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**The Sociocultural Significance of Mosques and Islamic Community Centers  
within the American Muslim Community**

**Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
Master's Degree in Literature and Civilization**

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## **Dedication**

We dedicate this humble work to our parents, for their patience, love, guidance and for being with us, because without their support, the work would not be completed.

To all people who know us.

To everyone who helped us.

To the readers of this work.

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## **Abstract**

This study investigates the multifaceted socio-cultural roles of Mosques and Islamic Community Centers within the American Muslim community. While these institutions basically serve as places of worships, they have witnessed a remarkable shift to function far beyond religious roles, acting as important hubs for social interaction, cultural preservation, and more. This study used a qualitative research method, based on a review of literature involving collecting, analyzing and summarizing information to see how Muslims in America engage with these spaces and how these spaces affect their social and cultural lives. It reveals that Mosques and Islamic Community Centers play a significant role in shaping the identity, fostering the sense of belonging, providing various social services, and facilitating intergenerational relations among American Muslims. Additionally, Mosques and Islamic Community Centers have demonstrated their ability to face challenges such as Islamophobia, discrimination and cultural barriers. By highlighting the multiple roles of mosques and Islamic Community Centers, this research concludes that these institutions are not solely places of worship. Instead, they provide a wide range of services and support to Muslims at several levels whether socially or culturally.

**Keywords:** American Muslim community, Islamic Community Centers, Mosques, Socio-cultural Significance

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## List of Abbreviations

<b>CAIR</b>	Council for American Islamic Relations
<b>ICC</b>	The Islamic Cultural Center of Manhattan
<b>IMAN</b>	Inner city Muslim Action Network
<b>INSA</b>	Islamic Society of North America
<b>MAS</b>	Muslim American Society
<b>MECCA</b>	The Muslim Educational and Converts Center of America
<b>MFC</b>	The Muslim Family Center
<b>PBUH</b>	Peace Be Upon Him
<b>UCLA</b>	University of California, Los Angeles
<b>US</b>	United States
<b>USA</b>	United States of America

## **General Introduction**

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## **1. Background of the Study**

Over 3.5 million Muslims make up the diverse Muslim population in the United States. Mosques and Islamic community centers are considered in this community as locations for social support, religious practice, and cultural preservation. In Muslim societies, mosques have traditionally fulfilled multiple functions beyond being simple places of worship to include social and cultural functions. These American organizations provide essential social services like family counseling, youth activities, and anti-racism campaigns, in addition to supporting the preservation of Islamic culture and values. Mosques and Islamic Community Centers have grown increasingly important since the events of 9/11, as American Muslims have been subjected to intense campaigns of Islamophobia and discrimination. These places foster a sense of feeling of belonging and inclusion by offering a hospitable atmosphere for social interpersonal communication and assistance. Several studies have focused on the religious functions of mosques and ICCs, this fact makes the broader socio-cultural roles of mosques and ICCs a topic of various researches. This dissertation aims to fill this gap by examining how mosques and Islamic community centers contribute to community cohesion, cultural preservation, and social support. The study will discover the multiple functions these important places serve, what obstacles face and how they manage to achieve their objective of strengthening the American Muslim community.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

In the United States, mosques and Islamic community centers are essential places not only for religious prayer but also for social engagement, cultural preservation, and community support. Nevertheless, little is known about or has been sufficiently researched about their larger social and cultural roles. The majority of current studies concentrate on the religious aspects of these organizations, ignoring how they promote identity, offer social services, and maintain community cohesiveness without forgetting the efforts made to face

obstacles such as Islamophobia and discrimination. By investigating how mosques and Islamic community centers support the American Muslim community in addition to their religious functions, this research seeks to close this gap by shedding light on their important socio-cultural contributions to the American Muslim community.

### **3. Research Questions and Hypotheses**

The current study seeks to provide conclusive answers to the following questions:

- What role do mosques and Islamic community centers play in promoting community cohesion?
- Do mosques and Islamic community centers face challenges while achieving their objectives? If so, what strategies did they employ to respond to these obstacles?
- How do mosques and Islamic centers preserve and protect the Islamic cultural heritage?

#### **Hypotheses**

This dissertation is built on the following hypotheses:

- Mosques and Islamic community centers may enhance community cohesion by providing social support.
- Mosques and Islamic community centers may face various difficulties in achieving their objectives. To respond to these challenges, they employ certain strategies, including educational programs, cultural activities, and economic empowerment.
- Mosques and Islamic community centers can play a vital role in preserving the Islamic cultural heritage among American Muslims.

### **4. Aims of the Study**

The current study aims to investigate and clarify the sociocultural functions and importance of mosques and Islamic community centers in American Muslim society. In particular, it looks at how these institutions serve as hubs for social and educational

development, cultural preservation, and communal cohesiveness, in addition to their fundamental religious functions. The study also aims to highlight the most familiar obstacles that mosques and Islamic centers face while practicing their activities and to explore their responses to these challenges.

## **5. Significance of the Study**

Mosques and Islamic centers in American Muslim society have multiple roles, serving as not just places of worship but also as important centers for community building, cultural preservation, and social support. The importance of this research is to address a notable absence in current studies by examining how these establishments contribute to nurturing a sense of identity, inclusion, and making Muslims able to protect their traditions and values among Americans. The information provided in this study will help create a better understanding and improve public awareness to fight stereotypes and promote more inclusivity.

## **6. Research Methodology**

In order to obtain relevant information concerning our topic, and to answer our research questions, a qualitative research method was adopted. The qualitative method is based on collecting data that serve the objective of the study. A combination of the historical method and the descriptive method is applied in the two chapters to examine the importance of mosques and Islamic community centers in American Muslim society.

## **7. Structure of the Dissertation**

In order to cover all the points concerning this topic, this dissertation is divided into two main chapters. The first chapter investigates the social importance of mosques and Islamic community centers within American Muslim society. It also provides detailed information about the different functions that mosques and ICCs play in American Muslim society and their contribution to the social cohesion of American Muslims. It also covers the

issue of challenges and obstacles that face mosques and ICCs, and highlights the various strategies that they adopt to confront these challenges.

On the other hand, the second chapter gives a clear idea of the role that mosques and ICCs play in preserving the cultural Islamic heritage and the great impact they have had on Muslims especially youth. In addition, this chapter examines the different cultural activities, initiatives, programs, and events that play a great role in nurturing and enriching Muslim identity with Islamic traditions and values.

Finally, the dissertation concludes with a comprehensive conclusion, recapitulating the key themes and findings explored in the two chapters. These observations are subsequently utilized to offer pertinent recommendations for future research endeavors.

**CHAPTER ONE:**

**The Social Significance of Mosques and Islamic  
Community Centers in the Muslim American  
Community**

## **Chapter I: The Social Significance of Mosques and Islamic Community**

### **Centers in the Muslim American Community**

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## Introduction

Mosques and Islamic community centers serve as vital symbols of faith, culture, and community for Muslims in the diverse American society. These sacred places serve as vibrant centers of gathering, education, charity, and social interaction, in addition to their main role as sites of worship. Hence, to understand the social importance of mosques and Islamic community centers within American Muslim society, we must explore the complexities of their diverse functions and the significant influence they have on both individuals and communities. The fundamental significance of mosques is their function as spiritual places, offering Muslims a place to pray and practice their faith properly. Mosques function as spiritual identity anchors beyond the traditional role of worship, providing a sense of unity and belonging in a community that struggles with identity and belonging issues. In addition, mosques and Islamic community centers serve as educational institutions where people of all ages can learn Islamic history and teachings. These organizations support the development of critical thinking skills, especially among young Muslims, and enhance intellectual growth among them.

Crucially, mosques are important social gathering places where people meet to celebrate festivals, share meals during Ramadan, and support each other in happy and sad times. Mosques and Islamic community centers promote harmony within the diverse Muslim community in America, despite variations in age, color, and culture. Furthermore, mosques and Islamic community centers play a great role in facilitating outreach and interfaith dialogue, fostering understanding and cooperation between different religious and cultural communities. Through offering different social services, holding several initiatives, open houses, and partnerships with local organizations, mosques actively contribute to the broader social fabric, embodying the values of compassion, inclusivity, and civic engagement.

Comprehending these roles is essential to gain a deeper insight into the social interactions within the Muslim community in America and to promote increased intercultural

comprehension and collaboration. To accomplish this goal, the chapter initially examines the historical background of mosques in the United States. It then explores their functions as focal points for social interactions, places of learning, hubs for charitable activities, and participants in interfaith initiatives. The discussion culminates with an examination of the obstacles confronting them and the tactical measures taken in response to these challenges.

## **1-Mosques Across America:**

### **1-1-A Historical Background**

Mosques can be found throughout the United States, spanning from bustling urban centers to remote rural areas, serving as places of worship and spiritual refuge for Muslim Americans. Significant events, such as immigration rules, contributions by noteworthy individuals and organizations, and the impact of US foreign relations on immigrant populations, are frequently used to record the history of Islamic communities in the country. According to the Pluralism Project at Harvard University (2020), the majority of Muslims in America are either immigrants or descendants of immigrants, mirroring the broader narrative of immigration and cultural assimilation in the United States. The migration of Muslims to the U.S. dates back to the late 1800s, with the initial wave arriving on the East Coast in the 1870s, primarily from Syria and Lebanon. Later, European Muslims followed, and in the early 1900s, Muslims from the Indian subcontinent came to the West Coast. Like any other religion, American Muslims want to practice their religion and do their rituals in a private sacred place, which is known as “the mosque”, or “Al masjid’ in Arabic. However, early Muslims were only small groups who were not financially ready yet to build mosques, so the idea of mosques was soon embodied in private homes or rented-out halls.

Building mosques in America was particularly related to the increasing number of Muslims. The coming Muslim wave or immigration wave has gone through three phases. First, the entrance of African slaves in the 1700s marked the beginning of the Muslim immigration wave, but many of them were forced to convert to Christianity, and their right to practice their religion was denied. Second, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw the coming of the second major wave of Muslim immigration. The majority of the immigrants in this group were from Arab nations. According to Pang (2017), many Muslim immigrants from the Middle East and South Asia came to the United States seeking job opportunities

following the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which eliminated the national origins quota system and prioritized family ties and skills.

Furthermore, a U.S. survey (2011) reported that 26% of all the mosques studied were established from 2000–2011. There are several reasons behind the large number of new mosques; one reason could be the rise in Muslim refugees and new immigrant groups who have encouraged them to build mosques. Another reason could be in his report; Bagby (2011) claimed that the increasing Muslim population in earlier unpopulated regions of a city, suburb, or town has inspired Muslims to establish mosques in these previously uninhabited areas. Additionally, because of the differences in ethnicity and religion among Muslims, some have left a mosque to find their own, which is more suitable for their understanding of Islam.

The statistics provided in Bagby’s report (2011) proved the remarkable increase in the number of mosques and mosque participants in the USA. The US Mosque Survey (2011) counted a total of 2,106 mosques, as compared to the year 2000, when 1,209 mosques were counted, representing a 74% increase from 2000.

<i>The Number of Mosques in the US Continues to Grow</i>		
<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Mosques</b>	<b>Percentage Increase</b>
1994	962	
2000	1,209	26%
2011	2,106	74%

**Figure 1:** The Increasing Number of Mosques in the USA

### 1.2. Mosques vs. Islamic Community Centers

Historically, the mosque (or masjid) has been a pivotal institution within the Islamic community, playing an important part in Muslims' daily lives (Warrach & Feroze, 2003). While both mosques and Islamic community centers serve as essential pillars of Muslim life, their historical development and primary functions differ significantly. This

analysis explores these distinctions, exploring the historical context in which each emerged and the core functionalities they provide.

### **1.2.1. Mosques in the United States**

Since September 11, the construction of mosques in the United States has been met with opposition in various communities in the form of legal restrictions on zoning and building permits and sometimes outright hostility. This opposition reflects the growing visibility of Muslims in the public sphere and highlights the American public's need to reconcile with Islam as a religion increasingly present in various facets of society. Characteristics of modern mosque architecture that will serve generations of American Muslims continue to be defined by the yet constantly evolving process of integration and identity in the United States.

#### **1.2.1.1. Definition of Mosque**

In Islam, prayers can be offered anywhere on God's earth. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) said: "The world, the whole of it, is a mosque." "Wherever you turn, there is the face of God." (Quran, 2:115). This underscores the belief that Allah's presence is everywhere, allowing worship in any location. Yet, Muslims often prefer a designated, sacred space for communal worship. The word *masjid* in Arabic, or mosque, comes from the word "Sajad". It has several meanings, according to the following mu'jam: Lisan al-Arab (Ibn Mandour, 2003). A mosque can be any place used for acts of worship. It also means a place of prostration to Allah. According to Mu'jam al-Wasit, the mosque can be defined as a house for prayer and worship for Muslims (Al-Asfahani, 1997).

#### **1.2.1.2. Exploring Mosques in the United States**

An article featured in an exhibit catalog organized by Public Affairs Germany in the U.S. Embassy in Berlin and the U.S. Consulates in Frankfurt and Düsseldorf, accompanied by Dr. Omar Khalidi's photo exhibit "Mosques in America," reveals that the

United States is home to over 2,000 mosques, many of which are located within buildings originally constructed for other functions. However, mosques built in America over the past few decades, reflecting a period in which Islam has increasingly found a sense of belonging in the country, are predominantly architecturally designed. A study conducted in the mid-1990s found that less than 100 out of 1,000 mosques and Islamic centers had been purposefully constructed as mosques.

Additionally, many of the older establishments were not architecturally designed. These simple structures often served as communal or cultural hubs, offering facilities such as classrooms, a library, a conference room, a bookstore, a kitchen, a social hall, residential flats, and possibly even a funeral home. They had a prayer area, but there were also clubs, with a bingo room in the basement and a hall for dinner parties and weddings (Tachhini, 2011). For instance, the Islamic Cultural Center in Washington, D.C. (built in 1957), the Islamic Center of Greater Toledo, Ohio (in 1983), and the Islamic Center of West Virginia in South Charleston (established in 1989). These centers reflect the architectural evolution and community importance of mosques in America.

Leonard and Karen (2003) stated that when mosques were first constructed in the United States, Muslims wanted them to fit in with the surrounding homes and businesses. However, by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Muslims desired their mosques to be clearly distinctive symbols of Islamic identity, such as domes and minarets. Following the significant event of 9/11, “a renovated atmosphere has affected the style and inspiration of new mosques, through which Muslims get creative and stir controversy and debate.” (Power & Carla, 2009. p. 50). For instance, the architectural changes post-9/11 symbolize the Muslim community's resilience and adaptation, reflecting a desire to assert identity and foster interfaith understanding amidst heightened scrutiny. Moreover, the Islamic Cultural Center in New York City, completed in 1991, and Dar al-Islam in Abiquiu, New Mexico, established in 1981, were among the pioneering examples of Islamic centers in the United States, as

highlighted in Muhammad's work on the Islamic Center of Washington, DC (Muhammad, Al-Markaz al-Islāmī at Washington, The Islamic Center of Washington, Color Tone Press, 1978).

It seems that the example of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) clarified that the masjid was not only a place of worship but also a place for learning and discussion. It was a hub for information exchange and social interaction. Today, an Islamic community center should provide such an environment, yet it is very difficult in the current circumstances to emulate the environment set by the Prophet.

### 1.2.1.3. Architectural and Functional Elements of Mosques

Irrespective of their geographical context, mosques exhibit several consistent architectural and functional elements. For example, the **sahn**, a level courtyard, serves as a space for congregational prayers and communal gatherings. The **mihrab**, positioned towards the qibla direction within prominent mosques like 'al-Haram' in Mecca, designates the direction of prayer towards the Kaaba. Adjacent to the mihrab lays the **mimbar**, or pulpit, where religious sermons are delivered by appointed speakers, typically located on the right-hand side. Architecturally, the dome, a central feature of mosque roofing, typically manifests as a rounded or semi-circular structure covering the central area of the building, which is generally of modest height. While historically absent from early mosque constructions such as that of Medina during the Prophet's era, the minaret emerged as a distinctive architectural element during the Umayyad dynasty. Initially conceived for aesthetic enhancement and symbolic representation of Islamic majesty, the minaret also functioned practically as a platform for the adhan, ensuring the call to prayer resonated beyond the immediate vicinity of the mosque to reach the wider Muslim community (Warraich & Feroze, 2003).

