

Research Paper

## Presenting a Conceptual Model of the Components Making the Sense of Privacy in the Mosques

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### Abstract

'Privacy' in Islamic culture is considered one of the concepts related to the existential dimensions of human beings and one of the most important spiritual needs for self-improvement and a sincere connection with Allah. In this regard, mosques, as places for the Muslims' collective worship ceremonies, are not only a place for social interaction but also a privacy-focused gathering, they are optimal places for thinking and enjoying some private moments with Allah. Two questions arise that what are the components of creating the privacy in the Architecture of mosques? How do these components result in the creation of this privacy in the mosques? The present study is basic and qualitative research in terms of purpose, which uses both comparative and meta-analysis methods. In this study, while analyzing documentary studies as well as in-depth and open interviews, mosques from Isfahan were selected as a case study. The NVivo software was used to analyze qualitative data. Based upon the conceptual model obtained from the research findings, three types of privacy have been proposed. The first mode is 'having private moments with oneself' which is made by the components such as 'introspection and remembrance'. The second mode is 'having private moments with Allah' which is formed via components such as the companionship of light and darkness and the vacuity. Finally, the third mode is 'the privacy in the public' which is created due to components such as verbal and non-verbal communication.

**Keywords:** Privacy, Architecture, Mosques, Nvivo.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The principles used in Iranian architecture are closely related to the culture and beliefs of the people and a reflection of many of their cultural and social characteristics. Among these, one of the most important characteristics related to the dimensions of human existence is the issue of 'privacy'. 'Privacy' is a fundamental feature of all human cultures that should not be ignored for no reason (Alitajer & Nojumi,

2016). This concept is not just culturally specific and must be evaluated from a cultural perspective (Altman, 1977; Fahey, 1995; Newell, 1994) but also a precise concept cannot be defined for it because such a concept requires the reflection of the ideas of a society at a particular time (Fischer, 1971; Kelvin, 1973; Mellors, 1978; Westin, 1970). The meaning of privacy has been focused on by specialists in different subject domains and different scholars have presented various definitions for privacy. Privacy is the process of determining the boundaries between people by which

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the person or the group monitors their interaction with others (Altman, 2004). Privacy means the human need to monitor and have the necessary control on his relations and communications with others and if he fails to fulfil this demand then he may experience tension and conflict (Lang, 2010). In Islamic culture, privacy is a state in which a person has the ability to reach the inner depths and the trueness inside him (Nasiri, 2010). This concept has been formed in Islamic culture according to historical conditions and under the influence of *the Holy Quran* and hadith including the privacy of the Prophet (PBUH) in the Hara cave and his advice to the Muslims for i'tikaf. In Mysticism and Sufism, privacy and recluse are considered the basic pillars of the stages of conduct, and the leaders of the sect have always ordered their followers to have a kind of privacy. Privacy in Sufism is not only incompatible with striving for business and interfering in politics and society, rather, it is an order for self-cultivation and a kind of care for actions and circumstances, which depends on the states and conditions of the seeker, who chooses privacy in the community or apparent privacy. The evolution and change that we now see in the type of privacy is a sign of the Sufi school's attention to the presence of seekers in the society (Fattahi, 2014). In line with the importance of privacy, Rumi says:

Set thy face to the wall, sit alone, and choose to be secluded even from thine own existence (Rumi, 2010)

Everyone who is wise chose the bottom of the well (to live in), because spiritual joys are (to be attained only) in privacy (Rumi, 2010). Due to the importance of privacy as one of the main characteristics related to existential dimensions of human being, the purposes of this study are: 1) investigating the concept of privacy in the mosques as well as an influential component in designing the building, and 2) defining a conceptual model of components involved in making the privacy in the mosques. To this end, while analyzing and investigating the papers on this issue and in-depth and open interviews, the mosques of Isfahan such as the Imam Mosque, Sheikh Lotfollah, and the Jame mosque were selected as samples. The process of analysis of the qualitative data was done by the NVivo software. As we know, mosques, while enjoying the full growth and excellence of the arts of their time, are counted among the outstanding architectural works of every time. Mosques are always mentioned as the place of art of the Islamic era (Bemanian, 2001). In this study, by the selection of Isfahan mosques and the historical period of Iranian architecture as a case study, we have never intended to study the history and the geography of Iranian architecture. A comprehensive understanding of the architecture of this period and this temporal-spatial context requires more opportunities and more capable

studies. On the other hand, in order to empathize with the valuable architectures of the past, dealing with them is inevitable. Since the nature and trueness of those architectures are not merely an objective source and matter, which can be studied as an objective substance in the hands of the scientists of the pure sciences and in the 'laboratory', but they have a life and trueness which, as Pazuki believes, deserve to be investigated as 'art researchers', and not merely a 'researcher' (Taghvaei, 2015). The Safavi era is the period when the Shiite intellectual life culminated and the Jafari Shiites attained an independent political and cultural identity. It provided the ground for an enlightened, philosophical, and practical judgment to flourish. Therefore, the mosques of this period can not be ignored among all the historical periods of Iran.

## 2. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The definition of the concept of privacy is very complex and includes different perspectives and dimensions and many theoretical and experimental studies have been done in that direction. In the field of mysticism, privacy and seclusion (recluse) are the important topics of practical mysticism in the stages of the seeker's journey to reach God. In connection with privacy as one of the important topics in the works of the great Sufis, several treatises have been written on the etiquette and secrets of privacy in its acceptance, conditions, manner, and benefits (Esfarayeni, 1980; Najmuddin Razi, 1995; Semnani, 1984). The books of Kashfat al-Mahjoub Hojwiri, Awaref al-Ma'arif Suhrawardi, Mesbah al-Hadaieh Kashfi, and the works of Ibn Arabi and Ala al-Dawlah Semnani are also among the important works in this field. Rumi also considers privacy and seclusion as necessary etiquettes of conduct and in Masnavi he has dealt with it from different angles. The concept of privacy in Islamic culture ('spiritual privacy') is one of the topics that has been less studied by researchers in the field of architecture. And most of the studies are about 'privacy at home'. In this regard, we can study the role of privacy in the architecture of traditional Iranian houses (Bigdeli, 2019). The concept of privacy is realized in the bio-world of the Iranian home (Khamenehzadeh, 2018). Arjomand (2012) also while dealing with the concept of 'privacy' and examining this concept in the field of Islamic culture, emphasized the two relations of 'privacy with oneself' and 'seclusion with God'. Alitajer and Nojoumi (2016) also studied privacy at home and analyzed behavioral patterns in the spatial configuration of traditional and modern houses in the city of Hamadan (Alitajer & Nojoumi, 2016). In relation to privacy in mosques, Seirafian (2017) emphasizes indicators such as

openness and secrecy, vacuity (empty space), the principle of repetition and the combination of dynamism and static, in order to create and strengthen a sense of privacy and secrecy. Razjooyan (2001) has also dealt with the alignment of the axis of movement and the axis of attention in mosques from the entrance to the dome and dome to the altar and measures to avoid the congestion of the mind along this axis. Homayouni (2005) also expressed the effective physical and qualitative natures in inducing a sense of silence in a secluded body such as restraint in light, formal unity, central organization, suspension and timelessness, and empty space (vacuity). Other researchers such as Shooa Ahmadi (2008) and Taghvaei (2007) have also expressed such qualities in matter and form in their research. The purpose of this study is to investigate the concept of privacy in mosques and the effective components in its formation and also to explain the conceptual model of the components of privacy in mosques.

