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Inclusive Community Engagement in Mosque Networks: Developing a Communication Model for a Multicultural Society through a Case Study of FOSIL BKM Medan

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Abstract

Objective: This study analyzes communication and inclusive community engagement in FOSIL BKM Medan and develops an initial communication model for mosque networks in a multicultural society. **Theoretical framework:** The study draws on participatory communication, social capital, collaborative governance, and symbolic interaction to explain relationships between dialogue, trust, collective action, and organizational meaning. **Literature review:** Previous studies address religious volunteering, community empowerment, and collaboration. The remaining question concerns how relational closeness becomes traceable decisions and coordinated action across mosque organizations while accommodating different community perspectives. **Methods:** A qualitative single-case approach uses participant observation, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and organizational document analysis. Interview excerpts from Informants support thematic interpretation. Analysis involves data condensation, presentation, verification, and pattern matching, distinguishing reported practices from normative policy proposals. **Results:** The accounts identify silaturahim as relational capital and emphasize documented follow-up, responses to aspirations, transparent commitments, and complementary digital and direct communication. These themes inform seven CECMN components: needs and asset mapping, structured dialogue, joint planning, collaborative implementation, network strengthening, hybrid communication, and participatory evaluation. Four propositions connect voice with influence, trust with commitment, networks with resources, and experience with learning. **Implications:** The model offers guidance for inclusive dialogue, responsibility allocation, and shared learning within Medan's culturally plural setting. North Sumatran relational traditions provide contextual insights without establishing interethnic or interfaith outcomes. Implementation testing remains necessary. **Novelty:** The contribution is a context-specific integration of relational communication mechanisms and governance supports in the Community Engagement Communication Model for Mosque Network.

Keywords: participatory communication, community, multicultural society, mosque networks, social capital

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INTRODUCTION

In the lives of Muslim communities, mosques serve not only as places of worship but also as spaces for education, social services, community organizing, and solidarity building. This position gives mosques a social closeness that other formal institutions do not always possess. This closeness to the congregation allows mosques to identify community issues, gather support, and connect local resources to social needs. However, the expansion of mosque functions does not occur automatically. Institutional capacity, quality of communication, and community involvement determine whether mosques can develop as centers of community activity or remain limited to organizing ritual activities [1], [2]. The main issue, therefore, is not only the availability of programs, but the ability of mosque managers to build communication that produces a sense of belonging and collective action.

An urban mosque network brings together communities whose needs, resources, and ways of participating may differ. The communication problem is therefore not resolved by referring generally to Medan's social diversity. It concerns whether different community perspectives can enter a shared agenda and influence decisions without requiring all member mosques to adopt identical priorities. Differences in organizational capacity, age, social position, and access to digital channels may intersect with cultural differences, but they should not be treated as evidence of cultural identities in themselves. Some mosques have stronger educational and social-service capacity, while others face constraints in coordination, documentation, and partnerships. Inter-mosque communication can connect these capacities, provided that participation remains open and that access to shared resources does not depend solely on proximity to influential administrators.

Medan's multicultural setting is part of the wider cultural plurality of North Sumatra. The city's tourism authority identifies Malay, Mandailing, Karo, Toba Batak, Simalungun, Pakpak, Nias, Javanese, Minangkabau, Acehnese, Chinese, Indian, and Arab communities among the groups contributing to its cultural life. Its profile describes cultural diversity in traditions and architecture, including the Malay and Middle Eastern features associated with Masjid Raya Al-Mashun [3]. This contextual description does not identify the ethnic composition of the research participants. It establishes why a communication model intended for Medan should allow different community experiences to inform shared agendas rather than assume one uniform cultural background.

North Sumatran cultural resources also offer contextual points of reflection. A provincial government account describes *Dalihan Na Tolu* in Tapanuli and Mandailing communities through the interdependent relationships of mora, kahanggi, and anak boru, emphasizing respect and care within kinship relations [4]. This tradition is not a universal code for all residents of Medan. Its relevance to the present framework is an analytical question about how relational responsibilities may inform cooperation while dialogue remains open to people outside particular kinship networks. Silaturahim and musyawarah in mosque communication can provide shared organizational practices, but their inclusive meaning must be assessed through participants' actual opportunity to speak and influence decisions.

