, especially among the Acehnese people who are often in conflict. In the reform era, the central government has legitimately provided opportunities for the Acehnese people to practice their religious law. Law No. 44 of 1999 concerning regional autonomy and Law No. 18 of 2001 concerning special autonomy for Aceh Province (Compiling Team: 2018). The specificity lies in the formal legality of the comprehensive implementation of Islamic law *in* Aceh Province. Among the means of supporting the implementation of Islamic law is the construction of houses of worship, including mosques, prayer rooms, meunasah, and others. (Ma'ruf et al., 2025)

The large number of mosques throughout Aceh indicates the strong public devotion to the Islamic faith they adhere to. Data from the Aceh Islamic Sharia Office indicates that the number of mosques in Aceh reached 4,040 (four thousand four Twenty) mosques spread throughout Aceh (DSI: 2022) . In order to enliven the implementation of Islamic Sharia, the Aceh Government established Qanun number 11 of 2003. Article 1 paragraph 5 explains that Islamic propagation is all activities that contain worship values to enliven and glorify the implementation of Islamic teachings.

More specifically, Article 9 of the qanun states that among the forms of worship practice are: (a) every government agency, educational institution and business entity is obliged to promote and provide facilities for congregational prayer; (b) Village leaders are obliged to improve mosques and/or meunasah with congregational prayer and revive religious studies; and (c) Public transportation

companies are obliged to provide opportunities and facilities to service users to perform obligatory prayers (Compiling Team: 2022).

The above Qanun demonstrates the importance of mosques as a place of worship for the people of Aceh, particularly Muslims, without being limited by differences in perspectives on the process of worshipping Allah. Functionally, mosques belong to the community, not to individuals or specific groups, although some of their construction is funded by individuals, certain organizational groups, community self-help, or even the government. Although it is acknowledged that many parties are involved in the physical construction of mosques, spiritually, *mosques* are sacred houses used by all Muslims to purify themselves, especially to purify their souls from various sins. (Adib, 2015)

As a sacred place, all Muslims should ideally maintain the sanctity of the mosque, preventing it from being contaminated by vested interests, whether economic, political, or sectarian, by fostering effective communication. A breakdown in communication can lead to mosque-based conflicts. A mosque contaminated by vested interests, whether individual or group, desecrates its sanctity. Several cases of communication conflicts within mosques have occurred in Aceh and have been reported in the media. *The first case* occurred in Bireun Regency in 2015, where a mosque-based social conflict occurred, particularly during the construction of the At-Taqwa Muhammadiyah mosque in Samalanga and Juli sub-districts, which was met with resistance from some local residents. This rejection has led to social conflicts based on religion and mosque institutions (Muhammad Ridha Basri, 2024).

The second case occurred in 2026 at the Abu Indrapuri Grand Mosque in Aceh Besar Regency. Unlike the first case, the conflict was primarily driven by differences in religious understanding or sectarianism. The second case, however, tended to stem from miscommunication between the community and the local government, specifically the Aceh Besar Regent's policy regarding mosque management that differed from the local community's decision. (Harian Suara Aceh)

The two case studies above demonstrate the dynamics of mosque-based communication in Aceh. While neither case can be justified, these are the facts, and it's possible that mosques also harbor potential conflicts within them. Therefore, the question this research seeks to answer is: if mosques are sacred places for Muslims, how can these potential conflicts arise within them? (WULANDARI, nd)

RESEARCH METHODS

This qualitative research was conducted in 10 regencies/cities that are considered to be representative of Aceh Province. The regencies/cities were divided into three zones, namely the east and north coast zones in four regencies: Aceh Besar, Pidie, North Aceh, and Aceh Tamiang. Three regencies were selected for the West-South Coast Zone: Nagan Raya, South Aceh, and Subulussalam City. Two regencies were selected for the central region:

Central Aceh and Southeast Aceh. Banda Aceh City was chosen due to its location in the center of the provincial capital.

