

Comparative Study of Mosque and Church Construction Management in Majority-Minority Religious Communities: Cases from Manado and Gorontalo

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ABSTRACT

Religious diversity in Indonesia presents unique challenges in managing houses of worship construction, particularly in areas where religious groups constitute a minority. This study investigates the management of mosque construction in Manado, a predominantly Christian city, and church construction in Gorontalo, a predominantly Muslim city. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through interviews with key informants including mosque and church committee leaders, religious leaders, and local government officials, as well as through direct observation and documentation analysis. The findings revealed five critical elements in worship house construction management: planning processes, funding sources, organizational structure, implementation strategies, and evaluation mechanisms. The study found that while both cities maintain religious tolerance, management approaches differ significantly between majority and minority contexts. In Manado, mosque construction faced challenges primarily in financial management and internal organizational conflicts, while in Gorontalo, church construction encountered regulatory hurdles despite facing fewer social obstacles. These findings have important implications for religious policy development and interfaith relations in pluralistic societies, suggesting the need for more structured management approaches in worship house construction that consider both technical and socio-religious factors.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Religious diversity in Indonesia presents unique dynamics in managing the construction of houses of worship, particularly in regions with varying religious majority-minority compositions. This phenomenon becomes increasingly interesting when examining the pattern of construction of houses of worship in cities with contrasting religious demographic characteristics, as seen in Manado and Gorontalo (Saputera, 2022; Yahya, 2020). In Manado, with a majority population of Christians (306,262 people) and Catholics (27,188 people) compared to Muslims (193,122 people), there are 987 houses of worship consisting of 202 mosques, 717 Protestant churches, and 22 Catholic churches. Meanwhile, in Gorontalo, with a majority Muslim population (400,531 people) compared to Protestants and Catholics (2,130 people each), there are 1,104 houses of worship dominated by 1,075 mosques and only 26 Protestant churches and 1 Catholic church.

Theoretically, houses of worship serve functions beyond mere religious ritual spaces. They are social institutions that play crucial roles in building social cohesion and strengthening interfaith brotherhood (Heiberger, 2015). In the context of plural societies, the presence of houses of worship can act as catalysts in enhancing tolerance and harmony between religious communities (Naeem & Yousaf, 2023; Siddiq et al., 2024). Mosques, for instance, function not only as places of worship but also as centers for social activities, intellectual development, and discussion spaces for finding solutions to community problems (Jawahir & Uyuni, 2019). Similarly, churches serve as centers for faith development and vessels for social service to the surrounding community (Taylor et al., 2000).

However, the complexity of managing the construction of houses of worship often emerges when faced with the reality of majority-minority communities. These challenges are not only related to technical aspects such as licensing and funding but also involve broader socio-political dimensions (Arifinsyah & Sofian, 2021). In some regions, the construction of houses of worship for minority groups faces various obstacles, ranging from difficulties in meeting administrative requirements to social resistance from the surrounding community. This situation becomes more complex with diverse interpretations of regulations regarding the construction of houses of worship, particularly concerning the Joint Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs and Minister of Home Affairs Numbers 9 and 8 of 2006 (Ansori, 2019).

Previous studies on the management of house of worship construction in Indonesia show several research focus trends. Most research emphasizes the technical aspects of construction or the conflictual dimensions in the licensing process (Arora & Fosfuri, 2000; Jørgensen, 2012). Some studies reveal the problems in constructing houses of worship for minorities, including the dynamics of negotiations with the government and local communities (Hasan et al., 2018). Other research focuses on legal-formal aspects and policy implementation related to the construction of houses of worship (Musthofa, 2018). However, there remains a gap in understanding how management approaches

differ between religious majority and minority communities in constructing houses of worship, particularly in more specific contexts such as in Manado and Gorontalo.

