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Applying a Systems-Thinking Approach to Developing Resiliency in Muslim Nonprofit Organizations

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APPLYING A SYSTEMS-THINKING APPROACH TO DEVELOPING RESILIENCY IN MUSLIM NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

by

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ABSTRACT

Nonprofit organizations play a major role in maintaining balance in societies. They provide support and services to communities that governments cannot. They create an environment in communities wherein social problems can be more easily addressed. Nonprofit organizations also contribute billions of dollars to the economy and create thousands of jobs in communities. Muslim nonprofit organizations are among the faith-based nonprofit organizations contributing and playing an important role in American society as well. However, due to the world becoming more turbulent in highly volatile and uncertain times, many Muslims nonprofit organizations are unable to bounce back from crises and cope successfully with unexpected adversities such as Islamophobia, pandemics, and interpersonal conflicts. Often, these organizations lack the insights of systems thinking to view problems as complex components requiring a holistic approach. This study explores the application of systems thinking within Muslim nonprofit organizations to conceptualize systems thinking learning model that establishes organizational improvement and resilience. By learning systems thinking, Muslim nonprofit organizations can continuously respond to challenges while providing valuable services to societies.

Keywords: Muslim nonprofit organizations, Systems Thinking, Systems thinking learning model, organizational improvement, and resilience.

DEDICATION

First, I dedicate this dissertation to my God the Almighty, my creator, my source of all blessing, graces, and bounties. He has been the source of my strength throughout this program and life.

To my dearest wife, Zineb Ouhnayen, who has been a constant source of support, encouragement, and inspiration during the challenges of completing the program, raising three beautiful daughters, and working full time.

To my mother and father, who have always loved me unconditionally.

To my beloved daughters Aya, Leena, and Emaan whom I love from all my heart and want to be a role model for them.

To my all teachers who helped and guided me to successfully complete this doctorate program.

Last, I dedicate this dissertation to all family members and friends who have encouraged me throughout the program.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

> "Every person in the United States benefits from the work of nonprofits in one way or another, whether they realize it or not" (National Council of Nonprofits, 2020).

Camper (2016) noted that nonprofit organizations play a vital role in building healthy communities; this includes supporting communities in society and solving social problems. When governments are not able to provide social services, nonprofit organizations are formed to fill the gap. They grow from a combination of voluntary, market, and government failures (Chambre, 1995). As the oil tycoon and later philanthropist, John D. Rockefeller (1839-1937) stated, "the voluntary sector is the seedbed for organized efforts to deal with social issues" (cited in Hopkins, 2017, p. 7). Differentiated from the public sector (first sector) and corporate sector (second sector), nonprofit organizations are becoming known as the "third sector" and are referred to as the third, voluntary, or nonprofit sectors (Salamon & Anheier, 1997).

Defining Nonprofit Sectors

All legitimate nonprofit sectors operate under nonprofit legal status. This means revenues that exceed expenses must be committed to the organization's purposes instead of being distributed to organization management or benefactors. However, not all of these organizations are operated at the same size and scope. Some nonprofit organizations are labeled non-governmental organizations (NGOs). They have a broader size and scope and an international footprint. Werker and Ahmed (2007) stated NGOs "are the subset of the broader nonprofit sector that engage specifically in international development" (p.74). NGOs work in areas where governments may also be involved, but they function independently from governments. They may receive funding from government agencies to combat widespread famine, disease control, or

large-scale disaster, but nobody from those government agencies is directly involved in their decision or actions (Weedmark, 2018).

On the other hand, nonprofit organizations (NPOs) can be of any size and are founded by individuals or small groups to make improvements within their local community (Fritz, 2019). Often, NPOs operate on a limited scale with help of volunteers and staff, but to fuel their mission, they need partnership with the community (Jepson, n.d.).

This dissertation focuses on nonprofit organizations (NPOs) and specifically Muslim nonprofit organizations (MNPOs) relied on by their communities for funds and other support. The Muslim community, which is part of American society, relies heavily on American MNPOs to prepare them to contribute to society. As Denhardt and Denhardt (2000) argued that building a healthy and active community depends on mediating institutions to offer experiences that will better prepare citizens for achievements in the larger political system. MNPOs play the role of mediating institutions. They provide various religious services to the community, build communities through face-to-face interactions, and build networks and bridges within their own and the wider community (Ilham, 2007). The Muslim American Public Opinion Survey (MAPOS) reported:

> Despite the popularized idea that Muslims are radicalized around the country in mosques, we find that mosques help Muslims integrate into US society, and in fact have a very productive role in bridging the differences between Muslims and non-Muslims in the United States. This is a finding in social science that is consistent with decades of research on other religious groups such as Jews, Protestants and Catholics where church attendance and religiosity has been proven to result in higher civic engagement and support for core values of the American political system. Likewise, mosques are institutions that should be encouraged to function as centers of social and political integration in America. (Dana & Barreto, 2011, para.7)

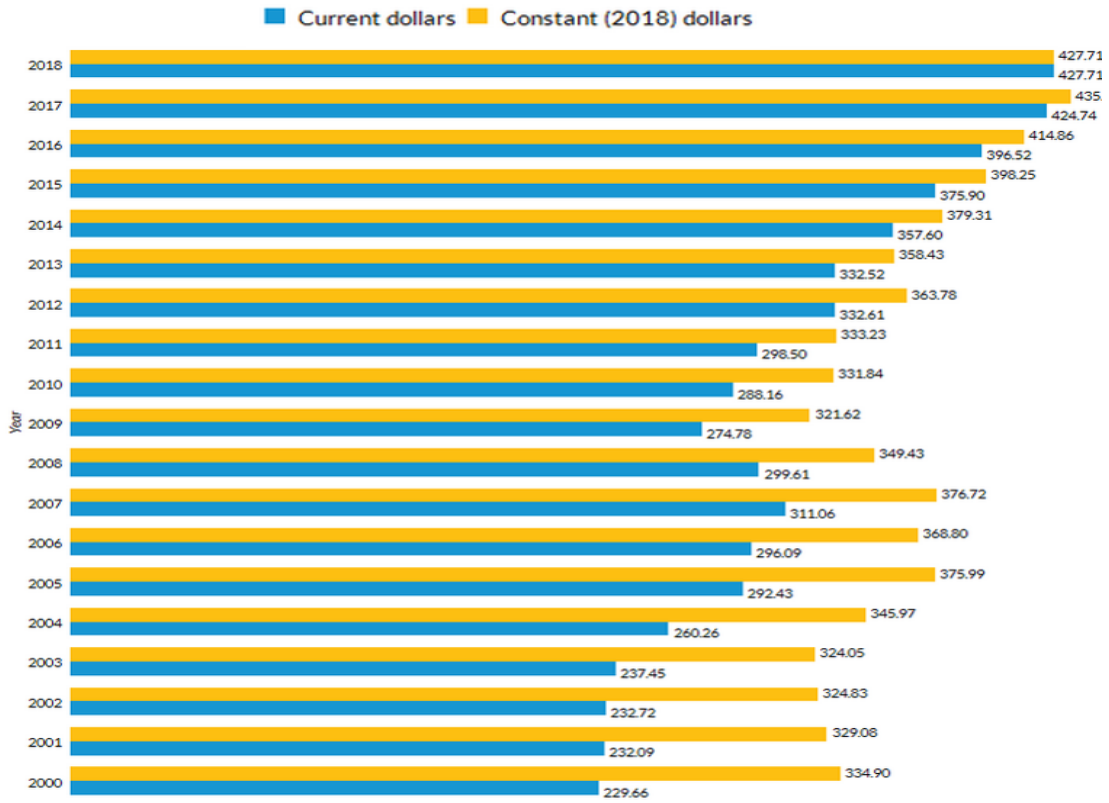
Khan and Siddiqui (2018) described how America's Muslim communities are benefiting from nonprofit status in the United States and that MNPOs will find significant opportunities to

sustain beliefs into the next generation through service and active engagement and to advocate for recognition.

The nonprofit sector in general, including MNPOs, not only have a positive impact on communities and societies, but they also contribute to the US economy. They contributed an estimated $1.047.2 trillion to the US economy in 2016, comprising 5.6% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP). In 2018, total private giving from individuals, foundations, and businesses totaled $427.71 billion (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Private Charitable Contributions 2000-2018



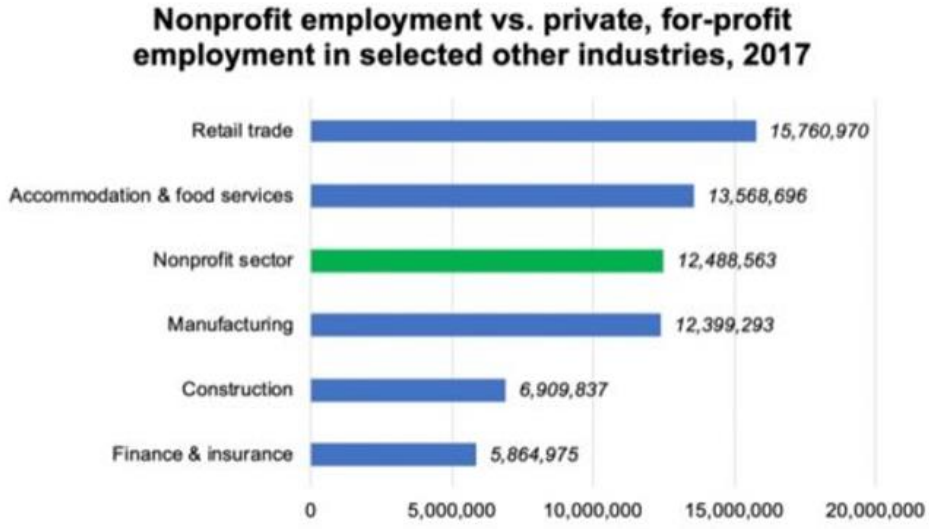
Private Charitable contributions 2000-2018
Source: Giving USA Foundation (2019)

An estimated 25.1% of US adults volunteered with NPOs in 2017, contributing an estimated 8.8 billion hours. The value of these hours is approximately $195.0 billion. From 2006 to 2016, the number of nonprofit organizations registered with the IRS rose from 1.48 million to

1.54 million, an increase of 4.5 percent. (Urban Institute -Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2020). A study released in 2017 revealed that nonprofits are the third largest workforce in the US behind only retail trade and accommodation and food services. The nonprofit sector employs 12.5 million people (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data - updated by the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society, 2017) (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Nonprofit employment vs. private, for-profit employment in selected other industries, 2017



U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data - updated by the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society, 2017

Even though the nonprofit sector, including MNPOs, provide many benefits to communities, society, and the economy, unfortunately, not all of them survive to accomplish their missions. As of 2019, there were over 1.5 million tax-exempt nonprofits in the US (Ebarb, 2019). Approximately 30% of nonprofits are expected to fail within 10 years of their founding (National Center on Charitable Statistics, year). According to *Forbes Magazine*, over half of all nonprofits cease to exist within a few years of their inception due to leadership issues, lack of a strategic plan, and other problems (Ebarb, 2019).

Defining Problems of Muslim Nonprofit Organizations (MNPO)

Complex/Wicked Problems

Like other nonprofit organizations, many MNPOs cease to operate not because they complete their missions, but, I argue, because they fail to cope with complex challenges they face. In recent years, MNPOs have been dealing with more complex challenges or so-called wicked problems, than ever before. These problems are wicked "not in the sense of being 'evil' but in that they are seriously devious and can have (nasty) unintended consequences for the planners who try to do something about them" (Ritchey, 2013, p. 3). They are wicked problems because they are "ill-defined, ambiguous and associated with strong moral, political and professional issues" (Ritchey, 2013, p. 3). Rittel and Webber (1973) defined ten important characteristics that describe a wicked problem (Table 1).

Table 1

Characteristics of Complex/Wicked Problems.

1. There is no definitive formula for a wicked problem.
2. Wicked problems have no stopping rule—there's no way to know whether your solution is final.
3. Solutions to wicked problems are not true or false; they can only be good or bad.
4. You cannot immediately test a solution to a wicked problem.
5. Every solution to a wicked problem is a "one-shot operation" because there is no opportunity to learn by trial and error—every attempt counts significantly.
6. Wicked problems do not have a set number of potential solutions.
7. Every wicked problem is essentially unique.
8. Every wicked problem can be considered a symptom of another problem.
9. There is always more than one explanation for a wicked problem because the explanations vary greatly depending on the individual's perspective.
10. The planner/designer has no right to be wrong and must be fully responsible for their actions.

I argue that the interconnectedness of external and internal problems faced by MNOPs create additional wicked problems that display all the characteristics of the wicked problems detailed by Rittel and Webber (1973). External influences include Islamophobia (trigged by

terrorist attacks by Muslim criminals), the way media report these terrorist events, and the COVID 19 pandemic. Internal problems include mindsets of Muslims (members and stakeholders) and interpersonal conflicts are some examples of complex/wicked problems that MNPOs struggle with. These problems are connected to each other, influence each other, and create additional problems. Trying to solve them separately without considering their interconnectedness, and without using appropriate tools and methods may create unintended consequences. If leaders of MNPOs do not recognize, formulate, and address these wicked problems properly, their organizations will lose credibility, trustworthiness, and agility to the point that, eventually, they will lose resiliency to survive. Despite the emergence of institutions that support and sustain Muslim nonprofit organizations, these problems still cause major challenges requiring innovative and radical solutions. According to Starr (2020) the preferred mindset and course of action to address complex problems (wicked problems) is adopting the systems thinking approach.

Islamophobia as Wicked Problem

Many studies show that, after 9/11, Muslims have been the subject of increased Islamophobia in the United States (Jalalzai, 2011). Islamophobia was defined by Awan and Zembi (2020) as

> A fear, prejudice and hatred of Muslims or non-Muslim individuals that leads to provocation, hostility and intolerance by means of threatening, harassment, abuse, incitement and intimidation of Muslims and non-Muslims, both in the online and offline world. Motivated by institutional, ideological, political and religious hostility that transcends into structural and cultural racism which targets the symbols and markers of a being a Muslim. (p. 2).

According to Warsi (2020), a new report from the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding indicates that Muslims are more likely than any other faith groups to experience religious discrimination in both institutional and interpersonal settings.

Islamophobia is considered by many researchers to be a wicked or complex problem. For example, Anderson, Shahbaz and Abid (2021) stated that "Islamophobia is a complex and contested phenomenon that defies easy classification within the boundaries of terminology which would normally be employed to describe hostility or prejudice based on, for example, race or religion" (p.183). Love (2017) argues that Islamophobia is a "complex problem that involves a wide range of social issues . . . religion, gender, class, sexuality – all these and more play crucial roles in the reproduction of Islamophobia" (p.18). The complex interdependencies of Islamophobia and the effort to solve this problem may create other problems. I argue that Islamophobia can be classified as wicked problem that adheres to the characteristics described by Rittel and Webber (1973) and, in addition to that, it can be navigated using systems thinking tools and methods.

Terrorist Attacks as Wicked Problem

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 heavily impacted American Muslim nonprofit organizations. They touched all parts of American life including the American Muslim communities and their organizations which have been heavily impacted. Islamophobia existed before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, but it increased in frequency during the two decades since. The effects of these terrorist attacks on Muslim nonprofit organizations display the characteristics of wicked problems per Rittel and Webber (1973). Denis Fischbacher-Smith (2016) stated

> Given the ambiguity that exists around the exact nature of what constitutes terrorism, its principal characteristics, the difficulties associated with the determination of risk, and the points of intervention that are available to policymakers, then it should not be surprising that it meets many of the main elements of a wicked problem as set out by Rittel and Webber (1973) (p.401).

Since the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001, Muslim nonprofit organizations and American Muslim communities have been heavily impacted. The term 'terrorist' has become

associated with Muslim individuals, communities, and organizations. Many Muslims experienced negative sociocultural, sociopolitical, and socioeconomic consequences. They were targets of stereotypes, more hatred, and they became more segregated from the larger population (Bornstein, 2005; Peek, 2003).

Leaders of Muslims nonprofit organization are not required to solve the problem of terrorism-even though they can play a big role in reducing extremism. However, they are required to minimize the effect of terrorism on Muslim communities and their organizations. To do so, I argue that they need systems thinking tools and methods. Erdogan Celebi (2006) stated that terrorism is a wicked problem and systems thinking is one of the coping strategies to address wicked problems (Smith, 2016; Rittel & Webber, 1973). Without systems thinking tools, solving one particular set of the effect of terrorism on Muslim communities will not address the problem in a holistic way (Smith, 2016; Rittel & Webber, 1973).

Media as Wicked Problem

The effect of Islamophobia, shaped by the media, on Muslim nonprofit organization is a wicked problem. Molly Montgomery (2020), advising the Biden campaign for President, pointed out that

> Disinformation [the spread of false and/or intentionally misleading information] and other online problems [social media] are not conventional problems that can be solved individually with traditional regulation. Instead, they are a web of interrelated "wicked" problems — problems that are highly complex, interdependent, and unstable — and can only be mitigated, managed, or minimized, not solved (p.1).

Since 9/11, the media played a big role in increasing Islamophobia. Muslims in the media are commonly linked with terrorism (Gerges, 2003). Rao and Shenkman (2018) stated that acts of violence committed by Muslims were more likely reported as "terrorist," "terrorism" or "extremism." Rao and Shenkman (2018) also added that acts of violence by Muslim criminals

received twice as much coverage in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* as similar acts by non-Muslims. The way media has been reporting and framing terrorism as a problem primarily from Muslims/Islam and covering domestic terrorism as less threatening (Powell, 2011), has created hatreds, discrimination, and physical assaults towards Muslims. As results "hundreds of Arab and Muslim Americans reported discrimination at work, receiving hate mail, and physical assaults, and their property, mosques, and community centers vandalized or set on fire" (Alsultany, 2013, pp. 161)

Leaders of Muslim nonprofit organizations should be aware that the problem they are facing with media is a wicked problem and can cause other wicked problems. I argue that dealing with the media by using systems thinking will help Muslim nonprofit organization to avoid unintended consequences.

The Pandemic as Wicked Problem

The COVID-19 global pandemic, a once-in-100 years' event, is another wicked problem that affected not only Muslim nonprofit organizations, but also most faith-based nonprofit sector and millions of for-profit businesses worldwide. Pourdehnad, Starr, Koewer, and McCloskey (2020) stated, "the Coronavirus is more than a health problem. It is a "wicked" problem disrupting work, education, travel, politics, financial indicators, and more" (Para. 1)

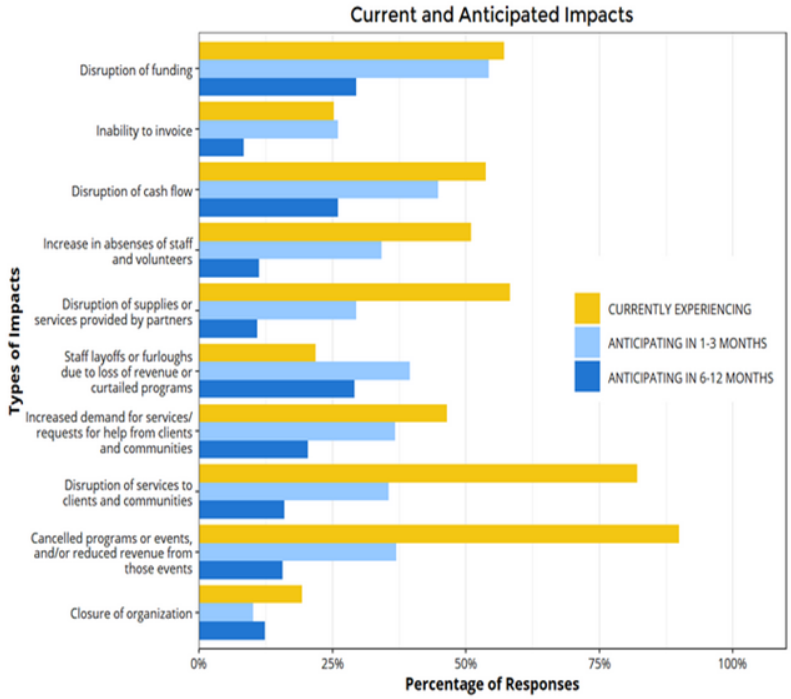
The pandemic has had significant impacts on revenue, services, and people working in the nonprofit sector. As millions of people lost their jobs and worship places were forced to stop meeting face-to-face (shifting where possible to online), faith-based organizations have been forced to cancel their usual activities and fundraising events. Eliza Griswold (2020), writer for *The New Yorker*, reported that an Imam of the Masjidu-Allah Mosque in Philadelphia stated

"We're prepared to take the proper precautions, but we need to stay open. If we don't, I don't know how people who are not being paid are going to survive."

In June 2020, The Mayor's Policy Office of Philadelphia conducted a survey on the impact of COVID-19 to help government officials understand how COVID-19 is impacting nonprofit organizations in Philadelphia and its region. They found that more than 90% were experiencing cancelled programs and events that caused a reduction in revenue. About 65% were experiencing disruption of funding (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Impact of COVID-19 on Nonprofits in the Greater Philadelphia Region by Counties Served (2020)



Source: Mayor's Policy Office "Impact of COVID-19 on Nonprofits in the Greater Philadelphia Region by Counties Served"

The coronavirus pandemic is not only a wicked problem for the health system, but also a wicked problem for all types of organizations, regardless of if they are for-profit or nonprofit. To date, there is no clear way to stop the spread of the virus and there are many explanations and

interpretations about the origin of the COVID-19. This pandemic has produced confusion, conflicts, and failures within large organizations and communities as well (Starr et al., 2015). For that reason, the World Health Organization (WHO), as well as international experts, have strongly advocated and promoted systems thinking to resolve the complexity of the pandemic (Hassan et.al, 2020), Similarly, it is also vital for MNPOs to use the systems thinking to address the effect of the pandemic on their programs and events.

Internal challenges

Mindset as Wicked Problem

The appropriate mindset is needed to deal with wicked problems. I argue that conflicts between different mindsets in a Muslim nonprofit organization is a wicked problem and to ignore them will create additional wicked problems. Kasperowski (2020) argued that the most wicked problem he can think of is the fixed mindset that seems to be driving so much of the fear and polarized thinking that's damaging the world today. According to Carol Dweck (2007), there are two mindsets: growth and fixed. Fixed mindset individuals have negative thinking and usually avoid challenges in life. A growth mindset individuals believes that their intelligence and abilities can be improved by efforts and actions. This mean that if there are two individuals in the same organization, dealing with one problem, but holding two different mindsets, they may solve the problem differently. Starr (2018) added three different kinds of mindsets and suggested that people hold three broad type of mindsets – authority/power, science/evidence, and systems - each of which leads to different methods of thinking and different methods of deciding.

Individuals and organizations with an authority/power mindset believe that the world and the current reality in which they operate is uncontrollable, threatening, and unknowable. They likely choose actions that offer prevention and protection. Individuals and organizations with a

science mindset believe that the world and the current reality in which they operate is complicated but knowable. It can be understood, predicted and (eventually) controlled primarily through human expertise and application of proper scientific methodologies.

Individuals and organizations with systems mindsets believe that the world and the current reality in which they operate consists of interacting systems which may not be understandable. However, both, the world and the current reality, are viewed as systems composed of complex sets of interaction and interdependence among its parts, and every system is part of a larger system.

In general, mindset influences how we think, feel, and behave in any given situation (Cherry, 2021). Having the appropriate mindset in organizational leadership is central because it can affect the way leaders think and behave.

One of the mindsets that exists in Muslim nonprofit organizations is fear and mistrust. Ilhame (2007) revealed that the mindset of Muslim immigrants leading nonprofit organizations, in America displays a relationship based on fear of the government. Their fears are often due to the immigration and naturalization status in their country of origin. Bagby (2018) added that the founding generation of these MNPOs is still in power, and the younger generation, the American-born Muslims, remains outside the circle of leadership. Most of those leaders are unwilling to hand the levers of power to others, because they feel they are best able to preserve the original vision of their respective organizations (Bagby, 2018). The founders, most of the time, lack openness to new ideas, willingness to listen to diverse perspectives, or even use young talent. According to one young professional in Ohio, there is ample smart, skilled talent interested in the Muslim nonprofit sector – the problem, in his view, lies with organizations' inability to absorb this talent (Aamir Rehman, 2004).

With this mindset, many MNPO founders/leaders lost participation by the younger generation for operational support. The kind of power these founders/leaders are exercising is not motivating young generations to support these organizations' goals. Ackoff (1994) has captured the distinction between the two types of powers in his book, *The Democratic Corporation*, as "power over" and "power to." Ackoff (1994) notes,

> Power over is the ability to get people to do things that they do not want to do, that they would not do voluntarily. This type of power is normally based on the ability to reward and punish. Autocratic rulers, dictators, military commanders, and parents of the very young have such power. On the other hand, power to is the ability to get people to do voluntarily what one wants them to do. To exercise this ability is to lead rather than to command. (p. 112).

One of the reasons that younger generations do not cooperate or volunteer is because they are well educated and educated people do not respond well to power over mindset. Ackoff (1994) explains that:

> Shortly before the fundamentalist' revolution in Iran, I was asked by the empress, the shahbanoo, why her husband, the shah, who was one of the most powerful rulers on Earth, could not successfully implement most of the programs he introduced. He was a ruler who had almost complete power over his nationals, but virtually no power to implement his decisions. His impotence was explained by the fact that he had significantly increased the educational level of the Iranian population. Educated people do not respond well to commands, the exercise of power over (p. 112).

Shabahang is a nonprofit organization founded in 1990 in the suburbs of Philadelphia by Iranian immigrants to promote Iranian culture and heritage. By 1998, the founders needed more volunteer workers from their first Iranian American generation for operational support. However, they failed because they did not realize that educated young members could not be inspired through commanding. These young members expected to be more than simple followers. They disagree with the founders in many aspects. For example, they disagree regarding political and religious discussion, which have been banned by the founders. Younger members believed that these discussions would be educational and an exchange of ideas, especially in the American

environment that encourages freedom of speech would be beneficial. On the other hand, the group's founders had reasons for avoiding political and religious matters. One was that they were frightened that Iranian agents in the United States may report them to authorities in Iran. To protect themselves and their families in Iran, they actively avoided discussions among attendees and lecturers related to politics and religion. This conflict contributed to the leadership change. Shabahang's founders eventually agreed to surrender their authority to the younger members and withdrew from leadership. A committee of four people was elected. They were assigned to review the by-laws and amend sections and definitions that needed to be changed in order to make the society more interesting to people of all ideologies, political and social views. This leadership transition led to an increase in the number of members who voiced their objections toward leaders' decisions and decreased the number of members exiting the organization. (Shahpari, 2008)

In Muslim nonprofit organizations, founders/leaders' mindsets are often considered the main root of wicked problems. Ackoff (1999) stated that to change the mindset we must recognize that what we are doing is not working. Leaders of Muslim nonprofit organizations need to know that changing the mindset within their organizations is a complex task. Most change efforts fail because of a lack of understanding of the dynamics of organizational change (Levine, 2017). Therefore, leaders for Muslim nonprofit organizations need to adapt new way of thinking in order to face complex or wicked problems. Systems thinking, however, will help leaders to understand the complexity of dynamics of an organization and to use a suitable method to shift to the right mindset.

