



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Congregation Constraints in Attending Religious Studies in Mosque: Pull and Push Theory

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: Sep 18, 2024	<p>Mosques have long been central institutions in the development of Islam and the heart of Muslim community life. While their role today is not entirely reflective of the practices during the Prophet's (SAW) time, mosques continue to play a significant role in religious and educational affairs. This study aims to identify the factors that influence the congregation's interest in attending religious studies at mosques in Kubang Pasu, Kedah. Using qualitative interviews, this study found that mosque management, speakers, facilities, and the content of religious knowledge are the primary factors impacting attendance. By applying the Push and Pull Theory, this research offers comprehensive insights into these influencing factors, providing valuable guidance for stakeholders to develop strategies that attract congregants to religious studies.</p>
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INTRODUCTION

Mosques were originally established to offer a comfortable place for worshippers. Beyond that, mosque authorities have organized various activities, such as religious lectures, to serve the community. However, despite these efforts, the administration faces challenges in ensuring these programs are successful. One recurring issue is the lackluster response from the congregation (Nor Rosmawati, 2016).

Syamsinar (2019) noted that while congregants are interested in religious programs, they often lack the motivation to attend. This absence contributes to the perception that mosque activities are underwhelming. The issue is not the mosque itself but rather the unwillingness of congregants to actively participate.

Other challenges stem from the relevance of the lecture topics and programs offered. As Mohamad Azrien and Zamri (2019) observed, the community's lack of interest can also be attributed to unappealing content or inadequate presentation by the mosque administration.

Recognizing these issues, this study aims to explore the factors influencing congregants' interest in attending religious studies at several mosques in Kubang Pasu, Kedah, using the Push and Pull Theory to analyze the identified constraints.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Push and Pull Theory of Motivation (Dann, 1977)

Motivation, derived from the Latin word *movere* (meaning "to move"), refers to the driving force behind human actions. When an individual's physiological or psychological needs arise, the balance of homeostasis is disturbed, prompting the individual to take action in order to restore that balance (Heung, Qu, & Chu, 2021). In tourism studies, some scholars view tourists as people motivated by the desire to escape the routines of daily life, highlighting the crucial role motivation plays in decision-making for travelers. As noted by Dann (1977), the question, "Why do people travel?" has long intrigued researchers, with many pointing to motivation as the key factor in explaining tourist behavior.

Motivation serves as both an attractive and driving force behind human behavior (Rittichainuwat, 2018; Muhamad Amar et al., 2021). The formation of motivation involves both utilitarian or need-based factors and hedonic motivations, which stimulate individuals to take action and fulfill their needs (Prayag & Ryan, 2021). In the context of travel, motivation is often seen as an induced need that drives a person to embark on a journey.

The theory of push and pull factors is one of the most widely recognized frameworks in tourism research (Rittichainuwat, 2018; Jam et al., 2017). Discussions about tourist motivation often center on these two categories: push factors and pull factors (Prayag & Ryan, 2021). Push factors refer to the internal, socio-psychological drives that lead a person to seek travel, such as the desire for escape, rest, adventure, or social interaction. On the other hand, pull factors pertain to the external attributes of a destination—such as cultural attractions, scenic beauty, or recreational facilities—that attract individuals and motivate them to visit a particular place (Dann, 1977; Prayag & Ryan, 2021; Triantoro et al., 2023; Mohammed et al., 2024).

Push Factor

Push motivations refer to the internal forces that drive individuals toward their goals or to accomplish certain objectives. These motivations can include desires such as escape, rest and relaxation, prestige, health and fitness, adventure, and social interaction. However, while push factors can strongly motivate individuals, they may also lead to discouragement if obstacles arise during the pursuit of these goals. Motivation, in this sense, acts as a form of willpower, and an individual's determination is often only as strong as the underlying desire that fuels it (Holt, 2020).

In addition, push motivations are not always positive. A study on social networks revealed that regret and dissatisfaction can act as driving forces, pushing consumers to leave their current service providers. In this case, push motivations are negative, driven by dissatisfaction and the desire to change due to an unfavorable experience (Hosany, Ekinici & Uysal, 2017). This suggests that push factors can include not only the pursuit of positive outcomes but also the desire to escape negative situations.

Pull Factor

Pull motivation works in contrast to push motivation, as it is driven by external forces that attract individuals toward a goal or destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 2019). Pull factors are generally considered stronger than push factors because they stem from the inherent appeal of a goal or destination. These factors include both tangible elements, such as beaches, recreational facilities, and

cultural attractions, as well as intangible perceptions like novelty, expected benefits, and marketing imagery (Cárdenas-García, Sánchez-Rivero & Pulido-Fernández, 2019; Muhamad Amar, 2021).