The novelty of this research lies in three main aspects. *First*, its comparative approach analyzes mosque construction management in Christian-majority areas (Manado) and church construction in Muslim-majority areas (Gorontalo). *Second*, the analysis focuses on five critical elements in construction management: planning processes, funding sources, organizational structure, implementation strategies, and evaluation mechanisms. *Third*, it provides an in-depth exploration of how social, cultural, and regulatory factors interact in shaping the management practices of house of worship construction in both cities.

This research aims to comprehensively analyze the management practices of house of worship construction in the context of majority-minority communities in Manado and Gorontalo. Specifically, this research explores: (1) how majority-minority contexts influence the management approach to house of worship construction; (2) how religious communities develop adaptation strategies to overcome challenges in house of worship construction; and (3) what factors support and hinder the successful construction of houses of worship in both cities.

The findings of this research have significant implications in several aspects. Theoretically, this research contributes to developing an understanding of house of worship construction management in plural society contexts, particularly regarding majority-minority dynamics. Practically, the research findings can serve as a reference for developing more adaptive and inclusive policies in house of worship construction. Furthermore, the identification of best practices in house of worship construction management can become a model for other regions with similar demographic characteristics. Socially, this research can contribute to strengthening social harmony and interfaith tolerance through better understanding of the complexities of house of worship construction in pluralistic societies.

2. METHODS

This research employs a qualitative approach with descriptive research design to explore and understand the phenomenon of mosque and church construction management in religious majority-minority communities in Manado and Gorontalo. The qualitative approach was chosen as it enables researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of social complexities and the studied phenomena in their natural context (Creswell, 2014).

The research locations focused on two regions with different religious demographic characteristics: Manado with a Christian majority population, and Gorontalo with a Muslim majority population. The selection of these locations was based on strategic considerations that both regions possess unique dynamics in house of worship construction, where each has its own nickname - Manado as the "City of a Thousand Churches" and Gorontalo as the "City of a Thousand Mosques". Additionally, both regions demonstrate high levels of religious tolerance, making them ideal locations to study house of worship construction management in pluralistic society contexts.

Data collection was conducted through three main methods: in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted with various key informants selected purposively, including the chairman of the Mosque Management Council, mosque imams, mosque and church construction committee heads, church congregation council chairs, pastors, heads of FKUB Manado and Gorontalo,

Ministry of Religious Affairs Manado, and the chairman of DMI Manado. The selection of these informants was based on the consideration that they possess in-depth knowledge and direct experience in house of worship construction management (Machado-da-Silva, 2003).

Direct observation was conducted on ongoing house of worship construction processes, focusing on management aspects such as team coordination, construction plan implementation, and interaction between various stakeholders. Researchers used both participant and non-participant observation techniques, adapted to the context and situation in the field. These observations were systematically recorded in field notes which were then analyzed together with data from other sources.

Documentation analysis involved examining various related documents such as construction proposals, financial reports, licensing documents, meeting minutes, and construction process documentation. These documents provided important information about formal and administrative aspects of house of worship construction management. Additionally, researchers also analyzed government policy documents related to house of worship construction, including the Joint Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs and Minister of Home Affairs Numbers 9 and 8 of 2006.

To ensure data validity, researchers used triangulation techniques including source, method, and time triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information from different informants. Method triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained through interviews, observation, and documentation. Time triangulation was conducted by collecting data at different times to ensure information consistency (Flick, 2022).

Data analysis used a thematic analysis approach with three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, researchers conducted a process of selecting, focusing, and transforming raw data from field notes. Data presentation was conducted in the form of organized narrative descriptions, enabling conclusion drawing. This analysis process was iterative, where researchers continuously moved between data collection, analysis, and concept development (Miles & Hubberman, 2019).

To ensure research credibility, researchers conducted member checking by presenting initial findings to key informants for feedback and validation. Additionally, researchers also conducted peer debriefing with research colleagues to discuss data interpretation and research findings. This process helped identify potential bias and increase analysis objectivity (Muthiah et al., 2020).

