



Architecture as cultural text: Multimodal interpretation of Javanese-Islamic minimalism in the Saminah Sihyadi Mosque, Surakarta

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Abstract.

This study analyzes the intersection of spiritual identity and architectural minimalism in the Saminah Sihyadi Mosque, Surakarta, by interpreting its spatial configuration as a multimodal cultural text. Drawing on Kress and van Leeuwen's multimodal discourse analysis, it investigates how visual and material elements—unpolished stone, wood, and natural light—function as semiotic resources communicating Javanese values and Islamic humility. Through qualitative field research combining visual documentation, spatial observation, and semi-structured interviews, the mosque's spatial elements are analyzed across three metafunctions: representational, interactive, and compositional. The findings demonstrate that meaning in this mosque is produced not through conventional symbolic markers, but through the relational interplay of material restraint, spatial permeability, and diffused light—a condition this study terms an "aesthetic of sincerity." This spatial logic articulates Javanese-Islamic values such as humility, balance, and inclusivity through embodied and atmospheric experience rather than ornamental assertion. The study concludes that contemporary mosque architecture in Indonesia is shifting toward spatially enacted religious expression, where absence of grandeur operates as a deliberate semiotic strategy. These findings suggest that multimodal semiotics offers a productive framework for analyzing religious spaces that communicate cultural identity through relational, experiential, and material means.

Keywords: Multimodal discourse, Saminah Sihyadi Mosque, Javanese-Islamic minimalism, Mosque spatial semiotics, Vernacular-contemporary architecture.

Introduction

Mosque in Indonesia has long functioned as more than sacred spaces for ritual practice; they operate as socio-cultural nodes where religious values, local traditions, and everyday life intersect (Suud Sarim Karimullah, 2023). The historical process of Islamization in the Indonesian archipelago did not replace pre-existing cultural systems, but rather reconfigured them through adaptation and acculturation (Widayat & Prameswari, 2022). As a result, mosque architecture—particularly in Java—emerged as a hybrid expression, where Islamic spirituality is articulated through local forms such as tiered roofs, timber construction, and symbolic ornamentation (Idham, 2021). These architectural elements embody a worldview that situates harmony not only between humans and God, but also between the built environment and nature, positioning the mosque as a cultural mediator rather than a purely religious artifact.

In recent decades, however, the architectural language of mosques in Indonesia has undergone a notable shift. While earlier forms emphasized monumentality—often expressed through domes and elaborate ornamentation—contemporary designs increasingly adopt a more restrained and minimal aesthetic. This transition reflects broader transformations in how Islamic identity and spirituality are

expressed spatially. Contemporary mosque architecture has been noted to favor openness, material honesty, and environmental responsiveness (Primanizar, 2024). The emergence of “mosques without domes” has also been identified as a significant phenomenon, indicating a deliberate move away from symbolic grandeur toward expressions of humility and ecological awareness (Suhendar et al., 2020). At the same time, the integration of global and local visual elements in mosque design reflects the ongoing negotiation of identity within modern Indonesian Muslim communities (Fuadah & Arzaqina, 2024). These studies indicate that mosque architecture is no longer defined solely by inherited typologies, but is actively rearticulated in response to changing cultural, social, and environmental contexts.

Despite these developments, much of the existing scholarship on Indonesian mosque architecture remains centered on formal analysis or isolated symbolic interpretation. Studies examining ornamental motifs have demonstrated how Islamic visual language assimilates pre-Islamic cultural patterns, while analyses of specific architectural elements—such as the mihrab—have interpreted form and ornament as expressions of theological balance and social values (Idham, 2021; Sunaryo et al., 2017; Widayat & Prameswari, 2022). While these contributions are valuable, they share a common limitation: meaning is treated as residing in discrete architectural elements rather than emerging from the interaction of spatial atmosphere, materiality, permeability, and lived use. Critically, none of these studies adequately accounts for how minimalist mosque architecture—where conventional symbolic markers are deliberately absent—communicates cultural and spiritual meaning. This is not merely a methodological gap; it reflects a deeper conceptual limitation in how the field has theorized architectural meaning-making. When ornament is stripped away, symbol-centered readings lose much of their analytical purchase, leaving contemporary minimalist mosques undertheorized precisely where they are most architecturally and culturally significant.

