



# The Role of Cyberspace in Religious Education of Teenagers and Introducing them to the Mosque

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## Abstract

The mosque plays a crucial role in familiarizing children with religious concepts and teachings. Today, in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the physical presence of families and their children in the mosque may have declined as a result of the necessity to maintain social distancing measures. Hence, it is essential to utilize the potential of cyberspace to introduce teenagers to the mosque and its teachings. This article aims to elucidate the mechanisms and capabilities of the virtual mosque in cyberspace, while exploring its role in educating teenagers through the application of crucial educational principles in religious education. The article will adopt an analytical approach to explain the content, providing citations to reference different opinions and perspectives. The research findings of this article illustrate that leveraging cyberspace enables the establishment of two-way communication with a vast audience, transcending geographical and temporal limitations. Furthermore, it allows the utilization of innovative advertising methods to effectively engage with the target audience. By utilizing this platform effectively, it becomes feasible to educate and guide young

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individuals who spend a significant amount of their leisure time in the cyberspace, ensuring they are exposed to genuine religious teachings amidst the abundance of entertainment content. By harnessing the mechanisms and responsibilities of the mosque in the cyberspace and digital realm, such as the virtual pulpit, social networks, webinars, and computer games featuring accurate and reliable content, the cyberspace emerges as an ideal platform for delivering cultural, artistic, educational, and social modeling and guidance to children and teenagers. It proves to be highly effective in their educational development and overall growth.

**Keywords:** Cyberspace, mosque, education, teenagers, webinar, social networks

## Introduction

In today's world, information and communication technology have become deeply integrated into human life, offering a platform for genuine religious leaders and individuals concerned with guiding humanity to present their authentic and reliable concepts and teachings to the global community. However, it is worth noting that the cyberspace and media are also utilized by false purveyors of peace and adversaries of Islam, who employ cultural attacks as a means to achieve their objectives.

In this context, individuals who embrace the correct beliefs are likely to excel in effectively presenting moral, religious, spiritual, and belief systems by employing logical and persuasive arguments. Therefore, it is crucial for religious entities to proactively take measures to disseminate the genuine teachings of Islam, utilizing the potential of virtual space and actively engaging within the virtual sphere. This will contribute to ensuring that teenagers are properly introduced to the virtual mosque and have access to authentic religious guidance.

At the present time and age, the influence of mass media on the identity formation of children and adolescents is inescapable (Melvin et al., 2004, 300). Furthermore, the utilization of the internet and social networks by young people and adolescents surpasses that of any other age group (Bullen 2000, 5). Therefore, it becomes imperative to leverage the educational potential of cyberspace to provide original educational solutions, concepts, and teachings to the youth. This article aims to shed light on the significance of the virtual mosque, highlighting its capabilities in the education of teenagers. By drawing upon important principles in education, we will examine and analyze the role of the virtual mosque, as well as its impact on the educational development of teenagers.

### 1. Functions of the Mosque in Cyberspace

The term "masjid" (mosque) etymologically signifies a place of prostration. According to Ibn al-Manzūr's work, *Lisān al- 'Arab*, "Masjad and masjid refer to a location where individuals bow in prostration, and 'masjid' is the singular form of 'masājid'" (Ibn al-Manzūr 1405 AH, 3:204). Al-Zubaydī adds, "Masjad refers to the prayer area and chamber within homes, whereas the masjid is the communal prayer space, and its plural form is 'masājid'" (Zubaydī 1414 AH, 5: 7).

The mosque has functions in Islamic culture. It is stated in a hadith that anyone who goes to the mosques will get one of these eight things: either a religious brother who will benefit from him, or gain knowledge and a wise point, or comprehend a strong sign, or receive the expected mercy (from Allah), or hear a word that prevents him from destruction, or a word that leads him to guidance, or leaves a sin because of the fear of God (Majlisī 1403 AH, 80: 351).

Based on this hadith, it becomes evident that many of the functions attributed to the mosque can be accessed and fulfilled through the cyberspace. Establishing a virtual mosque not only facilitates the dissemination of religious messages but also becomes a source of cultural and spiritual movements, providing guidance for people. The responsibilities of a mosque encompass various aspects such as worship, education, upbringing, culture, communication, social interaction, political involvement, architectural significance, and role-playing functions within the physical urban space (Alviri 2007, 9). Interestingly, most of these functions can be observed as being fulfilled by the virtual mosque in the realm of cyberspace.

