

Proliferation of Jumu'at Masajid in Gusau Metropolis and its Implications to the Unity of Muslim Ummah (2000-2023)

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Abstract

Islam prioritizes acts of *ibadah* and the creation of a conducive atmosphere for worshippers to be in closer communion with their Lord and Creator. Over the last two decades, the Gusau metropolis has witnessed a rapid increase in the number of Jumu'at Masajid. As the population grows at a faster rate, there is an increasing demand to meet the needs of this population surge, a call that requires the attention of all stakeholders across various sectors. This paper examines the implications of the proliferation of Jumu'at Masajid in Gusau on the unity of the Muslim Ummah. It analyzes the gravity and magnitude of the consequences and suggests possible control measures. A qualitative data collection method was employed through interviews, field observations, and relevant documentary sources. While the proliferation of Masajid offers benefits such as increased access to prayer and enhanced community engagement, it is crucial to address potential challenges such as fragmentation, leadership conflicts, and religious manipulation, to ensure that the unity of the Muslim Ummah is not compromised.

Introduction

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Most Merciful. May the peace and blessings of Allah, the Almighty, be upon our Noble Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W), his family, companions, and all those who follow their guidance until the Day of Reckoning. Proliferation refers to the rapid growth or increase in numbers, such as the proliferation of cancer cells or the danger of nuclear proliferation (i.e., the spread of nuclear weapons to countries that do not already possess them). It also denotes the act of producing, reproducing, or growing, especially at a rapid pace, leading to a

large number of a particular thing. For example, buyers are often confused by the sheer proliferation of available models.⁴³

In other words, proliferation refers to the rapid increase or spread of something, often used to describe the growth or expansion of a particular phenomenon, entity, or activity. It can denote the widespread dissemination or multiplication of objects, ideas, technologies, organisms, or other entities over a relatively short period of time. Generally, proliferation can carry both positive and negative connotations depending on the context in which it is applied. For instance, the proliferation of knowledge and education is considered positive, while the proliferation of nuclear weapons or diseases is typically viewed as negative. "Proliferation" generally implies a significant and often rapid increase or spread of something, often leading to notable consequences or effects in the affected areas or systems.

Gusau is a product of the nineteenth-century Jihad activities of the Sokoto Caliphate. During the colonial period, it was made a District under the Sokoto Sultanate Council. Following Nigeria's independence and the subsequent creation of states, Gusau was designated as one of the Local Government Areas under Sokoto State until 1996, when Zamfara State was created with Gusau as its capital. The circumstances surrounding the establishment of Gusau, coupled with its strategic location, positioned it as a prominent religious and commercial center. At the time of Zamfara State's creation, Gusau had fewer than five Jumaat Masajid. However, by December 2023, there were ninety approved Jumaat Masajid, according to the report of the Zamfara State Government Committee for the assessment of approved Jumaat Masajid in the State.

This surge can be attributed to the tireless efforts of Muslim organizations and the subsequent reintroduction and implementation of Shariah law in Zamfara State in October 1999. The proliferation of Friday Masajid in Gusau has both positive and negative implications for the unity of the

⁴³ Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of English Language, p. 926; The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language, Deluxe Encyclopedic Edition, Standard International Media Holdings, 2013 Edition, p.1008

Muslim community. While the construction of more places of worship may be seen as a positive development, it also raises concerns about the potential for division and fragmentation within the Muslim community. This research paper aims to critically analyze the implications of the proliferation of Jumaat Masajid on the unity of the Muslim community in Gusau Metropolis. The objectives of the study are to examine the factors contributing to the proliferation of Jumaat Masajid in Gusau; to assess the impact of this proliferation on the unity and cohesion of the Muslim community; and to identify strategies for promoting unity and cooperation among different Jumaat Masajid and the broader Muslim community in Gusau.

The Positive Implications include among other things:

The proliferation of Friday Masajid in Gusau can offer several significant benefits to the Muslim community:

1. **Increased Access to Prayer:** The establishment of more Friday Masajid provides greater access to prayer facilities for Muslims in Gusau. This ensures that individuals living in various parts of the city have convenient locations to perform their Friday prayers. It eliminates the challenges of long-distance travel to reach the nearest Masajid, promoting a sense of convenience and accessibility for the community.
2. **Community Engagement:** Friday Masajid often serve as hubs for community interaction beyond prayer. They act as spaces where Muslims come together not only for worship but also for religious and social activities, such as gatherings, counseling, and charitable initiatives. The proliferation of these Masajid enhances opportunities for Muslims to engage in collective activities, build stronger relationships within the community, and foster a sense of unity. Shared experiences within these spaces contribute to a deeper sense of brotherhood and solidarity among Muslims in Gusau.
3. **Enhanced Religious Education:** With the increase in the number of Masajid, there is a greater opportunity to provide religious education programs, such as Quranic classes, Islamic lectures, and other educational initiatives. More Masajid means that a larger

number of Muslims can benefit from these programs, which can lead to a better understanding of Islamic teachings and principles. Such educational initiatives not only promote religious knowledge but also strengthen the faith and unity of the Muslim community, as they are collectively learning and growing in their understanding of their religion.

These benefits of the proliferation of Jumaat Masajid contribute to the overall strengthening of the Muslim community in Gusau, both spiritually and socially. However, it is also essential to manage and address the potential challenges that may arise from this rapid growth to ensure that unity remains a core value within the community.

While the negative implications comprise among other things:

First, Fragmentation of Community: The proliferation of Friday masjid can lead to the fragmentation of the Muslim community in Gusau. Different masjid may attract different groups of people, based on factors such as proximity or theological preferences. This can result in divisions and a lack of cohesion within the community. Second, Leadership and Authority Issues: When there are numerous Friday Masjid, there may be competition among local religious leaders for followers and influence. This can lead to conflicts over leadership and authority, which can further contribute to divisions within the community. Third, Divergent Practices and Ideologies: Different Friday masjid may have varying practices and interpretations of Islam. This can lead to differences in rituals, religious customs, and even ideological perspectives. Such divergences can create tensions and disagreements amongst Muslim community and hinder the efforts of ensuring that unity and cohesion prevail in the society.

Importance of Unity of Ummah in Islam

Unity holds great significance in Islam, as it is considered essential for the well-being and strength of the Muslim community (Ummah). The importance of unity in Islam is multi faceted and multi dimensional. Islam emphasizes the importance of unity among Muslims regardless of their race, nationality, or social status. Unity among Muslims promotes a sense

of brotherhood and solidarity, fostering a strong and supportive community. Unity in the Muslim community provides strength and protection against external threats and challenges. When Muslims are united, they are better equipped to face societal, political, and economic challenges, and to defend their rights and beliefs. Unity promotes peace and harmony within the Muslim community and beyond. By working together and resolving conflicts peacefully, Muslims can create a more harmonious society based on mutual respect and understanding.

Unity helps in preserving and spreading the teachings of Islam. When Muslims are united, they can more effectively convey the message of Islam to others and strengthen their faith through collective worship, education, and community building. A united Muslim community can advocate for social justice, human rights, and other important causes more effectively. By coming together and speaking with one voice, Muslims can address injustices and contribute positively to society. Islam warns against division and sectarianism within the Muslim community. Unity helps in overcoming differences and maintaining the overall coherence and strength of the Ummah. Unity in Islam is not just a moral value but a practical necessity for the well-being and progress of the Muslim community. By fostering unity, Muslims can uphold their faith, strengthen their communities, and contribute positively to the world around them.

