



# The Concept of Al-'Imarah in the Qur'an and Its Relevance to Mosque Prosperity (A Tafsir Study of Qur'an Surah At-Tawbah verse 18)

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## Abstract

This study examines the concept of Al-'Imārah in the Qur'an and its relevance to the prosperity of mosques by focusing on the interpretation of Surah At-Taubah verse 18. This study employs a qualitative approach with a library research method and applies the thematic interpretation method (tafsir maudhu'i). The primary data sources include the Qur'an and classical and contemporary kufir literature, such as Tafsir Ibn Kathir and Tafsir Al-Misbah. The results show that the concept of Al-'Imārah in the Qur'an is not limited to the physical construction of mosques but also includes spiritual, social, and civilizational prosperity. The spiritual dimension is manifested through various forms of worship, such as congregational prayer, dhikr, and Qur'anic recitation. The social dimension is reflected in the mosque's function as a center for social activities, including zakat distribution, charity, and community solidarity strengthening. Meanwhile, the civilizational dimension is demonstrated by the mosque's role as a center for education and community development. In the modern context, the concept of Al-'Imārah remains highly relevant in revitalizing the mosque's role as a center of spiritual development, education, and community empowerment. Therefore, the prosperity of mosques should be holistically understood so that they can function as centers for spiritual, social, and civilizational development in Muslim societies.

**Keywords:** Al-'Imārah, Mosque prosperity, Thematic interpretation, Surah At-Taubah verse 18.

## Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji konsep Al-'Imārah dalam Al-Qur'an serta relevansinya terhadap pemakmuran masjid dengan fokus pada kajian tafsir QS. At-Taubah ayat 18. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian library research dan metode tafsir tematik (tafsir maudhu'i). Sumber data utama penelitian ini adalah Al-Qur'an dan kitab-kitab tafsir klasik maupun kontemporer, seperti Tafsir Ibnu Katsir dan Tafsir Al-Misbah. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa konsep Al-'Imārah dalam Al-Qur'an tidak hanya berkaitan dengan pembangunan fisik masjid, tetapi juga mencakup pemakmuran spiritual, sosial, and peradaban. Dimensi spiritual diwujudkan melalui berbagai aktivitas ibadah seperti salat berjamaah, dzikir, dan tilawah Al-Qur'an Dimensi sosial terlihat dari fungsi masjid sebagai pusat kegiatan sosial, seperti penyaluran zakat, sedekah, serta penguatan solidaritas masyarakat. Sementara itu, dimensi peradaban tercermin dari fungsi masjid sebagai pusat pendidikan dan pembinaan umat. Dalam konteks kehidupan modern, konsep Al-'Imārah memiliki relevansi yang kuat dalam menghidupkan kembali peran masjid sebagai pusat pembinaan spiritual, pendidikan, dan pemberdayaan masyarakat. Dengan demikian, pemakmuran masjid harus dipahami secara holistik agar masjid dapat berfungsi sebagai pusat pembangunan spiritual, sosial, dan peradaban umat Islam.

**Kata kunci:** Al-'Imārah, Pemakmuran masjid, Tafsir tematik, At-Taubah ayat 18



## A. INTRODUCTION

Mosques occupy a highly significant position in Islam, serving not only as places for performing ritual worship but also as centers for community development and social life advancement. The Qur'an positions the mosque as an institution that contributes to the development of faith, education, social solidarity, and community empowerment. This is reflected in verse 18 of the Qur'an Surah At-Tawbah, which emphasizes that those who prosper the mosque are those who believe in Allah and the Last Day, establish prayer, give zakat, and fear no one except Allah (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). Therefore, from the Qur'anic perspective, mosque prosperity is related not only to the physical building's existence but also to the optimization of its religious and social functions (Shihab, 2017).