This virtual space can be designed in a manner that obliges users to observe the specific customs and conditions necessary to enter a physical mosque. For example, a mechanism can be implemented where users must perform ablution before engaging in spiritual gatherings such as virtual classes or educational webinars. Similarly, if a user intends to make purchases within this space, they may be required to fulfill their zakat obligations. In such a scenario, the statement of the Prophet (s) could potentially extend to the users present in this virtual realm, as he stated, "As long as you are sitting in the mosque, the Exalted God will grant you one degree in heaven for every breath you take, and the angels will send blessings upon you" (Majlisī 1403 AH, 76: 336). Consequently, the functions of the virtual mosque in the cyberspace would create a religious media platform that not only disseminates messages but also strives to present realities in an authentic and meaningful manner, catering to the spiritual needs of individuals in a digital context.

The duties of the mosque in the cyberspace refer to those aspects of the physical mosque's functions that can be translated

into the virtual realm (Jahangiri Sohravardi 2008, 72). The virtual space of the mosque and webinar platform can be created in various ways. Apart from designing this space through websites and social networks, it can also be developed as software. This software would leverage the capabilities of the computer's virtual world to introduce, familiarize, and educate users about the different areas, sections, elements, and functions of the mosque. By utilizing computer features such as animations, videos, photos, and information sources, along with the three-dimensional and virtual representation of the mosque, a suitable platform can be established for cultural, artistic, educational, and instructional modeling and guidance.

Through the development of such software, which can be accessed for free, any user, regardless of their technical or computer proficiency, can enter the virtual realm of the mosque and explore its various stages by simply inserting a compact disk into their computer. This will grant them access to the virtual space of the mosque, allowing them to familiarize themselves with all the components of a physical mosque, including prestigious mosques and models adhering to Islamic traditions. Once fully immersed in this environment, users will have the opportunity to explore and learn about every aspect of the mosque (for more see Ghaemi 1984).

It is crucial to emphasize that highlighting the significance of the virtual mosque in cyberspace does not imply diminishing the importance of physical mosques. It is evident that the virtual mosque cannot replicate or encompass all the functions and experiences of real mosques. Despite enhancing the quality, impact, and immersive nature of the virtual mosque, it cannot replace the profound experience of being physically present in a mosque, participating in Hajj rituals, attending Friday prayers, and other similar rituals.

Nevertheless, it is crucial not to overlook the valuable role of the virtual mosque as a stepping stone to engage and attract young individuals who may feel lost or disconnected within the vast digital landscape, ultimately leading them towards real and traditional mosques. The undeniable reality is that there has been a decline in the acceptance of mosques among young people, while their acceptance and engagement with the internet and

virtual spaces have increased significantly.

Indeed, the virtual nature of an experience does not diminish its impact or significance; rather, it presents a different manifestation of reality in a virtual form. In parallel with the physical world, virtual reality endeavors to construct new environments and imaginative realms that can evoke a sense of "realness" in distinct ways. Although these virtual realms may appear detached from our tangible reality, they are intricately connected and offer unique opportunities for exploration and understanding.

## 2. The Educational Significance of Virtual Mosques for Adolescents

Failing to recognize the potential of cyberspace can have significant consequences, not only for future generations who will bear the responsibilities of tomorrow but also for society as a whole. Neglecting the influence of the digital realm, particularly during adolescence, can lead to substantial educational deviations and subsequent challenges.

This is because the formation of teenagers' personalities is influenced by a multitude of factors and components. In addition to elements such as heredity, family, society, nationality, ecosystem, social class, contemporary national and global culture, and religion, their presence in the expansive realm of cyberspace and the internet also exerts a profound and extensive impact. Cyberspace, particularly the internet and social networks, can greatly influence the knowledge and beliefs of individuals in various age groups, with teenagers being particularly susceptible (Hosseini Anjdani 2009, 52). In nearly all countries, especially developing ones, the youth population is larger, and their engagement with mass media is more prevalent.

Given that a significant portion of users and interactions in the cyber environment and cyberspace involve teenagers, it becomes imperative to develop a program tailored to this large demographic. Such a program should aim to guide them towards religious and spiritual teachings. One effective approach is to utilize the mechanisms of the mosque within the cyberspace.

Introducing the younger generation to religious and epistemological principles through the cyberspace, with a wealth of relevant and meaningful religious content, can fortify them against the influence of foreign cultures and safeguard their

future, as well as the well-being of society, by upholding norms and values. Considering that young individuals are particularly susceptible to cultural influences during this phase of their lives, and that they are among the primary users of cyberspace, this relationship can serve as an exceptional platform for fostering positive outcomes. It has the potential to enhance their awareness, as well as develop a range of skills.