This limitation is particularly pressing given the rapid growth of minimalist mosque design in contemporary Indonesia—a trajectory that existing scholarship has documented but not yet adequately explained in terms of how meaning is produced and experienced. As more mosques depart from conventional typologies, the field requires analytical tools capable of reading architecture as an integrated spatial and social event rather than as a repository of symbols. To address this gap, the present study adopts a multimodal approach that conceptualizes architecture as a cultural text, drawing on Kress and van Leeuwen's (2020) framework in which meaning emerges from the interaction of multiple semiotic modes—visual composition, materiality, spatial arrangement, and embodied experience (Asran & Udasmoro, 2020; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2020). This is reinforced by representation theory, which holds that meaning is produced through cultural practice and lived experience rather than residing inherently in visual form (Hall, 1997), and by semiotic approaches that foreground the ideological and spiritual dimensions of spatial expression beyond formal or geometric readings (Al Fahmawee, 2022).

Within this conceptual framework, the Saminah Sihyadi Mosque in Surakarta is examined as a critical case study. Located at Jl. Tirtonadi No.9, Gilingan, Banjarsari, and inaugurated in 2023, the mosque represents a contemporary architectural approach that departs from conventional typologies by integrating circular geometry, natural materials, and the deliberate absence of a dome (admin, 2025). Its spatial configuration—marked by porous boundaries, diffused natural lighting, and integration with the surrounding landscape—makes it a particularly productive site for investigating how cultural and spiritual meaning is articulated through design rather than decoration. The mosque's social positioning further strengthens its relevance: situated within a previously marginalized urban area and accommodating diverse community-based activities, it exemplifies the shift toward an inclusive spatial practice that responds to varied users and modes of engagement (Nasybullina & Zuykov, 2024).

This study therefore asks: how do multimodal interactions among representational, interactive, and compositional elements construct a culturally embedded expression of contemporary Javanese-Islamic identity? The novelty of this study is twofold. Theoretically, it extends multimodal discourse analysis into the domain of contemporary religious architecture, demonstrating that semiotic

frameworks developed for visual media are productively applicable to spatial and material environments where meaning is relational and experiential rather than symbolic and decorative. Methodologically, it introduces a tripartite analytical structure—integrating field observation, visual documentation, and visitor interviews—that enables meaning to be traced across the full cycle of spatial production, configuration, and use. Together, these contributions offer a replicable model for analyzing religious and cultural spaces in which identity is articulated through atmosphere, material, and social practice rather than through conventional iconographic markers.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative interpretive approach to examine how architectural space operates as a cultural text. Rather than treating the mosque as a fixed physical object, the research positions it as a multimodal spatial configuration through which meaning is produced, negotiated, and experienced. The methodology integrates visual analysis, spatial observation, and contextual interpretation to investigate how material, spatial, and experiential elements collectively articulate Javanese–Islamic values.

The research is grounded in multimodal discourse analysis, drawing on the framework proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen, which understands meaning as emerging from the interaction of multiple semiotic modes, including visual composition, materiality, spatial arrangement, and embodied experience (Asran & Udasmoro, 2020; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2020). This analytical position is further informed by representation theory, which emphasizes that meaning is constructed through cultural practices and lived experience rather than being inherent in visual form (Hall, 1997), and by semiotic approaches that foreground the ideological and spiritual dimensions of spatial expression (Al Fahmawee, 2022). Together, these frameworks enable architecture to be understood as an active medium of cultural communication.

The object of this study is the Saminah Sihyadi Mosque in Surakarta, located at Jl. Tirtonadi No. 9, Gilingan, Banjarsari, and inaugurated in 2023. The mosque was selected because its architectural language departs from conventional mosque typologies while integrating contemporary minimalism with Javanese–Islamic values. Its openness, natural materiality, and environmental integration provide a relevant context for examining how cultural and spiritual meanings are articulated through design. At the same time, the mosque's active use by different groups of visitors makes it a suitable site for investigating the relationship between architectural form, spatial experience, and everyday religious-social practice.

Data were collected through four complementary techniques: repeated field observation, visual documentation, visitor interviews, and contextual review. Field observation was conducted over three weeks between February and March 2025, covering varied temporal conditions including daytime, pre-Maghrib, and Ramadan periods—enabling the researchers to record differences in light quality, spatial atmosphere, circulation patterns, and modes of occupation. Visual documentation included photographs of the façade, prayer hall, mihrab area, circulation zones, material details, and partitions, accompanied by field notes compiled during and after each visit.