Data collection was conducted through *in-depth interviews* with several informants consisting of BKM Mosque administrators, construction committees, permanent mosque congregations, community leaders, and government officials. Important data to be obtained through these interviews relate to mosque typologies and the potential for latent conflicts *that* could surface at any time. The interviews also explored the inner feelings of the administrators, permanent mosque congregations, and other informants regarding the management of their respective mosques. In addition to interviews, *a documentation study* was also conducted to obtain written information about the development of the mosque. In addition to these two techniques, limited *observations were also conducted* within the mosque environment, particularly regarding cleanliness, the completeness of worship facilities such as ablution areas, sound systems, BKM activities, mosque youth, and the activities of Muslimat mothers in improving the mosque.

All data collected during the study was grouped into primary and secondary data. Data collected using all techniques was *cross-checked as needed to ensure an appropriate level of validity*. All data deemed valid was *reanalyzed using conflict theory* to identify and explain potential conflicts that were still *latent*. (Arif et al., 2025)

RESEARCH RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

1. Typology of Mosques in Aceh Province

Based on data searches conducted at 10 (ten) research locations, data was found that mosques in the Aceh Province area were classified into several typologies as follows:

- a. *The Grand Mosque*, located in the center of the capital of Aceh Province, means that there is only one mosque with Grand Mosque status in Aceh Province: the Baiturrahman Grand Mosque. This Grand Mosque serves as the *Main Supervisory Mosque*, overseeing the mosque one level below it, the Grand Mosque.
- b. *The Grand Mosque* is located in every capital city of the 23 regencies/cities in Aceh. However, this number is not directly proportional to the number of Grand Mosques, which definitively still number 21 units. This means that there are still 2 (two) regencies/cities that do not have a Grand Mosque, namely Banda City and North Aceh Regency. Initially, the Oman al-Makmur Lamprit Mosque was named the Grand Mosque of Banda Aceh City, but since 2020, there has been chaos between the Lamprit community and the BKM management with the Banda Aceh City Government supported by a group of people claiming the Aswaja group. This tug of war of interests has led the community and mosque management to agree to reject the status of the Grand Mosque for the Oman Mosque. (M Jamil Ibrhaim, Interview results). Meanwhile, in North Aceh, there is a tug of war over the status of the Grand Mosque between the Pantan Labu City Mosque and the Lhoksukon

City Mosque. Despite this conflict of interest, functionally this mosque serves as a *mentor* who provides guidance to the large mosques in each sub-district in a synergistic and sustainable manner.

- c. *The Grand Mosque* is located in each sub-district capital and serves as the Middle Guidance Center. There is only one mosque at the sub-district level, and its number corresponds to the number of sub-districts in Aceh Province. According to statistics, Aceh has 289 sub-districts. thus, the number of large mosques is also comparable with amount Subdistrict the.
- d. *Jami' Mosque*, namely designation towards residential mosques located in residential areas residents. This mosque functioning as Connector between the mosque and Meunasah and prayer rooms in the surrounding area.
- e. *Family/Group Mosque*, namely a mosque belonging to a group of people or families which is used as a center of worship (prayer), for example the H Harun Keuchik Leumiek mosque in Banda Aceh City.

The mosque typology above shows that, from a management perspective, the mosque has a very strong network in carrying out its functions. However, this institution has not yet optimally carried out its role and function. Mosques at all levels generally still carry out their roles and functions independently. The coaching process carried out by the Grand Mosque, the Grand Mosque, and so on down to the lowest level, has not yet been implemented. This factor has made it difficult for mosque administrators to resolve various issues/conflicts based on religion and the mosque. This deficiency has resulted in a decline in the prosperity of congregations in several areas. (Nst, nd)

2. Potential for Mosque-Based Conflict

The results of data analysis from informants indicate that mosques also harbor the potential for conflict within them, albeit at a low and limited intensity. Despite their small and limited capacity, this miscommunication could potentially lead to greater disruptions to the comfort of worship and mosque management. Therefore, any potential disruption to the comfort of mosque administrators and congregants should be detected and addressed wisely as early as possible by the mosque administrators and congregants to prevent it from escalating into a larger issue that is difficult to resolve. (EM et al., 2024)