In the Quran, there are several verses that emphasize the importance of unity within the Muslim community. Here are a few Quranic teachings on the moral excellence of unity among Muslims: Believers as Brothers and Sisters: The Quran repeatedly refers to the believers as brothers and sisters, emphasizing the bond and unity among them. Allah the Almighty says:

The believers are but brothers, so make settlement between your brothers. And fear Allah that you may receive mercy.⁴⁴

This verse highlights the need for Muslims to treat one another with love, respect, and unity.

Cooperation and Mutual Support: The Quran encourages Muslims to cooperate and support one another. Allah the Almighty says:

⁴⁴ Al- Qur'an, 49:10

And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression.⁴⁵

This verse promotes unity in working together for righteous causes, while discouraging collaboration in sinful or harmful actions. Unity in Prayer: The Quran emphasizes the importance of congregational prayer and unity in worship. Allah the Almighty says:

"And establish prayer and give zakah and bow with those who bow [in worship and obedience]."⁴⁶

This verse encourages Muslims to pray together, demonstrating the unity and solidarity in their worship of Allah. Resolving Disputes with Unity: The Quran encourages Muslims to resolve their disputes and conflicts with unity and fairness. Allah the Almighty says:

And if two factions among the believers should fight, then make settlement between the two. But if one of them oppresses the other, then fight against the one that oppresses until it returns to the ordinance of Allah. And if it returns, then make settlement between them in justice and act justly. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly.⁴⁷

This verse emphasizes the importance of resolving conflicts within the Muslim community and restoring unity through justice and fairness. Upholding Unity in Diversity: The Quran recognizes and celebrates the diversity within the Muslim community while emphasizing the importance of unity. Allah the Almighty says:

"O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted."⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Al- Qur'an, 5:2

⁴⁶ Al- Qur'an, 2:43

⁴⁷ Al- Qur'an, 49:9

⁴⁸ Al-Qur'an, 49:13

This verse teaches Muslims to appreciate and respect the diversity of cultures, languages, and backgrounds within the Muslim community, while upholding unity through righteousness and piety. These verses and teachings from the Quran highlight the moral excellence of unity within the Muslim community. Muslims are encouraged to treat one another as brothers and sisters, cooperate and support one another, pray together, resolve disputes with justice, and appreciate the diversity while maintaining unity through righteousness. In the light of these verses, Allah the Almighty contracted unbreakable relationship amongst Believers; that whenever faith is traced to an individual in the east or west, that he believes in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers and the Day of Judgement; then he becomes a brother to all believers. A kind of relationship that necessitates the Believers to love for him what they love for themselves; and hate towards him all evils they avert from themselves.⁴⁹

Da'awah, in the context of Islam, refers to the act of inviting others to the faith and sharing the message of Islam. It is an important aspect of the Muslim community's responsibility to spread the teachings of Islam and invite others to embrace the faith. The unity of the Muslim community plays a crucial role in effective daawah efforts. Unity within the Muslim community is emphasized in the teachings of Islam. The Quran and ahadith of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) emphasize the importance of unity and cooperation among Muslims.

Unity allows the Muslim community to present a strong and cohesive message to the wider society, making da'awah efforts more effective.⁵⁰ All the teaching activities, sermons and preachings taking place in the Masajid are meant to promote Daawah Activities initiated by Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.).

The Muslim community should share a common objective of inviting people to the message of Islam and promoting its values. This shared

⁴⁹ A. N. Al-Sa'adi, Taisir Al- Karim Al- Rahman fi Tafsir Kalam Al- Mannan, Muassasatu al-Muhit Lin Nashr wa al-Tawzi', Cairo, 2018, p.944

⁵⁰ A. A. Mahmud, Al Tarbiyyah Al Islamiyya fi Surah Al Anfal, Far Al Tawzi' was Al nashr Al Islamiyya, np, nd, pp. 38-41

purpose helps in fostering unity and cooperation among Muslims. Unity within the Muslim community involves supporting one another in daawah efforts. Muslims should collaborate, exchange ideas, and combine resources to reach out to different segments of society effectively. The Muslim community is diverse, comprising people from various ethnicities, cultures, and backgrounds. Unity does not mean uniformity, but rather it involves respecting and appreciating this diversity while focusing on common goals. Embracing diversity strengthens the community's ability to connect with people from different walks of life.⁵¹

Unity is nurtured through constructive dialogue and open communication among Muslims. Discussions and debates should take place in a respectful manner, allowing for the exchange of ideas and the growth of knowledge. This helps in addressing challenges and finding effective solutions for daawah efforts. Joint initiatives and collaborations can be undertaken by the Muslim community to address societal issues, promote social justice, and engage in charitable activities. Such collective efforts demonstrate the unity and positive impact of the Muslim community, attracting people towards the message of Islam. Unity does not imply the absence of disagreements or differences of opinion within the Muslim community. However, Muslims should strive to reconcile their differences and focus on the greater good. The Quran encourages resolving disputes through peaceful means and maintaining unity despite differences.

Ultimately, daawah and the unity of the Muslim community go hand in hand. When the Muslim community is united, it can effectively convey the message of Islam to others, address misconceptions, and promote a positive image of Islam. By working together, Muslims can make a significant impact in their daawah efforts and contribute to the well-being of society as a whole. However, unity is achieved through strict adherence to the teachings of Islam; not through compromise and tolerance of all forms of deviation from the mainstream aqida of pious Muslims who stick to the examples and teachings of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) and his Companions (R.A.).

⁵¹ M. Hassan, *Khawatir Aka Tariq Al Da'awah*, Maktabat Fayyad, Al Mansurah, 2006, pp.147-149

Factors Contributing to the Proliferation of Juma'at Masajid in Gusau

The proliferation of Jumaat Masajid in Gusau is a phenomenon that can be traced to a variety of interrelated factors. One of the primary reasons for the increasing number of Masajid is the growth of the city. Gusau, as the capital city of Zamfara State, has experienced rapid urbanization since the state's creation in 1996. The expansion of the city and the establishment of residential areas such as Damba 200 Housing Estate, Mareri 100 Housing Estate, Rijiyar Gabas 200 Housing Estate, Unguwar Gwaza 100 Housing Estate, Abdussalam Abubakar 100 Housing Estate, and others have led to a significant increase in the population. These housing estates, built between 1996 and 2023, have attracted both long-term residents and migrants from various regions, contributing to the growth in the number of Muslims who require access to places of worship, including Jumaat Masajid.

Another contributing factor is the demographic changes within the city. As the population of Gusau continues to grow, particularly with an influx of Muslims, the demand for more places of worship also rises. This is compounded by migration patterns, where individuals and families relocate to Gusau for better opportunities, be they educational, economic, or religious. These migrants bring with them their own religious practices and needs, thereby increasing the demand for Jumaat Masajid.

Urban development has also played a significant role in the proliferation of these Masajid. As the city expands and more housing estates are built, new communities emerge, creating a need for nearby Masajid for the residents to perform their religious duties, including Friday prayers. Many of the newly developed residential areas are situated in close proximity to existing Masajid, and it is not uncommon for multiple Masajid to be built within a small radius of each other, often no more than two to five hundred meters apart.