Research ethics were maintained by obtaining informed consent from all participants, maintaining informant identity confidentiality, and respecting cultural and religious sensitivities in the data collection and analysis process. Researchers also ensured that research results were presented in a way that respects all religious groups involved in the research.

3.1. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Differences in Majority-Minority Context in the Management of Houses of Worship Construction

The majority-minority context has a significant influence on the management approach to the construction of houses of worship in Manado and Gorontalo. Research data shows striking differences in terms of planning, fund management, organizational structure, and evaluation mechanisms between mosque construction in Christian-majority areas (Manado) and church construction in Muslim-majority areas (Gorontalo).

In Manado, with Christians as the majority population (306,262 Protestants and 27,188 Catholics) compared to Muslims (193,122), mosque construction faces more complex challenges in internal management aspects. This is reflected in organizational conflicts between the mosque management board, imams, and construction committee chairs that often impede planning effectiveness. This situation differs from church construction in Manado, which has a more organized management structure and receives stronger socio-political support from the surrounding community.

Meanwhile in Gorontalo, with a dominant Muslim population (400,531) compared to Christians (2,130 Protestants and 2,130 Catholics), church construction faces different challenges. Although social barriers are relatively minimal, regulations for house of worship construction become the main focus to be addressed. Churches in Gorontalo must comply with specific rules such as restrictions on using shophouses or hotels as places of worship. However, church construction management actually shows more structured performance with more systematic implementation of management functions.

In the planning aspect, mosques in Manado tend to adopt a more complex approach involving third-party consultants, as occurred in the construction of Ar-Rahman Mosque. This strategy was chosen to ensure the building's technical quality could compete with surrounding high-rise buildings, as experienced by Al-Khairiyah Mosque (Hasan et al., 2018). Conversely, church construction in Gorontalo relies more on internal management by the Congregation Council Working Committee without external consultant involvement (Thalib et al., 2023).

Significant differences are also seen in financial management. In Manado, mosques often face transparency and accountability challenges that lead to internal conflicts regarding fund management. In contrast, churches in Gorontalo implement stricter monitoring and evaluation systems, including forming special teams to oversee construction fund usage.

Construction organizational structure also shows interesting variations. Mosques in Manado tend to experience leadership overlap between the management board, imams, and construction committees that hinders management effectiveness. On the other hand, churches in Gorontalo demonstrate clearer hierarchies with well-defined task distribution among council, construction committee, and congregation.

Evaluation mechanisms also show different approaches (Lacouture et al., 2015). Mosque construction in Manado is often less consistent in conducting evaluations, contributing to internal conflicts. Meanwhile, churches in Gorontalo implement more structured periodic evaluation systems, including weekly to annual reporting to ensure transparency and accountability.

This phenomenon shows that majority-minority status does not always directly correlate with the effectiveness of house of worship construction management. In fact, minority communities sometimes develop more structured management systems as a

form of adaptation to the challenges they face. This is evident in how churches in Gorontalo and mosques in Manado develop different management approaches to address specific challenges in their respective regions.

The majority-minority context also influences the main focus of construction management. In minority areas, focus is more emphasized on external aspects such as licensing and relations with surrounding communities, while in majority areas, attention is directed more toward internal organizational optimization and facility development. These differences reflect how local socio-political contexts shape the priorities and strategies of house of worship construction management.

3.2. Religious Communities' Adaptation Strategies in Addressing Houses of Worship Construction Challenges

This research reveals various adaptation strategies developed by religious communities in addressing house of worship construction challenges in Manado and Gorontalo. These strategies reflect the creativity and resilience of religious communities in facing various constraints, whether administrative, financial, or social.

Mosque construction in Muslim-minority areas like Manado requires a comprehensive strategic approach. According to Lacouture et al. (2015), the involvement of professional consultants in mosque planning and construction processes is crucial to ensure technical quality and project legitimacy. This aligns with Hassner (2003) findings, which emphasize that professionalism in house of worship construction in minority areas can minimize potential conflicts and increase acceptance from surrounding communities.