This need underpinned the formation of the Medan Mosque Prosperity Agency Silaturrahim Forum (FOSIL BKM). The initial idea developed through discussions between the Medan Waspada Daily and the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra regarding the existence and management of mosques, and was further strengthened through the National Mosque Management Seminar in 2016. The need for a forum for exchanging experiences and resolving shared issues prompted the formation of FOSIL BKM in 2017. This forum provides a meeting space for mosque administrators and opens up opportunities for socio-religious coordination. However, the forum's growth has also presented challenges such as reliance on informal communication, unequal member participation, weak decision documentation, and inconsistent follow-up. These conditions indicate a gap between the potential of silaturrahim as social capital and the forum's ability to transform it into collective capacity. The research proposal distinguishes the earlier forum

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initiative from the national association's legal recognition in 2023 and its registration in 2024. These milestones describe organizational context rather than evidence of communication effectiveness.

Participatory communication provides a framework for understanding this distance. This approach developed as a critique of one-way communication that positions the community as the recipient of messages and programs. Servaes and Servaes explain that communication for social change requires dialogue, access, participation, and redistribution of influence in decision-making [5]. From this perspective, successful communication does not stop at the delivery of information, but is seen in the ability of members to define problems, share experiences, and influence organizational actions. For mosque networks, this approach is relevant because administrators, congregants, youth, women, volunteers, and partners have different knowledge about community needs. Participation becomes meaningful when this diversity of knowledge is given space and consequences in forum policies.

Community engagement is also closely linked to social capital. Putnam positions trust, networks, and norms of reciprocity as elements that enable coordination and collective action [6]. In faith-based organizations, shared values can form initial closeness, but operational trust still requires openness, consistency, and fulfillment of commitments. Peucker's research shows that volunteerism in Muslim communities contains both religious and civic dimensions that can expand social contributions [7]. Meanwhile, dialogic communication through organizational media can strengthen relationships with the public when it occurs at various levels and does not function solely as a means of disseminating messages [8]. These findings emphasize that religious institutions have the potential to become community mobilizers if normative values are translated into concrete mechanisms of communication and collaboration.

Previous studies provide important foundations but address different analytical levels. Mosque-based empowerment research examines the mobilization of community capacity [9]. Community engagement studies identify trust, recognition of local knowledge, and power relations as important process conditions [10]. Participatory deliberation research examines how underrepresented voices enter collective decisions [11]. These contributions do not make participation in an inter-mosque forum self-explanatory. The question addressed here is how a forum connects members' aspirations with decisions, contributions, actions, and learning while preserving differences between its constituent communities. CECMN is proposed as a context-specific integration of these processes, not as evidence that participatory communication or collaborative governance has previously been absent from the literature.

This study examines FOSIL BKM Medan as a case of communication across member mosque organizations. This case was selected because the forum connects mosque administrators through coordination, discussion, and community-oriented activities, providing an information-rich setting for examining communication across organizations. The analytical purpose is to examine how shared religious relationships interact with differences in institutional capacity and community priorities. Its scope is the forum, its member communities, and their institutional partnerships. It does not constitute a comparative study of ethnic groups or an evaluation of interfaith dialogue. Two questions guide the analysis: how do communication practices enable or constrain meaningful community engagement within FOSIL BKM Medan, and how can these patterns inform an inclusive communication model for mosque networks? The contribution is an initial framework connecting voice, authority, contributions, and organizational learning. Multicultural relevance is considered through recognition of different perspectives and the limits of network openness; culturally differentiated outcomes require further evidence.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Participatory Communication and Community Engagement

Participatory communication views communities as actors with knowledge, experience, and capacity to influence change. Participation is not synonymous with attendance at meetings, but rather includes access to information, the opportunity to express views, the ability to influence decisions, involvement in implementation, and the right to evaluate outcomes [5]. This framework distinguishes substantive participation from symbolic participation. Forums can appear open because they are attended by many members, but remain one-way if the agenda and decisions are predetermined. In FOSIL BKM, participatory communication is used to assess the extent to which member mosques and community elements have space in shaping the agenda and how their input is linked to organizational actions.

This distinction aligns with critiques of ceremonial participation. Arnstein suggests that community engagement moves from manipulation and tokenism to partnership and citizen control [12]. Cornwall asserts that the meaning of participation is determined by who provides the space, who is allowed in, and how much authority is shared [13]. Participation also requires a learning process that allows communities to analyze their own issues, rather than simply validate organizational choices [14]. In the context of FOSIL BKM, these three perspectives make it clear that open invitations are inadequate if members' voices are not connected to agendas, resources, and decisions.