In the United States, the construction of mosques has been a complex endeavor, yet it has shown progressive development throughout history. Khalidi (2008) observes that the evolution of mosque architecture has been marked by a variety of design concepts. One notable category comprises mosques that adhere to traditional design principles adapted to

Islamic regions. Several prominent mosques exemplify this architectural style. Some mosques embody a reinterpretation of tradition, occasionally integrating elements of American architectural styles. Beyond established styles, mosque architecture can exhibit a remarkable degree of innovation.

#### **1.2.1.4. Roles and Functions of the Mosques**

Kamil and Darojat (2019) highlight the mosque's role as a sanctuary for travelers and a center for prayers. Therefore, it is reasonable to state that a mosque is a facility with a significant purpose. Towns have developed around the mosque, which served as the hub of the community for much of Islamic history. Nowadays, mosques are widespread, especially in places where many Muslims live. This makes it convenient for Muslims to go to the mosque for their daily prayers. Mosques are crucial parts of Islamic communities in the West that usually contain community services and educational spaces.

Within the mosque, significant roles are undertaken by two essential individuals in the dissemination of the faith's teachings. The Mu'adhdhin, is the appointed official responsible for issuing the call to prayer, known as the Adhan, for the communal worship on Friday and the Prayer (Salat), the daily prayers conducted five times, at dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset, and nightfall. Meanwhile, the Imam serves as the religious leader who typically leads the congregational prayers within the mosque.

However, despite these historical roles and functions, the number of mosques that are abandoned shows that public understanding of the significance of mosques' role has decreased recently. Nowadays, people believe that a mosque should only be used for prayer; unlike during the Prophet's time, so mosques are no longer seen as an important hub (Dan & Kusuma, 2017). Additionally, Isnaini et al., (2019) also claimed that mosques served as the main place of worship in addition to other purposes throughout the time of the Prophet Muhammad; the mosque served as a hub for scientific, educational, and social-political advancement.

### 1.2.2. The Significance of Islamic Community Centers

An Islamic community center becomes an expression of Islamic cultural identity and is an important addition to the American and Muslim experience. Most of the Islamic Center's programs and activities revolve around worship, education, and service, under the broad philosophy of "Building Bridges." This philosophy often translates into positive interfaith activities. As a result, a typical Islamic center serves as the most dynamic and multifaceted hub for the Muslim community. In addition to locations for daily prayers, jumu'ah prayers, and weekend Islamic schools, these centers host youth programs, lectures and seminars, and various social service activities, such as feeding the homeless, blood drives, and health fairs.

Through offering different social services holding several initiatives, open houses, and partnerships with local organizations, mosques actively contribute to the broader social fabric, embodying the values of compassion, inclusivity, and civic engagement. Furthermore, mosques and Islamic community centers have much more social value within American Muslim society. They are dynamic centers of spirituality, education, community building, and civic involvement that have a great impact on people's daily lives and add to the rich tapestry of diverse American identity. Therefore, investigating the multifaceted roles of mosques and Islamic community centers is important to understand Muslim life in America as well as discover the challenges they face.

The need for a community center often arose when a Muslim community reached a certain size, typically a few hundred families, at which point it became possible to employ an imam and other staff full-time, conduct regular congregational prayers, and organize educational and social programs. Up to this point, community members might have been gathering for Friday prayers at a university or a hired facility, conducting weekend Islamic school classes in the basement of a mosque or someone's home, and holding occasional public events in rented halls. Supporting this view, Qomar et al. (2014) argued that mosques served

as hubs for both religious and secular purposes throughout the Prophet's lifetime, including learning and socio-politics.

### **1.2.2.1. Architectural and Functional Elements of Islamic Centers**

According to Sembiring and Furqani (2021), the idea of building an institution that could foster different non-formal activities of study, guidance, and development of religion and culture emerged as a new concept aimed at restoring the mosque's role as it was during the time of the Prophet and the period of rapid Islamic advancement. This establishment is known as the Islamic Community Center. An Islamic Center serves as both a religious institution and a venue for various Islamic activities, encompassing both religious and social aspects. These centers play a significant role in nurturing and cultivating Islamic religion and culture within their communities. Additionally, many scholars considered the Islamic Center as both an institution of prayer and a platform for Islamic activity that combines both social and religious principles. They noted that the Islamic Center functions as a hub for the development of Islamic culture and religion; it serves as a shelter for the formulation of ideas to advance religious life and Islamic culture. Moreover, it functions as a platform for implementing non-formal education training programs and conducting research and development in these areas. The center is responsible for broadcasting information related to religion and Islamic culture, acting as a coordination center to synchronize coaching activities and support the development of Islamic da'wah. Moreover, it serves as an information center, facilitating public communication, particularly within the Muslim community (Ratnaand & Nurjannah (2020).

Islamic centers throughout the United States demonstrate a variety of architectural styles. Some like the Islamic Cultural Center in New York City (finished in 1991) and Dar al-Islam in Abiquiu, New Mexico (founded in 1981), show traditional design aspects. Others choose to have more innovative designs. The headquarters of the Islamic Society of North America in Plainfield, Indiana (built in 1979), as well as the Islamic Center of Albuquerque,

New Mexico (opened in 1981), and the Islamic Center of Edmond, Oklahoma (started in 1992), together with the Islamic Center of Evansville, Indiana (began in 1992), exemplify this modern approach (Khalidi, 2008). Also implicated are the Islamic Cultural Centers located in Washington, D.C., and Tempe, which were constructed in 1957 and closed down after completion in 1984. In addition to that, Richmond, Virginia, established a mosque called Al-Madina Mosque, where it incorporated both old-style and recent architectural ideas into its construction work.

#### **1.2.2.2. Mosques and Islamic Centers: Transformative Roles in Different Contexts**

Abd Al-Hady, in his book **The Masjid Yesterday and Today** (2010), claimed that mosques in Muslim-majority nations serve a more limited function since services that were formerly performed inside the mosque's boundaries are now handled by other organizations and institutions. With the establishment of a dedicated Ministry of Education tasked with overseeing universities, colleges, schools, and occasionally even madrasas, the educational role traditionally associated with mosques has diminished. In contrast, Kanmaz (2010) thought that mosques and Islamic centers have assumed distinct and more extensive functions in nations where Muslims constitute a minority. For instance, the mosque serves as a community center in some areas. According to recent studies, mosques are an essential and significant part of Muslims' social networks. They have had a beneficial effect on Muslims' integration and socialization into secular, western societies. Furthermore, mosques in Western countries are under more pressure than those in Muslim countries to serve as multifunctional gathering places in the context of immigration. In another way, mosques have evolved from being places for religious activity to hubs for a wide range of cultural and social activities.

As a result, Islamic community centers hold a central position within the community, exceeding their current significance in Muslim nations. They encompass a variety of amenities; including teashops, barber shops, bookstores, cassette outlets, perfume vendors, and halal food establishments. Additionally, affiliated youth and women's associations often

convene at these centers outside of prayer hours to coordinate recreational events and other communal activities (Abd Al Hady, 2010).

Whether they have their own dedicated space or are located within office buildings, Islamic community centers serve as versatile hubs catering to the diverse needs of Muslims in a community. This is because Muslims aren't obliged to visit the mosque for prayer five times a day. Many Muslims living in Western countries may opt to pray at work, missing out on the chance for communal prayer. However, they often gather at mosques on weekends. Consequently, these community centers often provide halal catering for weekly events to accommodate the dietary needs of the Muslim community. The more accessible these centers and their services are, the more people can benefit from them.

Besides prayer, mosques and community centers commonly offer additional services such as funeral arrangements, hosting Islamic marriages (Nikah), Islamic education for children (often including Quranic studies), and educational programs for adults. Friday sermons held at mosques are a regular feature. The primary purpose of a mosque is to provide a space for regular prayer, serving as a hub for religious activities in Islam. Typically, mosques are frequented by Muslim men for prayer, especially during work breaks, with some attending before starting work and remaining until after work hours. Therefore, mosques are strategically located to ensure easy access for worshippers.

Despite overlapping features, mosques and Islamic Community Centers differ primarily in their functions. While mosques focus on spiritual activities, Islamic Community Centers offer a broader range of services, including social and cultural services. This distinction highlights an effort to revive the multifunctional role of mosques as practiced during the Prophet Mohammed's era. Ultimately, mosques and Islamic community centers both play vital roles in Muslim communities. Mosques serve as the heart of religious life, while community centers provide a broader platform for education, social support, and cultural expression.

### **1.2.3. Exploring Mosques in the USA**

#### **1.2.3.1. Evolving Roles from a Place of Worship to a Community Hub**

With the increasing number of Muslims in the USA, both immigrants originating from various parts of the world and recent converts to Islam, the responsibilities over mosques have become complex and challenging. Mosques are now required to perform multiple functions beyond their primary religious role of worship to meet the varied needs of the diverse American Muslim population.

#### **1.2.3.2. The Significance of Friday Prayer in American Mosques**

The Friday Prayer (Jumu'ah), with its commitments to devotionism and sociality, is a cornerstone of Islamic practice. The Friday Prayer, which is the single most important weekly ritual event for practicing Muslims, combines commitments to aspects of devotionism, sociality, and collectivity in a synergistic way. Friday prayer requires extensive preparation. Muslims are required to engage in a ritual cleansing of the body and don “leveler” clothes, and they are expected to walk to the mosque in a spirit of moderation and solemnity. In the mosque, they enter a collective of Muslims who set out to worship God together. Their nationality, ethnicity, and social status become “marinated” in faith whenever they gather as a collective to pray together. This weekly gathering is for Muslims going to mosque, an exercise in building social bonds that engender a sense of “learned intimacy” among the members of the congregation. It allows Muslims to talk to people in the mosque about a wide variety of topics related to life, including their spiritual condition, which could include the well-being of the soul and its potential transformation. The U.S. organization Project (2020) found that Muslims in the United States of America had great difficulties attending the Friday prayer because Friday in the United States is a normal working day. Over the centuries, Muslims attempted to be committed to the Friday prayer and, in any case,

wanted to raise religious awareness of Muslim collective practice by gathering for their Friday prayer in other places, such as local parks and storerooms.

As a result, certain American Muslims pioneered the concept of "Commuter Mosques" close to their workplaces, enabling them to fulfill their prayer obligations while at work. These commuter mosques were predominantly situated in urban areas. This initiative emerged during a time when mosques were not widely dispersed across America. However, today, it has become commonplace for American mosques to accommodate more than 1000 worshippers during Jum'ah prayers, whether in bustling locales such as Silicon Valley, Manhattan's Upper East Side, or at the Islamic Center in Washington, D.C. These centers, alongside other mosques, serve as focal points for a substantial gathering of Muslims, fostering a sense of unity within the community. The remarkable increase in Jum'ah attendance in America was explained by being influenced by the concept of "Build it and they will come". Mosques' leaders remarked that as soon as they built or expanded mosques, they would be full of worshippers (Bagby, 2020). As mosques were evolving in terms of architectural design, their functions were also evolving. They were expanded from a mosque that serves simply as a place of worship to a communal hub that serves several functions.

#### **1.2.4. Enhanced Community Roles of Mosques**

According to Stacy (2014), the mosque serves as more than just a place of prayer. It is a place where Muslims meet, regardless of their race or nationality. This provides a clear message about the importance of Muslim unity, especially in the twenty-first century when the Muslim nation is more divided and scattered over the world than ever before. However, time and circumstances also bring about changes, and as history has progressed, the role of the mosque has also evolved slightly.

Additionally, mosques have expanded their functions as worship-based institutions and started to serve as educational tools, delivering Islamic teachings to young Muslims and initiating interfaith activities. Mosques also play a vital role in taking charge of

social events (weddings, funerals), and that was proven in Bagby's Report (2012) with statistics, which mentioned that:

In addition to educational programs, Islamic Studies classes are held in 83% of American mosques, and worshipping is conducted in 77% of mosques during the five daily prayers or Salat. In addition, 93% of mosques in the United States organize community events, and 79% of them take part in interfaith activities. These mosques promote interfaith discussion.” (p. 4).

### **1.2.5. Factors Influencing American Mosques' Transformation into Social Hubs**

Over the years, mosques have evolved from simply places of worship into social hubs, a transition shaped by several factors. First, as mentioned in the Pluralism Project (2020), Muslims in America consist of immigrants and their descendants who came from diverse countries, congregations, and cultures. Consequently, mosques were committed to serving the needs of these varied populations; here, demographic growth emerged as an influencing factor. Moreover, interfaith dialogue and outreach programs have played a crucial role in this evolution. In this context, Bagby (2012) states that 79 percent of mosques are involved in interfaith activities. Hence, mosques serve as a bridge to convey a better impression of Islam as a religion to other faith communities.

Technological advancements have played a significant role in reshaping the importance of mosques in America. The dynamics of human interaction have changed significantly over time, owing primarily to the spread of computers and other technological devices. These tools have empowered individuals to communicate and foster relationships with greater ease (Bandura, 1986). Mosques in America have successfully benefited from this technological progress, particularly through the use of social media platforms. This innovation has enabled mosques to expand their religious and social perspectives, reaching wider audiences and engaging with their communities in creative ways.

Mosques in America have significantly profited from technological advancement, especially social media, which has allowed them to expand their religious and social scope. Karimullah (2023) argued that mosques create strong social connections and a sense of belonging among Muslims. They are increasingly serving as hubs for social services in America, including community dialogues, social assistance programs, and catering to the needy. The mosque serves as a space for discussion of social issues that are important to society as well as a place for interfaith communication.

In summary, the adaptation of mosques in America reflects their growing importance not only as places of spiritual practice but also as vital centers for social and communal engagement, indicative of the broadening roles these institutions play in the lives of American Muslims.

### **1.3. Mosques beyond Worship**

#### **1.3.1. Mosques as Social Hubs**

It was discussed earlier that mosques had expanded their scope to serve beyond religious functions, and this expansion was thanks to factors that were mentioned before. In the coming section, we will explore how mosques are multifaceted and play different functions within Muslim society, particularly American society.

##### **1.3.1.1. Mosques as Gathering Centers**

The multifaceted nature of mosques has been a study focus for a large number of researchers to understand the impact of mosques on Muslim communities (Karimullah, 2023). Mosques were created to gather Muslims under their roof to worship God and do their prayers, which is the primary role of mosques (religious), but the gathering is not only for religious sake, Muslims may gather by managing some social activities like catering to the needy, organizing breakfast during the month of Ramadan, and celebrating both Eids (Fitr and Adha). Also, gatherings may occur for educational purposes. From the early beginning,

particularly in Mohamed's (PBUH) era, mosques played a great role in education. Wherever Islam took hold, mosques were built and educational instructions took place. As a result, mosques were like learning institutions with large numbers of students and important libraries as well. (Ibn Asakir as cited in Zaimche, 2001). Today, mosques still serve as educational institutions. For example, mosques provide an original reference to Islamic knowledge at Friday prayer sermons, lectures, and regular Quran recitation. However, this educational role is not limited to religious knowledge only but also life knowledge like ethics, morals, Islamic values, and social skills (Dana et al., 2011).

In the United States, based on reports, (Bagby et al., 2001) argues that mosque attendees are growing largely; about 4 million participants of Muslims attend at least Eid prayer. These Muslims who are gathered in one place, irrespective of their differences, are united in believing in one God and sharing the same religion. In addition to religious gatherings, American Muslims do gather in mosques for educational reasons and to get a good Islamic education, especially for young Muslims, and this task is conducted through full-time Islamic schools; about one in five mosques in America (21 percent) has a full-time Islamic school. In addition, American mosques are very aware of their responsibility to teach and educate the young Muslim generation through many activities, like regular khatirah or short talk, Quran memorization, tajwid classes, youth activities or programs, fitness or martial arts classes, and Arabic language classes. According to Abd Rahman (2023), educational programs provided by mosques help in forming a solid religious foundation and fostering positive behaviors among young Muslims; also, educational activities offered by mosques will support both adults and older people to have good lifestyles.

