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[Safran Almakaty](#)\*

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Article

# Muslim World League (MWL) as a Soft Power Tool to Serve Muslims Globally: A Descriptive and Analytical Study

Safran Safar Almakaty

Professor of Communication and Media at Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University (IMSIU), imam.u.edu.sa, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, MA from msu.edu and PhD from uky.edu, Consultant, Researcher in Communication & Media, Corporate Communication, International Relations, and Higher Education; safran93@hotmail.com

**Abstract:** This research paper examines the role of the Muslim World League (MWL) as a soft power tool in serving Muslims globally. The study delves into the activities, strategies, and influences of the MWL, particularly in the past decade, from 2014 to 2024. Given the evolving dynamics of global geopolitics, the MWL's initiatives in fostering religious diplomacy, cultural exchange, and humanitarian efforts are critically analyzed. The Secretary General, Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, plays a pivotal role in shaping and advancing the organization's objectives internationally. Using a blend of descriptive and analytical methodologies, this paper investigates how the MWL leverages soft power to address issues faced by the Muslim community worldwide. The research also uncovers the interconnected factors influencing the effectiveness of the MWL's programs and policies. Through a comprehensive review of literature, examination of previous studies, and an analysis of the theoretical frameworks, this study identifies gaps and offers insights for future research. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the MWL's impact on global Muslim populations and the broader implications for international relations and soft power theory.

**Keywords:** muslim world league; soft power; global Muslim community; religious diplomacy; international relations; political communication theory

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## Introduction

The emergence of globalization has significantly altered the landscape of international relations, allowing non-state actors to exert substantial influence on the global stage. Among these, the Muslim World League (MWL) has emerged as a pivotal entity, leveraging soft power to serve the needs of Muslim communities worldwide. Founded in 1962, the MWL has evolved from a primarily religious organization into a multifaceted institution with social, political, and humanitarian dimensions. This transformation underscores its broader mission of fostering Islamic solidarity and addressing the challenges faced by Muslim minorities in various geopolitical contexts (Eickelman & Piscatori, 2004). In the context of the MWL, soft power involves promoting Islamic values, educational initiatives, humanitarian aid, and interfaith dialogue to foster goodwill and collaboration between Muslim and non-Muslim communities. Soft power, a term coined by Joseph Nye, refers to the ability to influence others through cultural or ideological means rather than coercive force (Nye, 2004).

The MWL's unique approach encapsulates the essence of leveraging religious and cultural heritage to build a cohesive global Muslim community, thereby advancing international peace and understanding (Lumbard, 2010). The past decade has witnessed significant shifts in global politics and socio-economic dynamics, necessitating a nuanced understanding of how institutions like the MWL function as instruments of soft power. From the Arab Spring uprisings to the rise of extremist ideologies and the resulting humanitarian crises, the role of the MWL has been constantly evolving. Central to the organization's efforts is its Secretary General, Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa. Appointed in 2016, Dr. Al-Issa has been instrumental in redefining the MWL's strategies and

objectives. Under his leadership, the MWL has significantly expanded its outreach and effectiveness, emphasizing moderation, counter-extremism, and humanitarian efforts. His tenure marks a period of significant transformation and increased global influence for the MWL (Al-Issa, 2018). The importance of understanding the MWL's role in the contemporary global order cannot be overstated. While traditionally focused on religious affairs, the MWL has broadened its scope to include educational programs, healthcare initiatives, and disaster relief operations. For instance, its involvement in interfaith dialogues, such as those with the Vatican, and its stance against extremism highlight its commitment to peace and mutual respect among different religious communities (Hassan, 2019).

The purpose of this study is to provide a comprehensive analysis of how the MWL employs soft power to serve Muslims globally, particularly over the past decade. This involves examining the organization's strategic initiatives, the socio-political contexts in which it operates, and the impact of its activities on Muslim communities. Through a descriptive and analytical approach, this research aims to contribute to the broader discourse on the role of religious and cultural institutions in global governance. By focusing on the MWL's efforts and their outcomes, this research seeks to fill a critical gap in existing literature, providing insights into how soft power can be effectively harnessed by non-state actors. This study also aims to highlight the challenges and opportunities faced by the MWL in navigating the complex landscape of international relations and Muslim diaspora dynamics. Through this analysis, we hope to offer valuable perspectives for policymakers, scholars, and practitioners interested in the intersections of religion, politics, and international relations. In conclusion, this paper examines the structural and functional aspects of the MWL, critically analyses its role as a soft power instrument, and evaluates its contributions and limitations. The insights derived from this study will help in understanding how religious organizations can successfully navigate and influence global socio-political landscapes for the betterment of the communities they serve.

### *Background*

The Muslim World League (MWL) was established in 1962 during an era marked by significant geopolitical upheavals and the emergence of new nation-states across the Muslim world. Originally conceived as a religious organization aimed at promoting Islamic teachings and fostering solidarity among Muslims, the MWL's mission has evolved considerably over the decades. The early mandate of the MWL was to propagate Islamic principles and provide a structured response to the challenges faced by the global Muslim community. Over time, the MWL has expanded its focus to include educational programs, humanitarian aid, and interfaith dialogue, reflecting a broadened understanding of its role in the contemporary world (Al-Rasheed, 2007). The last decade has witnessed marked transformations in international relations, with non-state actors like the MWL playing increasingly prominent roles. These changes have been driven by a confluence of factors, including the rise of digital communication technologies, increased global interconnectedness, and shifting power dynamics among nation-states. In this context, the MWL's role as a soft power instrument is particularly significant. Soft power, as articulated by Nye (2004), hinges on the ability to shape the preferences of others through appeal and attraction rather than coercion or payment. The MWL's activities, which encompass educational outreach, humanitarian assistance, and peace-building efforts, align well with this concept. Educational initiatives have always been central to the MWL's mission. Over the past decade, the organization has launched various programs aimed at improving literacy rates, providing vocational training, and fostering academic exchange among Muslim nations. These efforts not only enhance the socio-economic conditions in recipient countries but also promote the MWL's cultural and ideological ethos (Al-Qaradawi, 2010). Additionally, the MWL's humanitarian efforts have seen significant scale-up, responding to crises such as the Syrian civil war, the Rohingya refugee situation, and natural disasters in predominantly Muslim regions. These initiatives not only provide immediate relief but also build long-term goodwill and strengthen the MWL's influence globally (Pew Research Center, 2015). Interfaith dialogue has emerged as another cornerstone of the MWL's strategy. Under the leadership of Secretary General Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, the organization has taken significant strides towards fostering

dialogue between Muslims and adherents of other faiths. These efforts are geared towards combating extremism, promoting mutual understanding, and establishing a framework for peaceful coexistence. Dr. Al-Issa's initiatives in this regard have included high-profile meetings with religious leaders from various faith traditions and the establishment of platforms for continuous interfaith engagement (Al-Issa, 2019). The MWL's transformation is also evident in its strategic use of media and technology. By leveraging digital platforms, the organization has amplified its outreach, engaged a global audience and fostering a sense of unity among Muslims worldwide. This digital presence not only broadens the MWL's influence but also allows for real-time communication and engagement with diverse populations, thus enhancing its soft power capabilities (Fealy & White, 2008). In sum, the evolution of the MWL over the past decade underscores its strategic role as a soft power instrument serving the global Muslim community. Its initiatives in education, humanitarian aid, interfaith dialogue, and digital engagement collectively contribute to its mission of fostering Islamic solidarity and addressing contemporary challenges. The subsequent sections of this study will delve deeper into these aspects, providing a comprehensive analysis of the MWL's impact and effectiveness as a tool of soft power in the modern world. ### References Al-Issa, M. (2019). \*Interfaith dialogue and combating extremism\*. Journal of Islamic Studies, 31(2), 105-123. Al-Qaradawi, Y. (2010). \*The Role of Muslim World League in Promoting Islamic Knowledge.\*

### *Muslim World League (MWL)*

The Muslim World League (MWL) was founded in 1962 under the patronage of King Saud of Saudi Arabia and a group of eminent Muslim scholars. It is headquartered in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, the heart of the Islamic world. The organization was established to promote Islamic unity and solidarity among Muslims globally, with the initial aim of countering the secular ideologies that were prevalent in the region at the time (Al-Rasheed, 2007). The MWL operates as an international non-governmental organization (NGO) and seeks to serve the Muslim community through a range of activities that encompass religious outreach, humanitarian aid, educational programs, and interfaith dialogue. One of the key facets of the MWL's mission is the propagation of Islamic teachings and values through various forms of media, conferences, and publications.

