

# Design Character of Islamic Prayer Room Based on Shari'ah Case Study: Shopping Malls in Medan, Indonesia

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**Abstract:** Indonesia with a population of more than 265 million people, has a majority Muslim population of around 87%. Every Muslim is obliged to offer Salah at least five times a day. Nowadays, urban communities in Indonesia are having difficulties to find a proper room to perform Salah in public buildings in the middle of daily activities. Even though there are Masjids and Musallas scattered throughout the city, previous researches suggest that the existence of more accessible prayer rooms in public buildings especially shopping malls is also very important because they generally serve as one-stop shop where visitors can find all types of goods/ services in one building. This allows visitors to spend a considerable amount of time inside the building including within specific time of Salah. A review on five shopping malls in Medan indicates that although the majority of shopping malls have dedicated prayer room, the majority designs is still inadequate both from the shari'ah and architectural perspective. This research is using qualitative method with triangulation data collection derived from comparative and literature studies, field surveys and interviews. The research produced the prayer room design criteria in the shopping mall.

**Key Words:** Islamic prayer room ; design character ; shari'ah ; shopping mall.

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

Pancasila as the Indonesian ideology consists of five basic principles that guarantee the rights and obligation of Indonesian people. The first principle of Pancasila which reads 'To belief in One Supreme God' illustrates that Indonesia is a religious-based state with the basic needs of its people is to carry out religious services. Indonesia itself has a majority of Muslim population, comprises 85% of its total population. In Islamic teachings, Muslim has to do a daily-based prayer ritual called 'Salah'. Salah is one of the 'five pillars' in Islam, and can be done by Muslim individually or in congregation (congregation is recommended) at five predetermined times a day. Offering Salah is the duty of all Muslims as long as they live, and is performed in the same way all over the world. The obligation to pray five times a day is no exception for urban communities in Indonesia. The often encountered phenomenon in urban communities today is that they find it difficult to have a decent room to perform Salah in public buildings amid their daily busy activities. Although there are many masjids distributed in various parts of the city, previous studies stated that the existence of more accessible prayer rooms in public buildings is also very important to accommodate the Salah of urban communities [1]. Also, from architectural point of view, the design of prayer rooms in public buildings is quite different from the design of masjid which are specifically built for worship activities. Prayer rooms in public buildings generally have a smaller scale and are integrated directly with other spaces inside the buildings which have different main functions. Shopping malls are general samples of public commercial buildings found in urban areas. The presence of Islamic prayer rooms in shopping malls are important because these types of business generally offer a 'one stop shopping' concept where visitors can find all types of goods and services that they need in one single building. This allows visitors to spend a considerable amount of time inside the building, including the special time to offer Salah. Medan, with a population of around 2.5 million and the area of 265.10 km<sup>2</sup>, is Indonesia's third largest city. Medan plays an important role in Indonesian economy and business. Today, there are at least 14 active shopping malls in Medan and the number continues to increase. Those shopping malls have different classes and targeted markets. The initial review of several shopping malls in Medan indicates that even when they have prayer room to perform Salah, the feasibility of its design is still inadequate both from the perspective of shari'ah and architecture values. Visitors of some shopping malls in Medan complaint on the building relate to its prayer room facilities such as: 1. Location of the prayer rooms is not easily found because they are "hidden" in parking lots, basements or at the corners of the buildings without proper orientation markers; 2. The location of the prayer room (e.g. in the parking lot) leaves visitors questioning the safety and proper air quality; 3. Washing area for wudhū' of the prayer room is designed openly as it is exposing the privacy of visitors while they are doing wudhū'; 4. The bathroom and the washing area are too close to the prayer room, resulting an unpleasant scent; and, 5. The dimensions of the prayer room are too narrow with an unclear circulation between people who are praying and passing. The invalidity of prayer rooms design causing the prayer ritual not running well. If architectural design aims to create a space that is able to accommodate users' activities to the maximum, then

the design of the prayer room today which tends to be unable to accommodate prayer activities according to the sharī‘ah can be seen as an architectural failure. This study aims to find the initial criteria for prayer room design in public buildings, specifically shopping malls. The problems in this study are; 1. What aspects guarantee the flexibility and convenience of users in the prayer room of a shopping mall; and 2. What is the character of the prayer room design inside public buildings in accordance with the sharī‘ah.