### 3. RESEARCH METHOD

The present study is qualitative in terms of purpose, which uses the adaptive method in the first part and the data foundation method (grounded theory) in the second part. In the adaptive method, mosques such as

Imam Mosque, Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, and the Jame Mosque were selected to carry out and adapt the studies on the concepts of privacy. The grounded theory method is a qualitative research method by which a theory is developed using a set of data. The grounded theory is usually implemented in three ways: systematic method, emerging method, and constructivism method. In this research, a systematic method attributed to Straus and Corbin has been used to analyze the data. The systematic method itself has three main stages: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). The statistical population of this research includes experts, pundits, and university professors in the field of architecture. The method of data collection is documentary study, views, definitions, and in-depth and open interviews. In this study, 35 people were interviewed and after the 21<sup>st</sup> interview, repetition was observed in the received information. And after the 30<sup>th</sup> interviews, the data were completely repetitive and theoretically saturated. but to be sure, it continued until interview 35. In-depth interviews were conducted with questions about the influential components of the concept of privacy in mosques. The NVivo software was used for qualitative data analysis and coding. Finally, a theoretical model of the themes of creating a sense of privacy in the architecture of mosques are presented.

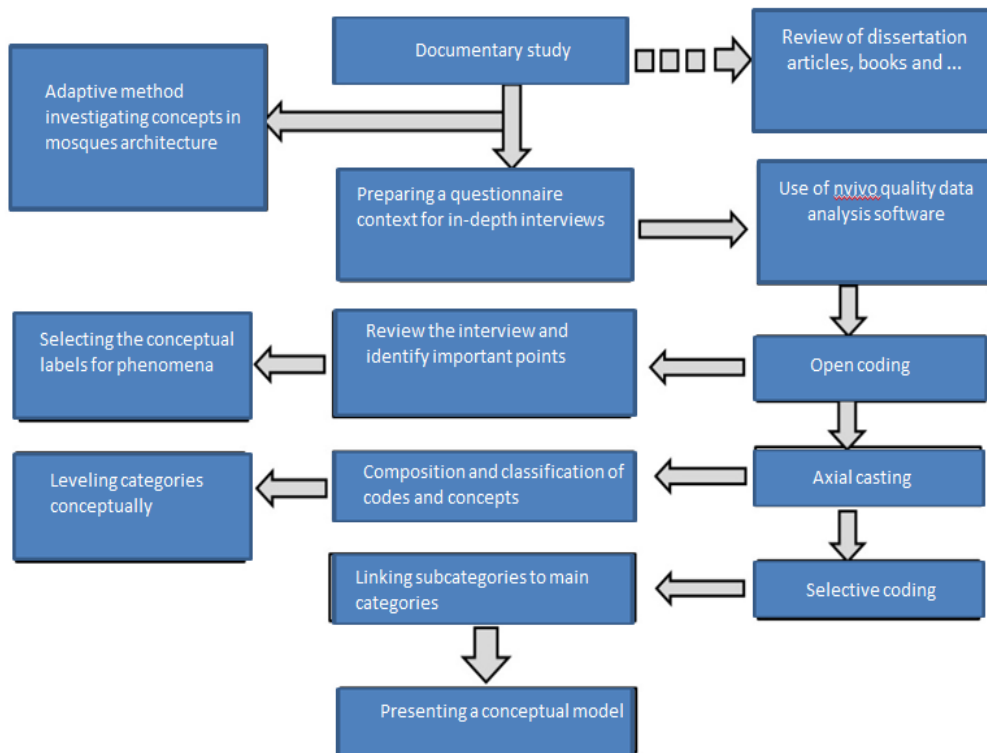


Fig 1. The Research Method Process (Source: Authors)

## 4. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF RESEARCH

### 4.1. The Lexical Definition of the Word 'Privacy'

The literal meaning of privacy in Persian means isolation, loneliness, and solitude, a place empty of others, opposite of Jalut, and Hazrat. In the book *the Terminology of Sufism* by Goharrin, under the entry for privacy we can see that: human privacy means to mention the trueness and engage in the thought, and loneliness, stopping to interact with people. Lexically, privacy means isolation and vacancy, and in the mystical term, it is a secret incident with the Almighty where no one else is allowed, and this is the true meaning of privacy. But the form of privacy is to disconnect from the other (Goharin, 1997). Abdolrazaq Kashani has also given the following definition for privacy: "speaking in secret with Allah, so that nobody can see him and leaving all other than Him" (Kashani, 1997). In other words, lexically, privacy means isolation and vacancy or cutting off from all other than Allah and joining the Almighty in a mountain cave, in a mosque, or in the corner of a house. Idiomatically it means i'tikaaf with worship and austerity in a closed and empty space (Helli, 2009). In the comprehensive cultural *Dictionary of Dekhoda*, *Moin Dictionary*, *Arianpour Amid Dictionary*, *Novin*, and *the Encyclopedia of Britannica*, the synonyms for privacy are: choosing solitude, sitting alone, loneliness, isolation, opposition to the people and perseverance in the remembrance of God and the denial of memories and incidents with the truth if it is not impossible.'

### 4.2. Privacy in Mysticism and Sufism

Sufis' interpretation of privacy is different. Some have equated privacy with seclusion, and some have distinguished between these two. In their point of view, privacy means choosing to keep distance from others and separating the self and everything which calls for him, and a Sufi distances from anything which calls him toward anything except Allah. For many mystics, such as Ala 'al-Dawlah Semnani, privacy is the process of taking distance (from anything except Allah), so as to come closer to God, and taking the Arbaeen as a practical way to disconnect from the material world and connect to the Alawite worlds (Semnani, 1983). Some have considered privacy to be the building of conduct. As stated in *Mersad al-Ibad*: note that the base of the conducting process of the path of the faith and reaching the certainty degrees, is the privacy and

solitude and disconnecting from the people, and primarily, all the prophets and the saints called for privacy so to reach their destination (Najm al-Din Razi, n.d). According to Ibn Arabi, "the principle of privacy is taking distance from anything that occupies the seeker from the truth, and completing privacy means that the mystic world is forever solitary and something other than God in It does not exist" (Ibn Arabi, n.d).

### 4.3. Privacy in its Self-improvement Dimension

In order to distance themselves from the society and its problems as well as to get away from the secular constraints, people choose to live apart from others in order to think and improve their self-esteem. Given that by releasing from secularism and getting away from anything except Allah, they gain something which fulfills the whole trueness and that is God (Nasiri, 2010). In the Islamic culture, in the verses and sayings of Imams there's an emphasis on having some private moments praying to God as a means of self-improvement and bliss both in the individual and social dimension, for example, the story of saint Marian privacy (Maryam, 16-50) and the privacy of the Companions of the cave (Kahf, 16). Actually, in the Islamic culture privacy was made due to the historical conditions influenced by *the Holy Quran* and the Hadiths such as the privacy of the Prophet (PBUH) in the Hara Cave and his emphasis on the I'tekaf ceremony for the Muslims. In mysticism and Sufism, privacy and solitude are the basic pillars during the stages of conduct, and the Morsheds (the leaders in Sufism) have always advised some kind of privacy. The purpose of this stage is self-purification which is presented as a way of acceding of the human being and being blessed. Imam Ali (PBUH) emphasized privacy and solitude: privacy is a good way of praying. It is also said that the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) believes: O, people know that the best and the purest task which helps you gain a premier degree before the God and the best thing in the world (which the sun is shining on) is the praying and the remembrance of God, actually He said: I am the friend of who remembers me, and what is greater than the companionship of God Almighty?' (as cited in Mohiti, 2009). In Surah Al-A'raf, God also commanded Moses to seek privacy and solitude in order to receive *the Torah* and guide his people, to be prepared to receive the divine trust. Rumi has also emphasized inner development and psychic mysticism in his thoughts and teachings. In his point of view, the worst losses and damages a human can face are primarily because of his blindness toward the basic nature and trueness of himself. In this regard, he cites

the hadith of the Prophet of Islam who says ‘the one who knows himself, surely is the one who knows the God’, and notes that the reason for the necessity of the cognition and the inner journey is that the real ego and self of a person mirrors the beauty of trueness and this will not happen until he himself decides to do (Ahmadpour Mobarakeh, 2014). He also argues that the reason the Prophet advised it ( is that ) whoever knew himself shall know the God (Rumi, n.d). So, privacy due to its self-improvement dimension means sitting alone and spending time for a cognition and an inner journey, or in other words, staying away from people for self-purification and self-improvement. In fact, the remembrance of God and ‘spending private time with God’ is one of the basic concepts on the path to human bliss.