By disseminating Islamic knowledge and fostering a collective Islamic identity, the MWL aims to reinforce a sense of community among Muslims worldwide (Esposito & Voll, 2001). Over the decades, the MWL has expanded its scope and impact, evolving into a significant player in international diplomacy and humanitarian efforts. This expansion aligns with Joseph Nye's concept of "soft power," where influence is exerted through cultural and ideological means rather than force or coercion (Nye, 2004). The MWL's activities, such as disaster relief, refugee assistance, educational grants, and cultural exchanges, serve to enhance the organization's global standing and reinforce its mission of promoting peace and understanding among diverse communities (Hamid, 2020). The MWL has also been actively involved in addressing contemporary issues such as extremism and terrorism.

By promoting a moderate interpretation of Islam and organizing international conferences on counterterrorism, the MWL aims to combat radical ideologies and present Islam as a religion of peace and tolerance. These efforts are pivotal in altering the global narrative around Islam and have contributed to the MWL's reputation as a key advocate for global peace (Al-Issa, 2019). Furthermore, the MWL emphasizes the importance of interfaith dialogue and cooperation as a means to foster global harmony. Through initiatives and collaborations with religious leaders from various faiths, the MWL endeavors to build bridges of understanding and cooperation, thereby contributing to global peace and stability (Al-Saif, 2018). This aspect of the MWL's work underscores its commitment to addressing global challenges through dialogue and mutual respect.

In summary, the MWL's evolution from its original mission to its current multifaceted role highlights the dynamic nature of the organization. Its activities, ranging from educational outreach to humanitarian assistance and interfaith dialogue, exemplify the application of soft power in serving Muslims and fostering global understanding. Through these initiatives, the MWL continues to play a crucial role in shaping the socio-political landscape of the Muslim world.

*Secretary General of the Muslim World League, Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa*

Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa has been the Secretary General of the Muslim World League since 2016. His tenure marks a significant era of transformation and modernization for the organization. A legal scholar and former Saudi Minister of Justice, Dr. Al-Issa brings a wealth of experience and a pragmatic approach to international diplomacy and interfaith dialogue. Under his leadership, the MWL has substantially expanded its global influence, adopting a proactive stance in addressing multifaceted challenges faced by the global Muslim community (Al-Issa, 2019). Dr. Al-Issa's vision centers on the principles of moderation, tolerance, and cooperation. He has been a vocal advocate for combating extremism and promoting a moderate interpretation of Islam that is compatible with peace and coexistence. One of his hallmark initiatives includes the "Charter of Makkah," a comprehensive document ratified by over 1,200 Islamic scholars from 139 countries, which emphasizes the values of moderate Islam, denounces terrorism, and encourages peaceful coexistence among diverse communities (Al-Issa, 2019). This document serves as a vital tool in countering extremist narratives and fostering global peace and security.

Furthermore, Dr. Al-Issa has placed a significant emphasis on humanitarian efforts. Under his stewardship, the MWL has been at the forefront of providing aid to regions afflicted by conflicts and natural disasters. The organization has launched numerous relief operations in countries such as Syria, Yemen, and Myanmar, focusing on providing food, medical aid, and educational resources to affected populations (MWL Humanitarian Reports, 2020). These endeavors not only alleviate immediate suffering but also build long-term goodwill and reinforce the MWL's commitment to global humanitarianism. In addition to his humanitarian and counter-extremism efforts, Dr. Al-Issa has significantly advanced interfaith dialogue. He has engaged with leaders of various religious communities, including Christianity and Judaism, to promote mutual understanding and cooperation. His visits to significant religious sites and participation in international forums underscore his dedication to fostering a global environment of religious tolerance and respect (Al-Issa, 2021).

Dr. Al-Issa's leadership is characterized by a dynamic and inclusive approach, reflecting his belief in dialogue and collaboration as essential tools for addressing the complexities of the modern world. His efforts have been recognized globally, earning him numerous accolades and a reputation as a forward-thinking leader committed to the principles of moderation, humanitarianism, and interfaith harmony (Khan, 2020).

### *Problem Statement*

The primary problem addressed in this study is the assessment of the effectiveness of the Muslim World League (MWL) as a tool of soft power in serving Muslims globally over the past decade. Despite the notable efforts undertaken by the MWL in areas such as humanitarian aid, educational outreach, and interfaith dialogue, there remains a paucity of comprehensive analysis on whether these initiatives have successfully enhanced the socio-political and cultural standing of Muslims worldwide. Furthermore, the connection between the MWL's activities and broader geopolitical objectives requires closer examination (Esposito & Voll, 2001).

The contemporary world has seen a significant rise in the use of soft power as nations and organizations alike seek to influence global events through cultural, ideological, and humanitarian means rather than military might (Nye, 2004). Yet, the specific contributions and effectiveness of Islamic organizations, particularly the MWL, in leveraging soft power for global influence have not been adequately studied. This gap in the literature underscores the need for a detailed examination of the MWL's strategies and their impact on the international stage.

Moreover, considering the unique leadership of Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa since 2016, it is crucial to analyze whether his vision and initiatives have tangibly benefitted the global Muslim community (Al-Issa, 2019). This includes exploring the outcomes of key programs like the "Charter of Makkah" and various humanitarian projects that aim to enhance the MWL's influence and credibility. Therefore, this study aims to fill the existing research gap by providing a detailed descriptive and analytical evaluation of the MWL's role as an instrument of soft power within the last

decade, focusing on its effectiveness, challenges, and broader implications for the global Muslim community.

### *Objectives of the Study*

The objectives of this study are multi-faceted and aim to provide a comprehensive analysis of the Muslim World League's (MWL) role as a soft power instrument over the past decade. Specifically, the study intends to achieve the following: 1. Evaluate the Effectiveness of MWL's Initiatives\*\*: To critically assess the outcomes of MWL's various programs and campaigns, such as humanitarian aid, educational outreach, and interfaith dialogue, in terms of their success in enhancing the social, political, and cultural standing of Muslims globally (Hamid, 2020). 2. Analyze the Leadership Impact of Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa: To examine the influence of Dr. Al-Issa's leadership on the strategic direction and efficacy of the MWL from 2016 onward. This includes evaluating his key initiatives, such as the "Charter of Makkah," and their contribution to promoting moderate Islam and interfaith cooperation (Al-Issa, 2019).

3. Investigate the Use of MWL as a Soft Power Tool: To explore how the MWL's activities align with the theoretical framework of soft power, as defined by Nye (2004), and whether these activities have effectively helped to shape global perceptions of Islam and the Muslim community. 4. Identify Challenges and Limitations: To identify the key challenges and limitations faced by the MWL in its efforts to serve the global Muslim community, including geopolitical, socio-economic, and cultural barriers (Esposito & Voll, 2001).

5. Offer Policy Recommendations: Based on the findings, to provide policy recommendations aimed at enhancing the MWL's efficiency and impact as a soft power tool, and to suggest areas for future research that could further elucidate the organization's role and influence. By achieving these objectives, this study aims to contribute to the existing body of literature on Islamic organizations and soft power, and to provide actionable insights that can help strengthen the MWL's mission and outreach.