## 2. SHOPPING MALLS IN MEDAN:

Shopping mall used in this study is one as found in the classification of shopping centres according to the International Council of Shopping Center (ICSC). The shopping centre itself is defined as a group of retail and other commercial establishments that is planned, developed, owned and managed as a single property, typically with on-site parking provided. The size and orientation of a shopping mall is determined by the market characteristics of the trading area that it serves [2]. The position of shopping mall in ICSC classification can be seen in Figure 1.

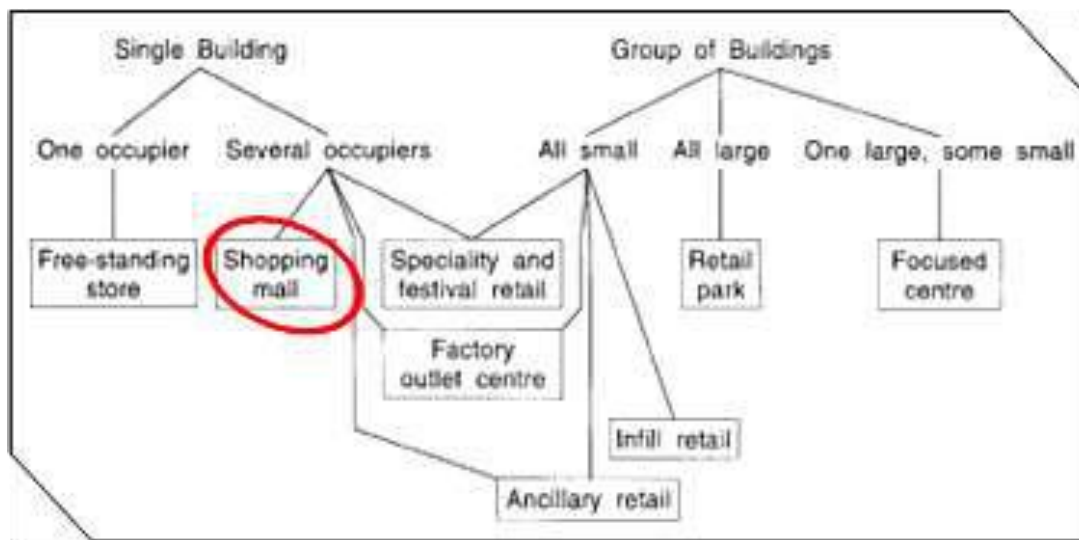


Figure 1. Shopping mall in ICSC classification [2]

A shopping mall is one single building composed by retails and is occupied by a number of tenants, has one or more anchors, and fully managed by one owner company [2].

Shopping mall functioning as: 1. Meeting place between seller and buyer, exchanging goods, information and services; 2. Place for producers to demonstrate goods and its ability to end-consumers; 3. Public facility that provides life needs, services and recreation to the community. The scale of a Shopping mall according to ICSC can be categorized into nine classes, as seen in Table 1.

No	Type	Concept	Square Feet	Typical Anchor		Anchor Ratio*	Primary Trade Area**
				Number	Type		
1	Neighborhood Centre	Convenience	30.000 – 150.000	1 or more	Supermarket	30% - 50%	3 miles
2	Community Centre	General merchandise, convenience	100.000 – 350.000	2 or more	Discount department store, supermarket, drug, home improvement, large specialty, discount apparel	40% - 60%	3 – 6 miles
3	Regional Center	General merchandise,, fashion (mall, typical enclosed)	400.000 – 800.000	2 or more	Full-line department store, mass merchant, discount department store, fashion apparel	50% - 70%	5 – 15 miles
4	Superregional Centre	Similar to Regional Centre but has more variety and assortment.	800.000+	3 or more	Full-line department store, mass merchant, fashion apparel	50% - 70%	5 – 25 miles
5	Fashion/ Specialty Centre	Higher end, fashion oriented	80.000 – 250.000	N/A	Fashion	N/A	5 – 15 miles