Community engagement expands participation by emphasizing ongoing relationships between organizations and communities. Engagement is not a one-time activity, but a process that continues from problem definition to evaluation. Research on engagement processes shows that trust, power sharing, recognition of local knowledge, and clarity of feedback influence the quality of community relationships [10]. Mthembu and Chimbari also show that engagement moves from providing information to consultation, involvement, and empowerment [15]. In this research, community engagement becomes a bridge between dialogue and collective action: the community's voice is not only heard, but translated into shared planning, contribution, and accountability.

Sustained engagement also aligns with principles of community-based research and action, particularly the formation of equitable partnerships, capacity building, and leveraging outcomes for the community [16]. When multiple organizations are involved, success is influenced by institutional design, direct dialogue, facilitative leadership, and trust-building [17]. A broader collaborative framework positions principled engagement, shared motivation, and collective action capacity as interconnected processes [18]. This perspective reinforces the CECMN's foundation that community relationships must be governed by rules of engagement that enable collaboration to endure beyond personal proximity.

Social Capital, Community Communication, and Collective Identity

Social capital explains how relationships can facilitate collaboration through trust, reciprocity, and access to resources [6]. Bonding ties may sustain solidarity among BKM members, while bridging ties may connect the forum with universities, government, media, businesses, and social organizations. Neither form guarantees inclusion. Strong internal ties may privilege familiar actors, whereas external partnerships may leave existing decision-making hierarchies unchanged. The analytical issue is who can enter the network, express disagreement, influence priorities, and access the benefits it mobilizes. Civic participation in Muslim communities provides a relevant perspective on the relationship between religious commitment and wider social contribution [7]. However, cross-sector partnerships should not be equated with intercultural or interfaith engagement unless the identities, interactions, and experiences of the participating groups are documented.

At the organizational level, networks require a form of governance that is appropriate to the level of trust, number of members, agreed goals, and competency requirements [19]. Cross-

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sector collaboration also depends on initial agreements, structure, leadership, legitimacy, and the ability to manage resource inequalities [20]–[22]. The literature on co-creation and co-production shows that citizens can play roles as designers, implementers, and evaluators of services, but the results are influenced by organizational capacity and the available space for participation [23]-[25]. Therefore, FOSIL BKM needs to combine open participation with a clear division of mandates so that the network does not lose effectiveness.

Social capital is not just an attribute of relationships, but a source of knowledge and organizational capabilities. Network structure, relationship quality, and shared understanding support the exchange and creation of knowledge [26]. Social capital is also a resource embedded in the relationship structure and facilitates actors' actions [27], while the relationships that bind, bridge, and connect communities with authoritative institutions determine access to resources [28]. For mosque networks, this perspective explains why internal solidarity needs to be translated into information exchange, access to partnerships, and problem-solving capacity.

Community communication positions shared experiences as the source of public formation and social action. Dewey views communication as a process that enables communities to recognize shared problems and form collective responses [29]. The meaning of togetherness then develops through interaction. Mead and Blumer explain that identity and action are not automatically born from symbols, but from interpretations that are continuously formed in social relationships [30], [31]. In FOSIL BKM, the terms silaturahim, amanah, ukhuwah, and kemaslahah gain institutional strength when translated into openness, accountability, exchange of contributions, and benefits for the congregation. This framework is used to understand how the forum's identity is formed and tested through the communicative experiences of its members.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative single-case approach to examine communication and community engagement within FOSIL BKM Medan. The forum is the primary unit of analysis, while administrators, member mosque communities, and institutional partners provide perspectives on its practices. The case was selected for its role in linking mosque administration, community dialogue, and socio-religious cooperation. The proposal schedules the project from August to October 2026. This schedule is reported as a planned project period and does not establish the actual dates of every interview, observation, or appraisal session.

Purposive selection focused on involvement in forum activities and knowledge of communication practices. Four interview excerpts are presented under anonymized codes A-D. The wider reported participant categories include administrators, religious leaders, congr and interview or FGD duration are not specified; four quoted informants should not be interpreted as the complete sample.

The manuscript reports participant observation, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and document review. Observation concerns interactions and coordination during forum activities; interviews concern participants' experiences and perceived communication barriers; group discussion concerns shared needs and model development. Organizational sources include minutes, activity reports, structures, publications, digital channels, and the national strategic policy draft [32]. The policy draft identifies recommended institutional arrangements rather than independently verifying the effects of a local intervention.