The practice of prospering the mosque was exemplified during the time of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ through the Prophet's Mosque (*Masjid Nabawi*) in Madinah. Although it was built in a simple form, the mosque functioned as a center for worship, education, consultation, zakat distribution, and social welfare development. The mosque became the epicenter of an Islamic society founded on the values of faith while simultaneously supporting social development (Hamidullah, 2019). This historical experience demonstrates that the concept of mosque prosperity in Islam is comprehensive and encompasses spiritual, social, educational, and civilisational dimensions.

However, in contemporary Muslim societies, this ideal function has not yet been fully realized. Mosque management is still frequently oriented toward physical construction and ritual activities, whereas educational functions, economic empowerment, social development, and community strengthening have not been optimally implemented. As a result, the prosperity of mosques is often measured by the grandeur of their buildings and the number of worshipers rather than by their contribution to improving the quality of community life. This condition reveals a gap between the ideal concept of mosque prosperity taught by the Qur'an and its practical implementation within society (Aziz & Munir, 2021).

Various studies have examined the role of mosques as centers of social and educational activities, mosque prosperity management, and the historical development of the functions of the Prophet's Mosque (*Masjid Nabawi*) (Hidayat, 2019). These studies have provided significant contributions to the understanding of the implementation of

mosque functions in Muslim life. Nevertheless, most existing studies remain focused on managerial, historical, or sociological aspects. Studies that specifically analyze the concept of *al-'imārah* based on the Qur'anic interpretation of Surah At-Tawbah verse 18 as a normative foundation for mosque prosperity remain relatively limited. In fact, this verse serves as a fundamental basis for developing the criteria, meaning, and orientation of the Qur'an's definition of mosque prosperity.

Based on this research gap, this study proposes an analysis of the concept of *al-'imārah* in Qur'an Surah At-Tawbah verse 18 through a Qur'anic exegesis approach. This research not only examines the linguistic meaning of the term *al-'imārah* but also analyzes its theological, social, and civilizational dimensions. Thus, this study is expected to provide a more comprehensive conceptual framework regarding the integration of spiritual strengthening, education, social empowerment, and the development of the Muslim civilization into mosque prosperity.

This study analyzes the concept of *al-'imārah* in Qur'an Surah At-Tawbah verse 18, explains the meaning of mosque prosperity from the Qur'anic perspective, and identifies its implications for strengthening the function of mosques as centers of worship, education, social empowerment, and the development of Islamic civilization.

## **B. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a qualitative approach with a library research design. This approach was chosen because the study aims to deeply understand and interpret the concept of *al-'imārah* (*yu'ammiru*) in Qur'an Surah At-Tawbah verse 18, particularly in relation to the role of the mosque in realizing spiritual prosperity, social welfare, and the development of Muslim civilization. Library research was conducted through an examination of various written sources, including the Qur'an, classical and contemporary tafsīr works, scholarly books, journal articles, and previous research findings relevant to the focus of this study.

This study applies the *tafsīr maudhū'ī* (thematic exegesis) method. This method was selected because it enables a comprehensive study of a particular Qur'anic theme by collecting related verses and systematically analyzing them based on the interpretations of Qur'anic exegetes (*mufasir*). In this study, the application of the *tafsīr maudhū'ī* method was applied through several stages. First, the research theme was determined, namely,

the concept of *al-'imārah* in mosque prosperity. Second, Qur'an Surah At-Tawbah verse 18 is established as the main verse (*core verse*) that serves as the primary focus of analysis. Third, other verses related to the themes of mosque prosperity, mosque functions, faith, worship, and community development were collected. Fourth, examining the *asbāb al-nuzūl* (context of revelation), *munāsabah* (interrelation between verses), and linguistic aspects related to the term *al-'imārah*. Fifth, studying and comparing the interpretations of classical and contemporary Qur'anic exegetes regarding these verses is necessary. Sixth, the findings of the interpretations are synthesized to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the concept of *al-'imārah* and its implications for the development of mosque functions in contemporary Muslim life.

