Analyzing the Efficiency of Parking Lots Around Mosque in Urban Area

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ABSTRACT

Parking facility can be considered as an important part of planning requirement of a mosque that can affect the whole development scheme, especially in urban area. The larger the town, the most likely the larger the amount of road users. This parallel occurred situation often leads to parking issues. The mosque is a sacred place for the Muslim, however, the car parking has been a long-standing issue that tarnished the image of the Mosque (Rasdi, M.T.H.M., 1998). These problems becomes more significant especially when mosque located around the business central such as banking, administration area and also as a center of Muslims meeting. The problem often starts with the limited numbers of parking available for people who come to mosque, and this situation turns to critical especially during Friday prayers and throughout the Ramadan month (Rasdi, M.T.H.M. and N. Utaberta, 2010; Dabbagh Niya, M., et al., 2015). The public complaint of insufficient car park and traffic congestion occurred in that area. This study is conducted to evaluate the efficiency of the parking spaces around urban mosque.

KEY WORDS: Mosque, Parking space, Urban Context

INTRODUCTION

Parking facility can be considered as an important part of planning requirement of a mosque that can affect the whole development scheme, especially in urban area. The larger the town, the most likely the larger the amount of road users. This parallel occurred situation often leads to parking issues. The mosque is a sacred place for the Muslim, however, the car parking has been a long-standing issue that tarnished the image of the Mosque (Rasdi, M.T.H.M., 1998). These problems becomes more significant especially when mosque located around the business central such as banking, administration area and also as a center of Muslims meeting. The problem often starts with the limited numbers of parking available for people who come to mosque, and this situation turns to critical especially during Friday prayers and throughout the Ramadan month (Rasdi, M.T.H.M. and N. Utaberta, 2010; Dabbagh Niya, M., et al., 2015). The public complaint of insufficient car park and traffic congestion occurred in that area. This study is conducted to evaluate the efficiency of the parking spaces around urban mosque.

Background of Study:

Parking can be defined as a storage area for vehicles that stopped and turned off the engine in an area. It is a convenience for drivers to park or store a vehicle for their business. Research about parking lot is important to find out whether it is adequate for current needs not. Development and rapid progress in an area will indirectly cause the increased traffic system and the demand for parking. The consequence of that, most of the modern country had taken action to overcome this problem by increase the charge, limit the duration of parking cars and also increase the public service quality. The reason for these actions is to limit the personal vehicles from entering the town and thus can control the drastically rise of parking demand.
In Malaysia, parking demand and parking requirement change very fast, this study is aim to discover the parking problem that always occurs especially in the urban area. Limited land spaces in the urban area and insufficient car parking area compared to high amounts of private vehicles is one another core of this problem. Other than that, parking spaces in central business are always fully occupied during peak hour. To avoid traffic congestion on the roads, an adequate parking spaces are required. The public will be satisfied and feel more convenience to park their car when visiting a place.

Review of Literature:

Parking can be defined as an area of land, usually in a largely natural state that set for the enjoyment of the public from having facilities for rest and recreation that often owned, set apart and managed by a city, state or nation. There are many terms in the parking facilities such as parking lots, parking spaces, parking demand, parking supply and others.

3.1 Parking lots:

According to Jim Gibbons 1999 parking lots can be defined as a cleared area that is intended for vehicles parking. Usually it refers to the area that has been provided with durable or semi-durable surface. Parking lots are commonly provided in commercial areas such as shopping malls, stadium, airport, residential areas such as apartment complexes and similar venues.

Parking lots usually paved with asphalt while some are paved with concrete. There are also paved with gravel. Parking lots can be small with just parking spaces for a few vehicles. Small parking lots are usually located near building for small businesses, residential or a few apartments. Parking garages refers to parking lots comprised of multiple storIES Parking garage also called multi-storey car park, multi-level parking structure. The structure of the building is designed for vehicles parking with several floors or level that can accommodate with several cars and are arranged. In many large shopping malls, car park was built adjacent to the shopping center to enable easy access of customers on each floor to parking garage. Parking lots that located on the roof or underground may have an elevator taking the customers going up or down into the building.