Analysis uses data condensation, thematic presentation, interpretation, and verification [33]. Reported material is grouped around communication, participation, trust, authority, documentation, resource exchange, and sustainability. Pattern matching compares these themes with the proposed governance arrangements, retaining a distinction between reported practice and normative design. The themes inform seven model components and four

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explanatory propositions. Discussions with informants, academics, practitioners, and administrators are treated as preliminary relevance appraisal. The available record does not support a claim that the model has passed implementation testing or that improvements can be attributed to it.

Source and technique triangulation compare interviews, observations, discussions, and organizational documents. Repeated observations are not documented in sufficient detail to establish temporal triangulation. The A–D excerpts provide direct support for the principal communication themes. They do not independently establish completed policy implementation, culturally differentiated outcomes, or model effectiveness. Reporting remains limited by the absence of detailed participant counts, event identifiers, a full coding trail, researcher positionality, consent procedures, and an institutional ethics determination. These limitations bound the interpretation of the case and the transferability of the framework.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Transforming Silaturahim into a Communication Network

Informant A described the relationship between silaturahim and coordination: “FOSIL BKM provides a space for mosque administrators to maintain ties, exchange experiences, and discuss mosque-management issues. Through these meetings, we can learn about other mosques' activities and opportunities for cooperation. However, to ensure that communication does not stop at meetings, more regular follow-up is needed, including recording the discussions and allocating responsibilities.” The account identifies relational contact as a basis for inter-mosque knowledge exchange. It also distinguishes opportunities for cooperation from the organizational arrangements needed to sustain them. Documentation and responsibility allocation are therefore responses to a need expressed by the informant, rather than evidence that an effective follow-up system is already established.

A significant shift occurred when mosques began to be viewed as network nodes, rather than stand-alone units. Each mosque brought knowledge about its congregation, facilities, volunteers, programs, and external relationships that could be exchanged. Mosques with educational capacity could share learning methods; mosques with young volunteers could support the use of technology; and mosques experienced in social service could disseminate program management practices. This pattern shifted the orientation from symbolic competition to complementarity. From a social capital perspective, relationships become productive when networks are able to facilitate coordination and collective action [6]. Thus, the strength of FOSIL BKM lies not in the breadth of its membership, but in its ability to activate relationships to address community needs.

Forum transformation requires a consistent rhythm of communication. Occasional meetings merely provide introductions, while repeated interactions allow members to recognize competencies, test commitments, and build shared expectations. At this point, silaturahim acquires an institutional function by becoming a space for building trust and norms of reciprocity. However, institutionalization does not mean adding rigid bureaucracy. Structure is needed in the form of agendas, decision-making records, responsible parties, follow-up schedules, and simple evaluation forums. These findings demonstrate that the professionalization of mosque networks does not necessarily eliminate the flexibility of religious relationships. Rather, this flexibility needs to be protected by mechanisms that maintain continuity, openness, and accountability.

Dialogue and the Formation of Meaningful Participation

Informant B explained the difference between attendance and influence: “Each mosque has different needs and problems. The forum becomes useful when administrators do not merely attend and listen but also have an opportunity to explain the problems they face. Suggestions need a clear response regarding whether they can be implemented, require adjustment, or need

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further discussion." This account supports the distinction between formal presence and substantive participation. Meaningful dialogue includes both expression of needs and an explanation of how proposals are handled [5]. A register of accepted, modified, deferred, and declined proposals translates this concern into a proposed governance instrument. The statement does not establish that proposals have already changed specific decisions; that outcome requires decision-level evidence.

Equal dialogue does not arise simply from an open invitation, but requires process design. Differences in status, age, economic capacity, and proximity to the board can influence who speaks more dominantly. Facilitators are needed to maintain time allocation, clarify issues, document views, and open up space for youth, women, congregants, volunteers, and smaller mosques. Russell's findings indicate that deliberation becomes more responsive when the voices of underrepresented groups are not only present but truly taken into account [11]. In FOSIL BKM, communication justice therefore does not mean equalizing the competence of all participants, but rather ensuring that differences do not eliminate the right to share relevant experiences.

Dialogue also serves to manage differences in character and priorities between mosques. Uniformity is not a prerequisite for collaboration because each BKM faces a different congregational environment. Agreement can be built on shared issues and goals, while implementation methods are adapted to each context. Within Dewey's framework, public communication allows communities to conduct joint investigations into the issues they face [29]. Therefore, consensus does not necessarily mean the elimination of differences, but rather the establishment of a sufficient working basis for testing a course of action. If full agreement is not yet achieved, programs can be tested on a limited scale, and the results can then be jointly assessed. This mechanism makes differences a source of learning, not an organizational obstacle.