6	Lifestyle Centre	Upscale national chail specialty, store, dining and entertainment in outdoor setting	Typical 150.000 – 500.000 but can be 0 – 2 smaller or larger	0 – 2	Not usually anchored in the traditional sense but may include book store, other large format specialty retailers, multiplex cinema, small department store	0% - 50%	8 – 12 miles
7	Power Centre	Category-dominant anchors, few small tenants	250.000 – 600.000	3 or more	Category killer, home improvement, discount department store, warehouse club, off-price	75% - 90%	5 – 10 miles
8	Theme/ Festival Centre	Leisure, tourist oriented, retail and service	80.000 – 250.000	N/A	Restaurants, entertainment	N/A	N/A
9	Other Centre	Manufacturers' outlet stores	50.000 – 400.000	N/A	Manufacturers' outlet stores	N/A	25 – 75 miles
* The share of a centres' total square footage that is attributable to its anchors							

There are at least 14 shopping malls in Medan. Each of those shopping malls has its own class and targeted markets as shown in Table 2.

No	Shopping Mall	Class
1	Yuki Simpang Raya	Regional Centre
2	Medan Mall	Regional Centre
3	Hongkong Plaza	Specialty Centre (Bags & Apparel)
4	Yanglim Plaza	Community Centre
5	Millenium Plaza	Specialty Centre (Electronics)
6	Grand Palladium	Community Centre
7	Thamrin Plaza	Regional Centre
8	Plaza Medan Fair	Regional Centre
9	Lippo Mall	Lifestyle Centre
10	Medan Focal Point	Lifestyle Centre
11	Cambridge City Square	Lifestyle Centre
12	Ringroad City Walks	Theme/ Festival Centre
13	Sun Plaza	Regional Centre
14	Centre Point	Superregional Centre

### 3. MUSLIMS AND SALAH:

Salah is seen as a 'pillar' of Islam that must be done by Muslims as long as they alive. The command to do Salah for Muslims is revealed by Allah through Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Salah is done 5 times a day at specified time. The 5 times Salah are: Subh, before sunrise; Zuhr, when the sun starts to fall from the Zenith point; Asr, in the afternoon; Maghrib, at sunset; and Isha, at night. In addition to the five daily prayers, Friday Salah is also included in the obligatory prayer service for male Muslims which is held every Friday (Al-Qur'an 62: 9). The way Muslims do Salah is the same throughout the world. Salah can be carried out in congregation or individually, and does not require special equipment.

Muslim who wants to perform Salah has to perform ablution (purification) first. It is written in the holy Qur'an:

"O you who have believed, when you rise to [perform] prayer, wash your faces and your forearms to the elbows and wipe over your heads and wash your feet to the ankles. And if you are in a state of janabah, then purify yourselves. But if you are ill or on a journey or one of you comes from the place of relieving himself or you have contacted women and do not find water, then seek clean earth and wipe over your faces and hands with it. Allah does not intend to make difficulty for you, but He intends to purify you and complete His favor upon you that you may be grateful." (Al-Qur'an 5: 6)

A Muslim must cover his awrah when offering Salah. For women, it means they have to cover their entire body except their face and hands. While for men it means they must at least cover the part between their navels and knees. Salah is offered by practicing a number of movements while reciting verses from the holy Qur'an. In performing Salah, first one has to positioning himself facing the qiblah, which is the direction of the Ka'bah in Mecca. One then begins to recite prayer such as to recite intentions, takbiratul ihram, the holy verses from the Qur'an, and so on. One then ends it with greetings. Movements in prayer include i'tidal (standing), ruku' (bowing) and prostration.

#### 4. ISLAMIC PRAYER ROOM IN PUBLIC BUILDINGS:

Prayer room for Salah is an "intervention", and not "intrusion" to the surrounding environment where it is located [3]. This space is also described as an "oasis", a metaphor of a place that is open to anyone who needs a momentary protection, a life-transit place, where the space is not only presents as physical form but also presents as a spiritual meaning [3].

The existence of a prayer rooms in a "modern" public building such as shopping malls has the potential to balance between religious and secularism aspects. It is because "modernization" is often seen as the cause of declining religious values in a secular environment [4]. As a result, building designer are considered responsible in "explaining" and "showing" to the public that the process of "modernization" is not something that will alienate public from their religious values (e.g. by designing a prayer room based on sharī'ah) [1].