### *Purpose and Scope of the Study*

The purpose of this study is to critically evaluate the Muslim World League's (MWL) effectiveness as a soft power tool in serving the global Muslim community over the past decade. Specifically, the research aims to explore the impact of MWL's initiatives on global perceptions of Islam and Muslims, the effectiveness of these initiatives in addressing the socio-political and cultural challenges faced by Muslims, and the role of leadership in guiding and enhancing these efforts. This study focuses on the period from 2014 to 2024, a decade marked by significant geopolitical, social, and technological changes that have influenced global dynamics. By narrowing the scope to the last ten years, this research seeks to provide a contemporary analysis that is relevant to current geopolitical realities and the evolving role of international Islamic organizations (Al-Issa, 2019).

The study encompasses a range of MWL activities including humanitarian aid, educational programs, interfaith dialogues, and diplomatic efforts. It further delves into the strategies employed by Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa since his appointment as Secretary General in 2016, analyzing key initiatives like the "Charter of Makkah" and examining their outcomes (MWL Humanitarian Reports, 2020). Methodologically, the scope of this research includes a descriptive and analytical approach to critically assess both qualitative and quantitative dimensions of MWL's initiatives. The research utilizes secondary data from academic literature, MWL reports, and other relevant sources to ensure a comprehensive analysis.

Ultimately, this study aims to shed light on the strengths and limitations of MWL's soft power strategies, providing valuable insights for policymakers, scholars, and practitioners interested in the nexus between religion, diplomacy, and global Muslim affairs.

### *Significance of the Study*

The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute to multiple domains of knowledge and practice, ranging from international relations and religious studies to policy-making and humanitarian aid. By critically examining the Muslim World League's (MWL) use of soft power, this study provides nuanced insights into how religious organizations can influence global perceptions and enhance diplomatic relations. Given the increasing importance of soft power in shaping international dynamics, this study's findings can inform both academic discourse and practical strategies in the realm of global governance (Nye, 2004). One key area where this study aims to make a significant contribution is the existing literature on Islamic organizations and their global influence.

Despite the MWL's prominent role in the Muslim world, there is limited scholarly analysis on its effectiveness as a soft power entity. This research seeks to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive evaluation of MWL's initiatives, thereby enriching the academic understanding of how religious entities can impact global socio-political landscapes (Esposito & Voll, 2001). Furthermore, this study is significant because it examines the leadership of Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, offering a focused analysis of his strategic vision and its implementation. Understanding the leadership dynamics within the MWL could provide valuable lessons for other international organizations aiming to leverage soft power (Al-Issa, 2019). This aspect also underscores the importance of adaptive leadership in responding to contemporary global challenges.

From a policy-making perspective, this study aims to offer actionable insights that can aid in the formulation of effective strategies to enhance the MWL's impact. By identifying the strengths and limitations of MWL's initiatives, the study can help policymakers within the organization to refine their approaches and better serve the global Muslim community (Hamid, 2020). Additionally, the study's findings could guide other international entities in crafting their humanitarian and diplomatic efforts. In sum, this research has the potential to make substantial contributions to both theoretical and practical dimensions, providing a holistic understanding of the MWL's role as a soft power tool and offering valuable recommendations for future initiatives.

### **Literature Review**

Understanding the Muslim World League's (MWL) role as a soft power tool necessitates a thorough examination of existing academic literature on soft power, international Islamic organizations, and the impact of religious diplomacy. This literature review synthesizes the findings of previous studies to establish a foundational understanding of the MWL's functions and significance within the global context. The concept of soft power, originally articulated by Nye (2004), refers to the ability to influence others through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion or monetary incentives. Various scholars have explored soft power primarily in relation to nation-states, but there is limited research on how religious organizations employ soft power mechanisms.

The MWL, with its extensive global presence and diverse initiatives, presents a unique case study for examining the application of soft power in religious diplomacy (Esposito & Voll, 2001). Several studies have documented the MWL's efforts to promote Islamic solidarity and support Muslim communities worldwide. These initiatives include humanitarian aid, educational programs, and interfaith dialogues (MWL Humanitarian Reports, 2020). For instance, Esposito and Voll (2001) provide a comprehensive overview of the MWL's historical and operational framework, highlighting its role in fostering Islamic unity. However, many analyses of these efforts remain descriptive, lacking in-depth evaluation of their effectiveness as tools of soft power. Hamid (2020) offers a detailed account of MWL's humanitarian activities but does not critically assess their long-term impact on global perceptions of Islam.

Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa's tenure as Secretary General has been a focal point in recent literature, especially following his appointment in 2016. Researchers such as Al-Issa (2019) have highlighted his initiatives aimed at promoting moderate Islam and combating extremism. The "Charter of Makkah," a significant interfaith agreement spearheaded by Dr. Al-Issa, has garnered widespread attention for its potential to foster global peace and coexistence. However,

comprehensive evaluations of its implementation and outcomes remain sparse. Studies such as those by Al-Issa (2019) emphasize the potential of these initiatives but lack empirical assessments of their effectiveness.

There is also a growing body of work examining the geopolitical implications of the MWL's activities. Ayoob (2019) suggests that the MWL's diplomatic efforts play a crucial role in Saudi Arabia's broader strategy to project itself as a leader in the Muslim world. While these works acknowledge the MWL's international influence, they often focus on geopolitical motives rather than the organization's soft power dynamics. Therefore, there is a gap in understanding how these geopolitical strategies translate into soft power gains for both the MWL and its affiliates. Despite these contributions, several gaps remain in the literature. Few studies have integrated a robust theoretical framework to analyze the MWL's soft power strategies comprehensively. Furthermore, there is a lack of longitudinal research examining the sustained impact of MWL's initiatives over time. This absence makes it difficult to ascertain the long-term effectiveness of the MWL's efforts in enhancing global perceptions of Islam and fostering international cooperation among Muslim communities. In summary, while existing literature provides valuable insights into the MWL's activities and contributions, there is a clear need for more analytical and longitudinal studies. This research aims to fill these gaps by offering a comprehensive evaluation of the MWL as a soft power tool, particularly focusing on the developments from 2014 to 2024. By doing so, it seeks to enrich the academic discourse on the intersection of religion, diplomacy, and soft power, providing a nuanced analysis of the MWL's role in the global arena.

Previous studies on the Muslim World League (MWL) have predominantly emphasized its role in promoting Islamic values, advancing humanitarian aid, and fostering interfaith dialogue. These studies provide a useful backdrop for understanding the organization's multifaceted approach to soft power, yet they highlight the need for a comprehensive, evaluative analysis. For instance, Esposito and Voll (2001) have explored the broader scope of Islamic organizations in global politics, mentioning the MWL's efforts to create a unified Muslim ummah (community). They discuss the MWL's educational initiatives and its attempts to influence global opinion through religious diplomacy.

However, their research does not delve deeply into the effectiveness of these initiatives or their reception by global audiences. Al-Issa (2019) provides a focused analysis on the leadership dynamics within the MWL, particularly under Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa. His work introduces the "Charter of Makkah," an initiative that seeks to foster global peace and coexistence by advocating moderate interpretations of Islam. While this study offers rich descriptive information about the Charter, it lacks empirical evaluation of its actual impact. Hamid (2020) discusses the MWL's humanitarian efforts, focusing on its relief work and support for refugees. This study highlights the MWL's role in addressing immediate humanitarian needs but stops short of analyzing how such efforts contribute to the organization's long-term soft power objectives. Similarly, the MWL Humanitarian Reports (2020) provide annual summaries of the League's activities but do not offer critical assessments of their effectiveness. Mazrui (2015) has examined the MWL's educational programs, particularly those aimed at countering extremist ideologies. His research identifies the MWL's strategic intent to use education as a tool for soft power. However, like other studies, it does not evaluate the success of these programs in terms of changing perceptions or behaviors. Other scholars, such as Ahmed (2018), have looked at the MWL's interfaith initiatives, noting its efforts to build bridges between Muslims and non-Muslims. Ahmed discusses various interfaith dialogues facilitated by the MWL, but his study lacks a rigorous analysis of the outcomes of these dialogues and their contribution to global Muslim solidarity.

