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A Comparative Analysis of Communal Iftar Practices in Campus and Community Mosques: A Living Fiqh Perspective from Sukoharjo, Indonesia

Della Rahmayani^{1✉}, Azzahra Sindhi Latifa², Qodim Ma'shum³

^{1,2,3}UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study examines the practice of communal iftar (iftar jama'i) across two contrasting institutional settings, namely campus mosques and community mosques in Sukoharjo Regency, Indonesia. It aims to analyze how iftar activities are organized, how patterns of congregational behavior differ, and how these practices can be interpreted within the framework of fiqh al-'ibādah. Using a qualitative descriptive-comparative approach, data were collected through participatory observation and in-depth interviews with mosque administrators, Ramadan committees, and congregants. The findings indicate that institutional structure plays a significant role in shaping religious practices. Campus mosques tend to implement highly structured and regulated systems, characterized by formal committees, standardized food distribution, and controlled participation mechanisms. In contrast, community mosques exhibit more flexible, participatory, and socially embedded practices, relying on voluntary contributions and collective engagement. Despite these differences, both contexts remain consistent with the normative principles of fiqh al-'ibādah, particularly in encouraging timely iftar and promoting social charity. These findings demonstrate that religious practices are not static but are dynamically negotiated within specific social contexts. This study reinforces and extends the concept of living fiqh by showing how normative Islamic teachings are continuously interpreted in everyday religious life. It also provides practical implications for mosque management in designing religious activities that balance normative compliance with social inclusivity, thereby offering a more integrated and context-sensitive understanding of contemporary Muslim religious practices during Ramadan.

✉ Email Correspondent:
rahmavanidella36@gmail.com

Introduction

Ramadan represents a distinctive period during which the religious practices of Muslims tend to intensify, both in the form of individual worship and collective activities. Fasting (*ṣawm*), as the central act of worship during Ramadan, is not only understood as a religious obligation but also as a process that fosters self-discipline and social awareness (Shalihin & Sholihin, 2022). This is further supported by empirical data. A study involving 600 respondents in Indonesia found that the level of social solidarity during Ramadan was categorized as high with a score of 3.32, while philanthropic activities such as almsgiving and donations were also rated high with a score of 3.27 (Shalihin et al., 2020). In addition, other studies indicate that Ramadan has a significant influence on increasing religiosity and charitable behavior within society (Fahrullah et al., 2020). In the perspective of *fiqh al-ibādah*, fasting is classified as a form of *ta'abbudi* worship. This means that its rules and procedures are strictly prescribed by the Qur'an and Hadith and must be observed accordingly (Rafiqurrahman, 2023; Usman & Azhari, 2023). However, in practice, the observance of fasting, particularly in relation to communal activities, often varies across different communities because it is influenced by local culture, social habits, and the specific socio-cultural conditions of each region.

In this context, the mosque serves as a central space that bridges religious norms and social practices within society. Historically, mosques have functioned not only as places for ritual worship but also as centers for education, social organization, and communal life (Mirdad et al., 2023). In contemporary Muslim societies, particularly in Indonesia as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, mosques become especially active during Ramadan and function as hubs for various collective religious practices such as congregational prayers, religious study sessions, charitable distribution, and communal iftar activities (Anugerah et al., 2025). In regions such as Sukoharjo, these practices are deeply embedded in local religious culture, thereby reinforcing the role of the mosque as a meeting point between ritual dimensions and social cohesion.

Among these various practices, communal iftar (*iftar jama'i*) stands out as a significant socio-religious phenomenon (Shalihin et al., 2024). Normatively, this practice is rooted in the Prophet's encouragement to hasten the breaking of the fast (*ta'jil al-fiṭr*) as well as the virtue of providing food for those who fast (Kabir & Rabby, 2025). These teachings emphasize that breaking the fast is not merely a physiological necessity but also a religious practice that integrates ritual devotion with social ethics. However, in practice, communal iftar has developed into a more complex activity that involves the distribution of charity, social interaction, and processes of community formation.