Furthermore, teenagers and young people possess an inherent essence of evolutionism, wherein they strive for positive change, growth, and progress (Lotfabadi 2001, 112). By actively engaging them in the planning, programming, and interactive discourse within the cyberspace, as well as involving them in mosque-related activities, we can steer them away from mundane pursuits and pave the way for transformative experiences. Their thinking across various domains will naturally align with the content available to them in the cyberspace, facilitating their adaptation and development.

### **3. Religious Education Initiatives of the Virtual Mosque**

Religious education is defined as a deliberate and purposeful endeavor aimed at imparting the valid tenets of a religion to others, with the intention of fostering their commitment and adherence to these teachings in both practice and belief (Davoodi 2004, 1:26). The teaching of religious principles is guided by fundamental principles and characteristics, such as creating a contextual framework, allowing for personal choice, acknowledging innate tendencies, and more. It is within this context that the role of the virtual mosque, as previously outlined, can be elucidated and examined in terms of educating children and teenagers. In other words, the methods employed to teach religious doctrines to children and adolescents are rooted in principles that can be effectively implemented in the virtual mosque, thereby institutionalizing educational principles in the lives of young individuals. These principles and characteristics encompass:

1. The principle of foundational and progressive instruction in religious matters: Education experts hold divergent views regarding the appropriate initiation point for religious education and the teaching of spiritual programs and religious teachings. One school of thought asserts that children and adolescents lack the cognitive capacity to comprehend religious teachings until

they reach maturity and growth, and therefore should not be exposed to religious education. Conversely, another viewpoint maintains that children and teenagers are deserving of and possess the inherent capacity to engage in religious education. Proponents of this perspective argue that educators can simplify and present religious content in a manner that is accessible and comprehensible to children (Kariminia 2007, 212).

Islam offers clear and definitive perspectives on this issue. According to Islamic law, children bear no responsibilities until they reach the age of puberty. However, once they reach the age of *taklif*, which is the age at which they become obligated to adhere to Islamic laws, it becomes challenging for them to accept and fulfill these religious obligations without prior familiarity and preparation.

While it is true that boys are assigned religious responsibilities after reaching the age of fourteen, and girls after reaching the age of nine, it is not advisable to delay the performance of religious duties until puberty. It is crucial for individuals to become accustomed to worship and religious obligations from childhood, so that they develop a desire to fulfill them when they reach the age of puberty (Amini 2006, 156). Children should be trained to pray from a young age, and it is recommended to teach them the practice of prayer starting from the age of seven. Although a seven-year-old child may not be able to perform prayer perfectly, they can learn the structure of prayer and become accustomed to it. Therefore, whether they are boys or girls, it is important to introduce prayer to children as they enter primary school, both within the educational setting and within the family (Motahhari 1994, 100).

Consequently, one of the fundamental principles in religious education is the principle of "establishing a foundation" and mentally, psychologically, and emotionally preparing children for religious matters. Since the groundwork for embracing spiritual and moral virtues is typically laid during adolescence and youth, it is crucial to create an environment that facilitates religious engagement among teenagers (for more, see Ghaemi 1984). It is essential to provide a supportive environment where their inclination and desire to fulfill devotional duties stem from an inner motivation. Familiarizing them with the worship environment is necessary to cultivate this interest and desire from within.

Given that the majority of teenagers spend a significant amount



of time in the cyberspace and social networks, it becomes necessary to consider a mechanism that can compensate for their reduced physical presence in the mosque, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic when health regulations limit gatherings. In this regard, familiarizing them with the functionalities of the virtual mosque within the cyberspace can serve as a means of establishing a solid foundation. Effectively acclimating and instructing children and teenagers on religious and moral matters can be achieved through the virtual mosque. By immersing themselves in this spiritual environment, behaviors and moral teachings become ingrained in their existence, often without conscious awareness.

2. The principle of the innateness of religion: This principle highlights the inherent inclination within human beings to worship and pray. The need for worship and prayer is a fundamental and profound aspect deeply rooted in the human psyche. Historical research has unequivocally demonstrated that worship is an integral part of human existence and a natural inclination. At times, this desire and inclination towards worship are channeled correctly, leading to the worship of God. However, there are instances where due to ignorance, deviation, and obstinacy, various entities and objects such as stones, wood, the moon, the sun, and others are worshipped, or it may result in irreligion.