#### 4.4. The Dimension of Society Improvement

Usually the sense of privacy is obtained through humans control over his private environment and the sense of authority in social interactions’ (Einifar, 2000). In the Iranian culture and architecture, ‘personal privacy’ and ‘public privacy’ are two different meanings of privacy while they are two aspects equal in nature. It is crucial to bear in mind both of them in order to create the desired privacy. Paying attention to one of them, independent of the other, results in places where people are dropped out of creativity and self-esteem due to a lack of personal privacy (Khamenezhadeh, 2018). This issue makes the balance between privacy and interaction inevitable. In fact, privacy is an important and influential

component in the interaction of people with others, and in order to establish social relations, the privacy of individuals and groups in public places must be considered (Altman, 2006). If the social needs of people are in balance with the feeling of individual independence resulting from privacy, social interactions will be easier (Lang, 2010). In fact, privacy is a process of defining the boundaries between individuals, and through this, the person or group monitors the interacting process with others (Altman, 2004). Vestin believes that ‘privacy fulfills the human need for independence, helps the process of self-evaluation and limits the interactions and protects them’ (Lang, 2010). The concept of privacy and related mechanisms could be applied to design principles that reflect the social interaction and create environments where different degrees of controlling interactions are possible (Namazian & Mehdipour, 2013). Privacy in Sufism is not only in conflict with working and interfering in politics and society, but its a command for self-improvement and a kind of caring for deeds and behaviours, which depends on the situation and conditions of the seeker to take privacy in the public or the Apparent privacy (Fattahi, 2014). On the other hand, however, Rumi considers that one of the undeniable benefits of privacy is the purity of heart: ‘who selected privacy is surely the wise/ Because he is in the privacy of the purities of the heart (Rumi, n.d). but he condemns making distance from other people as a possible result of keeping to be alone, because the benefits of privacy can be understood just by the necessity of talking: (Zarrin Kub, 2004) ‘one who looks for privacy / actually he has learned it from his fellow’ (Rumi, 2010).

**Table 1.** Privacy in the Dimensions of Self-improvement and Society Improvement according to Verses of *Quran* (Source: Authors)

results	Definitions	Quranic verse
Referring to the remembrance of God in appearance and inwardly	(191) Who remember Allāh while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying], ‘Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire.	Al-Imran / 191
Referring to the remembrance of God in appearance and inwardly	(103) And when you have completed the prayer, remember Allāh standing, sitting, or [lying] on your sides. But when you become secure, re-establish [regular] prayer. Indeed, prayer has been decreed upon the believers a decree of specified times.	An- Nissa / 103
Referring to the remembrance of God in appearance and inwardly	1) O you who wraps himself [in clothing][1778] (2) Arise [to pray] the night, except for a little (3) Half of it - or subtract from it a little (4) Or add to it, and recite the Qur’ān with measured recitation.	Al-Muzzammil/ 1-4
Referring to the remembrance of God and separation from creation	(8) And remember the name of your Lord and devote yourself to Him with [complete] devotion.	Al-Muzzammil / 8
Withdrawal from creation and seclusion with God	(15) And peace be upon him the day he was born and the day he dies and the day he is raised alive. (16) And mention, [O Muḥammad], in the Book [the story of] Mary, when she withdrew from her family to a place toward the east.	Maryam / 15-16

results	Definitions	Quranic verse
Withdrawal from creation and seclusion with God	(141) And [recall, O Children of Israel], when We saved you from the people of Pharaoh, [who were] afflicting you with the worst torment - killing your sons and keeping your women alive. And in that was a great trial from your Lord. (142) And We made an appointment with Moses for thirty nights and perfected them by [the addition of] ten; so the term of his Lord was completed as forty nights. And Moses said to his brother Aaron, 'Take my place among my people, do right [by them],[400] and do not follow the way of the corrupters. (143) And when Moses arrived at Our appointed time and his Lord spoke to him, he said, 'My Lord, show me [Yourself] that I may look at You.' [Allāh] said, 'You will not see Me,[401] but look at the mountain; if it should remain in place, then you will see Me.' But when his Lord appeared to the mountain, He rendered it level,[402] and Moses fell unconscious. And when he awoke, he said, 'Exalted are You! I have repented to You, and I am the first [among my people] of the believers.'[403] 144) [Allāh] said, 'O Moses, I have chosen you over the people with My messages and My words [to you]. So take what I have given you and be among the grateful.'	Al-A'raaf / 141-144
Withdrawal from creation and seclusion with God	(16) [The youths said to one another], 'And when you have withdrawn from them and that which they worship other than Allāh, retreat to the cave. Your Lord will spread out for you of His mercy and will prepare for you from your affair facility.'	Al-Kahf / 16
Importance and attention to individual privacy along with the community	(125) And [mention] when We made the House [i.e., the Ka'bah] a place of return for the people and [a place of] security. And take, [O believers], from the standing place of Abraham a place of prayer. And We charged Abraham and Ishmael, [saying], 'Purify My House for those who perform ṭawāf[41] and those who are staying [there] for worship and those who bow and prostrate [in prayer].'	Al-Baqara / 125

## 5. INVESTIGATING THE VALUES AND COMPONENTS AFFECTING THE SENSE OF PRIVACY IN MOSQUES AND EXAMINING ITS INSTANCES IN THE ARCHITECTURE OF ISFAHAN MOSQUES 'IMAM MOSQUE, JAME, AND SHEIKH LOTFOLLAH':

### 5.1. Investigating the Values and Influential Components Affecting the Sense of Self-privacy (Privacy with oneself 'Disconnection from non')

#### 5.1.1. Values 'Prayer, Zikr, Contemplation, Trust, an Inner Journey to Connect to the Truth'

Rumi in his thoughts and teachings has emphasized a lot on the inner journey and spiritual mysticism. According to him, the highest loss and damage to human beings is primarily human ignorance of the basic truth and essence of oneself. In this regard, citing the hadith of the Prophet of Islam, 'He Who knows his self knows his Lord', reminds that the necessity of knowledge and the inner journey is due to the fact that the true self of man is the manifestation of the beauty of truth (God). And this will not be fulfilled unless the man chooses to do (Ahmadpour Mobarakeh, 2014) In this regard, he

says: 'hence the Prophet expounded this (matter), (when he said), Whoever knows himself knows God'. Rumi also emphasizes the inner journey of a man through seclusion with God and says: 'I will not go forth from this seclusion, because I am occupied with inward experiences'. In fact, the only way or at least the most correct way to know God is to know oneself (Kakaei, 2003). Meanwhile, zikr and remembrance of God is a prelude to worship. In this position, the worshiper concentrates his mind due to focusing on worship or repetition in his zikr. He will be set free from both being seen and engaged in the world of pluralities. And like an empty conduit, He prepares to accept the light of truth (God) (Shoaa Ahmadi, 2009). In fact, the basics of the manifestation of remembrance and zikr mean the foundation of how the remembrance of God appears or manifests in the mind and heart of man, which makes his remembrance always alive in the hearts and so to speak the man will be crowned with the remembrance of God (Shakeri, 2016).