The main function of an Islamic prayer room is a place to do Salah. However, there are several other activities carried out by users in this room. The function of the prayer room in general can be described as a place to: 1. Carry out prayers in congregation; 2. Carry out prayers individually; 3. Sit on the floor to read the Qur'an, make dhikr (remembrance of God) and other similar worship.

Unlike the mosque design that has a variety of zoning, the minimum zoning of a prayer room in public buildings are [5]:

1. Prayer area, the main area in a prayer room. This area is a simple open space.
2. The area of removing and storing footwear and general stuff, the area where user releases and saves footwear and their general stuff. The need for human and air circulation is a consideration that needs to be considered in this area.
3. Toilet, where the orientation of space and furniture in the toilet needs to be designed according to sharī'ah to improve the user's self-purification process.
4. Wudu area, area where user performs ablution with certain sharī'ah conditions. The circulation of user movements when using the prayer room can be seen in Fig. 2.

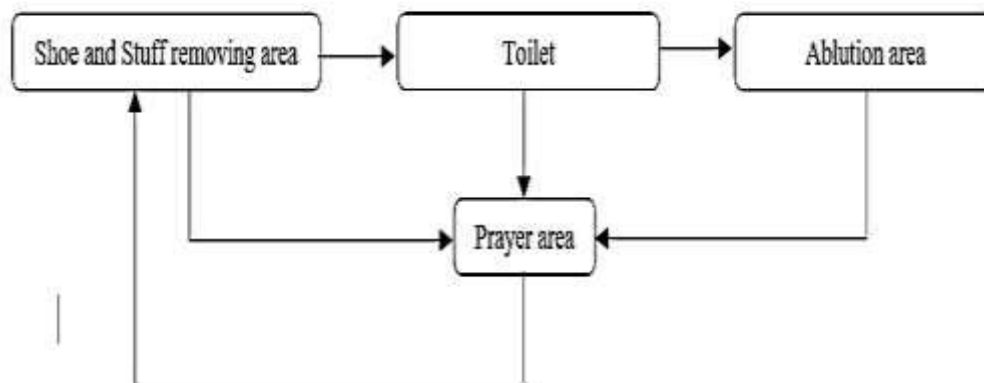


Figure 2. User movement when using Islamic prayer room

#### 5. METHOD:

This research was conducted on prayer rooms of five shopping malls in Medan. Data was collected through observation and interview. The data was then processed by analyzing the suitability of sharī'ah-based design and architectural literatures, while paying attention to the level of user satisfaction based on interviews. The scope of this study comprises two phases:

1. Field observation and user satisfaction analysis in five shopping malls in Medan.
2. Finding the characters of sharī'ah-based design of prayer rooms.

Shopping malls as research objects are Ringroad Citywalk, Millennium Plaza, Mall Center Point, Medan Mall, and Medan Fair Plaza. Data was collected at each shopping malls in the form of rooms' physical data and information as the result of interviews to users of each prayer room.

#### 6. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on field surveys and interviews, it is found that twelve elements that should be taken into consideration in prayer room design as shown in Table 3.

No	Aspect	Element
1	General Architecture	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prayer room location in the shopping mall</li> <li>2. Accessibility of prayer room</li> <li>3. Space comparison between prayer room and shopping mall</li> <li>4. Wudhū' area design</li> <li>5. Signage</li> <li>6. Air circulation</li> <li>7. Lighting</li> <li>8. Personal stuff security</li> </ol>
2	Sharī'ah	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. User privacy (e.g. has to cover awrah from the opposite sex) while inside or circulating along toilet, wudhū' and prayer area.</li> <li>2. Differentiate of payer area between men and women.</li> <li>3. The existence of <i>sutrah</i> (prostration marker)</li> </ol>

According to those elements, further analysis of prayer room is divided into 4 areas as discussed in literature review, those are: 1. Wudhū' area; 2. Toilet; 3. Area for removing and storing footwear and personal items; and 4. Prayer area. The results of the analysis are as follows:

### 6.1 Wudhū' Area

Wudhū' area is the place where user performs ablution (purification) with water as regulated in sharī'ah. Integration between prayer and wudhū' area is very important to make prayer ritual comfortable and sharī'ah-based. The things that need to be considered regarding the wudhū' area are:

- a. Sufficient distance should be provided between wudhū' and prayer area, because according to sharī'ah the prayer area must be kept clean, free from dirt and damp odor which may be generated from the wudhū' area.
- b. Because according to sharī'ah one has to cover awrah, especially for women, then the wudhū' area must be able to protect the privacy of its users while they are doing ablution. It is not recommended to design an open-to-all ablution space where one has to cover themselves while striving to cover their awrah as other people (especially the opponent sex) can freely see them.
- c. The presence of water in the wudhū' area will certainly allow the emerging of bacteria and increase air humidity. Both are reasons that can create unpleasant odors. Therefore, the design of wudhū' area must avoid using materials that are difficult to clean.
- d. The installation of plumbing fixtures must pay attention to user convenience so that user does not have to bend or kneel in ways that are not natural/ comfortable. The installation and placement of plumbing fixtures must also consider elderly and people with disabilities.
- e. Design of the area where water is coming out of the tap must reduce the tendency of water splashing into users' clothes.
- f. The ablution area should be equipped with some simple accessories and furniture which actually important to create convenience of user in wudhū' area. The accessories and furnishings include:
  - i. 1) Hand rails to help user more stable while doing ablution.
  - ii. 2) Shelves and hangers for user to place personal items when doing ablution.
  - iii. 3) Mirror to help user ensure ones' physical appearance when finished doing ablution.
- g. Design must be able to create a boundary between wet and dry areas within the ablution space by using material differentiators, floor height differentiators, and/or other architectural ways.

### 6.2 Toilet

Toilet is the additional facility needed by prayer room user to complete the purification rituals. It is because based on sharī'ah, one should not perform Salah if he already feels like going to toilet. This should be done before doing wudhū'. In designing prayer rooms, some design considerations related to toilet are needed, including:

- Toilet location does not have to be very close to the prayer room, but it is have to be located so prayer room users can clearly and easily find signage that leads them to the toilet if needed.
- Toilet design for prayer room tends to be the same as general toilet design in accordance with architectural values. But specifically in sharī'ah, there is a guide on the orientation of water closet (WC) placement according to the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad: "When any one of you sits down to answer the call of nature, he should not face the qiblah or turn his back towards it" (History of Muslim Hadith no. 265) Therefore, it is recommended to design the orientation of WC not to face or back to the qiblah.



- Decent air circulation system so it does not easily create unpleasant smells inside toilet.
- Use of materials that are easy to clean, to ensure toilet hygiene.

### 6.3 Area for storing footwear and personal items

The area of removing and storing footwear as well as personal items is important to be considered in prayer room design. This is because footwear is basically not allowed to be brought into prayer area to maintain cleanliness. In addition, due to the fact that majority of prayer room users in shopping malls are carrying personal items (e.g. shopping bags), it is strongly recommended to include locker or special storing area in prayer room design of a shopping mall. In designing this area one should consider:

- Sufficient distance should be provided between storing and prayer area. It is because the prayer area must be kept clean, free of dirt and unpleasant odor.
- Decent air circulation in shoes storing area so that the unpleasant aroma of shoes does not disturb user convenience.
- Shoe can be stored in an open shelves, and personal items such as shopping bags can be stored in lockers which can be locked independently by user.
- Providing furniture such as seating and trash cans, because in a small-scale prayer rooms, this area can also function as a waiting room for prayer. The existence of seating also allows user to release shoes comfortably.

### 6.4 Prayer area

Prayer area is the main area in a prayer room. Prayer area is a simple open space using qibla as main orientation. In determining the scale and circulation of prayer area there are several design considerations, including:

- In defining prayer area locations, building designer should take comfort and safety of user in accessing these locations as an important consideration. Ideally, the placement of prayer areas should be included in the initial plan of building construction since the beginning of shopping mall construction. Locating prayer rooms after the building construction has been completed tends to cause user comfort and safety is not being optimal.
- In defining the dimension of prayer room, building designer should consider the number prayer rooms' user which are derived from the number of related shopping mall's visitors and also considering the capacity of prayer area in one single Salah time.
- Prayer room orientation has to face the qibla so that the use of space becomes efficient.
- Air circulation system inside the prayer room should be planned carefully. When a prayer room is located next to a parking lot and/ or inside a basement, it is actually not a problem as long as the air circulation system inside prayer room is designed to meet the minimum health standards of its users.
- According to shari'ah, there is a clear separation of space between male and female user of a praying room. The separation can be either permanent or non-permanent as long as each gender should not be able to see and interact with each other while inside prayer room, but at the same time female user should be able to hear male user leading the prayer.
- Physical material of the prayer area should be easy to clean because prayer area must be maintained to always be clean.
- Air circulation of a prayer room can be integrated with the main buildings system. It can be in the form of centralized air conditioner system. In addition, healthy air circulation (not contaminated with vehicle fumes) is also a concern when designing prayer rooms which located next to a parking lot.
- There can be minimalist accessories and furniture inside the prayer area that can maximize the function of a prayer room. It includes:
  - 1) At male prayer area: podium for preaching.
  - 2) At female prayer area: *mukena* (i.e. special cloth to cover awrah while doing Salah) storage in which the design should be able to maintain the cloths cleanliness because it is being used repeatedly by users.
  - 3) At prayer area in general: timepiece, can be in the form of a clock, complete with 5 times prayer times; prayer mat or sajdah; sutrah (a movable barrier between users who are praying with areas that other users may pass in front of them); assistance chairs for people with disabilities and elderly who have to do Salah while sitting; cabinets or shelves to store public stuff such as Al-Quran and other Islamic books.

### 6.5 Application of Shari'ah-Based Design

The following pictures show some examples on the application of shari'ah-based design in a prayer room of a shopping mall.

