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Faith in Question: Cultural and Intellectual Roots Uprooted, Emotional and Social Challenges Explored

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Note: This document represents the first draft of this research paper. Not all facts and statements have been attributed with references.

"الأراء في هذا البحث تعبر عن رأي الباحث وليس بالضرورة عن رأي أمجا"
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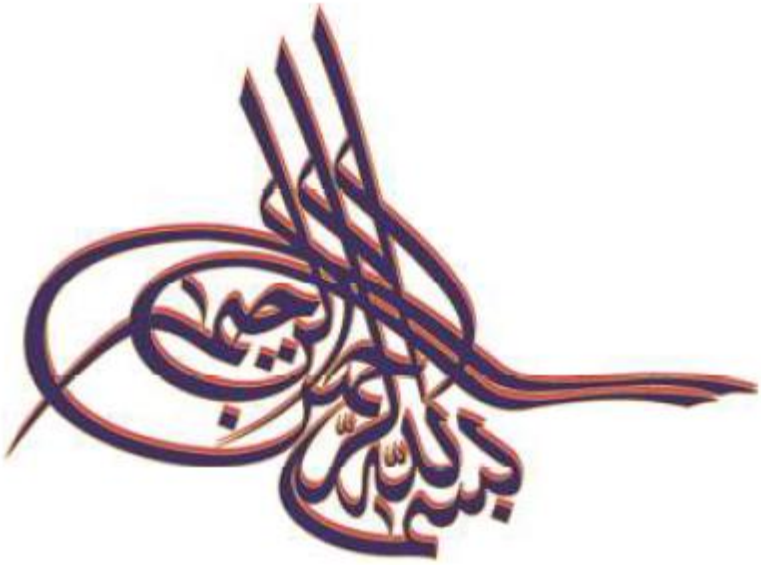
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CONTENTS

Abstract 4

PART I 5

1. The European Christian Dissension 5
2. Scientific Revolution 5
3. Age of Enlightenment in Europe 6
4. Enlightenment and the Founding Fathers 7
5. The Residual Effect of the Enlightenment 10
6. Faith crisis in the United States of America 10
7. Atheism 12
8. Agnosticism 12
9. Skepticism 13
10. Darwinism 15
11. Scientism 16
12. The Unseen and the Metaphysical 17
13. Conclusion and Solutions 18

PART II 19

1. Survey Methodology 19
2. The Struggle of Prayer 23
3. Masturbation, Pornography and Relationships 24
4. LGBTQ views 27
5. Being a Muslim girl/women 27
6. Being Judged 28
7. Chaos in the Community 29
8. Perception of Imams and Scholars 30
9. Intellectual Concerns Being Answered 33
10. Conclusion 34

References 35

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore the causes of atheism amongst Muslim youth in the United States; the first part is focused on the cultural and intellectual causes of atheism and the second part is focused on the social and emotional factors affecting the faith of the Muslim youth. Human actions are largely influenced by the inherited biases of their respective cultures.Muslims, like all humans, share a plethora of common characteristics and traits. Their actions may be heavily influenced by religion or society, but their inherent personalities remain the same.

Though this paper is focused on highlighting Muslim challenges, I will also rely on Christian, Jewish, and other faith-based groups and their statistics. These groups, which have been in the United States for a much longer period, have faced similar challenges and catalogued their surveys, whether it be for academic reasons or perhaps even reformation. This information will be essential in allowing insight into the obscure causes of atheism within the Muslim youth of this society.

I will start off by exploring the origins of Europe's enlightenment period; the residual effects it has had on modern philosophies such as Skepticism, Darwinism, Scientism; and how Islam has superior methodologies seen through its textual scriptures and the rational arguments presented by classical scholars. Due to the fact that the United States is sired by Europe, it not only continues to adhere to European philosophies and culture, but it also equally reciprocates those once inherited influences.

I will then move onto the social and emotional challenges that plague the Muslim youth in the United States, touching on the long lasting effects it has had on their beliefs and actions. I will conduct a survey of about 1,300 American Muslim youth aged between 13-29 and measure how effective each factor is. Just as culture and intellect are defining factors of a person, their social and emotional hurdles will either magnify or resist the person they turn out to be.

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Grantor of Mercy

PART I

1. The European Christian Dissension

In 1517, Martin Luther forever changed the perception of Christianity by nailing his 95 Theses to a Church door and sparking the Protestant Reformation. This, along with the assistance of the printing press, sent shockwaves through Europe's traditional view of Christianity under the Pope of Rome, a very influential man who was considered to be Christ's representative on the earth. From Pope Stephen VI (896-897) until Pope Clement VII (1523 - 1534), the eight most salacious, corrupt, and unholy Popes stained Christian history.[1] This is partly why, when King Henry VIII broke away from the Catholic Church in 1530 to form the Church of England, he had a strong case on his side. However, it can also be seen that his decisions were based on personal gain, including bias for his marriage to Anne Boleyn. These centuries showed the Europeans that the office of patriarchal holiness was not as holy as they had once believed it to be, an almost deafening conclusion. Repeatedly in the past, corrupt priests and religious figures have partaken in actions that have led people to completely question their faith. How is it possible for a layman or laywoman to follow the words of God if those who preach it are unable to do so. The Quran captures[2] the corruption of the Judaic faiths, their habit of alteration of religious texts, and prohibition and legalization of tenants that were not textually present. As trust of these valued authorities weakened, it allowed the people's rationale to see beyond what they were told to think. It is worth knowing that throughout this time, Islam had always been a religion of rationality, free from any and every clerical bias.

2. Scientific Revolution

Scientific revolution birthed the Enlightenment; in 1532, Copernicus challenged the Church by stating that the planets orbit the sun rather than the sun orbit the planets.[3] These, along with other incidents, lead people to question the the state of religion, specifically Christianity; criticizing other religions as being non essential. Birthed then, was the idea that there was a superior method to see the cosmos. It is worth knowing that the Quran states the Sun has its own path[4] (the word used is “tajri” which means to literally flow slowly) and in the early 20th century it was proven that the sun does have its own orbit. Though the process of arriving at the conclusion is admirable,

the precursor to the Enlightenment and one of the greatest causes of the scientific revolution was proved incorrect.

The capstone of the Scientific Revolution was in 1687 when Newton re-introduced the concept of motion and gravity. Newton explained the idea that whether it was the Moon orbiting Earth or an apple falling from a tree, they all followed the same basic principles. He writes, "to the same natural effects, we must, as far as possible, assign the same causes."[5] To some extent this does not contradict the Quran as Allah ﷻ mentions Sunnah, His laws which govern the universe, do not falter, affirming that the cosmos have a measured state.[6] Newton's laws were shaken again by Einstein's "theory of relativity," further proving the ongoing ignorance we posses in trying to grapple with the quantum realm. If one thing is understood through all of this, science is not constant and can quickly change its position, even though it is presented to its respective era as an absolute. Ironically, Newton himself admonishes against the "theory of everything," saying, "To explain all nature is too difficult a task for any one man or even for any one age. "Tis much better to do a little with certainty, and leave the rest for others that come after you, than to explain all things."[7]

3. Age of Enlightenment in Europe

Over the centuries, the landscape formed had been heavily infiltrated with frustration due to dissent with monarchs and abuse of basic freedom, leading Europe to begin reflecting on a world free from the grips of religion. The period of Enlightenment, literally enlightened to contrast the Dark Ages, extended to multiple parts of Europe and had a direct impact on the formation of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, both of which have shaped American political and social values. It began in the late 17th and 18th century from the concepts of the Scientific Revolution and distrust of European hierarchical culture. In France there were the likes of Voltaire, D'Alembert, Diderot, Montesquieu etc; the Scottish Enlightenment had Frances Hutcheson, Adam Smith, David Hume, Thomas Reid etc; the German Enlightenment had Christian Wolff, Moses Mendelssohn, G.E. Lessing and Immanuel Kant etc. Outside of these major hubs there were scattered influences in other cities, even in the Americas such as Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and many more. [8] The questions born from the ideas of these influential individuals were primarily related to five topics: reason, liberty, science, progress, and toleration. It is worth knowing that the concepts were not all in unison, neither are they did they remain the same over time, rather some have evolved into a concept that would be alien to their founder. The premise of all five concepts was however similar, challenging the traditional views of humankind, proving that the world was controlled by set natural laws and not miracles.

The Enlightenment did so much more than just provide new information to those who remained interested, it also sought to understand questions such as “What rights do we have? Who gets those rights? What duties and obligations do we have towards each other?, What is the role of the government?, and Who has the right to rule?” John Locke, a pillar of the Enlightenment era, quoted the following, fully capturing the foundation of his philosophy: “The state of nature has a law of nature to govern it, which obliges every one: and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind, who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions… [and] when his own preservation comes not in competition, ought he, as much as he can, to preserve the rest of mankind, and may not, unless it be to do justice on an offender, take away, or impair the life, or what tends to the preservation of the life, the liberty, health, limb, or goods of another.”[9]
Locke is known for his view of natural law, expressing the fundamental preservation of life, liberty, and property. That is, as long as it does not infringe upon another individual’s right, unless their own preservation is in question. Locke further compounds the understanding that anarchy is also not the solution by expounding on social contract, “Civil government is the proper remedy for the inconveniences of the state of nature.”[10]. For example, a person gives up their right/freedom to drive 100 mph so that someone else does not drive 100 mph and injures them. No actual contract is signed, but is a widely understood concept.

Lastly for the sake of brevity, we can not forget to mention Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu, or more easily known as Montesquieu. His Persian letters hold a notable satire that mocks the European beliefs in metaphysics. He writes of two fictional characters, Usbek and Rica, who view Europe from a foreigner's lense. For example, Rica writes that the Pope is a magician who can, "make the king believe that three are only one, or that the bread one eats is not bread, or that the wine one drinks is not wine, and a thousand other things of the same kind.” [11] Montesquieu believed that the three branches of government, the legislative that makes the laws, the judicial that judges the law, and the executive that oversees the affairs, should not be combined into one. The brilliance behind this idea is proven correct, as in the case of King Louis XIV, which led to his inevitable, yet avoidable, despotism.