Meanwhile, contemplation and thought are necessary to achieve the remembrance of God and the remembrance adds up to the depth of reason and contemplation. As it is stated: All the senses simultaneously must gather together to establish a firm connection with the inner (Ardalan, 2012). Thought is one of the houses of mystical and conduct

journey that pushes forward the seeker to the almighty God (Nariman, 2016). Relying on God and trusting him is also one of the ways to create a sense of peace and privacy while reducing stress and anxiety caused by the problems and pressures of life by creating reliable support and refuge like God, which plays a significant role in introspection. Mystics and the elders define trust as 'having confidence and hope in God. The hope that its source is optimism to God and its pleading causes calmness and reassurances (heart confidences) (ForuzanFar, 1999; Seraj, 2004).

Therefore, prayer and trust in God along with values such as zikr (remembrance of God) and contemplation are necessary to achieve remembrance and are of the best worship. While creating peace and reassurance in the audience are among the influential factors affecting the inner journey to reach the truth and introspection of individuals and they push forward the seeker closer to almighty god and provide him with a self-seclusion with God.

#### 5.1.1.1. Examining the Examples of 'Having Privacy with Oneself' in Mosques: 'Values'

Holding prayers in mosques as a place for interaction of the human soul with the levels of the universe is not only a suitable platform for concentration, peace, and seclusion with God, rather, it is a suitable place for man's inner journey to reach the truth and introspection. In this regard, Rumi emphasizes the seclusion with God while prayer along with worship and heart connection with God says: So that I may go to a solitary place and ask the Knower of mysteries about these matters, (whilst I am engaged) in prayer. During prayer I am accustomed to turn thus (to God): (that is) the meaning of (the words of the Tradition), the delight I feel in the ritual prayer. The window of my soul is opened, and from the purity (of the Unseen World) the Book of God comes (to me) without an intermediary (Rumi, n.d).

Mosques as one of the important subjects of architectural art have been formed due to the presence of the heart while praying and the evolution (journey) of the human soul from materiality to spirituality. Meanwhile, an atmosphere can lead to the manifestation of the remembrance of God, which stimulates thought and contemplation in people and makes them think reasonably. In fact, the appropriate space and geometry for the journey or meditation in the soul, which leads to the engagement of intellect and the soul, introduces a fixed point of view and a static human body, which is achieved through concentration, stillness, and journey from appearance

(outward) to the inner (inward) and from plurality to unity (Noghrehkar, 2008). In this regard, we can refer to the geometry of the designs used in mosques such as the sun-shaped motif (Shamseh). The focus and stillness created by sun-shaped motif (Shamseh), not only introduces a fixed point of view and a static human body. Rather, while pointing to the unity and oneness of God, it plays an important role in stimulating the thought and seclusion of individuals. Meanwhile, covering the building surfaces with a layer of various patterns and colors is also another influential factor affecting people's thoughts (contemplation) and calmness. Color is introduced in *the Holy Quran* as a factor that reveals the diversity of the elements of the universe.

Colors are considered signs and verses that show the plurality in the universe so the one who is conscious, seeing all these different works and manifestations, realizes the existence of Almighty God. In fact, when one is inside a colorful building, the color combination too, creates a harmony with the pure forms and the crystalline order so as to lessen the stress, anxiety, and concerns in minds and replace them with relief, relaxation, and heart reassurance (Navaei & Hajghasemi, 2012). The presence of Quranic inscriptions in mosques is also an effective factor in the manifestation of the remembrance of God. These inscriptions are a sign of the need to adhere to *the Holy Quran* in every movement and every passage. It is a sign of warning to Muslims and a sign of the fusion of Muslim life with the Holy Quran. This is the art of inscription that fills the space with the spirit of the Quran and the divine word, gives materials and space identity and meaning' (Naghizadeh, 1995). Due to the presence of these inscriptions, the building becomes pure and honorable and in 'zikr', 'remembrance of God' and 'worship' it accompanies the devout man and thus the same quality that occurred due to the orientation of the building towards the Kaaba Using the inscription is repeated in another way (Navaei & Hajghasemi, 2012) (Table 2)

#### 5.1.2. Hierarchy, Introversion, Interior and Exterior

All traditional cosmologies are somehow based on the basic fact that truth is hierarchical and the universe is not limited to its physical and material circle (Nasr, 2002). In the traditional view, hierarchy is considered the basis for human communication with the universe (Naghi Zadeh, 2000). Hierarchy in architecture is a manifestation of the attempt to express the concept of transition and the gradual aspect of the process of perception. This principle is known as one of the fundamental principles in

traditional arts and is also consistent with the existential hierarchy that is higher than the related material order (Nasr, 2002). The most prominent place for the emergence of this principle, which is related to the perceptual aspects of space, is the mosque. Hierarchy in mosques, while organizing spaces in its semantic aspect, leads to the formation of a spiritual atmosphere, and in its functional aspect, leads to the placement of various functions and the separation of borders and territories of individuals. The spatial system organizes the access levels from the outermost spaces to the innermost spaces based on the plan of continuity of positive space along with meeting the functional and spatial needs with an emphasis on connection, transfer, and reception. Among these, introversion can be considered the most obvious characteristic of observing hierarchy or the fruition of privacy (Seifan & Mahmoudi, 2008). Introversion seeks to preserve the privacy of the environment in which the physical condition, with the support of thought, contemplation and worship in order to reach its original and find the original peace and tranquility within, has reached a harmonious and transcendent order (Diba, 1999). The spaces in this place are located due to the increasing presence of the heart and the evolution of the human soul from materiality to spirituality.

Meanwhile, the axis is not only the factor generating movement hierarchy, rather, by the physical and spatial organization, while emphasizing the direction of the qibla, can induce different meanings and spatial qualities. These axes are formed in a direction, while responding to the privacy and territory of individuals, provide a favorable atmosphere for calmness, concentration and privacy of the audience. Meanwhile, the entrance also invites the person and warns him to enter an independent space. In fact, the entrance in the mosques, in addition to its mediating role in setting the observer free from the commotion of everyday life and the exterior and transferring him to a private, quiet and secluded place and introspection, provides a place for transition from the material to immaterialism. In transferring the audience inward, it has been tried to double the audience's mental readiness to enter the inner world due to factors such as the shape of the access path, the rotation of the entrance, the design of winding paths while adding spatial levels, pause and contemplation. The enclosed and defined courtyard of the mosque, with its regular geometric shape, also plays the role of transmitting the observer from an irregular and chaotic routine space to a regular and spiritual space. The principle of hierarchy