The adaptive strategy in Ar-Rahman Mosque construction not only focuses on technical aspects but also considers local socio-cultural aspects. This is reinforced by Al-Krenawi (2016), who explains that a professional approach in mosque construction can bridge perception gaps between Muslim and non-Muslim communities in the area.

Regarding funding, Al-Krenawi (2016) explain that diversification of funding sources is an effective strategy to ensure construction sustainability. Obaidullah & Khan (2008) add that cooperation with Regional Development Banks has proven to be a viable financial solution for mosque construction projects in minority areas. The utilization of Corporate Social Responsibility funds from state-owned enterprises not only provides financial support but also strengthens project legitimacy in the eyes of local stakeholders.

This discussion shows that successful mosque construction in minority areas like Manado depends on a strategic combination of professionalism in planning and innovation in funding. This approach not only ensures technical implementation but also builds positive social acceptance in the community.

In Gorontalo, the Christian community develops a more adaptive approach in addressing regulatory challenges. One strategy implemented is using regular houses as places of worship before obtaining formal church construction permits, as done by Imanuel Church. This strategy allows the community to continue religious activities while processing necessary permits. The Christian community also actively builds networks with the Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB) to facilitate the licensing process and build social support from surrounding communities.

In organizational management aspects, both communities develop different but equally effective strategies. In Manado, mosques form organizational structures involving various community elements, including empowering women's groups to manage construction workers' consumption. Meanwhile, churches in Gorontalo implement

layered supervision systems by forming special teams to oversee construction processes and financial management.

Adaptation strategies in fundraising also show interesting variations. The Muslim community in Manado develops fixed and non-fixed donor systems and actively distributes aid proposals to various government and private institutions. In Gorontalo, churches rely on combinations of congregation assistance, cooperation with religious organizations, and local government support.

In facing socio-cultural challenges, both communities develop intensive communication and community engagement strategies. In Manado, mosques regularly hold meetings with surrounding communities to discuss construction developments and address potential conflicts. In Gorontalo, churches actively participate in interfaith dialogue forums and social activities to build support and understanding from the majority community.

Evaluation and reporting strategies are also adapted to local contexts. Mosques in Manado adopt weekly reporting systems during Friday prayers to ensure fund management transparency, while churches in Gorontalo conduct periodic evaluations through plenary meetings. Both approaches reflect efforts to build trust and accountability in the construction process.

Another important aspect in adaptation strategies is internal and external conflict management. In Manado, the Muslim community develops mediation mechanisms through mosque management boards to resolve conflicts related to financial management and leadership. In Gorontalo, churches rely on FKUB roles and community leaders in addressing potential tensions with the majority community.

These adaptation strategies show that successful house of worship construction depends not only on material resource availability but also on communities' ability to develop approaches appropriate to local contexts. This reflects the importance of flexibility and creativity in house of worship construction management, especially in areas with complex majority-minority dynamics.

3.3. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Success of Houses of Worship Construction

This research identifies various factors influencing the success of houses of worship construction in Manado and Gorontalo, both supporting and inhibiting factors. Understanding these factors is crucial for optimizing the development process of houses of worship in the future.

3.3.1 Supporting Factors

One of the main supporting factors is the high level of religious tolerance in both cities. In Manado, although the majority of the population is Christian, mosque construction still receives support from the surrounding community. A similar situation occurs in Gorontalo, where the Muslim majority community shows a tolerant attitude toward church construction. This support is reflected in the ease of obtaining permits from the surrounding community and the minimal social conflicts related to the construction of houses of worship.

The second supporting factor is the existence of a clear regulatory framework through the Joint Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs and Minister of Home Affairs Numbers 9 and 8 of 2006. The existence of this regulation provides legal certainty and clear guidance in the process of constructing houses of worship. In Gorontalo, for example, although there are restrictions on the use of shop houses or hotels as places of

worship, existing regulations still provide space for minority communities to build their places of worship.