3.2 Parking Space:

Parking spaces can be in a parking garage, in a parking lot or on a city street. It is usually designated by a white paint on tar rectangle indicated by three lines at the top, left and right of the designated area. The car fits in the space either by parallel parking, perpendicular parking or angled parking.

3.3 Parking Demand:

Based on Victoria Transport Policy Institute 2011, parking demand means the amount of parking that would be used at a particular time, place and price. Parking demands are affected by vehicle ownership, trip rates, mode split, duration of motorist park, geographic location for example urban, downtown and suburban, the quality of travel alternatives, type of trip likes going to work, shopping, travel or recreational and factors such as fuel and toll pricing. Different types of trips have different types of parking demand. Different types of trips tend to serve different types of facilities.

Study Cases:

5.1 Land use impacts and parking lots issues of mosque in Australia:

A review of Rockdale City Council’s Environmental Planning Instruments such as Rockdale Local Environmental Plan 2000 (RLEP 2000) and Development Control Plans has revealed relatively little in terms of details to the development of mosques. RLEP 2000 permits the development of places of worship subject to Council consent in the residential, business, industrial and some zones pertaining to special uses. “Parking and Loading Code” is the only Development Control Plan application and is used in the assessment of places of worship. The Parking and Loading Code requires that “1 space per 10 seats or 1 space per 10 square metres nett floor area of hall.

The Environmental Planning Instruments applicable to the development of places of public worship within the local government area of Canterbury are called Canterbury Local Environmental Plan 178 and Development Control Plan (DCP) No. 20 Car Parking. DCP No. 20 in relation to places of worship states that “as a guide, 1 space per 5 people (accommodation capacity) for first 100, then 1 space per 3 people thereafter, and, for Bicycles Visitors: Minimum 1 space per 20 visitors or part thereof. Also a parking assessment with a survey of similar developments is required.

“Mosques are treated like all places of worship. Traffic generation and parking is a potential issue for them all.”

“Given issues of parking, traffic and sometimes of noise generation, especially on weekends, the location of places of worship in industrial areas is a good idea as it reduces potential conflict between uses. Placing them in residential areas, near to where people live, is also a good idea.”
Develop planning policies and strategies which encourage shared parking facilities. Also, distance separation requirements be implemented in areas where there is more than one place of worship. (Mourad, H., 2001).

Abu Dhabi residents complain of limited parking near mosques:

News in Abu Dhabi state that finding a mosque within walking distance has been a serious concern in the capital, with a variety of them dotting the city’s landscape. However, when driving to a mosque, residents report that it is difficult to find a parking spot, especially for prayers during peak hours or season which a large number of worshippers visit mosques.

“On normal days, I tend to pray at the neighbourhood mosque or use a prayer room at my workplace. But on Fridays, I drive to a mosque on Hazza Bin Zayed Street. Finding a parking spot then is not always easy,” Adil Abdul Wahid, a 33-year-old Emirati, told Gulf News.

“Because I go in early, I usually manage to park my car. But just a while later, the surrounding streets get very crowded, and people tend to park on the main road, leading to a lot of congestion,” he added.

Similar complaints were voiced by other residents, who said they had to arrive early at mosques for the Friday prayers. F. Mohammad, a 47-year-old taxi driver from Pakistan, said he tries to reach early and stay late at the mosque where he performs Friday prayers.

“I practice this in order to extend my prayers, but it also helps me avoid the rush of cars on the main roads outside the mosque. I have noticed that the lack of spaces means that many drivers double park their cars, which can be very inconvenient,” he said.

However, Mohammad said he does not face this kind of problem on other days of the week.

“I visit any nearby mosque that has an available parking spot,” he explained. “Perhaps the problem arises because a number of smaller neighborhood mosques don’t organize Friday afternoon prayers. So many people tend to drive down to other mosques, creating a greater demand for parking spaces near them,” Abdul Wahid suggested.