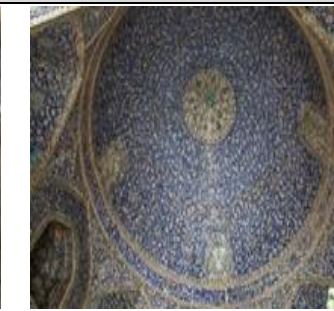



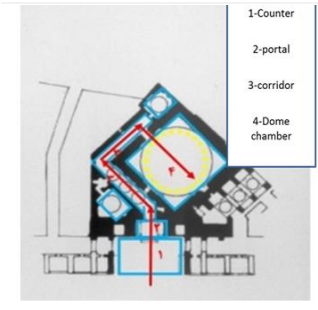
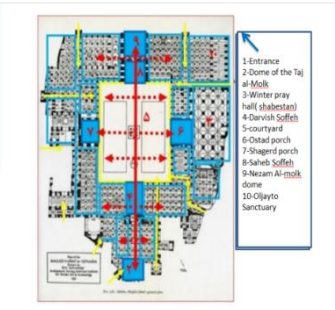
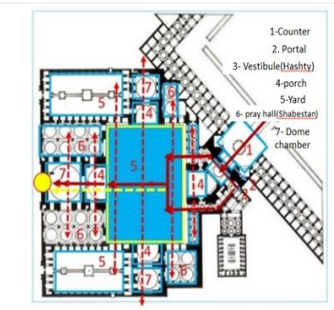
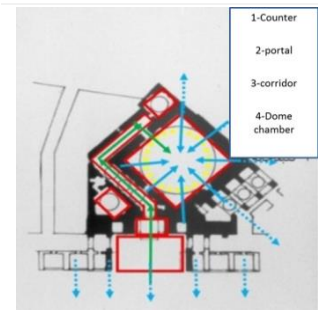
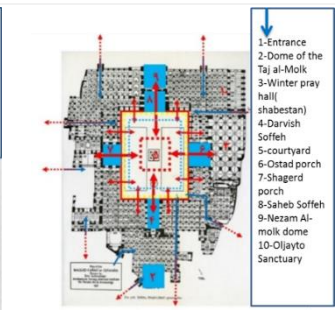
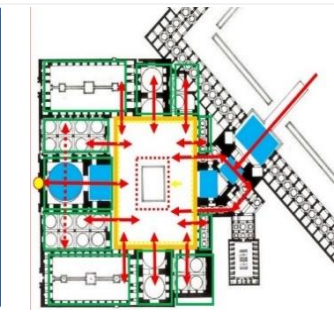
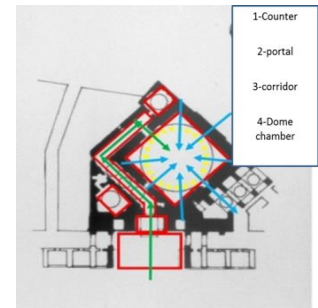
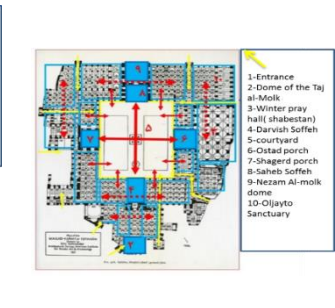
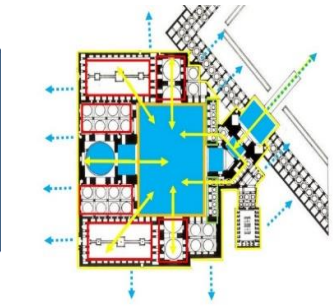
and introversion in the physical organization of mosques, according to the manner of placement of various functions and separation of areas while determining the limitations and boundaries around individuals, leads to the formation of levels of privacy and responsiveness to the privacy and territory of individuals (Table 2).













### *5.1.3. Dynamics, Fluidity, and Pause*

The movement of the observer in mosques is a kind of spiritual conduct. The body of the mosque is trying to gradually turn the outward movement of the observer into an inward movement and sets the observer of the space free from the worries of the outside world and invite him to calmness and the seclusion of the mosque's interior space. Meanwhile, the fluid space in the mosques through features such as 'dynamics, fluidity, and pause' makes the observer ready from the first moment of seeing the mosque to being in the center of space. In other words, from the outermost to the innermost point, Step by Step to move from the outward to the inward and have seclusion with the Lord. Among these, three spatial characteristics of dynamics, fluidity, pause in architecture cause three types of physical, visual, and abstract movements in the observer perceiving the space. These three characteristics are comprised of components such as dynamics 'geometry and axis, and Sequencing'; Fluidity 'including light and shadow, Level difference and Rhythm'; and pause 'consisting of apparent tangible signs and the apparent semantic signs and the semantic signs' (Peter Kurt, 2008; Shajari, 2019). The designer, with the help of movement in space, somehow makes the mind move and leads it to the imagination and seclusion. In fact, connection, transition, and peak in mosque architectural space are formed in three features of pause (stillness) Dynamics (physical movement) fluidity (visual movement). While facilitating the outward movement of observes to the inward movement and creating boundaries and objective and subjective territories for the audience, they play an important role in the privacy and introspection of individuals (Table 2).



**Table 2.** Components Affecting the Sense of Privacy with Oneself in the Architecture of Mosques  
(Source: Authors)

Sheik Lotfollah Mosque	Jame Mosque	Imam Mosque	Description	elements and features
			Stimulating one's thought and contemplation by the concentration and stillness created by the geometry of the shamseh motif	'The principle of unity in plurality
			'Manifestation of remembrance of God in mosques'	Qur'anic inscriptions
			Physical and spatial organization by focusing on the qibla and centrality	Hierarchy
			'The connection between inside and outside and the way an observer is transferred from the outside world to the inner privacy '	Introversion, interior and exterior places
			Organizing and maintaining the interrelationship of components with each other and their relationship with the whole set	Dynamics (Physical movement)/ Passage

Sheik Lotfollah Mosque	Jame Mosque	Imam Mosque	Description	elements and features
			<p>1- Light and dark frequency: Creating visual attraction and passion to cross the darkness and reach the light</p>	<p>Fluidity Visual movement the peak:</p>
				
			<p>2- Rhythm: the rhythm of the arches in the courtyard or the rhythm of the windows below the dome</p>	
			<p>Semantic signs 1- Minaret: Manifestation of divine light and movement towards God 2- Dome as a symbol of the sky and movement towards God</p>	<p>Pause (quiescence)connecting</p>

## 5.2. Influential Components affecting Seclusion with God in Mosques:

### 5.2.1. Companionship of Light and darkness

According to verse 35 of Surah An-Nur, ‘God is the light of the heavens and the earth’, light has found a special place among philosophers and sages. According to Suhrawardi, everything returns to light and god is the absolute light (Sajjadi, 1998). In fact, all objects are known by the radiance of light in the darkness. As this light is meant by the same darkness,

so light is the rank of unity and darkness is the rank of the oneness of God (Burckhardt, 2007). Light in Islamic architecture is a sacred element reminding people of the presence of God. It entered the space in such cautious, economic, and respectful ways and became integrated into its opposite component, darkness, that is manifested spaces in the reconciliation of light and the ‘seclusion of darkness’ (Taghvaei, 2015). The controlled presence of light in the interior of mosques through lattice windows expresses a sense of unity while plurality and plays an important role in the manifestation of divine light and

the sense of privacy of individuals. Concentrated lighting of windows along with the expansion and spread of light in the prayer hall space (shabestan) is also an effective factor in receiving and expanding emotions and the darkness of the corridors while causing the individuals to forget the outside world and pay attention to the inside, doubles the feeling of God's presence. The companionship of light and darkness in the mosques not only evokes an opportunity to pause and separate from the material world and connect with the divine light but also brings a state of stillness, emptiness (vacancy), and a sense of emptiness (vacuity) (Table 3).

### 5.2.2. Center, Empty Space, and Journey from Plurality to Unity

Schultz has introduced the concept of the center as 'the most important factor in determining the space of human existence' (Norberg-Schulz, 2000). Christopher Alexander also believes that the most central part of any phenomenon evokes a sense of closeness to the human self. In fact, 'God's image' is at the center of all living phenomena (Alexander, 2002). Also, designing the center in the mosques, while polarizing the area around the center, by stopping the time through the moments of the presence somewhere in the center, evokes the sense of privacy and quietness and by passing the time and manifestation of 'the eternal moment' takes the human to the 'timeless' world of imaginary (Taghvaei, 2015). The design of the center in spiritual spaces such as mosques, while giving meaning to the surrounding space and the manifestation of the divine essence, has a significant role in the sense of stillness and seclusion of human beings. In this regard, Nasr (2010) considers the symbol of the dome, the sky, and its center as the axis of the world, which connects all the higher levels of existence with a single essence. In fact, empty space (vacuity) is the secret of excellence of the Almighty God and his presence in all things (Nasr, 2010). According to Burkhardt, the lack of material objects in Islamic art has also prevented the distance between the unseen presence of God and man and caused the creation of an empty space to eliminate all the temptations and anxieties of the material world to replace a system of balance, purity and tranquility (Burkhardt, 1991). This occult tranquility in emptiness or 'Sakineh' is the presence of God in the center of existence that leads to unity with the essence and a mind with complete simplicity and empty of any thought can find it by deep observation (Guenon, 2000). Vacuuming the center of space and magnifying the central space while inviting the man into space, by directing the individual's views from the center to all around, reminds individuals of the almighty God.