To complement the observational data, informal semi-structured interviews were conducted with visitors encountered on site. A total of 12 participants were involved, selected purposively based on variation in age, occupational background, and pattern of mosque use—including routine worshippers, occasional visitors, and those using the mosque for Qur'anic recitation or quiet rest. Each interview lasted approximately 10–20 minutes and was conducted in Bahasa Indonesia. Key points were noted immediately after each session rather than recorded, to maintain conversational naturalness. This approach prioritizes interpretive breadth over statistical representation (Ahmad & Wilkins, 2025).

The units of analysis consisted of spatial and material elements that most clearly mediated the mosque's meaning-making processes: (1) the façade and outer envelope, (2) the mihrab area, (3) the

main prayer hall, (4) entrance and circulation thresholds, (5) semi-open or semi-filtered partitions, and (6) light, wood, stone, and water as recurring material-spatial components. These units were identified through an iterative process in which preliminary observations and visual documentation were used to locate spatial zones of interpretive density—where material, sensory, and social cues converged most consistently. This is consistent with purposive unit selection in qualitative spatial research (Creswell & Poth, 2016) and with Kress and van Leeuwen's (2020) argument that semiotic analysis should focus on elements that actively function as meaning-making resources. The façade was included as the primary urban interface; the mihrab as the spatial and spiritual focal point with highest representational density (Munir, 2023; Pradana, 2020); the prayer hall as the main site of congregational practice; thresholds as mediators of the sacred-profane boundary in Javanese-Islamic spatial logic (Idham, 2021; Widayat & Prameswari, 2022); partitions as sites of gender and privacy negotiation (Nyhagen, 2019); and material components as systemic elements recurring across all zones.

The analysis followed the three metafunctions of multimodal meaning—representational, interactive, and compositional—treating them not as isolated categories but as interrelated layers through which meaning emerges from the interaction of visual, spatial, material, and experiential elements. The analytical process was conducted iteratively across four stages: organizing data by spatial unit and recurring theme; coding according to the three metafunctions; identifying cross-source patterns such as filtered light, material restraint, permeability, and rhythmic repetition; and interpreting these in relation to Javanese-Islamic cultural values and the theoretical frameworks of Kress and van Leeuwen (2020), Hall (1997), and Al Fahmawee (2022). Table 1 presents the analytical matrix mapping each spatial unit against the three metafunctions and their corresponding indicators.

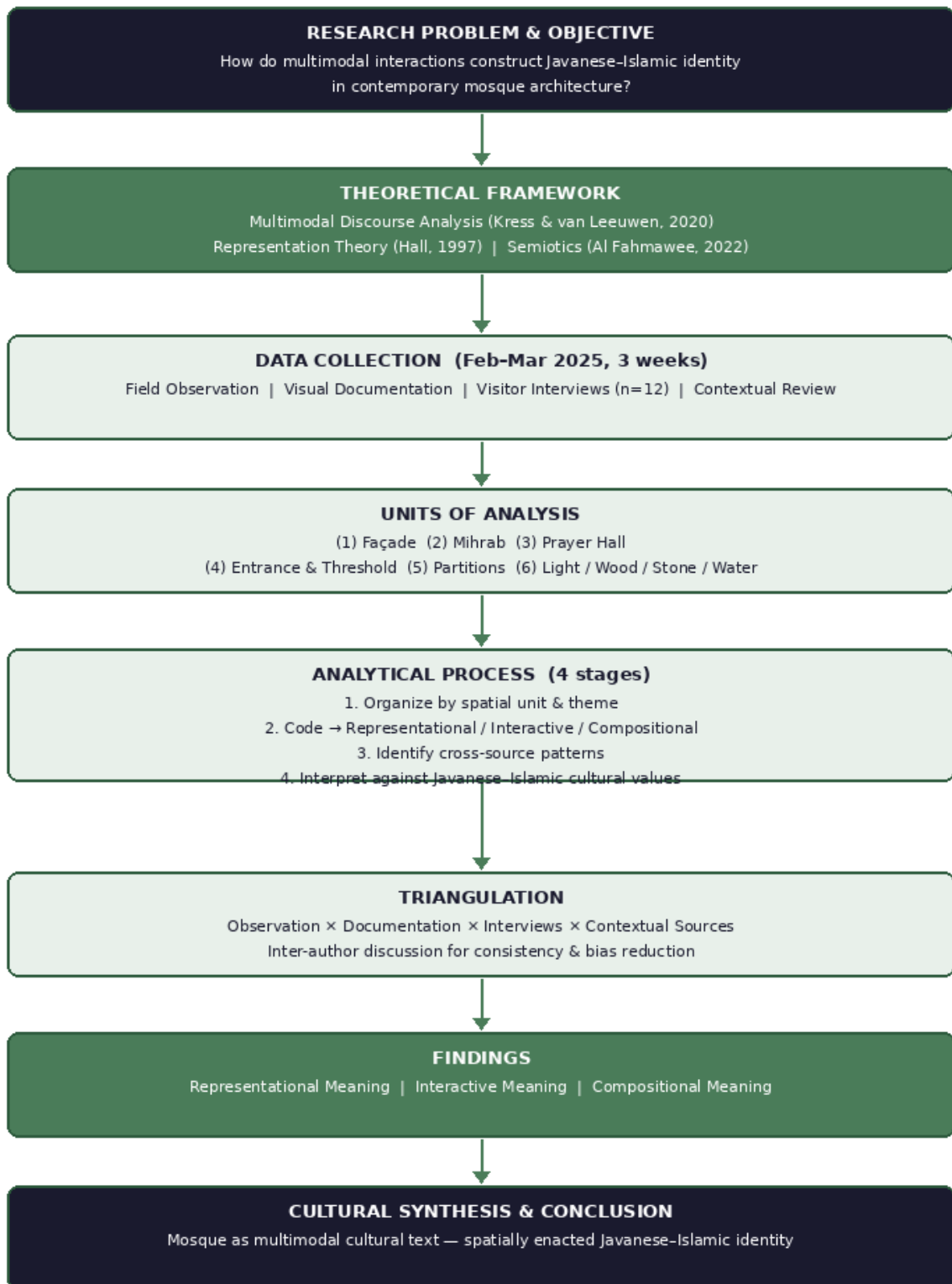
Table 1. Analytical Matrix: Spatial Units and Multimodal Metafunctions

