

## Public Perception on the Functions of Minaret for Contemporary Mosques in Selangor

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### **ABSTRACT**

The traditional function of minarets as a place for the *muezzin* to announce *adhan* and as symbols of Islam has changed due to modern advancements, which raise doubts about their significance in contemporary mosques. This perspective risks overlooking the community preferences, the diversity of Islamic architectural practices, and the minarets' growing cultural, historical, aesthetic, and symbolic value. This research investigates the importance of the minaret for contemporary mosques in Selangor. Utilising on-site observation and survey questionnaires, the study assesses public perception of the function and significance of contemporary minarets. Findings reveal that traditional elements of minarets such as their form, height and the presence of stairs are still adopted in contemporary minaret design, while some elements like materials, openings and ornaments are less common. The study also indicates that people continue to view minarets as essential for calling the *adhan*, serving as city landmarks, and marking the mosque's location. However, components such as a balcony for the *muezzin*, excessive ornamentation, and tiered gradation are no longer deemed essential. This research provides valuable insights into the functions and values of minarets for future mosque designs, serving as a guide for architects to align with community needs.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

A mosque is a place for Muslims to perform their prayers. Since the time of the Prophet Muhammad, there have been no specific requirements for the mosque design, as long as there is a prayer hall that could accommodate Muslims to perform their prayers (Astrini et al., 2020a). Over time, mosques have evolved architecturally, with certain common features becoming standard, including the prayer hall, ablution, minaret, dome, courtyard, *mimbar* (pulpit) and *mihrab* (prayer niche). Mosques are also built to be close to the community as they also serve as venues for social interactions. Historically, the minaret is a high tower used for the *muezzin* (a man who calls Muslims to prayer) to call *adhan* (a call to prayer for the Muslims), which has become a common feature of mosques since the Umayyad Caliphate Era. Early minarets were architecturally inspired by the Syrian church steeples, and some suggest they were also influenced by the Babylonian ziggurats and Assyrian shrines. Over time, minarets have been constructed worldwide, each reflecting local architectural styles. Their functions have evolved from simply announcing prayer times to indicating the presence of the Muslim community, as a symbol of Islamic power and as a guide to the location of the mosque. The significance of minarets extends into architecture and urban design as they help preserve cultural heritage, enhance the visual appeal of urban areas, and ensure their functional relevance. Architecturally, minarets have undergone changes in terms of materials, forms, openings, ornaments and others. As there are no specific directives on how a minaret should be designed, architects have been experimenting with various styles, regardless of the style of any era.

Contemporary mosques reflect the community's economic status, social and cultural demands, environmental concerns, and technical capabilities (Al-Bukhari et al., 2020). The invention of loudspeakers has significantly helped raise the volume for the *muezzin* to call for the *adhan*, and it has made the minaret's primary function in the contemporary mosque design seem unnecessary. It is essential to recognise potential issues, consider various perspectives, and provide inclusive and efficient solutions that resonate with the community's values. This study aims to assess public perception of the importance of minarets for contemporary mosques in Selangor. The objectives are to investigate the function and significance of the minaret of contemporary mosques in an urban context and to identify minaret design features that enhance the visibility and distinction of mosques in an urban context.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. The Functions of Minaret

Minarets are prominent features in mosque design and have multiple functions extending beyond their original role of calling worshippers to prayer. In Arabic, minarets are referred to by various terms: *manara* (refers to a place of light), *sauma'a* (refers to a seclusion chamber used for prayer) and *mi'dhana* (refers to a prayer call place). These terms indicate that the minaret historically served multiple purposes. Although the minaret was originally designed to help raise the voice of the *muezzin* for the call to prayer, some argue that modern technology, such as loudspeakers, has rendered this function less relevant (Asfour, 2016). This has made the necessity of the minaret in contemporary mosque architecture remain a subject of debate.