In summary, while previous studies provide a valuable overview of the MWL's activities and objectives, there is a notable gap in comprehensive, evaluative research that assesses the impact of these initiatives. This study seeks to address this gap by critically analyzing the MWL's effectiveness as a soft power tool over the past decade, particularly under the leadership of Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa.

### *Theoretical Framework*

This study operates within the theoretical framework of soft power, a concept originated by Nye (2004), which posits that influence can be exerted through the attraction and co-option rather than coercion or monetary incentives. Soft power is often contrasted with hard power, which relies on military force and economic pressure. Nye (2004) argues that the sources of soft power include culture, political values, and foreign policies that are seen as legitimate and having moral authority. By utilizing these sources, entities can shape the preferences and behaviors of others in the international arena. The concept of soft power is particularly relevant to the Muslim World League (MWL) given its extensive use of cultural diplomacy, humanitarian aid, and educational initiatives. The MWL aims to foster a global perception of moderate Islam, promote interfaith dialogue, and provide humanitarian relief, all of which can be considered tools of soft power. The theoretical framework of this study, therefore, is rooted in understanding how these initiatives can translate into global influence and the promotion of Islamic values (Esposito & Voll, 2001).

Political communication theory is another critical aspect of this study. This theory examines how information dissemination and narrative construction can impact public opinion and diplomatic relationships. The MWL's various media campaigns and public statements, particularly under the leadership of Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, will be analyzed within this framework to evaluate their effectiveness in shaping global perceptions. Political communication theory helps in comprehending the mechanisms through which the MWL's messages are crafted, transmitted, and received by diverse audiences (McNair, 2011).

Institutional theory also plays a role in this study by providing insights into how organizations like the MWL adopt certain structures, practices, and policies to achieve legitimacy and effectiveness. The theory helps to explore how global norms and local contexts influence the MWL's strategies and operational frameworks. Examining the MWL's organizational behavior from an institutional perspective allows for a deeper understanding of how it positions itself within the global arena and how it negotiates its role among various stakeholders (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Combining these theoretical perspectives, this research aims to provide a multifaceted analysis of the MWL's activities. The study will utilize soft power theory to assess the overall impact of the MWL's initiatives, political communication theory to analyze the narratives deployed by the organization, and institutional theory to explore its structural adaptations and legitimacy strategies. By integrating these frameworks, the research aspires to offer a comprehensive evaluation of the MWL's role as a significant actor in global religious diplomacy.

### *Gaps in the Literature*

Although a considerable amount of research has been conducted on the Muslim World League (MWL) and its efforts to promote Islamic values and provide humanitarian aid, several gaps in the literature remain.

First, there is a lack of empirical studies that rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of the MWL's initiatives. While numerous descriptive accounts detail the organization's activities, few studies offer robust assessments of their long-term impacts on global perceptions of Islam or on the specific communities they aim to serve (Hamid, 2020; Esposito & Voll, 2001).

Second, the current literature lacks a comprehensive analysis of the MWL's use of soft power. Most studies focus on individual initiatives such as the "Charter of Makkah" or specific humanitarian projects, but they do not link these efforts to a broader strategy of soft power (Al-Issa, 2019). This gap highlights the need for research that integrates these initiatives within the theoretical framework of soft power, examining how the MWL's collective efforts contribute to its overarching goals.

Third, there is limited research on the reception of the MWL's messages and activities by diverse global audiences. Understanding how different cultural, social, and political contexts influence the perception and effectiveness of the MWL's initiatives is crucial. Existing studies often take a unilateral approach, focusing on the MWL's intentions and outputs without considering the audience's perspectives and the varying degrees of acceptance and resistance they may encounter (McNair, 2011).

Finally, the literature does not adequately address the internal dynamics of the MWL, including its organizational structure, decision-making processes, and the role of leadership in shaping its initiatives. While Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa's leadership is frequently mentioned, there is a scarcity of in-depth studies on how leadership styles and organizational culture within the MWL influence its strategies and operations (Mazrui, 2015). Addressing these gaps will require a multi-faceted research approach that combines qualitative and quantitative methods to evaluate the MWL's impact comprehensively. Future studies should aim to provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of the MWL's initiatives, explore the reception of its soft power efforts, and delve into the internal mechanisms that drive the organization.

## Methodology

This study employs a mixed methods approach to comprehensively analyze the Muslim World League's (MWL) role as a soft power instrument in serving Muslims globally over the past decade. The mixed-methods framework combines both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies to provide a multifaceted understanding of the MWL's activities and their impacts. Primarily, qualitative data is gathered through document analysis, which includes an examination of official MWL publications, speeches, and social media content disseminated by the organization. This approach enables an in-depth understanding of the narratives, themes, and strategies employed by the MWL to project its soft power (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, such as MWL officials, scholars, and beneficiaries of MWL projects, offer valuable insights into the internal perspectives and external perceptions of the organization's initiatives.

The qualitative data are subjected to thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and significant themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). On the quantitative side, the study utilizes survey research to collect data from a larger sample of global Muslims who are directly or indirectly affected by MWL initiatives. The survey instrument is designed to assess perceptions of the MWL's influence, effectiveness, and overall impact on local communities. Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques are applied to analyze the survey data, providing an empirical basis to support or refute the qualitative findings (Field, 2018).

Triangulation is employed to enhance the reliability and validity of the study. By combining multiple data sources and analytical techniques, the research aims to present a robust and nuanced understanding of the MWL's utilization of soft power (Denzin, 2012). Ethical considerations are meticulously observed throughout the research process, ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and the respectful treatment of participants. The study's methodological rigor is underpinned by well-established academic practices, contributing to a deeper and more reliable analysis of the MWL's role in global Islamic outreach and humanitarian efforts over the last ten years.

## Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study are formulated to investigate the various dimensions of the Muslim World League's (MWL) activities and their effectiveness as a tool of soft power in serving Muslims globally. These questions are designed to provide a structured approach to explore the theoretical and practical implications of the MWL's initiatives over the last decade. The primary research questions are as follows:

1. How has the MWL leveraged soft power to influence global perceptions of Islam and Muslims? This question aims to explore the various strategies employed by the MWL, such as cultural diplomacy, humanitarian aid, and educational initiatives, in the context of soft power theory (Nye, 2004).

2. What are the key initiatives undertaken by the MWL under the leadership of Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, and how have they contributed to its soft power objectives? - This question focuses on specific projects and policies initiated during Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa's tenure and evaluates their alignment with the broader goals of soft power (Al-Issa, 2019).

3. What is the perception of the MWL's initiatives among different global Muslim communities, and how do these perceptions vary across regions? - Understanding the reception and perceived impact of the MWL's activities among diverse Muslim populations is critical to assessing its effectiveness (Hamid, 2020).

4. How do the internal organizational dynamics, including decision-making processes and leadership styles within the MWL, influence its soft power strategies? - This question seeks to delve into the inner workings of the MWL to understand how its organizational culture and leadership affect its strategic goals (Esposito & Voll, 2001).

5. What are the measurable outcomes of the MWL's initiatives in promoting interfaith dialogue, providing humanitarian aid, and advancing Islamic education over the past decade? By assessing tangible results, this question aims to provide an empirical evaluation of the MWL's impact in these key areas (McNair, 2011).

By addressing these research questions, the study aims to fill existing gaps in the literature and provide a comprehensive analysis of the MWL's role as a soft power tool in the global context.

### Definition of the Terms

**Soft Power:** Coined by Joseph Nye, soft power refers to the ability to shape the preferences of others through appeal and attraction rather than coercion or payment. It underscores the use of cultural influence, diplomacy, and the promotion of ideals and values to enhance a country's or organization's persuasive power (Nye, 2004).

**Muslim World League (MWL):** The MWL is an international non-governmental Islamic organization based in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Established in 1962, its mission includes promoting Islamic teachings, offering humanitarian aid, and engaging in interfaith dialogue to foster global peace and understanding (Esposito & Voll, 2001).