The research data sources comprise primary and secondary data. The primary data include the Qur'an, particularly the Qur'an Surah At-Tawbah verse 18, along with tafsīr works that directly discuss the verse, such as *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, *Al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'ān* by al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr al-Miṣbāḥ* by M. Quraish Shihab, and *Tafsīr al-Munīr* by Wahbah al-Zuhailī. Secondary data consist of scholarly books, journal articles, undergraduate theses, master's theses, dissertations, and research studies discussing the concept of *al-'imārah*, mosque functions, and community empowerment from an Islamic perspective.

The data collection technique was conducted through document study, which involved identifying, reading, examining, classifying, and recording various sources relevant to the research focus. All collected data were then organized according to thematic categories to facilitate the analysis process.

Data analysis was conducted using a descriptive-analytical method. The stages of analysis include: (1) identifying data related to the concept of *al-'imārah* in the Qur'an; (2) classifying data based on major themes, such as the meaning of *al-'imārah*, the criteria of mosque caretakers (*prosperers of mosques*), mosque functions, and their social implications; (3) comparing the interpretations of classical and contemporary exegetes to identify similarities and differences; (4) conducting critical interpretations of the analytical findings by considering the historical and social context of the verses; and (5) developing a conceptual synthesis regarding the meaning of *al-'imārah* as a paradigm of mosque prosperity oriented toward spiritual strengthening, education, social empowerment, and the development of Muslim civilization.

This study applies source triangulation techniques by comparing various interpretations of Qur'anic exegetes, previous research findings, and relevant scholarly literature to ensure data validity. In addition, data accuracy, citation precision, consistency of interpretation, and the relationship between research findings and the theoretical framework employed are cross-checked. Through these procedures, the study aims to produce valid, objective, and scientifically accountable findings.

## C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Compilation of Qur'anic Verses Related to Al-'Imārah

This study applies the *tafsīr maudhū'ī* (thematic exegesis) method by positioning Qur'an Surah At-Tawbah verse 18 as the primary verse (*al-āyah al-aṣliyyah*), as this verse explicitly explains those who are entitled to prosper the mosques (*ya'murū masājid Allāh*). Subsequently, other verses that have semantic connections with the theme of mosque prosperity were collected to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the Qur'anic concept.

The collected verses include Qur'an Surah An-Nūr verses 36–37, which explain worship activities within the mosque; Surah Al-Hajj verse 40, which highlights the importance of protecting places of worship; Surah Al-Baqarah verse 114, which discusses the prohibition of preventing people from prospering mosques; Surah Al-Baqarah verse 30, which explains humanity's role as Allah's vicegerent (*khalīfah*) on earth; and Surah Al-Mujādilah verse 11, which emphasizes the importance of knowledge in the development of the Muslim community. The compilation of these verses demonstrates that the concept of *al-'imārah* does not stand independently but is interconnected with faith, worship, social responsibility, intellectual development, and the advancement of human life.

The relationship among these verses indicates that QS. At-Tawbah verse 18 serves as the normative foundation regarding the subject of mosque prosperity, while the other verses expand the meaning of *al-'imārah* into various life dimensions. Therefore, the concept of *al-'imārah* in the Qur'an should be understood as an integrative concept rather than merely referring to mosques' physical construction.

### 2. Analysis of QS Mufasir Interpretations At-Tawbah Verse 18

After collecting the related verses, the next stage in the *tafsīr maudhū'ī* method is to analyze the interpretations of authoritative Qur'anic exegetes within the Islamic tradition. This analysis aims to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the concept of *'imārah al-masājid* in QS. At-Tawbah verse 18 based on the perspectives of tafsir's classical and contemporary scholars

Al-Ṭabarī explains that the phrase *innamā ya'muru masājid Allāh* indicates that those who are entitled to prosper the mosques are individuals who possess genuine faith, demonstrated through the performance of prayer, the payment of zakat, and obedience to Allah. According to Al-Ṭabarī, prospering the mosque is not limited to constructing or physically maintaining the building but also includes activities that bring the mosque to life through worship and obedience to Allah Almighty (Al-Ṭabarī, 2001).