This dense concentration of Masajid has both positive and negative implications. On one hand, it provides increased access to places of worship, making it easier for Muslims to attend Friday prayers. On the other hand, this proximity can lead to issues of fragmentation and competition among the Masajid, especially if there is insufficient coordination between the different worship centers. While these Masajid

serve as hubs for religious education, including Quranic studies, Hadith, Fiqh, Tawhid, and Islamic history, the increasing number of Masajid in close proximity may also result in leadership conflicts, division of resources, and a lack of cooperation, ultimately affecting the unity of the Muslim community in Gusau.

To summarize, the factors contributing to the proliferation of Jumaat Masajid in Gusau are multifaceted, including rapid urbanization, population growth, demographic shifts, and migration patterns. While this growth offers benefits such as improved access to worship and religious education, it also presents challenges related to unity and coordination within the Muslim community. Addressing these challenges requires careful consideration of the factors driving the proliferation and the implementation of strategies that foster cooperation and cohesion among the Masajid and their worshippers.

Additionally, the presence of federal agencies, educational institutions, and forced migration into the city from rural areas due to banditry and other security challenges has contributed to the rapid expansion of Gusau. The social and cultural implications of the increasing number of Jumaat Masajid in Gusau could involve their role in community cohesion, religious practices, and the formation of social networks.

The urban planning and architectural styles of Jumaat Masajid in Gusau reflect how their construction has influenced the urban landscape and the utilization of urban space. These factors also contribute to the dissemination of religious teachings and the influence of the Masajid on religious practices and beliefs. Other issues include community engagement and development initiatives in Gusau, such as social welfare, education, and other community-oriented activities.

These are some of the reasons behind the proliferation of Jumaat Masajid in Gusau, which provide insights into the social, cultural, and religious dynamics within the city.⁵²

The re-introduction and implementation of Shariah legal system is another factor. The Shariah Implementation was signed into law on 8th October 1999.⁵³ One of the benefits of Shariah which left indelible mark was the religious impact which touches every aspect of Shariah. When His Excellency, Alhaji Ahmad Sani Yarima, the then Governor of Zamfara State was asked about the legacy he wanted to leave at the expiration of his tenure in office; he said: " The first thing is to ensure that I completed the building of any uncompleted Masjid and Arabic School. Also, I want to formalize the Islamic Education system in order to attain the western education level. I want to my people to be educated and religiously sound." One of the legacies left in the history of Shariah was the construction of new Masajid and completion of uncompleted ones. This led to the establishment of Zamfara State Religious Preachings, Establishment of Juma'at Masajid and Eid Praying Grounds Commission.⁵⁴ The commission had raised the number of Juma'at Masajid in Zamfara State to 2386 with payment of monthly incentives to the Imams, their deputies, mu'adhins and caretakers amounting to over one hundred million naira monthly.⁵⁵ This brought about accelerated increase in the number of Masajid. Another factor that brought about the increase in the number of Juma'at Masajid in Gusau is the endowment activities of building Masajid embraced by many well to do individuals who were educated on the blessings attached to having everlasting endowment. Some of such Masajid constructed, reconstructed, renovated and upgraded by individuals include: Ibrahim Isa

⁵² An interview with Shaykh Aminu Aliyu Gusau, (65 years), Chief Imam, Masjid Salahuddin Ayyubi Gusau, and Deputy National Chairman of Jamaatu Tajdidil Islamy (JTI), interviewed in Gusau 22nd October 2023.

⁵³ N. S. Gusau, *A History of the Shariah Movement in Zamfara State 1999-2008*, Al-Hudah Ventures, Gusau, 2011, p.85

⁵⁴ N. S. Gusau, *A History of the Shariah Movement in Zamfara State 1999-2008*, Al-Hudah Ventures, Gusau, 2011, p.133

⁵⁵ An interview with Malam Muhammad Awwal Gusau, Director Preaching of the Commission, interviewed in Gusau, 22nd September 2023.

Mayana, Muslim Foundation, Liman Dan Alhaji, Ibrahim Wambai, Ibrahim Ruwan Doruwa and Tudun Wada as well as Umar bin Abdulaziz Juma'at Masjid. This was achieved through the religious orientation and activities of Zamfara State Zakat and Endowment Board which is one of the Shariah Implementation Agencies.

Another important factor is the role of Muslim organizations and groups, including Jamaatu Islahiddin, Jamaatu Izalatil Bid'a wa Ikamatis Sunnah (JIBWIS), Jamaatu Tajdidil Islamy (JTI), as well as the Qadiriyya and Tijjaniyyah Sufi Orders. These organizations have intensified efforts in educating Muslims, implementing Shariah, and establishing the Preachings Commission, which provided ample opportunities for them to establish Jumaat Masjid in a competitive manner. This growth may be linked to the desire for social relevance, rivalry among the groups, and the material gains associated with having a Jumaat Masjid under their control. Today, there is no prominent scholar within these groups who does not oversee a Jumaat Masjid, with some scholars managing more than one. Although having a Masjid under the guidance of a qualified and competent scholar is not inherently problematic, concerns arise regarding the intentions behind and management of these places, as they are considered a trust.

Additionally, the impact of Shariah and the nature of the people demand that anyone in power, such as a governor or other elected officials, either establish, renovate, or facilitate the establishment of more Jumaat and five daily Salat Masjid. This is driven by the significant religious influence these figures hold over the hearts of the people. Another contributing factor is the endowment activities of Arab countries, organizations, and individuals. Many Masjid have been constructed through such endowments, particularly from Saudi Arabia and other Muslim countries. Notable examples include the Uthaimin and Abu Ubaida Jumaat Masajids.

The hereditary leadership of Jumaat Masjid is another factor. When leadership is passed down within families, it can foster a sense of continuity and tradition within the community. However, this practice may also lead to the establishment of new places of worship by those who feel marginalized. If the families in charge of a particular Masjid prevent qualified scholars from being involved or conducting activities, it can

hinder both the growth of the Masjid and the development of the community. Furthermore, a lack of educational opportunities due to the absence of qualified scholars may result in the community lacking access to sound religious education and guidance. This can lead to misunderstandings of religious teachings and practices among the members of the community.⁵⁶

There is problem of stagnation: Without the input of qualified scholars, the masjid may not evolve to meet the changing needs of the community. This can lead to stagnation in terms of programming, outreach, and community engagement. Decreased credibility: If the Masjid leadership prevents qualified scholars from participating, it may raise doubts about the credibility and authenticity of the religious teachings being offered within the community. This can lead to a loss of trust and respect among community members. Potential division: The exclusion of qualified scholars can create divisions within the community, with some members seeking alternative sources of religious education and guidance outside of the Masjid. In such situations, it is important for community members to advocate for the inclusion of qualified scholars and to engage in open dialogue with the Masjid leadership.⁵⁷ Building consensus and emphasizing the importance of having knowledgeable and qualified individuals involved in the religious activities of the masjid can help address these challenges and ensure the growth and prosperity of the community.

In some instances, there are economic benefits and privileges which some Imams enjoy from individuals, corporate bodies and International Arab organizations involving sometimes construction of masajid and Islamiyya Schools as endowment which are awarded to them through direct labour. People who could not enjoy such advantages possibly because they are ordinary members of the masajid committees or the organization that established a Masjid, since they have reasonable Islamic education; they

⁵⁶ An interview with Malam Ilyasu Muhammad, (38years), Businessman/Teacher, interviewed in Gusau, 29th April 2024; and Malam Sanusi Ibrahim, (52years), Teacher, interviewed in Gusau, 27th April 2024.