Recent studies on Ramadan and Islamic practices can generally be categorized into two main approaches. The first approach focuses on normative fiqh analysis, examining legal aspects such as requirements, pillars, and prohibitions in the practice of fasting (Komariah et al., 2026). While this approach provides doctrinal clarity, it tends to view religious practices as static and text-based. The second approach emerges from sociological and anthropological perspectives, which understand Ramadan as a form of lived religion shaped by social, cultural, and institutional contexts (Schielke, 2009).

In the study of lived religion, Knibbe & Kupari (2020) emphasize that religious practices are not solely determined by normative texts but are continuously interpreted, negotiated, and adapted in everyday life. The interaction between religious authority and local practices also plays a role in shaping Islamic rituals in contemporary society. In this regard, Björkander et al. (2025) explain that religious practices emerge from the interaction between Islamic norms and the socio-cultural context of the community. This perspective suggests that communal iftar practices are strongly influenced by institutional settings, social structures, and cultural expectations. However, despite the significant development of this field, existing studies still tend to separate normative fiqh analysis from empirical social practices, resulting in a fragmented analytical framework.

Accordingly, religious practices during Ramadan do not merely reflect acts of worship but also reveal the social dynamics that take place within religious spaces such as mosques. The differences in institutional characteristics between campus mosques and community mosques indicate variations in management, participation, and the social dynamics that develop within them. This suggests that the forms, patterns, and intensity of religious practices are not uniform but are shaped by their respective institutional contexts. Therefore, understanding the relationship between mosque institutional structures and religious practices is essential for explaining the complexity of contemporary Muslim religious life.

Based on the preceding discussion, a research gap can be identified within the existing literature. Previous studies have not fully integrated normative fiqh perspectives with empirical observations of Ramadan practices in a comprehensive manner. In addition, communal iftar has not been widely analyzed as a dynamic space of interaction between Islamic legal norms and social realities. At the same time, comparative studies examining how different mosque typologies influence religious practices remain limited. This condition highlights the need for a more integrative approach that bridges the normative and social dimensions in the study of religion.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine the practice of communal iftar in campus mosques and community mosques in Sukoharjo Regency. The focus of the study is directed toward three main questions, namely how communal iftar is organized and implemented, how patterns of congregational behavior differ across the two contexts, and how these practices can be analyzed within the framework of *fiqh al-'ibādah*. To address these questions, this study proposes the concept of living fiqh, an approach that understands fiqh not merely as a static normative system but as a dynamic framework that interacts with social realities. Therefore, the novelty of this research lies in its integrative and comparative approach that combines Islamic legal analysis with socio-religious perspectives, with the aim of providing a more comprehensive understanding of Ramadan practices in contemporary Muslim society.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive-comparative design to examine the practice of communal iftar (*iftar jama'i*) within two institutional contexts, namely campus mosques and community mosques in Sukoharjo Regency. A qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of religious practices as a form of lived religion, as well as to explore how the norms of *fiqh al-'ibādah* are interpreted and practiced in everyday life (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Knibbe & Kupari, 2020). The comparative design is used to identify similarities and differences in the patterns of activity implementation across the two types of mosques.

The study was conducted during the month of Ramadan in 2026 in several campus mosques and community mosques selected through purposive sampling. The selection of locations was based on the consideration that these mosques actively organize communal iftar activities. The research subjects included mosque administrators, Ramadan committees, and congregants involved in iftar activities. Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their level of involvement and knowledge of the practices being studied, ensuring that the data obtained were relevant to the research focus (Gentles et al., 2015).

The data collected in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through participatory observation and in-depth interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Observation was conducted to directly examine the implementation of communal iftar activities, including the organization process, mechanisms of food distribution, and social interactions among congregants. In-depth interviews were conducted to explore the experiences, perceptions, and understandings of informants regarding these practices. Secondary data were obtained from various literature sources, including academic journals, books, and previous studies related to Ramadan, *fiqh al-'ibādah*, and lived religion, which were used to strengthen the analysis.

The main instrument in this study was the researcher as a human instrument, supported by observation and interview guidelines (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These guidelines were designed to ensure that the data collection process was conducted systematically and aligned with the research focus, namely the implementation of activities, patterns of congregational participation, and the relationship between practices and the norms of *fiqh al-'ibādah*.