Spatial Unit	Representational	Interactive	Compositional
Façade & outer envelope	Material restraint, absence of dome as humility	First impression, social legibility	Rhythm of wooden skin, relation to reflection pool
Mihrab area	Water/stone as <i>tawazun</i> , sanctity through stillness	Bodily orientation, sensory slowing	Focal point, framing of greenery
Main prayer hall	Light as spiritual clarity, simplicity as sincerity	Movement, pausing, adjustment before prayer	Directional alignment, spatial sequence
Entrance & circulation	Threshold as sacred-profane negotiation	Transition, gradual entry	Continuity between inside and outside
Semi-open partitions	Gender negotiation, <i>tepa selira</i>	Privacy with participation	Filtering of light, view, and sound
Light, wood, stone, water	Recurring material values: balance, honesty	Tactile and sensory engagement	Cross-cutting rhythm and textural consistency

The overall research process is summarized in Figure 1, which maps the flow from theoretical framework through data collection, unit selection, coding, triangulation, and interpretation to final synthesis. To strengthen interpretive validity, this study applied data source triangulation across field observation, visual documentation, interviews, and contextual references—cross-checking whether patterns held consistently across different types of evidence (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Morgan, 2024). Interpretations were discussed iteratively among co-authors to assess consistency and identify competing readings, ensuring that the analysis reflects a grounded and critically examined account rather than individual interpretive bias.

Research Flow Diagram

Multimodal Discourse Analysis of the Saminah Sihyadi Mosque



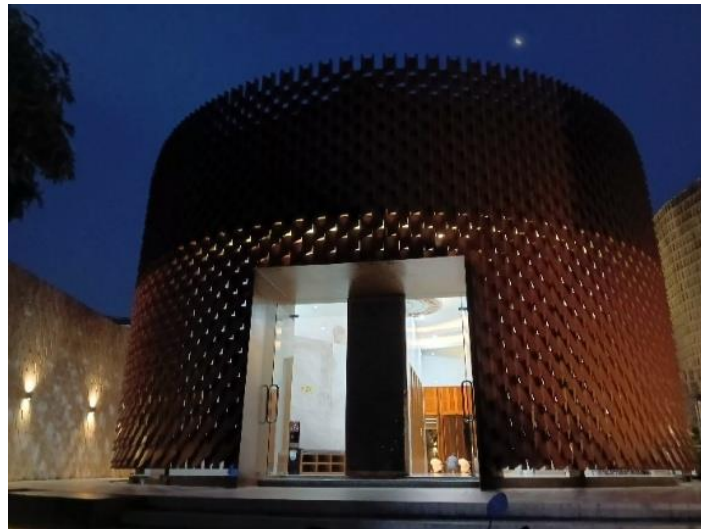
Research flow diagram
Source: Asran, 2025