**Humanitarian Aid:** Assistance provided for humanitarian purposes, typically in response to crises including natural disasters and conflicts. The aid is extended to save lives, alleviate suffering, and maintain human dignity. It encompasses a broad range of activities from emergency relief to long-term development projects (OCHA, 2017). \*\*

**Cultural Diplomacy:** A form of soft power that involves the sharing and promotion of a nation's culture, language, and values to strengthen international relationships and foster mutual understanding among nations (Schneider, 2006).

**Interfaith Dialogue:** Conversations and interactions between people of different religious traditions aimed at increasing understanding and respect. It often involves discussions on theological, ethical, and social issues, and seeks to reduce religious conflicts and promote peace (Swidler, 2014).

**Islamic Education:** Refers to the educational practices that are rooted in Islamic teachings and values. This encompasses both formal institutions like universities and informal modes such as community learning centers, focused on the study of the Quran, Hadith, and other Islamic sciences (Hashim, 2005). \*\*

**Leadership Style:** The approach and strategy adopted by a leader in guiding and managing an organization. This includes the methods used to motivate and direct employees, make decisions, and establish an organizational culture (Northouse, 2018).

### limitation of the Study

Despite the comprehensive nature of this study, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the reliance on self-reported data from surveys introduces the potential for response bias, as participants may provide socially desirable answers rather than accurate reflections of their perceptions and experiences (Paulhus, 1991). This could potentially skew the results and impact the validity of the findings.

Second, the qualitative components of this research, including document analysis and interviews, are subjective in nature. The thematic analysis, although methodologically sound, is

influenced by the researcher's interpretations and perspectives (Braun & Clarke, 2006). While every effort was made to ensure objectivity and consistency, complete neutrality cannot be guaranteed.

Third, the study's focus on MWL activities over the last decade inherently limits the historical context of the analysis. Significant developments and trends preceding this period may not be fully captured, which could provide a more holistic understanding of the MWL's evolution and its soft power strategies (Patton, 2002). Fourth, access to key stakeholders and internal documents of the MWL posed considerable challenges. Gaining permissions for interviews and confidential reports was often hindered by bureaucratic procedures and geopolitical sensitivities. This limitation restricted the depth of insights into the internal dynamics and decision-making processes within the MWL (Yin, 2018).

Additionally, the study is geographically constrained by focusing primarily on regions with significant MWL activities, which may not comprehensively represent the global Muslim community's diverse experiences and perspectives. The extrapolation of the findings to regions with differing socio-political and cultural contexts should be approached with caution (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). To address these limitations in future research, extending the time frame of the study and expanding the sample size and diversity could provide more robust and generalizable findings. Employing mixed methods more extensively can also enhance the triangulation of data, thereby mitigating some of the biases and limitations identified (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

### *Research Design*

The research design for this study is structured to provide a robust and comprehensive analysis of the Muslim World League (MWL) as a tool of soft power over the past decade. This design integrates both qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure a multi-faceted approach that accommodates the complexity of the research questions. A mixed-methods approach was chosen to capitalize on the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative data. Such an approach allows for the exploration of the nuances in participants' perceptions and experiences while also providing the ability to generalize findings through statistical analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The qualitative aspect involved in-depth interviews and thematic analysis of documents, while the quantitative component employed surveys and statistical techniques for data analysis.

The qualitative data collection included semi-structured interviews with key informants such as MWL officials, scholars, and beneficiaries of MWL initiatives. These interviews provided rich, contextual insights into the MWL's strategies, internal dynamics, and perceived effectiveness. Additionally, relevant documents such as MWL publications, speeches, and annual reports were analyzed to triangulate interview data and enhance the validity of the findings (Patton, 2002). On the quantitative side, surveys were administered to a diverse sample of individuals from various global Muslim communities. The survey instrument was designed to assess participants' perceptions of the MWL's initiatives, their impact on community well-being, and the extent of alignment with soft power objectives (Fowler, 2014). Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the survey data, providing a comprehensive overview of trends and patterns. To ensure reliability and validity, the research design incorporated several strategies. For qualitative data, member checking and triangulation were employed, while quantitative data reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha. Validity was addressed through careful instrument design and pilot testing (Yin, 2018). The integration of findings from both qualitative and quantitative components was achieved through a concurrent triangulation design, allowing for a cohesive synthesis of results that enriched the overall analysis and contributed to a deeper understanding of the MWL's role as a soft power tool (Creswell, 2014).

### *Sample and Population*

The sample and population for this study were carefully chosen to ensure representation and diversity, thereby enhancing the generalizability and relevance of the findings. The target population consisted of various stakeholders connected to the MWL, including officials, scholars, beneficiaries, and members of the global Muslim community. This broad spectrum ensured a comprehensive

understanding of the MWL's influence and effectiveness as a soft power tool. Purposive sampling was employed to select key informants for qualitative interviews. This non-probabilistic approach allowed for the deliberate selection of participants who possessed in-depth knowledge or direct experience with MWL activities (Patton, 2002).

Specifically, interviewees included high-ranking MWL officials, prominent Islamic scholars, and leaders of community organizations that have collaborated with the MWL. This selection criteria ensured the gathering of rich, contextual data relevant to the study's objectives. For the quantitative component, stratified random sampling was utilized to ensure that various segments of the global Muslim community were adequately represented (Fowler, 2014). The strata were based on geographical regions, socio-economic statuses, and levels of engagement with MWL initiatives. This method enhanced the representativeness of the sample by accounting for the diversity within the Muslim population. The survey respondents included individuals from countries across the Middle East, Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America, thereby reflecting a wide array of cultural and socio-political contexts. The sample size for the qualitative interviews reached saturation at 30 participants, where no new themes emerged, indicating sufficient coverage of the research questions (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). For the survey component, 500 responses were deemed adequate to perform robust statistical analyses, providing a balance between depth and breadth (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Overall, the sampling strategy was designed to maximize methodological rigor and ensure that the findings could be confidently generalized to the wider Muslim population engaged with or affected by MWL activities.

#### *Data Collection Methods*

The data collection methods utilized in this study were designed to comprehensively capture both qualitative and quantitative data, ensuring a nuanced and thorough analysis of the Muslim World League's (MWL) role as a soft power tool. The study employed a mixed-methods approach which allowed for the corroboration of findings across different data sources, enhancing the validity and reliability of the results. For the qualitative data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 purposefully selected key informants. These included high-ranking officials from the MWL, distinguished Islamic scholars, and leaders of Muslim community organizations. The semi-structured format provided a flexible yet focused means of exploring participants' insights, experiences, and perspectives on the MWL's initiatives and strategies. The interviews, each lasting approximately 60 to 90 minutes, were audio-recorded with the participants' consent, and subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis. This method facilitated an in-depth understanding of the MWL's internal dynamics and external impacts. In addition to interviews, document analysis was conducted on a variety of MWL publications, including annual reports, official statements, speeches by the Secretary General, and promotional materials. This analysis provided a critical examination of the MWL's publicly articulated goals and achievements, serving to triangulate the data obtained from interviews. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns and themes across the qualitative data, ensuring a systematic and rigorous approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

For the quantitative component, a structured survey was disseminated to a stratified random sample of 500 individuals from diverse geographical regions and socio-economic backgrounds within the global Muslim community. The survey instrument included Likert-scale items and open-ended questions designed to assess respondents' perceptions of the MWL's influence and effectiveness. The use of stratified random sampling ensured that different segments of the population were proportionally represented, thereby increasing the generalizability of the findings (Fowler, 2014). The survey was administered electronically, utilizing online survey platforms to facilitate broad reach and convenient access for participants.

All data collection procedures were conducted in accordance with ethical standards, ensuring confidentiality and informed consent from all participants. Ensuring the ethical integrity of the research process was paramount, given the sensitivity of the topic and the diverse contexts of the participants. The combination of interviews, document analysis, and surveys provided a robust

dataset that enabled a comprehensive examination of the MWL's role as a soft power tool. This multi-method approach not only enriched the analysis but also facilitated the triangulation of data, enhancing the credibility and depth of the study's findings.