Support from local governments and financial institutions is also an important factor. Research shows that both mosques and churches receive assistance from city governments, Regional Development Banks, and CSR funds from state-owned enterprises. This financial support is very helpful in overcoming funding constraints that often become the main obstacle in the construction of houses of worship.

The success of houses of worship construction in Manado and Gorontalo results from the harmonious interaction between various supporting factors. Pajarianto et al. (2022) show that the main foundation of this success lies in the strong values of tolerance that have taken root in the communities of both cities. Gea et al. (2022) affirm that a clear regulatory framework has provided effective operational guidance for implementing these values. Meanwhile, Rwigema (2020) underlines the importance of institutional support, both from local governments and financial institutions, which has enabled the sustainable realization of houses of worship construction. Furthermore, Wijayanto et al. (2020) add that the synergy between these various stakeholders has created an inclusive model of house of worship construction that can serve as an example for other regions in Indonesia.

3.3.2. Inhibiting Factors

On the other hand, there are several factors that hinder the development process. The main obstacle identified is financial management issues (Nurdin et al., 2024). In Manado, internal conflicts often occur regarding transparency and accountability in mosque construction fund management. This situation is exacerbated by weak monitoring and evaluation systems in several mosques.

The second obstacle is the limitation of competent human resources in construction management (Jamaludin, 2018; Tinov, 2015). Research shows that the placement of administrators who do not match competencies often hinders the optimization of construction and management of houses of worship. This is particularly evident in the context of mosque construction in Manado, where there is leadership overlap between the takmir board, imam, and construction committee.

The third inhibiting factor is the limitation of time and community participation in the construction process (Afriani & Indra, 2024; Suryawati, 2016). Many community members who want to help are constrained by their busy schedules, causing the construction process to often be delayed or require more time than planned. This condition requires the construction committee to hire professional workers, which means additional costs.

Administrative barriers also pose their own challenges, especially in the licensing process (Mohadi & Pandoyo, 2022; Suryawati, 2016). In Gorontalo, for example, churches must meet various strict administrative requirements before construction can begin. Although these regulations are necessary to ensure order, the process often takes considerable time and resources.

Inter-agency coordination factors also affect construction smoothness. Research shows that local government regulations often change, affecting the construction process. This requires construction committees to continuously adjust their plans and strategies.

These findings indicate that the success of houses of worship construction is not determined by a single factor but results from complex interactions between various supporting and inhibiting factors. Understanding these factors is important for

developing more effective strategies in managing the construction of houses of worship in the future, especially in the context of pluralistic societies like Indonesia.

Although there are various challenges in the construction of houses of worship, the presence of supporting factors such as community tolerance, clear regulatory frameworks, and government support provides a strong foundation for successful construction of houses of worship. However, to optimize the construction process, systematic efforts are needed to address inhibiting factors, especially in aspects of financial management, human resource development, and inter-agency coordination.

3.4. Theoretical and Practical Implications of Houses of Worship Construction Management in the Majority-Minority Context

Research findings on the management of houses of worship construction in Manado and Gorontalo provide significant theoretical and practical implications in the context of majority-minority relations in Indonesia. The revealed dynamics show that the success of houses of worship construction depends not only on technical-managerial aspects but is also heavily influenced by local socio-political and religious contexts.

From a theoretical perspective, this research strengthens the social cohesion theory proposed by Heiberger (2015) regarding the role of houses of worship as social institutions. Findings in Manado and Gorontalo demonstrate that houses of worship function as more than just places of religious ritual, but also as catalysts in building and strengthening social bonds between religious communities. This is evident in how the construction process of houses of worship in both cities involves cross-religious participation and receives support from various elements of society.

The research findings also provide a new perspective on conflict management theory in the context of houses of worship construction proposed by Arifinsyah & Sofian (2021). Unlike the general assumption that conflicts in houses of worship construction mostly stem from social resistance, this research reveals that the main challenges actually come more from internal organizational aspects, particularly in terms of financial management and leadership coordination. This is clearly seen in the case of mosque construction in Manado, where internal conflicts related to financial transparency and accountability become significant obstacles.