A space without direction and free from any positive form that empties the man of himself by inducing the concept of nothingness and while providing the concentration and stillness plays an important role in the privacy and tranquility of people. Meanwhile, the decorative elements around the central axis, while emphasizing the celestial axis and pointing to the oneness of God, play an important role in the privacy of individuals. Emphasis on this direction, which is considered to mean pointing to the sky and the superior world, provides a special quality to the building and gives it honor and sanctity. Sun-shaped motifs (shamseh) are not only a symbol of life, movement, and radiance, but have always been associated with light rays. While illuminating the space, they emphasize the sanctity of the higher world and divine light. These motifs, while drawing the view from the bottom to the top and to the pinnacle of the dome, emphasize the vertical axis of the universe and they are associated with a sense of emptiness and plurality in unity. They, as a symbol of the movement of all components of the universe towards perfection, while emphasizing the divine light with expansion and openness in human beings, play an important role in the seclusion and concentration of individuals (Table 3).

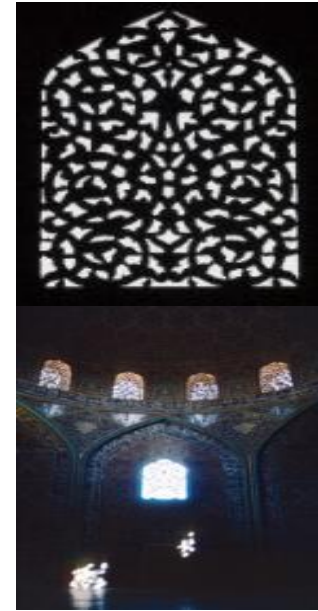




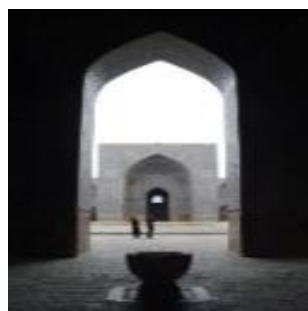
### 5.3. Privacy while being in community: 'Effective communication, sympathy, verbal communication and non-verbal communication':










Privacy while being in the community which is also called seclusion in public or privacy in the community is a state of seclusion with God and the result of one's social interaction. The man in the material world is inevitably interacting. So man must be in front of his worldly dimension and immersed in his divine dimension, in this type of privacy while being in the community or privacy in the community, the man is able to be in seclusion with his inner right while interacting with a group, and does not need physical seclusion (Nasiri, 2010). A sense of seclusion in collective spiritual spaces such as mosques is one of the most important spiritual needs of the man to communicate with God and introspect within. This place responds to the mental seclusion of individuals and the inner revelation and intuition of human beings through physical elements and in the individual social context based on cultural values, while balancing between seclusion and social interaction. People in this place, while holding congregational prayers and having seclusion with God, improve social relations through a set of desirable social actions and unity and sympathy. Every society is a set of desirable social actions 'social skills' that play an important role in the individual's adaptation to society and social

interaction. Meanwhile, human beings, as natural creatures, in order to survive and meet their needs in the society, are obliged to inevitably use social life skills such as effective communication and empathy. Some have called effective communication skills compatibility with others and sympathy skills the ability to express feelings and emotions and resolve conflicts with others. Sympathy helps one to understand and respect the circumstances of others. The ability to communicate effectively also helps the individual to express his message verbally and non-verbally and in accordance with the culture, society, and situation (Fathollahi & Sahraei, 2013). Thus, relationships between individuals in mosques through verbal communication such as speech interactions and non-verbal communication such as making eye

contact through emotional and affectionate gaze, being kind to others as well as listening to the pain and heart of others, lead to the formation of supportive and hospitable behaviors towards other human beings, followed by sympathy and improvement of social interaction. In this regard, we can point to the effective role of the courtyard and prayer hall (shabestan) in mosques to maintain privacy while being in communication. An empty and balanced space that, while responding to the prayers and maintaining the privacy of the worshipers, responds to their interaction and sympathy with others. In this place, individuals while interacting with others and being in public, could be in front and be in seclusion with their inner right in the divine dimension.

**Table 3.** Components Affecting the Sense of Seclusion with God ‘Manifestation of God's presence’ in the Architecture of Mosques (Source: Authors)

Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque	Jame Mosque	Imam Mosque	Influential components in ‘Manifestation of the presence of God’ in mosques
			<p>The companionship of light and darkness: Controlled presence of light in space through ‘lattice windows’ Journey from plurality to unity</p>
			<p>The companionship of light and darkness: prehension , Expansion and a sense of emptiness</p>

Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque	Jame Mosque	Imam Mosque	Influential components in 'Manifestation of the presence of God' in mosques
			
			The companionship of light and darkness 'attraction and appetite of the wisdom to pass the darkness toward the Light'
			Center: - Pointing to the center of the world and the higher levels of existence - The most important factor in determining the space of human existence - Unity and manifestation of the divine essence Empty space: Inviting human to enter and referring to the sense of divine presence The journey from plurality to unity: Manifestation of the Divine Essence

## 6. RESEARCH FINDINGS

As explained, we used interviews and documentary studies to collect the data, and Grounded theory was used to present a conceptual model. In the Grounded method, data are coded systematically. The steps of coding in grounded theory are open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Based on interviews with 35 professors of architecture in the research process, 167 initial (open) codes were extracted. After multiple revisions and integration of codes based on similarity in several stages, finally, 17 initial codes, 5 axial codes, and 3 selective codes were extracted for the concept of creating privacy in mosque architecture. Various clustering algorithms for grouping similar cells were used to represent the relationships between categories of NVivo software.

### 6.1. analyzing the qualitative data in the first step (investigating the privacy components in the Islamic culture)

#### 6.1.1. fist step: open coding

This step is done immediately after the first interview. In other words, after each interview, the researcher begins to find the concepts and select the appropriate labels for them, then combine the related concepts. The coding steps are 1) Analysis and coding, 2) Discovering the categories, and 3) Describing the categories due to their characteristics (Auerback, 2017).

In general, in the open coding step, the intention was to turn the data and phenomena into concepts (Flick, 2021). After the process of naming, the dimensions of the concepts must be determined. Each category has

general characteristics which are important to know and show the full range of dimensions of a category. Table 4 shows the open coding and the number of referrals obtained from the interview.

**Table 4.** The Open Coding and the Number of Referrals Obtained from the Interview

The first open codes	number of referrals
Considering the inner journey to find the trueness	14
Praying and invocation (prayers)	33
Thinking	34
Remembrance	23
Reliance	12
Inside and out	13
hierarchy	18
Confidentiality (introversion)	28
Dynamic features, undetermination and hesitation	19
Light and darkness	25
Center	15
Vacuity and empty space	14
A journey from plurality toward the unity	25
Effective relation	12
Empathy	12
Verbal communication	27
Non-verbal communication	19

6.1.2. Second Step: axial coding:

In the second stage of coding, the researcher selects one of the categories as the central category and

**Table 5.** The Axial and Selective Coding of the Obtained Data from the Interview (Extracting the Theme and the Sub-themes)

Selective coding (Interview IN1)	Axial coding (Interview IN1) (Themes)	The constructive components of axial code (Sub-themes)
seclusion with yourself Discontinuation from non	Introspection and self-identity	Paying attention to the inner journey of man to connect to the truth Prayer
	Peace(Tranquility)	Thought( contemplation) zikr Trust
	determining boundary and territory Determining the limits and boundaries around the individual	Interior and exterior Hierarchy Confidentiality (introversion) Dynamics, fluidity and pause Light and darkness
	Theology (manifestation of the presence of God)	Center vacuity and empty space Journey from plurality to unity effective communication
Privacy while being in the community	Social interaction	Sympathy Verbal communication non-verbal communication

investigates it as the central phenomenon in the focus of the process and determines its relationship with the other categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). The purpose of this step is to establish a relationship between the categories produced in the open coding step. In the second step of this research, 7 components have been obtained to create privacy based on the data obtained from the study of upstream documents and in-depth interviews and their categorization.