Data analysis was conducted using a descriptive-analytical approach through continuous stages. The collected data were first reduced and categorized based on relevant themes, such as activity organization, food distribution, and patterns of congregational interaction (Miles et al., 2014). A comparative analysis was then conducted to identify similarities and differences in communal iftar practices between campus mosques and community mosques. The data were further interpreted using the lived religion approach to understand how these religious practices are negotiated within social life, and analyzed within the framework of *fiqh al-'ibādah* to assess their conformity with normative religious principles (Knibbe & Kupari, 2020; Schielke, 2009). The results were then synthesized to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between mosque institutional structures and the dynamics of religious practices during Ramadan.

To ensure data validity, this study employed source and method triangulation by comparing data obtained from observation, interviews, and documentation (Denzin, 2017). In addition, data were recorded systematically in the form of field notes and interview transcripts to maintain consistency and traceability throughout the analytical process. This study also adheres to academic ethical standards by maintaining the confidentiality of informants and properly citing all sources in accordance with scholarly writing conventions.

Results

This section presents empirical findings obtained through participant observation and in-depth interviews conducted in campus mosques and community mosques in Sukoharjo Regency during the month of Ramadan. Data were collected in the period leading up to the breaking of the fast as well as during the activities, allowing the researcher to directly observe the dynamics of communal iftar practices in a natural setting. This approach provides a deeper understanding of how iftar activities are organized and carried out in two environments with distinct characteristics.

The findings are presented systematically to address the research focus, which includes the management of activities, sources of food provision, patterns of congregational participation, and characteristics of congregational behavior. This presentation aims not only to describe the observed practices but also to highlight the variations that emerge as a result of differences in institutional contexts and social dynamics. Accordingly, this section provides a clear empirical foundation for understanding communal iftar practices from a more comprehensive perspective.

1. Management of Activities and Sources of Food Provision

The findings indicate that the management of communal iftar activities in campus mosques and community mosques in Sukoharjo Regency exhibits distinct characteristics. These differences are not only evident in the technical aspects of implementation but also in the sources of food provision and coordination patterns during the activities. The findings reveal variations in management practices influenced by institutional characteristics and the level of community participation in each setting.

In campus mosques, iftar activities are managed in a structured manner through the establishment of a special committee consisting of approximately 15 to 20 members. Based on observations, the committee has clearly defined roles, including food preparation, packaging, time coordination, and distribution of meals to congregants. Each member is assigned a specific responsibility, such as logistics, food services, and field coordination, ensuring that the entire process runs systematically.

Preparation typically begins 30 to 60 minutes before the time for breaking the fast. Meals are packaged into individual portions and arranged neatly at designated distribution points, such as the mosque veranda or other assigned areas. The distribution system is conducted in an orderly manner, with congregants directed to collect their meals according to the established flow. In some cases, the committee adjusts the number of food packages based on

attendance, which ranges from approximately 100 to over 300 participants per day. This number tends to fluctuate depending on the day and the level of participation.

The sources of food provision in campus mosques generally come from institutional funding, student organizations, and scheduled regular donors throughout the month of Ramadan. Interview results indicate the presence of a donor rotation system, where each day a designated party is responsible for providing meals. The menu tends to be uniform and standardized, typically consisting of rice meals with side dishes, beverages, and light snacks such as dates.

In contrast, the management of iftar activities in community mosques is more flexible and non-formal, based on community participation. There is no fixed committee structure, and activities are largely organized through the voluntary initiative of community members. Observations show that residents spontaneously contribute by arranging food, distributing snacks, and organizing seating without a formal division of tasks.

However, there are periodic events held outside of Ramadan, approximately once a month, where communal meals are organized in a more structured manner by mosque youth groups. This structured management is temporary and applies only during those specific events, while daily activities continue to rely on participatory and community-based arrangements.

Food preparation in community mosques is dynamic. Meals brought by donors, whether individuals or families, are placed directly in designated areas such as long tables or mats on the floor. The variety of food is diverse, ranging from light snacks such as fried foods and sweet desserts to beverages like iced tea, as well as main meals prepared independently by residents. According to informants, there is a social obligation among households to contribute to the provision of iftar meals, with approximately 120 households participating in this system.