In general, mosque management at all typological levels throughout Aceh has been running well and normally, both in the areas of *Idarah*, *Imarah* and *ri'ayah*. However, throughout the journey of collecting data on the prosperity of mosques in Aceh, several marginal notes were found about conflicts that occurred within mosque management, both related to policy and transparency, policies on worship, and the tug of war of interests between mosque administrators and parties outside mosque management, such as the government and Islamic activist groups who call themselves the *Ahlussunnah wal-Jama'ah group*. (Silviana, 2019)

When this situation is analyzed further, three potential forms of conflict are identified that could disrupt worship services and other mosque management arrangements at any time. These three forms can be described as follows:

a. Vertical Conflict

This vertical conflict represents a lack of harmony between the mosque's management and the government. This miscommunication was revealed in an interview with a research informant at the Oman Al-Makmur Mosque in Lamprit, Banda Aceh City, who stated that the current condition of the Oman Al-Makmur Mosque is quite good, although some time ago there was a tug of war between the Banda Aceh City government and the mosque's management and permanent congregation. The City Government had previously designated the Oman Al-Makmur Mosque as a Grand Mosque. This decision initially received support from the management and the surrounding community, but after some time, the City Government appeared to be intervening for certain interests, causing friction with the management and the surrounding community. This conflict culminated in the rejection and return of the Grand Mosque status by the management, community leaders, and congregation to the Mayor of Banda Aceh. (Muhammaddiah & ..., 2024)

In addition to the Oman Mosque, horizontal conflict was also revealed through interviews with several administrators of the Istiqamah Mosque, the Grand Mosque of South Aceh Regency located in the center of Tapak Tuan city. According to sources at the Istiqamah Grand Mosque of South Aceh Regency, namely Mr. Shaumi, Tgk Fuadi, Tgk Darmiadi and Tgk Dedi, they admitted that the Regency government did not provide enough autonomy to the mosque administrators to regulate the operational matters of the mosque's activities. Several times the administrators and the community felt disadvantaged by the Regency government's policies regarding the arrangement of preachers, especially for Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha which were unilaterally determined by the government. However, approaching the Eid al-Fitr, the promised preacher could not be present, so the administrators were frantic to find a qualified replacement preacher. (Safrilsyah et al., 2024)

Further analysis reveals that the communication conflict between the government and mosque administrators is also influenced by government interference in mosque operations. This increasingly suggests political bias and elite interests in using mosques as a medium/facility. These hidden interests represent a potential conflict that will continue to grow if not promptly and wisely communicated.

b. Horizontal Conflict

Horizontal conflict is miscommunication that occurs internally among mosque administrators and the construction committee. Ideally, mosque administrators should... operate habit to be more transparent in publish mosque finances , namely details income and expenses on the board wall outside and in the mosque. However then sometimes become problem is performance

administrator in to deliberate What just related plan construction of mosques, especially for village mosques that have device government and figures people who feel must invited deliberation in taking decision . (E. Dewi, 2024)

The potential for such conflict emerged during meetings and focus groups with several mosque administrators in Banda Aceh City and Nagan Raya Regency. The horizontal conflict in Banda Aceh relates to the transparency of mosque finances. Research informants, including Tgk Samsul Bahri, Tgk Afwan, Tgk Tarnuman, and Ayah Pulo, understandably recognized this sensitive issue of transparency and potential for a vote of no confidence, as experienced by the Baiturrahim Mosque administrators in Ulee Lheu, Banda Aceh. Allegations lack of transparency the old management resulted in the takeover of the mosque's destruction by Imam Mukim for handed over to administrator new through One dozens of elections year No Once implemented . Until study This done the old management has not hand over mosque cash funds during the period Then to the new BKM . (Kahar, 2019)

A similar incident occurred in Nagan Raya Regency, where a small but serious argument was discovered between the village head and the head of the Nurul Iman Mosque Community Development Agency (BKM) in Alue Bili, Nagan Raya. This administrative friction stemmed from the BKM's habit of not consulting with the village government regarding mosque construction plans . only done when the mosque will roll out warning days great Islam. For That head village openly expressed his disappointment in the discussion forum .