According to Al-Bukhari et al. (2020), the minaret serves as a visual identifier for mosques, crucial for distinguishing it from other buildings in the surrounding area. The minaret was initially constructed to mark the mosque's location; it has continued to play a significant role as a city marker and a symbol of Islam. Their prominent heights allow them to be seen from a distance, maintaining their role in strengthening mosque identity since the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Minarets have also become a fundamental component of mosque construction with their vertical feature throughout the Islamic world, serving as a landmark and distinctive element that announces their presence (Asfour, 2016). Without minarets, distinguishing a mosque in the compact surroundings would be more challenging. Al Fatih et al. (2019) discovered that when minarets are visible and recognisable from the street, they provide a sense of direction and convey that the mosque is easily accessible. However, in some areas, the impact of minarets has diminished due to changes in townscapes, where towers and skyscrapers have surpassed them in prominence.

The minaret is also seen as a symbol of transcending from earth to heaven, often reflected in the design where the base is simpler and a more decorated top to the spire (Diab, 2020). The minaret symbolised the path to heaven through the call to prayer. Thus, the minaret is often built high into the sky to reflect the understanding that symbols lead to God Almighty (Ahmad et al., 2012). During the Byzantine Islamic era,

Sultan Muhammad Al Fateh constructed numerous mosques with minarets in Istanbul to signify the city's transition from a Byzantine Christian era to an Islamic one, thereby using minarets as symbols of power and dominance. The minaret has also gained importance, particularly for the Muslim minority in non-Islamic countries, as a symbol for showing their beliefs and proof of official and social acknowledgement (Hoteit, 2015). In Germany, for example, minarets signal the presence of a local Muslim population to both residents and tourists. The change in the local skyline reflects the mosque community's existence and represents its recognition and sense of belonging (Kuppinger, 2014). Minarets also serve as watchtowers, offering directed views and visibility. In North Java for example, the minaret of the Great Mosque of Banten resembled a lighthouse and it became a major tourist attraction, providing visitors with panoramic views and serving as a lookout tower against maritime invaders and pirates.

The minaret is the most prominent vertical component of mosque architecture, traditionally serving as the tower from which the call to prayer is made five times a day. With the advent of sound speakers, this function has shifted, but the minaret retains significant symbolic value. One or more minarets are frequently present at a mosque prayer hall (Asfour, 2016). The minaret represents humanity's ascension to God. It is sometimes the only indication of the presence of a mosque, standing tall like an illuminated finger pointing at "Allah, the One and Only," testifying to Islam's core doctrine, tawhid, or oneness. Despite modern changes, the significance of minarets to Muslims remains evident, even though not every mosque is required to have one (Benzine, 2011).

The minaret also represents the symbol of power and the political rise of Islam. In Switzerland, there was commotion in 2009 as the country announced a ban on minarets. Although there are only four minarets in Switzerland, they are perceived by some as a threat (Dodd, 2015). The Swiss government decided on the ban in response to public unrest, which included bomb attacks and disturbances at mosques. This ban highlights the contentious nature of minarets and their powerful symbolic representation. Despite these challenges, the significance and symbolic value of the minaret have expanded to encompass spiritual significance. It represents the existence of one Creator and Islam's fundamental beliefs. Hoteit (2015) emphasizes that the minaret's spiritual and symbolic importance and its leading role in the mosque remain and are still necessary today.

## 2.2. Minaret Design Characteristics

Ürey (2013) investigated the transformation of mosques in Turkey since the 1960s and found that designers continually seek new ways to design mosques, interpreting minarets based on their symbolic meanings. Song (2016) stated that the basis of the Korean Muslim Federation (KMF) decision during the designing stage of a mosque is to adopt appropriate design recommendations that are deemed acceptable to the Muslim community. In Korea, which is a minority Muslim country, there is no historical precedent of Islamic architecture. The Seoul Central Mosque is one of the few mosques built in Korea, and the designer was inspired by Masjidil Haram (the Great Mosque of Mecca) and decided to design two minarets for the mosque. To add local value, traditional Korean elements were added, for example, by using Korean roofs to the minaret design (Song, 2016).