6.1.3. Third Step: selective (elective) coding:

It systematically relates the central category to other categories and presents those relations within the framework of a narrative and modifies the categories which need further improvement and development. At this stage, the researcher, considering her understanding of the literature about the studied phenomenon, either presents the framework of the paradigm model in a narrative way or breaks down the paradigm model and shows the final theory in a graphic way (Danaei-Farda, 2015). Selective coding is the starting point for the analysis. There is an adequate description of the themes involved in creating privacy and re-evaluation of the axes raises the questions that: what themes should be considered when creating privacy? And finally, what are the main categories and concepts? Table 5 shows the extracted themes (axial coding) and sub-themes related to the main themes or selective coding.

Finally, due to the capability of the NVivo software in modeling, 'data re-evaluating' was performed. And a conceptual model of the themes and the sub-themes involved in creating privacy was drawn (Figures 2 to 4).

On the other hand, Figure 5 shows how to create privacy by demonstrating the relationships between the themes and the sub-themes that lead to privacy in the architecture of the mosques.

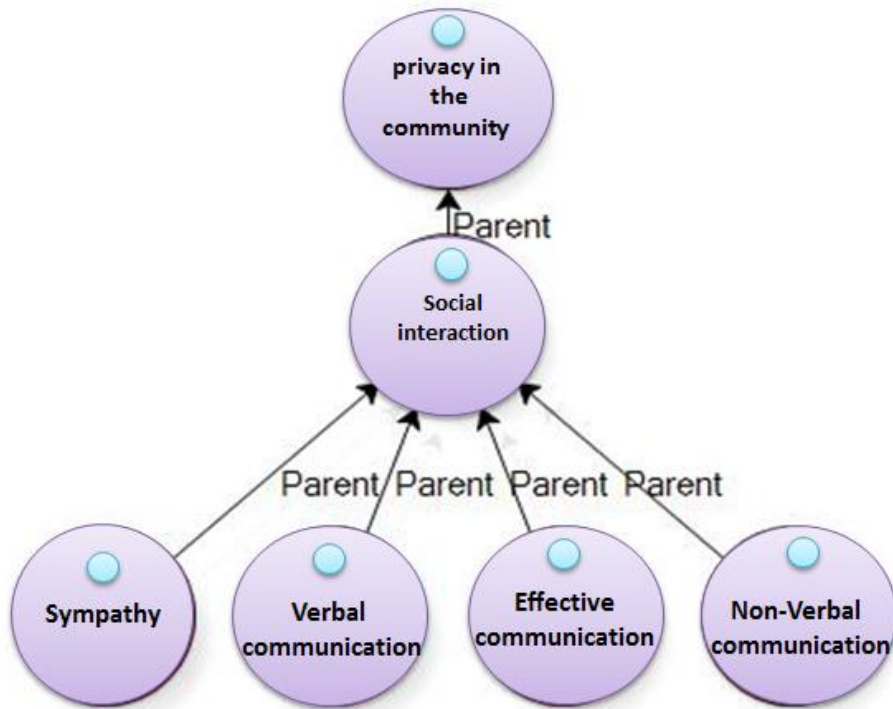


Fig 2. The Theme and Sub-theme of 'Privacy while being in the Community' (Source: Authors)

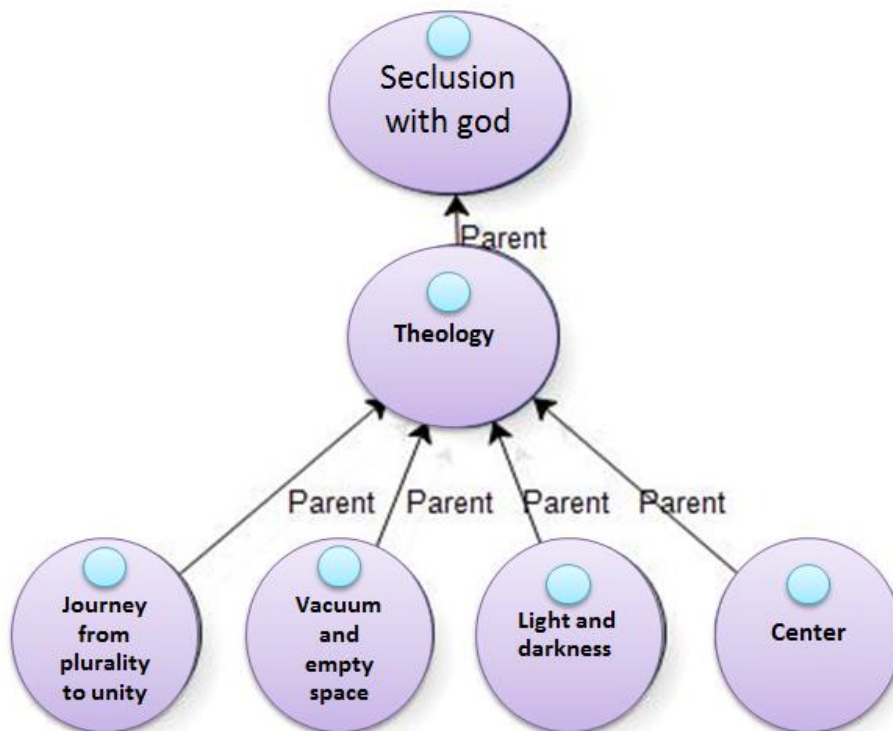


Fig 3. The Theme and Sub-theme of 'Seclusion with God' (Source: Authors)

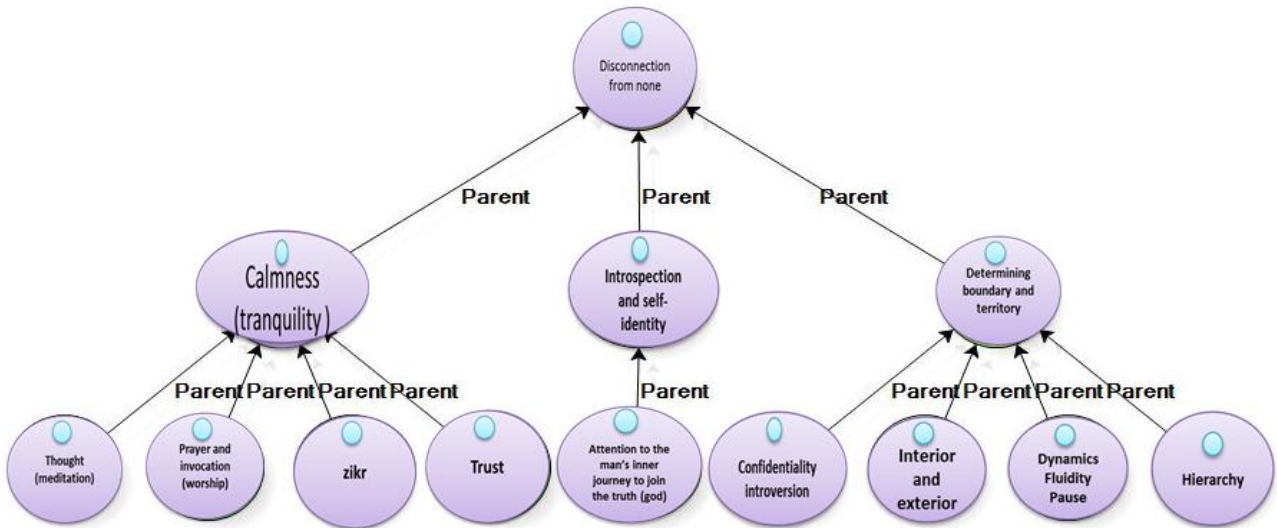


Fig 4. Theme and Sub-theme 'Disconnection from Non' (Source: Authors)