⁵⁷ An interview with Malam Ilyasu Muhammad, (38years), Businessman/Teacher, interviewed in Gusau, 29th April 2024; and Malam Sanusi Ibrahim, (52years), Teacher, interviewed in Gusau, 27th April 2024.

make efforts to establish such Masjid which in consequence leads to rising number of masajid..⁵⁸

⁵⁸ An interview with Alhaji Isiyaka Hassan, (45years), Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, Zamfara State, Interviewed in Gusau, 28thApril2024; and Malam Ilyasu Muhammad, (38years), Teacher/Businessman, interviewed in Gusau 25th April 2024.

Impact of Proliferation of Juma'at Masajid in Gusau

Religious manipulation can occur in any religious context, including Islam. It involves the exploitation of religious beliefs and practices for personal or political gain, often leading to negative consequences for individuals and societies. With a large number of Masajid scattered throughout the metropolis, there is greater opportunity for individuals from diverse backgrounds to perform prayers, as they are located within a walkable distance. Additionally, the timing for prayers varies, as there are about seven different times for the commencement of prayers, depending on which group or individual scholar oversees the Masjid. The prayer schedules are as follows: 1:00, 1:15, 1:30, 1:45, 1:50, 2:00, and 2:10. For instance, Abu Ubaida, Muslim Foundation, and Central Market observe at 1:00; Shaykh Abubakar Mahmud Gummi, Salahuddin Ayyubi, and Gusau Central Motor Park observe at 1:15; Uthaimin, Federal Low-cost, Sahaba, and Umar bin Abdulaziz observe at 1:30; Umar bin Khattab observes at 1:50; Unguwar Gwaza and Sharif Abdumajid Agege observe at 2:00; and Tudun Wada and the Emir's Palace observe at 2:10. However, while some adhere strictly to the designated times, others may delay by a few minutes, depending on the Imam and the Masjid committee.

The sermons and methods of delivery vary across Masajid, depending on who established, controls, and owns the Masjid, as well as the ideological leanings and subject areas of interest of the Imams. The sermons delivered in Masajid established by individual scholars differ from those established by organizations or groups. Some Imams focus on Tawhid and Aqida (Creed) as the most fundamental religious tenets, while others concentrate on current societal issues, particularly political matters. Some Imams address a broad range of Islamic teachings, covering Tawhid and Aqida, acts of ibada, mua'malat (transactions), morality and ethics, and proper etiquette. In terms of delivery, some Imams adopt a polemical style, while others are more persuasive. Some are eloquent and objective, while others may, to some extent, be subjective.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ An interview with Alkali Sanusi Muhammad Magami, (55years), Zamfara State Shariah Court of Appeal Judge and Chief Imam Ibrahim Galadima Juma'at Masjid Gusau, interviewed in Gusau, 15th October 2023; and Gwani Malam Hadi Sulaiman

The proliferation of Jumaat masajid in Gusau can have several positive implications: There has been increase and upsurge in Islamic Education activities in these Masajid; educational programs, lectures, and classes on Islam providing opportunities for spiritual growth and learning for individuals of all ages. Virtually, in every Masjid there are educational classes covering Tawhid and Aqida, Qur'an, Hadith, Islamic Jurisprudence, and Islamic History. Many religious books are being studied. Many adults have completed Quranic studies and other religious books through such efforts.⁶⁰ Increased access to religious services and community cohesion are achieved through the proliferation. More masajid mean that more people have access to regular congregational prayers, especially the Jumaat prayer, which is an important weekly congregation in Islam. The presence of multiple masajid can help bring together members of the community for religious activities, fostering a sense of unity and cohesion among residents.⁶¹ Masajid serve as social hubs where community members can interact, build relationships, and support one another, thereby strengthening social ties within the community.

Many masajid are involved in charitable activities, such as providing assistance to the needy, organizing food drives, or supporting local community initiatives, which can have a positive impact on the community as a whole. Masajid plays a role in promoting moral values, ethics, and good conduct among community members, contributing to a more harmonious and ethical society. Having multiple masajid in a community can help individuals develop a strong sense of religious identity and belonging, which can contribute to overall well-being and mental health.

(Modibbon Zamfara) ,(57 years), Zamfara State Quranic Tajwid and Memorisation Board, interviewed in Gusau 23rd October 2023

⁶⁰ An interview with Dr Salisu Sadi Tsafe, (65years), Secretary General, JIBWIS council of Ulama Zamfara State, interviewed in Gusau, 25th October 2023

⁶¹ An interview with Malam Ilyasu Muhammad, (38years), Businessman/Teacher, interviewed in Gusau, 29th April 2024; and Malam Sanusi Ibrahim, (52years), Teacher, interviewed in Gusau, 27th April 2024.

Negative Implications of the Proliferation of Jumaat Masajid in Gusau

The proliferation of Jumaat Masajid in Gusau has negative implications for the unity of the Muslim Ummah. These include, among others, the following: **Misinterpretation of Scripture:** Religious manipulators may selectively interpret religious texts to align with their personal agendas, often taking verses out of context or disregarding the broader teachings and principles of Islam. This manipulation can lead to the promotion of extremist ideologies and the justification of violence or oppressive practices. **Political Instrumentalization:** Religious manipulation in Islam can be exploited for political gain. Manipulators may use religious sentiments to amass political power, incite violence, or foster sectarian divisions within Muslim communities. This, in turn, can lead to social unrest and conflict. **Suppression of Dissent:** Those in positions of religious authority may use their influence to suppress dissenting voices and control information. They may label any criticism or questioning of their actions as heresy or blasphemy, stifling intellectual discourse and marginalizing alternative viewpoints. **Social Division:** The manipulation of religious identity and beliefs can contribute to the fracturing of social cohesion both within Muslim communities and in the wider society. It can cultivate an "us versus them" mentality, fostering hostility and distrust between different religious groups, which exacerbates social polarization.⁶²

There are cases of unguarded utterances from some of the Imams, calling people with their names portraying them as destroyers and manipulators of religion. Such Imams are just calling people to themselves to make game not towards the religion of Islam or it's teachings. While in some instances the Masajid are turned to be like private commercial companies. In other words, they are used to gather material gains.⁶³ When Muslims turned

⁶² An interview with Alkali Sanusi Muhammad Magami, (55years), Zamfara State Shariah Court of Appeal Judge and Chief Imam Ibrahim Galadima Juma'at Masjid Gusau, interviewed in Gusau, 15th October 2023; and Gwani Malam Hadi Sulaiman (Modibbon Zamfara) ,(57 years), Zamfara State Quranic Tajwid and Memorisation Board, interviewed in Gusau 23rd October 2023

⁶³ An interview with Alkali Sanusi Muhammad Magami, (55years), Zamfara State Shariah Court of Appeal Judge and Chief Imam Ibrahim Galadima Juma'at Masjid Gusau, interviewed in Gusau, 15th October 2023; and Gwani Malam Hadi Sulaiman

away from their religious teachings and became ignorant of its wisdom and laws and deviated towards the opinion of men, there spread with them immorality of character, falsehood, hypocrisy, ill- will and hatred. So their unity disintegrated and they became ignorant of their present and future state and became unaware of what will harm or benefit them. They became contented with life, eating, drinking, sleeping and competing for superiority.⁶⁴