This horizontal conflict is often triggered by a lack of transparency on the part of mosque administrators or building committees regarding finances and the process of developing mosque programs, including those related to idarah (guardianship), imarah (leadership), and ri'ayah (religious affairs). This lack of transparency and public accountability can be considered a potential latent *conflict of accountability* that could surface at any time, potentially having a broader impact on the mosque's development process and prosperity. (Syari, 2026)

c. Sectoral Conflict

Sectoral conflict is a type of conflict involving two or more parties in carrying out a particular activity. This type of conflict once emerged in one of the mosques in Keumala, Pidie Regency, in the form of an attack on the Friday prayer leader (Khatib) who was delivering a sermon by a certain group who felt they did not align with their current thinking. In addition to Pidie, this cross-sectoral conflict also hit the Oman al-Makmur Lamprit Mosque in Banda Aceh City. The struggle for mosque management was carried out by a group of people calling themselves *the Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah group* . This group tends to raise the issue of *Ahlussunnah* vs. *Wahabi* to influence the community, and even influence and drag the governments in Banda Aceh City and Bireun Regency to support their actions. This

sectoral conflict was widely circulated on social media and has tarnished the good name of Muslims in Aceh. (Nazaruddin et al., 2010)

This cross-sectoral conflict is also influenced by the scholarly arrogance of certain groups in understanding Islam without considering the greater good of society. Issues regarding Wahhabism have occurred not only in Bireun, Pidie, and Banda Aceh, but also in several other areas within Aceh Province. This is considered unwise in building and educating a mosque-based community, as the level of *mafasid* (negative) is greater than *mashalih* (positive). The potential for such conflict is largely hidden within Acehnese society, requiring careful vigilance to prevent it from becoming a ticking time bomb for a larger conflict (Herizal et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

Conflict is a fact that often occurs throughout human life, both in the political, economic and in matters of worship which is often caused by miscommunication between lines. The mosque is a holy place that is used as a means of vertical communication for humans in order to get closer to God on the one hand and as a place to communicate with each other to strengthen social solidarity on the other hand. However, within it there is also the potential for conflict that tends to be triggered by several issues, including: *first*, the existence of *political intervention*, in the form of the potential for a struggle for influence and tug of war of interests in order to gain public/congregation sympathy), especially between the BKM mosque administrators with the government or other parties who have the same interests. Ideally, the mosque is not a place for politics, because if the mosque has been used as a means for certain interests, whether the interests of the authorities or certain groups, then the mosque will experience dysfunction that is very dangerous for the interests of the congregation. Second, the emergence of *Sectoral Arrogance of knowledge*, namely in the form of arrogant actions and the imposition of the will of certain groups on other groups to seize influence within the mosque institution, especially to spread Islamic law in the sectarian perspective that they have understood so far. The third trigger for mosque-based conflict is *the potential for disaccountability* from mosque administrators, namely the lack of transparency/lack of honesty on the part of mosque administrators in managing mosque finances, especially in relation to aspects of development and management of mosque assets.

Facing these conditions, all mosque leaders, from the Grand Mosque at the provincial level, the Grand Mosques in the districts, to the Grand Mosques in all sub-districts in Aceh, must establish a structural communication network to all mosques under their jurisdiction, while continuing to carry out their duties and functions as they should. The Grand Mosque of the Province, which has stood majestically with its buildings and substantial assets, should be channeled to all mosques in the region,

ensuring a well-established chain of command within the mosque's management, minimizing conflicts that could divide the community and fostering the prosperity of the mosque-based community.

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