4. Enlightenment and the Founding Fathers

When the Founding Fathers were forming this new nation after facing abuse from King George, they majorly questioned his authority. Their decisions and thoughts were greatly influenced by the Age of Enlightenment. The colonists however, only knew of loyalty to the British Empire since 1607. The Bible had passages promoting obedience to Kings. One passage states,

"First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior,"[12]. Another goes on to say "Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work."[13] Therefore, in essence, it is clearly seen that disobeying the King was a grave sin.

Multiple times, there was an attempt to make changes within the people's minds and hearts. During the French and Indian war, Benjamin Franklin tried to unite the colonies under the Albany plan, which ultimately failed. One of the most influential writers in American history, Thomas Paine, a British born American, had written "Common Sense," a pamphlet which argued for independence from the British government. His pamphlet had instantly become a best seller in 1776 and heavily influenced the colonists' perception towards the British. Paine was soaked in the Enlightenment philosophy and his pamphlet was read across taverns, in town squares, etc. It appealed to the people due to its simple rhetoric and unique way of capturing phrases. Many of the concepts were directly from Locke's philosophy, such as the idea that power should be derived from popular consent.

Thomas Jefferson held Locke in an esteemed view, he even had a portrait of him in his Virginia based plantation home Monticello. In Jefferson's phrase "Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," [14] he takes a departure from Locke by replacing property with the pursuit of happiness. The implications are felt in our era today, where the culture states that if a person finds contentment in one form of sexuality or gender, then they should be allowed to, as long as it is a source of happiness. These implications create challenges such as a male feeling uncomfortable with someone who identifies as a male, though biologically they are a female. The pursuit of happiness is then either given to the male, who feels uncomfortable in a place such as a lavatory or locker room to have his space restricted to those who are biologically male or to the person who identifies as a male and finds pursuit of happiness in being recognized as such. Pursuit of happiness in a general sense creates this conundrum

Secondly, this fuels the concept of capitalism, that a person should earn as much as they can and this will lead to their pursuit of happiness. Enough research shows that the more a person earns and the quicker they earn has an effect on their wellbeing, not making it better but making it far worse. It also shows people who tend to be wealthier contribute less to charities than those are less wealthy. which Another research actually shows that millionaires and billionaires achieve happiness by giving their wealth in charity when gaining more wealth is no longer as fulfilling.[15] When the focus is purely on gaining material things one adopts greed, lying, and cheating, unless under rare circumstances. These all create a more evil society than a purer one. The Quran says

"Hoarding wealth has made you forget".[16] The Prophet ﷺ said "if the son of Adam were given a valley full of gold, he would love to have a second one; and if he were given the second one, he would love to have a third, for nothing fills the belly of Adam's son except dust"[17] Without a moral code imposed by religion one can do more harm as we have seen with the opioid crisis and the high costs of medical treatment and medicine especially in the USA. The concept of Ihtikaar, hoarding resources to raise the price at a time of need might bring joy to a single person but is directly detrimental to thousands of others.

Locke ant Montesquieu also popularized the separation of Church and State which the constitution mentions in Article 6 "no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States." The particular phrase "separation of Church and State" is attributed to Thomas Jefferson who had written this in a letter to the Danbury Baptist Association in Connecticut.[18] In all honesty, the separation is not truly isolation. Look at a US coin or bill, on one side a representation of state and the other "in God we trust" a peculiar collaboration for a government that claims separation of Church and State. Politicians still use religious rhetoric to garner votes and voters select politicians based on their religious backgrounds. Trump during his presidency has promoted Christian values to garner the Evangelical vote and even moved the American embassy to Jerusalem based on Judeo- Christian values. Amongst general Americans, 43% of Republicans and 29% of Democrats consider being Christian an important part of being an American[19]. Democracies are existing around the world which have strong biases to faith. This perhaps curtails influence but not necessarily mitigates it completely. From an Islamic perspective, Muslims have ruled and have had others rule over them as in the case of the Sahaba going to Abyssinia.

The philosophy of secularism reduces the influence of religion on politicians. As mentioned above, in theory it sounds honest but the practical implications in most democracies is that religion does influence politicians. Furthermore, Americans are generally more comfortable with religion playing a major role in public life in contrast to Europe.[20] Religion, especially Islam promotes ethical values of honesty, empathy, charity, integrity, sincerity etc. that are mostly urban legends in the political arena. When one looks at the lives of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, the righteous Caliphs, Umar bin Abdul Aziz, Aurangzeb etc. you find a level of sincerity and devotion to the people that is hard to find in a purely secular state. We see the incarceration of Blacks in the United States, the high cost of medical necessities and the corrupt bank systems. Around the globe, China, Russia, North Korea, England etc. all have citizens whose basic needs cannot be fulfilled due to the lack of a moral compass.

Montesquieu's view of separation of powers is one of the most influential views in American politics. It separates the three branches of government, the executive, judicial and legislative. This

is not in direct contrast with the principles of Islam and actually has been practiced by Muslims in their societies for centuries, from the inception of Islamic history. The legislative branch being the Quran, Hadith, and Fiqh are borne. Even at times Caliphs could be tried in court. The well known incident of Umar Bin Al Khattab رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ with Qadi Shurayh is a prime example.[21]

5. The Residual Effect of the Enlightenment

'The tendency of natural science toward progressive independence from metaphysics in the eighteenth century is correlated with this point about method. The rise of modern science in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries proceeds through its separation from the presuppositions, doctrines and methodology of theology; natural science in the eighteenth century proceeds to separate itself from metaphysics as well. Newton proves the capacity of natural science to succeed independently of a priori, clear and certain first principles. The characteristic Enlightenment suspicion of all allegedly authoritative claims the validity of which is obscure, which is directed first of all against religious dogmas, extends to the claims of metaphysics as well. '[22]

As the above quoted passage identifies that the contrast existed with religion it was more in contrast to Christianity than Islam. Many "isms" were born from the Enlightenment, I will focus on the influence of the Enlightenment on the founding fathers than the faith crisis in the United States, atheism, agnosticism, skepticism, Darwinism and scientism and provide Islamic responses to the above mentioned.

6. Faith crisis in the United States of America

Since its inception in 1776, the USA has always been multicultural in terms of ethnicity but has always been largely Christian with denominations: Anglican, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Protestant. The USA was initially a highly sought out refuge for religious freedom[23], though today the hierarchy in our political climate may not reflect that. Some historians even lay the cause of the American revolution as a religious war between the Protestants and the Anglicans; each adhering to their respective churches'.[24] Even so, other historians argue that the United States had strong secular values such as freedom of religion and freedom of speech expressed in the founding documents like the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Regardless, there was a strong sense of plurality and inclusiveness discussed amongst legislators such as Thomas Jefferson who specifically mentioned Muslims (who were referred as Mahometan) under the spectrum of protection; as he famously has said 'the Jew and the Gentile, the Christian and the Mahometan.'"[25] Benjamin Rush, the Pennsylvania signer of the Declaration of Independence and

friend of Adams and Jefferson, even preferred religious principles over non-religious principles saying "rather see the opinions of Confucius or Mohammed inculcated upon our youth than see them grow up wholly devoid of a system of religious principles."[26].

The founding fathers were the direct byproduct of Europe's Era of Enlightenment and in a rare occurrence in history, provided the ability of freedom of speech and religion. This meant religion no longer enjoyed its once apotheosized status and was open to criticism and scrutiny. Though this was a relatively new phenomenon amongst the Christians, Muslim had been scrutinizing their texts, debating authenticity and applying logic and reason over a millennia before, especially since no centric religious figure in Islamic tradition enjoys the status of pure acceptance equal or even close to that of the Prophet ﷺ. Understanding that religion was no longer a centric nucleus and separation of church and state remained a bedrock principle of American politics, allowed many to abandon their faith and normalized a culture in which religion has less and less influence as time progresses.

Despite the strong religious values and influence religion had on the creation of the USA, a study done by PEW noted that 23% of those who were raised as Muslim no longer identified as Muslims. Christianity has roughly the same decline at 22%, however, due to Muslims having a larger conversion rate of 23%, their population increase offsets its decrease whereas Christianity only has a conversion rate of 6%. . According to this survey, that would mean, out of 3.45 million Muslims residing in the USA, approximately 793,500 have left Islam. 25% reported their issue with Islam is directly dealing with the existence of God, organized religion and/or not practicing/drifting away. PEW outlines its parameter and sample size by stating "[t]hese are among the key findings of PEW Research Center's new survey of U.S. Muslims, conducted Jan. 23 to May 2, 2017, on landlines and cellphones, among a representative sample of 1,001 Muslim adults living in the United States."[27] It should be noted that the above number of 793,500 may be severely contested due to the small sample size and inclusion of all denominations that consider themselves Muslims. Nevertheless, even one Muslim leaving their faith is enough to cause alarm and warrants a study of a practical strategy to be put forward to preserve our posterity and their faith. When Muslims leave Islam the apparent choice that arises is to be atheist or agnostic and though there is not a clear unbiased and well-researched statistic, it is safe to assume based on the fact that Christian conversions are at 6% and the population of unaffiliated to a particular religion is about 26%[28] of which is about 3% atheists and 4% agnostic, atheism and agnosticism remains a strong choice for former Muslims. It should be noted that the population of atheists and agnostics reported are highly contested.

7. Atheism

Atheism etymologically comes from the Greek words “a”, a negation, and “theos”, meaning God. Therefore, atheists would be those who deny the existence of God philosophically. Theism is the actual belief in the existence of God. By definition atheism then becomes a direct answer to one of the most important metaphysical questions in the philosophy of religion, namely, “Is there a God?”. If the answer is yes, that is theism and if the answer is no, that is atheism. “I do not know”, “Maybe”, “I do not care” are not direct answers to this question.