Deviation from the true teachings of Islam results to wickedness, hostility and hatred in the society. The stable and happy community can only sustain its existence when individuals and groups of people reject servitude to materialism, submit to Shariah and decide to organize their scheme of life on the basis of this submission.⁶⁵ Prophet Muhammad (S. A.W) says:

"Two wolves free among sheep are no more destructive to them than a man's desire for wealth and honor is to his religion."⁶⁶

In some cases, the multiplicity of masajid in a community can lead to competition and rivalry among religious institutions. This competition may manifest in conflicting opinions, practices, and priorities, as each masajid seeks to attract and retain followers. Followers may be exposed to conflicting messages and directions as a result of this competition. Factors external to the masajid such as political, social, or economic forces, can also contribute to the diversity of opinions and directions among followers. Issues related to governance, funding, or external affiliations may impact the decisions and orientations of masajid and their followers. Unhealthy competitions among some Imams of the Masajid can have several negative implications on the community and the overall religious atmosphere.

(Modibbon Zamfara) ,(57 years), Zamfara State Quranic Tajwid and Memorisation Board, interviewed in Gusau 23rd October 2023

⁶⁴ A.I. Raji, *Materialism: The Bedrock of all Evils*, Alashela Islamic Publishing, Lagos, 1999, P.87

⁶⁵ A. I. Raji, *ibid* p.88

⁶⁶ M. I. S. Al- Tirmidhi, *Sunan Al- Tirmidhi*, Darus Salam publications, Cairo, 2007, Hadith No. 2376. It was graded Sahih (authentic) by Shaykh Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani. Refer to sunnah.com for more details.

Competition among Imams can lead to division within the community, as followers may align themselves with a particular Imam, creating factions and discord among community members. Compromised religious integrity is very prevalent, in a bid to outdo one another, some Imams resort to sensationalism, extremism, or other unethical practices to attract followers, compromising the integrity of religious teachings and values.⁶⁷ Unhealthy competition can hinder collaboration and cooperation among Imams and Masajid, preventing them from working together for the greater good of the community.

Loss of focus on core teachings. When Imams prioritize competition over the core teachings of Islam, the spiritual development and well-being of community members may be neglected, leading to a shallow understanding of the faith. Competition among Imams can erode trust in religious leaders and institutions, as community members may become disillusioned by the focus on personal ambition rather than genuine religious guidance and leadership. Unhealthy competition can lead to Imams focusing on fundraising and financial gains rather than spiritual growth and community service, potentially exploiting the generosity of community members for personal gain. Unhealthy rivalries among Imams can create a tense and competitive atmosphere within the community, detracting from the peaceful and supportive environment that Masajid should ideally provide. To mitigate the negative implications of unhealthy competition among Imams, it is important for community members to promote unity, cooperation, and a focus on the core teachings of Islam⁶⁸. Imams should also prioritize the well-being and spiritual development of their congregations over personal ambition or rivalry. Open communication, transparency, and a commitment to the values of Islam can help foster a harmonious and supportive religious community.

⁶⁷ An interview with Malam Ibrahim Sani, (40years), Lecturer Department of Physics, Federal University Gusau, interviewed in Gusau, 28thApril 2024; and Malam Sanusi Ibrahim, (54years), Farmer, interviewed in Gusau, 25th2024.

⁶⁸ An interview with Alhaji Isiyaka Hassan, (45years), Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, Zamfara State, Interviewed in Gusau, 28thApril2024; and Malam Ilyasu Muhammad, (38years), Teacher/Businessman, interviewed in Gusau 25th April 2024.

Picking up irrelevant topics for sermons in Masajid can have various negative implications. When Imams discuss irrelevant topics during sermons, it can lead to a loss of focus on the core teachings of Islam. This can detract from the spiritual growth and development of the congregation, as important religious guidance and lessons may be overshadowed by unrelated subjects. Discussing irrelevant topics can confuse the congregation and dilute the message of the sermon. Members of the congregation may struggle to understand the relevance of the sermon to their faith and daily lives, leading to a lack of engagement and impact. Sermons are valuable opportunities for Imams to impart religious knowledge, guidance, and moral teachings to the congregation. Choosing irrelevant topics can waste this opportunity and deprive the community of important spiritual insights and guidance that could benefit their lives.⁶⁹

Consistently focusing on irrelevant topics during sermons can undermine the credibility of the Imam and the Masjid. Community members may lose trust in the leadership and guidance provided by the Imam if they perceive the sermons as lacking relevance and depth. Sermons are meant to inspire, educate, and motivate the congregation to lead better lives according to Islamic principles. By picking up irrelevant topics, the impact of the sermon is diminished, and the ability to positively influence the behavior and attitudes of the congregation is weakened.

Relevant sermons can foster community engagement, discussion, and reflection among the congregation. Picking up irrelevant topics may alienate community members and hinder the development of a supportive and united religious community. To address the issue of picking up irrelevant topics for sermons, Imams should prioritize staying true to the core teachings of Islam, addressing the needs and concerns of the congregation, and providing guidance that is relevant to their daily lives.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ An interview with Alhaji Muhammad Yahya Mai Bulawus, (55years), Businessman, interviewed in Gusau, 8thApril2024; and Malam Sanusi Ibrahim, (54years), Farmer, interviewed in Gusau, 25thApril 2024.

⁷⁰ Alhaji Muhammad Yahya Mai Bulawus, Businessman, interviewed in Gusau, 8thApril 2024; and Malam Alaramma Naziru Yusuf, (35years), Teacher, interviewed in Gusau, 8th May 2024.

Imams can seek feedback from the community, stay informed about current issues and challenges facing the congregation, and strive to deliver sermons that are insightful, engaging, and impactful. In the historical context of Hausaland, which refers to the region in West Africa encompassing parts of present-day Nigeria, Niger, Benin, and Cameroon, Muslim scholars have traditionally held significant recognition and influence in guiding the people. Hausaland boasts a rich Islamic heritage dating back to the 11th century, marked by the introduction and spread of Islam through trade routes and scholarly activities.

Muslim scholars in Gusau specifically, and in Hausaland more generally, often referred to as "ulama" or "malams," have played a central role in shaping the religious, social, and political landscape of the region. They have wielded influence due to their esteemed knowledge of Islamic teachings and jurisprudence. Serving as religious authorities, they provide guidance on matters of faith, ethics, and religious practices to the local population. Through sermons, lectures, and religious schools (madrassas), they educate the community about Islamic principles and values.

These scholars often hold leadership positions within the community, being respected figures who arbitrate disputes, offer counseling, and provide spiritual guidance to individuals and families. Their influence extends beyond religious matters to encompass social and cultural issues affecting the broader community. In some cases, Muslim scholars in Gusau have also held political power or exerted significant influence on political decisions. Historically, rulers and administrators in the region sought the support and legitimacy of Muslim scholars to govern effectively. Scholars have often advised rulers on governance, justice, and public policy, contributing to the overall stability and cohesion of society.⁷¹

They are therefore regarded as pillars of the community, providing spiritual guidance, education, and leadership to the people. Their influence

⁷¹ An interview with Alhaji Isiyaka Hassan, (45years), Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, Zamfara State, Interviewed in Gusau, 28thApril2024; and Malam Ilyasu Muhammad, (38years), Teacher/Businessman, interviewed in Gusau 25th April 2024.

continues to be felt in various aspects of life in the area, contributing to the preservation and promotion of Islamic values and traditions.