In China, the government has expedited the removal of Islamic architectural elements as part of the 'Sinicisation' movement, due to rising Islamophobia in the country. The government ordered removing any Arabic-style architecture and replacing them with Chinese symbols. Domes, minarets and other Islamic symbols are omitted from mosques in China as these elements are deemed inconsistent with traditional Chinese architecture (Misra, 2021). For example, the Dongguan Great Mosque of Xining had recently undergone renovations to remove its dome and minaret, transforming it into a more traditional Chinese architectural style.

Yaseen et al. (2024) state that the placement of the minaret in historical mosques across various regions is influenced by the architectural arrangement of the mosques and the chronological progression of Islamic architecture. The minarets can be positioned in several areas, including the prayer hall, the courtyard, the entryway, and the rooftop. In terms of minaret design, the components include their number, height, placement concerning the mosque, form, stairs, materials and decorations. The main elements of the minaret consist of a base, shaft, balconies, neck and spire. Astrini et al. (2020b), in their study of five mosques in Malang City, Indonesia, identified people's preferences for the composition of minaret design elements. They found that the shape of the minaret is the most relevant design factor, with a relative importance value of 24.53%, surpassing the other five factors such as the head of the minaret shape, number of minarets, ornamentation, ornamentation on the body, and openings. The community of Malang City prefers the octagonal cone shape for minarets. The minaret symbolizes the presence of Muslim communities in a particular area.

The minaret was a separate structure and construction from the mosque until the eleventh century. Following that, it became an integral part of a mosque, serving as an emblem as well as a structure, landmark, and lighthouse to assist travelling convoys (Hoteit, 2015). Taher and Dundar (2017) explain that the minaret locations are primarily attached to the main hall prayer, and only one is separated from the prayer hall (at the corner). During Ottoman rule in Turkey, the position of a mosque's minaret was determined by a law set by the Sultan. According to the law, the minaret could be positioned either at the intersection or end of the parallel edge with the main entrance or on the right side of the wall opposite the Qibla direction (Ahmad et al., 2012). Buksh & Malik (2019), in their comparative study on contemporary Jamia Mosques and Mughal Historical Mosques of Lahore, have discovered that the differences were attributed to changes in materials, and technological advancements, as well as a shortage of skilled labour and time.

According to Hoteit (2015), the cultural and architectural heritage of an era, along with the administrative structure it adopted, has influenced how minarets have evolved. The square-shaped minarets, cylinder-shaped minarets, spiral-shaped minarets, and rib-shaped minarets are the most notable forms of minarets that differ depending on the region in which they were built. Other types of minarets evolved various mixed forms, often square at the base, cylindrical at the shaft, and ribbed at the gallery. Benzine (2011) identified three types of minarets in the larger territories where Islam established itself: square, cylindrical, and polygonal. The square minaret is the oldest; it originated in Syria, evolved in the eastern Mediterranean, and was brought to Europe by Umayyad dynasty survivors who settled in Spain.

An observation of 100 minarets in Klang Valley, Malaysia, was conducted to explore the history of mosque minaret design (Mat Zin, 2018). The square form emerged as the most popular design in Klang Valley, followed by the cylindrical, conical, triangular, rectangular, pentagonal, hexagonal, and octagonal. The number of minarets in mosques increased from one to four: two defining the main entrance and two at the main facade (Bloom, 2002). Most historical minarets in Islamic regions were constructed using materials, for example, reinforced or unreinforced stone or brick masonry, whereas most current minarets are reinforced concrete structures. Typical minaret structures consist of a base or boot on top of the foundation, a tapered transition segment, a circular body or shaft with one or more balconies, and a spire at the top. The base, or boot, is often square or polygonal and is referred to by architects as the pulpit. The minaret can be either freestanding or attached to the mosque's structure. Inside, spiral stairs lead to the uppermost balcony level of the minaret, which is not visible from the outside (Baştürk et al., 2013). The balcony on the tower's front facade can serve as an entrance leading to the top of the tower. This is evident in the minarets of mosques in Iran and Asia. The more balconies allocated at the minaret, the higher the aesthetic value, as seen in the minaret of the mosque from the Mamluk, Ottoman, and Southeast Asian empires (Ahmad et al., 2012).