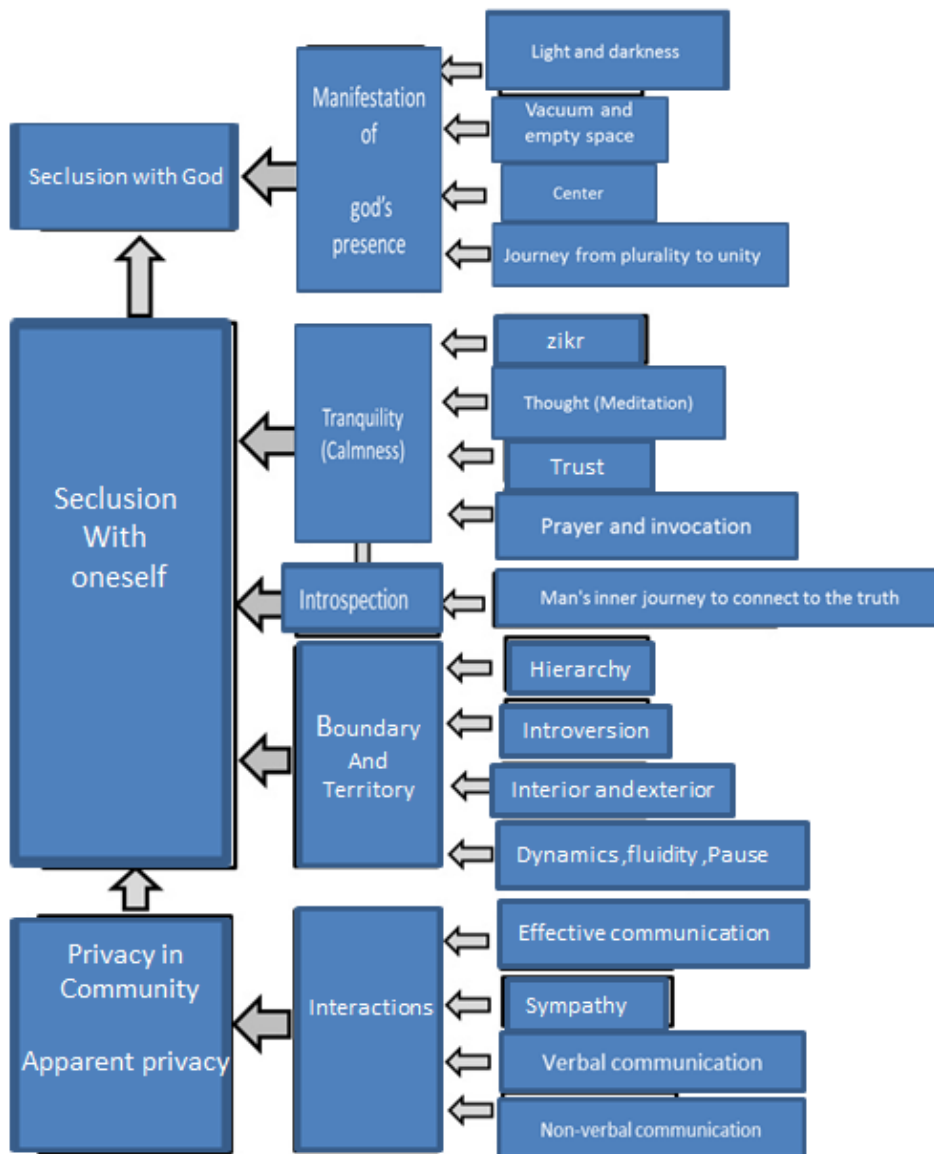


Fig 5. The Conceptual Model of Making the Sense of Privacy in Mosques (Source: Authors)



## 6. CONCLUSION

Based on the conceptual model obtained from the research findings, three types of privacy 'privacy while being in the community', 'disconnection from non', and 'seclusion with God' can be discussed. Privacy in Islamic culture, whether in the personal or social sphere, according to the relationship of the individual with 'self', 'God', and 'public' can be expressed in the form of 'privacy with self', 'seclusion with God', and 'privacy while being in the community'. All these situations can be associated with each other according to human conditions. 'Privacy while being in the community', which is also called seclusion in public or 'apparent privacy' is a state of seclusion with God and the result of one's social interaction. According to the research findings, components such as effective communication, sympathy, verbal and non-verbal communication are among the constructive components of social interaction that play an influential role in the emergence of privacy in the community. By investigating the mosques, we found that the courtyard and the nave (the Harem) as an empty and balanced space, along with being compatible with the prayers and the privacy of the worshipers meets the needs of the interaction and the empathy of people with each other. While being present at a public 'privacy' in the divine dimensions, they benefit the privacy with their inner trueness.

The second approach in the present study is 'seclusion with oneself' or 'disconnection from non'. In Islamic culture, 'seclusion with oneself' is the same as introspection and remembrance of God, in other words, disconnecting from none and joining the Almighty god. According to the view of mystics, 'seclusion with oneself' and self-knowledge are of the ways to know God. Therefore, contrary to the view of western theorists, the definition of seclusion based on 'loneliness and isolation', privacy with oneself is accompanied by the condition 'Seclusion with God'. According to the research findings, not only values such as attention to the inner journey of the man to connect to the truth, prayer, contemplation (thought), zikr and trust have an effective role in seclusion with God, introspection, and knowledge of God. Rather, components such as introversion, interior and exterior, hierarchy and dynamics, fluidity and pause, by creating mental and physical privacy and domains, while determining the limitations and boundaries around the individual, lead to the formation of seclusion with oneself and disconnection from non. The final approach in research also presents seclusion with God. The structure of theology is several concepts such as light and darkness, center, vacuity

and empty space, and the journey from plurality to unity, which play an influential role in seclusion with God.

According to the research findings, we also found that norms such as paying attention to one's inner journey to meet the trueness, prayer, thinking, remembrance and reliance along with elements such as the geometry of the motifs used in 'Shamseh' mosques, the presence of Quranic inscriptions, the covering of the surfaces with a layer of various paintings and colors are influential factors in self-esteem and privacy with God. On the other hand, while defining the limitations and borders of the environment around them, the components of the introversion, inside and outside, the hierarchy, the fluidity and hesitation result in privacy with self and distancing from other by creating privacy and a mental and physical realm. In fact, the spacial system of the mosques based on the continuity of a positive environment, as well as fulfilling the pragmatic and special needs focusing on the connection, transfer and achievement, organize the path from the outer spaces toward the most inner parts. In the meantime, introversion is considered to be the most obvious characteristic of observing the hierarchy or the result of secrecy, and the spaces in this place are located due to increasing the divine presence and the evolution of the human soul from materiality to intellectuality and spirituality. In fact, the physical and spatial organization of the mosques is due to the focusing point of the qibla and centrality, the connection between inside and outside, and the way the whole of the inner world, fluidity and visual movement created by the alternation of light and darkness, the rhythm of the arches in the courtyard or the rhythm of the windows in the dome, and the semantic signs such as the minaret and the dome. These are the manifestation of divine light and the symbol of the sky and the movement towards God, which are among the influential elements in the formation of the components of privacy in the mosques. The attraction and expansion as well as feeling of emptiness due to the companionship of the light and darkness in the space, emptying the center of space and magnifying the central space while inviting human to enter the place makes the person remind of God by looking around. A space without any angles and free from any positive form which, by inducing the concept of nothingness, makes the person not to think of himself and plays an important role in the privacy and tranquility of people as well as inducing the concept of concentration and hesitation. The decorating factors around a central pivot as well as focusing on the celestial axis and pointing out the oneness of God, play a significant role in the privacy of people.

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