Ibn Kathīr interprets mosque prosperity as being realized through the presence of people who consistently attend the mosque to perform congregational prayers, recite the Qur'an, engage in remembrance (*dhikr*), and carry out other forms of worship. Thus, according to Ibn Kathīr, the measure of a prosperous mosque does not lie in the grandeur or size of its building but in the vitality of religious activities conducted within it (Ibn Kathīr, 1999).

Al-Qurṭubī provides a more comprehensive explanation by distinguishing between the concept of *imārah ḥissiyyah* (physical prosperity) and *imārah ma'nawiyyah* (spiritual prosperity). *Imārah ḥissiyyah* relates to the construction, maintenance, and preservation of the mosque, whereas *imārah ma'nawiyyah* refers to the enhancement of the mosque through worship, knowledge, and socio-religious activities. According to him, both aspects must be balanced so that the function of the mosque can be optimally realized (Al-Qurṭubī, 1964).

In *Tafsīr al-Munīr*, Wahbah al-Zuhailī explains that the mosque's function is not limited to ritual aspects such as prayer and remembrance but also includes educational functions, preaching (*da'wah*), consultation (*shūrā*), and community development. From the Islamic perspective, the mosque is an institution with a strategic role in improving the spiritual and social quality of the Muslim community (Al-Zuhailī, 1991). Similarly, M. Quraish Shihab in *Tafsīr al-Miṣbāḥ* emphasizes that the mosque serves as a center for community development that integrates worship, education, social functions, and societal advancement. Therefore, mosque prosperity should be understood to transform

the mosque into a center of Muslim life, rather than merely a building for performing religious rituals (Shihab, 2002).

Based on the above-mentioned interpretations, the manasir share a common perspective in viewing *al-'imārah* as a multidimensional concept of mosque prosperity. Mosque prosperity is not only related to physical development but also includes strengthening faith, improving the quality of worship, developing Islamic education, nurturing society, and advancing the Muslim community's overall life. Thus, QS. At-Tawbah verse 18 illustrates that the success of a mosque is measured not by the magnificence of its structure but by the extent to which it functions as a center for strengthening society's spiritual and social dimensions.

### 3. Synthesis of the Concept of Al-'Imārah in QS. At-Tawbah Verse 18

The final stage in the *tafsīr maudhū'ī* method is the synthesis of the collected verses and the results of the manasir interpretations. This synthesis produces three main dimensions of the concept of *al-'imārah*.

The first dimension is spiritual, which is rooted in QS. At-Tawbah verse 18 and the QS. An-Nūr verses 36–37. These two verses demonstrate that the prosperity of a mosque begins with the quality of faith, the performance of worship, and devotion to Allah.

The social dimension is the second dimension, supported by QS. Al-Hajj verse 40, QS. Al-Baqarah verse 114 and the practice of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ at the Prophet's Mosque (*Masjid Nabawi*). These verses demonstrate that the mosque functions as a center for community services, zakat distribution, consultation, education, and Muslim community empowerment.

The third dimension is the civilizational dimension, which is based on QS. Al-Baqarah verse 30 and QS. Al-Mujādilah verse 11. These verses show that human beings, as Allah's vicegerents (*khalifah*), have the responsibility to develop life based on knowledge, faith, and moral values. In this context, the mosque becomes a strategic institution for producing a knowledgeable, faithful, and civilized society.

These three dimensions are interconnected, forming a comprehensive concept of *al-'imārah*. According to the Qur'an, prospering the mosque does not merely mean revitalizing acts of worship but also developing social responsibility and advancing Islamic civilization.

#### a. The Spiritual Dimension: The Mosque as a Space for Cultivating Faith and Piety

The first dimension of the concept of *al-'imārah* is the spiritual dimension. This dimension constitutes the fundamental foundation, as Qur'an Surah At-Tawbah verse 18 affirms, that is, those who prosper the mosque are those who believe in Allah and the Last Day, establish prayer, give zakat, and fear none but Allah. This verse indicates that the prosperity of the mosque must originate from the spiritual quality of the individuals who bring it to life.