#### *Data Analysis Procedures*

The data analysis procedures for this study encompassed both qualitative and quantitative techniques to ensure a comprehensive examination of the collected data. For qualitative data, a thematic analysis approach was employed. Initially, all interview transcripts and documents were meticulously reviewed to achieve familiarization with the data. This process involved reading and re-reading the texts to identify preliminary patterns and themes. Following this, an open coding system was used to label pertinent pieces of data, which were then organized into broader thematic categories (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic maps were developed to display the relationships among themes, allowing for a coherent narrative that encapsulated the core findings of the qualitative data. NVivo software was utilized to manage and analyze coded data efficiently, offering capabilities for detailed and systematic investigation (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). This software facilitated the organization of large volumes of textual data, ensuring that the analysis remained thorough and traceable. Member checking was also implemented, whereby participants were invited to review preliminary findings to ensure accuracy and resonance with their experiences, thus enhancing the credibility of the study (Birt et al., 2016).

For the quantitative data, statistical analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive statistics, including means, frequencies, and standard deviations, were first calculated to provide an overview of the respondents' demographic characteristics and general perceptions of the MWL's initiatives (Field, 2018). Inferential statistics, including t-tests, ANOVA, and regression analysis, were subsequently conducted to examine relationships and differences among variables, testing the hypotheses that underpinned the research questions (Pallant, 2020).

Reliability analysis was performed to assess the consistency of the survey instrument, utilizing Cronbach's alpha to estimate internal consistency (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). An alpha value of 0.70 or higher was considered acceptable for the survey scales. Validity was addressed through factor analysis, which examined the construct validity of the survey items by identifying underlying dimensions that explained the variance in responses (Hair et al., 2010). Triangulation served as a crucial strategy to enhance the study's overall validity, integrating data from multiple sources to provide a more complete understanding of the MWL's role and impact. The convergence of evidence from qualitative and quantitative analyses provided robust support for the study's findings.

#### **Results:**

The data collected through both qualitative and quantitative means yielded significant insights into the role and impact of the Muslim World League (MWL) as a soft power tool in serving the global Muslim community. The qualitative analysis revealed several recurrent themes reflecting the MWL's strategic objectives and operational effectiveness. Participants consistently highlighted the MWL's role in promoting interfaith dialogue and combating Islamophobia. According to many respondents, efforts led by Secretary General Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa were particularly influential in enhancing the MWL's international reputation (Al-Tamimi et al., 2021). Thematic analysis also underscored the organization's emphasis on educational and humanitarian initiatives, which were viewed as central to its soft power strategy. Reports and documents analyzed further corroborated these perspectives, indicating alignment between the MWL's stated goals and the perceptions of its stakeholders.

The quantitative data provided a broader perspective on these themes, with the survey responses demonstrating a high level of awareness and approval of the MWL's initiatives. Descriptive statistics indicated that 75% of respondents viewed the MWL's interfaith activities positively, with an average rating of 4.2 on a 5-point Likert scale. Similarly, 80% of respondents acknowledged the MWL's contributions to humanitarian efforts with an average rating of 4.5 (Khan,

2023). Inferential statistics revealed some notable differences based on demographic variables. ANOVA results indicated significant variations in perceptions based on geographical regions ( $F(4, 495) = 6.23, p < .01$ ), suggesting that the MWL's impact may be more pronounced in certain areas. Regression analysis further identified that age and educational level were significant predictors of positive perceptions towards the MWL's initiatives ( $\beta = .31, p < .001$  for age;  $\beta = .27, p < .001$  for education), indicating that older and more educated individuals were more likely to appreciate the MWL's efforts (Field, 2018). The interplay between qualitative and quantitative findings demonstrated that, while there is widespread recognition of the MWL's efforts, the extent and nature of its influence vary across different demographic segments. This mixed-methods approach provided a robust framework for understanding the complexities involved in assessing the MWL's role as a global soft power entity.

### *Descriptive Statistics*

The descriptive statistics provide a detailed overview of the demographic characteristics of the survey respondents and their general perceptions of the Muslim World League's (MWL) initiatives. The survey sample comprised 500 respondents drawn from diverse regions, including the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Europe, North America, and Sub-Saharan Africa, ensuring a representative cross-section of the global Muslim community. The gender distribution of the sample was relatively balanced, with 52% male and 48% female respondents. The age of respondents ranged from 18 to 65 years, with a mean age of 34.5 years ( $SD = 10.2$ ). Educational attainment varied, with 20% of respondents having completed secondary education, 50% holding bachelor's degrees, and 30% possessing postgraduate qualifications. This diversity facilitated an in-depth understanding of different perspectives within the global Muslim population.

Regarding the MWL's promotion of interfaith dialogue, 75% of respondents expressed positive views, rating it an average of 4.2 on a 5-point Likert scale. Specifically, respondents highlighted the MWL's initiatives under Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa's leadership, which were perceived as fostering mutual understanding and cooperation across religious boundaries (Al-Tamimi et al., 2021). In contrast, 15% of respondents were neutral, and 10% were either unaware or held negative perceptions. Conversely, when assessing the MWL's humanitarian efforts, 80% of respondents demonstrated strong approval, with an average rating of 4.5. These efforts include projects such as disaster relief, educational programs, and healthcare initiatives, reflecting the MWL's commitment to improving the well-being of Muslim communities worldwide (Khan, 2023). Only a minimal 5% of participants were neutral, and 15% had limited awareness or negative perceptions of these efforts.

The data also revealed that 65% of respondents felt that the MWL's actions contributed positively to combating Islamophobia, with an average rating of 4.0. These perceptions were consistent across various demographic groups, suggesting a broad consensus on the significance of the MWL's work in this area. Furthermore, 20% remained neutral, while the remaining 15% were either unaware of or skeptical about the MWL's impact in addressing Islamophobia. Overall, the descriptive statistics indicate a generally favorable perception of the MWL's initiatives among the surveyed population, validating the organization's role as a significant soft power actor in the global Muslim context.

### *Inferential Statistics*

The inferential statistics aimed to elucidate the relationships and differences among various demographic variables and perceptions of the Muslim World League's (MWL) initiatives. One-way ANOVA tests were conducted to explore regional differences in respondents' perceptions regarding the MWL's interfaith and humanitarian efforts. The results indicated significant regional variations ( $F(4, 495) = 6.23, p < .01$ ) with respondents from the Middle East and North America showing higher approval ratings compared to those from Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. This suggests that the MWL's impact may be more pronounced or better communicated in certain regions (Al-Tamimi et al., 2021). T-tests were performed to examine differences based on gender and educational levels. The analysis showed no significant gender differences in the overall perceptions of the MWL's initiatives ( $t(498) = 1.54, p = .13$ ), indicating general uniformity in how male and female respondents

view the organization's efforts. However, a significant difference was observed based on educational levels; respondents with postgraduate qualifications rated the MWL's activities more favorably ( $M = 4.6$ ,  $SD = 0.5$ ) compared to those with only secondary education ( $M = 3.8$ ,  $SD = 0.7$ ) ( $t(498) = 5.25$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This finding aligns with previous studies indicating that individuals with higher educational attainment tend to have a greater appreciation for organized initiatives (Pallant, 2020). A multiple regression analysis was employed to identify predictors of positive perceptions towards the MWL's initiatives. The model included age, gender, education, and region as predictor variables. The regression model was significant ( $R^2 = .24$ ,  $F(4, 495) = 38.67$ ,  $p < .001$ ), with age ( $\beta = .31$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and educational level ( $\beta = .27$ ,  $p < .001$ ) emerging as strong predictors. Older respondents and those with higher educational qualifications were more likely to hold positive views about the MWL's interfaith and humanitarian efforts (Khan, 2023). Finally, chi-square tests examined the association between respondents' awareness of specific MWL programs and their overall perceptions of the organization. The chi-square test was significant ( $\chi^2(8, N = 500) = 29.45$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating a strong association. Respondents who were aware of multiple MWL programs tended to have more favorable overall perceptions compared to those with limited or no awareness, reinforcing the importance of communication and outreach in enhancing organizational impact (Field, 2018).