Result and Discussion

Representational Meaning: Reframing Faith through Visual Minimalism

Within the multimodal framework, representational meaning concerns the ways spatial form, material presence, and sensory atmosphere communicate ideas and values beyond their immediate physical functions (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2020). This perspective resonates with broader design studies that position architectural and interior space as socially embedded artefacts, in which function, material, and spatial configuration operate simultaneously as carriers of cultural meaning (Prasetyo et al., 2025). From this perspective, the mosque is not approached merely as a visual object, but as a spatial field where practical use, sensory experience, and cultural signification are continuously intertwined. In the case of Saminah Sihyadi Mosque, representation does not primarily rely on overt religious markers or ornamental density. Instead, meaning is built through the interaction of light, material restraint, permeability, and the lived experience of the space. This is precisely where the mosque becomes significant as a contemporary case: its Javanese-Islamic character is not asserted through visual excess, but through an atmosphere of calm, balance, and inwardness that is gradually produced by the architectural setting itself.

The reading extends earlier studies that tended to emphasize ornament, formal symbolism, or individual architectural element as the main carriers of meaning. In Saminah Sihyadi Mosque, representational force emerges less from isolated symbols than from the way multiple spatial elements work together. The mosque therefore needs to be read not as a container of pre-given meanings, but as a multimodal field in which material, spatial, and experiential cues invite cultural interpretation.



Saminah Sihyadi's facade with lighting during night time
Source: Asran, 2025

The mosque's facade (Figure 2) provides the clearest entry point into this representational logic (Figure 2). During evening observation, the circular mass and perforated wooden skin produced a muted amber glow rather than a sharply monumental visual effect. The building did not project dominance onto its surroundings; instead, it appeared visually restrained, almost inward in character. Across repeated visits, this perceptual quality recurred consistently in visitor accounts. Several respondents described the façade atmosphere using terms such as *tenang* and *adem*, and one visitor noted that the building "*tidak terasa seperti masjid besar, tapi tetap terasa khusyuk.*" This pattern was observed across different age groups and visit frequencies, suggesting that the representational effect of material restraint operates relatively consistently across varied users. This response is important because it shows that representation here is not dependent on recognizable symbols alone, but on

how the façade modulates perception. In this sense, the absence of a dome does not weaken Islamic identity. Rather, it shifts representation away from monumentality and toward qualities more closely aligned with humility, equality, and spiritual intimacy. Such a tendency resonates with broader discussions of contemporary Indonesian mosques, where minimalism increasingly functions not as stylistic simplification, but as an expression of spiritual sincerity (Idham, 2021; Suhendar et al., 2020; Widayat & Prameswari, 2022).



Mihrab with water and rock elements at the Saminah Sihyadi Mosque
Source: Asran, 2025

A comparable process appears in the mihrab composition (Figure 3). Here, stone, water, reflected light, and framed greenery work together to produce a sensory sequence that exceeds visual decoration. The mihrab does not present sanctity through elaborate ornament; it stages it through stillness, reflection, and environmental presence. Field notes and visitor accounts repeatedly referred to this area as *menyejukkan*, not merely in the physical sense of feeling cool, but in the affective sense of being soothing and settling. This response suggests that spiritual meaning is mediated through environmental perception. The presence of water and stone also invites a cultural reading of balance: the solidity of rock and the movement of water create a relation between permanence and flow, stability and adaptation. Rather than reducing this to a fixed symbol, it is more accurate to say that the spatial arrangement makes such values legible through experience. The representational dimension therefore lies in how the mihrab organizes atmosphere and attention, allowing cultural ideas such as harmony and *tawazun* to be sensed before they are named (Munir, 2023; Pradana, 2020)



Wood and stone elements at the Saminah Sihyadi Mosque
Source: Asran, 2025

At a finer scale, the repeated use of wood and stone reinforces the same logic (Figure 4). The vertical wooden slats create a rhythmic surface that changes with daylight, shadow, and viewing position. Formally, the treatment is minimal. Yet that very restraint gives representational weight to repetition, proportion, and texture. Several visitors described the space as *tenang* and *tidak mewah*, suggesting that simplicity was perceived not as absence, but as a deliberate refusal of excess. This point is crucial. What is being represented is not poverty of form, but ethical clarity through controlled material expression. In this respect, the mosque departs from studies that locate meaning mainly in decorative symbolism. Here, meaning is embedded in modulation, rhythm, and atmosphere. From the perspective of representation theory, these qualities operate as culturally coded forms through which sincerity, balance, and spiritual seriousness are communicated without being overtly declared (Hall, 1997; Sastra, 2023)