As Motahhari says, one of the most enduring and ancient manifestations of the human spirit, and one of the most fundamental aspects of human existence, is the sense of prayer and worship. The study of human history reveals that prayer and worship have existed whenever and wherever humans have inhabited the earth. The only thing that has changed is the manner of worship and the object of worship (Motahhari 2017, 21).

To nurture and safeguard this inherent inclination and prevent its deviation, it is crucial to create suitable conditions that cater to this natural tendency. Considering that most teenagers spend a significant amount of time in the virtual realm, it becomes essential to utilize the functionalities of the virtual mosque in an appealing manner, aligning with the aesthetic nature of humans. This can play a vital role in cultivating the innate purity within individuals. It is worth noting that if teenagers are not engaged in this virtual space, they may end up aimlessly spending their time

on pornographic websites where immoral content is presented through advertisements, movies, and even computer games. It is important to recognize that adolescents may lack the ability to discern these inappropriate materials. In today's world, where teenagers devote much of their time to computer games and exploring the cyberspace, if we observe a lack of interest or desire among a group of teenagers regarding religious matters such as prayer, it may be attributed to the non-religious nature of the cyberspace, which has led their innate disposition astray.

3. The principle of autonomy in religious matters: This principle emphasizes the inherent freedom of human beings. As individuals possess a multidimensional nature and are bestowed with divine magnificence, they have the capacity to elevate their dignity through their own volition. From the Islamic perspective, human beings are unique creatures endowed with spiritual aspirations and attractions that are absent in other beings. A person has the ability to resist their inner desires and refrain from acting upon their commands. They have the power to exercise restraint over certain desires while directing others towards specific purposes. The Quran and Islamic educational sources provide numerous reasons that affirm the freedom and agency of human beings.

In accordance with this principle, it is important to never impose religious beliefs upon teenagers. Instead, we should always provide them with a space where they can freely choose their own path. The mosque, both in its physical and virtual forms, serves as an ideal space that offers a foundation for individuals to explore the path of religion and discover a deep inner conviction. This conviction should not be driven by personal gain or fear of coercion, but rather be rooted in alignment with the spiritual and divine nature of humanity. When teenagers are not compelled or forced into religious practices, and religion is presented to them in a rational manner within the right conditions and atmosphere, they have the opportunity to develop a genuine understanding. Even if they arrive at this understanding through abstract thinking and within a virtual space, they will be able to articulate well-founded reasons for their beliefs, according to their cognitive abilities. They will embrace a religion that is not merely inherited or hypocritical, but rather sincere and driven by personal choice.

Considering this reality, if parents desire their children to develop a habit of prayer and become believers, they should make an effort to familiarize them with the religious environment during their early years. Mosques are among the most important and commonly utilized spaces for religious activities. Given the significant presence of teenagers in the cyberspace, it becomes necessary to devise a strategy that aligns with this digital realm. In this regard, the virtual mosque and purposeful computer games emerge as promising options. By leveraging their appeal, these platforms can guide aimless users in the cyberspace towards religious engagement.

4. The principle of observing and experiencing the benefits of the mosque: This principle underscores the significance Islam places on observation and firsthand experience. Observation, experience, critical thinking, and education are the tools that empower individuals. Children, through observation and experience, inherit their initial and most profound lesson on religiousness and establishing a spiritual connection with God in a religious environment. This observation and experience can be effectively attained in physical spaces. Consequently, when children participate in religious settings and programs, particularly congregational prayers, it motivates them to attend the mosque and engage in prayer.

Observation and experience can also be facilitated in the cyberspace, where devotional and religious practices can be presented through the virtual mosque. This allows teenagers, who spend a significant amount of their time engaging in computer games and similar activities, to witness and experience the spiritual atmosphere of the mosque. By immersing children and teenagers in both real and virtual mosque environments, we can encourage them to engage in acts of worship and foster a conscious inclination towards religious practices (Motahhari 1994, 100). It is worth noting that the level of a child's interest in this sacred environment is directly linked to their level of participation, communication, and engagement within this environment (Bahonar 2008, 122). Therefore, the greater the child's involvement and activities within these environments, the more likely they are to develop a deeper religious attitude.