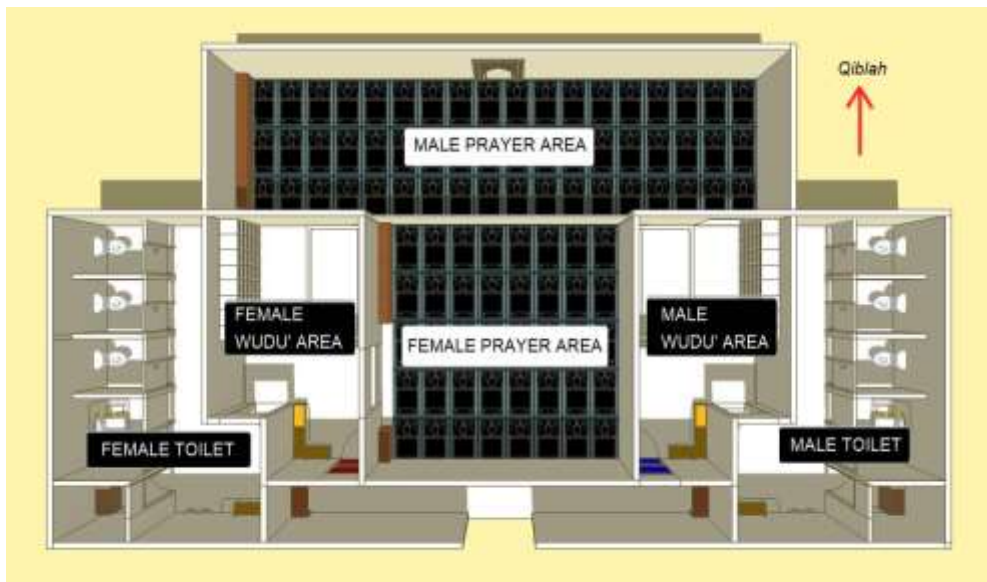


Figure 3. Sample of Islamic prayer room plan

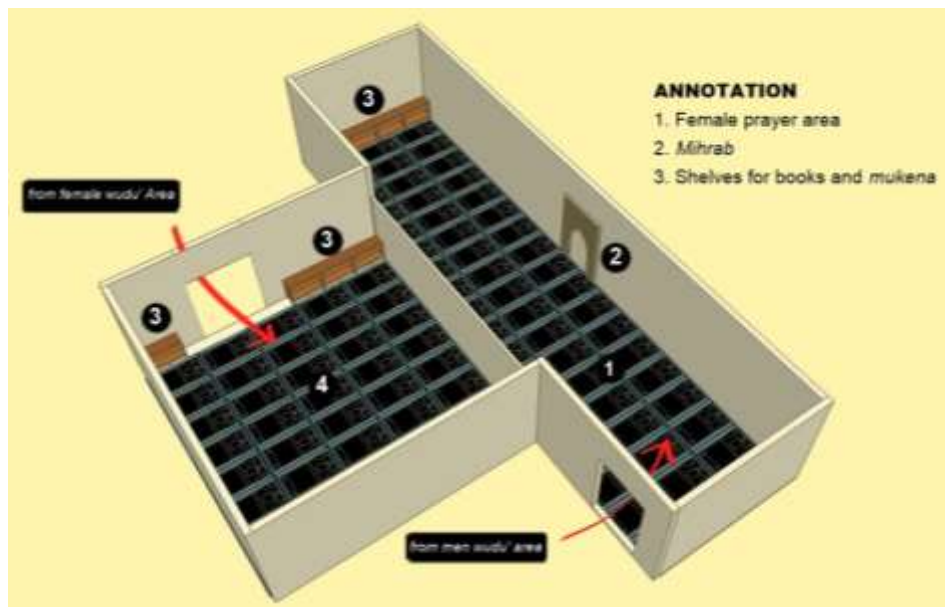


Figure 4. Prayer area

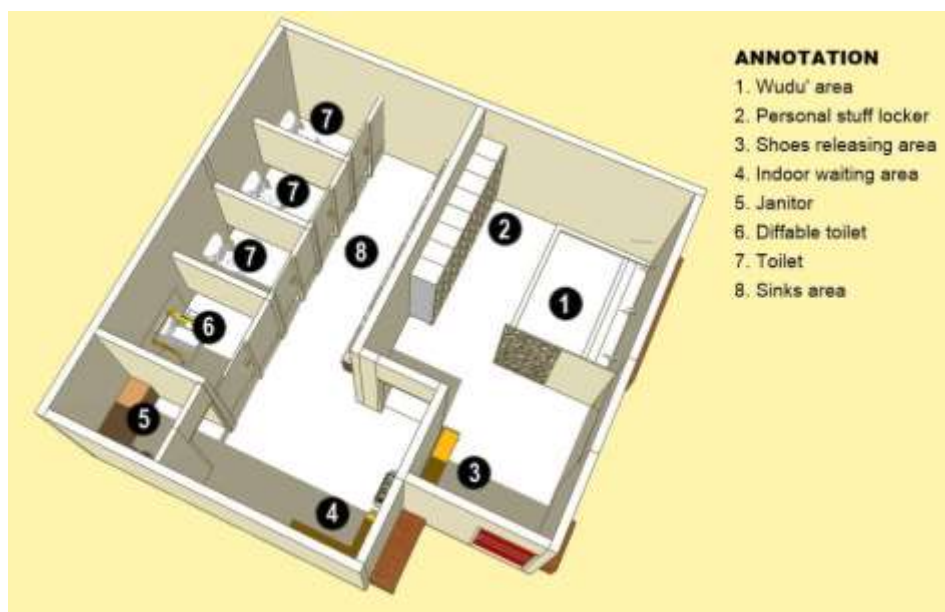


Figure 5. Toilet and wudhū' area

## 7. CONCLUSION:

Conclusion of the research are:

1. Prayer room design should have been included in shopping malls construction plan since the beginning, so that their roles and functions can be maximized. Planning the prayer room design after the building is completed tends to lead to the 'carelessly' prayer room design concept.
2. The shari'ah-based prayer room design needs to pay attention to a number of things that are sometimes not summarized explicitly in architectural aspects, such as wudhū', coverage of awrah, separation between male and female user, etc.
3. From the field surveys and user interviews on 5 shopping malls in Medan, it is found that the highest value of user satisfaction is as in order below (from the highest to the lowest level of satisfaction):
  - a. Center Point
  - b. Plaza Medan Fair
  - c. Millennium Plaza
  - d. Ringroad City Walk
  - e. Medan Mall

From these results, it can be seen that the majority of shopping malls in Medan still do not meet the criteria of an ideal prayer room, whether it is based on architectural value or shari'ah. In addition, the shopping mall class does not determine the seriousness of its management team in designing prayer rooms. Thus, shopping mall managements are expected to include prayer room design plan since the beginning of building planning for better services.

4. There are four areas that deserve special attention in designing prayer rooms according to shari'ah:
  - a. Wudhū' area
  - b. Toilet
  - c. Area for storing footwear and personal items
  - d. Prayer area.

## 8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

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