This understanding is reinforced by Qur'an Surah An-Nūr verses 36–37, which describe the mosque as a place where the name of Allah is exalted through acts of worship such as prayer, remembrance (*dhikr*), and devotion to Him. Accordingly, the mosque is not only a physical structure but also a spiritual space that nurtures individuals with a strong vertical relationship with Allah (*ḥabl min Allāh*).

From a contemporary perspective, the spiritual dimension of the mosque plays a vital role in fostering moral character and strengthening the ethical resilience of society. The mosque serves as a place for internalizing the values of *tawḥīd* (the oneness of God), cultivating noble character (*akhlāq*), and reinforcing religious consciousness. This demonstrates that the success of mosque prosperity should not be measured solely by the number of worshipers or the grandeur of its physical structure but also by the extent to which the mosque produces individuals who possess moral integrity and a deep awareness of God (Ismail, 2019).

Therefore, the revitalization of the role of the mosque in the modern era must preserve its primary function as the spiritual center of the Muslim community. While mosque management may adapt to contemporary developments, such modernization should never diminish the mosque's essential role as a place for nurturing faith, worship, and the moral transformation of society (Abdullah, 2020).

Therefore, the spiritual dimension constitutes the primary foundation of the concept of *al-'imārah*. The social activities and physical development of the mosque will lose their true purpose if they are not grounded in the values of faith (*īmān*) and piety (*taqwā*), as emphasized in verse 18 of the Qur'an Surah At-Tawbah.

#### b. Social Dimension: The Mosque as a Center for Community Service and Empowerment

The second dimension of the concept of *al-'imārah* is the social dimension. Based on Qur'an Surah Al-Hajj verse 40, the mosque occupies a vital position in society because its existence is closely associated with the protection of places of worship that serve as

centers of devotion to Allah. This verse indicates that the mosque fulfills a broad social function, serving as an institution that safeguards both religious life and community welfare.

Furthermore, verse 114 of the Qur'an Surah Al-Baqarah illustrates the strategic importance of the mosque in the life of the Muslim community. Therefore, preventing people from maintaining and prospering the mosque is portrayed as an act that contradicts the very purpose of Allah's houses. From this perspective, the mosque functions not only as a place for individual worship but also as a center for the Muslim community's collective activities.

This understanding is reflected in the practice of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who established the Prophet's Mosque (*Masjid Nabawi*) as the center of life in Madinah. During the Prophet's era, the mosque was not only a place for performing prayers but also a center for education, consultation (*shūrā*), conflict resolution, zakat administration, community services, and the cultivation of social relationships among members of the Muslim community.

In the contemporary context, the social function of a mosque has become increasingly relevant to the needs of modern society. It can serve as a center for economic empowerment, public education, social services, and community solidarity strengthening. Therefore, the development of the role of the mosque in the modern era should adopt an empowerment-based approach, positioning the mosque as an institution capable of providing solutions to various social challenges, including poverty, educational disparities, and economic inequality (Latifah & Suryani, 2021).

Accordingly, the paradigm of mosque management has evolved from viewing the mosque merely as a *place of worship* to recognizing it as a *center of community development*. This means that the mosque should generate tangible benefits for the surrounding community through various social, educational, and economic programs (Rifa'i, 2022).

Therefore, al-'imrah's social dimension of *al-'imārah* demonstrates that prospering the mosque means revitalizing its inherent social functions. A prosperous mosque is not simply one that is crowded with ritual worshipers, but one that actively contributes to improving the community's quality of life.

c. The Civilizational Dimension: The Mosque as a Foundation for Building a Knowledgeable and Ethical Society

The third dimension of the concept of *al-'imārah* is the civilizational dimension. This dimension is rooted in the understanding that, according to Qur'an Surah Al-Baqarah verse 30, human beings are appointed as Allah's *khalīfah* (vicegerents) on earth, entrusted with the responsibility of developing and managing life in accordance with divine values. This responsibility extends beyond material development to include knowledge advancement, morality, and human well-being.