5. The principle of insight: Numerous questions arise in the

minds of individuals, particularly teenagers, encompassing matters related to religion and transcendence. Adolescents are constantly seeking to comprehend their origins and their ultimate destination. They have an inherent inclination to worship and establish a connection with a higher power, as the sense of worship is ingrained within them (Motahhari 1994, 100). However, questions such as the philosophical and purposeful nature of these acts of worship, the meaning of life, the significance of prayer and its methodology, and the philosophy behind fasting consistently occupy their thoughts. Moreover, due to the current era and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, young people and teenagers have become more distant from physical mosques, spending the majority of their time on social networks and in the cyberspace. Consequently, they seek answers to these inquiries within the realm of the internet. It is crucial that university professors, seminary preachers, and mosque administrators in the cyberspace make the necessary arrangements and leverage this opportunity to provide content that addresses the needs of teenagers and young adults. If they fail to do so, they may encounter misleading and deviant answers. It can be argued that one of the reasons for the abandonment or neglect of prayer is the lack of understanding among teenagers and young adults regarding the philosophy of worship. However, if the performance of acts of worship during adolescence is rooted in knowledge and fostered through the development of religious insight, their behavior transitions from mere imitation to a conscious and attitudinal approach. As a result, teenagers will remain steadfast in their religious practices in later stages of life.

Hence, it is imperative to elucidate the philosophy behind devotional practices and teachings to individuals, taking into account their intellectual development and capacity for understanding. By doing so, they can engage in devotional actions based on knowledge and heartfelt conviction. This significance can be effectively conveyed to teenagers through the creation of concise and impactful videos in the cyberspace, the establishment of groups on social networks that offer well-reasoned, logical, and captivating content, hosting educational webinars, and maintaining informative Instagram pages. The virtual mosque platform presents an opportunity for inquisitive seekers of truth to

access the necessary information swiftly and discover suitable answers to their inquiries. Within this digital space, the interaction between users and preachers, operating in the form of a virtual forum, facilitates engaging conversations between them.

When a specialized preacher provides compelling answers to the user, the two-way intellectual interaction and conversational space greatly contribute to the user's acceptance of the responses based on their own choice and insight. As a result, these responses have a lasting impact on the user's mind. It is important to recognize that the acquisition of genuine religious knowledge goes beyond mere theoretical education. Religious education should be accompanied by the nurturing of a religious sense, which involves cultivating spiritual insight and internalizing religious knowledge. Through this process, belief and a heartfelt connection to religion and its obligations become deeply embedded within the individual's being, leading to a profound transformation facilitated by the teacher.

By adhering to the principle of enlightenment, if we foster and encourage religious sentiments in children, they will develop into believers, worshipers, and individuals with firm faith in subsequent stages of life. Utilizing the educational environment, we can facilitate the triple skills of inclining towards spirituality, attaining spirituality, and strengthening spirituality within them (Kashani 2009, 126). It is for this reason that Islam places significant emphasis on the fact that the principles of religion should not be accepted blindly but rather with awareness and freedom. Therefore, we should make efforts to invite children and teenagers to embrace religion through positive and persuasive means. Seeking assistance from expert preachers, we can create an environment of sincere dialogue in the cyberspace, fostering meaningful interactions that facilitate their genuine understanding and acceptance of religious teachings.

6. The principle of media literacy: This principle holds great significance, particularly for individuals in contemporary societies, including young people and students. In today's digital age, where a substantial amount of time is spent on the internet, the media exerts a powerful influence on their lives. According to James Potter, media literacy entails the perspective through which we expose ourselves to the media and interpret the meaning of the

messages we encounter (Davis 1999, 8). Dechiara defines media literacy as the ability to comprehend the language of the media (Dechiara 2002, 1). Similarly, Zill, an expert in this domain, regards media literacy as the understanding of the structure and function of media messages and the organizations responsible for creating them (Zill 1998, 10).

The concept of media literacy operates under the premise that exposure to the cyberspace has an impact on the audience, and these effects can be altered, mitigated, or directed towards more positive and creative pursuits through various educational and training programs. With the decreased proximity of young people to physical mosques and religious spaces, particularly in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic and widespread disasters, and their increased reliance on the internet and cyberspace, they may not be fully aware of the potential harms associated with the online world. Over time, this lack of awareness can result in educational deviations and negative influences emerging from their online experiences.

Hence, it is crucial to devise a solution to address these challenges. One potential solution lies in creating spiritual capacities within the cyberspace, establishing virtual pulpits, cultural platforms, and a virtual mosque. This approach can serve as a means to cultivate media literacy among teenagers and their parents, enabling them to navigate the online world while avoiding its destructive effects. Knowledgeable preachers play a pivotal role in this endeavor by creating virtual platforms and engaging with internet users in meaningful two-way dialogues. Through these interactions, the hidden ideologies embedded within symbolic media content can be unveiled, raising awareness about the dangers associated with the internet, satellite broadcasts, and social networks. Furthermore, this engagement will promote individuals' safety in the cyberspace and set them on the right educational path. The involvement of knowledgeable preachers in establishing virtual platforms and fostering interactive dialogues with internet users is instrumental in revealing the ideologies concealed within the symbolic content of the media.