Interpersonal Conflict as Wicked Problem

I argue that interpersonal conflict in Muslim nonprofit organizations is a wicked problem. Conflicts are often considered wicked problems, "because they don't have clear solutions due to divergent values of stakeholders and being embedded within wickedly complex environments." (Mason et al., 2018, p.1). Conflicts are generally defined as 'a state of opposition or hostilities' or 'a clashing of opposed principles' (Oxford Concise Dictionary, n.d)**.** The word denotes action rather than a passive reflection on disagreements and differences (Redpath et al., 2015). Hoban (1996) defines a conflict as a disagreement in opinions between people or groups, due to differences in attitudes, beliefs, values, or needs. Thus, conflicts exist whenever there are differences in thinking patterns. Other scholars suggested that organizational identity is the cause of intra-organizational conflicts. According to Glynn (2000), tension and conflict emerge when one identity element is emphasized over another. With dual identities, organizations often struggle (Albert & Whetten, 1985). Muslim nonprofit organizations carry different identities that are not normally expected to go together. As a result, these organizations suffer from conflict to the point that they become dysfunctional.

To avoid a state of dysfunctional due to interpersonal conflicts, Muslim Nonprofit organizations' function must be viewed and addressed as socially complex problems within larger socially complex systems. Boado (2014) stated that a social system is complex because it sets human relationships interacting in many ways. In a social system such as those of MNPOs, interpersonal conflicts exist because there are many human relationships intersections. What makes social systems more complex is that each problem is unique and thus there is no universal formula to resolve such problems (Starr, 2020). Therefore, dealing with interpersonal conflicts in MNPOs requires systems thinking.

Effects of Complex/Wicked Problems on MNPOs

I argue that if leaders of MNPOs do not recognize, formulate, and address the wicked problems properly by using systems thinking, their organizations will not be able to maintain credibility, trustworthiness, and agility. The aim to maintain credibility, trustworthiness and agility is to increase resiliency in Muslim nonprofit organization. However, especially in recent years where complexity has increased due to Islamophobia and the global pandemic, MNPOs have lost their credibility, trustworthiness, and agility. Though other characteristics are important, when facing wicked problems, credibility, trustworthiness, and agility are vital to maintain resiliency. Resilience refers to the capability of an organization to adapt to the surrounding environment and effectively develop new competences to absorb and manage environmental unpredictability (Coutu, 2002; Hamel & Valikangas, 2003; McDonalds, 2006).

Credibility

Muslim nonprofit organizations need legal credibility to keep their tax-exempt status. They are recognized by the US federal government as public charities, which lends to that credibility. A credible organization is believable, reliable, and plausible (Lemonis, 2020). Without credibility, organizational stakeholders are not loyal (Lotich, 2021). Other scholars argue that the concept of organizational credibility and organizational reputation are closely interrelated, and that credibility is derived from reputation (Goldberg & Hartwick, 1990; Fombrum & Van Riel, 2004; Hansen & Christensen, 2007).

After 9/11, to maintain credibility, Muslim nonprofit organization were forced to spend much time, energy, and money to defend their reputation. Jolly (2005) noted that in efforts to comply with U.S. government guidelines and be protected from designation as a terror supporting group, Muslim nonprofit organizations were required to spend most of their time and

resources on transparency efforts rather than their missions, services, and operations. He added that "while many Muslim charities have thrived despite post 9/11 scrutiny, some say they are spending more time, energy and money on audits and attorney fees than they ever did before" (Jolly, 2005, para 24**).**

Trustworthiness

Muslim nonprofit organizations need trustworthiness. In recent years, they have been more vulnerable to loss of trustworthiness than other faith-based organizations. Starnes, Truhon, and McCarthy (2016) noted that organizations with high levels of trustworthiness produce higher-quality products and provide high-quality service. Xiaowei Jiang (2016) noted that many indicators show that trustworthiness is no longer a default quality for nonprofits. Nonprofits must fight for it because it is crucial for their survival.

Gross, Aday and Brewer (2004) revealed that the nation's sense of social trust was diminished by 9/11. They added that persons exposed to television news coverage of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks experienced deterioration in levels of trust towards other individuals. Perceptions within American society about Muslims tied to the fear terrorism might strike American soil again have put MNPOs into a challenging situation. Consequently, even Muslim communities started to show doubtfulness and became less trusting of their Muslim nonprofit organizations. Instead of contributing to nonprofit organizations, Muslims started to reallocate their Zakat (donations) to informal channels such as family ties overseas, which ultimately disrupted the revenues with which American Muslim organizations carry out their missions (Hempel & Leak, 2005). It was reported that, after 9/11, an owner of a Middle Eastern restaurant in Dallas decided to stop giving money to local American Muslim charities out of fear that he was unwittingly contributing to a group linked to terrorist activities. To fulfill his

charitable obligation, instead of donating money to Muslim nonprofit organizations, he served about 30 meals monthly to homeless people. The owner of the restaurant stated: "After 9/11, I don't trust anyone." (Hempel & Leak, 2005).

Agility

Muslim nonprofit organizations need agility because they are facing unpredictable challenges and must act quickly and effectively. Agility is “the capacity to react quickly to rapidly changing circumstances” (Brown & Agnew, 1982, p. 29). It is considered one of the main survival factors in an unpredictable environment. Studies reveal that organizations with strong agility capabilities generate revenues 37% faster, with a profit that is 30% higher than those of non-agile organizations (Glenn, 2009; Wang et al., 2014).

Due to Muslims’ fear of being associated with terrorist activity, American Muslim nonprofit organizations have not only lost a large amount of charity income from their communities shifting those contributions elsewhere, but also their ability to recover rapidly. During these circumstances, many Muslim nonprofit organizations were unable to adapt and change quickly to recuperate because they were required to spend most of their resources and effort to comply with new U.S government rules rather than focus on adapting to the changes (Jolly, 2005).

Agility is also much needed in MNPOs during the pandemic. According to an April 2021 survey by the Charities Aid Foundation of America (CAF America) titled “12 Months Later: The State of the World’s Nonprofits”, in which nearly 500 charities in 129 countries participated, agility has been one of the most critical factors to improve resilience in nonprofit organizations. During the first 12 months of the pandemic, 61 percent of respondents stated that they shifted to online programming, 54 percent adopted new fundraising strategies, and 53 percent introduced

new services and programs. Without agility, these organizations would not be able to survive in front of the Coronavirus pandemic.

How Muslim Nonprofit Organizations are Addressing Complex Problems

Muslim nonprofit organization, compared to other religious organizations, are young institutions. Bagby, Perl, and Froehle (2001) reported that "30% of all mosques were established in the 1990s and 32% were started in the 1980s" (Council on American Islamic Relations - CAIR)**.** As such, most of the leaders of these organizations have inadequate experience to deal with complex problems.

In recent years, because many Muslim nonprofit organizations are facing challenges severe enough that some cease to operate, numerous studies have been conducted providing recommendations and advice to deal with certain widespread problems faced by these organizations. The topics researched relate to basic management skills such as fund management, engagement in the society, leadership skills and so forth. There are also many new Muslim consultant organizations created to provide training in leadership and management skills to support Muslim nonprofit organizations. However, introducing systems thinking tools and methods in research and consultations for Muslim nonprofit organizations has not yet been examined. Most leaders in MNPOs have not acquired the proficiencies, methods and tools of systems thinking.

To tackle Islamophobia caused by terrorism and media coverage, numerous American Muslim advocacy groups have persistently worked toward resolving incidents of discrimination and civil rights abuses (Huda, 2006a). Muslim advocates are legal advocacy organizations that help people learn about their rights and regularly take on lawsuits challenging anti-Muslim discrimination and hate crimes in the United States (Gaillot, 2017). These Muslim advocacy

organizations “aim to make U.S. Muslims agents of their own narratives, fostering their civic engagement and strengthening the social fabric of our nation” (Cury, 2017). While these advocacy organizations have made some progress, many Muslim nonprofit organizations do not understand the connectedness of the complex environment where they exist and do not know how to deal with complex social system. They cannot rely on these advocacy groups forever.

The background of religious observances and cultural differences within Muslim nonprofit organizations have led their founders/leaders to differ regarding their preferred style of handling problems. Wilson and Power (2004), in their study regarding how to handle conflicts from Christians and Muslims prospective, found that both groups of Christians and Muslims with low religiosity preferred collaborative (integrating) style, while the Muslims with higher religiosity tend to prefer compromising style. Wekhian (2015), found that religiosity among first-generation Arab immigrants correlates significantly with the choice of conflict-management styles. Unfortunately, to solve complex and wicked problems, many leaders in Muslim nonprofit organizations are still relying on their personal understanding of religion and culture rather than embracing new tools and methods such us systems thinking.

What Muslim Nonprofit Organizations Lack

Many scholars, authors, and consultants have studied how Muslims migrated to the United States, when they started forming communities, and when they built places for worship or community centers; however, very few articles exist on how Muslim nonprofit organizations have been organized and their challenges to successfully operate. Like many other nonprofit sectors, leaders of Muslim nonprofit organizations approach complex challenges as independent and linear problems. They do not deal with complex situation as interdependent and non-linear problems. They miss the interconnectedness of complex problems and the importance of systems

thinking. Sandy Louis (2016) reported that David Stroh (author of *Systems thinking for Social Change*) recommended, during his visit to the Nonprofit Center in Boston, that foundation, donors, boards, and nonprofit leaders change the way they think about solving complex problems. Professor Khan (2002), assistant professor in the Department of Political Science and International Relations at the University of Delaware, stated that "the [American Muslim] community needs to find a new way of thinking about its future in America…They need to listen more to the intellectuals and scholars who are seeking to chart a new path for the community" (para 15).

One of the new ways of thinking is adopting the systems thinking. Starr (2020) stated that "application of systems thinking to identify and understand complex problems and to discover innovative ways to intervene has been advocated separately within public health, education, finance, and many other spheres of society" (p. 3)

Muslim nonprofit organizations lack a self-learning process. They need to strive for self-development as well as organizational development. Development is not something done to an individual or organizations; it is something they do to themselves (Ackoff, 1999). Development is not about how much one has, but rather how much one can do with resources available (Ackoff, 1999). Leaders of Muslim nonprofit organizations must encourage organizational development in order to be able to fulfill their mission. "Development not only requires the ability to do things right -and thereby requiring information, knowledge, and understanding-but also the ability to do the right things-hence wisdom." (Ackof, 1999, p. 290). Moreover, MNPOs should not confuse development and growth. Growth is an increase in size and development is an increase in one's ability and desire to satisfy one's needs and legitimate desires and those of others (Ackoff, 2003).

Muslim nonprofit organizations lack the awareness of the different contexts or domains of social system problems. They are often unable to identify and to frame simple, complicated, complex, and chaotic problems. MNPOs are complex social systems because they composed of interconnected participants within multiple nonlinear dimensions (Crichton, Ramsey, & Kelley, 2009). Therefore, leading or managing a Muslim nonprofit organization is a complex challenge because the majority of problems that are encountered are complex and wicked problems. However, not all problems are complex. Some problems are simple or complicated, but they can be solved. However, complex/wicked problems need different tools and methods to be addressed. For that reason, knowing the appropriate frame of the context/domain of the problems helps MNPOs to use the appropriate course of action.

Muslim Nonprofit Organizations Operating in a Complex Domain

The Cynefin framework

Identifying the context of a problem was a contribution by Snowdon and Boone (2007) who proposed simple, complicated, complex, chaotic, and disorder (Figure 4). These contexts or "domains" help managers and leaders to identify situations, problems, or opportunities (Snowdon & Boone, 2007).

Figure 4

Cynefin Framework

In a simple context (also called obvious or clear), the situation is stable and the relationship between cause and effect is clear. It is the domain of best practices. If there is an X problem, then apply a Y approach. In a complicated context, problems are solvable, but require analysis or expertise. Causes and effects are indirectly linked and difficult to identify but can be defined and explained. It is the domain of experts. Snowden and Boone (2007) recommended using "sense-analyze-respond." Assess the facts, analyze, and apply the appropriate good operating practice. In this context, the leader is not required to know how to define or solve a problem; however, he or she can delegate to other experts or the more experienced in the organization to solve it. In short, a complicated problem, once solved, remains solved (Snyder, 2013).

Unlike a complicated context wherein at least one right answer exists, in complex contexts there are no right answers and there are no experts who can solve this type of problem. It is impossible to define a cause-and-effect relationship. Complex context is the domain of emergence. According to Snowden and Boone (2007), the best approach to complex situation is rather than trying to control the situation by implementing a course of action, be patient, look for patterns, and encourage a solution to emerge.

In chaotic context, looking for a right answer would be worthless. Patrick Lambe (2007) wrote that events in this domain are "too confusing to wait for a knowledge-based response" (P.136). He added, "action-any action-is the first and only way to respond appropriately" (Lambe, 2007, p. 136). The chaotic context is the domain of rapid response. Snowden and Boone (2007) wrote:

> In the chaotic domain, a leader's immediate job is not to discover patterns but to staunch the bleeding. A leader must first act to establish order, then sense where stability is present and from where it is absent, and then respond by working to transform the situation from chaos to complexity, where the identification of emerging patterns can both help prevent future crises and discern new opportunity. (69-76).

In a disordered context, there is no clarity about which of the other domains can be applied. "The way out of this realm is to break down the situation into constituent parts and assign each to one of the other four realms. Leaders can then make decisions and intervene in contextually appropriate ways." (Snowden & Boone, 2007, p.75)

As many leaders of Muslim nonprofit organizations are not aware that their problems are in the complex domain, they mistakenly apply traditional simple or complicated domain improvement methods. Starr (2020) stated, "If a leader fails to recognize that a problem's context is complex or chaotic and mistakenly applies traditional (simple or complicated) improvement methods and tools, these efforts will likely fail and can make the problem worse" (p.16).

Systems Thinking Approach

Muslim nonprofit organizations should be viewed as complex systems because they are composed of interconnected people and situations within multiple nonlinear dimensions (Crichton, Ramsey, & Kelley, 2009). The preferred mindset and course of action for social complex problems is to adopt the systems thinking approach (Starr, 2020). Systems thinking is a method of helping organizations to view systems from a broad perspective that includes seeing

overall structures, patterns, and cycles in systems, rather than seeing only specific events in the system. Senge (2006) defines systems thinking as "a discipline for seeing wholes. It is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for seeing patterns of change rather than static "snapshots". It is a set of general principles...and systems thinking is a sensibility - for the subtle interconnectedness that gives living systems their unique character" (pp. 68-69).

Ackoff was a pioneer who improved communities through nonprofit organizations by using systems thinking approaches. In 1968, Ackoff received a request for assistance from Mantua Community Planners (a coalition of neighborhood groups). At that time, Mantua was one of the poorest and most violent neighborhoods in Philadelphia (Ackoff, 1970). Ackoff's approach toward Mantua was based on a few simple assumptions. First, the Black neighborhoods should have an opportunity to solve their own problems in their own way and the White community should support them with resources required to address their problems. Second, those within Black communities could learn more from their own failures than they could from White successes (Ackoff, 1970). Such strategies could also prove effective for Muslim nonprofit organizations. In this case, the resources needed to support Muslim nonprofit organizations to solve their own problems and learn from their own failures is to teach them about systems thinking methods and tools.

Lessons from the Mantua achievement supported Ackoff's systems thinking model "Interactive Planning." Mantua had to plan for itself, learn how to use available resources, engage in continuous participative planning, and not simply do nothing hoping something will happen. These are the most important elements to develop Interactive Planning. From the Mantua experience, Ackoff devised the Interactive Planning model that should be continuous, holistic, participative, and be focused on design of an "idealized" future.

Interactive Planning

Interactive Planning is one of the methodologies informed by systems thinking applicable to improve communities and organizations. What makes Ackoff's approach different is that other models often focus on a community without considering differences in race, religion, or nationality. Ackoff's system approach, however, considers different sub-communities (systems) within a larger community. Another aspect that makes Ackoff's model unique is that other models are designed and executed by governments or authorities with limited participation by the community. Ackoff's model focuses on the stakeholders of nonprofit organizations and their leaders to design and apply their own plan.

Interactive planning has two parts: Idealization and realization. Idealization has two phases: 1) formulating the mess, (2) ends-planning. Realization has four phases: (3) means planning, (4) resource planning, (5) design of the implementation, and (6) design of controls. (Ackoff, 2001)

To allow MNPOs to design and apply their own plan, they need to first adopt systems thinking. Then, they need to apply a systems-informed methodology for problem-solving such as interactive planning. The "formulate the mess" phase is critical because it lets Muslim nonprofit organizations understand the complexity of social systems. Through mess formulation, they will be able to see the interconnectedness of subsystems that Muslim nonprofit organization relate to.

Mess Formulation

In messy situations, we often fail not because we do not solve the problem, but because we fail to define the correct problem (Ackoff, 1974). Muslim nonprofit organizations are not confronted with a single complex problem but many complex system problems. MNPOs may know how to solve simple or complicated problems, but they may not know how to solve complex and wicked problems. In addition, they may not know how to identify and define

complex problems. We have been taught how to solve problems, but never how to define them (Ackoff, 1974).

In a messy situation, everything is interconnected and there are no clear starting points. Ackoff (1999) defined a mess as a complex system of interacting problems. Implementing a wrong approach may cause serious consequences. Quick fixes will not work because the problem is not clear; however, looking for improvement instead of a solution is the only way to avoid the worst because looking for solutions is unlikely to work forever. As Armson (2011) pointed out in her book *Growing wings on the way*, "Aiming for improvement rather than solution allows me continuously to reevaluate the mess as it evolves alongside my growing understanding" (p. 17).

Because systems thinking approaches do not tell what to do but rather enable groups to work out what to do themselves (Armson, 2011), it is important to explore the messes thoroughly before deciding on actions for improvement. Formulating the mess is one of the best approaches to develop a shared understanding of why a system behaves the way it does, sets problems in the proper context, and identifies the areas of greatest leverage, vulnerability, and/or possible seeds of the system's destruction (Gharajedaghi, 2006).

Gharajedaghi (2006) defined a three-phase process to formulate the mess: 1) Searching, 2) Mapping, 3) Telling the story. The Searching phase gathers information, knowledge, and understanding about the system and its environment. The Mapping phase represents the complex webs of interconnection between entities and phenomena in a diagram. The Telling the story phase is a compelling narrative that reveals the undesirable future and consequences, thereby creating a desire for change. The Mapping phase, sometimes called diagraming, is considered the most important part in this study because it allows leaders of Muslim nonprofit organizations to see the whole picture of the mess.

General Problem and Declarative Hypothesis

In this dissertation, I propose a general problem and I propose a declarative hypothesis to address this problem as follows:

The *general problem* to be addressed in this dissertation is that MNPOs have inadequate resiliency, including inadequate credibility, trustworthiness, and agility in an environment full of complex problems. These challenges include but are not limited to the effect of Islamophobia trigged by terrorist attacks, the effect of media reporting on Muslim communities, the effect of the pandemic (COVID-19), and the effect of difference in mindsets and resulting interpersonal conflicts within MNPOs. MNPO leaders and members cannot ignore such complex problems hoping they will go away. Furthermore, I argue that leaders and members cannot solve these complex problems by applying traditional problem-solving improvement methods.

The *hypothesis* I propose to address this general problem is as follows: If leaders and stakeholders of Muslim nonprofit organizations learn to adopt the mindset and approach of systems thinking, including consideration of the influences of internal and external context/environment, then their formulation of problems and methods of problem solving will improve, leading to increased resiliency including increased credibility, trustworthiness, and agility.

Learning systems thinking will not offer solutions in and of itself. Rather, systems thinking offers a perspective from which improved understanding and possible pathways for navigation can emerge. In other words, learning systems thinking alone will not present available solutions to Muslim nonprofit organization leaders, but they will learn ways to discover what to do when they are unsure how to proceed. Unfortunately, as Armson (2011) pointed out, in our education system, we study problems that have solutions at the back of the book. We enjoy being

told that we have the right answer. However, we do not study how to deal with complex problems. MNOPs are not used to dealing with wicked or complex problems and need to acquire systems thinking methods and tools.

Methodology to Address the Hypotheses

To address the above hypothesis, I propose a nonlinear model. This model is based on a model of higher education institutions entitled "Leadership Learning System" developed by Starr (2020). It mimics simple cybernetic social system (Jackson, 2003) consisting of inputs, transformation, outputs, feedback, content, and contextual environment (Figures 5 and 6).

Figure 5

Simple Cybernetic Social System Version 1

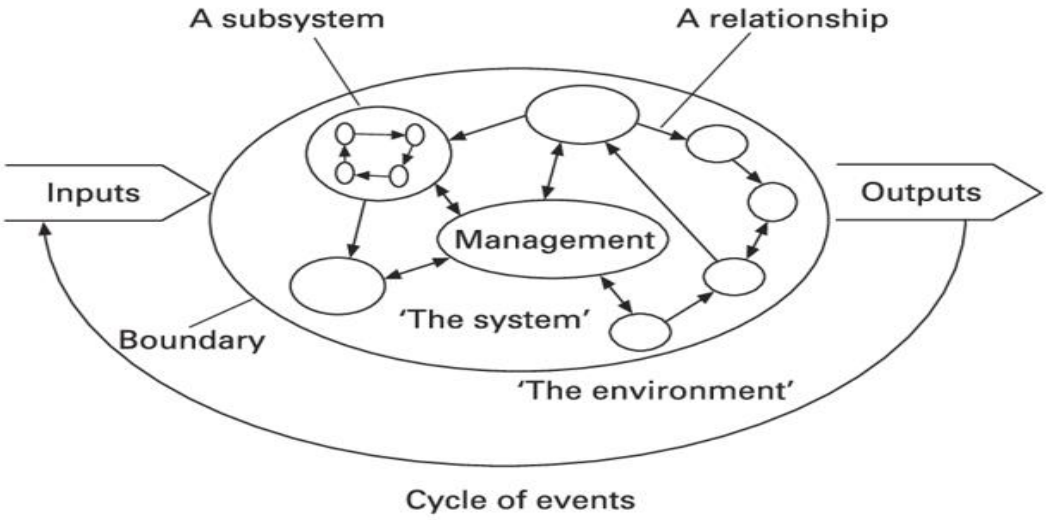
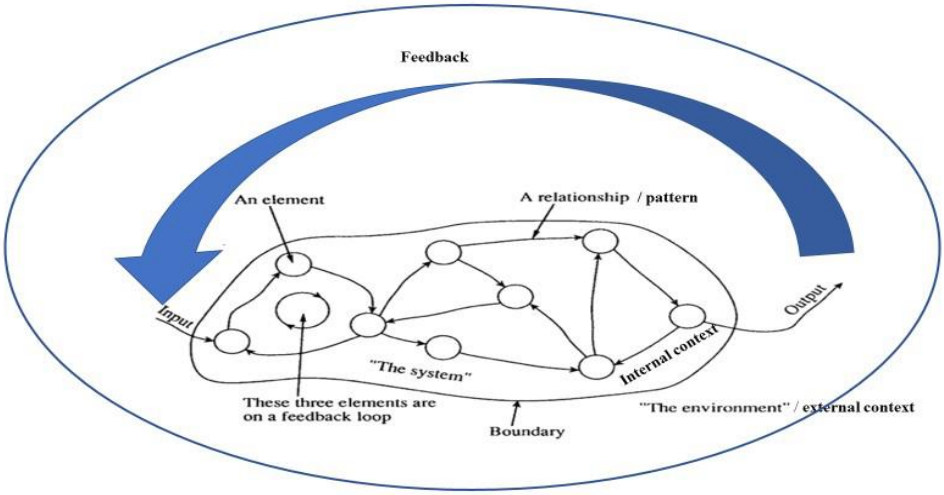


Figure 6

Simple Cybernetic Social System Version 2



Starr argued that, within a system perspective, learning leadership emerges from interaction of students, teachers, content, and internal context. In my model, I argue that in Muslim nonprofit organizations, resiliency and improved problem solving for complex challenges emerges from the learning/adoption of systems thinking and the interaction of leaders, instructor/coaches, content and context in which they operate.

In the following chapters, I provide a deeper understanding of Muslim nonprofit organizations with a comprehensive history, including cultures and mindsets of Muslim communities in America. I then introduce the systems thinking Interactive Planning model of Ackoff (1981) that was successfully implemented to improve nonprofit organizations and communities. Next, I provide a mess formulation of the situation of Muslim nonprofit organizations and present it in a clear diagram so leaders and stakeholders can see and understand the whole complex picture. I propose systems thinking learning that generates and promotes systems thinking knowledge and wisdom in Muslim nonprofit organizations. I then highlight implications of the model and recommendation.

The Importance of This Dissertation

As a Muslim and philanthropist, I have been active in the Muslim nonprofit sector for more than 20 years. Recently, I founded and led a small organization to serve the Muslim community in northeast Philadelphia. I have experienced and observed many complex problems that Muslim nonprofit organizations face. I interviewed friends who started their own nonprofit organization, but they failed within a few months. No one knows exactly what went wrong. Everyone speculates as to the reasons how and why they failed, but no one provided an explanation in a holistic way, nor in social system way. They are not aware about complex social systems nor how to deal with complex problems. Watching these organizations struggle gave me a personal purpose for selecting my topic. I am interested in this topic because I want to help Muslim nonprofit organizations to accomplish their missions. My hope is by learning systems thinking, Muslim nonprofit organizations will be able to maintain their resiliency.

Another reason that makes me interested in this topic is that Muslim communities need nonprofit organizations to help them adapt to American society and be successful and loyal citizens. The US government needs Muslim nonprofit organizations to fight extremist and radical thinking in Muslim community. If Muslim nonprofit organizations are not equipped with the right tools and methods, they will not have strong credibility, trustworthiness, and agility. Consequently, the government will not include them in fighting extremist and terrorism. Muslim nonprofit organizations can play a big role in reducing extremism in Muslim communities if they are equipped with systems thinking tools and methods.