Trust, Contribution, and Network Collaboration

Informant C linked trust with organizational conduct: "Cooperation between mosques cannot rely solely on good relationships. Trust needs to be maintained through openness of information, clarity of responsibilities, and implementation of agreements. Each mosque also has strengths and limitations. Cooperation should therefore be developed according to each mosque's capacities so that mosques can help one another according to their needs." The statement links relational trust with observable commitments and recognizes complementary capacities. It supports the proposed mechanism connecting trust to commitment, while avoiding an assumption that shared religious affiliation alone guarantees cooperation. The account expresses conditions for collaboration; it does not measure whether the proposed arrangements have improved trust across the network.

Collaboration is strengthened when contributions are not limited to funds. Mosques and communities can contribute time, expertise, space, data, networks, access to target groups, or social legitimacy. Recognizing various forms of contribution prevents the dominance of actors with greater economic resources. Asset mapping also shifts perspectives from deficits to capacities. Research on mosque-based empowerment confirms that mosques can become centers for mobilizing social resources when communities are positioned as actors [9]. In FOSIL BKM, this mapping allows for the division of roles based on competency, while also providing space for regeneration because leadership can shift depending on the issues being addressed.

External partnerships may expand access to expertise, facilities, and resources, but their presence alone does not demonstrate inclusive service delivery. Government, universities, media, philanthropic bodies, businesses, and social organizations can contribute different capacities. The proposed governance task is to clarify objectives, authority, contributions, and the groups expected to benefit. Dialogic communication offers a relevant basis for assessing

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relationships beyond information dissemination [8]. For FOSIL BKM, network openness should be examined through entry opportunities, participation in priority-setting, and access to services. The manuscript does not provide sufficient beneficiary-level evidence to determine whether internal solidarity currently broadens service access or restricts it to familiar groups.

The experience of faith-based organizations shows that religious communities can provide social capital, moral legitimacy, and networks that encourage public engagement, but the outcomes are influenced by institutional orientation and the context in which the organization operates [34]. Involvement in religious communities is also related to social relationships that provide support and a sense of belonging [35]. At the community level, religious institutions can build civic participation when religious values are translated into collaborative work and openness to public interests [36], [37]. These findings are relevant to FOSIL BKM because religious identity is the initial capital, while its social benefits depend on the quality of organization and cross-institutional relationships.

Legality, Governance, and Regeneration as Infrastructures of Engagement

The policy draft links communication with organizational certainty through shura, Articles of Association/Bylaws, management decrees, mandates, and public reporting [32]. This is a normative account of the conditions proposed to support engagement. It should be distinguished from evidence that these arrangements are in operation at FOSIL BKM Medan. Within CECMN, governance clarity is treated as a possible enabling condition for tracing aspirations to responsibilities and services. Whether it reduces uncertainty, conflicts of authority, or dependence on figures remains an empirical question. The policy document informs the proposed response but does not independently validate it.

Assistance with waqf certification is discussed as an asset-protection agenda. The manuscript does not report a verified number of completed certifications or participant accounts sufficient to establish its effect on trust. It is therefore treated here as a proposed collaborative instrument rather than a demonstrated communication outcome. Within the model, member mosques would identify asset-status concerns, the forum would connect them with appropriate advisers and authorities, and participants would review progress. The relevant legal reference is the national waqf framework [38]. Evaluation would need to distinguish completed administrative outputs from changes in trust and the continuity of social services.

Informant D explained the role of digital media and younger participants: “Digital media make it easier to share information and coordinate among mosque administrators. Information about activities can be distributed more quickly, while documents and meeting outcomes can be stored for later retrieval. However, direct communication remains necessary to build closeness and resolve issues that require discussion. The involvement of younger generations is also important for information management and the continuity of organizational communication.” This account supports a hybrid approach in which digital channels facilitate information exchange and organizational memory, while direct interaction supports deliberation. It also positions regeneration as part of maintaining communication capacity. The proposed model consequently includes youth in information governance rather than limiting their contribution to operational tasks.