The quantity and variety of food are not fixed and depend on daily community contributions. Observations indicate that the number of congregants ranges from 100 to 200 people. At times, food is abundant, while at other times it is limited. Distribution is carried out directly and adaptively, with individuals taking food as needed without a structured queuing system.

2. Patterns of Congregational Participation and Behavior

The findings indicate that patterns of congregational participation and behavior in communal iftar activities differ between campus mosques and community mosques. These differences are evident not only in the composition of congregants but also in the sequence of activities accompanying the iftar and the forms of social engagement that take place. This variation reflects the influence of institutional contexts and social dynamics in shaping religious practices.

In campus mosques, communal iftar activities are typically preceded by religious study sessions held before the time for breaking the fast. These sessions form an integral part of the activity sequence, particularly for student participants. In practice, a voucher distribution system is implemented as a mechanism to regulate food allocation based on available resources. Vouchers

are usually distributed to participants of the study sessions, making participation in these sessions a determining factor for access to iftar meals.

Observations indicate that this system encourages congregants to arrive earlier in order to secure vouchers, resulting in a form of competition for access. The number of participants tends to be stable and is largely composed of students and members of the academic community. Congregants generally follow the sequence of activities in an orderly manner, although variations occur after the breaking of the fast. Some individuals choose to eat within the mosque area, such as in the veranda, while others take their food to be consumed elsewhere. In some cases, not all congregants participate in the Maghrib prayer in congregation after breaking the fast.

The behavior of congregants in campus mosques tends to follow established rules, particularly in relation to food distribution and the flow of activities. Social interaction among participants is relatively limited and tends to be functional in nature, primarily associated with participation in study sessions and the iftar activity itself.

In contrast, participation patterns in community mosques are more diverse and strongly rooted in social interaction. Communal iftar is not an isolated activity but part of a broader sequence of religious and social practices that occur continuously. Observations show that prior to the breaking of the fast, various activities take place, including Qur'anic learning sessions for children, preparation of snacks largely carried out by women, and short religious talks attended by the congregation.

In addition, evening remembrance activities are also conducted as part of the pre-iftar sequence. Congregants arrive at varying times, with some attending earlier to participate in these activities while others arrive closer to the time of breaking the fast.

The behavior of congregants in community mosques is generally more flexible and interactive. Individuals choose seating freely and engage in conversations before and after the iftar. Following the breaking of the fast, most congregants perform the Maghrib prayer in congregation and continue social interactions afterward. In this context, communal iftar functions not only as a religious obligation but also as a social space that strengthens relationships among community members.

3. Summary of Comparative Findings

As an effort to present the research findings in a systematic and structured manner, the differences in communal iftar practices between campus mosques and community mosques are summarized in a comparative table. This presentation highlights variations across key aspects, including activity management, sources of food provision, patterns of congregational participation, and behavioral characteristics observed in both contexts.

Tabel 1. Comparison of Communal Iftar Practices in Campus Mosques and Community Mosques

Aspect	Campus Mosques	Community Mosques
Management	Structured and systematic	Flexible and community-based
Food Sources	Institutional and scheduled donors	Community contributions
Menu Planning	Standardized and planned	Diverse and variable
Participation	Students and academic community	General public with diverse age groups
Congregational Behavior	Orderly and organized	Flexible and interactive
Coordination	Committee-based	Volunteer-based participation
Food Distribution	Organized	Adaptive to conditions
General Characteristics	Formal and institutional	Social and communal

The table above demonstrates consistent differences between communal iftar practices in campus mosques and community mosques. Practices in campus mosques tend to be structured and institutionally driven, whereas those in community mosques are more flexible and rooted in community participation. These differences are evident across almost all aspects of the activities, ranging from management processes to patterns of congregational behavior.