By raising awareness about the dangers associated with the internet, satellite broadcasts, and social networks, individuals can be better equipped to navigate cyberspace safely and find themselves on the right educational path. It is crucial to note that

users typically seek internet experiences that provide them with the utmost satisfaction (McQuail 2010, 47). Therefore, in order for teenagers to develop the necessary media literacy, it is essential to provide them with a suitable religious space that offers precise and accurate content. By offering such a space, users will be more inclined to stay within this environment and spend their time in the cyberspace, ensuring they remain on the right educational trajectory.

#### **4. Webinar Pulpits and their Role in Fostering Religious Feelings in Children and Teenagers**

The virtual mosque provides an ideal platform for establishing a webinar pulpit, enabling religious preachers to deliver tailored content and information suitable for various cyberspace environments. Through the virtual pulpit and webinar speeches, a religious preacher can reach different audiences and users simultaneously with just one click, using email or messaging platforms. In essence, the virtual mosque serves as both a webinar pulpit and a presence on social networks. Alongside the physical mosque, the pulpit is an institution that regulates the moral, spiritual, and political behaviors of young people, teenagers, and even children (Latifpour 2000, 156-57). With the rapid advancement of technology and the widespread availability of the internet and cyberspace across families and society, the webinar pulpit can effectively fulfill the same educational function for children and teenagers in the virtual realm as it does in physical spaces.

The distance between people and teenagers has significantly increased, particularly due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in reduced attendance at physical mosque pulpits. Consequently, they spend a majority of their time on the internet and in cyberspace. Additionally, it is natural for young people and teenagers to exhibit an inherent inclination towards exploring new things and innovative approaches (Falsafi 1969, 137). In this context, virtual pulpits, when creatively utilized, can serve as influential factors in the development of their religious and moral sentiments. During the stage of puberty, young individuals experience a heightened awareness of their religious and moral inclinations, and they become increasingly curious

about understanding the causes and meanings behind them.<sup>1</sup> The flourishing of these moral inclinations compels individuals to embark on a quest for truth, leading them towards asceticism, piety, and worship during this stage of life. They strive to unlock the doors of knowledge and awaken their latent instincts. It is during this period that mystical leaps emerge in them, and the relationship between humans and God, which used to seem absurd to them, takes on profound meaning.

During this phase of life, in order to ensure that young individuals do not make mistakes in their pursuit of good morals and character development, and to prevent them from falling into moral pitfalls, they require teachers who can guide them indirectly or sometimes directly towards their aspirations. As they spend a significant amount of time in the cyberspace, they explore virtually, searching for these teachers within this realm. It becomes the responsibility of religious preachers and cultural guardians to establish virtual pulpits and tailor the educational programs for youth and teenagers accordingly. These programs should encompass religious, moral, scientific, practical, physical, psychological, spiritual, and material values. Furthermore, it is crucial to carefully calibrate the quality and quantity of the program materials, ensuring that their implementation does not become burdensome or exhausting for the youth. The aim is to strike a balance that preserves their enthusiasm, vitality, and strength, while safeguarding their well-being (Falsafi 1969, 46-46).

Young individuals who lack access to religious and practical programs, as well as those who lack qualified teachers in this domain, are often vulnerable to moral deviations and mental

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1. This approach holds significant potential in the realm of advertising, and it is evident that a shift in students' attitudes towards internet advertising could contribute to the growth and prosperity of religious teachings and Islamic education in the cyberspace. Likewise, students themselves can utilize this platform to disseminate their advertisements to individuals seeking pure religious teachings in a quicker and more accessible manner. To facilitate this process, the establishment of virtual seminaries and religious schools would create an ideal environment in the cyberspace. Such platforms would enable the audience and users interested in exploring religious concepts, accessing religious content, and obtaining information from various parts of the world with ease.



illnesses. The intense and impulsive emotions experienced during youth can lead them towards a path of downfall and destruction. Unfortunately, certain social networks, blogs, movies, and TV series promote negative influences such as running away from home, undue independence in teenagers, seeking constant variety in life, disrespecting parents, aggression towards elders, an excessive focus on materialistic pursuits, and more. These influences act as traps for users and audiences who lack proper guidance and religious educators in the cyberspace.