Identity Construction and Organizational Memory

The identity of FOSIL BKM is not formed solely through the organization's name, but through members' experiences in interacting, gaining support, and resolving problems. Mead and Blumer position meaning as the result of interactions and evolving interpretations [30], [31]. From this perspective, religious symbols have institutional consequences when manifested in behavior. Silaturahim means open communication; ukhuwah means a willingness to share capacity; amanah means accountability; while kemaslahatan means benefits that can be felt by the congregation. Consistency between values, procedures, and experiences shapes the forum's identity as an empowerment network. Conversely, a mismatch

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between the language of participation and closed practices can reduce the organization's legitimacy.

Organizational memory is crucial for maintaining identity and learning. Minutes, needs maps, asset maps, decisions, task allocations, reports, and program reflections need to be regularly maintained. Documentation is not merely administrative, but a means of transforming personal knowledge into institutional knowledge. Without documentation, management turnover can diminish experience, successful programs are difficult to replicate, and mistakes are likely to recur. A hybrid communication infrastructure can support this need. Face-to-face meetings are used for substantive dialogue and dispute resolution, while digital media is used for coordination, document storage, and follow-up monitoring. This combination maintains the depth of relationships while increasing the speed of work.

Digital media can enhance relationship maintenance and social capital formation when technology complements, rather than replaces, community interactions [39], [40]. Access to information through social media is also related to civic participation, although its influence is determined by how it is used and the quality of the network [41]. For nonprofit organizations, social media enables information dissemination, community building, and mobilization of action, but the practice is often still predominantly one-way [42]. The dialogic principle demands that digital channels provide useful information, ease of interaction, relationship maintenance, and opportunities for re-engagement [43],[44]. Therefore, FOSIL BKM digital channels should be designed as spaces for coordination and feedback, not just bulletin boards.

Policy Implications: From Relational Forums to Empowered Networks

The interpretation of the case and the policy draft informs five proposed institutional agendas, not five verified implementation outcomes. They are assistance with organizational rules and management mandates, protection of waqf assets, a twin-mosque scheme for capacity exchange, meaningful involvement of youth, and cross-sector partnerships. Twin-mosque cooperation denotes a proposed pairing of organizations with complementary capacities. Strengthening Unit Pengumpul Zakat (UPZ), or Zakat Collection Units, is considered alongside the zakat-management framework [45]. The proposed hexa-helix arrangement brings together government, universities, Islamic organizations, businesses, media, and communities. These actors are institutional categories rather than evidence of multicultural representation. The agendas are intended to support clearer responsibilities, resource exchange, and accountability; their implementation and distributional effects require separate assessment.

External partnerships need to be designed based on the principles of goal compatibility, proportionality of contributions, protection of community autonomy, and measurability of benefits. Legal status strengthens the forum's capacity to reach formal agreements, but social legitimacy remains determined by member engagement. Therefore, the partnership agenda must stem from needs mapping, be discussed through a *shura* forum, outlined in a clear mandate, and evaluated with beneficiaries. This framework prevents partnerships from devolving into dependency or merely symbolic mobilization. FOSIL BKM acts as a boundary-spanning organization, connecting congregational knowledge with institutional resources without usurping the authority of member mosques.

To systematically connect empirical challenges with model outcomes, Table 1 details how identified organizational issues map onto corresponding CECMN mechanisms, actionable policy instruments, and concrete evaluation indicators designed to strengthen mosque network governance.

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Table 1. Integration of empirical findings, CECMN mechanisms, and policy instruments

Reported issues	CECMN Mechanism	Proposed policy instruments	Proposed evaluation indicators
Untraceable aspirations	Voice → influence	Structured shura and follow-up register	Proportion of proposals with status and followed up
Trust is not yet operational	Trust → commitment	Public LPJ, mandate, AD/ART, and management decree	Accuracy of reporting and fulfillment of mandates
Distributed assets and capacity	Network → resources	Waqf certification, twin-mosque, UPZ, hexa-helix	Assets protected and resources mobilized
Figure dependence	Experience → learning	Youth regeneration, database, digital archives	Role transfer, documentation, and program replication

Table 1 integrates empirical issues with CECMN mechanisms, policy instruments, and evaluation indicators to transform mosque networks into structured, accountable, collaborative, and sustainable organizations through strengthening member aspirations, trust, assets, and institutional regeneration.