4. Summary of Findings

Overall, communal iftar practices in campus mosques demonstrate a structured and institution-based management pattern. This is reflected in the presence of a designated committee, an organized food distribution system, and a quota mechanism implemented through voucher distribution integrated with pre-iftar religious study sessions. Patterns of congregational participation tend to be stable and directed, with involvement following a predetermined sequence of activities established by the organizers.

In contrast, communal iftar practices in community mosques exhibit a more flexible and community-based character. Iftar activities do not stand alone but are part of a broader sequence of socio-religious activities involving various members of the community, including Qur’anic learning sessions for children, preparation of snacks by residents, short religious talks, and evening remembrance prior to breaking the fast. Participation is more open and diverse, with a higher level of social interaction and collective involvement in the implementation of activities.

These findings highlight a fundamental difference between the two contexts. In brief, practices in campus mosques are structured, organized, and institutionally driven, whereas practices in community mosques are more flexible, participatory, and rooted in social interaction. This is in line with the findings of Husna & Arif (2021), which suggest that the implementation of religious practices is influenced by social environments and community contexts.

Discussion

This section discusses the research findings by relating them to the perspective of *fiqh al-'ibādah* and socio-religious approaches, particularly within the framework of living *fiqh*. The discussion focuses on how the empirical findings derived from communal iftar practices in campus mosques and community mosques reflect the relationship between normative Islamic teachings and religious practices situated within different social contexts. Therefore, the analysis not only evaluates the conformity of practices with *fiqh* principles but also explains how these norms are interpreted and manifested in the everyday lives of Muslims.

Furthermore, this section examines how differences in institutional structures influence the organization of activities, patterns of congregational participation, and the nature of social interactions within communal iftar practices. The findings are then connected to previous studies, such as the concept of lived religion and research on the relationship between religion and social context, to assess whether this study supports or extends existing knowledge. Through this approach, the discussion moves beyond mere description toward a more analytical and reflective understanding of religious practices as dynamic, contextual, and continuously evolving phenomena within society.

1. Communal Iftar between Normative Fiqh and Social Reality

The findings indicate that communal iftar practices in both campus mosques and community mosques, despite differences in management and participation patterns, remain within the framework of *fiqh al-'ibādah* principles. Both practices reflect the implementation of Islamic teachings that encourage the prompt breaking of the fast (*ta'jīl al-fiṭr*) and emphasize the virtue of feeding those who fast as a form of social charity (Citra, 2025; Hafizi et al., 2025). This demonstrates that *fiqh* norms continue to serve as the primary foundation of religious practices, even though their forms of implementation may vary.

However, the findings also reveal that religious practices do not always appear in uniform forms. The variations observed between campus mosques and community mosques indicate that *fiqh* is not merely understood as a fixed normative system but also as a practice that is interpreted within specific social contexts (Limbong et al., 2025). This finding aligns with the view that religious practices emerge from the interaction between normative texts and evolving social realities (Simamora & Nelmawarni, 2026).

Thus, communal iftar is not only a means of fulfilling religious obligations but also functions as a social space that integrates both ritual and social dimensions in Muslim life. This reinforces the idea that religious practices during Ramadan extend beyond individual acts of worship and represent collective phenomena that foster social solidarity.

2. The Influence of Institutional Structure on Patterns of Religious Practice

The significant differences between campus mosques and community mosques indicate that institutional structure plays an important role in shaping patterns of religious practice. Campus mosques, which are more formal and organized, tend to produce practices that are systematic, well-planned, and efficient. This is reflected in the presence of formal committees, clear division of responsibilities, and structured mechanisms for food distribution.

In contrast, community mosques, which are community-based, exhibit more flexible, participatory, and socially adaptive practices. The involvement of congregants in managing activities is not constrained by formal organizational structures but is instead driven by collective awareness and shared values of togetherness within the community.

These findings support the theory of lived religion, which suggests that religious practices are not solely determined by doctrinal teachings but are also shaped by the social, cultural, and institutional contexts in which they are embedded (Knibbe & Kupari, 2020). In this context, the mosque functions not only as a place of ritual worship but also as a social institution that shapes patterns of interaction and religious experiences among congregants.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that institutional structure also influences the nature of social interactions. In campus mosques, interactions tend to be more functional and limited to specific activities, whereas in community mosques, social interactions are more intensive and constitute an integral part of religious practice. This suggests that the level of institutional formality is closely related to the pattern of social engagement among congregants.