In Gusau, religious institutions and figures hold significant influence and power due to the deep-seated reverence and respect people have for religious beliefs and teachings. They use some ways in order to have relevance and the power to be listened to by sections of the community. This is because the power and relevance of scholars in society are often intertwined with the religious beliefs and convictions they represent. By leveraging the authority, moral guidance, and cultural influence provided by religion, scholars can effectively communicate their message and garner respect and attention from the community.⁷²

The multiplicity of masajid in Gusau, can indeed lead to a diversity of opinions and directions among followers. This diversity can arise due to a variety of factors, including differences in religious interpretation, leadership styles, and community dynamics. The imams and religious leaders of masajid play a crucial role in shaping the religious discourse and direction of their followers. Variances in leadership styles, communication approaches, and personal beliefs can influence the perspectives and attitudes of followers attending different mosques. Followers may align themselves with leaders who resonate with their own beliefs and values. Followers may choose to attend a particular masajid based on personal preferences, such as proximity to their residence, quality of services, or the reputation of the imam.⁷³ These individual choices can result in a diverse group of followers with varied backgrounds and perspectives congregating at different masajid.

Today, almost every Muslim is a member of an Islamic group, organisation or school of thought with each group engaging other groups in bitter

⁷² Alhaji Muhammad Yahya Mai Bulawus, Businessman, interviewed in Gusau, 8th April 2024; and Malam Alaramma Naziru Yusuf, (35years), Teacher, interviewed in Gusau, 8th May 2024.

⁷³ Alhaji Muhammad Yahya Mai Bulawus, Businessman, interviewed in Gusau, 8th April 2024; and Malam Alaramma Naziru Yusuf, (35years), Teacher, interviewed in Gusau, 8th May 2024.

rivalry. With the passage of time, Muslims created these numerous Organisations with their own distinct agenda. Some of them were created in order to conflict with already existing ones. Part of the objectives of some of these groups is to eliminate those who disagree with their own interpretation of Islam. Instead of bringing Muslims together, these groups and organisations have been more inclined towards imposing their thoughts on the rest of the Ummah because they believe their thoughts to be the only correct ones.⁷⁴

The quality of humbleness and mutual tolerance that was the hallmark of the great Imams of jurisprudence (Abu Hanifa, Malik, Shafi'i and Ahmad bin Hanbal) is conspicuously missing among the various Muslim groups and schools of thought today. They are quick at pointing out mistakes of others, but it is very rare to find them acknowledge their own fallibility or admit to their own errors. There is a need to try bridging the gaps that exist within the ummah based on knowledge, tolerance and open-mindedness. At the same time, we need to look more at ourselves than others in order to truly adopt the practice of self-criticism and corrections.⁷⁵

The foregoing discourse highlights a perceived decline in the qualities of humility, mutual tolerance, and self-awareness among contemporary Muslim groups and schools of thought, especially when compared to the great Imams of jurisprudence. The Imams of jurisprudence were renowned for their humility, tolerance, and willingness to acknowledge their fallibility and errors. In contrast, many modern Muslim groups appear more focused on criticizing others, rather than reflecting on their own shortcomings.

To foster greater unity within the ummah, there is a call for individuals and groups to emulate the qualities of the great Imams by prioritizing humility, mutual tolerance, and self-reflection. By acknowledging one's fallibility and errors, individuals can cultivate a more inclusive and understanding approach towards others, thus bridging the gaps that currently exist within

⁷⁴ H. Bako & A.A Oare, *Challenges of the Contemporary Muslims*, Sahaba Publications, Kaduna, 2013, p.50

⁷⁵ H. Bako, ...*ibid*, pp. 50-1

the Muslim community. Promoting a culture of knowledge-sharing and respectful dialogue can facilitate greater understanding and cooperation among different schools of thought. Emphasizing the importance of humility and self-awareness can contribute to a more harmonious and united ummah, grounded in the principles of mutual respect and understanding.⁷⁶

Envy, one of the harmful diseases of the heart, spreads between Muslims, dividing their hearts and making them hate one another. This is what is referred to as selfish transgression between themselves. In this kind of sick and infected society, unity and love never prevail.⁷⁷ Sultan Muhammad Bello states a similar scenario that happened to Jamaah:

"The rivalry for acquiring the pleasures of the world: power and authority that was in the past nations has also appeared in this Jamaah and the sickness of past nations has crept into them: envy, hatred and division, leading it to weakness, unable to perform Jihad, defend themselves and establish Shariah"⁷⁸. Ego is yet another problem. Every Muslim wants to be a Lord unto himself. The mushrooming of organizations in the name of Islamic propagation is a proof of this untoward development. Greed at the heart of the problem of unity in Islam is the unbridled greed on the part of those who masquerade as leaders.⁷⁹

This passage appears to criticize the fragmentation and lack of unity within the Muslim community, attributing it to a pervasive desire for individual

⁷⁶ Alhaji Muhammad Yahya Mai Bulawus, Businessman, interviewed in Gusau, 8th April 2024; and Malam Alaramma Naziru Yusuf, (35years), Teacher, interviewed in Gusau, 8th Ma

⁷⁷ H. Bako & A.A. Oare, *Challenges of the Contemporary Muslims*, Sahaba Publications, Kaduna, 2013, p.47

⁷⁸ M. Bello, *Sufficient Advice*, in M. A Daura & Y. M. Yunus (trans.) & S. Musa (Ed.) In A. B. Yahya et-al (eds) *Selected Writings of Sultan Muhammad Bello*, Iqra'a Publishing House, Gusau, 2013, Vol. 1, p. 149.

⁷⁹ S. S. Adua & M. A. Hadi, *Unity: The Hallmark of Islam*, in *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE)*, Vol. 7, Issue 1, January 2020, p.40

power and greed among Muslim leaders. The phrase "Every Muslim wants to be a Lord unto himself" suggests a tendency towards self-importance and a lack of willingness to cooperate for the greater good. The mention of the proliferation of organizations focused on Islamic propagation implies a sense of disorganization and potentially conflicting agenda within the community. The description of unbridled greed among those in leadership positions indicates a perception of corruption and self-interest undermining efforts towards unity. This portrayal highlights a systemic issue within the Muslim community where personal ambition and material gain overshadow the principles of collaboration and solidarity that are essential for fostering a cohesive and harmonious religious community.

Strategies for Promoting Unity and Cooperation among Juma'at Masajid in Gusau

The declarative admonition of the Ummah's fraternal bond is reinforced by a qualitative appraisal of the Ummah's cohesive unity. The qualitative appraisal is encapsulated in a tripartite identity pattern that makes it the best community ever brought forth to this planetary entity, because its individual constituents and collective entity: (i) admonish that which is good (ii) prohibit that which is wrong, and (iii) believe in Allah. In his Summation, El-Miskin believes that this qualitative appraisal of the important bond constructed with the building blocks of faith that brings together diverse human elements within a single cohesive Ummah entity is both a reinforcement of the bond and a rationale that instills in the believer that this community called the Ummah is the best entity to belong to.⁸⁰ The Muslims in the world over believe in the oneness of Allah. So central is this fact to one's protestation of faith in Allah that the least derogation from it is an inexplicable sin that no extenuating circumstance can justify. The Muslims are united in this belief. Even the weakest in faith who may be guilty of violation of Allah's command does not robustly impugn the oneness of Allah. The institution of Salat (obligatory daily prayers) has the intendment of creating unity in the lives of Muslims. Apart from the

⁸⁰ S. S. Adua & M. A. Hadi, Unity: The Hallmark of Islam, in International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE), Vol. 7, Issue 1, January 2020, p.38

uniformity in the way and manner prayers are observed, they make social intercourse possible and easy.