Results from an officials surveys carried out by the Urban Planning Council (UPC) at 2011 among 11,000 households regarding mosque usage, It found that nearly 35 per cent of the Abu Dhabi emirate’s population frequents mosques on a regular basis. According to a senior official at the General Authority of Islamic Affairs and Endowments (AWQAF), the emirate of Abu Dhabi currently has more than 2,700 mosques, with 641 of them located in the capital city.

“While all mosques are allowed to conduct daily prayers and Ramadan night time prayers, smaller ones do not organise the Friday prayers as they are not equipped to provide enough parking spaces,” he added.

Free parking are provided for worshippers in the capital on Fridays. And from the Department of Transport (DoT), during the month of Ramadan residents can park free of cost during the hours of iftar, and the longer night prayers (Tarawih prayers) that usually start after 9pm. However, certain business owners with stores located nearby to the mosques had complaint about the lack of spaces in the vicinity dampens their sales.

“My shop is located right next to a popular mosque, and during the Ramadan night prayers, motorists park their cars in ways that block the street. And even though there is generally a greater demand for fabrics and clothes during Ramadan, my sales tend to fall by 20 per cent during the hours of the night prayer,” said K.D., the owner of a textiles store near Hamdan Street. “If there were more places to park, business would be greater in Ramadan. But I don’t see any space for the authorities to construct a parking structure,” he added.[5]

Islam maintains the mosque as the inside for the Muslims to love Allah. As Allah has given us clear rules on the best way to deal with our life, the mosque additionally ought to be utilized to the greatest limit where we can tie the quality of the ummah and enhance their life through any exercises sorted out by the mosque. Through the headway of innovation, we ought to utilize it for the sole purpose of flourishing the muslims youth.

Based on the above writings, the involvement of youth in the mosques is still very small. However, the youth should be actively involves in the mosques as youth in King Fahad Mosques and Masjid Al Barakah. With a proper activities and involving more youth in the mosque committee, more or less it can attract others youth to join and become part of mosque committee as stated by Raeisian,Gh., Badreh, M.(2013). Other than that, Qari Muhammad Asim also stated that the youngsters have altogether different needs with elderly with engagement with the mosques. Lastly, as stated by Yassir Fazaqa, youth feel like their presence is not being appreciated and doesn’t feel the belonging when they are in the mosque.

Parking guidelines for new mosques:

News in Abu Dhabi state that in June, officials from Urban Planning Council (UPC) unveiled new regulations that require mosques within 350 metres of every home in the emirate of Abu Dhabi. The guidelines are to ensure that more mosques are developed and maintained on the outskirts of the capital, especially in newly developed areas such as Khalifa City and Mohammad Bin Zayed City, also in Western Region towns like Madinat Zayed.
Gulf News readers expressed much appreciation, saying it would bring much-needed ease of access to mosques in new areas of the city. Amer Al Hammadi, executive director for planning and infrastructure at the UPC, also told Gulf News that detailed parking requirements have been specified for newly developed mosques.

“These call for mosques in highly urban and urban areas to have one parking space per 30 worshippers, whereas mosques in suburban and rural areas will have one parking space for every 15 worshippers,” he said.

This is because mosques are more spread out in rural areas, thus requiring people to approach by driving. In addition, the total parking requirement for any given mosque will be within 150 metres of the mosque plot, and can be distributed onsite, on an adjacent parking lot, or on the street. Parking can also be shared with other facilities, and all decisions are subject to a comprehensive parking strategy and approval of the Department of Transport, Al Hammadi explained.

“All mosques will also have designated spots for the Imam (the one who leads the prayer), the Muezzin (the one who calls to prayer), disabled persons, and civil defence officials, as well as a number of bicycle stands,” he added. (Zaman, S. and nada, 2013)

**Things Every Green Mosque Should Have:**

Mostly mosques provide car parks, but most Muslims who arrive by cars have to park on the pavements, far away from the entrances, creating traffic jams and increased carbon emissions. Hence, for greener transportation, Eco-Mosques should provide ample space for parking bikes and promote biking routes to beat the afternoon and after work traffic congestion. This can lower the amounts of cars significantly and thus lower the requirements for parking lots. (Zaufishan, 2013)

**Traffic Congestion at BlackHall Mosque:**

Complaints have been filed by local residents to city council regarding the issues of parking lots and traffic congestion at BlackHall Mosque. A common complaint by local residents focuses on the inappropriate speed at which cars are driven to and from the Mosque, especially at prayer times when cars are often driven at a speed totally inappropriate for the narrow streets as drivers urgently seek to find a parking space. Inappropriate turning maneuvers are frequently carried out with cars mounting the pavement or using driveways to make a turn.