Development of Community Engagement Communication Model for Mosque Network

CECMN is proposed as an initial communication framework informed by the reported case patterns and their interpretation through participatory communication and network governance. Its seven components specify how members could contribute before decisions, during implementation, and during review. The model positions communities as contributors of knowledge, participants in planning, and reviewers of benefits. It proposes a coordinating role for FOSIL BKM while allowing issue-specific leadership among member mosques. This distribution of roles is a design proposition, not a demonstrated polycentric system. Inclusive engagement requires examining whose perspectives remain absent and whether participants can influence priorities. Cultural responsiveness involves allowing differences in community practices and meanings to inform dialogue, without presuming that such differences have already been empirically mapped in this case.

The first component of the model is participatory mapping of community needs and assets. Mapping begins with the experiences of those facing the problem, then identifies affected groups, causes, resources, and alternative solutions. Needs are combined with assets such as skills, facilities, volunteer time, data, networks, and experience. This approach recognizes local knowledge and avoids the view that communities are merely recipients of aid. Studies of place-based engagement show that trust and attention to power relations determine the success of participation [10]. In CECMN, mapping also serves as a correction for knowledge imbalances because the experiences of the congregation are given a place in shaping the agenda.

The second and third components are structured dialogue and joint planning. The dialogue is conducted with an open agenda, a facilitator, fair opportunity to speak, documentation of opinions, and explanations of the results of decisions. Input is assigned a status of accepted, modified, postponed, or not implemented along with the reasons. The results of the dialogue are translated into objectives, target groups, activities, role allocations, resources, risks, timeframes, and indicators. The planning document is kept simple so that it can be understood by all actors and functions as a social contract. Involvement in the planning stage influences the sustainability of community projects because it strengthens program alignment and a sense of ownership [46]. Thus, the dialogue does not stop at consultation, but produces a mandate and accountability.

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The fourth and fifth components are collaborative implementation and network strengthening. Each actor declares contributions according to their capacity and accepts responsibilities that can be fulfilled. Thematic teams are formed based on issues, have coordinators, timeframes, and reporting mechanisms. Internal networks are used to exchange good practices and resources between BKMs, while external networks foster relevant partnerships. Collaborative implementation requires documentation of contributions and equitable distribution of benefits to prevent reciprocity from turning into exploitation of volunteers. Engagement strategies developed with communities demonstrate that sustainable relationships require planning, adaptation, and strengthening of local capacity [47]. Therefore, network expansion within CECMN is always accompanied by clear objectives and boundaries of responsibility.

The sixth and seventh components are hybrid communication and participatory evaluation. Communication channels are selected based on function, not solely on technology. Face-to-face interaction is maintained to build trust, facilitate deliberation, and resolve conflicts, while digital channels accelerate coordination and build organizational memory. Evaluation is conducted by involving the community in determining indicators, reading results, and explaining changes experienced. Evaluation does not only count activities, but also assesses the quality of the process, the equity of benefits, sustainability, and unintended consequences. Community engagement that moves from information to empowerment requires relationships across all phases of the activity [15]. Findings on participatory learning also show that peer communication can transform experience into knowledge through shared assessment and reflection [48].

To synthesize these dynamics, the conceptual framework illustrates how inclusive communication, cross-sector collaboration, and community engagement interconnect within mosque networks to foster sustainable social impacts across multicultural societies, as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the Community Engagement Communication Model for Mosque Network (CECMN) in a multicultural society

As illustrated in Figure 1, this conceptual model highlights the pivotal role of leadership responsiveness and open digital dialogue in transforming relational ties into actionable commitments, ensuring equitable participation across diverse member organizations.

Managing digital communications also requires dialogic engagement from organizational leaders, as their responsiveness and presence can strengthen relationships with members [49]. At the same time, digital transparency needs to be accompanied by accountability for decisions and resource use; simply providing information is insufficient if the organization does not

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create a space for conversation and feedback [50]. In CECMN, technology is therefore positioned as a supporter of process traceability, not a substitute for deliberation. Participatory evaluation ensures that digital data, activity reports, and beneficiary experiences are shared before being used as the basis for subsequent decisions.

These seven components operate through four transformational mechanisms. First, voice becomes influence when aspirations change agendas, programs, or resource distribution. Second, trust becomes commitment when openness and consistency result in a willingness to fulfill responsibilities. Third, networks become resources when relationships can be activated to share knowledge, facilities, energy, access, and legitimacy. Fourth, experience becomes learning when implementation outcomes are reflected upon and documented. The relationship between these four mechanisms is circular: influence strengthens trust, trust fosters commitment, commitment activates networks, and implementation generates experiences that improve subsequent decisions. The CECMN is thus not simply a sequence of activities, but explains how communication produces relational and institutional change.