Pull motivation can be understood as a powerful desire to achieve a specific goal, where the goal itself becomes so attractive that it almost “pulls” the individual toward it. This type of motivation is often stronger than merely forcing oneself to pursue something, as it is much easier to be drawn toward an appealing objective than to push oneself toward a less desirable one. Additionally, pull motivation can serve as a positive alternative to negative influences, such as dissatisfaction (Agaraj & Murati, 2015).

A study on social networks highlighted the concept that regret and dissatisfaction with existing service providers may lead consumers to consider switching. However, the availability of attractive alternatives plays a crucial role in translating this intent into action. In this case, pull motivation, represented by the attractiveness of alternatives, can moderate the negative effects of dissatisfaction and encourage individuals to make a change (Akama & Kieti, 2017).

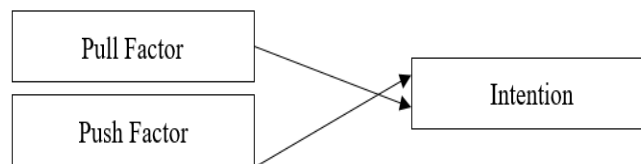


Figure 1: Pull and Push Theory

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design, focusing on interviews to gather in-depth insights from congregants attending mosques in Kubang Pasu, Kedah. The mosques selected for this study include Al-Muttaqin Mosque, Tanjung Pauh Mosque, and Lubok Kawah Mosque. These mosques were chosen for their significance in the local community and the variety of programs they offer. Interviews were conducted with both mosque administrators and regular congregants to understand the constraints and motivations affecting attendance at religious studies. The interview questions were structured around the Push and Pull Theory framework to identify specific factors influencing participation.

DISCUSSION AND RESULT

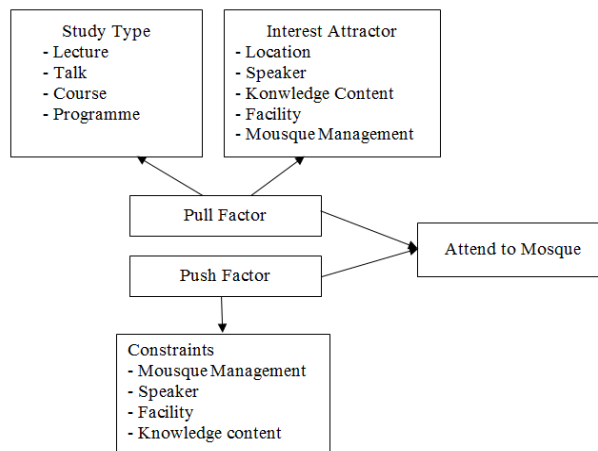


Figure 2: Congregation Constraints in Attending Religious Studies in Mosque

This study successfully met its objectives by identifying the types of religious studies offered and the factors that influence attendance. Four types of religious studies were identified: lectures, talks, courses, and religious programs.

The main factors attracting congregants include:

- **Location:** Proximity plays a significant role in determining whether individuals attend.
- **Speakers:** Charismatic and knowledgeable speakers are a crucial attraction.
- **Knowledge Content:** The relevance and depth of the material covered impact interest.
- **Facilities:** A mosque with comfortable facilities is more likely to encourage attendance.
- **Mosque Management:** Effective management can ensure the smooth execution of programs and engage the community.

However, several constraints were also identified, notably in the areas of management, speaker quality, facilities, and the depth of religious content offered. Figure 2 illustrates the dynamic between push and pull factors and their influence on congregants.

CONCLUSION

Improving key elements is the most effective strategy for increasing congregational interest in attending religious studies at mosques. This study identifies several areas for improvement, including mosque management, speaker quality, facilities, and the content of religious knowledge. Addressing these obstacles is crucial for fostering a more engaged community.

Mosques must expand their role beyond being merely places of worship to becoming central hubs for community life. The management of mosques should be fully committed to this socialization process, organizing activities that extend beyond the prayer hall and into the broader social fabric of the community. To "communitize" the mosque institution, a range of organized activities should be developed, making the mosque a focal point for social and educational events.

In a rapidly changing society, mosque management must be proactive to remain relevant. This requires a strong commitment from mosque committees to continually strive for improved performance in managing mosque affairs. Likewise, the broader Muslim community must actively contribute to the development of mosque institutions.

The findings of this study emphasize that the implementation of da'wah programs should not only aim to enhance religious knowledge and understanding of Islam but should also focus on developing the personal skills of community members. Programs aimed at teenagers and youth are particularly critical, as they represent the future of the Muslim community. The mosque's missionary efforts should foster strong relationships between congregants and the community, ensuring that younger generations are prepared to take on leadership roles.

Furthermore, mosque management must recognize that in this era of globalization, stagnation is not an option. If management remains stuck in outdated practices, they will fail to capture the interest of the younger generation. It is imperative that mosque operations innovate and adapt to meet the needs of the modern community, ensuring that mosques continue to serve as dynamic centers of religious and social life.

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