In this context, the cyberspace presents an opportunity for religious preachers and teachers to make a difference. Through their speeches delivered via electronic pulpits or through online platforms hosting scientific and cultural classes, they can reach audiences from all around the world. This enables them to foster the development of moral and spiritual awareness among users, particularly the teenagers who often navigate social networks. By providing proper guidance, these educators can steer users towards healthier and more appropriate thoughts, thereby instilling a sense of morality and spirituality in their existence within the cyberspace.

Certainly, the administration of the virtual pulpit entails specific considerations. Religious preachers who are responsible for virtual platforms should understand that in order to establish a strong preaching presence among diverse communities, they need to familiarize themselves with new methods of exploring cyberspace and learn about emerging technologies. When engaging with the digital realm, preachers should strive to become experts with informed opinions, rather than presenting an array of theories and answers that may render the issues meaningless and discourage users. It is crucial to recognize that if the educational process, particularly pertaining to stages of psychological development of children and adolescents, is excessively accelerated, the acquisition of moral-educational concepts and values can become unstable. In such cases, children may struggle to apply learned principles to novel conditions and situations (Karimi 2002, 181). Additionally, possessing professional ethics is paramount. Internet education, as well as the management of virtual platforms or successful and impactful webinar sessions, necessitates adherence to professional ethics.

To ensure a successful virtual pulpit, several factors must be considered. These include audience analysis, which involves having precise knowledge about specific and general audiences, as well as appropriate planning tailored to each group. Understanding the needs and demands of users is crucial, as is employing impactful methods and being mindful of time constraints. Having accurate knowledge of the geographical location, timing, and proficiency in working with software and meeting platforms are also important considerations. Moreover, to expand the reach of the virtual pulpit and engage a wider user base, it is essential to present the pulpit contents in popular languages such as Arabic, English, French, German, and others. Therefore, it is necessary for the preacher to familiarize themselves with these languages as well.

### **5. Strategies for Enhancing the Role of Mosques in the Digital Space**

Recognizing the significance of pulpit mechanisms, cultural meetings, and propaganda in the digital realm, it becomes crucial to address the educational needs of teenagers and young individuals who are increasingly distanced from physical mosques, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Given their extensive online presence and reliance on the internet, it is essential to explore solutions for establishing virtual mosques or organizing cultural-religious webinars. These initiatives aim to facilitate religious education within society.

1. **Establishing Dedicated Virtual Social Networks for Teenagers and Young People with Religious Themes at the Core:** By leveraging multimedia communication tools, including audio and video content, and incorporating attractive and engaging materials, it is possible to redirect the attention of teenagers away from potentially traumatic social networks towards active participation in religious social networks. One example of such networks is the self-control network for prayer accuracy. This platform aims to cultivate and expand the culture of correct recitation and practice of prayer within the digital space. By utilizing this network, teenagers can personally monitor and ensure the accuracy of their prayers, eliminating the need for physical oversight from others and alleviating any feelings of embarrassment or fear. This strategy effectively introduces

teenagers to the fundamental principles, rules, rituals, and teachings of religion, while also facilitating the proper recitation of the Noble Quran, among other benefits.

Likewise, the establishment of various scientific, sports, and news-focused hubs within social networks, particularly targeted at mosque students and graduates, can have a significant impact. Creating these groups or hubs in the digital space encourages communication and interaction among users, fostering an environment for the exchange of knowledge and interests. When accompanied by relevant and informative content, the formation of such groups can enhance the audience's scientific knowledge and engagement. This approach effectively provides teenagers and young individuals with a virtual atmosphere akin to a real mosque, facilitating targeted guidance and preparation for their spiritual development. Furthermore, it serves as a platform for teenagers and young people to engage in information sharing and participate in publications and the press. This prevents aimless wandering in cyberspace and promotes a sense of positive activity and purpose in their online presence.

2. Emphasizing the Significance of Digital Mosque Libraries: The realm of books and reading is a vibrant area where teenagers and young people actively participate. Establishing a digital library in mosques can greatly enhance their engagement. However, prior to creating such a library, it is crucial to have a comprehensive understanding of teenagers' tastes, interests, and reading levels to ensure the desired outcomes. Organizing book-reading contests, implementing a structured study curriculum for users, and teaching book creation within social network spaces can be effective methods for educating teenagers and young individuals. Additionally, offering a selection of favorite books with appropriate content can help familiarize them with religious concepts and increase their interest in attending mosques.