In order to encourage such social intercourse, prayers said congregationally are rated twenty-seven times better and more rewarding than the ones said alone. Muslims thus meet congregationally in their different locality five times everyday of their lives⁸¹. The scholars are in agreement that it is in the pursuit of the expansion of the unity in Islam that on a weekly basis the mosques for the five daily prayers collapse into one bigger congregation for the Friday service. This is no mere ritual; it is to drive home the sameness and oneness of our humanity. The two Ids enable us to realise, on a greater scale, our ambition of a united humanity. The concourse provides not just the opportunity of meeting twice in a year, but summons attention to the fact that we are one humanity with a common destiny realizing the ultimate unity of Allah. The Institution of Fasting provides a yet providential platform for the concept of Islamic unity. In addition to its spiritual dimension, fasting plays an equilibrating role in the life of the Ummah. The very rich and the penurious that are divinely juxtaposed in all human communities go through the same process of seeking to tame and domesticate the desire for food and drink. Whereas, for the poor, it is a continuation of the miserable existence to which they are used, the rich are reminded of the daily experience of the poor. When they thus become solicitous for the poor, subsequently, they help in redefining the common humanity of all.⁸²

The Zakah institution is yet a very unifying element in Islam. By Allah's design some person are hugely endowed with material opulence while others struggle to survive. This dichotomy is not just studious; it is equally purposive. Ours would have been a world saturated with some hubristic tendencies if resources with all existed in equipoise. It would have been a

⁸¹ S. S. Adua & M. A. Hadi, Unity: The Hallmark of Islam, in *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE)*, Vol. 7, Issue 1, January 2020, p.38

⁸² S. S. Adua & M. A. Hadi, Unity: The Hallmark of Islam, in *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE)*, Vol. 7, Issue 1, January 2020, p.38

terrifying world to live in. Zakah provides the link. The giver gives withdoes not deify the giver. Each provides a basis for the fulfillment of Allah's command. Love in its undiluted and imperishable state becomes the byproduct of this exercise. The poor and the rich are united as both actors are witnesses of this divine process. Furthermore, the hemlock which is the desire to accumulate wealth and peculate what is collectively owned is cauterized. Little wonder that the stench of corruption (like the one in Nigeria today) is much more potent among those who do not have this Islamic value. Because of the role Zakah plays in cementing the relationship between members of the Islamic Ummah, it was a justificatory basis for Abu Bakr to go to war with those who saw the demise of the Prophet (S.A.W) as a golden opportunity to go back on the payment of Zakat.⁸³

Hajj is one of the noblest institutions that Allah has blessed humanity with. Its role in enhancing unity within Islam is beyond explanation; it is simply an exhilarating experience. Hajj is the only event that brings people from diverse backgrounds and orientations together. It assembles a crowd unlike any other gathering. Shariati (n.d.) describes Hajj as follows: "In essence, Hajj is man's evolution towards Allah. It is a symbolic demonstration of the philosophy behind the creation of Adam... It may be stated that the performance of Hajj is a simultaneous display of many things; it is a 'show of creation,' a 'show of history,' a 'show of unity,' a 'show of Islamic ideology,' and a 'show of the Ummah.'"

Hajj serves as a lesson in leadership. It teaches us that a leader who is disdainful of the responsibilities that naturally accompany their privileges brings about an unmitigated humanitarian disaster. It instructs leaders to transform heterogeneous grounds into homogeneous ones. Hajj represents a liberation from fragmentation and relativity to unity. In performing Hajj, one comes to realize the truth of the oneness of mankind, as stated in the Qur'ān. One observes that the greed and lust of mankind are the root causes

⁸³ S. S. Adua & M. A. Hadi, Unity: The Hallmark of Islam, in International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE), Vol. 7, Issue 1, January 2020, p.39

of the desire to keep humanity divided.⁸⁴ In the Qur'ān Allah says: Mankind was one single nation. And Allah sent messengers with glad tidings and warnings; and with them, He sent the Book in truth, to judge between people in matters where in they differed; but the people of the Book after the clear signs came to them, did not differ among themselves except through selfish contumacy.⁸⁵

The above institutional framework in Islam for unity, is no doubt a clear indication that the Hall Mark of Islam is unity, unity of faith, unity of action, unity of purpose and unity of thoughts.

The value and importance of uniting Muslims is a common knowledge. Despite the fact that there are good and solid bases on which Muslims can be united; and despite the fact that the need and importance of uniting Muslims is a much talked about subject, Muslims are getting more and more divided by the day. This means that there are some things which we are doing wrongly that require urgent and practical steps to correct; or some things which we are supposed to be doing but which we are negligent and lethargic about. Disunity is among the greatest problems which Muslims face today that divided us into smaller and weaker fragments. It is our duty to purify our society of this disease.⁸⁶ This highlights the presence of critical issues within the Muslim community that need immediate attention. It emphasizes the need to rectify mistakes and take practical steps to address them, as well as the importance of fulfilling neglected responsibilities. The mention of disunity as a significant problem facing Muslims today underscores the detrimental impact of division within the community, leading to fragmentation and weakening of their collective strength. The call to purify society of this "disease" suggests a sense of

⁸⁴ S. S. Adua & M. A. Hadi, Unity: The Hallmark of Islam, in *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE)*, Vol. 7, Issue 1, January 2020, p.39

⁸⁵ Al- Qur'an, 2:213

⁸⁶ H. Bako & A. A. Oare, *Challenges of the Contemporary Muslims*, Sahaba Publications, Kaduna, 2013, p.45

urgency and duty to overcome disunity and unite for the greater good of the community.

There are several Quranic verses that emphasize the importance of unity among Muslims. Here are a few examples: Allah the Almighty says "And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided. And remember the favor of Allah upon you - when you were enemies and He brought your hearts together and you became, by His favor, brothers. And you were on the edge of a pit of the Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus Allah does make clear to you His verses that you may be guided."⁸⁷

Allah the Almighty says in another Surah:

"And obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not dispute and [thus] lose courage and [then] your strength would depart; and be patient. Indeed, Allah is with the patient."⁸⁸

In another, Allah the Almighty says:

"The believers are but brothers, so make settlement between your brothers. And fear Allah that you may receive mercy."⁸⁹

These verses highlight the importance of unity, avoiding division and disputes, and working together as a unified community of believers. They remind Muslims to hold onto the teachings of Allah and His Messenger, to reconcile any conflicts among themselves, and to fear Allah in order to receive His mercy. There are several Prophetic ahadith that emphasize the importance of unity among Muslims. Here are a few examples:

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

The believers in their mutual kindness, compassion, and sympathy are just like one body. When one limb suffers, the whole body responds to it with wakefulness and fever".⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Al-Qur'an, 3:103

⁸⁸ Al-Qur'an, 8:46

⁸⁹ Al-Qur'an, 49:10

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This Hadith highlights the concept of unity and mutual care among believers, emphasizing that they should support and empathize with one another.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

The example of the believers in their affection, mercy, and compassion for each other is that of a body. When any limb aches, the whole body reacts with sleeplessness and fever⁹¹

This Hadith further emphasizes the unity and interconnectedness of believers, emphasizing the need for compassion and empathy towards one another.