It is also important to know that even in philosophy atheism is polysemous. Anthony Flew states that atheism is merely a psychological state in not believing in the existence of God. He mentions that there is negative atheism or soft atheism, where one does not believe in a deity but also does not unequivocally deny one and positive atheism or strong atheism is where one unequivocally denies the existence and possibility of a deity. In contrast to Flew, “The Four Horsemen” - Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris, and Christopher Hitchens - popularized the concept of New Atheism, specifically criticizing religion. Furthermore, John Schellenberg, coined the terms pro-God atheism, whose supporters wish there was a God to set the world in harmony, and anti-God atheism, whose supporters argue that the idea of God in it of itself is reprehensible. As is seen, atheism has multiple levels of differences and definitions for each theorist, thinker and philosopher. In reality, the concept of atheism is not uniform and is a rather a broad term with many nuances that most who even claim to adhere to atheism are not privy of.[29]

8. Agnosticism

In 1869 Thomas Henry Huxley, a British biologist famously known as Darwin’s bulldog, coined the word agnostic, meaning that one could know nothing of ultimate reality, whether spiritual or material.[30] In essence, agnostics neither affirm or deny the existence of a God or higher power. Rather the notion is; we neither know enough to prove it and we neither know enough to disprove it. Though the term was coined by Huxley, there is evidence of this as early as the 5th c. B.C.E. by the Greek philosopher Protagoras, who is known primarily for one of his three claims, one of them being that one could not tell if the gods existed or not.[31] David Hume, a Scottish philosopher of the Enlightenment Era, contends that “Though there be no such thing as chance in the world; our ignorance of the real cause of any event has the same influence on the understanding, and begets a like species of belief or opinion.”.[32]

Furthermore, there are multiple types of agnosticism

A. Strong agnosticism ("hard", "closed", "strict", or "permanent agnosticism") - The question of the existence of any form of a deity and the nature of ultimate reality is unknowable by any means. A strong agnostic would say "I do not know, and neither can you"
B. Weak agnosticism (also called "soft", "open", "empirical", or "temporal agnosticism") The existence of a deity is currently unknown, but it does not mean in the future it cannot be known. A weak agnostic would say "I don't know of the existence of God but perhaps in the future, it is possible to know [33]
C. Apathetic agnosticism- Whether a God exists or not, it is of little significance to us for they would not care as to the actions of mortals

Evidently, a weak agnostic would be more prone to understanding and discovering the truth. It is also important to know that these are not stagnant positions Muslim youth have. When they explore and research, Muslim youth change their positions based on what truth they may perceive. In my experience with working with Muslim youth in the United States, they have shifted their position from being an atheist to a strong agnostic to an apathetic agnostic to a weak agnostic and back to Islam, all in one conversation. Understanding the stage a person is in helps identify which discussions are important and which are not. For example, a discussion on miracles is not relevant for one who has certain atheistic views but may convince a weak agnostic or apathetic agnostic. Whereas debating the existence of God with an apathetic agnostic may be futile but a discussion of the concept of morality and purpose would be fruitful.

9. Skepticism

Skepticism is the theory that certain knowledge is impossible. In philosophy, it can simply refer to:
A method of deduction through critical scrutiny, caution, and intellectual rigor obtaining knowledge
Obtaining knowledge through systematic doubt and continuous testing
A set of claims surrounding the limitation of human knowledge

As for the first two definitions, these do not contradict Islam. Rather Islam motivates one to use their intellect to question the absurdities they see around them. Allah ﷻ says that He makes signs clear for us so that we may understand[34] Furthermore, Allah ﷻ says to measure the Prophetic words and life with one's intellect, which can only be done after scrutiny.[35] Allah ﷻ even challenges those who doubt his scriptures to go scrutinize it and look for inconsistencies.[36] Allah ﷻ even commands to verify the information if a person (whose character is flawed) was to

bring you.[37] Moreover, The Prophet ﷺ further says that it is sufficient for a person to be deemed a liar if they quote everything they hear.[38] This and many other scriptures is the reason that Islam has a rigorous process of scrutinizing text, especially those that relate to its creed and law. No other religion has a similar process of academia as portrayed by the Quran.

The third definition of skepticism is where we have a major conundrum with Islam. The various perspectives of skepticism will be listed below:

1. Academic skepticism - It is not possible to verify any form of knowledge as it pertains to our sensory perception. Using sensory perception as a means to justify knowledge leads to infinite regress. For example, if I am looking at a wall, how do I know that my eyes are actually capturing the wall ahead of me? What if I am dreaming?

Pyrrhonism - Is knowledge even possible? If I was to say it is hot outside the question asked would be "Why?" and I would respond "because of the sun". The response would again be met with "Why?" and this line of questioning would continue to be asked down to the last atom and still being asked about the atom being the way it is. That true knowledge is not possible.

These forms of skepticism are used to question the reality of life, most famously the dreaming argument. Zhuangzi the Chinese philosopher once mentioned he dreamt he was a butterfly. Upon waking he was not sure if he was dreaming of being a butterfly or is now dreaming of being human. René Descartes, a 17th century philosopher, mentions that when dreaming we are aware of certain facts that seem natural to us. For example, "a square has four sides" or "1+1 = 2". He then goes on to question what we deem as natural, giving examples that make individuals doubt their existence as well as their knowledge of abstract facts. He explains what if there was an evil genius feeding us incorrect information which we inaccurately assume to be correct. In another perspective, imagine one's brain inside a jar that is hooked to computers. Programmers control the signals, making the individual feel and experience sensations; but ultimately it is just a brain in a jar. How do we know that we do not exist, and every decision, feeling, and experience is the product of a simulation?

Descartes answers this dilemma by stating that even if people were controlled through a simulation, they would still know for sure that they were in existence-whether it be a dream or a controlled state. Typical skeptics do not try to prove the existence of the brain in a stimulation but rather there is a possibility of you being in a stimulation. Therefore, one scenario is that one is in actual existence and reality with the other scenario as one being a brain in a jar under control. If you are in the former, actually existing in the perceived reality. However, you cannot prove you are

not in the latter scenario and your inability to prove you are not means you do not know if you are in the actual existence you perceive.

One must then ask, do the evil geniuses/supercomputers want us to know they exist? If they do not want us to know, then it would not be possible for us to think of them. If they do want us to know, then what is the purpose of this knowledge? How do they benefit from our knowledge of their existence? Since everything is controlled, our knowledge of their existence becomes purposeless. Therefore, we know that we exist; and, if there is a possibility that we do not exist then the universal maxim "Certainty is not dismissed through doubts" must be applied.

10. Darwinism

As Europe began to question the basis of Christian values on the creation scientifically and morally, Christians attempted to solve this question by representing a more harmonic approach. William Paley in 1802 published Natural Theology, or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity collected from the Appearances of Nature. Here he ultimately explained 4 concepts:

1. There is a divine creator
2. Species did not change
3. The world was about 6,000 years old
4. There was a perfect design for each species

Darwin was greatly influenced by Paley's work; and, later in his life, after collaboration with Alfred Wallace, published scientific articles in 1858 on natural selection. The following year Darwin published his widely idolized book "On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life". Though decades later Wallace and Darwin would disagree on nuances of natural selection, their correspondence and collaboration greatly contributed to the theory that is widely known as Darwinism. Darwin never stated humans came from apes, but scientists later came to explain human evolution through his theory as well. [39]

Few points are worth knowing as Darwinism is not necessarily completely against Islamic values. Islam never denies or affirms evolution; rather, it says the originating creator is Allah ﷻ who created Adam ؑand sent him on earth. The existence of the world being 6,000 years old is not an Islamic perspective. Judiac religions suggested this timeline when computing the ages of Adam and Abraham to our current year. This is important to know because, according to Islam, Adam was not the first living being on earth. He was predated by the animals who were created a day before[40] (time is subjective in translation). Allah ﷻ also mentions that everything was created from water[41] and in another verse details everything being created from water and animals who crawled and walked on two legs and four legs. This could possibly even be a subtle interpretation of

the gradual process of animals evolving from one another with their inception being in water. There was also an existence of Jinn[42] on earth before Adam, as was the opinion of Ibn Abbas رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ. This could explain the bones of dinosaurs and the fossils that resemble human configuration. It is interesting to note that the 9th century Zoologist Jaahiz documented concepts of natural selection one-thousand years before Darwin.[43]

In terms of natural theology, Islam wholeheartedly agrees with the first and last concepts but not those in between. The idea is simple, Allah ﷻ could have created the world with a mere word "Be"; however, He let the world develop and flourish in its own manner. Therefore, Islam agrees with theistic evolution, accepting the concepts of evolution aside from those of man.

The issue of human evolution has far less probability than the theory of evolution. At least the theory of evolution excluding humans has supporting evidence. When the theory extends to humans, there is no complete fossil record to substantiate this claim; and, fossils brought forward have been carbon dated, a process that has had previous inaccuracies. The factor that causes the evolution has been termed as random, which remains an unknown. As any beginner science student knows, a theory is a theory, not a law. It has the possibility of being disproved or proven, but it is strange how strongly people accept the theory in all of its aspects without substantial evidence.

11. Scientism

Scientism is the belief that the assumptions and methods of research of the physical and natural sciences are equally applicable or essential to all other disciplines, including philosophy, the humanities, and the social sciences. There are a few problems with this ideology. In its most extreme form, Scientism accepts only scientific claims as meaningful. This in itself is not scientific. Thus, Scientism is self-annihilating in its philosophy. Additionally, the process of scientific validation is limited. It works great with components that can be measured or reproduced. However, not every form of knowledge is measurable or reproducible. For example, historical events can not be studied through the scientific method as it would entail reproduction of those incidents; this shows a logical fallacy in the argument.