### **1.3.1.2. Mosques as Charity Centers**

Mosques function as charity centers, deeply rooted in Islamic principles of charity, as emphasized in the Quran: "Be steadfast in prayer, practice regular charity, and bow down your heads with those who bow down (in worship)." (Al-Baqara: 110). Charity predates Islam, reflecting ancient human concerns for support and assistance (Saripudin, 2016, as cited in Naisabur et al., 2023). In the American context, mosques play a vital philanthropic role, engaging in outreach programs such as food drives and clothing donations for the homeless and immigrants, with 63% of American mosques participating in these initiatives (Bagby, 2012). These services address the needs of Muslims and aid community problem-solving. Mosques also offer diverse philanthropic services like food distribution, healthcare, neighborhood improvement, education promotion, and personal guidance, significantly contributing to the social development of the American Muslim community (Adhami, 2010). The practice of Zakat (Islam's Third Pillar) helps alleviate poverty and reduce inequality, strengthening the Muslim community in America (Razzack et al., 2022, as cited in Naisabur et al., 2023). Zaid Adhami's (2010) study on mosques in Southern California highlights their active engagement in social services, such as zakat distribution, counseling, professional development, burial services, health fairs, and more. The most formal and effective service observed was the zakat distribution program, which is well-organized with specialized committees. Other services, like burial and food distribution, also have formal procedures, while some services remain informal and dependent on external partnerships. Many services are irregular and lack consistency, often being one-time projects or programs (Adhami, 2010).

#### **1.3.1.2.1. Collaborative Charities:**

The role of American mosques as charity centers is crucial. Still, collaboration with other organizations is necessary to handle various social services effectively (Adhami, 2010). Collaboration takes forms such as mobilizing volunteers, recruiting professionals,

hosting events, and organizing charity events together (Adhami, 2010). This collaboration fosters solidarity and a sense of responsibility within the Muslim community (Sandikci & Ger, 2010), while enhancing values of compassion and generosity (Alterman et al., 2004). Charitable actions also promote equality and social justice, aligning with Islamic teachings (Albrithen, 2023). Ultimately, mosques' charitable efforts contribute to the development of a cohesive and united Muslim community in America.

#### **1.3.1.2.2. Mobilizing Communities for Social Change**

Mosques in America serve as advocacy centers, particularly through civic education programs, empowering Muslims to participate in democratic processes (Rietbergen-McCracken, 2012). These programs, including religious and civic education, equip Muslims with knowledge of their rights and responsibilities (Dana & Barreto, 2011). Furthermore, mosques' spiritual actions, philanthropy, and social services reinforce ethical principles, fostering advocacy for various social issues. Interfaith dialogue activities in mosques facilitate joint advocacy efforts with other religions (Bagby, 2020).

It was mentioned before in Bagby's report (2020) that mosques in the USA devote a large space for interfaith dialogue activities, which can create a solid foundation of joint advocacy between Islam and other religions to advocate multiple issues such as social justice, human rights, etc.

#### **1.3.2. The Vital Role of Mosques in Social Services**

In the USA, mosques play a significant role in the community as social services providers because they offer several services that help Muslims in need, which contributes to community cohesion and the integration of diverse populations. Mosques in the USA provide several social services. For example, some mosques offer food assistance by organizing food pantries for Muslims who suffer from food insecurity or collaborating with famous food banks (Fulton, 2021).

According to the National Congregation Study (2018), 48 percent of US congregations, including mosques, provide food assistance, so when mosques provide such social service, this will help and support the Muslim community in America and prevent several problems like begging, for instance, and seeking food using other forbidden ways in Islamic teaching like stealing. It was mentioned earlier that mosques may collaborate with some famous food banks to provide food services. One of the most important ones is the Islamic Food Bank, which was founded in 2008 in northwest Ohio. Its aim is to fight food insecurity by identifying and filling in gaps to expand access to nutritious, culturally relevant food.

### **1.3.3. Mosques as Hubs of Health Equity and Mental Wellness Support**

Mosques in America serve as vital hubs for both health equity and mental wellness support within Muslim communities. On the health front, organizations like the Huda Clinic, initially conceived within mosques, provide crucial services such as free healthcare, medication, and screenings, with ongoing support from mosque-based fundraising efforts; like programming local visits to mosques to encourage donations (American Muslims and Free Health Services to Understand the Population, 2016).

According to Padela et al. (2011), imams play significant roles in promoting positive health behaviors through sermons, providing cultural sensitivity training, and offering spiritual guidance around health issues. Several factors have contributed to the mental health status of Muslims in America, like the aftermath of 9/11 violent attacks, discrimination, media misrepresentations, and so on (Amri S., Bemak F., 2012). As a result, several Muslims suffer from mental problems such as depression, addiction, and being aggressive, which later on will affect their status as American citizens. Mosques in the USA can act as a hospitable environment in which Muslims struggling with mental health problems can build solid social bonds and get support (Pew Research Center, 2018 as cited in Ali et al., 2022).

According to Community-Based Participatory Research 2022, the mosque community can support individuals suffering from mental diseases by offering diverse support mechanisms, including support groups, volunteer activities, and tailored services for new converts and their families, all aimed at fostering mental well-being and integration into American society

#### **1.3.4. Mosques as Catalysts for Youth Development**

Mosques in America can have an evident contribution to youth development; this sensitive part of society has been remarked for its stepping away from mosques, liking much freedom, and some of them engaging in immoral behaviors, which has rung the bell for mosques' leaders to provide youth programs aimed at shaping the character of the young Muslim (Udin et al., 2023). Youth development programs offered by mosques can take several forms; for instance, youth activities such as fitness or martial arts classes or sports teams, regular khatirah or short talk, Arabic classes, Quran memorization, and tajwid classes (Bgby et al., 2001).

Furthermore, mosques can have a role in guiding and supporting young Muslims and helping them navigate challenges and make positive life choices. This can be achieved by providing mentoring programs and workshops that train young Muslims in different things, such as engagement skills, nonverbal and verbal communication principles, and counseling services (Mentoring Muslim Youth Workshop, n.d.). Additionally, mosques play a crucial role in youth leadership development by providing a suitable environment that fosters the growth of young Muslims into leaders who embody Islamic values and principles. Mosques provide a welcoming atmosphere for young Muslims where they can strengthen their Islamic identity and contribute to the community (Udin et al., 2023).

Usually, people who come to the mosques are elderly. However, young people seem uninterested in joining and coming to the mosque. Therefore, mosques have started to think about engaging youth by adopting different activities such as organizing sports,

seminars, outdoor motivational events, and recreational activities within the mosque, aiming to promote physical fitness, teamwork, and healthy lifestyles.

### **1.3.5. The Role of Muslim Women in American Mosques: Empowerment and Participation**

In America, Muslim women constitute 46 percent of the Muslim population, contributing significantly to various spheres of life (Pew Research, 2017). Despite historical and contemporary challenges, they have demonstrated professionalism and engagement across professions and societal interactions, fostering interfaith dialogue and dispelling misconceptions about Islam (Taylor, editor of the Muslim women's magazine *Azizah*, 2007).

While historical precedence illustrates the involvement of women in mosques during the Prophet's era, recent times have seen disparities in women's participation, with some mosques limiting or excluding them from activities (Utaberta et al., 2018). In fact, in some countries, women are not allowed to enter the mosque or be a part of mosques' activities (Nawaz, 2005, as cited in Utaberta et al, 2018). However, there is a growing recognition of women's roles within mosques, as evidenced by increasing attendance at prayers and leadership positions on mosque boards. For example, the Pew Research Center analysis of faith communities today (2011-2020), showed that the number of women who are allowed on board as trustees increased from 77 percent to 88 percent.

Initiatives like the Women's Mosque of America highlight efforts to empower women and expand their involvement in religious and social spheres. Achieving gender equality and mental wellness for Muslim women requires fostering inclusivity and dialogue, and providing supportive services within mosques, aiming to strengthen their roles in the community (Ali, 2022).

## **1.4. Islamic Community Centers in America**

Islamic community centers, also known as ICCs, are establishments created to offer social activities and values (Ratna et al., 2020). They function as hubs that provide support, education, and cultural interaction by offering prayer spaces, counseling services, educational programs, and social events to nurture a sense of community and belonging (Pew Research, 2018; Khan, 2017; Islamic Society of North America, n.d.; Ameri, 2019).

In these centers, individuals and families do not have access to places for prayer and worship. Also benefit from a wide range of resources to tackle the complex challenges of contemporary life (Khan, 2017). Furthermore, they work towards bridging the gap between communities and society at large through interfaith dialogue, outreach initiatives, and charitable projects aimed at fostering understanding and dispelling misconceptions (Bagby, 2001; Islamic Relief USA, n.d.). Additionally, ICCs are advocates for justice by addressing issues like discrimination, Islamophobia, and violations of civil rights. Essentially, ICCs play a role in offering guidance and championing positive societal changes, within Muslim communities as well as in broader society (Bagby, 2001).

### **1.4.1. Understanding the Mission**

Islamic community centers (ICCs) in the USA function as essential hubs for the Muslim population and offer a variety of services and opportunities for engagement (Bagby et al., 2001). Primarily, these centers provide spiritual guidance by hosting congregational prayers, Friday sermons, and religious ceremonies, facilitated by imams and religious leaders who offer counseling and religious education (Khan, 2017). ICCs also offer educational programs for all age groups, including Quranic studies, Islamic history, theology classes, Arabic language courses, and various workshops, thus deepening the community's understanding of Islam (Islamic Society of North America section, n.d.). Moreover, these centers address social and economic challenges by providing social services such as food assistance, financial aid, counseling, refugee resettlement support, and healthcare access

(Islamic Relief USA, n.d.). Furthermore, ICCs engage in interfaith dialogue and community outreach to foster understanding and cooperation between Muslims and people of other faiths through events like open houses, interfaith dialogues, and collaborative projects (Bagby et al., 2001; Khan, 2016).

#### **1.4.2. Types of Islamic Community Centers**

Islamic community centers encompass a variety of types, each catering to the specific needs and contexts of Muslim communities (Bagby, 2001). They differ in the kind of services they provide and the category of Muslim people they focus on, among them:

**Mosque-based Community Centers:** This type is usually attached to mosques; they provide comprehensive facilities for worship, education, and communal activities, featuring prayer halls, classrooms, libraries, and multipurpose halls (Bagby, 2001).

**Youth Centers:** They looked towards engaging young Muslims through holding sports leagues, leadership programs, and social events addressed to adolescents and young adults (Ameri, 2019).

**Women's Centers:** To provide a supportive environment for women, these centers offer workshops on women's health, parenting, and personal development (Khan, 2017).

**Educational Institutes:** They are dedicated to Islamic education, these centers offer formal schooling, weekend Islamic schools, and adult education programs (Islamic Society of North America, n.d.).

**Community Outreach Centers:** These centers prioritize engagement with other communities. They host interfaith dialogues, open houses, and community service projects (Islamic Relief USA, n.d.).

**Social Services Centers:** Pew Research (2018) claimed that this type of community center tends to address social and economic needs and offers counseling, financial help, food pantries, and refugee support for new immigrants or homeless people.

Consequently, the above mentioned types of Islamic community centers play a significant role in enriching the Muslims' lives in the United States, providing them with support, education, and opportunities for engagement within their communities.

### **1.4.3. Charity Organization**

According to Bagby et al. (2001), charity organizations within Islamic community centers in the USA are integral elements of the broader mission to serve both Muslim communities and society at large. These organizations, deeply rooted in Islamic principles of compassion and social justice, channel efforts toward addressing various social issues and supporting those in need (Bagby et al., 2001). The following points are considered key aspects of charity organizations within Islamic community centers:

#### **1.4.3.1. Zakat and Sadaqah**

It is one of the Five Pillars of Islam; it emphasizes the importance of charity among Muslims (Esposito, 2004). Generally speaking, the Islamic community tends to facilitate the collection and distribution of Zakat and Sadaqah through voluntary works to support poor people (Islamic Relief USA, n.d.). These funds may go to providing food, healthcare, education, and other essential needs.

#### **1.4.3.2. Community Outreach Programs**

Charity organizations within Islamic community centers actively engage in outreach programs to identify and assist vulnerable populations within their local communities. This might involve programs like food donations, clothing drives, and assistance for immigrants and refugees getting settled in America (Bagby et al., 2001).

#### **1.4.3.3. Disaster Relief Efforts**

Islamic community centers organize disaster relief operations and aid for affected populations in response to natural disasters and humanitarian situations (Islamic Relief USA,

n.d.). Companies can support those in need locally and globally by establishing disaster relief initiatives or collaborating with overseas organizations.

#### **1.4.3.4. Social Welfare Services**

Many Islamic community centers tend to offer social welfare aimed at tackling serious issues such as poverty, homelessness, and healthcare problems (Bagby et al., 2001). Free medical treatments, financial aid for low-income families, and support for those dealing with immigration issues are a few examples of these initiatives.

#### **1.4.3.5. Educational Initiatives**

Charity groups in Islamic community centers understand the value of education in ending poverty and empowering people (Islamic Society of North America, n.d.). They may provide scholarships, financial assistance, and educational programs that enhance education and access to quality education, particularly in impoverished headquarters.

#### **1.4.3.6. Interfaith Collaboration**

In the spirit of promoting unity and understanding, charity organizations within Islamic community centers often collaborate with interfaith groups and non-Muslim organizations to address common social concerns (Bagby et al., 2001). Through joint initiatives and partnerships, they work towards building bridges of solidarity and fostering mutual respect among diverse communities (Khan, 2016). Additionally, charity organizations within Islamic community centers play a vital role in embodying Islamic values of compassion, generosity, and service to humanity (Esposito, 2004). By addressing social issues and offering support to those in need, these organizations contribute to the broader mission of creating a more equitable and compassionate Muslim society in America (Pew Research, 2018).

### **1.5. Challenges Confronting Mosques and Islamic Community Centers in the USA**

Mosques and Islamic Community Centers are globally prevalent, mirroring the distribution of the Muslim population, and their existence is a commonplace aspect within Islamic nations. However, in countries where Islam is not the predominant religion, such as the United States, the establishment of mosques represents a significant challenge. These are the primary hurdles that may face mosques and Islamic community centers in the United States:

### **1.5.1. Discrimination and Islamophobia**

Mosques and Islamic community centers often confront discrimination and hostility from individuals or groups holding negative stereotypes or prejudices against Islam and Muslims ((Pew Research, 2018). This can manifest in various ways, including vandalism, hate speech, harassment, and even violent attacks. Overcoming Islamophobia necessitates serious efforts to educate the public, promote interfaith dialogue, and dispel misinformation about Islam and Muslims (Khan, 2016).

### **1.5.2. Zoning and Permitting Challenges**

Mosques and Islamic community centers may encounter difficulties related to zoning regulations and obtaining permits for construction or expansion (Khan, 2016). Local opposition or bureaucratic obstacles can delay or obstruct the establishment of new facilities, hindering Muslim communities' ability to practice their faith and engage in communal activities.

### **1.5.3. Surveillance and Monitoring**

Muslim communities often face surveillance and monitoring by law enforcement agencies in the name of counterterrorism efforts (Bagby et al., 2001). This can create an atmosphere of fear and mistrust, hindering mosques and community centers' ability to function as safe and welcoming spaces for worship, education, and social gatherings.

#### **1.5.4. Hate Crimes and Security Risks**

Hate crimes targeting mosques and Islamic community centers have seen an increase, posing significant security concerns for Muslim communities. Threats, vandalism, and acts of violence not only jeopardize the physical safety of community members but also inhibit their freedom to practice their religion and express their identity (Bagby et al., 2001).

