

## The Role of Mosques in Neighborhood Development in Mashhad

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### Extended Abstract

#### 1. Introduction

The present research analyzes the role of mosques as the most widespread, pervasive social network and examines their place in district development in Holy Mashhad. The analysis is done through investigating the variables related to the multifold activities of mosques in neighborhoods and evaluating neighborhood dweller's reception of activities and programs offered and foundations laid by mosques. The variables related to the multifold activities of mosques pivot on eight general points (i.e., the role of mosques in enriching people's free time, creation of a cultural atmosphere, offering financial aides, staging religious-cultural ceremonies and meetings, increasing the participation rate of neighborhood dwellers, offering consultation, prioritizing neighborhoods' issues, problems and needs, and enhancing individual and social security through increased internal and external surveillance).

#### 2. Theoretical Framework

District development is not a novel notion and goes back to the first collective efforts of people who cooperated in order to increase their stock (Mc Crindle, 1998). It is said that, contrary to other types of development, district-regional development has a longer, albeit more tumultuous, history in planning and development sources. In our country, mosques, dating back to centuries ago and being steeped in our history, fulfill varied political, economic, and social functions and can play a crucial role in achieving the objectives of district development. Identifying the various useful and effective functions of these holy places and their roles, in addition to being realistic and concentrating on organizing people's affairs, is a rich source of describing the pattern of urban development and endogenous district development, during Islamic communities' era.

#### 3. Method

The research method adopted in this study is an analytical-descriptive one and was conducted through collecting the required data via library research and filed study. In the main section of the research scaling was used. Taking the physical classification of Mashhad into account, cluster sampling was utilized. First, among the thirteen municipal regions of Mashhad, three regions, according to their ranking with regards to socio-economic factors (deprived, average, and developed areas), were selected. Then three neighborhoods in each region were chosen, in a way that all areas of the region are covered. For calculating the number of required samples, Cochran's formula was used and 113 questionnaires were prepared, designed and distributed.

#### 4. Discussion

In order to investigate the hypothesis of the research, Chi-square test was used. According the table,  $\chi^2$  equals 1960/343 and the significance of mosques' programs for neighborhoods' development is zero which is less than 5 percent, thus within a significance level of 95 percent, there is a significant difference between the number of responding groups and that of the majority of respondents regarding mosques' neighborhood-development plans.

#### 5. Conclusion

According to analysis of the present research and the overall effect of studying mosques' plans and activities in formation of eight-component plan, it can be said that mosques have effective plans for developing neighborhoods. On the other hand, neighborhood dwellers have used the foundations laid by the mosques and welcome their plans and activities. Similarly, a separate eight-component study reveals the following results. It is revealed that the majority of the programs were educational

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ones (33.1%), and intellectual and physical activities (22.1%), pilgrimage-recreational tours (21.9%), others (11.7%) together with family walks (11.2%) constitute mosques' subsequent priorities, respectively. The majority of respondents (36.9%) use mosques' recreational programs, to a moderate degree. In investigating the lack of a warmer reception to mosques'

recreational programs, discrepancy between such programs and citizen's needs (22.3%) and their commonplaceness and aridity (22.3%) were mentioned as the major reasons.

**Key Words:** Community development, Cooperation, Mashhad, Mosque, Urban planning.

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