Science is not a constant; rather, it is ever changing. Earlier, I had mentioned how Copernicus's theory was at one point considered to be ground breaking- until we discovered that the sun does, in fact, possess its own orbit. Newtonian physics, which were the foundational element of any physics class, no longer remains absolute against the quantum realm. Every sphere of science constantly is updated and revisited. Doctors and medical professionals constantly reveal treatment options that were previously deemed scientifically impossible. A quick stroll down any

hospital will leave even the most devout followers of Scientism a little puzzled at the updates and revisions to the scientific conclusions once regarded as accurate at the time.

Another impediment to Scientism is the lack of unison amongst all scientists. Many disagreements show that the field is not absolute. Proponents of Scientism generally claim if it can not be proven scientifically then it is not acceptable. However, if we are to follow this ideology then science will never grow. Is science not the process of discovery? Further, most proponents of Scientism are not knowledgable with the research a scientist presents. They will quote scientists but are not knowledgeable of the process leading to the stance, inadvertently believing in the unknown. This is the very wrong that religious followers are patronized for. .Lastly, the sheer number of scientists that adhere to a religion shows the compatibility of faith, especially Islam and science.

12. The Unseen and the Metaphysical

Christianity largely relies on the concept of just belief with little reason. The concept of trinity, the inspiration of disciples in writing the New Testament, tongues, visions, miracles, the divinity of religious figures, etc. are all rooted in mere faith without any true logical reasoning. Islam on the other hand is largely understood through rational methodology, although it impresses in believing in the unseen.[44] Islam also has the concept of miracles and visions with a major difference. Miracles and visions of the Prophets which have textually and authentically come to us are mandated to believe in. However, Islam does attest that those besides Prophets can perform miracles as in the case of Maryam[45]. Besides those individuals that have been mentioned in the Quran and authentic Hadith, one does not necessarily need to believe that xyz actually performed the miracle. For example, the belief that an individual other than the Prophets can perform something metaphysical is an Islamic notion[46] ,but the belief of a particular Shaykh or person performing the miracle can be debated or even denied without any spiritual ramification. The same applies to dreams and visions one claims. Another important distinction is that legislation and law can not be produced through any individual, Shaykh, or through any divine claim of vision. This greatly restricts the influence of individuals in religion. The unseen such as paradise, hell, the afterlife, etc. are all elements of Islam.

If one argues how can one believe it without actually seeing it? There are three levels of conviction:

1. Ilmul Yaqeen[47] - reasonable certainty, this means a person has the knowledge without the element of doubt
2. Aynul Yaqeen[48] - empirical certainty, this means a person witnesses it themselves

3. Haqqul Yaqeen[49] - ultimate certainty, this means a person experiences it themselves

Ibnul Qayyim says “An example of these three degrees is like a person who tells you that he has honey with him. (At this stage) you have no doubt in his testimony. Then you actually see the honey and this increases your yaqeen, then you actually taste the honey. The first is reasonable certainty (‘ilm al-yaqeen), the second is empirical certainty (‘ayn al-yaqeen), the third is ultimate certainty (haqq al-yaqeen)” A believer holds the first level of conviction. They do not doubt it as they trust the perfect source, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

How can Muslims believe in someone without seeing them or seeing their evidence? Simple, just as we believe Napoleon when he chronicles his diary. Neither did we see him or see his handwriting. Even if we were to see Napoleon’s handwriting, most of us would not know if it was truly his or someone else's. Now suppose an expert on Napoleon informed us that the handwriting on the manuscript truly was Napoleon’s, most of us would trust the expert’s word without knowing him or verifying his qualifications. As mentioned earlier the scientific method can not be applied to every scenario, it has its limitations which is an undeniable fact. There isn’t a human on earth who has physically experienced the authenticity of every information he/she has attained. There always remains an element of trust in the unseen. When we study Socrates in philosophy, we are unaware of even the publisher of the book. Yet we contend “If the university has added this into our curriculum then it must be accurate.” The trust is leveled and degrees are attained without actually exploring the original source of knowledge. The difference between the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and others is he never lied; and no such accusations were leveled against him for forty years. Even Non- Muslim historians such as Washington Irving attest that the man was not a liar.[50]

13. Conclusion and Solutions

The bubbling of the Enlightenment was caused by the spiritual fracture, nay paralyzation that spread across Christian religious leaders. Distrust in religious leadership lead to distance from religion which ultimately led to the decline of religious allegiance and loyalty to rational. "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” This is a strong reminder first and foremost to myself and my colleagues that our actions, religiosity and integrity has and will have an enormous impact on the future of our community's faith. It is important that we take a note to ourselves, find mentors, seek advice, and strengthen our spiritual connections with Allah ﷻ and follow the Prophetic Sunnah, distancing ourselves from the pay-per-view Islam or the celebrity culture which has plagued Muslims. Academia is all but fossilized in the libraries. Just as the Enlightenment grew distrust so will distrust grow in the Muslim community. We already see it

happening where Muslim no longer trust scholars, be it in Pakistan, the Middle East, or our own home country, the USA.

Secondly, we must acquaint ourselves with the the philosophical concepts that are indoctrinated to our masses. Every person who has garnered higher education in the West comes in contact with and studies these as their core classes. We must not enter the realm with a completely dismissive mentality that all of these philosophies are unequivocally incorrect. Grasp the elements that correspond with Islam and respond adequately to those elements that contradict Islam. Start with younger minds, those in middle school, High School, or College, and explain these concepts with their responses in simple terminology. By starting the educational process early we hold the power of first impression. If this opportunity has been missed, provide these courses at all levels to bring the younger generation on the same page. Youth often feel they do not receive adequate responses to their questions; and, as a result, believe there might not actually be a response. Islamic seminaries, universities, Darul Ulooms, Mahads, etc need to address the liberal sciences pragmatically and not merely chalk it off as misguided philosophies.

Lastly, encourage the youth to learn and go down the path of scholarship. The more individuals who are homegrown and equipped to understand the intellectual crisis amongst their peers, the better our preservation of faith will be. Islamic scholarship no longer remains a sought out field. It is undermined by the very secular ideas ingrained in us from centuries of resentment towards organized religion. Once the post of scholarship is respected and restored, by definition it will translate to a more holistic connection to Islam.

Allah ﷻ knows best

PART II

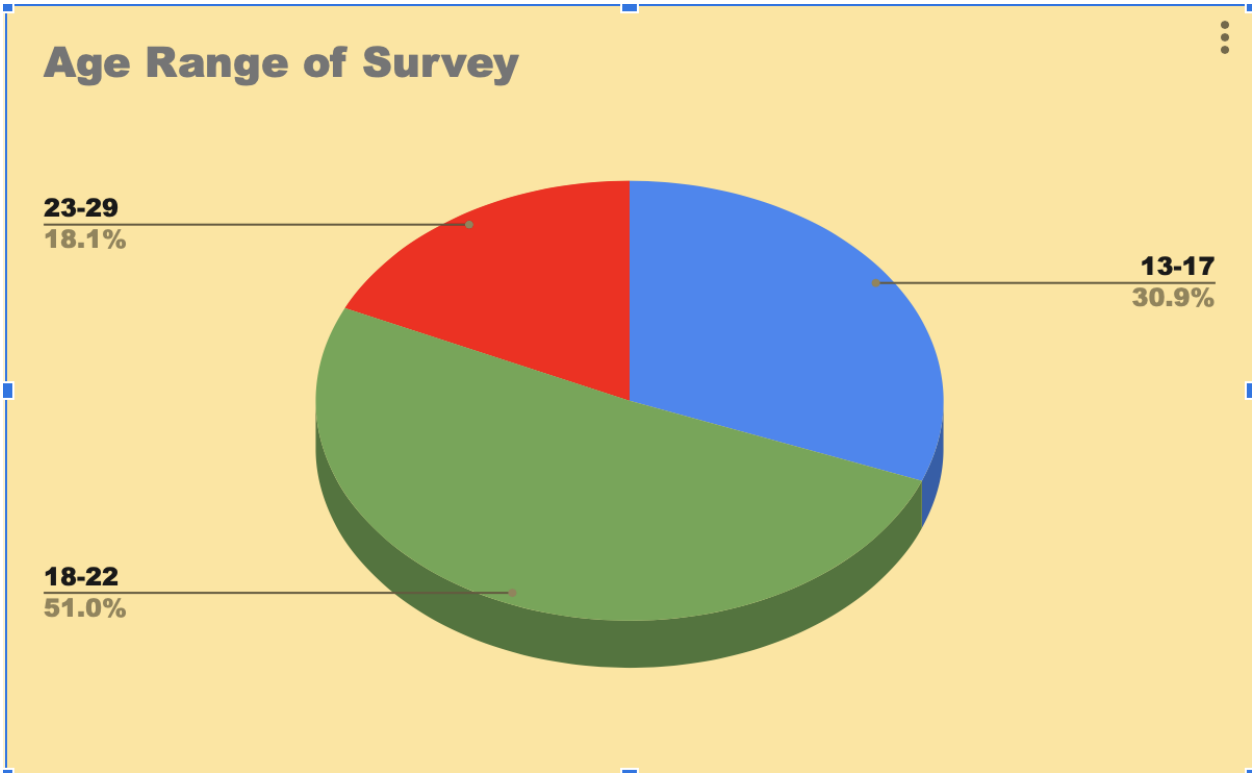
1. Survey Methodology

In February 2020 I surveyed 1,276 Muslim American youth from over 60 cities spread across over 25 states to measure the effect of social and emotional factors on their faith and which

issues cause doubt in religion. The sample then was reduced to 1,111 participants to reduce the margin of error. The survey listed 19 questions and had 26 factors that commonly cause spiritual crisis. The age group was between 13-29, and the survey results are categorized under three groups. High school youth from the ages of 13-17, college youth from 18-22, and young adults from 23-29. From now on, High school youth will refer to Muslim American youth aged between 13-17, college students will refer to Muslim American youth aged between 18- 22, and young Muslim adults will refer to youth aged between 23-29.