#### **1.5.5. Cultural and Linguistic Barriers**

Immigrant and refugee communities within Muslim populations may encounter challenges such as language barriers, cultural adjustment, and integration into American society (Khan, 2017). Mosques and community centers play a critical role in providing support services, language classes, and cultural orientation programs to help newcomers navigate these challenges and foster a sense of belonging.

#### **1.5.6. Resource Constraints**

Many mosques and Islamic community centers operate with limited resources and depend heavily on donations and volunteer efforts to sustain their operations (Islam Relief USA, n.d.). Financial limitations can impede their ability to provide essential services, maintain facilities, and support community initiatives effectively. According to Khan (2016), facing these challenges takes a comprehensive approach involving community empowerment, advocacy, education, and collaboration with government agencies, civil society organizations, and interfaith partners. All these factors will work together to promote tolerance, safeguard civil liberties, and uphold the rights of all individuals, particularly Muslims, to practice their faith peacefully (Pew Research, 2018).

#### **1.5.7. American Community Resistance**

American communities often resist the establishment of mosques and Islamic community centers, necessitating a multifaceted approach to foster inclusivity and understanding (Bagby et al., 2001). Education and awareness-building are central to this

effort, countering misconceptions and stereotypes through accurate information and dialogue. Initiatives like outreach programs, educational efforts, and interfaith dialogues promote mutual understanding. Highlighting values like diversity, inclusion, and religious freedom are vital (Esposito, 2004), emphasizing Muslims' contributions to various sectors of American society and shared values across faiths (Khan, 2016).

Mosques and Islamic centers have to directly tackle concerns and misconceptions while also encouraging open discourse and interaction (Islamic Society of North America, n.d.). Collaboration with local leaders, government, law enforcement, and interfaith groups enhances efforts to fight opposition (Bagby et al., 2001). Legal safeguards and advocacy ensure protection against discrimination by pushing for regulations that protect religious freedom and Muslims from discrimination or hatred (Pew Research, 2018). Positive outreach strategies, including community service programs and cultural events, promote meaningful encounters and bridge-building (Islamic Relief USA, n.d.).

## **1.6. Meeting Challenges**

### **1.6.1. Strategic Responses Taken by Mosques and Islamic Community Centers**

Based on the challenges that confront mosques and Islamic community centers in America and hinder them from achieving their role, especially the social one, they tend to figure out some strategies and solutions to overcome those obstacles or at least lessen them to fulfill their social aims.

#### **1.6.1.1. Educational Social Programs**

The educational aspect within the Islamic community in the USA is crucial for nurturing intellectual growth and fostering belongingness among the youth. Smith (2018) emphasizes the necessity for mosque leaders and ICC stakeholders to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment within the local Muslim community to understand their social, educational, and cultural requirements. This involves engaging community members

through surveys, focus groups, and meetings to align programs and services with their needs and aspirations. Additionally, programs and services provided by mosques and ICCs should be diversified to cater to different demographic groups within the community (Hossain et al., 2015). This includes educational classes, religious study groups, youth programs, family support services, and recreational activities, ensuring inclusivity and accessibility for all community members.

Prioritizing youth engagement, mosques and ICCs design programs and initiatives to empower and engage young people through leadership development, mentorship, skill-building workshops, and community service projects (Lloyd et al., 2018). Furthermore, interfaith dialogue and outreach efforts can promote understanding and cooperation by fostering partnerships with other religious and community groups (Patel, 2012). This involves organizing interfaith events, service projects, and educational forums to build solidarity and promote mutual respect and tolerance, thereby overcoming obstacles faced by mosques and ICCs.

To build community cohesion, mosques and ICCs organize social gatherings, cultural celebrations, and community events that celebrate diversity and strengthen bonds within the community (Rana, 2017). Continuous evaluation and improvement are essential to assess the effectiveness of programs and services, using feedback mechanisms, surveys, and evaluation metrics to make data-driven decisions and enhance social initiatives over time (Fetterman et al., 2012). Moreover, engaging parents and families in their children's education is crucial for academic success (Rana, 2017). Parenting workshops, family literacy programs, and support groups can strengthen parental involvement and create a supportive learning environment at home.

#### **1.6.1.2. Community Development Initiatives**

Community development initiatives within mosques and Islamic community centers in the USA are instrumental in fostering social cohesion, empowerment, and

community well-being (Smith, 2018). These initiatives begin with thorough needs assessments and community engagement to understand socio-economic, educational, and cultural needs (Smith, 2018). They offer diverse capacity-building programs, such as educational workshops and vocational training, to unlock individuals' potential (Hossain & Dutta, 2015). Additionally, they provide essential social services like food assistance and counseling to promote inclusivity (Jawad & Zurawan, 2017).

These centers prioritize youth development through tailored educational and recreational programs, instilling Islamic values and leadership skills (Lloyd & Devine, 2018). They also engage in interfaith dialogue and outreach to foster mutual respect and collaboration with other religious and cultural communities (Patel, 2012). Through cultural events and environmental initiatives, they celebrate Muslim heritage and advocate for environmental stewardship (Rana, 2017). Overall, these initiatives serve as catalysts for transformative change, strengthening social bonds and enriching societal landscapes with flexibility, compassion, and inclusivity.

### **1.6.1.3. Economic Empowerment**

Economic empowerment initiatives within Islamic community centers in the USA are integral components of broader efforts to uplift and strengthen the Muslim community socioeconomically. These initiatives aim to provide individuals with the necessary resources, skills, and opportunities to achieve financial stability, independence, and prosperity. Here's an outline of key aspects of economic empowerment programs in Islamic community centers:

#### **1.6.1.3.1. Business Development**

Islamic community centers often offer business training programs, workshops, and mentorship opportunities to aspiring businessmen within the community. These initiatives guide business planning, marketing strategies, financial management, and access to funding sources (Al-Dhubaib, 2016).

#### **1.6.1.3.2. Job Training and Employment Services**

Economic empowerment programs may include job training workshops, vocational skills development courses, and career counseling services. These initiatives aim to enhance individuals' employability, job readiness, and upward mobility in the workforce (Lloyd & Devine, 2018).

#### **1.6.1.3.3. Financial Literacy and Management**

Islamic community centers offer financial literacy workshops and seminars to educate community members on budgeting, saving, investing, and debt management according to Islamic principles. By promoting responsible financial behavior, these programs empower individuals to achieve financial security and resilience (Ameer & Othman, 2012).

#### **1.6.1.3.4. Support for Immigrant and Refugee Integration**

Many Islamic community centers provide assistance and support services to immigrants and refugees, including job placement assistance, language training, and cultural orientation programs. These initiatives facilitate economic integration and socio-economic mobility for newcomers to the USA (Mai, 2018).

#### **1.6.1.3.5. Community Economic Development Projects**

Some Islamic community centers undertake community-based economic development projects aimed at creating employment opportunities, stimulating local economic growth, and addressing socio-economic disparities in underserved neighborhoods (Tang, 2015). By fostering economic empowerment and self-reliance, these initiatives not only uplift individual community members but also contribute to the overall economic resilience and vitality of the Muslim community in the USA.

#### 1.6.1.4. Collective Responsibility and Self-Reliance

Collective responsibility and self-reliance are fundamental principles guiding the endeavors of Islamic community centers in the USA (Hassan & Shahbaz, 2019). These principles stress the significance of communal unity, mutual assistance, and proactive involvement in addressing the Muslim community's needs and challenges. Here's how these principles manifest:

- **Collective Responsibility:** Islamic community centers cultivate a sense of collective responsibility, urging members to actively contribute to the community's welfare through volunteering and support for various initiatives (Hassan & Shahbaz, 2019).
- **Self-Reliance:** These centers promote self-reliance to empower individuals and communities to control their destinies and overcome adversity. They encourage skills development, education, and seeking economic independence (Khan, 2017).
- **Community Support Networks:** Serving as hubs for building strong support networks, Islamic community centers provide practical, emotional, and spiritual aid to individuals and families facing challenges (Haque & Mirza, 2018).
- **Skill-Sharing and Capacity Building:** Centers facilitate initiatives to empower members with the knowledge and skills needed for community development and personal growth (Ali, 2016).
- **Promotion of Civic Engagement:** Encouraging active civic engagement, these centers advocate for social justice and community development initiatives, upholding collective responsibility (Ahmad & Al-Zahrani, 2019).

In summary, these values form the backbone of Islamic community centers in the USA, nurturing resilient and self-sufficient communities through solidarity, individual empowerment, and active community engagement.

## **Conclusion**

To sum up, this chapter has explored various aspects of the social role of mosques and Islamic community centers in the USA. First, we provided a brief overview of mosque development in the USA, emphasizing their evolution from mere places of worship to multifunctional social hubs. Also, this chapter covers immigration waves, increased construction, and changing architectural styles, while also highlighting the distinction between mosques and Islamic community centers. We discussed how mosques have evolved into multifunctional hubs beyond prayer, addressing educational, social, and cultural needs within Muslim communities. This includes the significance of Friday prayers and the emergence of commuter mosques to accommodate diverse populations. Mosques and Islamic Community Centers in the USA play vital roles in shaping youth, empowering women, and fostering community engagement.

Despite challenges like discrimination, Islamophobia, zoning issues, and community resistance, they offer essential services and face obstacles through community empowerment and positive outreach initiatives, offering educational programs, community initiatives, economic empowerment, and promoting collective responsibility, aiming to strengthen community bonds and foster resilience.

## **CHAPTER TWO:**

### **The Cultural significance of Mosques and Islamic Community Centers within the American Muslim Community**

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## **Introduction**

Muslims in America identify with a wide range of racial and ethnic backgrounds, including Asian, Hispanic, European, and black. However, although the community is diverse, American culture and the media frequently portray it as a single, homogenous religious and cultural group. This misrepresentation overlooks the tapestry of traditions, beliefs, and practices as American Muslims come from various backgrounds, contributing to a rich blend of cultural influences within the community. Mosques and Islamic centers, beyond serving as places of worship, provide American Muslims with a sense of identity and belonging. They act as hubs for education, social interaction, and culture. This chapter aims to highlight and explain the cultural significance of mosques and Islamic community centers within the American Muslim community. It also examines the interaction between Islamic culture and American culture as it evolves over time, with mosques and various Islamic centers becoming hubs for religious, cultural, educational, and social activities that support the formation of American Muslim identities. Furthermore, it emphasizes the crucial role these institutions play in protecting and supporting American Muslims against Islamophobia and widespread misconceptions about Islamic culture.

## **2- Mosques in USA:**

### **2-1-Guidance Beacon**

Every religion places the worship of God at its core. Thus, places of worship play a significant role in all religious societies' day-to-day activities. The mosque, or masjid as it is known in Arabic, has always had a special place in the hearts of Muslim populations in the United States. The mosque served as more than just a house of prayer, a place to carry out rites, or a hub for Muslim social and political activity. Rather, it has functioned as a representation of identification and belonging (Abdel-Hady, 2010). This section discusses and

clarifies the mosque's important position as a center of culture that promotes cohesion over the American Muslim community.

### **2.1.1 Mosques as Community Hubs**

In Islam, mosques symbolize devotion and the strength of community togetherness. They are beacons of spiritual growth, weaving the fabric of Islamic culture and faith. As Muslims stand side by side, shoulder to shoulder, facing the Qiblah, a profound sense of unity, equality, and spiritual connection prevails. This alignment represents the larger unity of the Ummah (Muslim community) and also reinforces the shared devotion that transcends cultural, linguistic, and national differences. Consequently, mosques uphold the fundamental principles of Islam by encouraging harmony and removing barriers. They exemplify Islam's message of oneness, and the Prophet's teachings of fairness, kindness, and respect (Importance of Building a Masjid in Islam, 2024).

Moreover, prominent mosques like Masjid Al-Iman, San Diego, California, Dearborn, Michigan's Islamic Center of America; Washington, D.C.'s Islamic Center, and other local mosques across the country are vivid examples of mosques that function as hubs for social interaction, interfaith understanding, and community development. These institutions, beyond their roles as places of worship and prayer, represent the inclusive nature of Islam in the United States. Through their efforts, both Muslims and non-Muslims have greatly benefited from their vital role in creating harmony, as they have the ability to erase divisions that may exist among Muslims; they are strong forces for unification. Believers from all backgrounds, cultures, and social classes come together within the mosque's embrace, creating a strong feeling of solidarity and purpose (Importance of Building a Masjid in Islam, 2024). In this context, (Islami, 2023) states that:

The mosque is a melting pot that must exist for the refinement of souls, detachment from worldly attachments, and the erasure of hierarchies, positions, barriers of

arrogance, and self-centeredness. It purifies hearts and prepares them for sincere worship and devotion to Allah (p. 03).

In addition, people would feel safe and comfortable, as Thaha (2019) argues that the mosque is the house of Allah, and compassion and love are radiated from this house. This is how the impoverished and homeless see the mosque's location. Therefore, in their daily lives, mosques ought to provide them with comfort and peace.

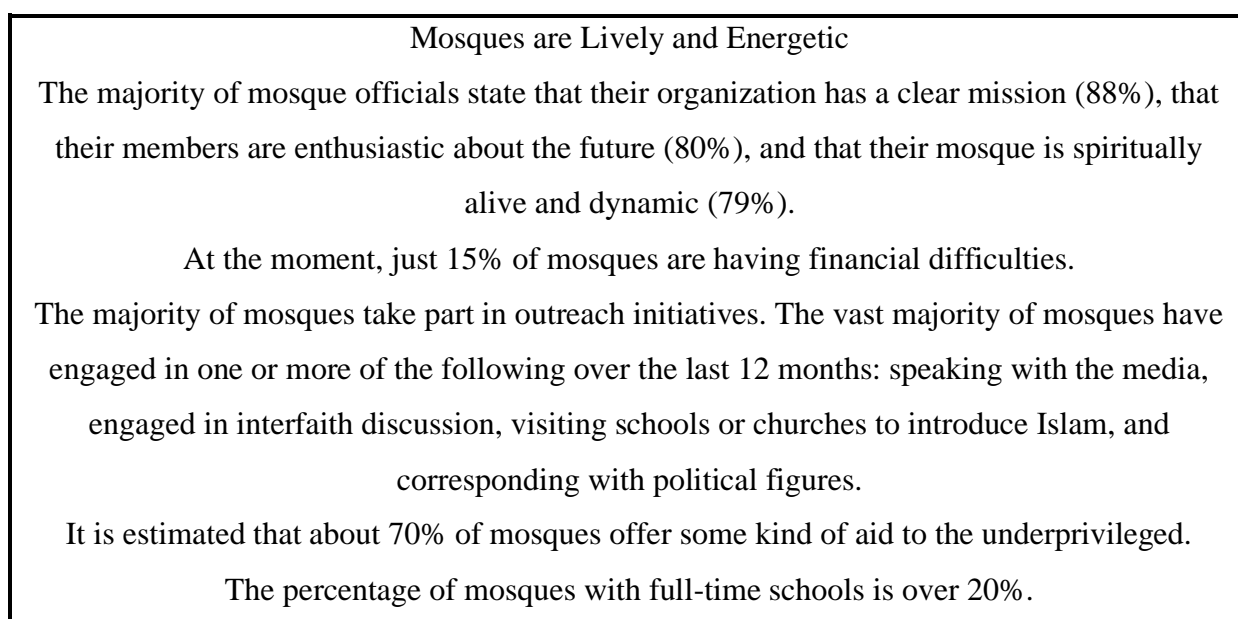
Furthermore, mosques, as communal hubs in the United States represent the base for cultural exchange. The function of the masjid as a hub for cultural interaction strengthens the bonds among the Muslim community. It provides a forum for exchanging stories, encouraging one another, and celebrating happy and sad times alike. Thus, masjids foster relationships through an array of community activities, from seminars and workshops to cultural events, which go beyond religious observance. Thaha (2019) also confirms that mosques serve as comprehensive, remarkable study centers in the truest sense. The teachers and students get along well, and the students are encouraged to engage in discussions. These universities excelled in the humanities and arts in addition to teaching sciences connected to Sharia.