A minaret can significantly enhance other forms of comfort ventilation. In a study by Imam (2003), a minaret can complement natural ventilation, which is particularly important given Dhaka's warm, humid climate. With the advent of loudspeakers, the internal staircase of a minaret is no longer needed for ascending to deliver *adhan*. The internal stair can be replaced with a lighter ladder, hinged to the shaft's internal or external walls and encased in steel mesh for safety. This setup can be used to install and service loudspeakers. As a result, a minaret can be readily changed into a ventilation tower while maintaining its traditional function. This dual-purpose design not only preserves the cultural and symbolic importance of the minaret but also enhances the mosque's environmental sustainability by improving airflow and reducing reliance on mechanical cooling systems.

Aziz (2016) emphasizes the importance of reevaluating the current method of constructing the mosque by considering its historical significance, the surrounding environment, and future aspirations. As modern circumstances evolve, it is crucial to adapt mosque design to address the demands of urban life. All facets of modern urban life must be considered while designing mosques in compact cities. This includes establishing a harmonious and environmentally friendly setting, maximising space, incorporating technology, and using modern materials to enhance the structure's potential (Asif et al., 2019).

### 3.0 METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Case Studies

A case study approach was adopted to gain an in-depth understanding and detailed illustration of contemporary minaret architecture in Malaysia. The study was conducted at three contemporary mosques in Selangor, namely the Puncak Alam mosque, Ara Damansara mosque and Raja Haji Fi Sabilillah mosque in Cyberjaya. These mosques were selected based on the following criteria: i) they represent new mosques in different cities within Selangor; ii) they have a capacity of between 1,500 and 10,000 people; and iii) they feature unconventional minaret designs.

Puncak Alam Mosque, located in a residential area of Puncak Alam, Selangor, features a Mediterranean modern style. Its design elements carry specific meanings; the mosque has two minarets on both sides of the prayer hall, symbolising the two *kalimah syahadah* (the Islamic declaration of faith). Six small minor domes represent the tenets of the faith, and the five sides of the *mihrab* symbolise the five pillars of Islam. Opened in 2014, the mosque covers an area of 6,766 sqm and accommodates up to 5,000 worshippers. Raja Haji Fisabilillah Mosque, situated in Cyberjaya, Selangor, boasts a modern futuristic design. The mosque was opened in 2016, it is rated platinum for the Green Building Index (GBI) standard and features a uniquely designed dome with double-glazed Low-E glass and ventilators at the top to expel rising heat (Aziz, 2016). The mosque can accommodate up to 8,300 people. Its freestanding minaret is a distinctive five-tiered steel structure that narrows towards the spire; with the tiers symbolising the five pillars of Islam. The Ara Damansara mosque, located in Ara Damansara, Selangor, also features a modern futuristic design. It is also an award-winning mosque with a rating of Green Building Index (GBI). As the first mosque in Ara Damansara township, it is situated in a compact residential area and surrounded by high-rise buildings. Opened in 2015, the 8,232 sqm mosque can accommodate up to 1,500 worshippers. The minaret design is a frame structure with exposed trusses and a wire mesh enclosure.



**Figure 1.** Minarets of Puncak Alam mosque, Raja Haji Fi Sabilillah mosque in Cyberjaya and Ara Damansara mosque (from left to right). (Source: Author)

#### 3.2. Data collection techniques

##### 3.2.1. On-site observation

On-site observations were conducted at the three mosques on different days, and the time was both during and outside prayer times. The observations focused on evaluating minarets based on their dimension, form, location, quantity, availability of staircases, and the existence of sound amplification mechanisms. The observation technique entailed recording these variables by taking images using a smartphone camera.