In this section I will deal with the most common issues affecting Muslim American youth in general followed by considerable challenges that were mentioned in their suggestion box. I will also attempt to provide solutions for given challenges. I will first mention internal struggles that are found on a personal level and then follow them by external challenges and factors that influence their connection to Allah ﷻ. It is worth noting, I focused on MSAs and youth organizations; however, Masaajid and Imams also provided their youth platforms. The former was aggressively consulted over the latter to provide a more diverse demographic.

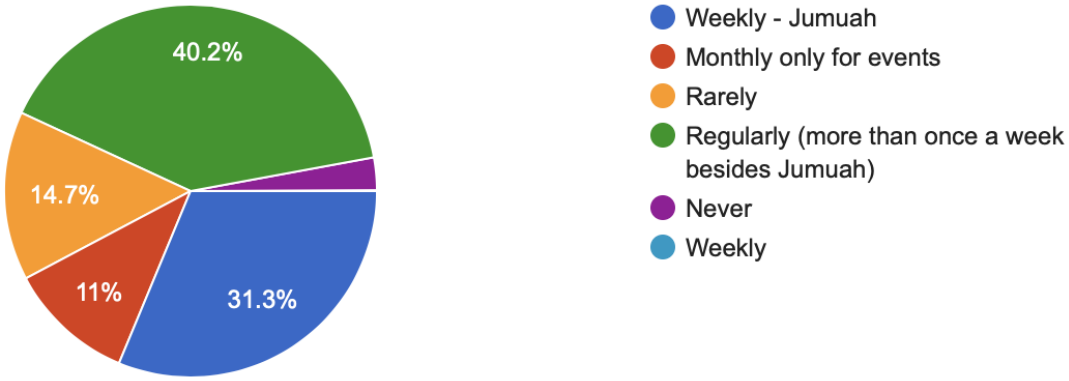
The greatest struggles across Muslim youth is their relationship to Salah (prayer), followed by masturbation, pornography and relationships. Aside from these factors, youth girls struggled strongly with Islam's place for women in terms of role and representation. LGBTQ views in Islam and answers to questions of Islam in a logical manner were a strong discouraging factor amongst the American Muslim youth. Chaos in the Muslim community related to struggles of Masjid politics, disunity being the leading cause of American youth wanting to leave Islam by a greater margin than anything else. I will begin with the highest concerns then will list general major concerns. The first and the highest rated concern amongst all was their connection to pray.



One aspect of the survey had 12 questions which asked how impactful are certain struggles to the faith of youth. The options ranged from "not at all" to "I do not want to be a Muslim". The purpose was not to make a theological statement but truly measure the pulse of Muslim youth and question the statistics of PEW which presented that about 23% of American Muslims leave Islam. Our research found that amongst high school youth and young adult youth only 12% selected the option of "I do not want to be a muslim" for any of the 12 questions. Amongst college youth there was a slight increase of 13% who had selected "I do not want to be a muslim" for any of the 12 questions. This is half of what PEW had reported. Though even 1 person is enough cause for worry it is satisfactory to know that not all surveys present a bleak future for Muslim youth.

Words are enlarged based on frequency

The survey also showed a growing attachment to Masaajid amongst the younger generation. 40% went to the Masjid regularly, which means at least once a week besides the Friday prayer and 31% said they go only for Jumuah. 29% listed seldom visits to the Masaajid.



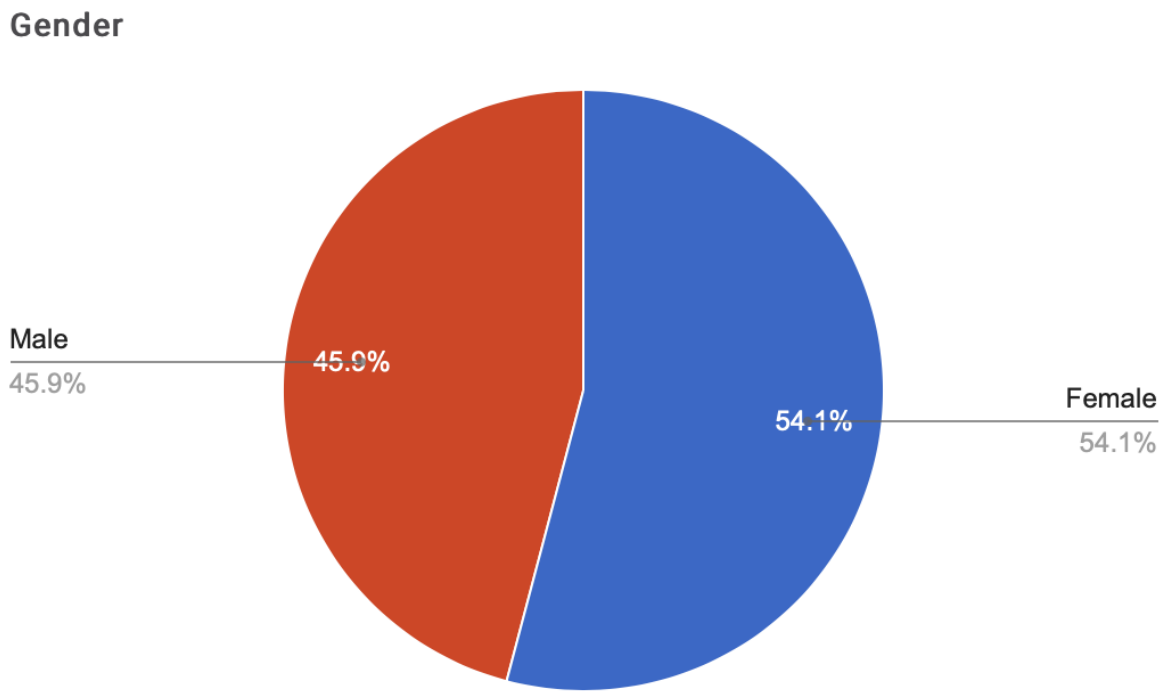
2. The Struggle of Prayer

Struggling to concentrate in prayer has been the leading cause of spiritual crisis amongst the youth across all ages. This is closely followed by the challenge of praying 5 times a day. There is a near perfect correlation between one's ability to concentrate in their prayer and their ability to habitually pray. As understood earlier, the American mentality is to bring everything in logical bounds. If something does not make sense logically it is difficult to accept. That is why the inability to understand prayer has a direct effect on the ability to pray. 67% of High school youth struggled to concentrate in prayer and 62% struggled to pray 5 times a day. College youth almost equally struggled to concentrate in prayer in which 66% listed concentration as their greatest struggle, however 57% struggled with praying 5 times a day. 61% of Young Muslim adults struggled with concentration and 49% struggled to pray. We notice a common struggle in concentration during prayer, however as the age group gets older it becomes less of a struggle to pray 5 times a day. This could be a result of maturity, marriage, learning Arabic or the need for being more committed and disciplined.

The solution could be found on two levels. The first is an immediate level and the second is on a continuous level. On an immediate level, a short intensive between 1-3 hours should be conducted for every age group that explains the meaning of every aspect of prayer along with logical explanations for each motion. This intensive should be done three times a year for three years to maximize reach in every age group. Afterwards, on a continuous level this intensive could be taught once a year for high school youth, college students and young professionals whilst providing the intensive or a series for middle school and elementary school youth twice a year. We noticed that the concentration and ability to pray became less difficult as the youth got older, however if we can influence right from childhood their understanding that would be the most impactful.

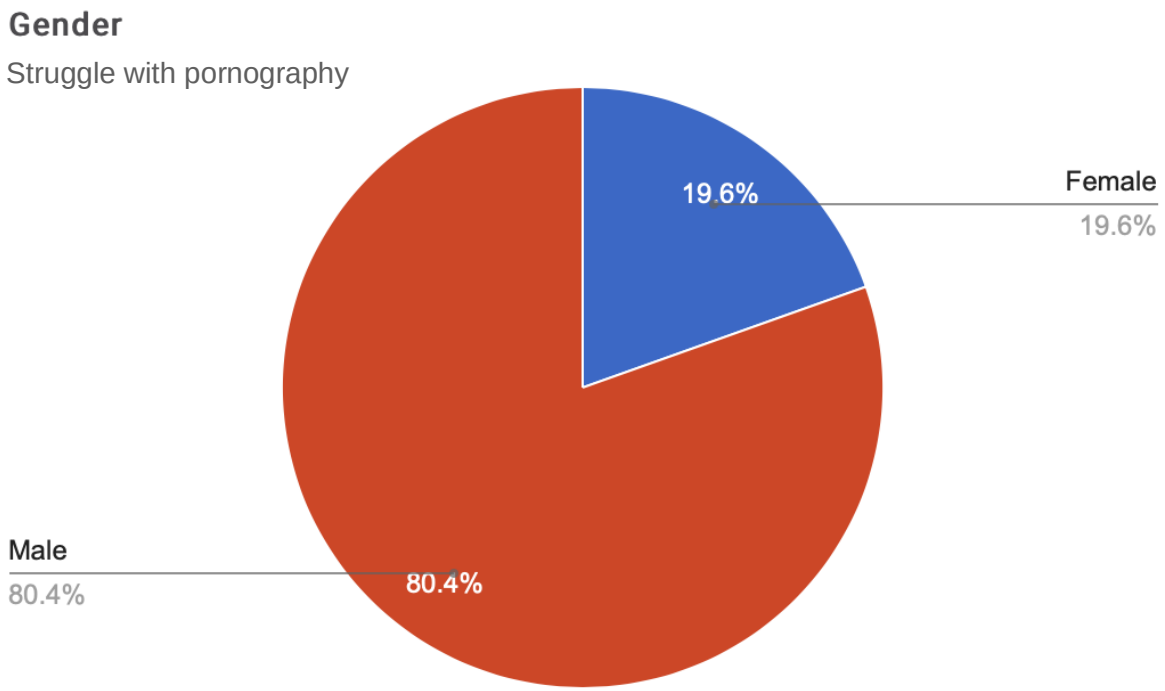
In the Quran, Salah is considered the tool to prevent one from immorality. When the Salah is lacking, there is a direct impact on following the other tenets of Islam. Therefore, the basic concept of Salah and emphasizing prayer is incredibly important. Teaching that prayer is a reward rather than a punishment will also help grow the connection youth have to their prayer. Perhaps a study can be done to measure the reasons why youth do not find spirituality in prayer and diversify mechanisms in solving this crisis. That is why it comes without surprise the next most challenging struggles faced by Muslim youth are masturbation, pornography and relationships.