Finally, new, small, and young Muslim nonprofit organizations are the most affected by complex problems. Especially in recent years, they are the most vulnerable to failure. My hope, through this dissertation, is to present a model to teach new, small, and young Muslim nonprofit

organizations systems thinking that I believe is the key to success. As the old Chinese proverb "give a man a fish you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." MNPOs cannot rely on consultants or other facilitators to formulate their daily complex problems and offer a course of actions. It is time for MNPOs to learn how to solve their own complex problems.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Brief History of Philanthropy and the Nonprofit Sector in the US

In this chapter and throughout the dissertation, I use the terms "nonprofit" and "not-for-profit" interchangeably. According to Emily Heaslip (2021), "a nonprofit organization is one that qualifies for tax-exempt status by the IRS because its mission and purpose are to further a social cause and provide a public benefit." However, not-for-profits are not required to serve the public good but can serve the goals of their members. They can apply for tax exemption under code Section 501(c)(3), but depending on their mission and goals, they could fall under different section, such as Section 501(c)(7) (Heaslip, 2021). For-profit organizations, on the other hand, are not tax exempt because they operate in the private sector and their main goal is to make money. The *Free Management Library* provided the following definition:

> A for-profit organization exists primarily to generate a profit, that is, to take in more money than it spends. The owners can decide to keep all the profit themselves, or they can spend some or all of it on the business itself. Or, they may decide to share some of it with employees through the use of various types of compensation plans, e.g., employee profit sharing (para. 2).

There are two types of nonprofit organizations: public serving and member serving (Salamon, 1992). Public-serving organizations are those described under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and include religious, educational, charitable, and other voluntary organizations designed to provide services to the public. Member-serving organizations are those covered under other subsections of 501(c). Appendix A at the end of this article provides detailed information on organizations exempt under section 501(c) (Arnsberger et al., 2008).

Nonprofits organizations have philanthropic goals. The term “Philanthropy” derives from the Greek words “Philos” meaning “love,” and “Anthropos,” meaning “mankind.” So literally Philanthropy means “Love of mankind” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). The United States is considered the most philanthropic and generous country in the world (Albrecht, 2019). Since the establishment of the first colonies to present time, philanthropy has played increasingly important roles in America history (Bremner, 1970). Philanthropy in early America was active under nonprofit organizations that emerged from religious beliefs to serve needy people and support new immigrant communities.

Generally, citizens enter the public sphere through voluntary community organizations. As Jürgen Habermas (1996) states, “civil society is composed of those more or less spontaneously emergent associations, organizations and movements that, attuned to how political problems resonate in the private life spheres, distill and transmit such reactions in amplified form to the public sphere” (p. 367). Nonprofit organizations have the ability and capacity to link between government and communities to promote democracy. Hall (1987) notes that the state has delegated nonprofit organizations to perform tasks that have not been provided by the public and private sector and, as a result, they influence the direction of the state’s policy, the for-profit sector, or other nonprofit organizations. Scholars in public administration have indicated in their research that to make the state effective and democratic, active community members are needed. Voices of these communities are embedded in nonprofit organizations. Silencing these voices will decrease citizens’ presence in the public sphere. Couto (1999) noted that the third sector is innovative, provides services and develops policy, supports minority and local interests and above all, furthers active citizenship. For instance, various nonprofits were founded by immigrant groups to support their community financially and help preserve their

identity; they also help new immigrants acclimate to the new society by teaching them American mores. In other words, nonprofits integrate individuals into wider society (Smith, 1983). This statement has a particular relevance because part of the argument in this study is that nonprofit organizations are gateways for immigrants in general, and Muslims in particular, into mainstream society.

Nonprofit Organizations in Early America

Before American independence, most colonies, religious congregations, townships, and colleges were public corporations supported by taxation (Whitehead, 1976). These colonial institutions, like modern nonprofits, were self-governing. They had no owners or stockholders and as public bodies they were exempt from taxation. (Zollmann, 1924 cited in Hall, 2016). Many of these institutions accepted donations and gifts from donors and held them in trust as endowment. These institutions played a significant role in promoting the importance of individual rights and the use of associations in politics to the point that some of them helped mobilize citizens to fight for American independence (Hall, 2010).

After American independence and before the Civil War, many southern and western states feared the power of wealthy institutions and actively discouraged private charity (Wyllie, 1959; Miller, 1961). In contrast, northeastern and New England states actively encouraged voluntary associations of all sorts, religious and secular. They became national centers for education, culture, and science. The wealth from their industrializing economy was transferred into the funds of their colleges, hospitals, libraries, and museums (Hall, 1982). Because each state had its own laws governing corporations, associations, and charities, some New England states had more private philanthropy and charitable corporations than other states. The differences in dealing with private associations, charity, and philanthropy led to political

consequences (Hall, 2010). As Americans became concerned about slavery and other issues, voluntary associations were the preferred vehicles for social reform. Furthermore, they played prominent roles in the Civil War (Hall, 2010). Once the Civil War started, many associations organized fundraising events and mobilized volunteers in towns and cities to provide medical help and other needs for Union armed forces (Brockett, 1864; Cross, 1865; Moss, 1968; Frederickson, 1965).

After the Civil War, the government of the victorious Union faced an immense task reconstructing states devastated by the war. It turned to voluntary organizations to build schools, teach civic skills to newly freed men and women, and reform southern industry and agriculture (Swint, 1967). The second half of the nineteenth century was the beginning of modern philanthropy. Nonprofit organizations learned how to be self-governing, raise funds and manage finances, and form alliances and coalitions. As the French sociologist and political theorist Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859) observed when he visited America in the 1830s, Americans were continuously forming associations. In the first half of the nineteenth century, Americans had learned the principle of association in their schoolyards, in the second half of the century associations became the great school of democracy. He stated:

> Americans of all ages, conditions, and dispositions constantly unite together. Not only do they have commercial and industrial associations to which all belong but also a thousand other kinds, religious, moral, serious, futile...Americans group together to hold fetes, found seminaries, build inns, construct churches, distribute books...They establish prisons, schools by the same method...I have frequently admired the endless skill with which the inhabitants of the United States manage to set a common aim to the efforts of a great number of men and to persuade them to pursue it voluntarily (Tocqueville, 1840, as cited in Arnsberger, Ludlum, Riley, and Stanton, 2008).

In the first third of the twentieth century, many business leaders started getting involved in sustaining charitable, educational, and religious institutions to improve American society

(Heald, 1970; Hall 1989b). Many businessmen abandoned their business to devote themselves to lead nonprofit organizations. These nonprofit organizations focused on promoting public welfare, improving public health, and solving social problems. Some of these organizations are still active to this day. For example, Melvin Jones abandoned his insurance agency to devote himself full time to Lions Clubs International that was founded on June 7, 1917 (lionsclubs.org). Paul Percy Harris, a Chicago attorney, founded the club that became the humanitarian organization Rotary International in 1905 (www.easthartfordrotary.org/sitepage/paul-harris-fellows). In the first quarter of the twentieth century, such businessmen's service organizations and others appeared in almost every town and city (Charles, 1993). Even the 31st president of the United States from 1929 to 1933, Herbert Clark Hoover, supported voluntary organizations. He wrote, in 1922, that a nation that promotes public interest voluntarism would not need socialism and communism to solve problems of inequality and injustice (Hall 2010).

Between 1930 and 1980, during the Second World War and afterward, the federal government became more involved in encouraging nonprofit organizations, this time using taxation (Witte, 1985; Webber & Wildavsky, 1986). The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) started to implement new tax policies on most wages and salaries. It dramatically increased tax rates on estates and business corporations. As results, the revenue of the government was enlarged which allowed the IRS to issue tax exempt policies and grants for charitable organizations (Howard, 1997). These policies played a key role in increasing the number of nonprofit organizations. As of 1940, charitable tax-exempt organizations registered with the IRS were only 12,500. By 1980, the number of charitable tax-exempt nonprofits increased to 320,000. By 2006, the number became more than 600,000 charitable organizations (Hall & Burke, 2006).

From 1980 to the present, the involvement of new young billionaires and globalization have enabled some American nonprofit organizations to expand their operations beyond national borders. These organizations are based in the United States but operate elsewhere. They became so-called nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The term NGO was first introduced in Article 71 of the newly formed United Nation's Charter in 1945 (Candid Learning). The purpose of these types of organizations is to focus on global issues such as human rights, sustainable development, and environmental objectives (Fisher, 1993, 1998; Edwards, 1999). Because the sources of wealth of the new billionaires came from across the globe, they wanted to express their values by funding or establishing NGOs that focus on global problems such as hunger, disease, environment, and economic development (Hall, 2010). The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, for example, was established in 1994 by Microsoft Founder and Chairman Bill Gates and his wife, Melinda. The mission of this organization is to create a world where every person can live a healthy, productive life (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2021). Globalization is also another factor that not only allowed some nonprofits to operate beyond national borders and became nongovernmental organizations, but also influenced their performance. New technology brought by globalization, allowed NGOs to make connections everywhere rapidly, respond faster to events, and to use the quality of information gathered for the purpose of campaigning and advocacy.

Along with such NGOs, there are many faith-based charities and foundations including Islamic organizations that sustain religious education, provide relief, and support economic and political development in Muslim communities across the globe (Hall 2010). Islamic Relief is one of the largest Islamic NGOs. It was founded in 1984 in UK but operates

in 50 countries. Its mission states “Islamic Relief USA provides relief and development in a dignified manner regardless of gender, race, or religion, and works to empower individuals in their communities and give them a voice in the world.” (irusa.org).

Faith-Based Nonprofits (FBOs)

Faith-based organizations (FBOs) are defined as non-profit and voluntary organizations whose “identity and mission are self-consciously derived from the teachings of one or more religious or spiritual traditions” (Berger, 2003, p.16). FBO missions range from simply meeting their community’s immediate needs (food, shelter, clothing, etc.) to their spiritual needs (Goldsmith, Eimicke, & Pineda, 2006). According to Joanne Fritz (2019), the Corporation for National and Community Service says that an FBO usually includes:

- A religious congregation (church, mosque, synagogue, or temple).
- An organization, program, or project sponsored/hosted by a religious congregation.
- A nonprofit organization, founded by a religious congregation or religiously motivated organizers and board members that clearly states in its name, incorporation, or mission statement that it is a religiously motivated institution.
- A collaboration of organizations that explicitly includes organizations from the previous categories.

Scholars have identified different characteristics of faith-based organizations. Clarke (2006) classified faith-based organizations into five different types of operations:

1) Faith-based representative organizations, which operate on doctrinal matters and represent them through engagement with the state and other actors.

2) Faith-based charitable or development organizations, which rally based on the faith to support the poor and other social groups.

3) Faith-based socio-political organizations, which organize social groups based on faith identities to pursue political objectives.

4) Faith-based missionary organizations, which spread faith messages by actively promoting the faith and seeking new converts.

5) Faith-based radical, illegal, or terrorist organizations, which promote radical forms of faith identity and engage in violent acts in the name of faith.

In most cases, religious group establish FBOs for the purpose to add something particular to their community, but their faith or religion is central to their mission and the services they provide (Goldsmith et al., 2006). This includes all religions such as Christian, Jewish, Islam, and other faiths. Schneider et al. (2011) found that "all faith communities feel responsible for ensuring that their current practical theology was followed by their FBOs" (p. 409).

Historically, religion played a central role for social service provision and the generation of communities in the United States (Hammack, 1998). Freedom of religion also played a significant role in the history of FBOs in United States. The first people who came to America were Huguenots who were being persecuted in France because they were Protestant, rather than Catholic. In 1564, they arrived at Fort Caroline near modern Jacksonville, Florida. French Protestants came to America in search of religious freedom. More than half a century later, in 1620, a group of English families came aboard the *Mayflower*, an English ship, to the New World in search of religious freedom as well (Davis, 2010). Since then, millions of Europeans have come to America to escape religious oppression and to establish a country in which there is freedom to practice one's faith without fear of persecution. This desire of freedom of religion was preserved from the first American's forefathers until the establishment of the first

Amendment in the Constitution that states “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

To preserve their religious values and traditions, the first settlers in the new world established churches and houses of worship. Some settlers came for secular motives, but the great majority who left Europe came to worship in the way they believed to be correct (Weir, 2005). After 1654, Christian denominations including Anglicans, Baptists, Catholics, Congregationalists, German Pietists, Lutherans, Methodists, and Quakers were dominant. Judaism was practiced, but in small pockets. Separatists (Anglicans who advocated separation from the Anglican Church) and Puritans (who sought to purify Anglicanism of Catholic influences and practices) founded the New England colonies that included Massachusetts, New Hemisphere, Connecticut. Anglicans, Quakers, Catholics and non-conformist Protestants founded the Middle and Southern colonies that included Pennsylvania, Virginia Maryland, and Carolina (Mark, 2021).

The colonies of New England were established between 1629-1638 by Separatists and Puritans to create a community in which they could worship freely. Both groups suffered persecution in England, but when they founded their colonies in New England, they started persecuting others. Their claim to have founded communities based on religious freedom extended only to their own beliefs (Mark, 2021). Jews, Catholics, Quakers and others were periodically persecuted for their faith. For example, between 1659 and 1661, four Quakers (known as Boston Martyrs) were hanged because they were accused of spreading Quaker believes (Woollacott, 2018).

On the other hand, the Middle Colonies, which were under Dutch control until 1664, appreciated diversity and followed the Dutch policy of religious tolerance. Unsurprisingly, there

were some religious conflicts between different Christian communities in these colonies, but they were not as tense as they were in New England where strict religious laws were imposed (Mark, 2021). In 1681, King Charles II chartered the wealthy Quaker William Penn (1644-1718) to establish the Pennsylvania colony in which people of diverse faiths were welcomed as well as Native Americans from different tribes. Pennsylvania was the first colony to pass a law mandating religious toleration and mutual respect between different faiths (Benson, 2009)

Religious diversity in the Middle Colonies and religious conflicts in New England continued throughout the 18th century. However, after the Great Awakening of the 1730s and 1740s –where the "purpose was to convince people that religious power was in their own hands, not the hands of the Church" (Guelzo, 2020) colonies became united because it was the first major national event that all colonies experienced, colleges were founded, and religious toleration was established (Guelzo, 2020). Eventually, this first Great Awakening led to the American War of Independence (1775-1783) and the establishment of the United States of America (Mark, 2021)

From colonial times to the present, faith-based organizations have been very connected to their religion. FBOs are often extensions of the church and therefore strive to be in harmony with the mission of a given church (Fischer, 2003). These FBOs may seem that they are providing services related to a particular faith. However, programs and services are not necessarily faith activities (DiVirgilio, 2016). For instance, the Salvation Army, Catholic Charities, Lutheran Social Services and Jewish Family & Children's Service provide a huge array of services to the nation's sick, elderly and poor. They own hospitals and nursing homes, run mental health clinics, provide substance abuse treatment, build affordable housing, and offer job training and after-

school programs. These services are not religious or faith activities, but rather religiously motivated.

Muslim nonprofit organizations are among FBOs that provide services that are not faith activities. Yaghi (2009) noted that values articulated by Muslims are founded on Islamic religious and social doctrines espoused in the Quran, even if these nonprofit organizations provide nonreligious services. Many Muslim nonprofit organizations help people in need from all backgrounds and faiths, which encourages serving and friendship with Muslims and Non-Muslim communities. For example, one of the core principles of the Pennsylvania chapter of CAIR is "to be committed to protecting the civil rights of all Americans, regardless of faith" (https://pa.cair.com/about/).

Another example of Muslim faith-based nonprofits is the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA), an Islamic North American grassroots umbrella organization. ICNA is an offshoot of the Muslim Students' Association (MSA) and was founded by immigrants from South Asia (Coward, Hinnells, & Williams, 2000). ICNA Relief's Social Health and Medical Service (SHAMS) Clinic is located on Frankford Avenue in Northeast Philadelphia. According to their website (https://www.icnarelief.org/shamsclinic/about-shams/), SHAMS is a "nonprofit organization that endeavors to improve the health and social well-being of underserved communities in Philadelphia as rooted in the charitable principles of the Islamic faith." As the medical director, Dr. Ammar Shahid stated, this has extended to non-Muslims in the community: "We've reached out to the local churches, synagogues, local businesses and let them know that sure we're under a Muslim name and Muslim leaders, but we are open to everyone. We're not discriminating based on race or culture, even where you're from. The whole community is helped, not just the Muslims here" (Ben-Yaacov, 2018).

Legal and Political Framework of FBOs

Since early of America's history, social welfare was provided mostly by faith-based or religious organizations. Eventually, the modern state started taking the lead in providing social welfare (Trattner, 1999). Even though U.S. Constitution mandates a separation between any religion and state, in recent years many laws were passed to allow federal and state agencies to help religious organizations to provide social services (Siddons, 2009). To enhance the ability of faith-based organizations to provide social welfare, President Clinton signed the Charitable Choice laws during the period from 1996-2000. Charitable Choice rules are intended to ensure that faith-based organizations are not excluded from federal funds because of their religion and they can offer social services without abandoning their religious values (Fritz, 2019). After President Clinton, both President Bush (2000-2008) and President Obama (2008-2016) took further steps to enact comprehensive Charitable Choice laws. Under President Trump, the federal government has been extraordinarily friendly to religious groups, even setting up the White House Faith and Opportunity Initiative (Fritz, 2019). To address any potential violation of these laws, faith-based organizations are not allowed to use public money to support religious activities (Siddons, 2009).

The IRS classification of 501(c)(3) is used for organizations that are founded for charitable, religious, educational, scientific, or literary purposes. Churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples have the option to apply for 501(c)(3) exemption or not. If these faith-based organizations meet the requirements of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, they can claim tax-exemption without a determination from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). However, FBOs that are not registered as 501(c)(3)s will likely not be able to receive any federal funds (Fritz, 2019).

Muslim Nonprofit Organizations (MNPOs)

Muslim nonprofit organizations (MNPOs) are considered a subgroup of faith-based organizations. Their mission, derived from their understanding of Islam, is to provide for spiritual needs, religious services, charities, education, civil rights, political participation, and so on. Easton (1979) stated that throughout the 1970s, the emergence of Islamic centers, Islamic schools, community-based groups, social service - charitable organizations, public advocacy associations, political parties, professional associations, and research organizations have all contributed to multiple identities of "American Muslims" that go beyond either a one-dimensional ethnic identity or traditional religious identity. The involvement of American Muslims has fostered numerous national and regional organizations to contribute to areas such as civil rights, interfaith dialogue, charity, education, political activism, and other secular activities. As Jamal (2005) stated, Muslim nonprofit organizations serve as the seedbed for political participation in the ethnically diverse US society.

Muslim nonprofit organizations begun to emerge in the early of 20th century when Muslim immigrants came from Middle East, South and Central Asia, and Eastern Europe, to work in mining and industry during the industrial revolution after the Civil War. After the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act, a mass of Muslims fled from their home countries to the US because of war, coups, revolution, and dictatorship. From that time to present (21 century), the number of Muslim nonprofit organizations has increased remarkably. Some historians argued that Muslims' existence in US did not begin in the early 20th century, but rather in period of founding fathers.

Muslims have a long history in America, going back to the period of founding fathers (Williams, 2017). African Muslims were a remarkable part of creating America from the first

expeditions to participating in the fight for independence and from slavery to emancipation. In the past two-plus centuries, American Muslims have been intertwined with American history (Williams, 2017).

Mustafa Zemmouri (also known as Estevanico) was the first Muslim who came to America in April 1528, as part of a colonial expedition. Zemmouri was born in the late fifteenth century in Azemmour, Morocco. At the time, the Portuguese Empire controlled the Azemmour region and sold many locals, including Zemmouri, into slavery in Europe. While he was a servant of a Spanish nobleman called Dorantes, he joined Pamphilo de Narvaez's expedition in 1527 to explore the northern Gulf of Mexico. Most of the five hundred members of the expedition did not survive except four, including Estevanico and Dorantes. Three companions stayed in the Spanish colonies, but Estevanico was sent to explore additional cities of Cabila. It is reported that Estevanico was good at learning the languages of the natives. He then became the first non-indigenous person to enter the territories of Arizona and New Mexico. It was reported to be his final destination, for he was probably killed (Saidi, 2014).

In the 18th century, Muslims were not citizens but rather were a significant proportion of African slaves. Scholar Richard Brent Turner estimates the number of Muslim slaves that were brought to the Americas ranges from 40,000 (in just the US) to 3 million across North and South America (Williams, 2017). Ayuba Suleyman Diallo, also known as Job Ben Solomon, is a well-known Muslim slave of 18th-century. He was a prince from West Africa born in Bundu, Senegal (an Islamic theocracy). When he was captured by a British slave trader in 1731, they sold him to a Maryland slaveowner (Haselby, 2016). Ayuba used to go into the woods to pray. However, after being humiliated by a white boy while praying, Ayuba ran away in 1731, but was captured and imprisoned. Ayuba's reasons for escape was not understood until a lawyer in the courthouse

discovered that he was Muslim and not a common slave. Then they allowed him to write a letter in Arabic to Africa to send to his father. In July 1734, Ayuba returned to his homeland (Edward, 2009).

Omar Ibn Said (1770-1864) was another very well-known slave of the early 19-century. He was born to a wealthy family along the Senegal River in West Africa. He was an Islamic scholar. In 1807, he was captured during a military conflict, enslaved and taken to the New World. After escaping from a cruel master and being recaptured, he was sold to a new owner. The owner was gracious toward him and was impressed by Ibn Said's education. They provided him with an English translation of the Quran. Multiple opportunities to return to Africa were offered to Ibn Said, but he chose to remain in the United States. He was uncertain that his family and his people were still alive. He was still enslaved at the time of his death in 1864. He was buried in Bladen County, North Carolina (William, 1979).

Enslaved Muslims used their faith and bi-lingual proficiencies to build communities and resist slavery. They were educated and literate in Arabic and religion. They left many letters, diaries, and autobiographies. Most of them are in Arabic. For example, they wrote Quranic verses condemning slavery or pleaded to return home to Africa (Amon, 2017). The material Muslims left such as clothing, writing, and rugs are proof of their stories. As Katie Brown, the great-granddaughter of Bilali Mohammad, said that these materials were an important part of their religious practice and identity (Amon, 2017).

Because many African Muslims contributed and fought with the colonists during the Revolutionary War (1775-1783) such as, Muhamed, Yusuf ben Ali, also known as Joseph Benhaley, and Joseph Saba, the founding fathers considered Islam and Muslims in their writings and political treatises (Amon, 2017). Thomas Jefferson, who owned a copy of the Quran,

included Muslims in many of his early writings. He argued that “neither Pagan nor Mahamedan [Muslim] nor Jew ought to be excluded from the civil rights of the commonwealth because of his religion” (Thomas Jefferson, quoting John Locke, 1776, in Spellberg, 2013). Unfortunately, those who came after Thomas Jefferson did not follow his thinking and beliefs, so they did not stop enslaving African including Muslims. Being slaves without freedom to practice religion, many Muslims converted to Christianity. By the end of the 19th century, Islam had almost disappeared in African American communities (Williams, 2017).

Muslims after the Civil War

According to Haddad (1997), the first wave of Muslims arrived between 1875 and 1912. They were men from Muslim-majority countries in the Middle East, South and Central Asia, and Eastern Europe. They were working in the mining or factory industry. They were encouraged by the industrial revolution that emerged after the Civil War. According to historian Sally Howell, author of *Old Islam in Detroit: Rediscovering the Muslim American Past*, the first mosque was built in 1893, in Chicago on Cairo Street (Howell, 2014).

The second mosque was built in 1921, in Michigan (Howell, 2014). At that time, Muslims, like other immigrants, were looking for higher paying factory jobs. Their mosque was close to their workplace. Howell says, "The first mosque that was built as a mosque in the United States was built one block away from the entrance from the Highland Park Factory" (Howell, 2014). Detroit and surrounding areas are still attractive to present-day for Muslim immigrants who are looking for a sense of community (Staff, 2014).

The next wave of immigrants arrived in the mid of 1930s. They were the families of men who came during the first wave (Haddad, 1997). These Muslim immigrant communities started to establish small, local community organizations across the country. At the same time, in the

period between 1920 and 1930, African Americans began to embrace Islam and establish associations due to the racism and discrimination they experienced (Howell, 2014). Several of these African American Muslim associations promoted the idea of Islam as a lost part of black African heritage and they had a significant impact on Islam in America (Williams, 2017).

The Moorish Science Temple, the first African American Muslim religious organization, was founded by Nobel Drew Ali in 1913 in Newark, New Jersey. His original name was Timothy Drew and he was believed to have been born on January 8, 1886, in North Carolina. Sources about his background differ, but one reported that his father was a Moroccan Muslim and his mother was a Cherokee (Abdat, 2014). Drew Ali believed that African Americans are all Moors, whom he claimed were descended from ancient Moabites in present-day Morocco (Nuruddin, 2000). Drew Ali began his version of teaching the Moorish-Americans to become better citizens. He urged Americans of all races to reject hate and embrace love. One tradition he founded was male members of the Temple wearing a fez or red turban as a head covering and women wearing a turban (Koura, Chloe (27 May 2017)). Drew Ali settled in Chicago in 1925, saying the Midwest was "closer to Islam." (Wilson, 1993. p. 29). In the late 1920s, it was estimated that the Moorish Science Temple had 35,000 members in 17 temples in cities across the Midwest and upper South (Chicago Tribune, May 14, 1929).

After Drew Ali's death on July 20, 1929, three independent organizations were developed. Edward Mealy El, John Givens El, and Charles Kirkman Bey took over separate factions of the Moorish Science temple. All three factions are still active today. (Gomez, 2005). In 1930, Wallace Fard Muhammad, known as David Ford-el, also claimed to be the reincarnation of Drew Ali (Ahlstrom, 2004; Hamm, 2007; and Lippy, 2006). Ford El was rejected by the

Moorish Science Temple and formed his own organization that would become the Nation of Islam. (Ahlstrom, 2004; Lippy, 2006; Miyakawa, 2005).

The nation of Islam (NOI) was non-orthodox and non-Sunni. It taught the mythology of black supremacy, which appealed to many disenfranchised African Americans amid racial discrimination. Members of mainstream Muslim groups view it as "a religious movement which has selectively adopted some Islamic beliefs and concepts, but which cannot be thought of in any way, as truly Islamic" (Oliver, 2012. p. 28). After Fard Muhammad disappeared in 1934, the leadership of the NOI was assumed by Elijah Muhammad (1897-1975). Under his leadership, NOI became the most popular branch of Islam among African America during the 1950s and 1960s.

The big next wave of Muslim immigrants arrived after the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act abolished the existing McCarran Walter Act passed in 1924. The purpose of the later Act was to reduce Middle Eastern immigrants to the United Sates (Campi, 2004). This abolition led to massive immigration from Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Southern and Eastern Europe. By the end of the 20th century, it was estimated that more than 1.1 million new Muslims immigrated to the US (Hammer & Safi, 2013). The majority of Muslim immigrants came because of war, coups, revolution, and dictatorship. They came to America with the intention to acquire wealth or wait until the political situation improved, and then return to their home countries. However, they soon realized that they would settle here for good. The creation of Muslim immigrant nonprofit associations started in response to certain social incidents and events such as the death of a relative that require a Muslim cemetery or the marriage ceremony (Ahmed, 1991). The goals for these Muslim immigrants, in establishing nonprofit organizations

to serve their communities, was to maintain spirituality, pass on identity, and foster social progress.