Interactive Meaning: Spatial Experience as Social and Embodied Engagement

Interactive meaning concerns how space positions its user: how it guides movement, frames perception, and structures relations between body, environment and other people (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2020). In the Saminah Sihyadi Mosque, this interactive dimension does not emerge through visual spectacle, but through a spatial atmosphere that invites slowing down, pausing, and remaining present. Interaction is therefore not limited to what is seen; it is shaped by how the body enters, adjusts, lingers, and shares space with others.



Interior view of the Saminah Sihyadi Mosque showing filtered daylight and spatial openness
Source: Asran, 2025

From the main prayer hall, filtered daylight, open edges, and framed greenery create a spatial condition that is both calm and porous (Figure 5). Across repeated observations, this interior did not produce a strongly enclosed feeling; instead, it maintained a measured balance between protection and openness. Several visitors were observed pausing briefly before prayer, while others remained seated after entering before engaging in worship. This behavioral pattern was noted across multiple observation sessions and across different temporal conditions—daytime, pre-Maghrib, and during Ramadan. When asked about this tendency, a number of respondents described the interior as “*membuat ingin diam sebentar*” or “*tidak terburu-buru.*” Such accounts suggest that the spatial configuration actively shapes conduct through environmental cues rather than explicit instruction (Lang et al., 2020).

This condition can also be read through a sensory approach to architecture, which emphasizes that meaning is produced through the combined effect of light, airflow, material tactility, and acoustic

atmosphere rather than through vision in isolation (Choudhury, 2016). In the mosque, such sensory conditions contribute to a mode of interaction that is quiet but active: users do not merely occupy the room, but are gradually oriented by it. The space therefore shapes conduct not through control, but through environmental cues.



Interior view toward the entrance highlighting spatial permeability and visual continuity
Source: Asran, 2025

The same interactive logic is reinforced by the mosque's permeability toward the entrance zone (Figure 6). The visual and physical continuity between inside and outside reduces the sense of threshold as a rigid boundary. Rather than separating sacred interior from ordinary exterior in a strict manner, the design allows transition to occur gradually. This makes the mosque feel accessible without becoming visually exposed. During fieldwork, this openness was reflected in patterns of use: some visitors entered directly for prayer, some paused near the threshold, and others occupied the space more casually for recitation or short rest. Such variation suggests that interaction in this mosque is not governed by a single mode of behavior, but by a flexible spatial setting that accommodates different intensities of presence. At a more specific level, the semi-transparent partition in the women's prayer area also demonstrates how interaction is negotiated spatially rather than imposed absolutely. By filtering light, view, and sound without fully severing continuity with the main hall, the partition balances privacy with participation. Visitor accounts suggested that this arrangement was perceived as respectful while remaining inclusive. In this sense, interaction is structured through calibrated degrees of visibility and proximity, not simple separation. The arrangement recalls the ethical logic of *tepa selira*, where mutual awareness and sensitivity are maintained within shared space (Munir, 2023; Nyhagen, 2019).

This finding extends Nyhagen's (2019) analysis of gendered mosque spaces, which emphasizes the tension between separation and participation. Where Nyhagen's cases tend toward stricter spatial division, the Saminah Sihyadi Mosque negotiates this tension through calibrated permeability rather than hard boundaries—a distinction that reflects the Javanese cultural logic of *tepa selira* as an organizing spatial principle rather than merely an ethical norm.

Beyond formal worship, the mosque's openness supports everyday forms of gathering, waiting, and informal religious activity (Hadi, 2025). This broadens its role from a bounded ritual setting into a lived social environment. Interactive meaning, then, is produced through the convergence of atmosphere, permeability, and social use, where spirituality is experienced not as distance from everyday life, but through a spatial condition that keeps devotion, rest, encounter, and communal presence in active relation.

Compositional Meaning: Order, Rhythm, and the Construction of Spatial Harmony

Within a multimodal framework, compositional meaning concerns how spatial and visual elements are organized to produce coherence, hierarchy, and focus (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2020). In Saminah Sihyadi Mosque, composition is not simply a matter of formal organization. It works as a spatial logic through which harmony becomes legible and inhabitable. What is at stake is not visual order for its own sake, but the way proportion, rhythm, continuity, and directional clarity shape an atmosphere of balance. This is important in the context of contemporary mosque architecture, because sacredness here is not asserted through monumental excess, but through a carefully regulated spatial field.