##### 3.2.2. Survey Questionnaires

A set of questionnaires based on the Likert scale was used. The scale is adopted to develop an Average Index Rating Scale that measures the level of agreement with '1' representing - Strongly Disagree (SD); 2- Disagree (D); 3- Neither Agree or Disagree (N); 4- Agree (A); 5- Strongly Agree (SA). The questionnaires aimed to assess public perceptions by focusing on mosque users' opinions regarding the functions and significance of minarets. The data collected then were analyzed using frequency analysis and average index. Frequency analysis relies on the frequency and percentage of respondents providing the same responses. The

average index was used to determine the level of agreement on the function and significance of minaret. The rating scale as adopted from Abd. Majid and McCaffer (1997) is as follows:

**Table 1.** Rating scale to determine agreement average index.

Description	Rating Scale
Strongly Disagree (SD)	$1.00 < \text{Average Index (I)} < 1.50$
Disagree (D)	$1.50 \leq \text{Average Index (I)} < 2.50$
Neither Agree or Disagree (NA/D)	$2.50 \leq \text{Average Index (I)} < 3.50$
Agree (A)	$3.50 \leq \text{Average Index (I)} < 4.50$
Strongly Agree (SA)	$4.50 \leq \text{Average Index (I)} < 5.00$

### 3.3. Sample of Study

Questionnaire survey forms were distributed to mosque users to gather their opinions on the significance and function of the minaret in contemporary mosques. Thirty (30) samples were collected from each mosque; among the participants were the mosque committee members, regular mosque attendees, and residents living close to the mosque.

## 4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study operates on the belief that understanding public perception of the significance of the minaret in contemporary mosques is crucial. The data from the questionnaire survey were analysed using a quantitative method. For site observations, data from the fieldwork were recorded and comparisons were made across the mosques, highlighting differences in design and functionality. Table 2 provides a summary of general information about the three mosques.

**Table 2.** Summary of the general information on Puncak Alam mosque, Raja Haji Fi Sabilillah mosque and Ara Damansara mosque.

Comparative Components / Mosque	Puncak Alam Mosque	Raja Haji Fi Sabilillah Mosque	Ara Damansara Mosque
Year Open	2014	2016	2015
Category	Masjid Kariah (residential mosque)	Royal Mosque	Masjid Kariah (residential mosque)
Location of mosque	In the residential township of Bandar Puncak Alam, Kuala Selangor	In commercial areas, institutions and residential areas of Cyberjaya, Sepang	In the residential township of Ara Damansara, Petaling Jaya
Architecture of mosque	Modern Mediterranean	Modern futuristic	Modern futuristic
Placement of minaret	On each side of the prayer hall, separated from the central mass of the mosque	Near the main entrance, separated from the central mass of the mosque.	On the right-hand side of the prayer hall, separated from the central mass of the mosque
Number of the minaret(s)	2	1	1
Existence of a staircase to the top of the minaret	Yes	No	Yes
Presence of a sound amplifier	Yes	Yes	Yes
Materials	Concrete & Steel	Concrete & steel	Steel & expanded metal
Openings	None	None	Exposed stairs
Ornamentation	Framed floral pattern at the head	Geometric Islamic pattern from the shaft to the head	None

A minaret typically consists of several components, including a base, shaft, balcony, neck and spire. Based on the observation of the three mosques, it can be concluded that the minaret at Puncak Alam mosque has the most simplistic design compared to the other two. It has no gradation tiers, and it maintains a consistent width from the bottom to the top. Raja Haji Fi Sabilillah mosque features a distinct architectural design where the minaret has clear tiers that get smaller towards the head. It has a sturdy base that is much bigger than the shaft and head. Ara Damansara mosque's minaret features a captivating design resembling a framed structure. It does not have tiers, yet certain parts of it exhibit gradation towards the head.

#### 4.1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

A total of 90 respondents took part in the questionnaire survey (refer to Table 3). Based on age-wise distribution, 12.2% of respondents fall under 16-20 years old with 11 respondents, 21 to 30 years with 34 respondents (37.8%), and 31 to 40 years with 22 respondents (24.4%). The remaining was found to be distributed under 41 to 50 years with 8 respondents (8.9%), 51 to 60 years with 11 respondents (12.2%), and 61 years & above with 4 respondents (4.5%). In terms of gender, 62.2% of the sample are males and 37.8% are female. The majority of the respondents, 79 (87.8%), have completed their graduate level of education, 6 respondents (6.7%) have completed their post-graduate level, and 5 (5.5%) have completed their formal education up to senior secondary.