As the 20th century progressed, Muslim immigrants and Muslim African Americans began playing a very active role in American society and politics (Williams, 2017). As for Muslim immigrants, the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life report on Muslim Americans (2011) found that 95% of those who came in the 1980s and 80% of those arriving in the 1990s were naturalized citizens. Of these immigrants, 32 % had graduated from a college. During the same period (1980s-1990s), the Pew Research Center report revealed signs of growing Muslim American involvement in American society (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2015). Nazli Kibria (2011) noted that, at that time, many Islamic American leaders encouraged Muslim Americans to demand their rights as Americans and claim their American identity.

As for Muslim African American, their involvement in American society and politics was remarkable during the Civil Right Movement. For example, Malcom X (1925 –1965)(born Malcom Little) was a popular figure during the Civil Rights Movement. He was known as the best spokesman for the Nation of Islam and promotion of Islam within the Black community. He joined the NOI while he was in prison, sentenced to 10 years in 1946 for robbery. In late 1948, he began regular correspondence with Elijah Muhammad, the leader of the Nation of Islam. After his parole in August 1952, Malcolm X visited Elijah Muhammad in Chicago. In June 1953, he was named assistant minister of the Nation's Temple Number One in Detroit (Natambu, 2002). After Malcom X completed a pilgrimage to Mecca and traveled to different countries in Africa, he rejected the racial mythology of the NOI, disagreed with his leader Elijah Muhammad, and later embraced traditional Sunni Islam. He was killed in 1965.

Warith Deen Muhammad (1933-2008), the son of Elijah Muhammad, was one of the followers of Malcom X. After Elijah Muhammad died in 1975, Warith Deen Mohammed broke with his father's theology of black racial superiority and led most of the Nation's members to embrace orthodox Islam. Warith Deen Mohammed accepted whites as fellow-worshippers, built closer ties with mainstream Muslim communities, and introduced the Five Pillars of Islam into his group's theology (Esposito, 2008).

Muslim Nonprofit Organization Services

The American Muslim Community Foundation (AMCF), the first grassroots, national community foundation in the United States focused on creating Donor Advised Funds, distributing grants, and building endowments for the Muslim community - has identified thousands of nonprofit organizations that support and serve the interests and needs of the Muslim community in the United States. AMCF collect donations as cash, stocks, real estate, or assets and donate on behalf of the givers to organizations that have clear mission, purpose and legal compliances. AMCF has also presented a directory of more than 600 nonprofit organizations that have completed a Nonprofit Eligibility Form making them eligible to receive funding. (https://amuslimcf.org/).

Based AMCF's list of supportive organizations, most Muslim nonprofit organizations are dedicated, through mosques and community centers, to providing spiritual development and religious life services such as marriage services, funeral services, and spiritual services. In addition to that, like nonreligious nonprofit organizations that integrate individuals into wider society, Muslim Nonprofits play the same role integrating the American Muslim community into American society. Recently, many Muslim nonprofits emerged to provide legal services, social services, civil rights, and other services. For example, the Council on American–Islamic

Relations (CAIR) is a Muslim civil rights group created as an "organization that challenges stereotypes of Islam and Muslims" (CAIR letter to Vice President Gore, June 10, 1995). It promotes social, legal and political activism among Muslims in America.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations is the nation's largest American Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization and committed to the protection of American Muslim civil rights and their interests. CAIR encourages Muslim civic engagement and participation in national and state elections. As its mission is to enhance understanding of Islam, protect civil rights, promote justice, and empower American Muslims, CAIR has devoted a large part of its service, called "Muslims.Vote", to empower Muslim communities to vote and participate in elections. They even produced a report on American Muslim Voters for the 2020 Election which provided statistics indicating percentages of registered Muslim voters intending to vote in the November 3rd General Election and percentages of Muslim voters who would vote for Joe Biden or Donald Trump (https://muslims.vote/).

There are also other American Muslim legal organizations helping Muslim communities develop awareness of the American judicial system and encouraging participation in democratic institutions. As Huda (2006) stated, "American Muslims have successfully created professional, cultural, educational, political, human rights, and civil rights organizations as participants in the larger spectrum of American society and liberal democracy" (p.188).

The National Association of Muslim Lawyers (www.namlnet.org) and Muslim Advocates (www.muslimadvocates.org) aim to increase Muslims' legal knowledge and expertise to help them develop awareness of the judicial system and understanding of democratic institutions. A new American Muslim organization, Muslim Women Lawyers for Human Rights, is devoted to combining education and activism in order to foster identity, promoting social

justice, achieving gender equality, and creating a more meaningful interpretation of their Islamic beliefs.

In the humanitarian aid field, Life USA, is devoted to relieving humanitarian crises. Their primary focus is relief and development in areas that have disasters or wars. LIFE USA was engaged heavily in relief efforts after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Muslim organizations in America are not only an important benefit to communities, but also beneficial for governmental agencies. Muslim organizations are considered a reliable source of information and a bridge between the government and Muslim citizens. Unlike Muslim organizations in Europe that are isolated from political participation, American Muslims are not downgraded or locked out of political involvement (Huda, 2006b). Muslim nonprofit organizations have successfully created bridges between Muslims, law enforcement authorities, and even with the White House to develop strategies on public policy, civil rights, the war against terrorism, and other related issues (Huda, 2006b).

In recent years, numerous Muslim organizations have prioritized assisting enforcement agencies in detecting intolerant attitudes within the Muslim community (Huda, 2006b). For instance, in 2005, shortly after numerous terrorist events occurred and after many American Muslim groups repeatedly condemned acts of religious extremism, 18 members of the National Fiqh Council of North America (group of Islamic scholars that decides judicial issues for Muslims) issued a fatwa (a nonbinding legal opinion) condemning all forms of extremism, terrorism, and any destruction of property or human life. The fatwa stated that it is forbidden for any Muslim to cooperate with individuals or groups involved with violence, and it is Muslims' civic and religious duty to support law enforcement efforts to protect the lives of all civilians (Derose, 2005).

Since issuance of the fatwa condemning all acts of extremisms against civilians, many Muslim nonprofit organizations emerged to assist law enforcement agencies and to promote diversity in the field of Law Enforcement. The Muslim American Law Enforcement Association (MALEA) is a nonprofit organization providing training, mentorship, and promoting diversity in law enforcement as well as service and education to the Muslim Community and the community at large. It was founded by the Police Lt. Kamil Warraich. According to its website, MALEA does not bear allegiance to any skin color, white, black or brown. They stand for and with the people, accept all religions, and respect the rights of the people to practice any religion or the choice not to follow one (www.maleanj.org).

Another Muslim nonprofit organization that promotes similar values is Muslim Community Patrol & Services (MCPS). It was established in November 2018 to empower Muslims and non-Muslims alike with the skills and knowledge to create safer and more resilient communities. MCPS's mission is to promote the safety and well-being of all New York residents through its patrol services of local neighborhoods, schools, mosques, and houses of worship. They are bridging gaps between the Muslim community and other communities. They also assist New York Police Department (NYPD) by offering translation services (www.muslimcps.org).

Some Muslim nonprofit organizations are also very active in encouraging voting in presidential election. In the recent presidential race between Joe Biden and Donald Trump, a Muslim nonprofit played a big role for Biden to win Michigan. According to Nada Al-Hanooti, Muslim civic engagement nonprofit “Emgage Michigan”, said “I want everyone to know that Muslims played a huge role for Biden to win Michigan and the nation itself" (Ramey, 2020). Al-Hanooti added that Emgage Michigan “originally backed Bernie Sanders for the presidency, but

later switched gears to support Biden and Harris" (Ramey, 2020). To help Biden win Michigan, Emgage Michigan employed volunteers as young as 14 years old and organizers as young as 16 years old to make 1.8 million phone calls and send 3.6 million text messages (Ramey, 2020).

Revenue of Muslim Nonprofit Organizations

Nonprofit organizations in general have many funding sources. Ilma Ibrisevic (2020), a nonprofit writer, defined six main funding sources.

Individual donation can be one time or recurring donations. According to the National Philanthropic Trust individuals gave more than $309.66 billion in 2019 (www.nptrust.org). It is predicted to increase by 4.7% in 2021 according to Philanthropy Outlook (www.philanthropyoutlook.com).

Membership fees are collected when an organization is providing services and programs to its members. The membership model works well for hospitals and universities, who want to give back for their past of beneficiaries.

Selling goods and services is also called 'trading' or earned 'income'. Some small organizations sell t-shirts, mugs, cookies and other items. Large organizations can sell health services like hospitals, tuitions like colleges, legal services like civic organizations, and so on.

In-Kind Donations are not cash donations, but services or goods/products offered and delivered to organizations. Volunteering with time and effort is considered an in-kind donation. It can also include someone delivering a speech or a workshop for free.

Corporate Sponsorships or so called Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) offer donations in exchange with displaying their logo in events, t-shirts, or in social media platforms.

Grants can be offered by local, state, and federal governments as well as private and public foundations. Grants are restricted to certain sectors and type of services/programs. They

are offered for a short-term not to be a permanent revenue stream. Every grant-giving organization has different requirements and conditions depending on locations, services, and circumstances.

Because their annual budget can be hundreds of millions or even billions of dollars, many large nonprofit organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) rely heavily on governmental funding and wealthy individuals (Folger, 2020). For example, Warren Buffet pledged to leave his wealth to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. His lifetime giving was estimated about $25.54 billion. Barron Hilton committed to donate most of his personal wealth to the Hilton Foundation (Armour, 2018).

Large Muslim nonprofit organizations also accept funds from government and from wealthy individuals. As faith-based organizations, they cannot use any portion of Federal grants for religious worship or services, however, they can use government money to support their non-religious social services or to improve their security. In recent years, The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) and other Muslim nonprofit organizations applied to The Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) funds because they received numerous threats from domestic white supremacists and Islamophobes. A February 2021 analysis by the Newlines Institute for Strategy and Policy revealed that between 2008 and 2020, Jewish organizations were awarded a total of $170.3 million in The NSGP funds, while Christian groups were granted $13.9 million, and Muslim organizations received $3 million (Cohen, 2021).

Like other large nonprofit organizations, some large Muslim nonprofit organizations accept donations from wealthy individuals even if they are foreigners. For example, in 2002, CAIR accepted $500,000 from a Saudi prince, Alwaleed bin Talal bin AbdulAziz Alsaud. The donation was used to purchase 3,000 sets of books and tapes about Islam to educate people about

the religion and to support CAIR's media campaign in several leading American newspapers (www.arabianbusiness.com). In 2005, Talal bin Abdulaziz had also gave $20 million gift for both Harvard and Georgetown universities (www.philanthropynewsdigest.org).

In general, most Muslim nonprofit organizations depend heavily on donations by Muslims, regardless of if they are large or small. They accept all types of Islamic charities. Muslims believe they gain great rewards from charities. Charities play a significant role in Islamic societies and have reduced inequalities. Charity in the form of Zakat (obligatory charity) is one of the five pillars of Islam. It is obligatory for every wealthy Muslim. The amount of Zakat required is 2.5 percent of a person's annual income to the needy after meeting the basic requirement of their family. Zakat Al-fitr is another type of obligatory charity that should be given during the holy month of Ramadan. Zakat Al-fitr can be given as money or as food, before the end of Ramadan, to feed needy families during the EID (the three days of celebration of the end of Ramadan).

Charity in the form of Sadaqah (voluntary charity) is a voluntary charity through which Muslims can donate any amount of money at any time. Many Muslims give Sadaqah to aid the poor, assist the incapacitated, support social services, and help other worthy recipients and causes. In Islam it is preferable to give Sadaqah discreetly, but it is also encouraged publicly in some cases such as fund-raising events. Another form of Sadaqah is Waqf, a donation often given in the form of land or property that is either used directly for charitable purposes or used to support charitable activities through the return on its investment (Abu-Arqub & Phillips, 2009).

After 9/11, American Muslims have been hesitant to give any type of charity to Muslim nonprofit organizations. Many of them were afraid that they might be subject to surveillance or

arrested because of links to terrorists or terrorist organizations (Krupa, 2007). Terrorist attacks increasing Islamophobia created a huge challenge for Muslim nonprofit organizations.

External and Internal Challenges Facing Muslim Nonprofit Organizations

Islamophobia

Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) defined Islamophobia as "unreasonable dislike or fear of, and prejudice against, Muslims or Islam." It was first used in 1923 in an article in *The Journal of Theological Studies*. One of the earliest and most influential definitions of Islamophobia was developed by the Runnymede Trust, a British race equality think-tank. They defined Islamophobia as “an unfounded hostility toward Islam, and therefore fear or dislike of all or most Muslims” (Runnymede Trust, 1997).

The recent increase of Islamophobia is a subject of debate. Some commentators like Kiara Alfonseca (2021) view the increase of Islamophobia resulting from the September 11th attacks. Others such as Anthropologist Steven Vertovec (2002) argue that Islamophobia is associated with the increased Muslim presence in society and successes. According to Vertovec (2002) even if a government takes countermeasures such as institutional guidelines and changes to legislation, that by itself will fuel further Islamophobia.

Many studies show that Muslims have been the subject of increased Islamophobia in the United States (Jalalzai, 2011). Reza Aslan, Iranian-American writer and scholar on religion, has said that "Islamophobia has become so mainstream in this country that Americans have been trained to expect violence against Muslims – not excuse it, but expect it" (cited in Freedman, 2012, Para. 6). Islamophobia became a serious social problem during the past two decades. According to Warsi (2020), a new report from the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding indicates Muslims are more likely than any other faith groups to experience religious

discrimination in both institutional and interpersonal settings. Women, often accompanied by their children, are among those who are most often exposed to Islamophobic attacks, including verbal and physical abuse (Abu-Ras & Abu-Bader, 2018). Children have been targets as well. It was reported by the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU) that forty-two percent of U.S. Muslim children in K-12 had been bullied because of their faith (Ochieng, 2017).

After 9/11, the number of anti-Islamic hate crimes in the United States increased dramatically. Gallup polls in 2006 found "Nearly six in 10 Americans think the religion is prone to violent extremism, nearly half regard it unfavorably, and a remarkable one in four admits to prejudicial feelings against Muslims and Arabs alike" (Cohen, 2007, para.1).

Muslims' health is also influenced by social Islamophobia. A study revealed that the perception of an Islamophobic society is trigger more psychological problems, such as depression and nervousness (Kunst, Sam, & Ulleberg, 2017). Jerusha Lamptey, a professor of Islam and ministry at Union Theological Seminary in New York, said, "this anxiety for the American Muslim community is not new. But this last year, it's been wildly out of control" (cited by Zoll, 2017, para. 19).

Terrorist attacks increase Islamophobia

The terms "terrorist" and "terrorism" were used during the French Revolution of the late 18th century (Stevenson, 2010). After 1970, it became widely used due to increase of conflicts in many countries. Michael Walzer (2002), the American political philosopher, defined terrorism as an organized killing of random innocent people to spread fear in a population and force the hand of its political leaders. Alcoke (2019), Deputy Assistant Director of the FBI Counterterrorism Division, defines domestic terrorists as "individuals who commit violent criminal acts in furtherance of ideological goals stemming from domestic issues" (Para. 3).

In the last two decades, the focus was on Islamic extremist acts; however, as Risa Brooks (2011) concluded, “Muslim homegrown terrorism does not at present appear to constitute a serious threat to their welfare” (p. 10). There are other extremist terrorists, such far right, that are more violent. The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) reported on June 2020 that “the majority of all terrorist incidents in the United States since 1994, and the total number of rightwing attacks and plots has grown significantly during the past six years” (Wilson, 2020). Wilson (2020) added that the far right was responsible for two-thirds of attacks and plots in 2019, and 90% of those in 2020.

Even though there are non-Muslim domestic extremists responsible for many attacks, some governments and politicians have focused on Muslim terrorist attacks to achieve their objectives. When there has been a violent act by Muslims, some politicians exploited the event and created propaganda using negative stereotypes of Muslims and Arabs as “volatile, uncivilized “others” who bear “us” ill will” (Corbin, 2017). They also appointed to high-level positions people who support and share that view (Shariatmadari, 2017), so they can promote the framework of Islamophobia. Consequently, American Muslims and their nonprofit organizations experience a high level of racial profiling and surveillance (Aziz, 2011). For example, the Trump administration signed an executive order banning some from Muslim countries entering the United States and one of his justifications was to prevent future Muslim terrorist attacks. This ban negatively affected Muslim nonprofit organizations as well as many American Muslims who expected family members to return home to the US (Taxin, 2017).

Muslim nonprofit organizations are very affected when a terrorist attack occurs by a Muslim criminal. After such terrorist attacks, Islamophobia increases, and Muslim communities

suffer more. MNPOs cannot stop terrorism but they can help to decrease extremism among young Muslims by involving them in activities that serve the community.

The Media Increase Islamophobia

The term “media” is defined as the means of general communication, information, or entertainment in society, such as newspaper, radio, or television (Dictionary.com). Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980), a Canadian Philosopher, was the first who used the term ‘media’ in its modern application. He wrote that “The media are not toys; they should not be in the hands of Mother Goose and Peter Pan executives. They can be entrusted only to new artists because they are art forms” (cited in Ploeg, 2015, para 1). He also wrote that new media should not fall into the hands of managers of big companies and their marketing departments. New Media is safe with artists, because new media are art forms (Ploeg, 2015).

Unfortunately, not all new media falls into hands of artists. After 9/11, some media institutions portrayed Arab and Muslim Americans as the innocent target of hate crimes or as patriotic US citizens (Alsultany, 2013). Such positive portrayals have taken different forms, for example, Arabs or Muslims are publicized as willing to help the United States fight terrorism, or innocent Arabs or Muslims American who are among the victim of post-9/11 hate crimes (Alsultany, 2013). Yet at the same time, other parts of media have consistently broadcast Islamophobia and anti-Muslim prejudice (Anderson, Shahbazi, & Abid, 2021). Many authors have criticized media for promoting Islamophobia. Benn and Jawad (2003) wrote that aggression and anger towards Islam and Muslims are "closely linked to media portrayals of Islam as barbaric, irrational, primitive and sexist" (p. 178). William Russel (2017), author of “Islam: A threat to civilization” stated that “Egorova and Tudor cite European researchers in suggesting

that expressions used in the media such as "Islamic terrorism", "Islamic bombs" and "violent Islam" have resulted in a negative perception of Islam" (p. 156).

Muslims in the media are commonly linked with terrorism (Gerges, 2003). Rao and Shenkman (2018), found that acts of violence by Muslim criminals received twice as much coverage in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* as similar acts by non-Muslims, and that Muslim plots attracted seven-and-a-half times the coverage of non-Muslim plots. Kearns et al.'s (2018) analysis of American news media, found that attacks by Muslim perpetrators in the United States received, on average, 449% more coverage in American media than other attacks. Rao and Shenkman (2018) also added that acts of violence committed by Muslims were more likely reported as "terrorist"/ "terrorism" and "extremism". Smeeta Mishra (2014), Assistant Professor of Journalism, wrote "As for the Muslim men, their stories in The New York Times were primarily about terrorism, militancy, detention and interrogation" (p. 23).

When the mainstream media frame terrorism as a problem primarily of Islam and Muslims, domestic terrorism may be covered and treated as less threatening (Powell, 2011). This increases Islamophobia more by influencing the American public and governmental agencies to consider Muslim communities and their organizations as threats and a menace. Muslim nonprofit organizations need to know the importance of the media and its effect on the image of the Muslim community. Then they need to know tools and methods that allow them to use the media to present their perspective.

The Pandemic

Covid-19 is a global pandemic. According to Jennifer Robinson (2020), a pandemic is a disease outbreak that spreads across countries or continents and affects more people and takes more lives than an epidemic. When it was clear that COVID-19 was a severe illness and

spreading quickly over continents, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that COVID-19 a pandemic.

Nonprofit organizations are critical to communities and during the COVID-19 pandemic, they become more critical. However, the pandemic has caused problems and disruptions at many levels. In May 2020, the Federal Reserve System and the Board of Governors conducted a national survey to collect information on the scope and scale of challenges related to COVID-19. It was reported that nearly three quarters of respondents (74%) indicated COVID-19 is causing significant disruption to the entity they represent and only 42% are expecting to bounce (Choi, Mattiuzzi, & Shrimali, 2020).

The COVD-19 pandemic affected all sectors of life: health, social, economic, and religious. Almost all organizations, for-profits and nonprofits, started operating virtually. Not all jobs can be done from home, however, about half of American workers have worked from home (Guyot & Sawhill, 2020). To prevent the spread of the virus, the government imposed mandatory restrictions, such as assembly bans in many places and quarantines. The assembly bans included also religious gathering (Siddiqi & Graves-Fitzsimmons, 2020). For this reason, many Muslim nonprofit organizations decided that religious ritual practices and social gatherings in mosques or community centers should be suspended or shifted to virtual (Zaru, 2020). However, many mosques' leaders do not have the technological training or paid staff to assist, and some community members do not have internet access (Zaru, 2020).

According to America's Charities Inc., "the cancelation of fundraising galas and partner development conferences further exacerbates the situation and strains their finances, capacity, and resources. The long-term impact to nonprofits' bottom-line will affect the capacity of many nonprofits to serve their constituents in the months, and possibly years, to come" (Ford, 2020,

para 1). Mosques and Islamic schools are among the most impacted by cancelation of fundraising. Most Muslim nonprofit organizations are mosques or community centers, while others have specific responsibilities such as civil rights, legal services, social services, and education. Shaza Khan, leader of Islamic Schools League of America, stated that "one of the biggest worries for many nonprofits, especially Islamic schools, is the impact of their annual fundraisers being canceled. This is often the way many organizations close their budget, and they don't know how they will achieve that now" (cited in Mills, 2020, para. 9).

On the other hand, during the pandemic, many Muslim nonprofit organizations, small and large, were active helping Muslim and non-Muslim communities. Imam Said Mahmood Kauser, leader of congregations in four mosques in Brooklyn, Bronx, Queens, and Long Island, stated that since the start of the pandemic, almost overnight, his mosques have provided upwards of 150 meals a day to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. For those who cannot leave their homes, the mosques would deliver food straight to their homes (Khafagy, 2020). Another example from a larger Muslim nonprofit organization is the Islamic Relief which funded The Majlis-Ash Shura Leadership Council of New York, located in Jamaica, Queens, to distribute $12,000 directly into the hands of its struggling members. Southeast Queens was one of the hardest-hit regions in New York City by the pandemic (Khafagy, 2020).

Some Muslim nonprofit organizations survived during the pandemic and some even offered help to communities and other organizations. However, many other Muslim nonprofit organizations were not able to stay active and some failed to survive. They lost most of their revenue due to restrictions of gathering and not being able to find alternative ways to stay active. Muslim nonprofit organizations need to know how to sustain themselves during a pandemic.

Mindset

Mindset, as defined by the Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.), is a set of assumptions, methods, or notions held by one or more people or groups of people. Carol Dweck (2007) described two categories of mindsets: growth and fixed. In a growth mindset, individuals recognize that their abilities and skills can be developed through effort, good teaching, and persistence. Challenges and problems are considered opportunities to learn and gain knowledge, instead of feeling defeated. The fixed mindset, on the other hand, is the belief that failure is caused by the lack of basic abilities. Individuals who have a fixed mindset believe that their abilities, intelligence, and talents are fixed qualities and thus they cannot be increased or improved (Dweck, 2007). Both mindsets, growth and fixed, exist in Muslim nonprofit organizations. The fixed mindset dominates many Muslim nonprofit organizations.

Other types of mindsets were defined by Starr (2018). He suggested that there are three types of mindsets: authority/power, science/evidence, and systems. Each mindset leads to a different method of thinking and method of deciding. (Table 2)

Table 2

Epistemology Framework as Independent Approaches

Epistemology Framework
How we think about leadership

Mindset	Method *of Thinking*	Method of *Deciding*
Authority/Power	Heuristic Thinking *Rule of Thumb*	Policy, Rules, Trusted Books/Documents Religious Sources, Intimate People
Science/Evidence	Analytic Thinking *Reductionism*	Research, Root Cause, Quantitative/Some Qualitative Methods, Strategic Planning
Systems	Systems Thinking *Expansionism*	Design, Qualitative & Quantitative Methods, Synthesis, Interactive Planning

The method of thinking that an authority/power mindset follows relies on heuristics thinking. A heuristic "is a strategy that ignores part of the information, with the goal of making decisions more quickly, frugally, and/or accurately than more complex methods" (Gigerenzer & Gaissmaier, 2011, p. 454). Decision makers use heuristics to save time and effort through faster cognition and estimated guesses (Gigerenzer & Gaissmaier, 2011). When there is a challenging situation, instead of making choices based on reasoning, authority choices should be followed. This leads to more dependency on an established power hierarchy.

Individuals who hold a science mindset embrace analysis (which means to break into parts) or reductionism. The "reductionist mindset seeks to understand the world as a collection of separable and thus independent units and assumes linear cause-and-effect relationships between these units and that these relationships are reversible" (Rogers et al., 2013, p. 31). For more than 400 years, the science mindset combined with research-based analytic thinking have been the main approach for gaining knowledge and solving problems. This scientific mindset continues to be adopted by individuals and organizations who wish to improve and sustain productivity.

The science mindset emerged because the authority/power mindset failed to provide explanations of current reality. The system mindset emerged because of similar challenges. Not all problems have independent parts and can be reduced to individual parts. In many situations, problems are complex systems, their parts interconnected, and are part of a larger complex system. The method of thinking of individuals who hold a system mindset frames a problem as a sub-system functioning within larger containing systems, and focus on the interactions, interdependencies, patterns, and other system characteristics. Then, their decision process derived from the aim to dissolve the problem and to shift the focus from improving a part to

improving the whole system (Starr, 2018). Embracing the system mindset is the main goal for this dissertation.

Fear and mistrust exist in MNPOs. There are some Muslim immigrant leaders in America who display fear and anxiety toward government because of their immigration and naturalization status or previous experience in their country of origin (Ilham, 2007). As a result, they are not fully integrated, collaborating with local governments, or open to American society. On the other hand, the generation of Muslim immigrant articulate their concerns without fear of reprisal and are open to American society (Ilham, 2007). In addition to fear and anxiety, some Muslim leaders do not accept new ideas and are not willing to listen to different perspectives (Bagby, 2018). They believe that they are the best individuals who are able and capable of preserving the value of the community (Bagby, 2018). Because of this kind of Muslim leaders' mindset, young, talented Muslims are not involved in Muslim communities. The case of the Iranian nonprofit organization, Shabahang, mentioned in the introduction, is one example of many nonprofit organizations that reveal issues between founders and their young generations.