Struggle with prayer 5 times a day and concentration

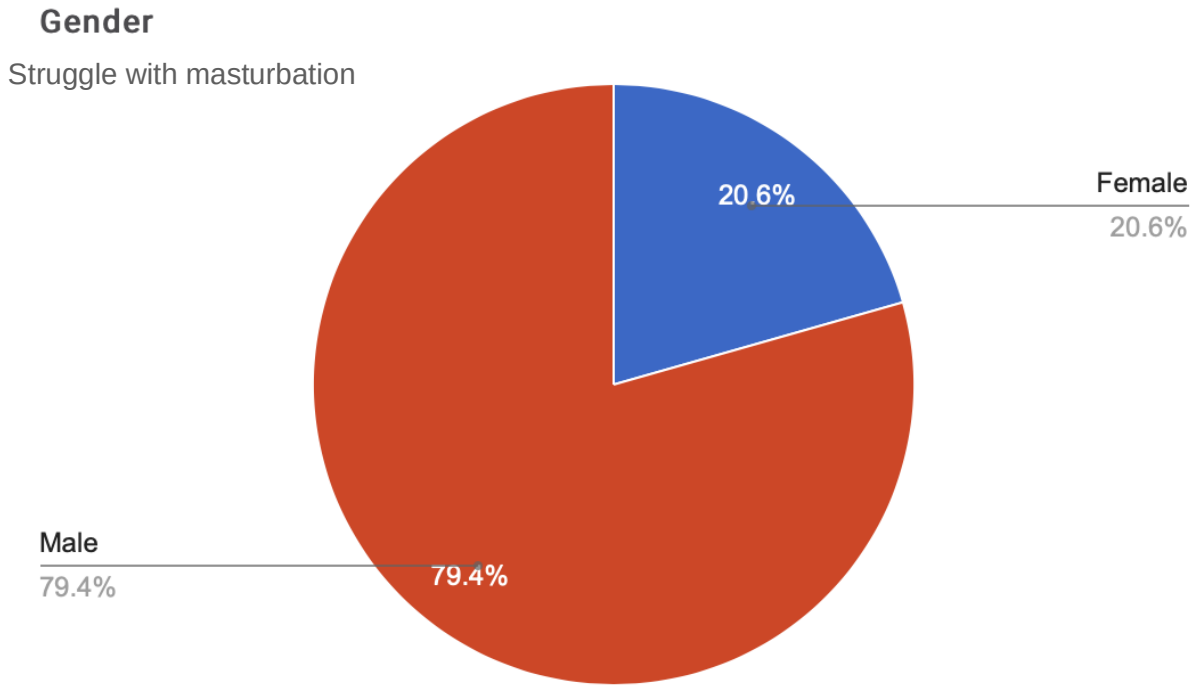


3. Masturbation, Pornography and Relationships

In a hyper-sexualized era, studies show over 70% of youth either watch pornography or masturbate. In our survey we found 38% of Muslim American youth struggled with masturbation and 35% struggled with pornography. The close results show a direct link between masturbation and pornography. Amongst high school youth 29% reported masturbation as a struggle and almost equally 29% reported pornography to be a struggle as well. Pornography could very well be the cause that leads to addiction which results in stronger struggles with masturbation. When college youth were polled, 42% struggled with masturbation and 38% struggled with pornography. The percentage further increases as we poll young adults where 47% struggle with masturbation and 41% struggle with pornography. This study shows that as addiction is cultivated in a young age it becomes harder to abandon even as the youth get older



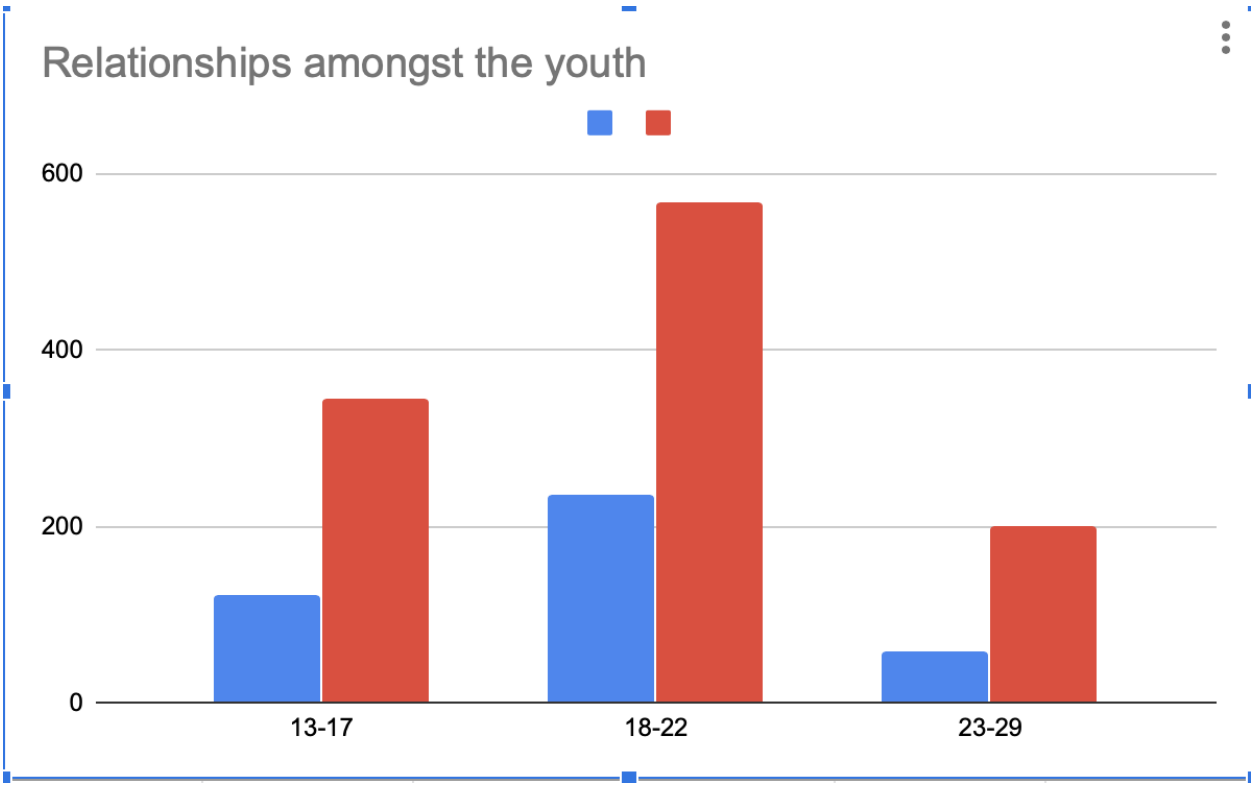
Furthermore, this also affects their desire to have relationships. 36% of high school youth struggle with relationships whereas 41% of college youth struggle with relationships. Now the most interesting part of this area of study was where young adults only reported a 29% of them who struggled with relationships. This could be due to a good percentage being married, however the



statistics of masturbation continued to increase and be much higher in their age group, even though relationships with the opposite gender seemed to be much less of a struggle. Muslim boys made up of about 75% of those who struggled with masturbation where as Muslim girls were 25% of those who comprised of those who struggled.

A solution could be found in raising more awareness and addressing topics related to sexual emotions and feelings and how to navigate them. Youth should be given an avenue to anonymously email and work on breaking their addiction. This can be accomplished by regulating social media usage and raising awareness of avoiding social media that sexualizes content such as instagram, tiktok and snapchat which are all major contributors to sexualizing content. Giving opportunities to youth to be engaged in volunteer work keeps them busy and reduces free time as the the devil tempts all men (women) and idle man (women) tempts the devil. Providing more spiritual content on social media also helps in reducing the focus on sexualized content when breaking away seems impossible.

In terms of 1 in 3 youth reporting relationship struggles there has to be a stronger emphasis on personal integrity and the concept of Hayaa in Islam and the concept of preservation of ones intimacy for their spouse. Segregating youth from the opposite gender without truly making them understand the etiquette of interactions is not beneficial. Khutbahs on long weekends and when youth are off should revolve on these aforementioned struggles and relevant solutions.