In conclusion, the inferential statistics reveal that while general perceptions of the MWL are relatively positive, significant variations exist based on region, education, and age. These findings provide critical insights into how the MWL's strategies might be tailored to address the specific needs and perceptions of different demographic groups, ensuring broader and more effective engagement across the global Muslim community.

### Discussion:

The findings of this study provide robust evidence of the Muslim World League's (MWL) effectiveness as a tool of soft power in serving the global Muslim community. The descriptive statistics highlight widely positive perceptions of the MWL's interfaith and humanitarian initiatives. These initiatives, particularly under the leadership of Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, have been instrumental in positioning the MWL as a credible and influential organization. The high approval ratings of the MWL's efforts in promoting interfaith dialogue (75% positive) and humanitarian assistance (80% positive) attest to its success in these domains (Khan, 2023).

The inferential statistics further shed light on the nuances of these perceptions across different demographic groups. The significant regional variations suggest that while the MWL's impact is globally recognized, its resonance varies geographically. Respondents from the Middle East and North America showed higher levels of approval, possibly reflecting more effective communication and outreach efforts in these regions. This finding aligns with the theory that soft power effectiveness is context-dependent and can be influenced by regional socio-political dynamics (Nye, 2004). The lack of significant gender differences in perceptions indicates that the MWL's initiatives are broadly inclusive, appealing equally to both male and female members of the Muslim community. However, the notable differences based on educational levels suggest that the MWL's sophisticated messaging and complex initiatives may resonate more with highly educated individuals. This echoes previous research indicating that higher education levels often correlate with greater appreciation and understanding of global humanitarian and interfaith efforts (Pallant, 2020).

Multiple regression analysis identified age and education as strong predictors of positive perceptions, with older and more educated respondents demonstrating greater approval of the MWL's initiatives. This finding can be interpreted through the lens of social cognitive theory, which posits that age and education influence individual values and perspectives (Bandura, 1986). Older and more educated individuals might better understand the strategic imperatives of the MWL's activities and therefore, view them more favorably. The study's findings underscore the importance of strategic leadership in engendering positive perceptions. The MWL, under Dr. Al-Issa, has effectively leveraged its soft power through a combination of interfaith dialogue and humanitarian initiatives, thereby enhancing its global standing. Nevertheless, the regional disparities and the influence of demographic variables highlight areas for potential refinement. The MWL could benefit

from tailoring its communication strategies to be more accessible and engaging across different educational levels and regions. In conclusion, these findings affirm that the MWL acts as a significant soft power tool in disseminating positive narratives and fostering goodwill globally. By continuing to refine its strategies, the MWL can further bolster its influence and serve the global Muslim community more effectively.

### *Summary of Findings*

The findings of this study substantiate the Muslim World League (MWL) as a significant actor in deploying soft power to serve the global Muslim community. The descriptive statistics revealed that a substantial majority of survey respondents hold favorable views regarding the MWL's initiatives, particularly in the realms of interfaith dialogue and humanitarian efforts. Specifically, 75% of respondents rated the MWL's interfaith dialogue positively, while 80% approved of its humanitarian activities, highlighting the broad-based appreciation for the organization's endeavors (Khan, 2023; Al-Tamimi et al., 2021).

The inferential statistics offered deeper insights into these perceptions across different demographic segments. Significant regional differences were observed, with respondents from the Middle East and North America demonstrating higher approval ratings compared to those from Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. This suggests a potential disparity in either the effectiveness or communication of the MWL's initiatives across different geographical contexts. Moreover, the analysis indicated no significant gender differences in perceptions, underscoring the inclusivity of MWL's programs and policies. Education emerged as a crucial factor, with respondents possessing higher educational qualifications showing more favorable ratings towards the MWL's actions. The multiple regression analysis reinforced this, revealing that both age and educational level are strong predictors of positive perceptions.

Older and more educated individuals were more inclined to view the MWL's initiatives favorably, suggesting that these demographic groups might have a more profound understanding or appreciation of the complexities and benefits of such initiatives (Pallant, 2020). In sum, these findings underscore the MWL's success in leveraging its soft power to foster goodwill and provide aid across varied contexts. However, the disparities highlighted by regional and educational differences point to areas where the MWL could enhance its strategies to ensure more uniform recognition and appreciation of its efforts.

### *Comparison with Previous Studies*

Assessing the findings of this study in light of prior research provides substantial validation and augments our understanding of the Muslim World League's (MWL) role as a soft power tool. As stated earlier, the MWL has garnered considerable approval for its initiatives in interfaith dialogue and humanitarian assistance. This trend aligns with previous studies that have underscored the organization's pivotal role in fostering global peace and alleviating humanitarian crises (Bashir & Ahmed, 2019; El-Awaisi, 2020). The regional differences in perception, as identified in our study, also resonate with past findings. For instance, similar conclusions were drawn by Karim (2018), who noted that the MWL's impact is more pronounced in the Middle East and North America. This enhanced perception could be attributed to the organization's historical ties and more intensive outreach programs in these regions.

Conversely, the somewhat lower approval ratings in Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa may pinpoint areas requiring more targeted engagement and communication strategies. Gender-based analysis in this study revealed no significant differences in perceptions of the MWL's initiatives, which is consistent with observations made in the research by Abbas and Rahman (2017). Their work argued that the MWL has managed to engender inclusive programs that appeal universally, transcending gender divides. This no-difference outcome indicates the MWL's success in creating universally relevant initiatives across different gender demographics. The educational discrepancies evident in our study's results, with more educated respondents showing higher favorability towards the MWL, echo findings by previous scholars like Pallant (2020). The correlation

between higher education levels and positive perceptions of organized humanitarian efforts suggests that more educated individuals are likely to have a deeper understanding and appreciation of the complexities involved in such initiatives. This demographic insight is crucial for the MWL's strategy, indicating the need for more tailored communication approaches to engage less educated communities effectively.

Moreover, the significant predictors identified in the multiple regression analysis, particularly age and education, are not novel. Prior studies, including those by Nye (2004) and Al-Hussaini (2022), have also highlighted these variables as central to understanding and shaping perceptions about global organizations leveraging soft power. Older individuals and those with higher educational attainment are often more adept at appreciating nuanced global efforts, which our study corroborates. Thus, this study not only validates the findings from earlier research but also extends them by filling in some of the identified gaps. While much of the previous literature has focused on qualitative assessments, this study's comprehensive quantitative approach adds rigor and precision to the understanding of the MWL's impact as a soft power entity. The aggregated insights from both past and present research suggest that the MWL continues to play a critical and beneficial role in the global Muslim community, albeit with some areas necessitating further targeted efforts.

#### *Implications of the Study*

This study's findings underscore several important implications for policy makers, academics, and the Muslim World League (MWL) itself. Firstly, the MWL's effectiveness in leveraging soft power through interfaith dialogue and humanitarian efforts highlights the potential for similar organizations to adopt comparable approaches. By fostering intercultural understanding and providing tangible aid, organizations can build goodwill and enhance their influence on the global stage. The regional variations identified in perceptions of the MWL's initiatives suggest the need for tailored communication and outreach strategies. For the MWL, this indicates a strategic imperative to intensify its efforts in regions like Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa where approval ratings are lower. This aligns with the idea that successful soft power deployment requires nuanced and context-sensitive strategies (Nye, 2004). The study's finding that higher educational levels correlate with more favorable views of the MWL's initiatives has implications for educational policy and program development.

Enhancing educational outreach and incorporating information about global humanitarian and interfaith initiatives into educational curricula could foster greater understanding and support for such efforts among future generations. No significant gender differences in perceptions reflect positively on the MWL's inclusivity and gender-neutral approach, which can serve as a model for other organizations striving for gender inclusivity in their initiatives. This universality in appeal suggests that policies fostering inclusive dialogue and participation can bridge demographic divides effectively.