Like many organizations and individuals, many Muslim nonprofit organizations and Muslim leaders deny problems and hope for the best. As Armson (2011) noted, when a messy problem is encountered, we choose to ignore it and hope it goes away. She added that the mindset of "Ignoring it and hoping it will go away" is a sign of lack of adequate tools (Armson 2011). One of the reasons of lacking adequate tools is education. Armson (2011) explained that education accustoms us to deal with problems that have solutions at the back of the book. We enjoy being told that we have the right answer. However, we did not acquire, in school or college, skills and tools to deal with complex and wicked problem. Not having the right tools and skills to solve complex problems causes individuals to procrastinate or ignore them and hope that

they go away. This path of thinking makes situations worse. As Ackoff (2003) stated “in an environment that is increasingly unpredictable and turbulent, doing little or nothing is a sure path to death” (p.204).

Ackoff (2003) considered doing nothing when encountering a complex problem, is a mistake. He called it ‘error of omission’. He also defined another error ‘error of commission’. An error of commission is when organizations or individuals did something that should not have been done; and an error of omission is when organizations or individuals did not do something that should have been done, or lost opportunities. Ackoff (2003) noted that mistakes from errors of commission are detected and corrected or sometimes punishable. This mean, to avoid making mistakes, doing nothing is the best way. Unfortunately, this does not lead to doing the right thing. He stated that “organizations are more likely to get into trouble because of errors of omission than errors of commission” (Ackoff, 2006, p.77).

Muslim nonprofit organizations need to embrace new way of thinking and reject mindsets that are no longer beneficial to their organizations. If they do not change their mindset and replace it with the right mindset capable and able to confront complex challenges, Muslim nonprofit organizations will not survive long term.

Interpersonal conflict

Conflicts are inevitable. Bernard Oladosu Omisore (2014) stated conflicts are inevitable in one's life, in organizations or even between nations. Hoban (1996) defines a conflict as a disagreement in opinions between people or groups, due to differences in attitudes, beliefs, values, or needs. Differences in characteristics, personalities, situations, all lead to conflict. Therefore, conflicts exist any given organization.

Researchers offer a variety of reasons why organizations cease to exist. Some connected the failure to conflicts due to age and size of the organizations. The process of establishing a new organization has a price and it likely ends with worry, inefficiency, and conflict. As Stinchcombe (1965) stated, "the process of inventing new roles, the determination of their mutual relations and of structuring the field of rewards and sanctions so as to get the maximum performance, have high costs in time, worry, conflict, and temporary inefficiency" (p. 148). As organizations age, they learn how to restructure themselves and are less likely to die (Hannan & Freeman, 1984).

Other scholars elaborated more on the failure of organizations due to conflicts and stated that they often struggle with dual identities developed when members combine two or more different conflicting dimensions that are not normally expected to go together. Disagreement about organizational identity "is a struggle . . . over the very soul of the institution" (Albert & Whetten, 1985, p. 272). Kreutzer and Jäger (2010) conducted a study on conflict of dual identities between volunteers and managers (paid employees). They stated that there was no disagreement about the content of the mission itself, but how to reach those goals. Misunderstandings and conflicts emerged from the differing understandings about organizational identity (volunteer identity vs. managerial identity) and from emphasizing elements of one identity over the other. Kreutzer and Jäger (2010) wanted, through their research, to make nonprofit leaders mindful of how conflict between volunteers and paid staff might arise because of different organizational identities and that this matter requires specific attention.

There are various opinions concerning conflicts. Traditional thinking holds that conflict must be avoided as it reflects malfunction within the group and all conflicts must be avoided at any costs (Omisore, 2014). On the other hand, modern views on conflict suggest it is a natural and inevitable outcome of people working together in groups and teams. Thus, it need not

necessarily be viewed negatively, but rather positively as a potential force in contributing to the performance of individuals (Robbins, 2005). Conflict is seen as not only a positive force, but also necessary for an individual to perform effectively. This recent view has categorized conflict into three types: task conflict (disagreement about what to do), process conflict (disagreement about how to do it), and relationship conflict (personal disagreement) (Robbins, 2005). Conflict at the desired level can inspire creativity and creates positive work environments. This type of conflict is called functional or constructive conflict. One of the main benefits of constructive conflict is that it gives its members a chance to identify the problems and see the opportunities. Also, it can inspire new ideas, learning, and growth among individuals (Kinicki & Kreitner, 2008).

However, conflict at an undesired level can be harmful and dysfunctional for the organization (Leung, 2009). The undesirable level of conflict is called dysfunctional or destructive conflict. Dysfunctional conflict leads to a decline in communication, performance of a group, and higher stress (Freund, 2019). This type of conflict is characterized by competing for individual interests overriding the larger interest of the business. Employees sabotage others' work, either intentionally or through subtle, conflict-motivated disinterest in teamwork (Kinicki & Kreitner, 2008).

Muslim nonprofit organizations need to keep conflicts at the desired level in order to survive and continue their missions. To do so, they need to acquire adequate methods and skills to minimize the effect of destructive conflicts and promote constructive conflict.

Resilience through Sustaining Credibility, Trustworthiness, and Agility in MNPOs

Resilience in Muslim nonprofit organization

At the organizational level, resilience refers to the ability to respond effectively to disruptive change and transform challenges into opportunities. Resilient organizations have the

capacity to absorb adversity and adapt to challenges in order to survive and continue functioning. The definition of organizational resilience is the capability of an organization to adapt to the surrounding environment and being able to effectively develop new competences to absorb and manage environmental unpredictability (Coutu, 2002; Hamel & Valikangas, 2003; McDonalds, 2006).

Few studies examine resilience in Muslim individuals and communities, and even fewer articles relate to building resilience for Muslim nonprofit organizations. The following are two examples related to building resilience in Muslim Communities, however, not at the organizational level. The first example is about building resilience among Muslim refugees and immigrants and the second is about fighting radicalism in Muslim community by building community resiliency.

Nazia Khan (2020), an executive board member for the local Muslim nonprofit Community Support Services (MCSS) in Austin, Texas, stated that her nonprofit organization builds resilience in the community by providing aid, shelter and other services to new immigrants, refugees, and victims of domestic violence. These types of help are considered a social support to enhance resilience in the lives of immigrants and refugees. Sleijpen, Boeije, Kleber, and Mooren, (2015) conducted a meta-analysis of sources of resilience in refugees. They found six reoccurring sources of resilience: social support, acculturation strategies, education, religion, avoidance, and hope. The authors demonstrated that these methods of resilience help refugees by increasing freedom from harm, having control of their sense of selves, preserving their senses of self-esteem, maintaining healthy relationships, and minimizing stress. Such support in improving resilience in refugees has allowed them to create nonprofit organizations that help refugees. For instance, Refugees help Refugees (RHR), a 501 (c)(3) organization,

founded in 2002 by Somali refugees in Western New York, is one of many Muslim nonprofit organizations that help other refugees to settle in American society (www.rhrroc.org).

Another article that exhibits building resilience in Muslim communities, but not at the organizational level, has been described through a pilot program Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) created by the Department of Homeland Security and at the direction of the Obama administration to prevent violent extremism domestically. In August 2011, Minneapolis and St. Paul were selected to participate in this pilot program because they have been a focus of overseas terror recruiting by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Al-Shabab. Young Somali Minnesotans were recruited to fight overseas on behalf of these terrorist organizations. The plan for the Minnesota CVE program was developed and implemented by the local U.S. Attorney's Office, with input from 15 Somali Americans appointed to serve on the Building Community Resilience Committee (United States Attorney's Office, April 2017).

When the Somali community and Minnesota Council on American-Islamic Relations learned about the CVE, they condemned the plan, arguing the Somali community was being unfairly targeted and domestic terrorism was more likely to be carried out by white American males than by Somali Americans (Sperber, 2015). However, when Erroll Southers and Justin Hienz (2015), from the University of Southern California's National Center of Excellence for Risk and Economic Analysis of Terrorism Events in partnership with the DHS Science and Technology Directorate, evaluated the Minneapolis CVE model, they found that despite the negative perception of CVE within the community, Somali-born residents of Minnesota recognized that radicalization is a problem for the local community and required an intervention by the community to improve the situation. A series of neighborhood meetings with religious groups, elders, business leaders, social workers, civil rights representatives, community groups,

youth, and law enforcement were conducted to provide input regarding community-led CVE program. It was revealed that the community wanted to be the primary component to prevent violent extremism and four root causes were highlighted that contributed to terrorist recruiting: disengaged youth, no connection to religious leaders, problems in school, and a lack of positive social opportunities outside the classroom (Southers & Hienz, 2015). The CVE evaluation research concluded by acknowledging the work in Minneapolis was far from over. The report encouraged local police and community groups to continue coordination and collaboration to eliminate the danger of terrorist recruitment of Muslim youth (Southers & Hienz, 2015).

Community groups that include all type of Muslim nonprofit organizations must be resilient in order to continue collaborating with law enforcement agencies. However, Muslim individuals or Muslim communities cannot build resilience without Muslim nonprofit organizations that are resilient. Unfortunately, there are few articles at the Muslim organizational level that provides a conceptual model for building resilience specifically for Muslim nonprofit organizations. Development of Muslim nonprofit organizational resilience relies on credibility, trustworthiness, and agility.

Credibility in Muslim Nonprofit Organizations

Credibility refers to the quality of being believed or trusted (Collins English Dictionary, 2020). Lemonis (2020) stated that a credible organization is believable, reliable, and plausible. Lemonis (2020) added that "A credible organization is the bedrock of an owner-employee and a company-client relationship where all parties are confident that promises will be fulfilled." Flanagin and Metzger (2008) stated that credibility has two key components: trustworthiness and expertise. Trustworthiness is based more on subjective factors such as psychological characteristics of human nature, social structure, social institutions, or social practices. It also can

include objective measurements such as established reliability. Expertise can be similarly subjectively perceived, but also includes relatively objective characteristics of the source or message (e.g., credentials, certification, or information quality) (Flanagin & Metzger, 2008). Other scholars argue that the concept of organizational credibility and organizational reputation are closely interrelated, and that credibility is derived from reputation (Goldberg & Hartwick, 1990; Fombrum & Van Riel, 2004; Hansen & Christensen, 2007).

Stakeholders are more loyal to organizations which maintain credibility (Lotich, 2021). However, if people discover or even suspect that an organization has been exaggerating the truth, organizational credibility may be quickly lost (Chan & Takagi, 2011). Hovland, Janis, and Kelley (1953) noted that trust has been a core construct in many conceptualizations of credibility. However, Tseng and Fogg (1999) point out that credibility and trust should not be considered synonymous. Trust is different from credibility because "trust indicates a positive belief about the perceived reliability of, dependability of, and confidence in a person, object, or process" (Tseng & Fogg, 1999, p. 41).

Like other organizations, Muslim nonprofit organization can quickly lose their credibility if stakeholders suspect that they have issues such as extremist connection, are not able to cope with internal or external conflicts, or any other problems. Because Muslim nonprofit organizations are recognized as a public charity by the US federal government, they need credibility to keep their tax-exempt status, which also contributes to being credible. Otherwise, they can also lose many benefits that come with that status.

After 9/11, American Muslim nonprofit organizations faced challenges to maintain credibility. Instead of focusing on their missions and services, they have been forced to spend much time, energy, and money maintaing their credibility. There were required to spend

additional efforts, resources, and time on transparency of their services and operations so they comply with US government guidelines and are protected from designation as a terror or extremist supporting group (Jolly, 2005).

Trustworthiness in Muslim Nonprofit Organizations

Trustworthiness was defined by Caldwell and Clapham (2003) as the antecedent to accrued perceptual experiences that leads one to trust another person, institution, or organization. It is “a precondition for productivity and meaning in work” (Hodson, 2004, p. 433). Occasionally the terms ‘trustworthiness’ and ‘trust’ are used interchangeably, however, they are different concepts. Trust is defined as ‘‘the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based upon the expectation that the other party will perform a particular action important to the trustor’’ (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995, p.712). Trust is also defined as "an expression of faith and confidence that a person or an institution will be fair, reliable, ethical, competent, and nonthreatening" (Carnevale, 1995, p. xi). Trust is a psychological construct or state of mind built through the demonstration of trustworthiness (Cho & Ringquist, 2010).

Hardin (2006) noted that, if a trustee does not have the ability to do what a trustor expects, trust might not emerge. When people observe a trust violation, such as fraud, deceit, or exploitation, they lower their expectations of future behavior and reduce trust (Kim, Dirks, & Cooper, 2009). Organizations should fight for trust because it is crucial for their survival (Jiang, 2016). In addition, “Trust takes years to build, seconds to break, and forever to repair” said Turnbull (2019). It takes so much time to build trust, but within seconds, it can be lost.

In the current societal context, Muslim nonprofit organizations are more vulnerable to loss of trustworthiness than any other faith-based organization. For example, any terrorist attack by a Muslim criminal or any aggression by a local or federal government against an American

Muslim nonprofit organization will lead to Islamophobia, which will diminish trustworthiness between the organization and the Muslim community particularly due to fear that they are associated with terrorist activity.

Regardless of whether the fear is realistic or neurotic, it affects trustworthiness of Muslim nonprofit organizations. The fear terrorism might strike again, from perceptions within broader American society, have put Muslim organizations into a tenuous situation. Gross, Aday and Brewer (2004) studied the effect of 9/11 on American life. They found that the nation's sense of social trust was impaired by 9/11. They revealed that persons exposed to television news coverage of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks experienced deterioration in levels of trust towards other individuals (Gross, Aday, and Brewer, 2004).

Due to reports of actual Muslim terrorism, Muslim individuals started to show doubt and became less truthful with their nonprofit organizations. For example, after 9/11, instead of contributing to nonprofit organizations, Muslims started to reallocate their Zakat to informal channels such as family ties overseas, which ultimately disrupted American Muslim organizations' revenues with which they carry out their missions (Hempel & Leak, 2005). Other individuals preferred to satisfy their religious obligation by providing a service to needy people instead of donating money to Muslim nonprofit organizations. For instance, the Muslim mentioned earlier who owns a restaurant in Dallas, TX. After 9/11, he did not trust anyone and start feeding homeless instead donating his money to local Muslim nonprofit organizations (Hempel & Leak, 2005).

To address the fear of Muslim individuals afraid to donate their Zakat and donations to an organization that has connection to extremists, several Muslim organizations have emerged to build the trust between Muslim community and MNPOs. Their mission is to collect donations as

cash, stocks, real estate, or assets and donates on behalf of the Muslim givers the collected Zakat and donations to Muslim nonprofit organizations that have clear mission, legal compliances, and no connection to extremists. The American Muslim Community Foundation (AMCF) is one of the new organizations that provides such services (https://amuslimcf.org/).

To be realistic, not all fear of terrorism is neurotic. There is exaggeration of extreme worry and obsessive thoughts about terrorism attacks. Baumeister and Vohs (2007) defined Neuroticism as a degree to which a person experiences the world as distressing, threatening, and unsafe. In fact, in recent years, there were Muslims who believed that they are too nice to commit a crime or harm a person. But it turned out that because they were heavily influenced by a terrorist organization's literature and lectures, they committed crimes and killed many innocent people. For example, the Boston Marathon bombing suspects Tamerlan Tsarnaev (26 years old) and his brother Dzhokhar Tsarnaev (19 years old). They were accused of killing three people and injuring 264 with homemade pressure-cooker bombs at the marathon's crowded finish line on April 15, 2013. Tamerlan was killed three days later following a gunfight with police and Dzhokhar was arrested while he was hiding in a boat in the suburb of Watertown, MA (Valdmanis, 2015). Dzhokhar Tsarnaev was described as normal and popular among fellow students. Larry Aaronson, a retired history teacher at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, where Dzhokhar graduated in 2011, said "…everything about him was wonderful. He was completely outgoing, very engaged, he loved the school…Dzhokhar was not overtly political or religious…. He spoke and acted like any other high school kid" (DiBlasio, 2013). Such incidents have left many American citizens with legitimate reasons to suspect Muslims and to fear that they have ties to terrorist organizations. MNPOs should not deny the existence of such incidents because doing so will affect their credibility and trustworthiness.

Agility in Muslim Nonprofit Organizations

Agility is the ability to deal with new situations or changes quickly and successfully (Cambridge Dictionary n.d.). Agility was first mentioned in 1982 as “the capacity to react quickly to rapidly changing circumstances” (Brown & Agnew, 1982, p. 29). It means also abandoning old ways of doing things (Goldman, Nagel, & Priess, 1995). In recent years, agility has become the topic of interest of many scholars. Various definitions have been proposed. Lu and Ramamurthy (2011) argue that “organizational agility is a firm-wide capability to deal with changes that often arise unexpectedly in business environments via rapid and innovative responses that exploit changes as opportunities to grow and prosper” (p. 933). Sindhwani and Malhotra (2017) noted that agility is “the capability of surviving and prospering in a competitive environment of continuous and unpredictable change by reacting quickly and efficiently in changing markets, driven by "customer-defined" products and services” (p. 467). Nejatian et al. (2018) report that agility is “[…] the ability of an enterprise to survive and prosper in a competitive and unpredictable environment by responding quickly and effectively to any kind of change—anticipated or unpredicted—in proper ways and due time” (p. 202).

Overall, the main factor of agility is responding to changes in proper ways and exploiting and taking advantages of changes (Sharifi & Zhang, 1999). That is why Agility is considered one of the main survival factors in unpredictable environment. Smith (2018) states,

> Nonprofits can no longer achieve success by setting sail on a 5-year strategic plan that is revisited just once a year. Nor can organizations afford the time to run most decisions up and down the chain of command. The unpredictability of our world today demands increasing agility to thrive – and perhaps even to survive… Our world is not only moving at a much faster pace, it is accelerating and, at the same time, becoming more and more unpredictable. VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity) is an apt description. In short, it’s crazy out there! This unpredictability is precisely what is driving the need for greater agility (https://socialimpactarchitects.com/nonprofit-agility/).

The challenges that Muslim nonprofit organizations faced recently required them to act quickly and effectively to survive. However, with complex challenges, MNPOs found it difficult to be agile and to recover quickly. For example, in efforts to comply with U.S. government guidelines and be protected from designation as terror-supporting groups, Muslim nonprofit organizations were required to spend most of their time and resources on transparency efforts rather than their missions, services, and operations (Jolly, 2005). Under these circumstances, many Muslim nonprofit organizations were unable to adapt and change quickly to recuperate. Only large Muslim nonprofit organizations that had the capacity to adapt quickly to changes were able to continue functioning.

Covid-19 also affected agility not only in Muslim nonprofit organizations, but also throughout the faith-based nonprofit sector and millions of for-profit businesses worldwide. As millions of people lost their jobs and worship places were forced to stop meeting face-to-face, faith-based organizations have been forced to cancel their usual activities and fundraising events. In early April 2020, *Charity Navigator* partnered with *Reuters News* contacted 4,598 nonprofit representatives to conduct a survey on the impact of COVID-19. They found that 83% of respondents were suffering financial hardship, 64% of respondents reported that they had to cut back on their program services, and 27% of respondents had to lay-off staff. These nonprofits were unable to practice agility in their management.

On the other hand, organizations that were able to promote agility during COVID-19, shifting to online and introducing new services and program virtually, were able to survive and prosper. According to an April 2021 survey by the Charities Aid Foundation of America (CAF America), where nearly 500 charities in 129 countries participated, agility has been one of the most critical factors to improve resilience in nonprofits organization. During the first 12 months

of the pandemic, 61 percent of respondents stated that they shifted to online programming, 54 percent had adopted new fundraising strategies, and 53 percent had introduced new services and programs.

Systems thinking: Philosophy and Methodology

Organizations may be understood as complex systems composed of interconnected elements including people within multiple nonlinear dimensions (Crichton, Ramsey, & Kelley, 2009). Organizations are complex social systems that serve three purposes: their own, those of their stakeholders, and those of the wider systems of which they are part (Ackoff, 1981). Boado (2014) added that a social system is complex because it causes human relationships to interact in many ways. What makes social systems more complex is that each problem is unique and thus there is no universal formula to resolve such problems. According to Snowden and Boone (2007), the best approach to complex situation is rather than trying to control the situation by implementing a course of action, it is best to be patient, look for patterns, and encourage a solution to emerge.

Holding the premise that nonprofit organizations are social complex systems, Ackoff (1981) proposed a different approach to assessing them. He argued that organizations are no longer living in “machine age”; they are living in the “systems age” instead. He added that before World War II, leaders and mangers tackled problems with machine-age thinking. This mechanistic approach was based on reductionism, analysis, and determinism. This mode of thinking can be summarized in three steps: 1. Decompose the thing to be explained. 2. Explain the behavior of each part separately. 3. Aggregate the explanations into an explanation of the whole (Ackoff, 2010). After World War II, the machine age began to give way to the systems age (Ackoff, 1974). The increasing interconnectedness of the problems and the Human Activity

System led to the need for a new world view/ paradigm (Pourdehnad, Wexler, & Wilson, 2011). The new system-age thinking is based on synthesis, expansionism, and emergent properties that arise from the synergy between the systems and their subsystems. This new thinking can be summarized in three steps that are complimentary: 1. Identify a containing whole (system) of which the thing to be explained. 2. Explain the behavior of the containing as whole. 3. Then, explain the behavior and function of the part within its containing whole (Ackoff, 2010).

Systems thinking is a discipline to understand situations including world events and to find better solutions to social complex problem. Richmond (1994) defined systems thinking as "the art and science of making reliable inferences about behavior by developing an increasingly deep understanding of the underlying structure" (p. 6). Systems thinking is a mode of thinking and sets of approaches informed by this mode that can help organizations adopt a broad perspective that includes seeing overall structures, patterns, and cycles in systems, rather than seeing only specific events in isolation. Senge (2006) defines systems thinking as

> a discipline for seeing wholes. It is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for seeing patterns of change rather than static "snapshots". It is a set of general principles...and systems thinking is a sensibility - for the subtle interconnectedness that gives living systems their unique character... Systems thinking is the antidote to this sense of helplessness that many feel... (pp. 68-69).

Systems Thinking Elements

The main goal of systems thinking as a discipline is to help understand and approach systemic problems from a broad perspective. There are some questions asked by systems thinkers that could be a good foundation for understanding issues in social systems. Weinberg (2001), asks three systems thinking questions that could articulate the problem more accurately: 1) Why do I see what I see? 2) Why do things stay the same? 3) Why do things change? To solve

problem for long term, Balle (1996), suggested three things: 1) Detect patterns, not just events, 2) use circular causality (feedback loops), and 3) Focus on the relationships, rather than the parts.

According to Donella Meadows (2008), there are three major components of systems: Elements, Interconnections, and Purpose. Elements are the "actors" in a system. They are the official personnel for any active or passive participant in the system. Interconnections bring the function of a system to life. Many interconnections are flows of information and indicators. This flow of information is an interconnection that affects decision-making. Purpose is not expressed through an announcement, but when watching what a system does, purpose will be found. Purpose has the greatest impact on system behavior. If the elements and interconnections stay the same, but the purpose changes, the whole system will change.

There are other expressions that deepen understanding of systems thinking. One of these expressions, according to Meadows (2008), is feedback loops. This feedback loop may be positive/reinforcing (such as compound interest on a savings account) or negative/balancing (such as a home thermostat). Meadows recommends asking the following questions to double check data for loops. Will the driving factors really unfold this way? If so, is the system going to react in the way I think? What is affecting the driving factors? The first question is a guess. The second question's intent is to ask how good the approach to the problem is. The third question is looking for system boundaries and other factors affecting the system.

Every system is limited by different constraints. One constraint, however, will be the strongest and can lead to a bottleneck. A bottleneck is defined as the point of extreme congestion that causes delay and postponement within a system (Sparks, 2017). As Eliyahu Goldratt (1992) points out, the performance of any system is limited by the output at the bottleneck and as long as the bottleneck issue is not addressed, nothing will change.

On many occasions, too much effort is devoted to a problem without reaching the desired result. Meadows (2008) introduced leverage as a skill to influence a system with limited time and energy while maximizing profits. She defined three things that are the most important to leverage in a system. First, changing the rules. This can help define what is possible within the system. Second, building in self-organization. This means designing a system in a way that it will improve naturally over time. Third, the most important form of leverage, improving the information flow. We can reflect more accurately on our progress if we use accurate measuring tools like feedback loops. These loops examine information in circulation, not in a linear nature (Meadows 2008).

How do we use the knowledge gained about bottlenecks, leverage, and feedback loops? When a bottleneck is identified, we can dedicate time and effort to implement the best leverage until the bottleneck is no longer an issue. Then we measure our improvement with feedback loops. Finally, we can move on to address the next bottleneck (Meadows 2008).

Systems Thinking - Interactive Planning Model

Interactive Planning is one of the models of systems thinking applied to improve communities and nonprofit organizations. There are numerous models applied to communities that were developed by scholars. For example, the Sensitivity Model (SM) was applied to develop the community of Ping-Ding in Taiwan (Chan & Huang, 2004). The model resolved the conflict between environmental conservation and the development of a local tourism industry. The Sensitivity Model was developed by Vester and Hesler in 1975 (Vester & Hesler, 1982). Another model, the Transdisciplinary Methodology, was used to build community resilience against disasters that cause food insecurity for the Muzarabani district in Zimbabwe (Mavhura, 2017). The term trans-disciplinarity was used for the first time in 1970 by the French

psychologist and structuralist Jean Piaget (Bernstein, 2001). The Transdisciplinary Model engages different disciplines to come up with holistic approach (Wang, 2009).

What makes Ackoff's model different is that other models focus on community without considering differences in race, religion, or nationality. Ackoff's systems approach, however, considers different sub-committees within the larger community. Unlike other communities in the world, communities in the US are highly diverse. There are Asian, European, African, and South American communities in almost all big cities. Within each community, there are many nationalities. For instance, the Muslim community includes Arabs from the Middle East, Arabs from North Africa, Asians, African, African American, Iranians, and others. By giving an opportunity to each sub-committee to plan for solving their own problems in their own way, they could learn more from their own mistakes and achieve more. As Ackoff (1970) said "blacks could learn more from their own failures than they could from white successes" (p. 62).

Another aspect that makes Ackoff's model unique is that other models are designed and executed by the government with limited participation by the community. Ackoff's model can be readily designed and applied by nonprofit organizations and their leaders. As he stated "they (referring to two nonprofit organizations, Young Great Society (YGS) and the Mantua Community Planners (MCP)) and their leaders, Herman Wrice and Andy Jenkins, are by far the most significant development forces in Mantua" (Ackoff, 1970, p. 64). Nonprofit organizations' leaders have commitments to their communities beyond those of governmental leaders. As a result, YGS and the MCP had performed great achievement in Mantua community.