The CECMN implementation is carried out in stages. The diagnosis phase maps actors, unrepresented groups, communication channels, the legal status of institutions and assets, needs, and capacities. The consolidation phase tests dialogue and joint planning on a priority issue while establishing a register of decisions and responsible parties. The institutionalization phase strengthens the Articles of Association (AD/ART), management, protection of waqf assets, youth regeneration, and documentation systems. The expansion phase develops twin-mosques, social services, Unit Pengumpul Zakat (UPZ), or Zakat Collection Units, and hexa-helix partnerships according to local needs. The learning phase institutionalizes participatory evaluation, public reporting, and replication of effective practices. The phased approach avoids increasing administrative burdens before trust and collaborative competence develop. Model indicators include diversity of voices, traceability of input, clarity of decisions, legal certainty, trust, resource mobilization, regeneration, service quality, equitable distribution of benefits, and community ownership.

The model proposes safeguards against elite dominance, symbolic participation, volunteer overload, digital exclusion, conflicts of interest, and partner dependence. Facilitator rotation, accessible agendas, clear mandates, and records linking proposals to decisions are possible instruments. Hybrid channels may support participants with different communication preferences or access constraints. The multicultural implication concerns whether the forum recognizes different community perspectives while maintaining a shared basis for cooperation. Ethnic, linguistic, or religious identities should not be inferred from differences in age, resources, or organizational roles. Evidence of inclusion would require accounts from differently situated participants and records of their influence and access to services. The contribution of CECMN is the integration of relational communication mechanisms with proposed governance supports. The mechanisms remain propositions requiring implementation-based assessment.

For application in Medan, CECMN should acknowledge cultural plurality without assigning fixed communication traits to ethnic groups. Structured dialogue can allow participants to explain preferred forms of address, language needs, community priorities, and concerns about representation. Facilitators should ask about these preferences rather than infer them from names or ancestry. In culturally mixed settings, Indonesian can serve as a shared working language while clarification is offered where needed. This is a proposed accommodation, not a reported language practice in the fieldwork. Respect for elders and relational obligations should be balanced with opportunities for younger participants, women, and less-connected members to question a proposal. The North Sumatran examples thus inform culturally responsive design without authorizing cultural status or kinship to replace equal access to deliberation.

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CONCLUSION

The empirical findings derived from the study of FOSIL BKM Medan indicate that informal relational closeness alone does not guarantee coordinated and sustained follow-up actions. Key informants emphasize the vital necessity of systematically documenting organizational decisions, clearly allocating individual responsibilities, actively responding to evolving community members' aspirations, maintaining transparent commitments, and strategically combining modern digital communication tools with traditional direct face-to-face interaction. These detailed qualitative accounts directly inform the CECMN model's seven proposed structural components and four operational mechanisms that connect member voice with actionable influence, institutional trust with long-term commitment, social networks with tangible resources, and practical experience with continuous organizational learning and institutional adaptation. Overall, the model offers a comprehensive operational framework for strengthening inclusive and participatory communication across decentralized mosque networks, while its associated governance instruments remain normative recommendations whose actual effects require rigorous field implementation testing. CECMN's broader multicultural relevance lies in acknowledging and recognizing diverse community perspectives within Medan's highly pluralistic setting. Traditional North Sumatran relational practices provide rich contextual insights; however, establishing genuinely inclusive dialogue requires structural safeguards against subtle forms of social exclusion based on extended kinship ties, age seniority, or personal familiarity. The present study does not establish definitive interethnic or interfaith outcomes, and its generalizable conclusions are naturally constrained by its focus on a single organizational forum, incomplete reporting of qualitative sample characteristics and research procedures, and the absence of real-world implementation testing. Consequently, future comparative and longitudinal research should examine highly diverse participant cohorts, unsuccessful collaborative experiences, and the underlying distribution of local community services to empirically assess whether the proposed operational mechanisms consistently improve public participation, mutual trust, and equitable resource access across multiethnic urban environments.

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Author Contribution

All authors contribute equally to the publication of this paper, all authors read and agree to this paper, and all authors declare no conflict of interest.

Conflicts of Interest

All authors declare no conflict of interest.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI assistance was used during revision for language editing, organization of the manuscript, clarification of conceptual distinctions, and checking selected bibliographic details. It was not used to generate participant accounts, field observations, consent records, or research results. The authors remain responsible for verifying the manuscript against the original research records and approving its scholarly interpretation.

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