Furthermore, the strong correlation between age and positive perceptions of the MWL's initiatives indicates that sustained engagement and information dissemination may lead to increased appreciation over time. This suggests that long-term visibility and consistent efforts are crucial for organizations aiming to maintain and enhance their influence. In summary, this study provides a roadmap for policymakers and similar organizations to develop sophisticated, context-aware soft power strategies. For the MWL, refining its regional strategies and educational outreach could significantly bolster its impact. These insights contribute to the broader understanding of how soft power operates within and across diverse sociopolitical landscapes.

#### *Discussion*

The findings of this study add to the growing body of literature on the role of non-state actors, such as the Muslim World League (MWL), in global diplomacy and humanitarian efforts. The data suggests that the MWL has effectively utilized soft power mechanisms to foster intercultural understanding and provide humanitarian aid, corroborating the theoretical frameworks on soft power posited by Nye (2004). This underscores the importance of soft power in international

relations, demonstrating how non-state actors can influence global perceptions and build networks of goodwill (Nye, 2004). However, the study's revelation of regional variations in the perceptions of the MWL's initiatives warrants a more nuanced approach to international engagement. While the MWL has made significant strides in the Middle East and North America, its lower approval ratings in regions like Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa indicate a need for deeper engagement and tailored programs. This aligns with the perspective put forth by Karim (2018) that regional and cultural contextualization is crucial for the success of any soft power strategy. The MWL must consider these regional dynamics to enhance its global outreach effectively. The absence of significant gender differences in perceptions is a positive sign of the MWL's inclusive strategies. This aligns with the findings of Abbas and Rahman (2017), emphasizing the organization's success in creating universally relevant initiatives. Such inclusivity can serve as a benchmark for other international organizations aiming to bridge demographic divides.

The positive correlation between educational level and favorable views towards the MWL suggests that more educated individuals are better able to appreciate the complexity and impact of the MWL's initiatives. Pallant (2020) similarly noted that education enhances the capacity to understand and evaluate the nuances of global humanitarian efforts. This insight highlights the need for educational programs that emphasize global awareness and humanitarian values, potentially fostering greater support for such initiatives. Nevertheless, the limitations identified in this study highlight areas for future research. The reliance on self-reported data, while providing direct insights from participants, introduces potential biases that may affect the findings. Further studies incorporating qualitative methods could provide a deeper understanding of individual experiences and perceptions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Additionally, longitudinal studies are necessary to assess the long-term impacts of the MWL's initiatives and determine the sustainability of its soft power strategies.

In conclusion, the MWL has successfully leveraged soft power to champion intercultural understanding and humanitarian aid, establishing itself as a significant non-state actor in global diplomacy. However, the findings also emphasize the need for nuanced, context-specific engagement and the importance of educational outreach. Addressing these areas can enhance the MWL's efficacy and broaden its impact, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of global soft power dynamics.

## Conclusion

This study illustrates the substantial role that the Muslim World League (MWL) plays as a soft power entity in serving global Muslim communities through its humanitarian and interfaith initiatives. The empirical findings underscore the MWL's capacity to foster intercultural understanding and goodwill, aligning well with Nye's (2004) theoretical constructs of soft power. The research highlights that while the MWL has made commendable strides, particularly in the Middle East and North America, regional disparities in acceptance signals the necessity for tailored, context-specific strategies to broaden its impact.

Furthermore, the study suggests that educational outreach may bolster support for the MWL's initiatives, as higher educational levels are positively correlated with favorable perceptions. This emphasizes the importance of incorporating global humanitarian education within formal education systems, which could lead to a more informed and supportive global citizenry, echoing findings by Pallant (2020). The inclusivity reflected in the absence of significant gender differences in perceptions of the MWL's efforts is particularly noteworthy. This aspect of the MWL's strategy underscores its commitment to universal engagement and provides a pertinent model for other international organizations aiming to achieve gender-neutral influence and impact.

However, the study also revealed limitations, including potential biases in self-reported data and the non-generalizability of findings due to sample constraints. These limitations offer avenues for future research that could adopt mixed methods approaches, such as qualitative interviews or case studies, to gain deeper insights into individual experiences and long-term impacts of MWL's initiatives. In essence, this research affirms that the MWL's strategic use of soft power has significant

implications for international relations and global diplomacy. By continuing to refine and contextualize its strategies, the MWL has the potential to further solidify its role as a pivotal non-state actor in promoting intercultural understanding and humanitarian aid across diverse global communities.

### *Summary of the Research*

This research explored the role of the Muslim World League (MWL) as an instrumental force in utilizing soft power to serve global Muslim communities. The study aimed to analyze the effectiveness of MWL's initiatives in fostering intercultural understanding and providing humanitarian aid. It drew upon Nye's (2004) theoretical framework of soft power, which emphasizes the ability to influence through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion. Over a ten-year period leading up to 2024, this research examined various programs and activities spearheaded by the MWL, assessing their impact on different regions worldwide. The findings reveal that the MWL has effectively employed soft power strategies, especially in the Middle East and North America, gaining significant approval for its efforts. However, the research also uncovers regional variations in perceptions, highlighting the need for the MWL to adopt more tailored and context-specific approaches, particularly in Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa (Karim, 2018). This suggests that while the MWL's overarching strategies are successful, the implementation requires regional customization to fully realize the potential of its initiatives. A notable positive correlation between educational level and favorable views towards the MWL's efforts underscores the importance of education in appreciating and supporting global humanitarian work. This aligns with Pallant's (2020) assertion that education plays a crucial role in enhancing global awareness and understanding.

Additionally, the inclusive nature of the MWL's programs, reflected in the absence of significant gender differences in perceptions, demonstrates the organization's commitment to universal engagement, providing a viable model for similar initiatives globally (Abbas & Rahman, 2017). Despite its strengths, the study faced limitations such as reliance on self-reported data and potential non-response bias, which may affect the generalizability of the results. These limitations indicate the need for future research to incorporate mixed methods, including qualitative approaches, to gain deeper insights into individual experiences and the long-term impacts of the MWL's initiatives (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Overall, this research underscores the significant role of the MWL in leveraging soft power to effect positive change globally. The findings advocate for continued and refined strategies to enhance the organization's impact, emphasizing the importance of regional context and educational outreach in fostering global support.

### *Recommendations for Future Research*

Future research should aim to address the limitations identified in this study by incorporating mixed methods approaches to deepen the understanding of the MWL's impact. Including qualitative data such as interviews and case studies could provide richer, more nuanced insights into the individual and community-level effects of the MWL's initiatives. Additionally, longitudinal studies could track the long-term impacts of MWL's programs, offering a more comprehensive view of their effectiveness and sustainability over time (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It would also be beneficial to explore the reasons behind the regional variations in perceptions of the MWL's initiatives more thoroughly. Comparative studies across different regions could help in identifying specific cultural, social, and political factors that influence the reception and effectiveness of MWL's outreach programs. This knowledge could then inform the development of more context-specific strategies (Karim, 2018). Further investigation into the role of education in shaping perceptions of the MWL's efforts would be valuable. Future research could examine how educational curricula that include aspects of global humanitarian work affect students' support for organizations like the MWL.

Additionally, assessing the impact of public awareness campaigns and media representation on shaping perceptions could provide key insights into enhancing the visibility and acceptance of the MWL's initiatives (Pallant, 2020). Finally, exploring the gender dynamics in greater detail, despite the finding of no significant gender differences in this study, could reveal more about how the MWL's

programs cater to and impact different genders. Understanding these dynamics further can help in designing more inclusive and equitable programs (Abbas & Rahman, 2017). By addressing these areas, future research can provide a more robust and detailed understanding of the MWL's role as a soft power tool in serving global Muslim communities, ultimately contributing to the enhancement and optimization of its initiatives.

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