The compositional role of the facade is already evident in its relationship with the reflection pool (Figure 2). The mirrored surface extends the vertical rhythm of the wooden envelope and stabilizes the building's circular mass within its setting. This reflection does not merely duplicate form; it deepens the sense of stillness by linking the mosque to its immediate environment through repetition and visual calm. Across repeated observations, the effect was less dramatic than meditative. The eye is not pulled toward a single decorative focal point, but guided across a field of recurrence, restraint, and continuity. In this respect, balance is produced not through rigid symmetry, but through a controlled relation between mass, surface, light, and reflection. The finding resonates with Idham's (2021) observation Javanese spatial order prioritizes relational harmony over geometric precision. However, the present case extends this argument by showing that such harmony is not merely a formal inheritance but an actively constructed compositional strategy—one that integrates landscape, reflection, and material rhythm in ways that earlier vernacular mosque studies did not anticipate, given their focus on traditional typologies rather than contemporary reinterpretations. Such an arrangement recalls the Javanese sense of order in which tranquility emerges from measured spatial relations rather than visual dominance (Idham, 2021; Munir, 2023).

Inside the prayer hall, compositional clarity becomes more directional. The structural alignment of the interior, together with the framed opening toward the mihrab, organizes the room into a legible spatial sequence (Figure 5). The body and gaze are subtly oriented forward, but without coercive emphasis. Light reinforces this orientation by moving across the interior in a way that keeps the central axis perceptible while preserving softness. What results is a compositional order that supports worship not by isolating the sacred as a distant object, but by making it quietly present within the whole field of space. Composition here functions as a kind of spatial grammar: it arranges attention, clarifies orientation, and gives coherence to the experience of prayer without relying on ornamental hierarchy.

This same logic continues at the threshold between interior and exterior (Figure 6). Rather than interrupting the order of the mosque, permeability extends it. Open corridors, framed views, and the absence of heavy enclosure allow transition to unfold gradually. Movement, pause, and entry are therefore incorporated into the compositional system rather than occurring outside it. This is significant because it shows that order in the mosque is not dependent on closure. Instead, coherence is maintained even as the building remains visually and spatially open to its surroundings. The result is a form of harmony that includes circulation and transition as part of the overall composition.

At a finer scale, the repetitive wooden lattice and the recurring use of wood, stone, and water reinforce this structured continuity (Figures 3 and 4). Repetition, in this context, is not merely decorative. It regulates proportion, mediates enclosure, and gives consistency to the relationship between surfaces, openings, and light. Minimal material expression thus becomes compositional discipline. Through this discipline, the mosque produces an order that is sensed as calm, readable, and integrated. Compositional meaning in Saminah Sihyadi Mosque therefore emerges through relational arrangement: not through a singular symbol or dominant gesture, but through the sustained orchestration of rhythm, continuity, and spatial balance, where harmony is experienced as both visual coherence and ethical-spiritual poise.

Cultural Synthesis: The Mosque as a Multimodal Cultural Text

Taken together, the preceding analysis shows that the Saminah Sihyadi Mosque operates as a coherent multimodal system in which representational, interactive, and compositional meanings are not

separated, but continuously reinforce one another. Meaning does not arise from a single architectural gesture, nor from conventional markers such as domes or ornamental calligraphy alone. Instead, it is produced through the interrelation of diffused light, restrained material expression, spatial permeability, rhythmic repetition, and everyday patterns of use. What emerges is not a symbolic statement in a narrow sense, but a spatial condition in which faith, atmosphere, and social life become mutually legible. This integration distinguishes the mosque from cases documented in recent studies of contemporary Indonesian mosques, which tend to frame minimalism primarily as a formal or stylistic choice (Primanizar, 2024; Suhendar et al., 2020). The present analysis suggests instead that minimalism here operates as a semiotic strategy – one in which the reduction of visual complexity is not aesthetic restraint alone, but a deliberate articulation of spiritual and cultural values through spatial means (Suryandari et al., 2023).

From a representational perspective, the mosque articulates humility, calm, and balance through minimal material treatment and close integration with natural elements. The muted glow of the façade, the presence of water and stone in the mihrab area, and the repeated wooden surfaces do not function as decorative additions. Rather, they guide interpretation through atmosphere, texture, and sensory restraint. In this way, values such as *ikhlas*, *tawazun*, and *rasa tentrem* are not presented as explicit symbols, but become readable through the way the space frames stillness, reflection, and inner composure (Idham, 2021; Munir, 2023). This is significant because it shifts the locus of meaning from symbolic display to environmental and material experience.