Interactive Planning can be better understood by comparing three types of planning: re-activist, in-activist, and pre-activist (Ackoff, 1974). Re-active planners want to return to 'golden age'. They believe in the past and they fail to accept current reality. Inactive planners want to

keep things as they are, avoiding real change. Pre-active Planners seek to predict or anticipate what is going to happen to prepare for it. To Ackoff, these types of planning are illogical. Interactive planners believe that the future of an organization can be affected by what the stakeholders do now and by taking into account the past, the present, and the future. Interactive planning was developed to design a desirable present by continuously closing the gap between where the organization is and where it would most like to be (Ackoff, 2001). He also believed that the process of interactive planning is the most important product because it solves problems by altering the environment to eliminate the problem. In other words, he stated, "to dissolve a problem is to design the system or its environment so that the problem is eliminated and cannot reappear" (Ackoff, 1974).

Ackoff's methodology to design interactive plans was based on three principles (Ackoff, 1981, 1999b). 1) Participative principle: If possible, all stakeholders should participate in the different phases of the planning process. By being involved in the process, stakeholders understand the role they can play in the organization. 2) Continuity principle: Because values change and unexpected events occur, plans need continual revision (planning becomes interactive and continually evolve). 3) Holistic principle: Because of the importance of the interactions between the parts of a system, the plan should include all levels of stakeholders if possible.

Using these three principles, Ackoff developed two parts: Idealization and Realization. Idealization has two phases: Phase 1) formulating the mess and Phase 2) ends-planning. Realization has 4 phases: Phase 3) means planning, Phase 4) resource planning, Phase 5) design of the implementation, and Phase 6) design of controls (Ackoff, 2001).

Phase 1) Formulating the mess: There are three types of study to formulate the mess: 1) Systems analysis - giving a detailed picture of the organization, what it does, its stakeholders, and relationships with its environment. 2) Obstruction analysis - setting out any obstacles to corporate development. 3) Reference projections - extrapolating (estimate or conclude) the organization's present performance in order to predict future performance. Synthesizing or combining the results of these three types of study yields a 'reference scenario,' which is a formulation of the mess that the organization currently finds itself.

Phase 2) Ends planning is about 'where to go'. It involves the purposes to be pursued. This phase has five steps: 1) Mission statement: Outline the organization's ultimate ideals 2) Help the stakeholders prepare a comprehensive list of the desired properties to be built into the system. 3) 'Idealized design' is the most essential item of Ackoff's approach. It is a design with which stakeholders would replace the existing design (no longer exist "destroyed last night"). This approach generates maximum creativity among those involved. 4) Formulation of closest approximation/estimation to this design that is believed to be attainable. 5) Identify the gaps between the approximation and the current state of the system.

Phase 3) Means planning is about 'how to get there.' Policies and procedures help to close the gap between the desired future, the idealized design, and the current situation of the organization. Creativity is needed to discover appropriate means to take the organization toward the desirable future created by its stakeholders.

Phase 4) Resource planning involves 'what's needed to get there'. There are five resources should be considered: Money, Equipment (Capital good), People, Materials, supplies, energy and services (consumables), and Data, information, knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.

Phase (5 & 6) Implementation and control entails ‘doing it’ and learning from what happens. The outcome is fed back into the planning process for learning and improving purposes.

The main philosophy behind Interactive planning is to assist all the stakeholders in designing a desirable future from themselves. As Ackoff (1974) stated that people should be given the opportunity to plan for themselves. This statement is my strategy and guideline to help and sustain Muslim nonprofit organizations to accomplish their mission.

The goal is to implement all phases of Interactive Planning (including formulating the mess, identifying stakeholders, and then engaging them to re-design their organization) thereby increasing resilience in Muslim nonprofit organizations. However, because this project requires many months, if not years, to be completed, we focused only on the first phase that is formulating the mess and then proposing a systems thinking learning model. The main intention of formulating the mess is to identify and recognize, through diagraming, the whole picture of complexity that will help MNPOs change their mindset and embrace systems thinking to approach their complex problems. The main goal of proposing systems thinking learning model is to allow MNPOs to understand, learn, and practice systems thinking tools and methods to solve their own complex problems.

CHAPTER 3: SYSTEMS APPROACH TO SUSTAIN MNPOs

In Chapter 1, I argued that MNPOs have a general problem defined as inadequate resiliency due to inadequate credibility, trustworthiness, and agility in an environment full of complex problems. These challenges include, but are not limited to, influences of Islamophobia trigged by terrorist attacks, media reporting on Muslim communities, the pandemic (COVID-19), and the effect of differences in mindsets and of resulting interpersonal conflicts within MNPOs. MNPO leaders and members cannot ignore such complex problems hoping they will go away. Furthermore, I argue that leaders and members cannot solve these complex problems by applying traditional improvement methods. These complex, or wicked, problems are unprecedented and have caused many MNPOs to cease functioning.

These wicked problems have affected MNPOs' credibility. With reduced credibility, MNPOs will not be seen as reliable by the government or their communities. More rules and regulations will be applied to them, and instead of focusing on their missions to serve the Muslim community, MNPOs will have to spend time, energy, and money to keep their credibility.

These wicked problems have affected MNPOs' trustworthiness. With less trustworthiness, MNPOs will struggle to collect donations from their communities or charitable institutions. Fearing ties with terrorist organizations, donors will look for different receivers unaffiliated with Muslim organizations. As result, the revenue of MNPOs will decrease along with their services, and performance.

These wicked problems have affected MNPOs' agility. With decreased agility, MNPOs will struggle to adapt to new changes and challenges. Any organization that is not fast to understand the current situation and act quickly with the right course of action, will not survive

in the long term. This is what happened to many MNPOs during the COVID-19 pandemic. They were not agile in adapting to new challenges, so they ceased to operate. To maintain credibility, trustworthiness, agility, and other measures of resiliency in an environment characterized by complex and wicked problems, MNPOs need to change their way of approaching, understanding, navigating, and solving their problems. These problems are no longer simple or complicated as they used to be, they are complex and wicked problems.

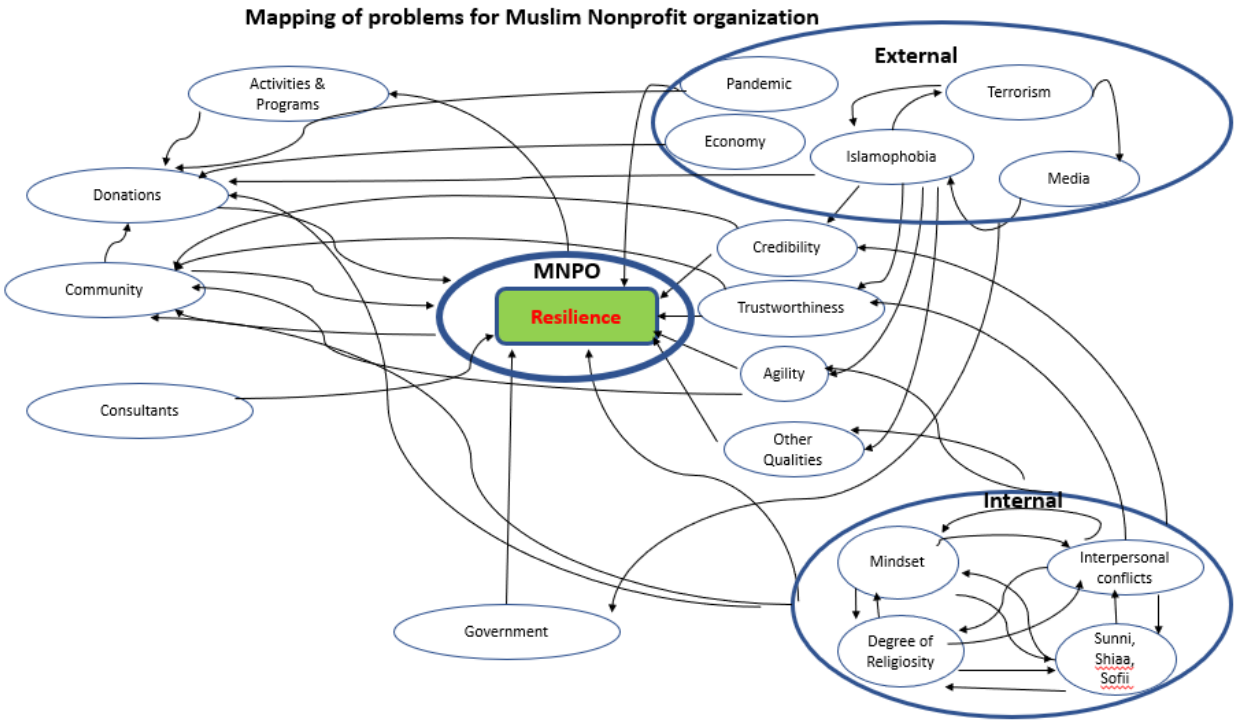
Formulating the Mess for an MNPO

Muslim nonprofit organizations are not confronted with a single complex problem but many interconnected complex system problems, which may be referred to as a mess (Ackoff, 1999). In a messy situation, everything is interconnected and there are no clear starting points. As it was defined by Ackoff (1999), a mess is a complex system of interacting problems. Therefore, it is important to explore the mess thoroughly before deciding on actions for improvement.

Formulating the mess is one of the methodologies in systems thinking; presenting a map or influence diagram of complex situations is one of the systems tools. It allows one to see the whole picture of the mess. Armson (2011) noted that “diagrams are a brilliant way of building systems thinking into everyday thinking skills” (p. 164). Figure 7 presents a diagram of the messy situation in which MNPOs operate. It reveals the complex web of interconnection between parts that influence Muslim nonprofit organizations.

Figure 7

Mess Diagram for Muslim Nonprofit Organization



In this formulation, there are many factors (the mess) that affect the resiliency of MNPOs. These factors connect to each other and inform or influence each other directly and indirectly. The group of external factors connect to each other and form closed loops. For example, when there is a terrorist attack by one or more Muslims on members of a local non-Muslim community in the US, some media report the event in a way that triggers or increases Islamophobia. Increased Islamophobia triggers retaliation that leads to additional terrorist attacks. External events such as the pandemic, a challenging economy and Muslim terrorism negatively affect credibility, trustworthiness, agility and other factors which affect MNPOs resiliency.

The same is true for internal problems. Internal factors are also connected to each other and form closed loops. For example, Muslims who hold different ideologies, e.g., Suni and Shiaa, vary in the degree of understanding and practice of the religion. Because they hold different mindsets, interpersonal conflicts emerge. With interpersonal conflicts, credibility, trustworthiness, agility, and other qualities are negatively affected, as is resiliency.

Positive influences on resiliency can come from Muslim communities, consultants, and support from the government. When an MNPO is supported and sustained by a Muslim community, financially and via other means, its resiliency increases. When government makes a regulation that supports MNPOs or any type of aid, it will boost resiliency. When a consultant provides the appropriate consultation that improve MNPO performance, resiliency will increase.

In summary, based on the analysis and synthesis of the current reality portrayed in Figure 7, elements that might improve resiliency of MNPOs are failing due to influences of external and internal complex problems. If this situation continues, the outcomes for the MNPOs are likely to get worse. For example, the influence diagram shows no internal personal responsibility within the Muslim community for the situation they face, for any self-development of resiliency or for controlling conflicts, credibility, trust, or agility. This may be because there is no evidence of positive models or heroes to emulate, no success stories to give hope, and no community cultures to build or renew resiliency through social learning. Rather, blame for inadequate resiliency is attributed to external forces of health, finance and the media which report real events, but which contribute to decreased resilience. Moreover, the presence of different Muslim ideologies is a belief conflict that cannot be controlled or tolerated sufficiently. As a complex system problem, improvement of any part or group of parts will not lead to improvement of the whole. Only a redesign of the system is likely to produce the level of resiliency desired and necessary.

Dissertation Hypothesis

To address the challenges of the general problem, in Chapter 1, I presented a declarative hypothesis. *If* leaders and stakeholders of Muslim nonprofit organizations (MNPOs) adopt the mindset and approach of systems thinking with consideration of the influences of the internal and external context/environment, *then* their formulation of problems and methods of problem solving will improve, leading to increased resiliency including increased credibility, trustworthiness, and agility. In this chapter, I follow my hypothesis by describing a systems model I propose as an alternative design to the current reality. Specifically, I propose that this model will lead to an outcome of increased resiliency by learning to adopt systems thinking. In this chapter, I explain the model. In Chapter 4, I explain how the model applies directly to leaders and stakeholders of MNPOs.

Learning Systems Thinking to Increase Resiliency Model

Muslim nonprofit organizations are social systems. A system is a model that, in general, can be represented by inputs, transformation processes, outputs, and feedback (The Open University, 2011). In the following section, I present four images showing iterations of how I generated the systems model for learning to adopt systems thinking and the outcomes that the model predicts in MNPOs.

As presented (Figure 8), the most basic model has four elements: the input (also called transformed resources) can be material, information, or people who go through a transformation process including a change in physical or psychological characteristics or accommodation of people, or ownership and location of material or information. The output is the result of the transformation process and includes goods or services to be delivered. The feedback loop

monitors the system by adjusting the inputs and transformation processes that are used to achieve desired outputs.

Figure 8

Inputs, Transformation Process, Outputs, and Feedback

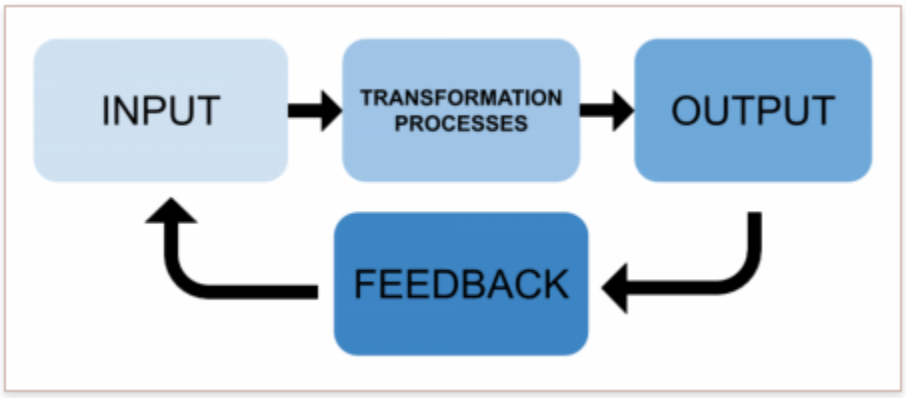
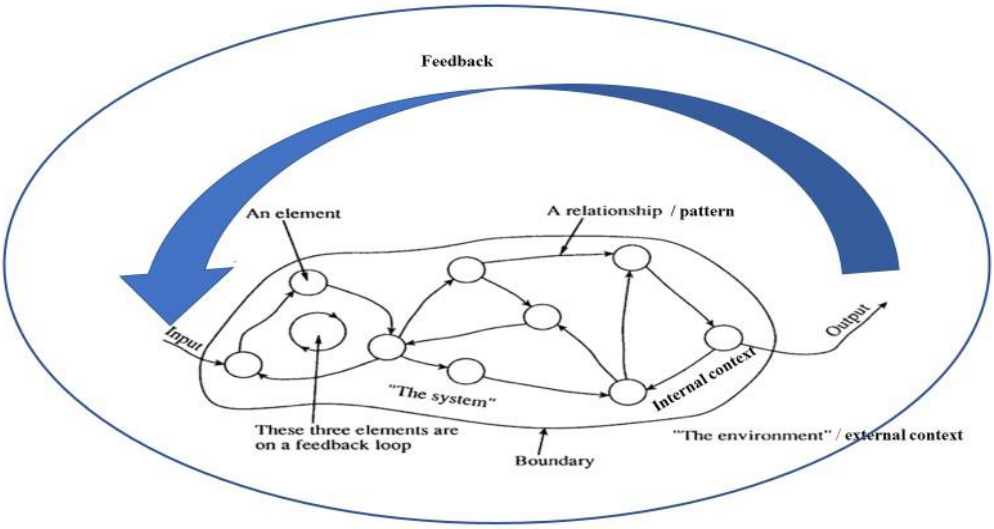


Figure 9 presents an expanded version of a system which presents more details about the transformation process. There are interrelationships and patterns that exist among elements, different kinds of feedback loops (closed and open), and an internal context. The system also has a boundary, external context (or environment) which affects the whole system, and a feedback loop linking output with inputs.

Figure 9

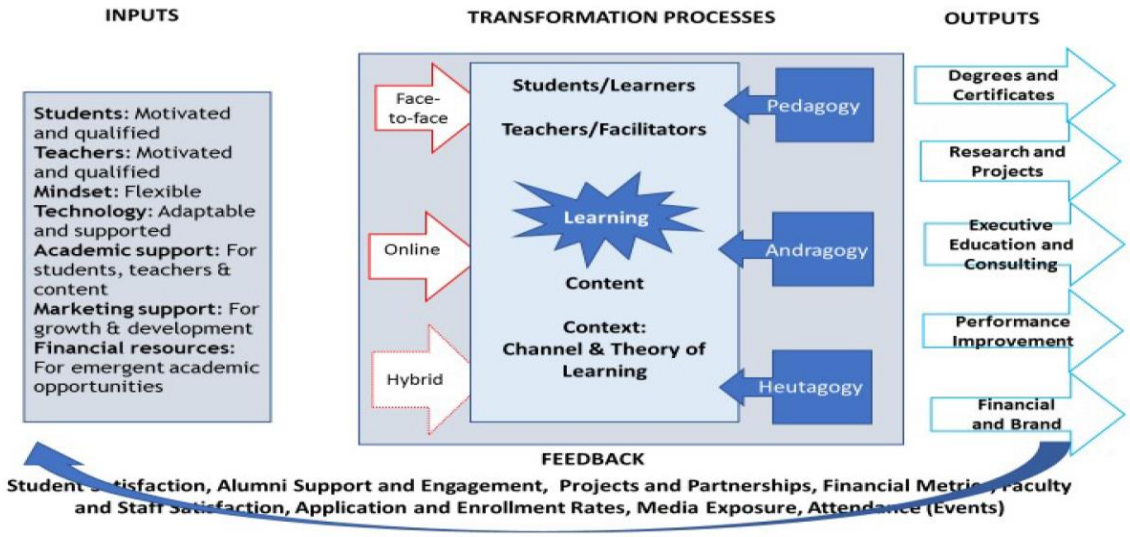
Simple Cybernetic Social System



Starr (2020) developed a Learning Leadership System model. The inputs of this model are students, teachers, mindset technology, academic support, marketing support, and financial resources. The transformation process involves students, teachers/facilitators, content, and internal and external contexts, including channels of communication and theory of leadership applied. The output of the model consists of degree and certificate, research and project, executive education and consulting, performance improvement, financial and brand. The feedback loop consists of student and learner satisfaction (Figure 10).

Figure 10

Learning Leadership System developed by Starr (2020)

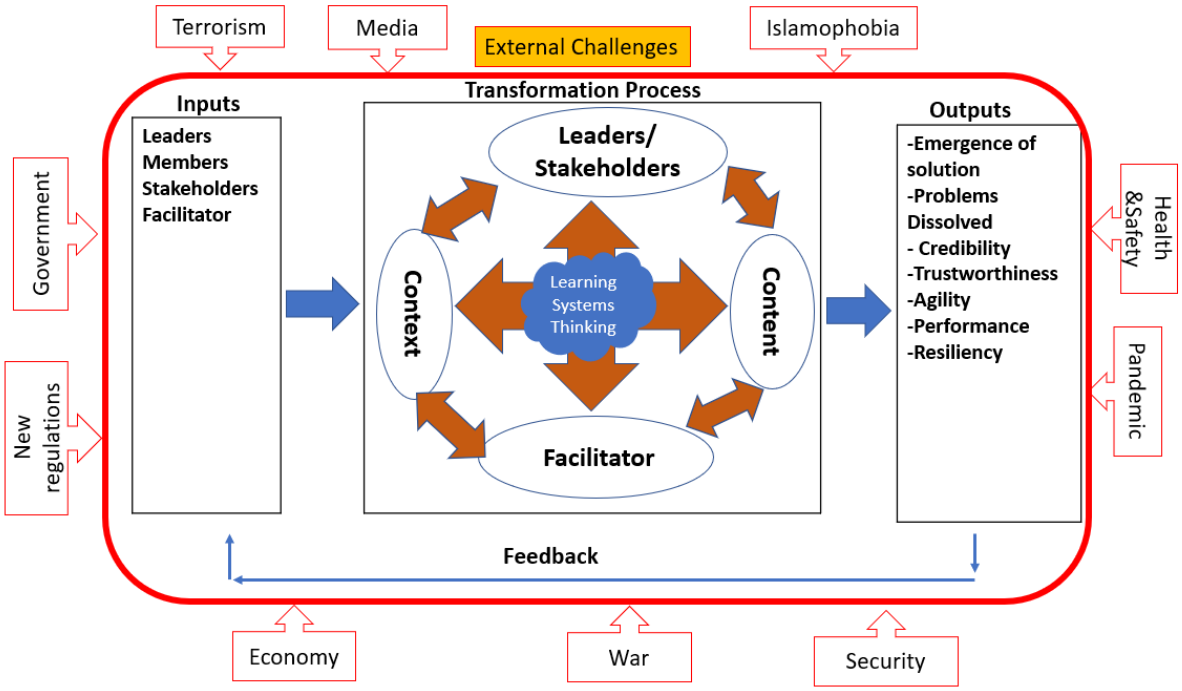


The model proposed in my study has the same structural components as the Learning Leadership System model developed by Starr (2020). The inputs for my model are leaders of MNPOs, members, and stakeholders who come together to participate in learning systems thinking to sustain MNPOs. The transformation process encompasses interactions of four essential elements: Leaders (learners), facilitator (instructors), content, and the internal/external context. The output of the model comprises systems thinking mindsets, performance improvement (credibility, trustworthiness, and agility), emergence of solutions, dissolving problems, and increasing resiliency. The feedback loop consists of leaders and member satisfaction. The feedback loop enables the inputs and transformation to adapt to changes due to experiences. In addition, external context influences the other elements' behavior and performances including the transformation process. Examples of external contextual influences include security concerns when Islamophobia increases due to a crime or terrorist attack by a

Muslim, threats to health safety from the Covid-19 global pandemic, an international war that impacts the national economy such as Russia and Ukraine, and many other forces.

Figure 11

Systems Thinking Learning Model for MNPOs



Elements of the Model

Each component will be explained separately to show how the model works. The most important part of the model is the transformation process because it has interactions and interdependencies of fundamental elements. More details and information will be provided regarding the transformation process.

Inputs of the Model

The input for the system consists of MNPO leaders, stakeholders, and facilitators. Stakeholder members differ within each complex problem. Stakeholders are individuals who can influence or be influenced by both the problem and the solution. They can be employees of the

organization, members of the community, or outside the Muslim community, such as agents from public safety agencies or the health department.

A facilitator plays a major role in making participants acquire systems thinking skills. A facilitator can be a consultant, instructor, or any individual who has skills and characteristics to be a successful facilitator. Olivia Hanifan (2020) stated that

> a facilitator is someone who supports a group and helps to create, plan and execute strategies whilst also identifying and helping to solve problems. Facilitators make things easier and get things done. Organizations need excellent facilitators in order to coordinate groups, resolve conflicts or handle situations that are not routine. A skilled facilitator can have a great impact on inspiring and motivating a group, building successful teamwork and in turn, achieving organizational success.

In addition to these qualities, a facilitator should have the skills and tools of systems thinking. The aim of the model is to teach participant systems thinking in order to sustain their nonprofit organizations. Leaders and stakeholders who know concepts of systems thinking can see the whole instead of the parts and patterns which help them to become better problem solvers.

The Transformation Process

Leaders/Stakeholders

Every leader/stakeholder in an MNPO has an individual learning style, whether they are in the workplace, academic institution, or at a social or religious gathering. This is because people have different preferences about how to process information. Over the past century, many studies were conducted to understand different learning styles and create learning environments that help learners acquire information in the most effective way possible. Pashler et al. (2008) refer to the term “learning styles” as the concept that individuals/learners differ regarding what method of instruction is most effective for them; optimal instruction requires identifying and classifying individuals’ learning style to adapt instruction accordingly.

The VARK model, suggested by Fleming and Mills (1992), is one of the most popular instruments for identifying and classifying learning style preferences. After completing a questionnaire, respondents are classified into four learning modes; visual (V), aural (A), read/write (R), and kinesthetic (K). The visual (V) learners prefer images, graphs, and videos to written text. The aural (A) learners prefer information from what they hear. Read/write (R) learners prefer to receive textual layouts such as booklets and manuals. Finally, kinesthetic (K) learners prefer absorbing their information by performing experiments or carrying out specific tasks. Several other models have been proposed and continue to be applied that classify learners into different preferences to learn.

Individual motivation and purpose are also important elements for learners (participants) (Starr, 2020). Starr (2020) argued there are three labels that describe how a learner joins a learning opportunity. *Intending to* join refers to the participant who is voluntary and purposefully joins a learning system. In this case, when a leader of an MNPO feels a lack of skills to solve a complex problem, he or she is eager to acquire skills and knowledge to sustain his or her organization. *Intended for* refers to the motivation or purpose imposed by another agent who assigns the participant to a learning system. An example of this label would be a leader of an MNPO who sent members or volunteers to attend a learning session to acquire new skills needed for their organization. *Incidental learning* refers to when there is no plan for participating. It is "a byproduct of some other activity, such as task accomplishment, interpersonal interactions sensing the organizational culture, or trial-and-error experimentation" (Marsick & Watkins, 1990, p. 7). A leader or members of an MNPO encountering an unprecedented situation is an example of *Incidental learning*. This type of learning is informal and without explicit or previously considered intention (Hall, 2016). Starr (2020) added that participants in a learning

experience may have elements of all three purposes and their interests can change during a learning experience.

In recent years, different strategies and resources emerged that help learners acquire knowledge. The idea that learning is best when instructional techniques align with individual's learning styles is no longer supported by sufficient evidence (May, 2018). Learners have adapted to a new 'normal' to learn. With online learning, learners now educate themselves on their own.

Facilitators/ Instructors

The facilitator in this part is considered an instructor or educator. Educating in general is a complex activity because instructors/educators make thousands of significant decisions daily (Danielson, 1996). Like learners, instructors/educators have characteristics that involve personal and professional demographics and preferred styles. Effective educators or instructors are vital because they can be the most important influence on learners' success.