**Table 3.** Demographic overview of the participants.

Variable	Category	Puncak Alam Mosque N = 30	Raja Haji Fi Sabilillah Mosque N = 30	Ara Damansara Mosque N = 30
<b>Gender</b>	Male	17 (56.7%)	20 (66.7%)	19 (63.3%)
	Female	13 (43.3%)	10 (33.3%)	11 (36.7%)
<b>Age group</b>	16-20	4 (13.3%)	7 (23.3%)	0 (0%)
	21-30	16 (53.3%)	12 (40%)	6 (20%)
	31-40	1 (3.3%)	7 (23.3%)	14 (46.7%)
	41-50	2 (6.7%)	2 (6.7%)	4 (13.3%)
	51-60	6 (20%)	2 (6.7%)	3 (10%)
	61 and above	1 (3.3%)	0 (0%)	3(10%)
<b>Education level</b>	Primary	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	High school	0 (0%)	5 (16.7%)	0 (0%)
	Diploma	7 (23.3%)	13 (43.3%)	13 (43.3%)
	Degree	20 (66.7%)	10 (33.3%)	16 (53.3%)
	Master	3 (10%)	1 (3.3%)	1 (3.3%)
	PhD	0 (0%)	1 (3.3%)	0 (0%)

#### 4.2. Function of the minaret in modern days

The function of the contemporary minaret is analysed based on the perception of the users of the mosque.

##### 4.2.1. Minaret as A Place to Call for Adhan

**Table 4.** Level of Agreement on minaret as a place to call for prayer

Mosque	Responses (Frequency and Percentage)					Average Index	Level of Agreement
	SD (1)	D (2)	NA/D (3)	A (4)	SA (5)		
<b>Puncak Alam Mosque</b>	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (6.7%)	7 (23.3%)	21 (70%)	4.63	Strongly Agree
<b>Raja Haji Fi Sabilillah Mosque</b>	0 (0%)	2 (6.7%)	1 (3.3%)	10 (33.4%)	17 (56.7%)	4.40	Strongly Agree
<b>Ara Damansara Mosque</b>	0 (0%)	1 (3.3%)	3 (10%)	3 (10%)	23 (76.7%)	4.60	Strongly Agree

SA- Strongly Agree; A- Agree; NA/D- Neither Agree or Disagree; D- Disagree; SD- Strongly Disagree

Based on Table 4, most of the respondents at each mosque strongly agree that the minaret remains an essential element in the mosque, as a place to call *adhan*. The *adhan* is the announcement that it is time for a specific obligatory prayer, recited five times a day. At the three mosques, the muezzin called *adhan* from the prayer hall using the microphone, which is connected to a speaker system on the minaret. The use of a speaker system is common as the voice of *muezzin* cannot be heard with constant traffic and city noise. Only 3 of the respondents from Raja Haji Fi Sabilillah Mosque and Ara Damansara Mosque disagree and six from the three mosques are unsure about the statement. This proves that the majority is aware of the minaret's function, which has been in use since the Umayyad Caliphate era. However, some question the invention of the minaret in comparison to Prophet Muhammad's time, during which the *muezzin* would call the prayer from an elevated place.

#### 4.2.2. Minaret as a Distinguisher of Mosque Position

**Table 5.** Level of Agreement on Minaret as Distinguisher of Mosque Position

Mosque	Responses (Frequency and Percentage)					Average Index	Level of Agreement
	SD (1)	D (2)	NA/D (3)	A (4)	SA (5)		
<b>Puncak Alam Mosque</b>	0 (0%)	1 (3.3%)	4 (13.3%)	5 (16.7%)	20 (66.7%)	4.50	Strongly Agree
<b>Raja Haji Fi Sabilillah Mosque</b>	0 (0%)	1 (3.3%)	5 (16.7%)	11 (36.7%)	13 (43.3%)	4.20	Strongly Agree
<b>Ara Damansara Mosque</b>	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (13.3%)	10 (33.4%)	16 (53.3%)	4.40	Strongly Agree