Additionally, mosques serve as educational centers that provide lessons and cultivate the current and upcoming generations. A regular mosque attendee will undoubtedly learn a great deal about their religion and worldly affairs from the Quran, the Sunnah, and more, as well as develop remembrance, education, and worship skills.

In the same vein, Islami (2023) confirms that the gathering place for scholars is the mosque. The Prophet said, "Indeed, the scholars are the inheritors of the Prophets." They are able to meet the mosques' requirements. As a result, the community's leaders need to make sure that qualified imams and committee members for mosque maintenance are appointed in the right way since Islami (2023) declares that "Everything begins with education." (p.02), he ensures that our offspring, the Islamic future- If our children do not

receive guidance throughout their formative years, there's a good likelihood they will be misled by the bad things in society. By fostering a welcoming environment, mosques should aid in the development of soft values in their patrons. If not, they will be thinking about things that are contrary to Islam and its principles. This creates a demand for tutors who are knowledgeable about students' psychology.

The following statistics in figure 2.1, the Mosque Study Project in America for Religious Research, represents major findings as mosques are healthy and active (Bagby, Perl & Froehle, 2001, p. 04).



**Figure 2. 1.** Mosques in the United States as Healthy and Active Places

### **2.1.2 Mosques and American Muslim Identity**

Religion provides people with moral guidance, a blueprint for life, a feeling of purpose, and the capacity to face and eventually accept death. For these reasons, it is crucial to investigate the relationship between religion and identity (Berger, 1967). American Muslim identity is shaped by the integration of Muslim and American aspects, emphasizing inclusivity in defining both identities. Mosques play a crucial role in facilitating this integration by helping individuals separate their ethnic and religious identities, thus contributing to the creation of a more inclusive definition of Islam (Abdelhadi, 2012). In the

same base, Islam's social structure is referred to as the Ummah, or Islamic nation. This idea assumes that all Muslims, regardless of where they live, share a shared identity and a degree of solidarity that transcends country boundaries, color, and race. As a result, several academics have supported the idea that Muslims in the United States have established a "transcendent identity," including Lori Peek, Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, and Sulayman S. Nyang (Barreto, Matt A., and Dino Bozonelos. 2009 as cited in Hayette, 2018). For this reason, Muslims who live in the United States are known as Muslim Americans or American Muslims, despite the cultural, racial, and lingual diversity among them (Hayette, 2018, p. 77).

Additionally, Mosques in the USA serve as Islamic hubs for American Muslims, providing for their religious, social, requirements in order to help them practice Islam and forge a sense of identity and community. A strong religious and cultural identity is fostered by these institutions, which help members integrate into American culture by offering tools for community building, camaraderie, and mutual aid. Younger generations of American Muslims receive this sense of identification from mosques as well, providing normative points of reference for them to experience a feeling of inclusion in the larger community (Mahmood, 2016).

Moreover, (Abdel-Hady, 2010) states that today's Muslim communities in the United States are divided not just by race but also by ethnicity, class, language, and religious preference. Despite efforts to deliberately create an English-speaking, inter-racial, and inter-ethnic community of believers, other Muslim communities, particularly in Southern California, provide other models of communal development. He adds that "children and adults who identify as Muslims build their identities in Islamic schools, which are frequently associated with mosques. Weekend religious education programs are offered by the majority of mosques, particularly on Sundays" (p. 14).

Unsurprisingly, Mahmood (2016) stated, in A Qualitative Study, that resources to make learning about Islam easier for those who are not Muslims or who have recently

converted, such as the International Islamic Center library, helped his participants establish their faith-based identity thanks to these places of worship. Some examples of mosque-based programs that promote American Muslim identity include religious and educational functions, cultural and ethnic anchors, and integration and assimilation efforts. Mosques in the USA serve as religious centers where Muslims can worship and fulfill their religious obligations, providing spaces for daily prayers and congregational prayers on Fridays. These mosques offer extended religious services that exceed those provided by mosques in Muslim-majority countries, emphasizing the importance of religious practice within the American Muslim community. Additionally, mosques like the International Islamic Center and Salaam Society create cultural and ethnic anchors for their members, helping them locate themselves in American society (Mahmood, 2016). To further integrate American Muslims into society, mosque leadership and volunteer members employ various techniques, offering resources for linguistic and logistical assimilation. They encourage political participation, develop relationships with local authorities, and facilitate voter registration drives, thereby emphasizing civic engagement within the community (Mahmood, 2016). Mosque-based programs play an important role in shaping American Muslim identities by fostering a sense of belonging, cultural preservation, and integration into American society.

### **2.1.3. Mosques as Multicultural Centers**

Mosques in the USA serve as places where diverse cultural backgrounds converge within the American Muslim community. According to a 2020 survey, over 2,700 mosques across the United States, reflect the multicultural fabric of the country (Mosques: A fixture of America's Cultural Landscape, n.d.). These mosques, through their inclusive activities, foster greater brotherhood bonds and promote cultural diversity. They also symbolize cultural exchange through Islamic architecture, representing both societal harmony and spiritual value. Speaking of migration, Hall & Sevim (2020) state that:

People from different ethnic backgrounds, faiths, and consuming cultures are forced to coexist either freely or involuntarily as a result of migration. The lives of migrants and citizens of the host nation are directly impacted by these requirements, whether they are mandatory or optional” (p.137).

It is known that the USA is a home for Muslim and non-Muslim immigrants coming from all over the world, and mosques are of great importance in Islam because they are places where people worship, interact, and socialize, which leads to greater brotherhood bonds that promote cultural diversity. As mentioned, people develop relationships with their homes, give them significance, and let their surroundings shape who they are. Mosques are also a symbol of religion and culture. According to Awaliyah (2023), the mosque is a shining example of Islamic construction, representing both societal harmony and spiritual value. Muslims have a sense of unity and belonging as a result of its deeply symbolic design. Acting as both a place of spiritual refuge and a social hub, it is a tangible embodiment of the common faith, identity, and values that unite the global Islamic community.

In the same sense, the construction of mosques serves as an important tool where Islamic architecture evolves over time, promoting cultural diversity as mosques are being built in a way that also represents the diversity of the Muslim community. Mosques built by Muslims in America often reflect the diversity of their origin and culture, which is reflected in the architectural style and cultural elements (Building Bridges of Faith: Muslims Establishing Mosques Across America, 2024, para. 9).

Overall, as America continues to evolve as a multicultural society, the building of mosques is a vital symbol of the Muslim community’s dedication to peaceful coexistence with people of all religions. These efforts serve as a testament to the values of religious freedom, diversity, and tolerance that are deeply rooted in the American ethos.

#### 2.1.4. Mosques and American Muslim Society

“The mosque’s social and communal purpose is distinctive feature in Islam. The mosque is a part of everyone, young and old, male and female” (Abdel-Hady, 2010). As American society values individualism and the significance of the individual over the group, Islam’s society members cooperate in order to bring about peace and progress; as a result, they always stand by and support one another to live in harmony.

According to Hayette (2018), American mosques’ religious teachings and social programs are fostering a sense of community among this diversified population and cementing the connections of brotherhood. Besides, mosques in America serve as much more than just locations for Muslims to offer their prayers. Instead, they are seen as the community’s combined spiritual home, social and cultural center, and hub for political consciousness. The MAS Freedom Foundation’s executive director, Imam Mahdi Bray, stated that meeting the religious, spiritual, social, and civic needs of the members is one of the main responsibilities of Islamic centers, especially those in America. The triple mission of these mosques is to provide community services, education, and Da’wah. The scholar Abdus Sattar Ghazali, who lives in California, argues that mosques and Islamic centers are crucial to the American Muslim community. According to him, a lot of Islamic centers feature large rooms where locals may host social gatherings (Role of Mosques in USA, 2022).

Furthermore, owing to the leaders’ message, mosques are open to the concept of engaging with American society. Indeed, the leaders of these mosques are deeply motivated to encourage their adherents to engage with American culture, especially in the political sphere. Muslims should be participating in American public life, according to the majority of them (Hayette, 2018).

Overall, mosques in the United States serve as vital centers that not only facilitate religious practices but also promote cultural exchange, socialization, and community engagement, playing a key role in fostering cohesion within American Muslim society.

### **2.1.5. Mosques and the Promotion of American Muslim Citizenship**

Mosques play a critical role in promoting American Muslim citizenship, by cultivating social unity and enable political engagement within the Muslim community in the United States. They address the obstacles and hardships experienced by American Muslims while also offering the essential support needed to effectively navigate these challenges.

#### **2.1.5.1. Citizenship: Definition and Challenges**

Citizenship is the bond between an individual and a political community. Those who attain citizenship are endowed with specific rights while also being obligated to fulfill certain duties. These duties are essential and are upheld by both the political community and its constituents, while rights are conferred upon individuals and protected accordingly (Pasquino, 2015). There are two types of citizenship: political and social. From a sociological viewpoint, social citizenship represents a modern fusion of nationality and religion, serving as a marker of social identity. The welfare state, functioning as a safeguard against market injustices and class disparities, forms the cornerstone of social citizenship. From a political and legal standpoint, citizenship encompasses a bundle of duties and entitlements inherent to membership in a political community. These privileges are typically reserved for individuals holding a passport or contributing taxes within a state, aligning with the prevailing Western social democratic model (Turner, 1993, as cited in Sopian et al., 2018).

Unfortunately, the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks keeps growing heavily over Muslim Americans. The majority claim that since 9/11, Muslims' lives in this nation have been harder. Many fear being watched by the government, facing discrimination at work, and experiencing harassment in public. Compared to African Americans, fewer Muslim Americans say they have experienced bigotry in the last year. Nevertheless, a third of American Muslims say that, in the previous year, they have experienced verbal abuse, physical threats, or mistrust due to their beliefs (Pew Research Center, 2007).

### **2.1.5.2. Challenges Facing Muslim Youth**

American Muslim youth face various obstacles due to the complex intersections of psychological and social factors. American teenagers who identify as Muslims encounter various obstacles that could lead them to engage in harmful activities (Ahmed & Ezzeddine, 2009, p. 160). The transition from adolescence to early adulthood presents a period of constant change for Muslim youth. This is due to a combination of factors: evolving personal identity, shifting relationships, and adapting to new cultural expectations. Additionally, this period coincides with significant cognitive, emotional, and physical development. Muslim youngsters must deal with issues unique to their religious identity in the contemporary geopolitical setting, in addition to the normative development obstacles that all adolescents face. The primary challenges encountered by Muslim youth in America, as indicated by initial research findings, encompass deficient social integration, identity crises, and challenges in acculturating to the prevailing societal norms. Additionally, these youths grapple with preserving their personal convictions amidst societal pressures, navigating discriminatory experiences, and negotiating complex dynamics within gender relations (Ahmed & Akhter, 2006, as cited in Ahmed & Ezzeddine, 2009, p. 160).

### **2.1.5.3. Supportive Role of Mosques for Muslim Youth**

Mosques are seen as symbols of Muslims' existence and provide Muslims' identity with a physical form. Muslims and their political culture use mosques as public gathering sites (Hall & Sevim, 2020, p. 139). Mosques serve as social, cultural, and spiritual hubs for the American Muslim community, promoting inclusivity and cross-cultural interaction (Role of Mosques in USA, 2022). Despite the great role of mosques in transforming American Muslim youth into good youth who are suitable role models in society and its servants, they may forget to work more on some issues and challenges faced by these youngsters. According to American Muslim youth, it is often the case that mosques and Islamic centers are unaware of the challenges that people encounter and are therefore unable

to provide them with programs of framed Islamic learning that would facilitate their spiritual development (Ahmed & Akhter, 2006 as cited in Ahmed & Ezzeddine, 2009).

For young Muslims, the dearth of social and recreational programs that align with their developmental needs and cultural context, specifically American, while also respecting religious differences, poses challenges. This deficiency leaves them without viable social alternatives to the opportunities and activities in which their peers engage. Numerous young individuals opt to engage in activities with their peers that may not align with the principles of their religion due to limited alternative options. This decision aids them in averting feelings of isolation and alienation. Additionally, young people are frustrated by their lack of control over the future of the Muslim community, along with difficulties integrating Islam into a Western environment and the group's seclusion from American society (Ahmed & Akhter, 2006, as cited in Ahmed & Ezzeddine, 2009).

However, collaboration between individuals and community agencies and institutions is crucial, given the multitude of obstacles faced by Muslim adolescents and the various areas of intervention. It is probable that a concerted effort will reduce dangerous behaviors and encourage young American Muslims to manage the complexity of their lives and create a whole, integrated sense of who they are.

#### **2.1.5.4. Women's Empowerment and Community Engagement**

Mosques that engage in interfaith dialogue and community activities report higher rates of women's participation and leadership. For example, mosques that participate in interfaith dialogue activities have higher reporting rates for women's clubs (35% versus 20% of those who did not participate in interfaith programs) and women's activities (76% versus 49% of those who did not). The attempt by the Muslim community to refute the perception of Muslim women as oppressed by the public may be the cause of this association. The community felt more strongly after 9/11 that Muslim institutions ought to engage in interfaith outreach. Without a doubt, having women participate in these kinds of activities has benefited

the community by dispelling misconceptions about gender norms. Moreover, women are becoming more influential in the community and acting as strong community spokespersons. Thus, as Muslim women leaders, the 9/11 tragedy has created a platform for women to participate more in public life. Over the past ten years, a whole generation of young people has grown up witnessing women in leadership positions, which will eventually have a revolutionary impact on the community. It is crucial to remember that there are other institutions outside of mosques where women can become involved. These include professional groups, national conventions, and national organizations, all of which include women to varied degrees. “Why are not there more women speakers in this national conference?” is a question that Muslim women frequently ask (Sayeed, Al-Adawiya & Bagby, 2013, pp. 10-11).

In conclusion, mosques significantly contribute to the advancement of American Muslim citizenship by promoting cross-cultural dialogue, social cohesion, and community involvement. They offer a comprehensive support system that addresses the diverse challenges faced by the Muslim community, facilitating a more integrated and participatory approach to American social and political life.

## **2.2. Mosques Navigate Orthodoxy and Inclusion: A Balancing Act for Modern Muslims**

The concept of the Women’s Mosque of America has particularly aroused our attention. It exemplifies the dynamic contradiction between preserving Islamic orthodoxy and increasing inclusivity in American Muslim communities. This balancing effort has become increasingly visible in American society, where gender norms and diversity are major problems. The Women’s Mosque is a compelling illustration of how modern mosques are defying established norms. This project, I believe, tackles past discrimination while also enriching the community’s spiritual and social fabric by accepting diversity.

Like mosques throughout Muslim history, American mosques today strive to find a balance between ritual adherence and communal inclusivity. Those who see mosques purely as spiritual retreats fail to recognize how this conflict has defined the mosque's function from its inception. Fareed's (2015) research demonstrates how attempts at ultimate conformity can damage the mosques's position as a hub for a pluralistic society and a tranquil sanctuary.

Mosques balance orthodoxy and inclusion by addressing the complexities of women's participation and opposition to gender norms. Muslims have debated the arrangement and function of mosques since Islamic history began. Regarding prayer, Muslims believe that the Prophet Muhammad revealed that all of creation is a masjid, or a place where believers freely practice their daily acts of worship. Mosques served as more than just places of prayer, however, even in seventh-century Arabia. In fact, Muhammad's home in Medina, which is regarded by many as the first mosque, served as the first Muslim place of social assembly and religious teaching, in addition to being a place of private and public prayer for the early Muslims. Congregations like the Women's Mosque of America, an inclusive, multiracial, and multiethnic group of women in Los Angeles, argue that mosques ought to serve as spaces for teaching Muslims about gender, race, and ethnic inclusivity in addition to being places of worship. This demonstrates a growing movement within American mosques to address issues of inclusivity and social justice across gender, racial, and sectarian boundaries, perceiving these qualities as Islamic virtues. The Woman's Mosque of America, formed in 2015, and provides a venue for Muslim women to lead prayers, deliver sermons, and engage in ritual activities, addressing the historical exclusion of woman in traditional mosque settings (Ali, 2023).