In another Hadith, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

"Do not envy one another, do not hate one another, do not turn your backs on one another, and do not undercut one another. Be brothers as Allah has commanded you."⁹²

This Hadith emphasizes the importance of avoiding negative feelings, animosity, and division among Muslims. It encourages them to maintain a sense of brotherhood and unity as commanded by Allah. These Prophetic traditions serve as reminders for Muslims to prioritize unity, compassion, and mutual support within the Muslim community. They emphasize the concept of believers being like one body, where the well-being of each individual affects the entire community.

The proliferation of Juma'at masajid in Gusau can lead to several issues such as fragmentation of the community, inefficient use of resources, and

⁹⁰ M. I. Al- Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Maktabat Al Hady Al Muhammady, Cairo, 2019, Hadith No. 6011

⁹¹ M. H. M. al-Naisaburi, *Sahih Muslim*, Maktabat al-Hady al-Muhammady, Cairo, 2019, Hadith No. 2586

⁹² M. I. al-Bukhari, *Sahih Al- Bukhari*, *Sahih Al- Bukhari*, Maktabat al-Hady al-Muhammady, Cairo, 2019, Hadith No. 6065

potential conflicts among different masajid congregations. This is because unnecessary duplication of masajid disrupts unity among people. A certain distance must be earmarked before a Masjid is constructed. A number of Masajid that violate such guiding principles should be converted to Daily prayers Masajid in order to keep the unity of the ummah intact. For example, the Masjid opposite Zamfara State Medical Stores Complex should be converted to Daily prayers Masajid because of its closeness to Masjid Sahaba, so is that of Salahuddin Ayyubi because it is very close to that of Malam Sambo Dan Ashafa and the latter has been there for many years before it; the same thing is applicable to Masjid Daril Qadiriyya because of its closeness with that of Umar bin Khattab; and so on.⁹³ The multiplicity of Masajid in Gusau has reduced the enthusiasm for attending and going to the places of worship on time; because one is counting minutes to reach the masjid resulting to losing sermons and praying on road sides.⁹⁴

Managing this situation requires a multifaceted approach involving community leaders, government officials, and the wider public, certain Islamic principles and solutions can also be applied to address this issue. Here are some Islamic solutions that could help in managing the situation effectively: first, strict adherence to Islamic teachings, devoid of any selfish interest. Scholars should desist from anything capable of dividing people along selfish vested interest in the name of group solidarity. Youths should seek knowledge in the hands of pious Scholars. There is also a need for proper and strict governmental regulation. The Agency in charge should put fear of Allah first before anything and avoid issuing license to any Masjid that does not deserve any Masjid that does not fulfill the conditions of being a Jumaat Masjid shall be converted to Khams al-Salawat.⁹⁵ Importance of unity and cooperation among Muslims must be

⁹³ An interview with Alhaji Isiyaka Hassan, (45years), Staff of Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) Zamfara State, interviewed in Gusau, 28th April 2024; and Malam Muhammad Tijjani Ustaz, (38years), Businessman/Teacher, interviewed in Gusau, 28th April 2024.

⁹⁴ An interview with Malam Tasiu Sani, (36 years), Teacher, interviewed in Gusau, 27th April 2024.

⁹⁵ An interview with Malam Muhammad Tijjani Ustaz, (38years), Businessman/Teacher, interviewed in Gusau, 28th April 2024; and Malam Ibrahim

emphasized Encourage the congregations of different masajid to come together for joint activities, events, and prayers. This can help foster a sense of community and reduce the need for multiple masajid. Islamic principles stress the importance of consultation (Shura) and leadership. Encourage community leaders to come together to discuss the issue and make decisions collectively. Leaders should consult with the community members to understand their needs and concerns.⁹⁶Encouraging the consolidation or merger of smaller Masajid to form larger congregations. This can help in utilizing resources more efficiently and reduce the number of masajid in the area; educating the community about the negative impacts of having too many Masajid in a small area is crucial; and teaching the importance of congregational prayers and the benefits of praying in larger congregations. Engaging the community in discussions and decision-making processes regarding the management of masajid in the area will also help in controlling the situation. By applying these Islamic principles and solutions, the community in Gusau can work together to address the proliferation of Juma'at masajid in a constructive and harmonious manner.

Conclusion

As Muslims, our power and strength lie in our ability to adhere strictly to Islamic teachings, not merely in numerical strength. The way we live our lives and engage with others is paramount to achieving this strength. Islam is a communal faith, and without a high level of cooperation, unity, discipline, and hierarchy, its obligations cannot be fulfilled. For example, the Salat al-Jama'a (congregational prayer) is performed in congregation behind an Imam, who must be strictly followed. Any attempt to precede the Imam nullifies the prayer. The collection and distribution of Zakat should be centralized to prioritize the categories of recipients and prevent irregularities. The fasting of Ramadan must begin and end with the approval of a central authority, or the society will descend into chaos. Similarly, Hajj requires management from a central authority that oversees

Sani, (40years), Lecturer, Department of Physics, Federal University Gusau, interviewed in Gusau, 28thApril 2024.

⁹⁶ An interview with Malam Tasiu Sani, (36 years), Teacher, interviewed in Gusau, 27th April 2024.

the movement of people and certifies the days of the exercise. Therefore, Muslims are like a building supported by pillars; if one pillar collapses, the other pillars may begin to shake or fail to function properly.

Building and maintaining a large number of masajid is undoubtedly a positive development, as it reflects the society's identity, enthusiasm, and solidarity in promoting Islam. The support extended by governments, Muslim organizations, and individuals is commendable and deserving of recognition. However, in the process of ensuring fair treatment for all people, the society must not lose sight of its Islamic ideals, particularly unity and harmonious coexistence. A Da'iya, Imam, or scholar must conduct their preaching with wisdom and eloquent speech, in line with Islamic teachings. They must demonstrate strong adherence to moderation, following a middle course between two extremes while avoiding both laxity and extremism. Above all, all stakeholders must be mindful of the fear of Allah in their dealings, showing sincerity and a sincere yearning for Allah's pleasure and blessings. It is essential to emphasize that guiding people back to the path of Tawhid and Sunnah when they deviate, or issuing a fatwa (religious verdict) that contrasts with established customs and traditions, is not an attempt to create division or disharmony.

In light of these factors, it is crucial for followers to critically assess the teachings and guidance they receive from their respective mosques. Engaging in dialogue with those who hold differing opinions and fostering understanding and unity within the community, despite differences, is vital. Effective communication, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to core values can help navigate the challenges presented by the multiplicity of masajid and the diversity of opinions among followers in Gusau.

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Nura Lawal

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore the state of Hausa thought and philosophy from a proverbial perspective. Proverbs are meaningful expressions crafted by the Hausa people to convey strategies for living in the world. The proverb texts used as examples in this study have been