SA- Strongly Agree; A- Agree; NA/D- Neither Agree or Disagree; D- Disagree; SD- Strongly Disagree

Most respondents believed that a minaret helps to distinguish a mosque's location. The top of the minaret is the highest point of the three mosques and one of the highest points in the immediate vicinity. Based on the survey, the Puncak Alam mosque, with the tallest minaret, had the highest percentage (83.4%) level of agreement among the respondents. Most users selected 'Agree', while only 2 users across all three mosques selected 'Disagree'. This indicates that the presence of a tall vertical tower serves as a clear indication to people that the city contains a mosque, thereby suggesting that the area is predominantly populated by Muslims. The minarets serve as an inviting architectural feature that calls Muslims to congregate in the mosque and build connections, thereby strengthening their bonds and revitalising the ambience of the mosque. The result aligns with Asfour (2016) assertion that minarets serve as landmarks and distinctive elements that announce their presence. However, 13 respondents held a neutral stance on this statement. The Raja Haji Fi Sabilillah mosque has the shortest minaret, which may make it challenging to identify the mosque's location from a certain distance.

#### 4.2.3. Minaret as a Guide for Travelling Convoys

**Table 6.** Level of Agreement on Minaret as Guide for Travelling Convoys

Mosque	Responses (Frequency and Percentage)					Average Index	Level of Agreement
	SD (1)	D (2)	NA/D (3)	A (4)	SA (5)		
<b>Puncak Alam Mosque</b>	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (6.7%)	7 (23.3%)	21 (70%)	4.63	Strongly Agree
<b>Raja Haji Fi Sabilillah Mosque</b>	0 (0%)	6 (20%)	7 (23.3%)	10 (33.4%)	7 (23.3%)	3.60	Agree
<b>Ara Damansara Mosque</b>	0 (0%)	8 (26.7%)	8 (26.7%)	7 (23.3%)	7 (23.3%)	3.43	Disagree; Neither Agree or Disagree

SA- Strongly Agree; A- Agree; NA/D- Neither Agree or Disagree; D- Disagree; SD- Strongly Disagree



Most participants believed that the minaret serves as a navigational aid for travelling convoys. The minaret's elevated height distinguishes it as a distinctive landmark, drawing attention and immediately signalling the presence of a mosque. When travelling in a convoy, it is important to maintain organisation, keep the group together and communicate clearly. The findings are consistent with Al Fatih et al. (2019), who noted that a minaret provides a sense of direction and creates the impression that the mosque is easily accessible. However, 14 respondents from the Raja Haji Fi Sabilillah mosque and Ara Damansara mosque disagreed with this statement.

#### 4.2.4. Minaret as a City Landmark

**Table 7.** Level of Agreement on Minaret as a City Landmark

Mosque	Responses (Frequency and Percentage)					Average Index	Level of Agreement
	SD (1)	D (2)	NA/D (3)	A (4)	SA (5)		
Puncak Alam Mosque	3 (10%)	5 (16.7%)	7 (23.3%)	5 (16.7%)	10 (33.4%)	3.47	Strongly Agree
Raja Haji Fi Sabilillah Mosque	1 (3.3%)	3 (10%)	8 (26.7%)	9 (30%)	9 (30%)	3.73	Agree / Strongly Agree
Ara Damansara Mosque	3 (10%)	4 (13.3%)	7 (23.3%)	7 (23.3%)	9 (30%)	3.50	Strongly Agree

SA- Strongly Agree; A- Agree; NA/D- Neither Agree or Disagree; D- Disagree; SD- Strongly Disagree

The majority of respondents agreed that the minaret serves as a city landmark due to its prominent height. Outsiders unfamiliar with the area can use the minaret to navigate their direction in travelling and avoid getting lost. The findings align with Al Fatih et al. (2019), which stated that the minaret of the Grand Mosque KH Hasyim Asy'ari acts as a prominent landmark, making it easy for people to locate the mosque. This is due to its noticeable height from the main street of West Jakarta, specifically Daan Mogot Street. However, some respondents disagreed or were neutral.