Qur'an Surah Al-Mujādilah verse 11 further emphasizes the significance of knowledge as one of the fundamental elements that elevate human dignity and status. In the context of *al-'imārah*, this verse indicates that the prosperity of the mosque should be oriented toward the development of knowledgeable, morally upright, and well-rounded individuals.

Islamic history demonstrates that the mosque has played a pivotal role in the development of civilization. During the early period of Islam, the mosque served as the center of the Muslim community's scholarly traditions, educational activities, religious learning, and intellectual development. Therefore, from the Qur'anic perspective, the concept of prosperity in mosques is closely associated with the advancement of human civilization.

In contemporary scholarship, the mosque is a socio-religious institution with significant potential to strengthen society's social capital. Reinforcing the mosque's function as a center for education and community development can serve as an effective strategy for addressing the challenges of modernity, particularly in maintaining a balance between scientific progress and spiritual values (Fauzi, 2018).

The mosque should be developed as a center for social transformation through the promotion of religious literacy, education, and social innovation. This reflects that the concept of *al-'imārah* encompasses a civilizational dimension in which the mosque functions as an institution for nurturing outstanding individuals who integrate faith, knowledge, and righteous action (*īmān*, *ilm*, and *'amal*) (Hidayat, 2023).

d. Integration of Al-'Imrah's Three Dimensions of *Al-'Imārah* as a Holistic Concept of Mosque Prosperity

Based on these three dimensions, the concept of *al-'imārah* in Qur'an Surah At-Tawbah verse 18 can be understood as a holistic and integrative concept of mosque prosperity. The spiritual dimension serves as the foundational value that directs human activities toward devotion to Allah. The social dimension represents the practical manifestation of faith through service, compassion, and concern for others. Meanwhile, the civilizational dimension provides a long-term orientation for building a progressive society based on knowledge and moral excellence.

These three dimensions are inseparable. Mosque prosperity that focuses solely on physical development without strengthening its spiritual foundation loses its primary purpose. Conversely, acts of worship that are not accompanied by social responsibility and contributions to the advancement of civilization do not fully reflect the comprehensive meaning of *al-'imārah*.

Thus, the concept of *al-'imārah* in Surah At-Tawbah verse 18 demonstrates that the mosque is a multidimensional institution that functions as a center of worship, social development, education, and civilizational advancement. From the Qur'anic perspective, prospering the mosque does not merely mean constructing an impressive physical building; rather, it means bringing the mosque to life through activities that nurture faithful individuals, foster a caring community, and contribute to the development of a civilization grounded in Islamic values.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

Based on the thematic (*tafsīr maudhū'ī*) analysis of verse 18 of the Qur'an Surah At-Tawbah, the concept of *al-'imārah* can be understood as the comprehensive prosperity and revitalization of the mosque. It is not limited to its physical construction or maintenance but encompasses spiritual, social, and civilisational dimensions. The Qur'anic exegetes explain that the essence of prospering the mosque begins with faith (*īmān*), piety (*taqwā*), and acts of worship that bring the mosque to life as a center of devotion to Allah.

The concept of *al-'imārah* also highlights the social role of the mosque as a center for education, community development, social services, and Muslim community empowerment. From the Qur'anic perspective, the mosque is not only a place for performing religious rituals but also an institution that contributes to the development

of human character and society. Therefore, prospering the mosque should be understood as an integrated effort to strengthen faith, foster social responsibility, and promote the advancement of civilization founded upon knowledge and moral values.

Therefore, Surah At-Tawbah verse 18 emphasizes that the success of a mosque is measured not by the grandeur of its physical structure but by the extent to which it serves as a center for nurturing faithful individuals, cultivating a caring society, and advancing an enlightened Islamic civilization.

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