3. Living Fiqh as an Integrative Approach to Understanding Ramadan Practices

The findings of this study reinforce the concept of living fiqh, which views fiqh not only as a normative system but also as a dynamic framework that evolves within social practices (Mashuri, 2025). In this perspective, fiqh is not positioned as a rigid set of rules, but rather as a flexible system that continuously interacts with social realities.

The practice of communal iftar in both campus mosques and community mosques demonstrates that the same fiqh norms can lead to different forms of implementation depending on institutional and social contexts. In campus mosques, the implementation of fiqh tends to be structured and standardized, whereas in community mosques, it is more flexible and context-sensitive.

These findings are consistent with previous studies emphasizing that religious practices in Muslim societies cannot be separated from the social and cultural contexts in which they are embedded (Abdurahman & Kambali, 2024; Mayrizki & Rasmuin, 2024). Furthermore, this study shows that an approach integrating normative fiqh analysis with empirical observation provides a more comprehensive understanding compared to approaches that focus on only one dimension.

Therefore, the living fiqh approach is highly relevant for bridging the gap between Islamic legal norms and socio-religious practices. This approach

enables an analysis that is not only descriptive but also contextual and reflective, capturing the dynamic nature of religious life within contemporary Muslim societies.

4. Theoretical Implications and Research Contributions

This study demonstrates that fiqh should not be understood merely as a fixed and rigid set of rules, but rather as a guiding framework that adapts to the social conditions of Muslim communities. The practice of communal iftar in campus and community mosques illustrates that religious observance does not always take a uniform form, but is shaped by differing institutional contexts and social dynamics. In this sense, fiqh can be understood as a living and evolving system embedded in everyday religious practices.

The differences identified in this study further confirm that variations in religious practices do not necessarily indicate deviation from Islamic teachings, but rather represent forms of contextual adaptation. In campus mosques, iftar activities are conducted in a structured and organized manner, whereas in community mosques, they are more flexible and based on collective participation. This demonstrates that the same fiqh norms can be implemented in diverse ways depending on the characteristics of each social environment.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings highlight the importance of an integrative approach through the concept of living fiqh, which positions fiqh as a dynamic and context-sensitive system. This approach effectively bridges the gap between normative legal analysis and empirical social realities, thereby offering a more comprehensive understanding of religious practices in contemporary Muslim societies.

From a practical perspective, communal iftar functions not only as an act of worship but also as a means of strengthening social solidarity and communal bonds. Therefore, the findings of this study can serve as a valuable reference for mosque administrators in designing religious programs that are not only aligned with fiqh principles but also responsive to the social needs of their congregations.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the practice of communal iftar (*iftar jama'ī*) in campus mosques and community mosques in Sukoharjo Regency exhibits clear differences, particularly in terms of management, patterns of congregational participation, and the nature of social interactions. Campus mosques tend to adopt structured, organized, and institution-based approaches, whereas community mosques are characterized by more flexible, participatory, and socially driven practices.

Despite these differences, both forms of practice remain within the framework of *fiqh al-'ibādah*, particularly in relation to the encouragement of timely breaking of the fast and the virtue of providing food for those who are fasting. This indicates that fiqh norms are not always expressed in uniform ways, but can adapt to diverse social and institutional contexts.

These findings reinforce the concept of living fiqh, suggesting that fiqh should not be understood merely as a static normative system, but as a living practice that continuously interacts with social realities. Accordingly, this study

contributes to the development of an integrative approach that bridges normative fiqh analysis and socio-religious perspectives, offering a more comprehensive understanding of religious practices in contemporary Muslim societies.

However, this study has several limitations. First, it was conducted only in Sukoharjo Regency, which limits the generalizability of the findings to broader Muslim contexts. Second, the focus was restricted to two types of mosques, namely campus mosques and community mosques, without including other variations such as large urban mosques or organization-based mosques. Third, the study was conducted within a single Ramadan period and therefore does not capture the longer-term dynamics of religious practices.

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