Marge Scherer (2003) defined nine characteristics of an instructor's effectiveness. Starr (2020) summarized them as follows. 1) Willingness to put in the necessary time. Teaching requires an investment of time and energy to prepare, evaluate learners' work, and support them outside class. Effective educators are willing to spend the time required to accommodate leaders and stakeholders of MNPOs. (2) Love for the group they educate. Educating adults or professional personnel requires an instructor who feels connected and attracted to MNPOs. On some occasions, leaders and stakeholders may possess more knowledge or expertise in their respective domains than the instructor, but still, the latter keeps loving the group. (3) Culturally effective management style. Effective instructors are able and capable to generate and sustain a culture of respect that flows from instructor to learners, learners to instructor, and learners to learners. (4) Positive relationships with colleagues. Effective instructors depend on and support

other instructors and administrators. They are a source of information, improvement, sometimes consolation, advice, and collegial sharing. (5) Consistent excellence. Effective instructors consistently keep outstanding performances. They are dedicated to their profession and willing to develop to tackle problems and challenges that affect teaching leaders and stakeholders for MNPOs. (6) Expert use of instructional methods. Effective instructors use a variety of instructional methods. They recognize that a single teaching method or approach does not always work with every learner. (7) In-depth content knowledge. They have a remarkably good command of content. They anticipate challenges and potential obstacles that could interfere with teaching. The content in this case is systems thinking tools and methods. (8) Capacity for growth. Instructors develop and grow because they are lifelong learners. They are continuously looking for emergent solid information about teaching which is constantly changing. (9) Steadiness of purpose and teaching personality. Effective instructors are not necessarily performers; rather, they simplify content that can be understood by the learners, they design and plan their lessons extremely well, they show care by actions, and they teach with honesty that reveals their personality.

Other researchers suggest a separate set of characteristics that go beyond teacher's subject matter knowledge (content) and general instructional knowledge methods (pedagogical knowledge). Lee Shulman (1986; 1987) and his colleagues and students (e.g. Carlsen, 1987; Grossman, Wilson, & Shulman, 1989; Gudmundsdottir, 1987a, 1987b; Gudmundsdottir & Shulman, 1987; Marks, 1990) suggested pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). The PCK is the integration of pedagogical knowledge (knowledge about teaching) and subject matter knowledge (knowing what to teach). Shulman (1986) wrote that pedagogical content knowledge

> embodies the aspects of content most germane to its teachability. Within the category of pedagogical content knowledge I include, for the most regularly taught topics in one's

> subject area, the most useful forms of representation of those ideas, the most powerful analogies, illustrations, examples, explanations, and demonstrations - in a word, the ways of representing and formulating the subject that make it comprehensible to others . . . [It] also includes an understanding of what makes the learning of specific concepts easy or difficult: the conceptions and preconceptions that students of different ages and backgrounds bring with them to the learning (p. 9).

Cochran, DeRuiter, and King (1993) revised the PCK of Shulman and suggested a model constructed of four major components, two of which are content (subject area) knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. The other two components are knowledge of students (e.g., their prior subject area knowledge, developmental levels, motivation, backgrounds, and prior knowledge of the concepts to be taught) and knowledge of the environmental context (e.g., understanding of the political, cultural and physical environments in which learners are learning, and the social context of the community). These four components of teacher knowledge, consisting of interaction among learners, content and context, continue to grow with teaching experience.

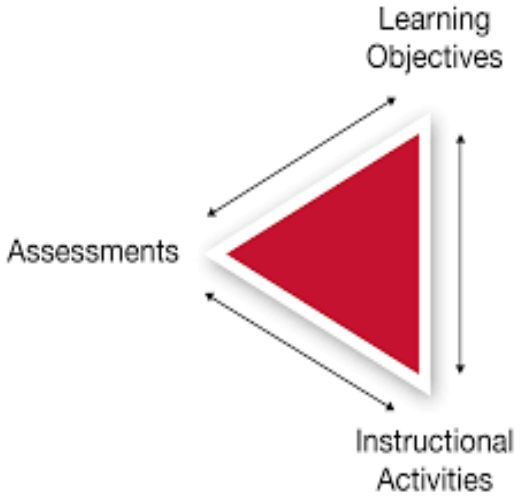
Content

The third essential part of the systems thinking learning model is the content (subject matter-systems thinking) knowledge. This is knowledge and skills that learners acquire by the end of a program. It is not only what the instructor will talk about, but also what the learner is expected to know and be able to do. Measuring how well learners are learning is defined as learning objectives. Learning objectives (also called learning outcomes) are statements describing what learners will be able to do upon completion of a unit of instruction (Dick, Carey, & Carey, 2005). A good learning objective should be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely fashion (S.M.A.R.T) (Doran, 1981).

To create clear learning objectives, Eberly Center at Carnegie Mellon University suggested three interdependent elements that instructors should use: specific learning objectives, the instructional activities, and the assessments

Figure 12

Learning Objectives, Instructional Activities, and Assessments



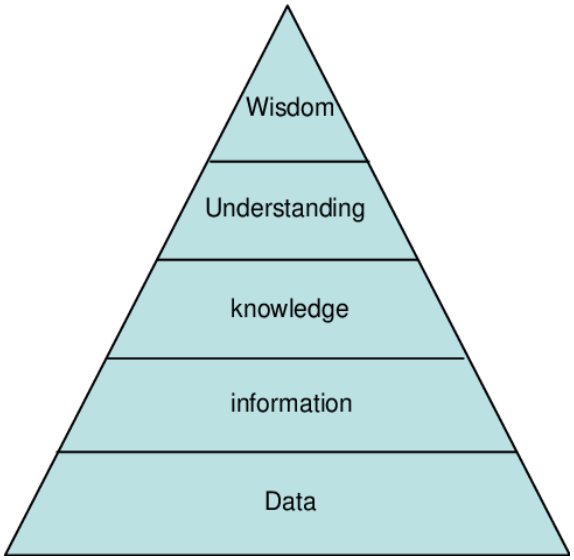
An instructor, in this model, should describe methods and tools of systems thinking learners should acquire by the end of the program (e.g., the knowledge and skills expected from learners to demonstrate by the end of a course). Instructional strategies should be selected that allow the instructor to foster systems thinking learning (e.g., case studies, discussions, readings). Then, the instructor should prepare and provide assessments to measure how well learners learn the program of systems thinking (e.g., tests, papers, problem sets, performances). This will provide opportunities for learners to practice knowledge and skills.

In the systems approach, instructors should consider *understanding* as a higher cognitive process when engaging with organizational systems. Housworth (2015) cites Gharajedaghi and Ackoff's 1984 claim that

> One can survive without understanding, but not thrive. Without understanding one cannot control causes; only treat effects, suppress symptoms. With understanding one can design and create the future ... people in an age of accelerating change, increasing uncertainty, and growing complexity often respond by acquiring more information and knowledge, but not understanding (para. 534).

Figure 13

Understanding in Social Systems



Bellinger, Castro, and Mills (2004) noted that understanding principles of knowledge is necessary to attain wisdom because understanding answers the question "why" rather than only 'what" or "how." They wrote:

> The difference between understanding and knowledge is the difference between 'learning' and 'memorizing.' People who have understanding can undertake useful actions because they can synthesize new knowledge, or in some cases, at least new information, from what is previously known (and understood) (para. 11).

The distinction between data, information, knowledge, understanding, and wisdom is needed for leaders of Muslim nonprofit organizations in the 21st century. They need to learn different content than was taught to previous generations. New content knowledge, skills, or proficiencies may emerge in the future for the next generation. Volini et al. (2019) noted that what is needed for 21st-century new content competencies and putting them into the new context that is characterized by continually changing social and organizational expectations. A better approach toward successful new content learning is to focus on the capacity of how to learn

(Starr, 2020). Systems thinking is a tool that will help current and future leaders of MNPOs learn how to learn in complex environment contexts.

Context

Context is the fourth essential element in the transformation process of systems thinking learning. James Kouzes and Barry Posner (2016) wrote, “it is important to be mindful of the context in which we live and work if we want to grow and develop the leadership competencies. Context affects our ability to grow and thrive as a leader-big time” (p. 81). The context of acquiring systems thinking can be influenced on two levels. The external context refers to forces that affect learning from the broader environment. These include security, safety, health (including the threat of COVID-19), politics, ethics, economics, and many others. The internal context refers to a learning environment that occurs in the transformation process.

External Context

The external contextual forces that influence systems thinking learning include political climate, economic factors, social environment, ethical considerations, legal restraints, health and safety measures, human emotions, the environment itself, and others. Starr (2020) noted that engaging in leadership education in a complex context, volatility, uncertainty, and ambiguity will be encountered. In such a context, small changes can have a large effect. Instructors, learners, and content may remain unchanged; however, context is uncertain and ambiguous. In such situations, the learning process is a struggle because no one has ever experienced this kind of circumstance before.

Providing systems thinking learning during a pandemic is a challenge. Instructors and learners (leaders and stakeholders) of MNPOs are worried about their health and safety as well as their educational outcomes. When the rate of infected people started to rise, the level of health

concerns started to rise as well. With such health uncertainty conditions, the learning process is negatively impacted and potentially delayed until an alternative is figured out.

Internal Context

Two internal context elements have an impact on systems thinking learning: the theory of learning and the channel of communication (methods of delivery).

Theory of Learning

Pedagogy.

Pedagogy is the general term describing all theories of learning. It comes from the Greek words, (peda) meaning child, and (agogy) meaning leading or teaching. Oxford English Dictionary (2018) defines pedagogy as a place of instruction; a school, a college; a university; Instruction, discipline, training; a system of introductory training; a means of guidance; The art, occupation, or practice of teaching. Pedagogy is the art or science of teaching children. In modern-day usage, it is a synonym for teaching or educating (Shah, 2020).

The traditional pedagogical approach emphasizes instructors assuming responsibility for making decisions about what will be learned, which method will be used, and when it will be learned. In other words, the instructor is an authoritarian and learners are not given the flexibility to be actively involved and responsive (Fenner-McAdoo, 2021). Instructors set an agenda, control a class process, determine a method of evaluation and assign a grade. On the other hand, learners are recipients of content and process, dependent on instructions, and acceptant of the teacher's evaluation (Starr, 2020).

According to Starr (2020), in this traditional pedagogical approach, the relationship between teacher, student, and content is directional, linear, and bounded. In other words, the

instructor defines and selects the systems thinking content and presents it to the learners. In this approach interaction between instructor, learners, and content are little or not considered.

Andragogy.

Andragogy refers to methods and principles used in adult education (Oxford Dictionaries, 2017). Malcolm Knowles (1989) defined andragogy as the art and science of helping adults learn. In other words, andragogy is the theory of learning where the emphasis is on adults during learning activities. It is the process during which learners take initiative, with or without the help of others, in identifying their learning needs, setting learning goals, finding material and human resources for learning, implementing learning strategies, and assessing learning outcomes (Knowles, 1970). Knowles defined four andragogical assumptions: Adults move from dependency to self-directedness; draw upon their pool of experience for acquiring knowledge; are ready to learn when assigned to new roles; and want to solve problems and implement new knowledge immediately.

The principle behind andragogy is that an adult learner is self-directed, independent, and strives for autonomy in learning responsibility. Those who assume the andragogic theory of learning recognize that adults will learn (systems thinking tools) on their own terms and are more interested in topics relevant to their personal and professional experiences and interests. In andragogy, instructors allow more autonomy to learners by assisting but not controlling. The only control they have is the control of the learning process and that is by specifying the learning objectives. Unlike pedagogy, the elements of andragogy such as teachers, learners, and content are interdependent. In this theory, learning takes place and is shaped in the context where teachers, learners, and content interact.

Heutagogy.

While pedagogy is teacher-led learning and andragogy is self-directed learning, heutagogy takes an approach different from both by encouraging learners to find their own problems and questions to answer instead of simply completing an assignment for teachers (Greene, 2021). Heutagogy was developed as an extension of andragogy. In heutagogy, the learners themselves contribute to what must be understood and learned rather than being driven by the designer or facilitator's decision. Hase and Kenyon (2000) argued that 21st century learners must become responsible not only for how to learn but also for what to learn. A learner, in andragogy may decide how to learn the content of systems thinking tools, but in heutagogy, the curriculum (such as systems thinking) can be decided by the learner.

Heutagogy is also well suited to technology in the 21st century, which has created a challenge regarding which pedagogy should be used. As Agonács and Matos (2019) stated:

> The emergence of digital technology and the web 2.0 in education, training, and learning has raised issues around which pedagogies best suit the twenty-first-century learning context. This is a context where the constantly changing workplace requires fast learners; where knowledge and skill acquisition has become increasingly the responsibility of the individual; where learning happens ubiquitously and non-linearly; where the Internet is a primary source of information; where an excess of information is at one's disposal in a second; where most of the learning occurs through knowledge sharing; and where the role of the teacher or trainer has radically changed (p. 223).

According to Starr (2020), this form of learning occurs in a non-linear manner because learners are self-determined, interdependent, and engaged in creation of new content/programs for which they need collaboration with facilitators and peers. As the context of learning in the 21st century is volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous, non-linear, and unpredictable, an instructor must give learners the autonomy to make choices and learn how to learn. This means that heutagogy is well suited to systems thinking learning for MNPO leaders and stakeholders.

Channels of Communication: Face-to face, virtual/online and hybrid/ blended

There are a variety of channels (ways) for delivering the content of systems thinking. Delivery involves interaction among instructor, learner, and content. This interaction plays a key role in both learning and interpersonal relationship. In this model, there are three ways of delivery methods: face-to-face learning, online learning, and hybrid/blended learning.

Face-to-Face Learning.

The Face-to-Face learning (also known as in-person F2F) is a traditional instructional method where content is delivered in-person to a group of learners. This permits live interaction between the instructor and learners. Barindra De (2018) noted that face-to-face classes are more suitable for young adolescents who have not entered the workforce. Attendance in classes helps instructors to know learners and better evaluate their weaknesses and strengths. In a traditional classroom, learners are less anxious and more motivated to obtain higher marks (De, 2018). A survey conducted on F2F meetings indicated they are significantly more creative, communicative, and informational than meetings held virtually (Narain, 2014).

Without a well-organized contextual environment, F2F learning cannot be effective. Barrett et al. (2016) stated that F2F learning can be effective when the contextual environment includes the physical design of the classroom being organized and well-structured. Buildings, classrooms, equipment, and education infrastructure are crucial elements of learning environments. There is strong evidence that high-quality infrastructure improves learners' outcomes and reduces dropout rates (Teixeira, Amoroso & Gresham, 2017).

Online Learning.

Online learning is education offered via the internet. In recent years, it is considered the most popular form of distance learning. There are other types of distance learning available

including Correspondence Courses (where content is delivered through regular mail), Telecourses (where content is delivered via radio or television broadcast), and CD-ROM courses (where students interact with static computers content). However, within the past decade and specifically during the COVID-19 pandemic where risks of F2F infection, online learning became the most dominant. According to eLearning Statistics, since 2020, 98% of universities moved classes online (ThinkImpact.com).

Online learning offers courses synchronously and/or asynchronously. Synchronous means "real-time." Instructor-learner, and peer–peer interact online with defined start and end times. Using Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or other platforms, learners can receive immediate feedback as they move through the content. In asynchronous courses, learners can learn at their own pace. Content and learning material are available online when it is convenient for the learner. The instructor visits the online site to evaluate the learner's performance. In the systems thinking model, systems thinking tools and methods can be offered in both ways synchronously and asynchronously.

New technology has improved online learning content delivery, making it more manageable, and easily accessible. If a learner struggles with complex material, the algorithm used by the platform can provide simulation and extra information to assist. If there is a lack of enrollment, with accessibility to online learning, educational institutions can accommodate many learners at little cost.

On the other hand, there are also challenges that online learning must resolve. For example, not all learners are literate in computer skills. On many occasions, learners get frustrated due to difficulties accessing online classes. In online learning, there is less social interaction between instructor and learners and between learner and learner. Quality control is

another challenge for online learning. There are many criticisms regarding the quality of content delivered to learners. With a growing number of courses offered online, there is significant concern regarding online education, particularly the quality of online instruction (Allen & Seaman, 2003). To improve the quality of online education, hybrid and blended learning models were developed.

Hybrid/Blended Learning.

Hybrid learning or blended learning combines traditional face-to-face learning and online learning. Both contain many of the same instructional elements. However, they are two slightly distinct learning models. Hybrid learning is an educational approach where instructors or facilitators teach learners remotely and F2F at the same time using technology like video conferencing. With hybrid learning, F2F learners and online learners are different individuals. Blended learning is a model where the same individuals attend both in-person and online classes. Instructors or facilitators make learners do some learning components in person and complete others online (Steele, 2022).

Hybrid learning is designed for learners living in any location. They come to campus once per semester to attend an all-day course. In this course, learners meet with their instructor and other learners either in person or virtually. An overview of the material studied throughout the semester (textbooks and online resources) is provided. Learners meet with an instructor and work with a cohort either in-person or online (Newbold, 2018).

Blended courses are where the same learners complete most of their work online but sometimes are brought together to meet the instructor and ask questions to one another. The in-person classes provide hands-on experiences and opportunities such as valuable connections between faculty and learners. In-person classes may take place on a university campus or

anywhere that is suitable for it. With limited class time for F2F and flexibility, a great number of learners are expected to attend (Monson, 2017).

Hybrid and blended learning models have become significant for educational institutions. Both are anticipated to evolve into fundamental learning models throughout all levels of education. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the necessity of implementing such models at all education levels, including kindergarten through grade 12. During the 2020-21 school year, 60% of schools offered hybrid instruction (Barshay, 2022). It is possible hybrid/blended learning could be the future model for the 21st century even though many teachers feel like their role is diminishing. However, the role of educators is actually more critical to learners' success than ever before. In the 21st century, instructors are guiding learners in dealing with massive amounts of content, facilitating the use of technology as an effective tool, and developing their learning needs and outcomes (O'Leary, 2015). Providing systems thinking learning with hybrid or blended models is ideal for leaders of MNPOs. Taking into consideration all the internal and external context challenges mentioned before, learners will be able to interact with content, instructor, and other learners.

Participants x Facilitator x Content x Context.

In this model, the transformation process is considered most important to generate the output. It is an emergent function where interactions and interdependencies among the elements leaders (participants), facilitator, content and context co-produce learning systems thinking. According to Starr (2020), the traditional science, particularly in a context that is well structured and ordered (where analytic thinking is applied), the relationship between the four elements is linear and additive. Adding leaders (L), facilitator (F), content (Ct), and context (Cx) equal

Learning. This can be written as an equation such as L + F + Ct + Cx ==> Learning. The whole (learning) is equal to the sum of the four elements.

However, Starr (2022) added, in a context that is unstructured and unordered where problems are complex and uncertain, the relationship between the four elements is nonlinear and interdependent. The whole of learning is no longer the sum (or edition of elements). Rather it is the interaction of the four elements. This is written as L x F x Ct x Cx ==> Learning. Efforts to improve any of the elements separately, or focus on one or two elements of learning, will not improve the whole of learning systems thinking. This system approach emphasizes the relationships and interactions between elements to gauge outcomes.

In this perspective, interaction of the four elements happens when the facilitator delivers the content (systems thinking knowledge, tools, and methods) to the leaders and stakeholders (participants). The content is applied in the context of the external and internal environment which influence the learning outcome. Within this dynamic, systems thinking learning will emerge which can lead to increase in resiliency.

Outputs of the model

The aim of this approach is to increase resilience in MNPOs. In this model, numerous outputs may be identified as resilience sustainers.

Emergence of Solution/Problem Dissolving:

As mentioned before, in complex environments there is no solution available to execute. Thus, the best course of action is to encourage a solution to emerge (Snowden & Boone, 2007) or to dissolve the problem by redesigning the entity that has such problems, so that the problem no longer exists. After participants (leaders and stakeholders) acquire systems thinking and are equipped with the mindset of systems thinkers, the model generates outcomes such as emergence

of solutions in case of dealing with outside problems such as Islamophobia or the pandemic; or outcome as a dissolving problem in case of internal problems such as interpersonal conflicts.

Leaders cannot dissolve major external complex problems such as Islamophobia or a pandemic. These are complex national or international problems. However, leaders and stakeholders with systems thinking knowledge can create an environment to encourage emergence of solutions that minimize the effect of the situation. As Snowden and Boone (2007) stated, in a complex domain (such as problems facing MNPOs), the best course of action is to look for patterns and encourage a solution to emerge.

If the problem is related to internal complex problems such as interpersonal conflicts, participants (leaders and stakeholders) will interact to dissolve the problem instead of letting a solution emerge. They can assume, as Ackoff suggested, that the entity affected no longer exists (was destroyed) and they have to design it from scratch. In this case, the new entity replaces the old one and the problem will be eliminated.

Credibility

With this model, MNPOs will be seen as reliable organizations. They will have good reputations in their communities. They will keep their tax-exempt status. When there is a wicked/complex problem, such as increased Islamophobia due to a terrorist attack, MNPOs can quickly lose their credibility among their stakeholders. However, with this model, stakeholders will continue to see strong credibility among MNPOs because they are included in the process.

Trustworthiness

Trust is an expression of confidence that an institution will be reliable and ethical. In the complex context such as how the media is covering terrorism, many Muslim American citizens have legitimate reason to suspect MNPOs. MNPOs are more vulnerable to lose trustworthiness

than other faith-based organizations. However, by applying systems thinking knowledge, trustworthiness will emerge.

Agility

Agility is the ability to act quickly and successfully. The challenges that MNPOs faced in recent years required them to be agile not only to survive but thrive. The way this model was designed allows MNPOs to become agile as quickly as possible. Because participants (leaders and stakeholders) have the wisdom of systems thinking, they will be able to interact seamlessly to handle a complex problem. This is an act of agility. As stated above, agility has been one of the most critical factors to improve resilience in nonprofit organizations.

Performance improvement

Shauna Robinson (2018) defined performance improvement as a systemic process of identifying the root causes of an issue and implementing solutions to resolve that issue. This model/approach equipped MNPOs with systems thinking tools which allow them to look for patterns of the root cause and create an environment in which solutions for performance improvement emerge that are suited to the complex problem at hand.

The Feedback Loop of the Model

A feedback loop is an element of a system where all (or some) outputs are re-used as input for future operations (Fitzgibbons, 2019). When outputs of a system are routed back as inputs, the feedback loop must be handled carefully. Åström and Murray (2008) stated that

> causal reasoning about a feedback system is difficult because the first system influences the second and second system influences the first, leading to a circular argument. This makes reasoning based upon cause and effect tricky, and it is necessary to analyze the system as a whole (p.1).

This part of the model is very critical to make the whole parts of the model successful.

There are two types of feedback loops: positive and negative. With positive feedback, the system strengthens the outputs by repeating the same actions or procedures that have been effective in the past. The purpose of positive feedback is to boost the system and move it from its starting state to an anticipated state (Fitzgibbons, 2019).

A negative feedback loop is known as an inhibitory loop slows down a reaction or function. It is a self-regulating system (Boskey, 2021). The purpose of negative feedback loops is to maintain relatively constant levels of desired outputs and inhibit future undesired levels of outputs (Boskey, 2021). Basically, negative feedback is a process of pointing out that the system is doing poorly and needs to change or adjust its procedure.

The feedback loop of a systems thinking learning model consists of MNPO leaders', Muslim communities', and stakeholders' satisfaction. The feedback loop in this model/approach enables the inputs and transformation process to adapt to changes due to outcomes desired and the environmental context. In this model, there are two levels of feedback loops. Feedback to regulate the level of acquiring systems thinking learning in the transformation process and feedback to change outcomes such as credibility, trustworthiness, agility, and resiliency.

Feedback at the level of systems thinking learning is called corrective feedback. This feedback is frequently used in the arena of education. Learners receive either formal or informal feedback on their understanding of the topic learned from their instructor or their peers (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). The facilitator in this phase will use a test or questionnaires to know the level of knowledge and understanding received by learners.

Feedback at the level of outputs focuses on the resiliency and other outputs that emerge from acquiring systems thinking. Unlike feedback for learning which can be known in the short term, feedback of resiliency can be known in long term. It can take months to know if the system

generates the desired level of resiliency and other outputs. To activate a feedback loop at the level of outputs, surveys, questionnaires, focus group, and more will be used to gather information regarding the desired outputs.

CHAPTER 4: APPLICATION OF THE SYSTEM APPROACH

This dissertation proposes that improved resiliency will be an outcome for MNPOs that learn/adopt systems thinking and that the process for this emergent outcome results from interaction of leaders/stakeholders, facilitators/instructors, content, and context

Implementation of the Model

Identifying and Recruiting the Input Elements

As a first effort, MNPOs that will use this model are new and small organizations. These types of organizations are most vulnerable when dealing with complex problems. They lack experience and awareness of challenges they will encounter. A prospective MNPO can be any organization that is not able to survive during a pandemic or struggle in a highly Islamophobic environment.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many organizations stopped their activities. Some large and well-established organizations did survive when ordered to stop all gatherings and activities. They survived because they have accumulated resources and established networks over many years. However, new and small MNPOs have just started and did not have the same qualities as established MNPOs. These organizations that could not survive during a pandemic are ideal organizations to use the model.

Other potential organizations are those located in areas where some residents and non-Muslim communities express hate against Muslims. The level of Islamophobia in such places is high and it becomes extremely dangerous if a terrorist attack were undertaken by a criminal with Islamic ideology. All sizes of MNPOs are influenced and impacted in such situations, but new and small organizations are most affected because they are not very well known. Therefore, they might be targeted.

Another reason this model would begin with new and small MNPOs is because people leading these types of organizations are willing to embrace different thinking and take different approaches to solve their problems. On the other hand, leaders of large, well-established MNPOs might not be willing to change their mindset due to their long-term successes. Willingness to change and embrace a new mindset is crucial to acquire systems thinking. If a well-established organization is willing to learn systems thinking, then the model will be offered.

To reach potential MNPOs, flyers can be distributed in Muslim gathering places, mosques, Muslim events, and via social media. A website would be created providing all the information of the model. Gatherings will be attended, physically or on Zoom, and permission sought to talk to the gathering to explain the importance of the model in making MNPOs resilient. Phone number and email address will be provided in case they have questions or concerns.

The elements necessary to carry out the model are leaders, stakeholders, and facilitators. They are essential for the input. They should be well identified and carefully chosen to participate in the model. If participants are not the right fit for this model, the system will not generate the outcome desired. The followings are some measures to identify participants.

Leaders.

A potential leader would be someone who has a responsibility in the organization. They can be board members of the organization such as the president/founder, vice-president, treasurer, or secretary officer. Also, it could be anyone assigned by the president or the board to lead a committee or work on a project for the MNPO.

Stakeholders.

A potential stakeholder can be identified as anyone who can influence or be influenced by decisions that MNPOs make. They can be from inside or outside the organization. They can be from the Muslim community or outside the Muslim community. They can also be from different nonprofit organizations. There are many factors to be considered before choosing a stakeholder. These include the type of problem encountered, occupation, and education level of the person.