The significant increase in volume of traffic attending the Mosque has led to overload in what was formerly a quiet residential neighborhood. Prayer facilities for 300 men and 200 women are confirmed on the Mosque’s public Facebook page and, in addition, 200 children attend the school. The vast majority of attendance involves vehicle movement. This presents an intolerable burden for local residents in terms of traffic noise and pollution, inconsiderate parking and the associated safety issues.

Many local residents also highlighted the parking issues that closely connected with the volume of traffic. Photographic evidence showing many examples of inconsiderate and unlawful parking; blocked driveways and cars parked on pavements during peak hours prayer times at Mosque. The volume of cars parked on streets, in combination with the high degree of inconsiderate parking, restricts access for emergency vehicles as well as other utilities. In addition to the manifest safety concerns, local residents have experienced difficulties in terms of normal activities that were previously enjoyed. Local postmen and delivery drivers have commented on the problems caused by the increased volume of traffic and parked cars in the area. (“Traffic Congestion at Mosque 2015)

**Fines for bad parking near mosques in Sharjah:**

News in Sharjah state that local police will issue fines ranging between Dh200 to Dh500 on motorists and also hand them four black points if their vehicles are found parked haphazardly in front of mosques on Friday prayers as well as Taraweeh during Ramadan.

“Inconsiderate drivers who park their vehicles where they please are in for a rude awakening”, Sharjah Police say.

Authorities warned motorists that beginning Friday, these drivers will feel the full force of the law as part of a crackdown on parking misdemeanors. The crackdown falls on the heels of an awareness campaign started earlier that aimed to educate the public about the dangers of random parking. The campaign is specifically aimed at creating a sense of order amid the traffic confusion created by motorists during Friday prayers as well as Taraweeh in Ramadan.

“Random parking is seen near mosques, which can endanger the lives of other people on the roads. Especially on Fridays, such parking can lead to unwanted traffic jams during prayer times,” said Colonel Ahmad Bin Darwish, Director of Traffic and Patrol Department at Sharjah Police. Random parking, he said, also prevents police patrols from carrying out duties or reaching destinations during emergencies. The department was forced to implement these rules as many drivers were seen parking their cars randomly, taking advantage of the fact that the traffic police earlier did not penalize drivers who parked improperly during prayer time. (Ali, A., 2015).
Discussions:

The parking lots issues are always a headache problem for mosques, especially for mosques located in urban areas. The situation turns even worse during peak seasons that is during Friday afternoon and also during the month of Ramadan. The aftermath of lack of parking spaces would be the impact on traffic around the area, causing heavily traffic jam. Thus, many mosques are being complaint for the causes of noises, unlawful parking, road blocking by vehicles, etc. This has become a serious issue that some people are actually trying to pull a stop to the building of mosque around their neighborhood through council.

From the studies, there are several solutions to overcome this problem. One of them is the shared parking lots where public can fully utilize the parking spaces during normal days while Muslims can also find their parking easily when going to mosque. This can turn out to be an open area parking or even a multi-storey parking lots. Other than that, a mosque should be also been build near to a public transport station so that visitors can approach by using public transports. This can avoid the congested traffic occurred around the mosque and it's more environmental friendly.

Conclusion:

Mosque is a scared place for Muslims. It plays an important role in Muslims' life. At here, they pray and stay communicate to Allah. Also, mosque is a place for social interactions among Muslims and place for various Muslims' events [10]. It is very important to solve the parking lots issue so that the area around mosque can free from congested traffic and illegal parking even during peak seasons. By overcoming this issue, a mosque can free from complaints by people and interact well with surrounding neighborhood.

REFERENCES


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