4. LGBTQ views

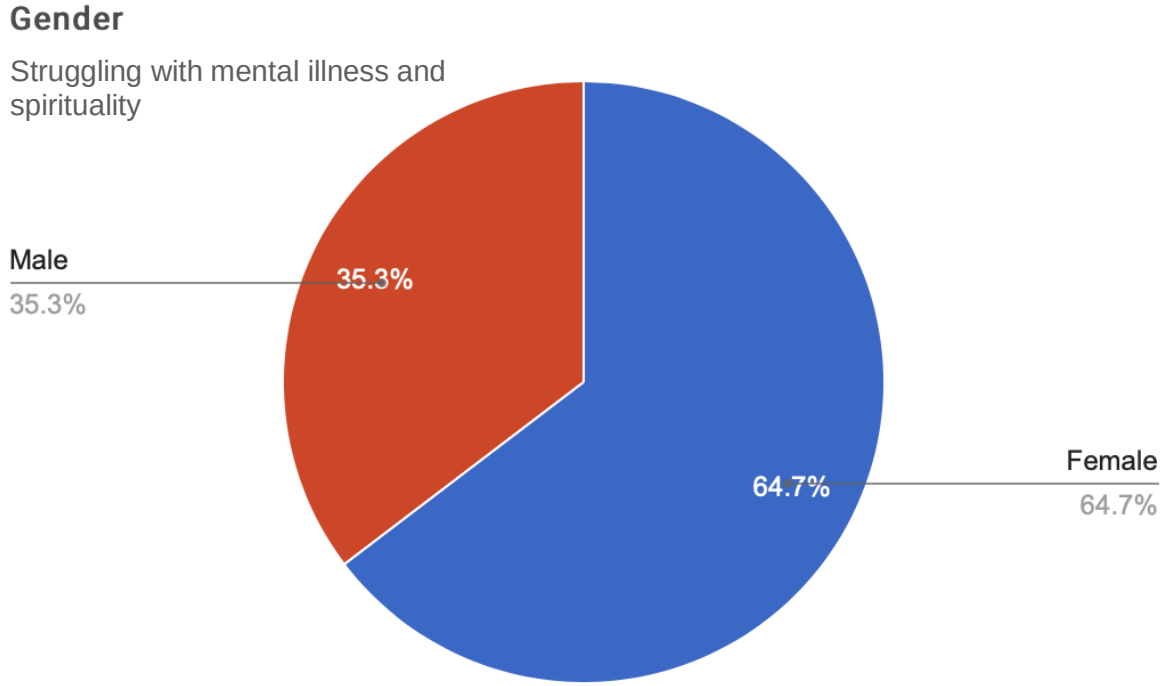
1 in 10 youth reported either being attracted to the same gender or being in conflict with Islam's view on LGBTQ issues. Though the study did not focus on this aspect it was apparent from the comments that there was a growing struggle with understanding Islam's views and reconciling those with one's personal struggles. A separate poll online was conducted with my social media followers who mentioned that in the last 3 years they had not heard a Khutbah or lecture addressing this topic. More awareness and a less judgmental approach coupled with rhetoric that shows one has a safe zone to address their personal matters in confidence is needed. Being judged remained a struggle amongst Muslim youth and will be addressed later. More study on this is needed.

5. Being a Muslim girl/women

Muslim girls presented strong challenges of perception and holding on to Islamic views. These challenges include wearing the Hijab, being treated differently from male siblings, and being able to make decisions and being empowered. An unfortunate realization was Muslim men were not as aware of Muslim women's struggle with their faith with only 25% considering this an issue. A more robust awareness of Muslim women and their roles and contributions to Islam should be taught. Equal opportunity for education and involvement in Masaajid should be encouraged as long as it does not impede the parameters of Fiqh. This can be done through scholarships for females who are then hired by their communities. Female scholars also reported lack of opportunity in the Muslim community and shared frustration in trying to solve the issues of Muslim youth, especially Muslim women.

Young Muslim women also accounted for 63% of the respondents to "mental illness being a factor that affects their faith". 53% of women felt the Masjid environment to be counterproductive to their faith. 60% - 70% of respondents to "struggles faced by Islamic rules", "religious expectations", "cultural expectations", "being misfits", "facing identity crisis", "Islamic values" and "struggles with friends" were women. There is mounting evidence that young Muslim women struggle more than young Muslim men and have less avenues to seek help and find a safe zone in Masaajid and with Imams. Consequently, over 50% of respondents to "discontent with Imam" were young Muslim women.

Islam has long championed women's rights and produced a plethora of women scholarship well before it was popular in "enlightened" Europe or progressive America. Islam has the tools and the ability to provide all women a safe place for personal development and to grow without



judgement in a hypersexualized culture where women are constantly sexually abused, harassed, body shamed and demeaned. The next challenge faced by the youth is being judged which leads to disinterest or disengagement.

6. Being Judged

"Judging someone can have similar effects to other forms of discrimination. People describe feeling isolated, ashamed, misunderstood, criticized and demeaned. Judging can also result in people being less likely to talk about what they are going through and ask for the help they need." Youth of all age groups reported being judged, however the sphere of judgement and where it stems from is vastly different amongst the age groups. High school youth perceive a significant amount of judgement from their local community, namely parents, relatives and their friends. This causes them to feel isolated. I think their main struggle is feeling comfortable in their skin as Muslims and they feel that it is made worse because of the added burden of judgements from the community. The community needs to have a more welcoming approach. If there is discontent with the youth it should be addressed with benevolence and where there is resistance and a lack of interest from youth, religious leadership should be approached to speak to them from an interpersonal relationship standpoint.

As for college-going youth, their complaints regarding judgement include being judged by their elders for struggles that their elders did not face, but also by their peers whom they feel are judgmental. This prevents the possibility of a cohesive Muslim community being built in this age group. They feel like their social community is very segmented. Constant condescending remarks

of the struggles faced by the elders or their relationship with their parents becomes counterproductive. Whilst, one must mention their experiences it will be more impactful to do so with a friendly and understanding relationship. College youth are generally more open to reason and logic and when advice is cloaked in this manner it will be far more impactful.

Young adults struggle to feel accepted in the workplace and especially struggle with independence from parents. The women of this age group complain about not being able to live independent of their parents as adult women if they are single. Islamic ethics and values should be ingrained from a younger age and more compassionate relationships at home create a stronger bond and attachment amongst children, especially women. In the United Kingdom, Muslim girls generally will not marry out of their city out of concern from being too distant from family. Family values and understanding children will falter will create a safe zone, yet productive environment towards their well being. The next challenge is how chaos in the community results in the highest rate of discontent amongst Muslim youth

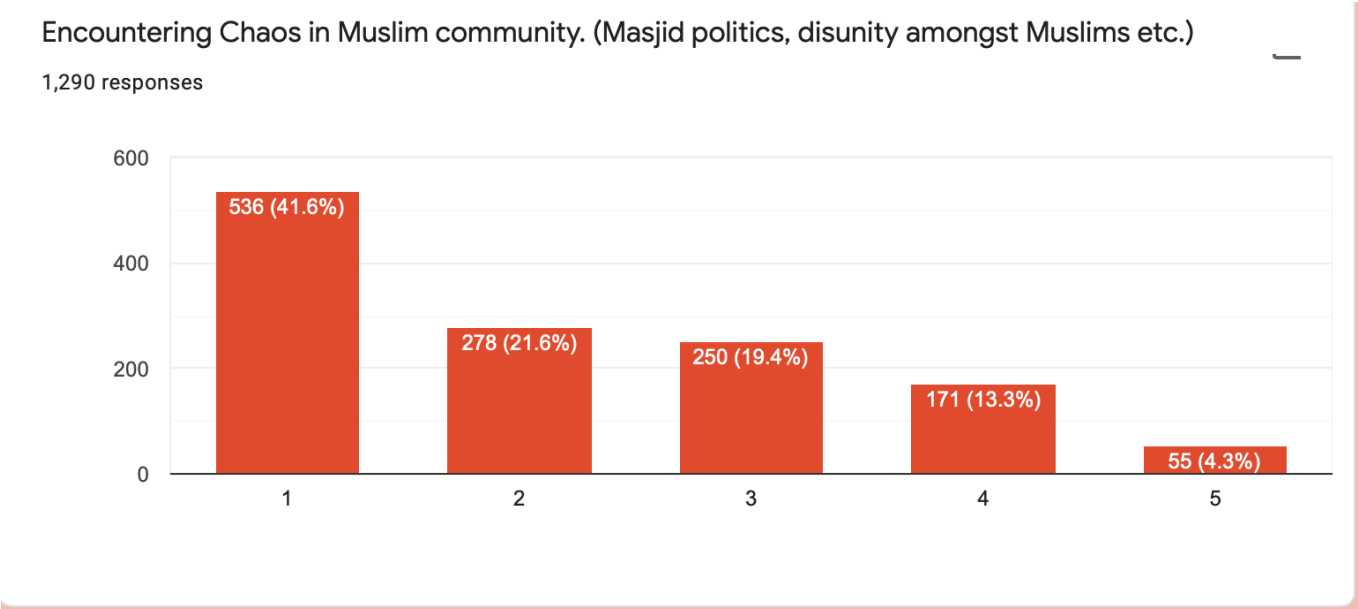
7. Chaos in the Community

Out of the 12 questions polled, where the spectrum was 1 “This issue does not affect me at all” and 5 “This makes me not want to be a Muslim”, chaos in the community related to Masjid politics and internal disagreement had the highest selection of option number 5. 3 out of 5 Muslim youth felt these struggles directly affected their faith. When Masaajid split, abuse their Imams and/or do not provide sufficient resources for the youth then there will inevitably be discontent that is grown amongst the Muslim youth.

Muslim youth have mentioned that their struggle with how the elder generation operates the Masjid,leads them to not want to come to the Masjid. When relationships are forged with Imams that are removed from their posts based on personal grievances and without considering the residual effect on the community and the next generation, serious harm can be done. This can be solved by advocating two solutions. The first is creating an Imam rights, or a charter that outlines how Imams are treated and under what conditions they can be removed. The second solution is to have an arbitration clause and checks and balances over boards. When boards are left unchecked they do more harm than any perception of benefit. Masjid representatives should be required to periodically undergo training, similar to a corporate standards, that will enhance productivity and enable more effective communication which will in turn allow for a more pleasant Masjid-going environment.

As far as the lack of support perceived by youth in terms of providing resources for them, this can be mitigated by allocating a budget for the youth. Youth directors should be employed

where they have half of their hours offsite to focus on counseling and bridging gaps and half of their hours onsite to foster relationships in the Masaajid. 5-10% of the annual budget should be for the youth. Activities in the Masjid and outside should be offered to create a stronger bonding experience.



8. Perception of Imams and Scholars

Relationships with scholars were not absolutely negative, however there were valid concerns raised by factions in each age group which are worth noting. Our effectiveness is dependent on the concerns of our congregation. These concerns should not be seen as conspiracy or taken defensively but rather constructively.