The minaret of Puncak Alam mosque features the simplest design, with a uniform width from the bottom to the top, lacking any gradation tiers. In contrast, the Raja Haji Fi Sabilillah mosque's minaret has distinct tiers that decrease in size as they reach the top, with a sturdy base that is much larger than the shaft and head. The Ara Damansara mosque's minaret resembles a framed structure without tiers, yet certain parts exhibit a gradual change towards the head. In an urban setting, the height of a contemporary minaret should be significant due to the compact nature of the area. A towering minaret immediately signals the presence of the mosque, standing out above the surrounding buildings. This aligns with the idea that a mosque's minaret is often built high into the sky, symbolising a connection to God Almighty (Ahmad et al., 2012).

#### 4.2.4 Minaret as a symbol to demonstrate Islamic Power

**Table 8.** Level of Agreement on the Significance of Minaret to Demonstrate Power of Islam

Mosque	Responses (Frequency and Percentage)					Average Index	Level of Agreement
	SD (1)	D (2)	NA/D (3)	A (4)	SA (5)		
Puncak Alam Mosque	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (6.7%)	6 (20%)	22 (73.3%)	4.67	Strongly Agree
Raja Haji Fi Sabilillah Mosque	1 (3.3%)	5 (16.7%)	3 (10%)	8 (26.7%)	13 (43.3%)	3.90	Strongly Agree
Ara Damansara Mosque	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	8 (26.7%)	8 (26.7%)	14 (46.7%)	4.20	Strongly Agree

SA- Strongly Agree; A- Agree; NA/D- Neither Agree or Disagree; D- Disagree; SD- Strongly Disagree

The majority of the respondents from the three mosques strongly agree the minaret plays an important role in demonstrating the strength and power of Islam. However, the remaining participants opted for a neutral stance or disagreed with this view. Historically, minarets were also used to mark an Islamic territory after winning a war.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

This study focuses on the public's perception of the function and significance of the minaret in contemporary mosques in Selangor. Most respondents agree that the minaret serves multiple functions, influenced by the architects' design ideas. Contemporary minarets are used as guides for travelling convoys and as city landmarks. Participants also emphasized the need to highlight the main function of the minaret, as a place to call *adhan*, with or without installing loudspeakers at these minarets. Respondents agreed that certain classic functions of minarets should be preserved, such as serving as a mosque's position marker. The existence of stairs and balconies for contemporary minarets may not be necessary due to the invention of loudspeakers. However, it is still sensible to have it, as they can serve as lookout platforms, allowing people to enjoy the scenery from above. The positioning of the minaret is largely at the discretion of the architect, as there are no specific guidelines in mosque design regarding its installation. Some architects may align the minaret with the prayer hall to emphasize its function in indicating the direction of the *qibla*, while others may choose to place it in a different location based on their design preferences or other considerations.

The research highlights the significance of the minaret as both a vital structural and a symbolic element in mosque architecture. It demonstrates a shift in contemporary minaret designs, where the emphasis is placed more on the aesthetic form rather than its traditional function. This represents a significant deviation, from the minaret functioned to announce the call for prayer, but now the muezzin delivers the call from a position facing the *mihrab*, with the sound amplified through speakers positioned in the minaret. Despite their reduced practical function, minarets remain a crucial design element in mosque architecture due to their historical and symbolic significance, which continues to define the identity and image of a mosque. While the presence of loudspeakers and the evolution of techniques of calling to prayer have altered the minaret's functional role, its spiritual and symbolic importance persists. The question of whether future mosques will continue to incorporate minarets, given their diminished original function, remains open to interpretation. While the small sample size of respondents may not represent the broader population or allow for generalization to other regions of Malaysia, this study has provided insights into the functions and significance of minarets, offering valuable guidance for architects in designing future mosques to meet community needs.

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