This representational layer is extended through interaction. As shown in the prayer hall and threshold areas, openness and permeability do not merely support circulation; they shape how the mosque is entered, inhabited, and shared. Filtered daylight, visual continuity, and soft transitions between inside and outside create a spatial setting in which users do not simply occupy the mosque for ritual purposes, but engage it as a lived environment. Repeated observations and visitor accounts indicate that this openness accommodates multiple modes of presence, from congregational prayer and Qur’anic recitation to pausing, resting, and informal gathering. Meaning, therefore, is not only represented through space but enacted through use, where spiritual and social practices remain in active relation.

Compositionally, this synthesis is held together by a consistent ordering logic. Rhythm, alignment, proportion, and continuity organize the mosque into a legible and balanced spatial field. The repetition of the wooden envelope, the directional clarity of the prayer hall, and the gradual transitions between enclosed and open areas produce coherence without visual rigidity. Harmony, in this sense, is not simply an aesthetic outcome; it becomes a spatial ethic. Order is experienced not as control or monumentality, but as a measured relation between stillness and movement, enclosure and openness, focus and diffusion. This is where compositional meaning becomes crucial: it gives structure to the mosque’s atmosphere and allows spiritual orientation to emerge through spatial clarity rather than symbolic dominance.

Read together, these three dimensions position the Saminah Sihyadi Mosque as a multimodal cultural text in which architecture communicates through relational experience. The mosque presents a localized expression of Islam that is culturally grounded, materially restrained, and socially responsive. Simplicity here is not reduction, but a mode of articulation; openness is not merely accessibility, but a way of negotiating inclusivity; and compositional order is not formal discipline alone, but a means of sustaining harmony between built form, human presence, and environmental setting. From this perspective, the mosque offers a useful lens for understanding how contemporary mosque architecture in Indonesia may articulate identity less through symbolic accumulation than through the orchestration of atmosphere, use, and spatial relation.

Drawing from these findings, this study proposes that Javanese-Islamic minimalism in contemporary mosque architecture operates through three interrelated spatial principles: *material sincerity*—the use of unfinished, natural materials as carriers of ethical and spiritual values rather than decorative intent; *relational permeability*—the configuration of boundaries, thresholds, and partitions to negotiate inclusion, privacy, and sacred-secular continuity; and *atmospheric order*—the

orchestration of light, rhythm, and proportion to produce coherence that is sensed before it is read. Together, these principles constitute a spatial model in which cultural and religious identity is enacted through experience rather than declared through symbol—offering a transferable framework for analyzing, and potentially informing, contemporary religious architecture in pluralistic urban contexts.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the Saminah Sihyadi Mosque operates not merely as an architectural object, but as a multimodal cultural text in which meaning emerges through the interplay of visual, spatial, and social dimensions. The findings reveal that representation, interaction, and composition are not discrete layers, but interdependent processes that collectively construct a culturally embedded expression of Javanese–Islamic spirituality. Rather than relying on conventional symbolic elements, the mosque articulates meaning through spatial strategies—light, materiality, rhythm, and permeability—that mediate both perception and experience. This shift suggests a redefinition of how faith is expressed architecturally: from visual symbolism toward embodied and relational forms of meaning.

The study also highlights that community integration within the spatial configuration extends the mosque's role beyond ritual practice, positioning it as a dynamic social environment—one that is simultaneously spiritual, cultural, and communal. More broadly, the findings suggest that contemporary mosque architecture in Indonesia is undergoing a quiet but significant transformation, repositioning simplicity, openness, and contextual responsiveness as central design principles.

Theoretically, this study contributes by demonstrating that multimodal discourse analysis is productively applicable to spatial and material environments where meaning is relational and atmospheric rather than symbolic. Methodologically, it offers a replicable tripartite structure integrating field observation, visual documentation, and visitor interviews, mapped through an explicit analytical matrix. For design practice, the findings suggest that architects working in culturally specific religious contexts may achieve stronger communicative outcomes by attending to the relational orchestration of material, light, and permeability rather than iconographic markers—a consideration particularly relevant for contemporary mosque design in Indonesia. The study is nonetheless limited by its single-case scope, three-week observation window, and small interview sample. Future research may address these by extending the framework comparatively across multiple mosque typologies or cultural contexts.

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