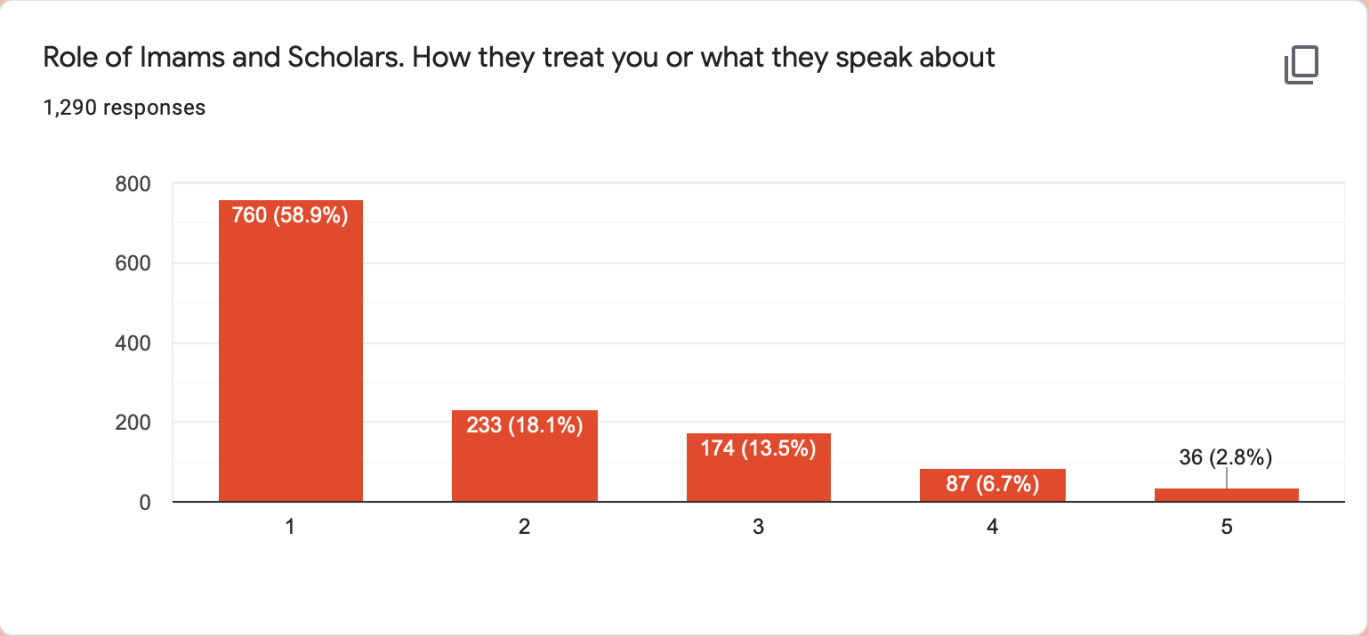
High school, youth, the main complaint about scholars from this age group is that they feel scholars are hard to approach because they preach fear and have elements that make them unrelatable. Scholars should implement topics that are relevant, understand trending influences, and be better at navigating the thought process. Topics of encouragement and love should be addressed more and the obedience to the Creator should first and foremost be implanted through love and affection without forgetting there is also a balanced concept of accountability. If accountability is all together left out it leads to faith without practice which will eventually lead to no faith at all.

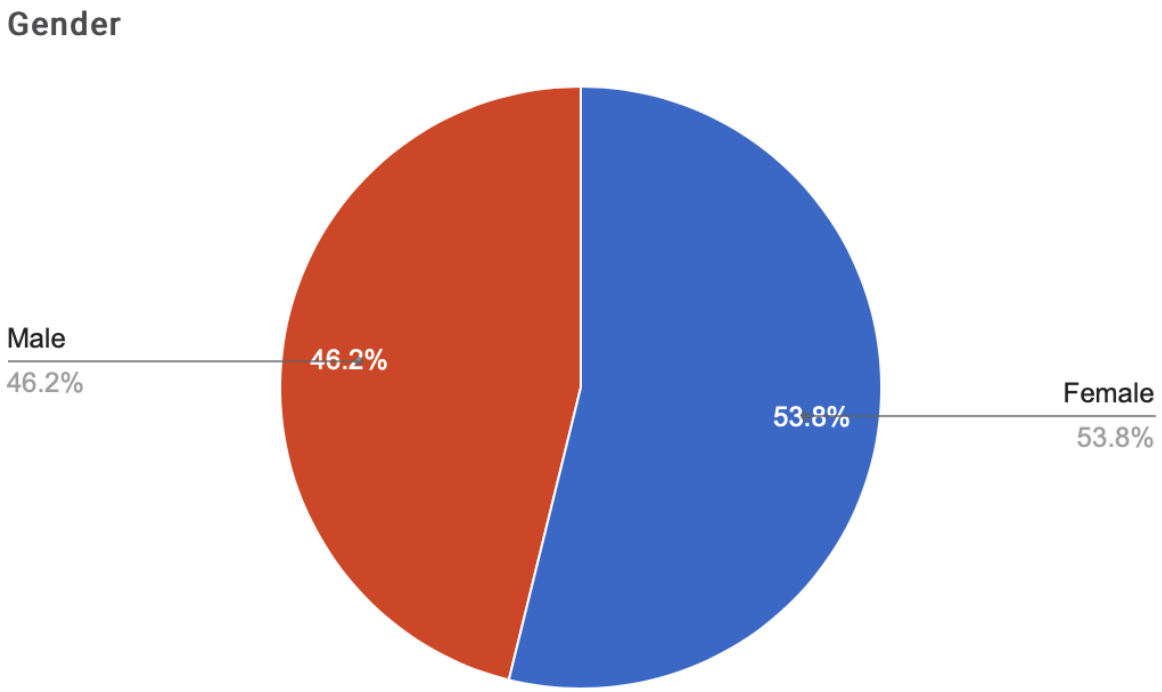
College youth, the people in this age group who feel that scholars are an obstacle do not seem to like scholars. They think scholars are corrupt or unkind or do not do a good job of trying to

connect with them. As youth grow older their ability to take criticism in our society becomes less tolerable. Youth mentioned how scholars at times mention statistics without providing references and this leads them to believe that the scholar either was ill prepared or is misinforming the community. Lack of academic substance and regurgitating the same concepts has also created a void in their spirituality. This can be remedied by preparing more relevant topics, treating them with respect over retribution and providing them an atmosphere of affection and admiration. Developing personal relationships should be for the sake of Allah ﷻ and not to exploit talent, relationships, or favors. The Prophet ﷺ said abstain from what the people posses and they will love you

Young adults, This age group feels that scholars have not done a good job of leading the community and blame scholars for issues they see in their community. Most Masaajid lack the presence of adequate youth aged from 18-35. They expect their Imams to be more active locally and provide strong leadership rather than passive leadership. They expect scholars to uphold justice and not have conflicts of interests. Our responsibilities should be focused on serving the community for the sake of Allah ﷻ without looking for personal gain.. We should take time out to periodically be involved in interfaith, local issues and national issues. The older youth are willing to follow if there is a leader but feel that their leaders are too disconnected and do not truly care for their communities. I am not doubting anyone's intentions as they belong between the creater and the creation, however we could do a better job in making others feel that we stand for justice and uphold the truth and are not worried about a salary or personal fame. The last discussion I will discuss is on how logical concerns are handled by scholars in regards to faith.

Struggle with the role of Imams and Scholars





9. Intellectual Concerns Being Answered

As mentioned in the first part of the paper, American youth are grown to question and measure what they are taught through reason and logic. Islam is unique in its rich history of providing logical explanations to most theological issues. An in-depth study and understanding of these topics will help relieve the Muslim youth of their misunderstandings and doubts.

Highs school youth, this age group faces logical struggles with Islam mainly in regards to future career interest. They seem to feel guilty being interested in fields of study and science that have a reputation of being in conflict with Islam. Providing alternatives and avenues for their interests will make them feel content in their workplace and careers. Instead of telling them it is not permissible, providing them with an alternative will realign their interests. Since this age group is highly impressionable, convincing arguments and income statistics could be deployed to help them overcome this struggle.

College youth and young adults, these age groups logical struggles with Islam are around understanding why certain Islamic principles or rules are in place and how that helps them be better people. They feel that in some regards Islam is outdated. They especially have questions about gender mingling. since this age group is usually in school and experiencing the most diversity and social opportunities in their life, they feel they have the best opportunity they have ever had or will have to logically challenge Islam and find opposite gender companions, especially intimately. Annual series on shattering doubts should be held where Islam's perspectives are outlined and logically proven to show how Islam has a greater epistemology and is far ahead of our times. How Islamic values are not always in contrast to social norms and the principles of Islam actually foster more freedom and a safe space for people to grow. Topics of slavery, Jihad, the Prophet ﷺ marriage should be approached in an unapologetic method with convincing and academic responses. Practical and implementable guidelines should be presented for interaction with the opposite gender especially in finding spouses and families should be encouraged to work with their children rather than impose upon their children as long as it falls under the acceptable tenets of Fiqh.

10. Conclusion

This research in no way is an absolute representation of Muslim American youth struggles, rather it is intended to spark discussion and study the most common issues. Issues such as racism, sexual abuse, mental illness, family struggles, struggles with friends, etc. are all challenges the youth feel unequipped to handle and feel they dont have the resources to handle them. Every Imam and community leader should do a local survey building off of these challenges on an annual basis and use those surveys to tailor the content they will present from the Mimbar. The more intune the Imams are the more they will connect with their congregations.. There is no doubt Hidaya is ultimately in the hands of Allah ﷻ, however we have to do our due diligence. Consulting peers, elders and and even other faith leaders can help us better serve our communities. One thing is for sure, there is a lot of room for us to operate in. Instead of viewing any Masjid, organization or Imam as a threat, we must understand that even if every Muslim organization had optimal concentrated efforts in the community there is a large segment of the community that will still remain in need. Let us concentrate our efforts at a more grass roots level and serve in as much of a capacity we can serve in and pray to Allah ﷻ for guidance. I ask you all to keep myself, my parents, teachers, students, friends and the entire Ummat in your prayers. Anything correctly mentioned is from Allah ﷻ and any inaccuracy is my negligence and the influence of Shaitaan. Allah ﷻ knows best.

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