However, those who advocate for women to be allowed in mosques, for instance, don't seem to care about how this would affect the mosque's sanctity. Thus, its opponents worry that what passes for women's rights are actually particular liberal ideals masquerading as equal rights for all. They argue that although allowing women to participate in mosque

events in accordance with popular culture is one thing, giving them the right to lead prayer or override established clothing regulations, for example, is against deeply ingrained Islamic beliefs. On the other hand, supporters believe that, when properly understood, mosques now violate both Islamic and modern society norms by refusing women full entrance (Fareed, 2015).

In our view, balancing tradition with modernity is a dynamic process within American mosques, and it mirrors the larger societal shifts towards gender equality and social justice. This balance is crucial, as it reflects the integration of Islamic virtues with contemporary values. From our perspective, the integration of women into mosque activities is a microcosm of larger societal changes, fostering a more inclusive environment that strengthens the overall community. This shift not only empowers women but also reflects a broader trend of inclusivity and equality that benefits the community as a whole.

### **2.3. Mosques and Interfaith Cooperation as Entry Points for Pluralism**

America's religious diversity creates a unique environment for interfaith cooperation. We believe this diversity, when actively engaged through pluralism, leads to significant societal benefits. In our opinion, interfaith collaboration extends beyond spiritual dialogue and addresses tangible societal conflicts, transforming religious diversity from a source of division into a powerful tool for social cohesion.

America is the most religiously pious nation in the West and the most religiously diverse nation in the world (Eck, 2001, as cited in Patel & Meyer, 2011). More than 80% of Americans identify as religious, and the variety of those affiliations keeps rising (Pew, 2008). Patel and Meyer (2011) suggest that cautions that, despite the popular belief that variety is a positive attribute in and of itself, "diversity" is only descriptive, telling us only about the types of people who make up a given community but not anything about how those people interact. Do different people have a common commitment to the common good and a sense of trust with one another? Or do they routinely engage in both official and informal interactions

with one another? Or do they continue to exist in a more surface-level tolerance that might not be able to withstand the pressure of genuine tension? According to Eck (n.d.), a society should actively engage variety in order to achieve pluralism (Patel & Meyer, 2011). In turn, our definition of interfaith cooperation is based on this concept of pluralism and aims to unite individuals of various faiths in a manner that honors their unique religious identities, fosters relationships based on mutual inspiration, and collaborates on matters of shared social concern (Patel & Meyer, 2011).

In 2010, there was a notable surge in calls for pluralism in the United States. However, American understanding of pluralism as a means of ensuring social equality was relatively recent. Pluralism was commonly seen as an indispensable social asset and a fundamental requirement for living in a free democracy, as articulated by sociologists Courtney Bender and Pamela Klassen. They described pluralism as the commitment to recognizing and understanding individuals from all backgrounds, regardless of perceived or asserted differences in faith. Nevertheless, Bender and Klassen emphasized that pluralism is a framework for acknowledging diversity, rooted in specific religious interpretations widely accepted within society (Pamela and Courtney, as cited in Hicks, 2013).

### **2.3.1. The Power of Interfaith Cooperation**

Interfaith collaboration offers a response to the challenge of religious variety that not only prevents civil violence but also strengthens communities in light of contemporary trends toward ignorance, intolerance, and friction. According to this viewpoint, interfaith collaboration transcends being merely a lovely concept for people seeking spiritual development and conversation. Rather, it becomes a matter of wider civic concern and a potential means of resolving actual societal conflicts (Patel & Meyer, 2011).

According to social science studies, this is true of the relationships between varied groups. Putnam argues that social capital rises sharply when a society or individual engages diversity via cooperative action in his examination of the ways in which diversity undermines

social capital. Put differently, a diverse society that manages to unite individuals from various backgrounds to collaborate on projects, in associations and organizations, strengthens the community despite its differences and fosters social cohesion, creativity, and productivity (Putnam, 2007).

Consequently, in our view, interfaith cooperation is not just a theoretical concept but a practical necessity in a multicultural society like the United States. This cooperation not only helps in building bridges between different faith communities but also fosters a sense of shared purpose and mutual respect. By engaging in interfaith dialogue and activities, we can address common social issues and work towards the common good, thus reinforcing the fabric of our diverse society.

### **2.3.2. Mosques Serving as Gateways to Pluralism in America**

The number of mosques in major cities like New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco appears to be equal to the number of Muslims. “Ethnic mosques” in San Francisco are largely frequented by communities that are Turko-Tatar, Gujarati Indian, Yemeni, and Fijian. Attendance at these mosques is open to all Muslims; however, linguistic or cultural barriers produce de facto splits in many of them. This was described as a “Mosque Baskin & Robbins, available in 31 varieties” by a young American Muslim. There is a growing divide in American communities between “immigrant” Muslims and “indigenous” Muslims of African American descent, which worries many. Nevertheless, attempts are being made to close this gap in many communities. For instance, South Asian immigrants and African Americans have long been part of the Ahmadiyya community, which gathers in Ahmadiyya mosques around the nation to practice together. Local immigrant and indigenous Muslim communities are organizing joint Eid celebrations, involving thousands of Muslims in exhibition halls and fairgrounds across the country, from New York to Texas and from California to Georgia (Unity and Diversity, n.d.).

Besides, considering the fact that there are still differences, a lot of American mosques unite diverse populations in ways that are unheard of in other Muslim or American religious groups. In numerous American mosques, racial and cultural boundaries, along with Sunni and Shi'i distinctions, vanish as American Muslims gather to pray together. People from diverse corners of the world stand shoulder to shoulder; although they speak different languages, they are united by a shared belief. During part of his lunch break, an African American man wearing a suit and tie prays. Nearby to him is a teenage Pakistani wearing loose-fitting pants and a flipped baseball cap. Next to him, an Arab father teaches the practice of prayer to his small kid, as a smiling European-American convert donning a kufi observes the scene. A young mother from Indonesia hides her girls' street clothes in the woman's section with long white robes and veils. The turban of the American woman on her right is brightly colored; a young Pakistani lady is adjusting her loosely draped scarf next to her as a Turkish woman unfolds a little prayer rug. Collectively, numerous American Muslim groups gather at Friday Jum'ah venues across the country to welcome one another, exchange Islamic knowledge, and offer prayers while facing toward the mihrab, which indicates the way to the holy city of Mecca (Unity and Diversity, n.d.).

In our opinion, the way American mosques manage to bring together such a diverse range of people is a testament to the inclusive spirit of Islam. These interactions not only break down cultural and racial barriers but also help foster a sense of unity and brotherhood among Muslims from different backgrounds. This pluralistic approach is essential for the growth and development of a cohesive Muslim community in America.

#### **2.4. Mosques and American Muslim Wellbeing:**

Muslims are migrating to the United States and other countries at an increasing rate. Unpleasantly, prejudice towards this minority demographic is also on the rise. For many Arab Americans and Muslims, spirituality and faith are significant aspects of their life. Religious convictions are seen as a major part of identity and have an effect on people's

mental health as individuals, families, and communities (Abudabbeh, 1996). As is already known, in the past, seeking mental health care was stigmatized and seen as untrustworthy, which harmed social connections and relations and had an impact on communities, businesses, and families. Nonetheless, as time passed, science advanced, new and contemporary discoveries were made, and psychological and mental health rose to the top of the list of concerns for people everywhere since it has a significant positive impact on one's quality of life and contributes to overall physical welfare. Another area where mosques have a significant impact is healthcare, as they facilitate primary health care access, particularly in places with few medical resources.

#### **2.4.1. Islamic Psychological Support**

The concept of "Islam" for Muslims refers to achieving a state of peace with God. According to Qur'an 41:44, the Qur'an is "a healer and a mentor for the believers," meaning it is God's message to believers. Islam is a whole lifestyle that instills moral and ethical conduct and gives daily existence significance and direction. The greatest way to prevent and manage emotional disorders is to follow the precepts revealed in the hadith and the Quran. In actuality, the Qur'an addresses a variety of psychological topics as a source of guidance and enlightenment, including parenting, marriage, and family relationships, treating the sick, justice, humility, and sincerity. For those who are truly committed, the teachings of Islam will guarantee a good quality of life and a healthy state of mind (Qur'an 2:177). It is crucial to remember that while the Qur'an offers guidance on living a psychologically healthy life, it should only be used as a religious text and not as a replacement for current medical expertise (Abu-Ras, Gheith & Cournos, 2008).

Understanding the tension that exists between the spiritual and bodily identities is the foundation of the Islamic approach to mental wellness advocacy. Whereas the physical self tries to assert its propensity for violence, greed, and cruelty, the spiritual self looks for human flaws, emotional vulnerabilities, and untapped potential. A person's physical side is

self-centered and desires destruction, but their spiritual side is selfless and wants to help and do good. Muslims are encouraged to work over their inner conflicts through their religious devotion and constructive activity. If they are successful in doing so, they can look forward to leading tranquil and fulfilling lives. Indeed, facing one's shortcomings and working toward improvements is a necessary element of being human (Wagdy, 1970). As Muslims navigate this moral minefield, they aim to comprehend the nature of mental illness and how it may hinder them from overcoming their innate faults. Islamic traditional teachings offer multiple explanations for mental disorders, such as a strained connection with God, divine retribution, or the uncertain course of God's will (Al-Krenawi, 1996). As a result, mosques offer a place where people can engage in acts of worship like prayer, dhikr, or Quran reading in order to commune with God. It is the instant when the person has a sense of divine presence and considers the purpose of their being. As people become more in line with Islamic principles and teachings, this process helps people's religious identities grow (Karimullah, 2023).

Like other religious communities in the United States, American Muslims have established their own organizations. For instance, American Muslim undergraduates at Charles Drew University and UCLA established the free medical clinic known as the University Muslim Medical Association in 1992 with the goal of providing healthcare to a diverse inner-city population. In addition, American Muslim students, locals, and leaders formed the community-based non-profit Inner City Muslim Action Network (IMAN) in 1995 to deal with abandonment and inner city hardship in the greater Chicago area. IMAN offers a range of offerings, such as a medical center that offers the uninsured people of Chicago's Southwest Side free medical care as well as support services (Interfaith Alliance, 2012).

In our perspective, it is true that Islam as a religion and faith strengthens the bond between a person's personal emotional well-being and mental stability and their beliefs, convictions, and devotion to Allah. Islam addresses and eliminates psychological issues and offers a window to a world of peace and freedom from earthly constraints, confirming the

idea that mental health and well-being are essential to our general health and happiness, as well as how we manage stress, relate to others, and make decisions.

#### **2.4.2. The Imam's Contribution to Promoting Mental Wellness**

Imams have a crucial role in helping Muslim worshippers with their mental health concerns, as well as in the creation and administration of community- and faith-based initiatives and amenities. When participating in outreach projects, social workers and mental health professionals should work in tandem with the local clergy to coordinate their activities. Furthermore, mental health practitioners ought to inform imams and other local authorities about the kinds of treatments that are accessible to mosque members. They may further enhance the imam's role as a mental health "gatekeeper" by providing written documents regarding referral processes and by conducting specialized ongoing education on mental health issues. These measures are crucial in easing the referral cessation process (Abu-Ras, Geith & Cournos, 2008).

In an effort to combat stigma, promote community resources, and encourage professional help-seeking behaviors, imams may include a section on mental illness in their weekly sermons. They could also educate their congregations on the role that religious coping can play in stress management. Given the apparent dearth of Muslim mental health experts, it is possible that more young adult American Muslims who identify as Muslims will explore psychology as a subject of study or employment if the significance of mental health care is further validated inside the Muslim community (Herzig & McGrath, 2014). Thus, a qualified imam should be respected as a visionary leader who attends to and consults with the appropriate boards and committees, rather than as an employee of the board who must constantly follow their lead. After all, he directs the entire mosque's initially developed strategy and spiritually inspired work. In addition, it is his duty to motivate and inspire others to take the initiative and direct the effort. Unquestionably, the foundation of any successful mosque model is an imam who is completely capable, educated, and empowered (Ederer, 2020).

This section has explored the ways in which American mosques navigate the complexities of orthodoxy and inclusion, interfaith cooperation, and the well-being of their congregations. Each of these aspects highlights, in our opinion, the dynamic interplay between maintaining traditional Islamic practices and embracing modern values. By balancing these elements, mosques not only preserve their religious identity but also contribute to a more inclusive and cohesive society. We believe this synthesis of tradition and modernity is crucial in fostering a community that respects diversity, promotes social cohesion, and supports the mental well-being of its members. The evolving role of mosques in American society reflects broader societal changes and underscores the importance of inclusivity and interfaith cooperation in achieving social harmony and well-being.

### **2.5. Islamic Community Centers in America**

In most Western non-Muslim majority cultures, Islamic community centers serve as more than just gathering spots and hubs for special activities. They are also locations where Muslims go to take care of their everyday requirements. They typically operate with a broader objective encompassing advocacy in the areas of culture, society, civic engagement, and politics. This is not only a response to the needs of the contemporary Muslim diaspora but also a reflection of Islamic tradition and culture, which regards these community centers as multifunctional hubs for the community.

Although mosques were the first Islamic establishments when Muslim communities began to appear in Western nations, they are by no means the only Muslim community organizations in existence today. Due to the significant immigration that has occurred in recent decades, numerous organizations based on various Muslim faiths have grown in number and scope, which has helped to diversify Western civil society. Similar to many well-established mosque associations, many of these community organizations provide a range of services even if they do not organize regular communal prayers. Although there hasn't been much research done on these varied activity profiles, in recent years, empirical

data has begun to surface, providing initial understandings and early findings (Peucker & Ceylan, 2017).

Fortunately, Muslim communities are incredibly diverse and complex and their institutionalized representations in various national contexts are acknowledged. The following titles and paragraphs represent a tentative attempt to highlight some important areas in which many Muslim community centers in America have become more active.

### **2.5.1. Islamic Community Centers' Role in Cultural Cohesion**

These community organizations have the ability to promote important facets of social cohesiveness, as evidenced by an examination of their activity profiles, cooperative efforts, and aspirational objectives. In relation to the “economic sphere” of social cohesion, numerous Muslim community groups strive to support the educational and socioeconomic advancement of their members as well as their social and psychological wellbeing through a variety of recreational activities and community welfare (such as counseling) services. In keeping with this, community groups provide initiatives and events that strengthen members’ networks of trust and social capital within and across community boundaries (also known as “bridging”), which is a crucial component of social cohesiveness.

Moreover, Muslim civic engagement takes place in various community organizations through volunteering, highlighting the civically mobilizing effects of these groups and their contribution to the “political sphere” of social cohesiveness (Peucker, 2017). The Islamic centers serve as hubs for American Muslim communities, offering a variety of services such as religious instruction, social events, and educational programming. They also foster interfaith dialogue and collaboration, making significant contributions to American society. Indeed, the Quran confirms and answers the common question of the main purpose of creating as well as blending in such centers in Surah Al-Hujurat:

O humanity! Indeed, we created you from a male and female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may get to know one another. Surely the most noble of you in

the sight of God is the most righteous among you. God is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware (Webb, Wannamaker & Sharif, 2016, p. 397).

Quraish Shihab goes on to say that getting to know one another creates chances for support and aid from one another. The passage highlights the significance of mutual recognition in order to promote a sense of collaboration and goodness. Mutual acknowledgment has the power to bring people happiness and health in this life as well as the next. Without getting to know one another, people cannot support, educate, enhance, and gain from one another. Therefore, rather than focusing only on pursuing personal gain, the verse underlines the significance of cultivating benefits through mutual acknowledgment regardless of race, gender, and origin, as Islam emphasizes that all people are equal and all humans are essentially the same when seen from the perspective of their clay-based origin of creation. According to Quraish Shihab's perspective, people are not distinguishable by their gender, either male or female, or by their tribe. Besides, according to Ibnu Katsir, Allah warns people not to belittle and criticize others because, at their core, they are all human beings with equal dignity (Fadhila, Rha'in & Th, 2024).