3. Establishing a "Virtual Husayniyya" or "Internet Husayniyya" Incorporating Authentic Islamic Art and Architecture: Throughout history, authentic Islamic and Iranian art and architecture have held a special place within Islamic and non-Islamic societies, with immense potential to captivate individuals and foster a deep connection to religious spaces. Regrettably, we have yet to fully leverage these beautiful and

alluring art forms to present religious content and information in the digital realm. Creating online spaces, such as the Virtual Husayniyya and the Hajj ceremony, that draw inspiration from traditional and religious architecture can be highly effective in attracting users. By designing the website format to reflect the intricate tiling of mosques and Islamic architectural elements, and by incorporating poems and key Islamic phrases, the ambiance of the Husayniyya and the mosque can be evoked. The creation of such a space allows users in the digital realm to experience a sense of closeness to the physical environment of these sacred places.

Such an environment, when complemented with appropriate content, has the potential to become a comprehensive and immersive online Husayniyya. For instance, by presenting a schedule of lectures, tables of lamentations, and nightly events throughout the holy month of Ramadan, including diverse speeches, lamentations, mourning ceremonies, and films from the shrines of the Imams, the online Husayniyya can offer a complete and authentic experience. Moreover, it eliminates the constraints of time and place, enabling individuals to engage in religious practices simultaneously regardless of their location or distance. This virtual platform allows individuals to participate in religious rituals and events, transcending physical boundaries and fostering a sense of unity and connection among users.

4. Facilitating the Launch and Expansion of a Mosque Blog Program for Promoting and Cultivating Mosque Culture: Such a program in the digital realm is another essential step towards institutionalizing the functions of the mosque. The mosque's Board of Trustees can establish a Bloggers Association, comprising of motivated teenagers and young individuals, who can create diverse blog formats. These formats may include question-and-answer blogs and personality-oriented blogs. By providing the necessary resources and support, the association can encourage the development of engaging and informative blog content centered around mosque-related topics. This initiative aims to foster a sense of community and promote the culture of the mosque, while also catering to the interests and preferences of the digital-savvy younger generation.

In question-and-answer and doubt-resolving blogs, authors should prioritize identifying the topics in which the audience faces

uncertainties and challenges. Subsequently, they can address these issues by providing reasoned explanations and inferences, offering comprehensive answers to alleviate doubts.

On the other hand, in personality-oriented blogs, the focus should be on presenting role models for the users. Religious scholars, religious thinkers specializing in various scientific fields, as well as pious and revered individuals, should be identified and highlighted. These blogs should provide a wide range of information about these exemplary figures, allowing young people to learn from their experiences and follow their righteous path.

### Conclusion

Upon careful examination and analysis of the influence of the cyber world and cyberspace on the education of teenagers and young people, it becomes evident that contemporary circumstances have led to an increased physical distance between mosques and the younger generation. The dominance of cyberspace, coupled with social barriers such as the ongoing challenges posed by diseases like COVID-19, has resulted in young individuals devoting a significant portion of their free time to seeking answers to their questions and uncertainties online, driven by their inherent curiosity. This trend highlights the pressing need to harness the potential of social networks, webinar platforms, and Instagram pages to establish virtual pulpits and create mosque mechanisms in the digital realm.

With careful consideration and planning by religious preachers and mosque trustees in the digital realm, the virtual mechanisms of a mosque can serve as a stepping stone for teenagers and future generations to engage with physical mosques, thereby facilitating religious education and fostering a strong connection with Islam. Adhering to the fundamental principles of religious education, such as insight, observation, experience, optionality, and the innate nature of religious matters, as well as emphasizing the necessity of media literacy, placing importance on mosque activities in the cyberspace can create an ideal environment for teenagers to develop a religious and Islamic identity. When these activities align with the guiding principles, incorporate creativity,

and embrace the aesthetic nature of human beings, they can profoundly contribute to nurturing the innate purity of children and teenagers, while satisfying their spiritual needs and safeguarding them against falling into the trap of false spirituality.

In light of the strengthened virtual infrastructure across various institutions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become crucial for cultural and promotional institutions to leverage the cyber environment and cyberspace as platforms for promotion and information dissemination. This approach ensures that children remain connected to a religious atmosphere despite physical limitations. Alongside their responsibilities in leading and managing physical mosques, cultural centers, mosque trustees, and congregational imams should actively engage in showcasing religious concepts and programs related to the virtual mosque in cyberspaces and social networks. Establishing Quranic and religious think tanks in the cyberspace, encouraging active youth participation through blogging contests on the topic of virtual mosques, organizing blogging contests with religious themes, and designating independent groups to curate impactful mosque programs on social networks are key solutions that cultural institutions should prioritize to institutionalize virtual mosques and guide young individuals towards the cyberspace.

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