Participation of individuals from the Muslim community is always beneficial for the model's success. The Muslim community influences and is influenced by MNPOs' outcomes. MNPOs are founded to serve the Muslim community and Muslim communities are developed and settled by MNPOs. Thus, because of the connections between MNPOs and Muslim communities, one or two members from the Muslim community play a vital role for the effectiveness of the model.

A potential stakeholder could be a member from a public safety authority. When dealing with Islamophobia or hatred of Muslims, the concern of security and safety increases. On many occasions, when levels of Islamophobia are high, Muslims get bullied and intimidated. Including a police officer or person from a security agency as input for the model could create great outcomes. Their security knowledge and skills could have a positive impact on the outcomes of the model.

In the case of a pandemic or epidemic, a potential stakeholder could be a member of a health department or a scholar in epidemiology. Dealing with a pandemic requires an expert in the health field, preferably in epidemiology. Participation of a stakeholder who has knowledge in

health could be very beneficial when an MNPO is facing effects of an unknown virus like COVID-19.

Facilitator.

A facilitator is an essential element for the model. To make the model successful, an experience and skilled facilitator is required. The facilitator's mission is to support participants learning systems thinking. Sam Kaner (2007) defined four functions that are the core values of facilitators: They run the work of the group, they strengthen individuals, they strengthen the whole group, and they enable groups to develop intelligent, well-balanced, and sustainable agreements.

In addition to these qualities, a potential facilitator should have basic knowledge and skills of systems thinking. The aim of the model is to teach participants systems thinking. Thus, the facilitator needs to have the basic knowledge of systems thinking. If a facilitator does not have the mindset and the knowledge of systems thinking, participants (MNPOs' leaders and stakeholders) will not be able to learn. Therefore, the model will not generate good results.

The participants (leaders, stakeholders, facilitator) could be contacted via email or social media. After carefully study of the situations and challenges encountered, participants will be identified and asked to participate in the model to help increase MNPO resiliency. The maximum number of participants should not be more than 10 people. The fewest should not be less than five people. Participants will include at least two leaders of the MNPO, at least two members of Muslim community, at least a person from a security agency or health department, and at least one facilitator.

Depending on the current situation, participants can be gathered in a room where they can meet physically or can meet virtually via Zoom. During the first meeting, the facilitator will

provide a summary of the model and its purpose to increase resiliency. He or she will explain the systems thinking mindset, the program to acquire systems thinking tools and methods, and outcomes desired to increase MNPOs resiliency.

Transformation Process of the Model

Participants (Leaders and Stakeholders)

In this part of the model, participants (leaders and stakeholders) become learners. They gather to learn systems thinking tools and methods. Depending on the size and the problems encountered, the criteria for inclusion would be decided. Age, gender, or level of education should not be an issue between learners. New immigrants with different races or ethnicities can participate, as long as they can understand and communicate English language.

Young participants may prefer to interact via online and social media where they can learn at their convenience. In this case, the transformation process would include online learning. However, older participants may prefer F2F for learning because they are less familiar with the technology and more sociable than the younger generation. In this case, the transformation process will include physical classes or workshops where participants can meet the facilitator and interact to learn all together. To balance between the preferences of younger and older generations, a hybrid program would be the suitable method to apply.

Facilitators

Facilitators play a central role in systems thinking learning. They not only administer the learning process, but also teach systems thinking skills and methods. The following are some tasks of a facilitator: Perform clerical tasks, set up classes either online or in classes, hire instructors who have knowledge and skills in systems thinking, create curriculum for the classes, sometime teach classes, and assess the program to make sure that the material taught is well

delivered. It does not mean that a facilitator must perform all these tasks alone. An assistant can be hired to do some clerical work.

First, it is necessary to look at the criterion and qualifications of a facilitator. The minimum education level required of a facilitator for the tasks listed is at least a bachelor's degree (preferably in Business Management). In addition to a bachelor's degree, an ideal facilitator has acquired the wisdom of systems thinking.

The facilitator would make sure that the learning procedure is going as planned. He/she would ensure the content of systems thinking is well delivered to participants. An assessment and testing would be implemented to ensure participants become well educated on systems thinking. The facilitator would set up a timeline for each topic. After completing the program, the facilitator may offer a certificate of accomplishment for learning systems thinking.

Content

The content used in the transformation process is systems thinking methods and tools. Systems thinking has many methods and many studies developed by many scholars. Since we deal with social systems (nonprofit organizations) and Dr. Russ Ackoff was the pioneer of using systems thinking to improve communities and organizations, it is preferable and desirable to focus on methods and approaches developed by Dr. Ackoff (i.e., Interactive Planning).

There are many sources from which to learn the method of Dr. Ackoff, including books, articles, and videos. There are also many articles written by Ackoff's students and followers of his methodology. Many websites were created to post articles and studies regarding systems thinking and Ackoff's methodology. Conferences are also held to discuss the Ackoff methodology and achievements. Such conferences are very good for facilitators as well as for participants.

The content of systems thinking can be embedded into different formats. A case study, for example, is a good method of making issues relevant to challenges which participants may face. It demonstrates how acquiring systems thinking helps solve complex problems which participants may be experiencing. A case study is like a story that focuses on what happened, why it happened, and how it was resolved. Using case studies in teaching systems thinking is one of the most effective ways to educate participants in the transformation process.

Systems thinking could be presented and delivered in the form of a whitepaper or written as a whitepaper. A whitepaper is an information-dense content document that can offer solutions, products, or services. It has at least 2,500 words and is written in an academic style (Hayes, 2022). A whitepaper about systems thinking may introduce a method or a tool with the implication of solving an MNPO's complex problem all on one page.

Video would be a great form to teach and learn systems thinking. Through video, participants could be more engaged and gain deeper understanding of systems thinking than reading text. They can watch step-by-step lesson on how to implement a method or tool. They can also watch a presentation video where text and images are combined or an animated video where participants can be entertained while understanding complex topics.

Depending on the level of education and availability of the participants, they may take between one and two months to acquire systems thinking methods. In cases of participants who have lower levels of education, they would learn and focus only on the basic of systems thinking such as the introduction of systems thinking. The learning process could have three levels: entry, medium, and advanced levels. Participants would take a short test to move between levels. The learning process should also consider that participants are full time employees, have families, and have other priorities, so the convenient time for classes is once a week for a couple hours.

Context

As stated earlier, acquiring systems thinking in the transformational process is influenced by external and internal context. In case of safety or health concerns (external context), the facilitator should have alternatives to continue providing systems thinking classes. If participants are attending F2F classes, online classes (via Zoom) should always be ready in case if F2F classes need to be postponed. Systems thinking materials could be uploaded on a website and always available to participants in case if they cannot meet F2F.

The theory of learning (internal context) that will work best for teaching systems thinking to MNPO leaders and stakeholders is heutagogy theory. Because participants occupy leadership positions in MNPOs or other positions in different places, they should have certain experience and levels of education. Some may have a doctorate degree. Therefore, participants need a theory of learning that encourages them to make they own decision on what must be learned and understood instead of waiting for a facilitator to decide for them.

If a facilitator realizes the level of education of participants is not high enough or there is lack of interaction by using heutagogy theory, he or she can switch from heutagogy to andragogy theory. With andragogy, participants will have autonomy to learn systems thinking and identify their learning needs. However, the facilitator or instructor has control of the learning process. He or she decides the specific learning objectives of systems thinking for learners. A good facilitator is able to identify the suitable theory of learning for each group of participants. To find the suitable theory, a facilitator can evaluate the readiness and level of understanding of participants before the learning process begins.

As for delivery of systems thinking to participants, it is preferable to use F2F classes. Considering the culture of Muslims, regardless of the countries of origin, most are sociable

people. They like to talk and create relationships with other people. F2F classes would be suitable for participants to interact more and to learn systems thinking. However, with the influence of external challenges, which are becoming more problematic in recent years, hybrid would be the appropriate strategy to teach systems thinking.

Hybrid learning is a combination of F2F classes and online learning. Depending on the availability of participants and external context, a facilitator can schedule one session online and the following session in class (F2F). Online learning can be used for topics that do not require interaction to understand or self-learning. However, F2F classes would be used for topics that need interaction and discussion. A facilitator can post material online or present a topic via Zoom. Then, in F2F classes, participants and the facilitator can interact and discuss a case study, address questions and answers, or practice systems thinking tools.

Output of Model

I argue that after participants (leaders and stakeholders) complete the acquisition of systems thinking, the following outcomes will emerge each of which will be described.

Emergence of Solutions

Systems thinking enables one to frame and formulate complex problems in productive ways to navigate complex contexts and identify novel and emergent outcomes and solutions. In case of increasing of Islamophobia due to terrorist attack, participants who completed the systems thinking learning would come together to encourage a solution to emerge rather than apply an existed solution. Leaders of MNPOs, members of the Muslim community, and agents from public safety who participated in the learning process will come together and use tools and methods to formulate the situation. They will look for patterns and interact with each other to find the root cause of Islamophobia in their community. They will view the situation from

different perspective to uncover new solutions. They will look for relationships between repeated hate crimes and let a solution emerge from public safety agent's viewpoint. Participants who acquire systems thinking would be able to find an appropriate approach to minimize the effect of Islamophobia on MNPOs. Such approaches will create a good image of MNPOs in the neighborhood or the city, and let other non-Muslim organizations collaborate to decrease security issues. Most importantly, this approach will let public safety department provide more security to MNPOs facilities.

All these positive outcomes that flow from emergence of a solution will contribute to increase credibility, trustworthiness, and agility. As a result, resiliency of MNPOs will increase as well. When public safety agencies such police departments increase efforts to provide security to MNPOs, these organizations are considered credible from the perspective of local government. Non-Muslim organizations and non-Muslim communities collaborating and cooperating to provide support and stand against Islamophobia is a sign of trustworthiness. MNPOs applying new approaches as quickly as possible to minimize the effect of Islamophobia is an outcome of agility. MNPOs that are credible, trustworthy, and agile, will definitely have high resiliency level.

Problems Dissolved

I argue that if leaders and stakeholders in MNPOs think systemically, they will address their problems in ways that increase resiliency and components of resilience. For example, in case of interpersonal conflicts, many small, new Muslim organizations cease to operate not due to lack of financial resources, but because of interpersonal conflicts. Interpersonal conflicts are complex problems. If these problems are underestimated and not well managed, it will cause serious problems to the organization. Participants who acquire systems thinking will not only fix

such issues for the short term, they will eliminate the problem for good thereby dissolving the problem. To dissolve such problem, participants will come together to redesign the entity or the part that has the issue. They will look at management's beliefs and behaviors as a whole not as parts. Interpersonal conflicts do not arise in isolation, but come from dynamic situations. Participants would consider mindsets, culture, levels of religiosity, levels of education, levels of experience, and other characteristics before redesigning the part that has the issue. Participants would also focus more on how parties who have conflict interact with each other as a whole, rather than how they act independently of each other.

After considering many aspects of the entity that has the problem, participants can start designing how the relationship of the parts should function. The design process should be based upon the assumption that the entity no longer exists and they must design it from the scratch. Dr. Ackoff suggested this strategy on redesigning entities because the new entity will replace the old one and all hidden problems will be eliminated.

With new entity design, individuals who had conflicts before will have fresh relationships which lead to fresh dynamic forces. When relationships are reconciled and the problem no longer exists, MNPOs will be able to focus on legal aspects to sustain the requirements of tax exemption and credibility of the organization. People in general do not trust an organization that suffers from interpersonal conflicts. When a Muslim community notices the good relationship amongst members of the organization and the smoothness of the interaction between them, trustworthiness will emerge and increase. When members of an organization are no longer wasting time dealing with conflicts, they become more agile and find new ways to improve the performance of their organization. In other words, eliminating interpersonal conflict by

redesigning the entity will increase credibility, trustworthiness, and agility. As a result, the MNPO's resiliency increases.

The resiliency and other outputs of the systems thinking learning model would be anticipated to emerge after two to three months. It may take longer than that, depending on the willingness and competency of participants and the influence of interior and exterior challenges.

Implementing the model of systems thinking learning in a social system is challenging because the containing system, where MNPOs operate, is complex and volatile. Therefore, the learning process of systems thinking may not be always successful, which may cause a delay or a poor result in resiliency and other outputs. As a plan B in this situation, the feedback loop will play a big role improving the quality of learning and the outcomes. With the feedback loop, a facilitator can go back and analyze the input part of the model to see whether the right participants were chosen. The facilitator can evaluate the content of systems thinking and channel used for delivery and make adjustments as necessary. The facilitator can also hold a focus group with participants (leaders and stakeholders) to discuss what went wrong in the learning procedure. By engaging participants to improve the implementation of the model, it will make them more committed and devoted to accomplishing the purpose of the model, which is boosting resiliency of MNPOs.

Feedback Loop of the Model

As mentioned earlier, the feedback loop is very critical to amplify the outputs of the system. Both positive and negative feedback affect the systems thinking learning model to generate desired outputs. Well-handled feedback will allow the model to increase resiliency in MNPOs by increasing credibility, trustworthiness, and agility.

Positive feedback to facilitators could allow them to amplify the strategies used to deliver systems thinking learning. It will give them confidence to keep offering high performance in administering the systems thinking learning.

Positive feedback to leaders could have a good impact on their willingness and motivation to strive more to lead their organizations. It could also inspire young Muslim members of that organization to become successful leaders in future. It will create a good relationship between leaders and other members of the organization.

Positive feedback to Muslim communities and other stakeholders could encourage them to offer more support financially and participate more in MNPO activities. It will also increase their trust in MNPOs. Collaborations and partnerships with other non-Muslim organizations could serve both communities, Muslim and non-Muslim.

In summary, the positive feedback of improved performances and increased resiliency of MNPOs will generate a good image of American Muslims organizations in broader society. As a result, media and social media will report more positive images, which will decrease Islamophobia and hate against Muslim communities.

Negative feedback will also have a good impact on the outcomes of the system. When the systems thinking learning is not generating the desired outputs, negative feedback allows facilitators to evaluate the learning program and redesign it so it will provide high quality of education.

When negative feedback is received by leaders, it will allow them to reconsider their understanding of systems thinking and how they implement what was learned. They can make additional efforts to interact more with the facilitator and the content to master tools of systems thinking to face complex challenges.

Negative feedback to Muslim community members and other stakeholders will allow them to reconsider their participation in the program and how to improve the services of MNPOs. They may make additional efforts to interact with facilitators, leaders, and content to acquire the desired level of systems thinking knowledge, so they can be able to participate in emergence of solutions or dissolving problems. Negative feedback in general will provide opportunities for facilitators and participants to re-evaluate the interaction required to learn systems thinking and to generate desired outputs. Without negative feedback, they will not be able to discover the deficiency of the model, and as consequence, problems will not be handled, and the situation may get worse.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION OF THE MODEL

Nonprofit organizations are essential in society. They play a vital role in solving social problems, building healthy communities, and developing good citizens. Some of these nonprofit organizations are non-governmental organizations (NGOs) because they have a broader size and scope and operate internationally. Other nonprofit organizations are labeled NPOs because they can be of any size and founded by individuals who want to make an impact within their local community.

Muslim nonprofit organizations (MNPOs), the focus of my dissertation, are considered a subgroup of faith-based organization that provide for American Muslim society's spiritual needs and religious services. They help Muslims integrate into US society. They also bridge the differences between Muslims and non-Muslims in the United States.

However, many MNPOs struggle to survive and some have ceased to operate because they fail to handle complex/wicked challenges. These challenges are external such as increased Islamophobia (trigged by terrorist attacks by Muslim criminals), media coverage of these terrorist events, COVID-19, and so on. Other challenges are internal such as interpersonal conflicts and some types of mindsets of Muslims (including leaders, members, and community). These problems (internal and external) are connected to each other, influence each other, and generate other complex problems. Trying to solve such complex problems without considering their interconnectedness, and without using appropriate tools and methods may create unintended consequences. For Muslim nonprofit organizations, credibility, trustworthiness, and agility are crucial to build resiliency. However, in recent years, these complex challenges have diminished and weakened these characteristics in MNPOs.

Research Question

Many MNPO leaders do not know how to deal with complex problems. They do not know the difference between complex situations as non-linear problems and complicated situations as linear problems. Moreover, these leaders lack an understanding of the interconnectedness of complex problems. In other words, they lack the mindset of systems thinking that will allow them to understand complex problems and to discover innovative ways to intervene.

To address this situation, I proposed the following research question: If leaders and stakeholders of Muslim nonprofit organizations learn and adopt the mindset of systems thinking with consideration of the influences of the internal and external context/environment, will resiliency improve?

To answer this research question, I examined the current reality of MNPOs in the United States by examining the literature. In Chapter 1, after identifying internal and external complex problem that MNPOs face, I argued that MNPOs lack the tools and skills to solve complex problems, understanding of complex domain of Cynefin framework, and the mindset of systems thinkers. Then, to address the research questions above, I proposed a nonlinear model taken and reformed from "Leadership Learning System" developed by Starr (2020). I named the model "Systems Thinking Learning model."

In Chapter 2, I provided a comprehensive history and information regarding Muslim communities and their nonprofit organizations since the foundation of America. I introduced the systems thinking model Interactive Planning developed by Dr. Ackoff to demonstrate how effective systems thinking is in improving communities and nonprofit organizations. I also presented a systems tool – the influence diagram – in which I explained many elements that

influence the development of resiliency in an MNPO. I concluded that the current situation is a "mess," a term created by Ackoff (1999) that refers to a system of challenges, problems, and opportunities. I also concluded that if the situation did not change-which was unlikely-then it would become much worse. Only a complete redesign would offer improvement.

In Chapters 3 and 4, I described the model I proposed that could offer this change. This model was an iteration of a basic system with inputs, a transformation process, outcomes and a feedback loop. I described the elements and how the model could be applied to MNPOs. This model is based on developing participants (leaders and stakeholders) by teaching them systems thinking tools and methods. The purpose of teaching systems thinking is to make them systems thinkers. It will change their mindset and the way they see complex problems. Then it will allow them to better interact. The aim of interaction is to allow solutions to emerge or dissolve problems.

The input of the model consists of MNPOs leaders, stakeholders, and a facilitator. Depending on the type of complex problem or situation, stakeholder members can come from different parties. They can come from a police department in case of Islamophobia and safety concerns, or they can come from a health department in case of health issues (pandemic). Every individual who can influence or be influenced by both the problem and the outcome of the issue is considered a valuable stakeholder.

The transformation process of the model consists of interaction between leaders/stakeholders, facilitator/instructors, content, and context to learn systems thinking. A facilitator is central in the transformation process. The facilitator administers systems thinking learning and manages interaction to allow learning.

Learning systems thinking is influenced by internal and external context. The internal context consists of the channel used to deliver the content. The appropriate channel proposed is a hybrid method because it provides F2F and online meetings, which is more convenient for participants in a volatile environment. The suitable strategy to learn proposed in this model is heutagogy because it gives participants the autonomy to make choices and learn how to learn. External contexts- such as health, economy, safety, war, and others- do influence the learning process because these forces are described as volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous.

The outputs of the model consist of interaction to allow a solution to emerge (in case of dealing with external problems) or dissolve the problem (in case of dealing with internal problems); progress in credibility, trustworthiness, and agility; and increase in MNPO resiliency.

The feedback loop of the model provides the outcomes desired to improve resiliency in MNPOs. If the outcomes desired is not reached, then the feedback loop will indicate that the system should re-do the process or adjust elements in order to accomplish the results desired.

The appropriate approach for a social system (such as MNPOs) which faces complex problems is systems thinking. A social system is defined as a group of individuals interacting with each other based on shared cultural norms and meanings (Parsons, 1951). MNPOs are groups of Muslim individuals who come together according to a shared culture and religion. Each MNPO may have different culture, different understanding of religion, and different languages.

By learning and using systems thinking, MNPOs will appropriately and effectively address complex problem. They will not implement quick fix solutions or universal solutions, but rather formulating problems as a first step then include stakeholders for interaction to allow solutions to emerge or to dissolve problems. To formulate problems for a wicked or messy

situation, it needs to be understood holistically from every possible perspective, and from which domain the problem is categorized. Formulating problems will enable recognition of interactions and interdependence of individuals in social system.

Problem solving is another benefit of using systems thinking. MNPOs will be able to find solutions when no one knows what to do. They will be able to learn from their own mistakes and implement the appropriate course of action that is convenient for them. Two types of problems solving were introduced in this dissertation. They are emergence of solutions and dissolving problems. Emergence of solution is considered the appropriate course of action when dealing with complex/wicked problem. In a complex domain, no one knows the answer and no expert can offer an answer. However, by interactions with stakeholders and using systems thinking tools, solution will eventually emerge. Dissolving problem is another problem solving. It allows the organization to eliminate the problem at the source. To do that, the organization will need to redesign the entity that has issues from the beginning.

Not all problems that MNPOs are facing, are complex. Some non-complex problem can be addressed by analytical thinking or so-called traditional science. Analytic thinking consists of breaking a complex topic into smaller parts in order to gain a better understanding of it (Beaney, 2012). Analytical thinking is well suited in a context that is well structured and ordered, and the cause and effect are linear.

It does not mean that analytic thinking should not be used at all, but both analytic thinking and systems thinking are needed and have their time and place. The strength of the analytic thinking is that it can address simple and complicated problems and the strength of systems thinking is the ability to address complex problems. To be effective, leaders of MNPOs

must have both and be able to shift from analytic to systems thinking in order to address problems in different contexts.

In recent years, it has been noticeable that disagreements and disputes arose without reaching a resolution in many MNPOs. For example, when considering a specific decision regarding an event or a project, board members often ended meetings with divergence and disagreement. Electing a new member to the board led to confrontation. Such situations created tension between members and board directors. It created frustration and discontent among the rest of the organization's members to the point they started losing their trust in the board members. The stress and tension between community members and board members became so tense that some members left the organization. Others became less motivated to contribute than they were before. Many activities and events were frozen. As a result, many organizations became dysfunctional.

It appeared that conflicts were common in many Muslim nonprofit organizations, but no one knows how to solve them. Those organizations had what most organizations need to operate normally. They had volunteers as human resources. They received grants from the government and donations from the community. They had everything set up legally. Still, they failed to operate properly.

MNPO leaders do not know that they are dealing with a social system that is complex and therefore, needs a system approach. They do not see the whole organization as a product of the interaction of its members, but only separate parts. As Dr. Ackoff indicated in his system approach for Interactive Planning, a social system is never the sum of its parts. It is the product of the interactions of its parts (Ackoff, 2003).

Many writers and consultants wrote about interpersonal conflicts and other issues in MNPOs. They offered general solutions that, according to their understanding, should be applicable for each organization. For example, Oussama Mezoui (2020), a nonprofit consultant, said: “If we’re to improve standards of the Muslim nonprofit sector, we must start by improving the quality of our boards.” True, but the question is how. In his article, he proposed that before leaders take responsibility for the organization, roles and responsibilities must be clear. He mentioned that board members should be chosen carefully. He also noted that overall, Muslim nonprofit organizations need to hire great leaders. But how if leaders are already in the position? What should we do? What if the leader is great, but the board members are not great? There are so many things to be considered that the writer did not mention.

The purpose of the systems thinking learning model is to help leaders become great leaders by acquiring a systems thinking mindset and continually developing their leadership skills not by themselves, but with stakeholders and facilitators.

Great leadership does not come from personal development only, but also from a good interrelationship between leaders, community members, and other stakeholders. If leaders and stakeholders become systems thinkers, they will know how to formulate their own problems (formulate the mess) and how to discover the best approach to fix their own unique problems.

The model proposed in this dissertation will help MNPOs effectively cope with interpersonal conflicts. Leaders and stakeholders will learn and acquire methods, techniques, and wisdom of systems thinking. With a systems thinking mindset they will be able to diagnose the problem and formulate the conflict. Then, after interactions, they will be able to detect and implement solutions that emerge. If the interpersonal conflict continues, they will dissolve the

problem by redesigning the portion that has the issue. By redesigning the part, that is "systemic ills," the conflict will be eliminated.

Critical Evaluation of the Model

Maturity model

The systems thinking learning model proposed in this paper allows MNPOs to learn about themselves and continually improve themselves. In other words, this model is creating maturity in MNPOs. This model reflects the characteristics of maturity models. Dachowitz (2021) defined a maturity model as a representation of how capable an organization or system is of achieving continuous improvement in a particular discipline. Maturity models show organizations what and where they can improve to achieve a higher maturity level. Organizations that have higher maturity have more chance to improve themselves after failures or errors (Dachowitz, 2021).

Like maturity models, a systems thinking learning model does not ensure organizational improvement. It is very important to understand the role of maturity models and what to expect from them. Osenstock, Johnston, and Anderson (2000) argued in their article "Maturity model implementation and use: A case study" that a maturity model helps to detect weaknesses, but not fix them. It helps to generate an improvement plan, but not execute the plan. Based on such understanding, the systems thinking learning model does not provide ready answers. However, it helps to discover innovative ways to find solutions when no one knows what to do.

Viable system

The systems thinking learning model can be applicable to any organization that reflects the characteristic of viable system. A variable system is a system that can survive in rapidly changing environments and be applicable to every organization (Beer, 1981). Therefore, the four

elements of the system – input, transformation, outcome, feedback- are also variable and feasible. It can run by one person (the facilitator) and it does not require special training to run the system. As long as the facilitator has basic skills of administration and basic knowledge of systems thinking knowledge, he or she will be able to run the systems thinking learning model.

Interaction system

The most significant aspect in this model is the interaction. If the interactions between the four key variables listed in the model (participants, facilitator, content, and context) are well handled and managed, it will produce desirable outputs. As Ackoff proposed in his system approach "Interactive Planning", as systems thinkers, to improve the performance of the whole, interactions between the parts should be well managed.

Next Steps

To answer the research question, it is hopeful that this model can help MNPOs to adopt systems thinking mindset and become more resilient. Teaching participants systems thinking methods and tools will allow them to interact to let solutions emerge or dissolve problems. With systems thinking learning model, MNPOs will not find solutions available and ready to be used, but they will learn ways how to discover what to do when they do not know what to do.

The Doctor of Management in Strategic Leadership program and the process of writing this dissertation have taught me alternative ways of formulating and thinking about problems. Systems thinking led me to reevaluate my thinking and approaches in addressing my problems as well as problems for MNPOs. The problems facing MNPOs cannot be completely solved when this model is implemented. However, it minimizes the effect of complex challenges when no one understands what is going on.

There is not much research conducted on MNPOs. Therefore, more research and studies should be conducted to support and sustain them. A full evaluation of the model proposed in this paper might be needed to improve the system approach and achieve greatest benefits. The assessment should include plausibility and effectiveness of the model as well. A next step after this study would be implementation of this model in a new and small MNPO to test the feasibility and discover weaknesses of this model. A detailed curriculum/syllabus with topics to be covered and resources should be developed to allow other facilitators to administer this model.

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