Mahmood argues that such centers were the glue that linked and connected American Muslims and encouraged them to take part and engage socially through programmed sessions and activities to ensure effective circulation of community practices. In her interview, Motiwala, a member of the International Islamic Center, provided insight into the ways in which the global Islamic Center met the communal requirements of Muslim Americans. She claims that the local Muslim community formally greets new Muslim families and introduces them to other Muslim families when they arrive from other states or countries. In addition to connecting jobless Muslims with local job openings, the International Islamic Center's community network also helps them locate suitable vocational training, sets up small enterprises like child care or catering, and points them in the direction of workforce offices. Members of the community who require further assistance are also taken care of.

Most importantly, Mrs. Motiwala explained how this center community set up a structure to assist residents in need of financial support during illness and without access to wider networks (Mahmood, 2016).

Since everyone in a society works together to achieve their needs, from our perspective, social harmony results from appreciation, respect, and equality among its members. By bringing people from different religious backgrounds together to address shared issues and advance values of peace and understanding, as well as by overcoming certain political and cultural barriers and working toward mutual betterment, these community centers play a crucial role in fostering a more inclusive and harmonious society. They also help dispel common misconceptions about Islam and serve as a welcoming place for both Muslims and non-Muslims.

### **2.5.2. Religious and Educational Functions of Islamic Community Centers**

Islamic Community Centers in America provide a broad range of religious, educational, and public programs tailored to the requirements of the Muslim community, making them shining examples of religion and education. These facilities are essential for fostering social cohesiveness, civic involvement, and cultural understanding among American Muslims. They function as institutions that promote a feeling of belonging, community, and unity by acting as centers of education in addition to providing religious services.

According to Mahmood (2016), Chaves (2004) demonstrated that religious instruction and worship are the primary activities of the majority of American religious communities, based on data from the National Congregation Study. During his ethnographic visits, Mahmood observed that both Islamic centers provided facilities for Muslims to perform the prescribed congregational prayers on Fridays, in addition to the five daily obligatory prayers. Furthermore, a middle-aged interviewee, Mr. Badar, elaborated on the religious purposes of the Salaam Society. Mr. Badar, an immigrant from Palestine who joined Salaam Society over 25 years ago, explained that the organization organizes special prayers

during the annual Eid festivals and hosts extra nighttime prayers throughout the holy month of Ramadan. Additionally, the mosque also offers services for body cleaning, shrouding, and burial, as well as hosting janaza prayers at Islamic funerals. Salaam Society also provides for social events mandated by religion, which Muslims in predominantly Muslim cultures would typically hold at their homes. For example, Families of Salaam Society members use the community hall to celebrate births, organize Islamic weddings, and receive guests for condolences when a member dies. Immigrant religious groups fulfill important spiritual requirements for immigrant communities, as scholars like Alba, Raboteau, and (2009), Min (2001), and Abusharaf (1998), among others, have shown, and Mahmood found this to be the case in his research locations (Mahmood, 2016).

Furthermore, as learning is typically associated with instructors and students in spaces designated as classrooms, it actually occurs anytime a person consciously reacts to a stimulus. Learning and studying entails picking up new abilities, competence, and even wisdom. In order to instill in them the desire to follow in the footsteps of the great Muslims and prophets, they ought to be told their stories. Also, teaching young Muslims how to correctly read the Quran, the Muslim holy book, is extremely important. In addition to education in conventional schools (elementary, middle, or high schools; or universities), learning and studying religion is necessary for the purpose of helping Muslims learn about Islam (bt Alias, 1988). That's why many libraries and bookstores are found in many Islamic centers to provide both Muslims and non-Muslims with different books and resources that cultivate their minds and sharpen their Muslim identities, as well as give real and correct pieces of information about Islam and the Prophets.

Islamic community centers in America offer a variety of educational programs to serve their communities. For example, the Al Noor Weekend School, provided by the North Hudson Islamic Educational Center, offers educational services that include Quran teaching and youth programs. The Muslim Family Center (MFC) provides a range of programs through

its Educational and Tarbiyah Programs, such as the Living Islam Family and Youth Series, Quranic reading and Hifdh programs for adults, and structured after-school programs focused on Quran and Islamic studies for youth. The Khair Community Center delivers adult Islamic education through the IQRA Institute, offering structured weekend seminars, an Associates Degree Program in Islamic Studies, Quranic reading and Hifdh programs for adults, and events featuring guest speakers on topics relevant to the American Muslim community. Additionally, the Muslim Education and Converts Center of America (M.E.C.C.A.) provides educational programs aimed at new Muslims, offering traditional Islamic knowledge and support to help them learn the basics of the faith and become knowledgeable, active members of the community.

Specifically, in our opinion, these sites used their educational and religious resources to help younger American Muslims form their American Muslim identities. Through religious instruction and training offered in mosques, people can better comprehend Islam's doctrines, engage in proper prayer, and deepen their relationship with Allah. Deep theological understanding must start with this fundamental building block. Besides, Islam's future lies in our children. If mosques provide a strong religious and educational foundation for them during their formative years, they will become more perceptive and have a deeper understanding of their purpose in life, and they will also be better equipped to propagate Islam and construct more Islamic institutions.

#### **2.5.2.1. Availabilities for All Ages**

Islamic Community Centers offer a wide range of educational programs and activities that are specifically designed to cater to the requirements of all age groups within the Muslim community, thereby engaging people of all ages. These centers give people of all ages the chance to take part in social, educational, and religious programs tailored to their individual interests and developmental phases. These centers guarantee inclusivity and involvement throughout generations, promoting a feeling of community, togetherness, and

lifelong learning among their members through anything from adult education programs to children's Quran courses.

As for new Muslims, continuing on the path of Islam can be difficult without continuous assistance. Therefore, these centers invite everyone in the community who might know someone who is a new Muslim and is looking for advice and assistance to feel free to participate in and be active in their activities and social events. By implementing different strategies such as tailored curricula, adjustable activities, specialized approaches and well trained educators, Islamic centers in America create a nurturing and stimulating environment that fosters the holistic development of children, catering to their unique needs and interests at different stages of growth.

#### **2.5.2.2. Normalization of Muslim Communities**

Islamic centers serve as stakeholders in civil society, dispelling untruths and preconceptions regarding Muslim communities in Western countries. It is true for many Western nations that as Muslim immigrants continue to arrive and their communities continue to grow and consolidate, numerous traditional community organizations – often linked to mosques and Islamic centers – have been established in an effort to meet the diverse religious, cultural, and social needs of their constituents. Over time, Muslim community organizations have expanded and become more active, even while the significance of these traditional services has not diminished in communities that are becoming more settled and, as a result of continual immigration, are also growing. This has happened in all Western cultures (Mahmood, 2016).

Apart from the numerous mosques and centers that have functioned as the hub of the neighborhood or particular ethnic community, Muslims have established new groups and other Islamic associations that are becoming more diverse in nature. These organizations, which often consist of women's, youth, and Muslim advocacy groups, to mention a few, have functioned independently of mosques in the pursuit of a variety of religious, civic, and

political agendas. They are motivated by Islamic ethos and represent and frequently target the Muslim community. These developments can be understood as the emergence of Muslim communities as stakeholders in civil society, with a profile as diverse as that of other religious or non-religious communities in a pluralistic civil society that is both culturally and religiously pluralistic. They have taken place in many Western countries where there is a significant Muslim population. As multiple contributors to this volume have noted, Muslims desire to be seen and acknowledged as “normal” citizens, on line with everyone else, is echoed by the ordinary nature of Muslim community organizations (Peucker & Celyan, 2017).

### **2.5.2.3. Cultural and Ethnic Anchoring**

According to traditional Islamic terminology, pluralism is the ability to discern God’s will in topics pertaining to us in a way that is honorable to Him, to have diverse opinions and views, and to perceive details in many ways while staying true to the source and truth. There are various paths to God since getting there is determined by a person’s surroundings, culture, and degree of manifestation of His Most Beautiful Names, among other things. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that the emergence of various orders and groups has always been a natural evolution. Because of this, we may say that this kind of pluralism existed even during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), when the Muslims were a fully cohesive group. As a result, this requirement is reasonable. Since individuals are not made alike and have distinct natures, it is actually against natural law to unite the several paths that lead to God (North East Islamic Community Center, 2013).

Mahmood (2016) documented variations in cultural practices at the Islamic centers she studied, noting distinct cultural developments at each research site. At the International Islamic Center, where ethnographic observations were conducted, a multilingual environment prevailed, with conversations heard in Spanish, English, Arabic, and Urdu, alongside other heritage languages. The community notice board displayed advertisements in

English, Arabic, and Spanish, reflecting the linguistic diversity of the center. Additionally, he observed diverse ethnic attire among attendees of Friday prayers, including African tunics, Middle Eastern abayas and hijabs, and Indo-Pakistani shalwar kameez and chadar.

Mahmood further noted the presence of various kiosks operated by different households, offering culinary delights such as Pakistani biryani, Egyptian stuffed grape leaves, and Syrian-style falafel wraps during his ethnographic excursions. He characterized the International Islamic Center as multicultural based on his observations. Similarly, Warner (2000:271) asserted that religious institutions frequented by immigrants serve as "free social spaces," allowing individuals to navigate without adhering to American norms or language requirements. These spaces offer a sense of belonging and familiarity, enabling immigrants to feel at "home."

The research locations provided Muslim immigrants residing abroad with a supportive community sharing common language, traditions, and culinary preferences. Consequently, like other ethnic religious institutions, the mosque under Mahmood's study facilitated the preservation of ties to ethnic heritage and the replication of cultural experiences (Mahmood, 2016). On top of that, as individuals with varying cultural backgrounds and interpretations of Islam interact with one another, the variety among Muslims in America offers both exceptional opportunities and special challenges. In the words of Aminah Wudud Muhsin, "I like to see unity in diversity. Since that is essentially what Islam is all about, I enjoy watching us confront the notion of having Islam under one roof in multiple forms." (Unity and Diversity, n.d.).

Since they function as multicultural and multipurpose centers, in our perspective, social flexibility, empathy, appreciation, and breaking down common stereotypes can emerge within the community members, leading to a spectrum of interconnected ideas, traditions, and perspectives along with active and meaningful activities and occasions.

## **2.6. Islamic Community Centers and American Muslim Life**

Islamic community centers foster social cohesion by providing opportunities for intersection and collaboration among American Muslims, regardless of their cultural backgrounds. They create environments that allow members to practice and express their religion and culture, thus contributing to the development of American Muslim identities. Also, they play a crucial role in supporting and enriching a wide range of religious, educational, and community programs that cater to individuals of all ages and backgrounds, as they serve as hubs for spreading unity among diverse Muslim communities.

### **2.6.1. Encouraging Transnational Connections and Global Islamic Consciousness**

Across America, by building a worldwide platform for discourse and providing sources of normative guidance for society, transnational Islam builds upon the physical migration patterns as outlined by Potes (1999). Transnational Islam is elevated above religious movement discourse by the Diaspora's self-defining quality, the common consciousness of the Muslim community, and the formation of a trans-cultural Muslim identity, particularly in the case of the United States (Peek 2005, Brown 2004, Levitt 2001 and 2003, Werbner 2002, as cited in Mahmood, 2016).

Islamic centers play a crucial role in fostering transnational connections, overcoming cultural barriers, and nurturing Islamic consciousness through various means. Firstly, they emphasize the spiritual unity of the Umma, drawing from the Qur'an and prophetic tradition as foundational elements of Muslim spirituality. The concept of tawhid, or the oneness of God, forms the basis for the Ummatic unity, transcending geographical boundaries and cultural differences. In mosques and other religious spaces, individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds find equality and fraternity, strengthening bonds of brotherhood. Secondly, these centers offer educational programs with global perspectives, exposing participants to the rich tapestry of Muslim cultures, histories, and perspectives worldwide. By challenging stereotypes and fostering appreciation for cultural diversity, these initiatives

broaden horizons and deepen understanding. Finally, Islamic centers facilitate global networking and exchanges, leveraging digital platforms and social media to connect Muslims across the globe. The proliferation of online platforms, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Telegram groups, has accelerated intra-Muslim cooperation and communication. These globalized networks not only affirm the unity of the Muslim community but also serve as catalysts for its transformation, transcending barriers of distance and culture.

Within our view, by implementing these strategies, Islamic centers can play a vital role in encouraging transnational connections, overcoming cultural barriers, and strengthening the bonds of togetherness and understanding within Muslims and beyond. Also, concentrating on our similarities rather than our differences, bringing distances closer, and taking the initiative to make the Islamic world a civilized and advanced world filled with brotherhood and civility consciousness.

### **2.6.2. Islamic Community Centers and Cultural Expression**

“Islam resembles a clear river that mirrors the hue of the bedrock,” is a statement that is made repeatedly by individuals and pairs of all origins. It almost felt like a chant. According to participants, this indicates that Islam reflects the unique characteristics of every culture rather than erasing them. Significant debates center on the means of Islam’s propagation, including whether or not the sword was used. Nonetheless, history demonstrates that the introduction of Islam was not an attempt to homogenize and Arabize people, as seen by the existence of Muslim minority communities and majority nations with an array of cultural backgrounds all throughout the world. Through its expansion from the Arabian Peninsula, where it originated, Islam reached China, Africa, and Europe by the seventh century. It did not give its new followers a thorough cultural manual as it gained traction, nor did it demand that they give up their cultural history. While some Arabic words and cultural elements may have persisted, as many have pointed out (Ali, 2018, including Abd-Allah 2004; Jackson 2005; Ramadan 2004), Arabic culture, including names, foods, arts,

architecture, and folklore, is not exclusively Islamic, with some shared with non-Muslim neighbors, despite Islam's shared history and civilizational heritage.

Everywhere, newly arrived Muslims have undertaken a cultural inventory, accepting as intrinsically Islamic anything that does not violate any particular religious tenet. This made it possible for Islam to have its own unique cultural identity and to be clothed in the traditional clothing of places in the world's north, south, east, and west. In the United States, given the remarkable difference of the remaining American Islamic population, the process has proven more challenging and complex. Thus, the discussion among various organizations today over Muslim American identity and culture centers on the justifications for and characteristics of an Islamist dressed in American cultural attire. Islam's indigenization leads to cohesive self, locally grounded sensibilities, intra-group reconciliation, civic engagement, cultural contribution, and the growth of local interpretative authority. Long-standing divisions among the groups that make up the Islamic society in America have hindered the convergence of these elements due to historical, social, and geopolitical considerations (Ali, 2018).

Undoubtedly, the intersection of faith and culture within American Muslim life is significantly influenced by various Islamic community centers. These centers serve as crucial spaces where American Muslims can express their religious beliefs and cultural heritage, promoting a sense of self and community within the community. By providing a platform for cultural expression, Islamic centers have a great role in shaping and preserving American Muslim identities.

### **2.6.2.1. Cultural Events**

A society's cultural events are vital components. They provide a platform for individuals to celebrate their ancestral culture, showcase their skills and creativity, and promote multiculturalism. These can take many different forms, such as concerts, art exhibits, theater productions, or traditional dances. Events celebrating culture provide a great way for

people to unite and celebrate their common history, as well as offer performers, musicians, and artists a stage on which to display their skills and creativity. People can experience many cultural customs, artistic mediums, and activities at these gatherings. This exposure can support the development of a sense of community and cultural understanding. Furthermore, cultural events may promote economic growth while also fostering cross-cultural exchange. These gatherings attract tourists and other visitors, bringing in money for nearby companies and boosting the local economy (Linkedin, 2023).

Islamic community centers in the United States serve as vibrant hubs of cultural exchange, hosting a variety of events that celebrate the diverse cultural heritage of American Muslims. Among these events are Quranic Recitation and Memorization Competitions, which encourage individuals to immerse themselves in the recitation and memorization of the Quran. These competitions not only foster a deeper connection between younger generations and the Quranic recitation community but also promote the application of Quranic teachings in daily life. Notably, the Annual Quran Competition at the Islamic Center of Southern California stands out as a festive occasion that instills a love for the Quran in children, particularly during the auspicious month of Ramadan.