Another interesting aspect is how minority status actually encourages the development of more structured and efficient management systems. This phenomenon supports organizational adaptation theory, which states that external pressure can trigger innovation and internal capacity development. This is evident in how churches in Gorontalo develop stricter evaluation and supervision systems, and how mosques in Manado involve professional consultants in the construction process.

The research findings also make important contributions to understanding public policy implementation in the context of religious pluralism. The interpretation and implementation of the Joint Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs and Minister of Home Affairs Numbers 9 and 8 of 2006 in both cities show that regulatory effectiveness highly depends on local context and local institutional capacity. This aligns with Musthofa's (2018) findings about the importance of considering local dynamics in implementing policies related to houses of worship.

In practical context, this research reveals the importance of developing adaptive and contextual management approaches. Strategies that succeed in one region may not be effective in others, given the differences in demographic and socio-cultural characteristics. For example, fundraising strategies applied by mosques in Manado

involving regional development banks and state-owned enterprise CSR might need modification for church construction contexts in Gorontalo.

Furthermore, research findings indicate that the success of houses of worship construction is determined not only by the availability of material resources but also heavily depends on leadership capacity and organizational management. Internal conflicts occurring in several mosques in Manado underscore the importance of developing leadership capacity and transparent, accountable management systems.

Another important implication is the need to develop more effective coordination mechanisms between religious communities, government, and civil society. The success of houses of worship construction in both cities is inseparable from the active role of the Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB) in facilitating dialogue and mediation between interest groups. This affirms the importance of strengthening mediation institutions in the context of houses of worship construction in plural societies.

These findings also have important implications for the development of house of worship construction policies in Indonesia. First, the need to develop more adaptive and contextual regulations that consider the uniqueness of situations in each region. Second, the importance of strengthening the institutional capacity of religious communities, especially in management and leadership aspects. Third, the need to develop more innovative and sustainable funding mechanisms to support houses of worship construction.

Moreover, this research underscores the importance of understanding houses of worship construction not only as physical projects but also as social processes involving various dimensions of community life. The success of houses of worship construction in Manado and Gorontalo shows that high religious tolerance can be important social capital in religious facility construction. This aligns with Naeem & Yousaf's (2023) findings about the role of houses of worship in strengthening social cohesion in plural societies.

Finally, this research provides strong empirical foundations for developing more inclusive and sustainable models of houses of worship construction management. This model must consider not only technical aspects of construction but also social, cultural, and religious dimensions that influence the success of houses of worship construction. Experiences in Manado and Gorontalo show that successful houses of worship construction requires a holistic approach that combines modern management excellence with sensitivity to local contexts and religious values.

4. CONCLUSION

Research on houses of worship construction management in Manado and Gorontalo produces several important findings that address the research objectives. First, the majority-minority context significantly influences the management approach to houses of worship construction, where in Manado, mosque construction faces more complex challenges in internal management aspects such as organizational conflicts and financial management, while in Gorontalo, church construction focuses more on fulfilling regulatory aspects despite having a more structured management system. Second, religious communities develop various creative adaptation strategies, such as involving professional consultants and developing diverse donor systems in Manado mosques, as well as using houses as temporary places of worship and strengthening networks with FKUB in Gorontalo churches. Third, factors supporting successful houses of worship

construction include high levels of religious tolerance in both cities, the existence of clear regulatory frameworks through Joint Ministerial Regulations, and support from local governments and financial institutions, while major inhibiting factors include financial management issues, limitations of competent human resources, and licensing process complexity. These findings provide important contributions to developing more inclusive and sustainable models of houses of worship construction management in Indonesia, while affirming the importance of adaptive and contextual approaches in managing houses of worship construction in plural societies. This research also underscores that successful houses of worship construction depends not only on technical-managerial aspects but is also heavily influenced by community capacity in developing adaptation strategies appropriate to local contexts.

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