Additionally, cultural festivals organized by these centers showcase the rich tapestry of Muslim cultures from around the world. Through exhibitions and presentations, attendees are introduced to various cultural traditions, fostering mutual understanding and appreciation among people of different faiths. These festivals create a welcoming atmosphere where individuals can engage in participatory education about the significance of faith in Muslim communities. Stories shared during these events, ranging from coming-of-age tales to anecdotes from converts and the elderly, humanize the experience of being Muslim and emphasize shared values that transcend religious boundaries.

Moreover, these festivals offer a range of activities for attendees of all ages, from voter registration drives to face painting, Arabic calligraphy, and henna art. Vendors and

volunteers enliven the atmosphere with Nasheeds playing in the background as children engage in games and parents peruse stalls selling Arabic clothing, accessories, and artwork. By bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds in a joyful and inclusive environment, Islamic community centers play a vital role in promoting cultural exchange and understanding within American society.

In addition to cultural awareness, in our view, celebrating cultural and traditional heritage for all the participants enriches other societies by showcasing the unique local performances and aspects of production that enhance cultural exchange.

#### **2.6.2.2. Cultural Workshops**

Islamic centers in America host a variety of cultural workshops to promote understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures, and most importantly, to preserve cultural heritage. By showcasing their customs and rituals, communities may make sure that they are carried on for upcoming generations. These occasions, which honor cultural history, can contribute to maintaining cultural diversity and halting the disappearance of cultural identity. Some examples include:

- Henna Workshops: Islamic centers organize henna workshops where participants can learn about the art of henna design, its cultural significance, and practice creating henna patterns on their hands or other surfaces (Open Mosque Day Festival, 2017).

- Arabic Calligraphy Workshops: cultural workshops on Arabic calligraphy introduce participants to the beauty and history of this art form, allowing them to learn basic calligraphy techniques and create their own pieces.

- Islamic Art and Craft Workshops: These workshops focus on traditional Islamic art forms such as geometric patterns, tile work, and miniature painting, providing participants with hands-on experience in creating Islamic art (Open Mosque Day Festival, 2017).

In our perspective, such workshops and conferences provide members of society with the opportunity to show their love for arts and distinguished crafts, as well as learn from

each other and discover different backgrounds, leading to a profound impact on both individuals and communities.

### **2.6.2.3. Cultural Exchange**

The world is a colorful tapestry made up of innumerable civilizations and customs. Cultural exchange is a process that not only improves our lives but also helps other societies understand and respect one another. Cultural interaction removes boundaries and dispels any preconceived notions we might have about things we do not understand as well as fostering cultural exchange rather than cultural change. Fundamentally, cultural exchange is the exchanging of concepts, beliefs, customs, and other facets of culture between individuals from various backgrounds. This can happen while traveling across borders or even within one's own community. Without the use of travel agencies, it offers the chance to learn about various lifestyles from people who actually lead them. In addition, explaining your customs to others allows you to view them from a different perspective. Apart from the benefits that these individuals receive, there are also broader ramifications. The fact that our ability to comprehend one another improves empathy and makes it possible to settle disputes more quickly, and global knowledge may now be shared more easily than ever thanks to the internet, still, nothing promotes a true appreciation and knowledge of different cultures better than actual encounters with locals in new environments, as such happens in Islamic centers (Worldpakers, 2023). This includes the following:

Islamic centers across the United States play a pivotal role in promoting cultural education and exchange through various initiatives. One such initiative is the provision of Arabic Language and Culture Classes, where individuals have the opportunity to immerse themselves in the language, customs, and traditions of the Arab world. These classes serve as a bridge between different cultures, fostering mutual understanding and appreciation. Moreover, Islamic centers actively engage in Cultural Exchange Programs, facilitating interactions between individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Through these programs,

participants share their personal narratives, enriching discussions, and deepening their understanding of different traditions and values. Such initiatives contribute to the promotion of cross-cultural cooperation and harmony within communities. Additionally, Islamic centers serve as platforms for the promotion of Islamic culture through Music and Dance Performances. These events provide artists with a space to showcase their talents while celebrating the richness of Islamic heritage. By offering diverse cultural experiences, Islamic centers contribute to the enrichment of local communities and the preservation of Islamic cultural identity (Adult Classes + Programs, n.d.).

#### **2.6.2.4. Culinary Experiences**

Cooking classes and food festivals that feature traditional dishes from various cultures, allowing participants to experience and appreciate the diversity of culinary traditions. Across the United States, Islamic centers host a variety of culinary experiences as part of their cultural events. This includes the following:

- Global Food Tasting: Events like the North/Central Jersey Muslim Heritage Month Festival feature global food tasting, allowing attendees to sample and enjoy diverse cuisines from different cultures (Adely, 2024).

- Banquets: Islamic Cultural Celebrations, such as the one hosted by the James Farmer Multicultural Center, often include banquets featuring various menu items, where attendees can enjoy a variety of dishes while learning about Muslim holidays and tenets of the faith (Islamic Cultural Celebration, n.d.).

- Communal Meals: Mosques and Islamic centers open their doors to neighbors for communal meals, providing opportunities for people to come together, share food, and engage in interfaith gatherings (Adely, 2024).

## 2.7. Challenges of Islamophobia

The September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist events thrust Islam into the national and international public eye with unexpected vigor. It is impossible to overestimate its influence on the Muslim community. Several people were afraid that Muslims in America would be the target of retaliation after Al Qaeda, an Islamist militant network that Osama bin Laden established and previously oversaw, claimed responsibility for the attacks. Following the attacks, individuals of all faiths joined together to express their solidarity with Muslim society by providing safety and assistance. Many people who were mistaken for Muslims in the weeks and years that followed, especially South Asians and Arabs of all religions, became the objects of prejudice, hate crimes, and other forms of discrimination (Islam in America Post 9/11, n.d.).

Muslims have experienced denials of access to their resources, including money, products, and services and there were comparable circumstances for Muslims in Afghanistan, Syria, Palestine, Somalia, Yemen, and Iraq. Muslims experience Islamophobia in schools and workplaces when they are subjected to open rejection, mistrust, assaults, stigmatization, and derision from coworkers and superiors. Since Muslims are generally a minority, the fact that you practice Islam gives you no influence in the workplace or in classrooms. Besides, because of their choice of faith, women who wear the hijab are viewed with disdain and disrespect. A growing number of Muslim women are battling for their rights, such as the ability to vote, the right to own property, the right to procreate, and other rights, as a result of the mistreatment and violence directed towards them. Lastly, expressions of hatred, nepotism, and indirect denial of public goods and services directed towards Islam are examples of how Islamophobia manifests in the public sphere. Associating Muslims with terrorism is akin to holding other religions, like Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity, responsible for global conflicts, colonialism, and other atrocities. There is terrorism in every religion. Even if the recent attack on the mosque in New Zealand was started by a non-Muslim, the media is still focusing on reporting about Islamist terrorism and nothing else (Ussif & Salifu, 2020).

### **2.7.1. Islamic Community Centers and American Muslim Response to Challenges**

The role of mosques and Islamic community centers in social services has enormous potential to support people and communities in overcoming hardship and achieving well-being in a world of ever-changing circumstances and diverse societal challenges. These structures continue to give hope and assistance to the underprivileged in Muslim communities and around the world with strong commitment, cross-sector cooperation, and change adaptation (Karimullah, 2023).

In the aftermath of 9/11, numerous Muslim public interest groups were established, and those that had previously existed gained more visibility. The Islamic Society of North America (INSA) has remained a proactive and significant voice in defining the discourse of Islam in America. INSA is an umbrella organization that works to solve many of the bigger concerns facing American Muslims. Another area of interest for the Council for American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) is political activity, particularly lobbying to combat anti-Islamic prejudice. For instance, CAIR has attempted to prevent anti-sharia legislation from being approved in a number of states. Even though not all American Muslims support them, groups like INSA and CAIR have played a significant role in defining the public conversation about Islam in America in the wake of September 11<sup>th</sup> (Islam in America Post 9/11, n.d.).

#### **2.7.1.1. Addressing Sectarian Tensions**

The characteristics of sectarianism vary greatly throughout Middle Eastern countries. The degree to which sectarianism is driven both within and internationally varies throughout Middle Eastern states and sectarian conflicts. This results in a distinct sectarian and political environment (Heather et al., 2018). As these sectarian tensions fail to unite, certain Islamic centers try their best to erase these gaps. Since each individual has a force within them, so does every group. It may be highly beneficial for everyone's well-being when these people and organizations work together and collaborate. All of its good will be lost if it

remains dispersed and unrealized, wasting its potential and causing indifference to grow and spread (North East Islamic Community Center, 2013).

#### **2.7.1.2 Combating Islamophobia**

By acting as engines of resilience, American mosques and Islamic centers serve as powerful and supportive structures for Muslims in the United States. Taking the initiative of promoting tolerance, hosting different interfaith dialogues, and working on melting the common misconceptions about the religion of Islam and its principles, such as: having the concept that the Islamic religion is a religion of terror and violence, no sign of freedom of speech or life for Muslim women, and that Islam opposes progress and development, as Islamophobia was founded in schools, workplaces, and public spaces, American Muslims, in turn, created their own world and sphere by establishing centers and organizations that would fight racism and support togetherness.

#### **2.7.1.3. Providing Resources during Crisis**

Studies have highlighted the value of religious organizations, as well as the involvement of non-governmental and international organizations as a strong point in society and the utilization of their capacity, taking into account the Islamic center as a comprehensive national network that can unquestionably play a role in both the development of the neighborhood and the solution of problems. Every country has attempted to encourage people to take part in community-based projects to lower the risk of disasters, depending on the dominant culture in that country (Moslehi et al., 2023). In our opinion, these centers act as catalysts for the Muslim community's foundations to thrive by working together and supporting one another through the severity of crises and tragedies.

#### **2.7.1.4. Supporting Civic Engagement**

Apart from their primary function of providing social services, Karimullah (2023) argues that these religious institutions have the potential to develop into hubs for advocacy

and societal transformation. Mosques have the power to actively advance human rights, equality, and peace. Social and political topics can be tested, discussed, and supported in mosques. These institutions can act as a voice for the Muslim community in this regard on important issues including inequity, discrimination, and violations of human rights. By doing this, they aid in preventing extremist organizations that attempt to attract members by taking advantage of social unrest or misunderstanding.

## Conclusion

Mosques and Islamic centers in America serve as essential pillars of Islamic society, offering more than simply locations for prayer but also hubs for cultural, educational, and social activities. These institutions play a crucial role in preserving and promoting Islamic traditions, fostering community cohesion, and facilitating interfaith dialogue. By offering a range of services, from religious education to social support, mosques and Islamic centers contribute significantly to the cultural richness and diversity of the American Muslim society. In addition, their cultural importance lies in their ability to nurture a sense of identity, provide a platform for cultural expression, and promote understanding and unity among individuals of diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, mosques and Islamic centers stand as vital cultural institutions that play a central role in shaping the cultural landscape of America. Via their diverse programming, including educational initiatives, cultural events, interfaith dialogue, and community outreach, mosques and Islamic centers foster a strong sense of identity, belonging, and pride among Muslims as they provide safe spaces for the transmission of religious and cultural knowledge, enabling the preservation and celebration of Islamic traditions across generations. Finally, mosques and Islamic centers in America serve as engines of cultural resilience and community empowerment for Muslim Americans. In the face of challenges like Islamophobia, these institutions have emerged as vital hubs that support, defend, and unite individuals, contributing to the overall well-being and cohesion of the American Muslim community.

## General Conclusion

This final section summarizes the main findings of our research and answers our research questions. To investigate both the social and cultural significance of mosques and Islamic community centers within American Muslim society, it was necessary to understand the importance and functions of these institutions in American Muslim society, both socially and culturally. In the first chapter, we examined the social importance and significance of mosques and ICCs in the USA, and highlighted the several functions and roles that these institutions play and the impact they have had on Muslims' lives. This confirmed our hypothesis about the evolving role of mosques and ICCs from places of worship into multifaceted places which provide services and support to Muslims at several levels whether socially or culturally.

Furthermore, we got answers for whether mosques and ICCs face challenges while practicing their roles. The study deduced that mosques and ICCs do face various challenges such as discrimination, Islamophobia, community resistance, hate crimes, and others but they tried to face these challenges by adopting various strategies; such as effective educational programs, community initiatives, economic empowerment, etc.

The second chapter dealt with the cultural aspect in which we explored the cultural importance of mosques and Islamic centers in the United States, including in-depth parts outlining the different responsibilities of these religious structures and how they demonstrated strong support for Muslims. Also, by contributing to the broader cultural fabric of the USA and serving as vital hubs for multipurpose facilities such as cultural preservation, identity formation, and community empowerment, this ultimately supported our hypothesis that the cultural significance of mosques and ICCs lies in their ability to motivate American Muslim society to thrive and transfer cultural knowledge considering their continuous development over the years.

Moreover, along with the worldly issues facing Islam everywhere, which we mentioned in the second chapter, including Islamophobia, lack of rights, racism, and times of crisis, we have come to the conclusions and responses provided by our research, within the second chapter that mosques and Islamic centers emerged as bases of support and resilience, offering resources and a sense of community while facing such challenges.

From all that has been said earlier, we may learn some lessons from both chapters, such as:

- The evolving roles of mosques as multifunctional institutions enable them to adapt to the changing needs of Muslims in America.
- The increase in immigration waves led to the wide spread of mosques and ICCs' construction, which will affect the progress and diversity of Muslim populations in the USA.
- Mosques and Islamic Community Centers can help in shaping the Muslims' Islamic identity and balancing it with their American one. Here we are addressing young Muslims.
- The development of the architectural styles of mosques and ICCs throughout the years; may reflect the cultural and social changes within Muslim communities.
- Mosques and ICCs are the best way to preserve and protect the Islamic cultural heritage within American society.
- Mosques and ICCs through their cultural programs, initiatives, and events can facilitate the intergenerational transmission of Islamic culture, traditions, and values.
- Mosques and Islamic centers take on the role of helping new immigrants integrate into American society through different advanced services.
- By shifting from being places of prayer to hosting cultural events, these institutions promote mutual understanding and respect for Muslims and people of other faiths.

Finally, Future research could explore the following areas: Conducting comparative studies across different regions; the role of mosques and Islamic community centers across different regions to shed light on the regional differences, and investigating the impact of technology, such as social media, on the social and cultural activities of mosques and Islamic community centers.

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## الملخص

تتقصى هذه الدراسة الأدوار الاجتماعية والثقافية المتعددة للمساجد والمراكز الإسلامية داخل المجتمع المسلم الأمريكي. في حين أن هذه المؤسسات تضطلع أساساً بدورها كأماكن للعبادة، فهي شهدت تحولاً ملحوظاً يتعدى حدود الأدوار الدينية، حيث أصبحت مراكز هامة للتفاعل الاجتماعي والحفاظ على الثقافة وغيرها. وقد استخدمت هذه الدراسة منهج البحث النوعي الذي يعتمد على مراجعة الأدبيات من خلال جمع المعلومات وتحليلها وتلخيصها لمعرفة كيفية تفاعل المسلمين في أمريكا في هذه الأماكن وكيف تؤثر على حياتهم الاجتماعية والثقافية. وتكشف الدراسة أن المساجد والمراكز الإسلامية تضطلع بدور مهم في تشكيل الهوية وتعزيز الشعور بالانتماء وتقديم خدمات اجتماعية متنوعة، وتسهيل العلاقات بين أجيال المسلمين الأمريكيين. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، أظهرت المساجد والمراكز الإسلامية قدرتها على مواجهة تحديات مثل الإسلاموفوبيا والتمييز والحوجز الثقافية. ومن خلال تسليط الضوء على الأدوار المتعددة للمساجد والمراكز الإسلامية، تخلص هذه الدراسة إلى أن هذه المؤسسات ليست مجرد أماكن للعبادة. بل إنها توفر مجموعة واسعة من الخدمات والدعم للمسلمين على المستويين الاجتماعي والثقافي.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الجالية الإسلامية الأمريكية، مراكز الجالية الإسلامية، المساجد، الأهمية

الاجتماعية والثقافية