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Evaluating Cultural Activities within Religious Institutions: A SWOT Analysis of Organizational Culture in FAHMA and CCC

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Abstract

Religious institutions serve as vital platforms for fostering cultural development, social cohesion, and community well-being. This study evaluates the organizational culture of cultural activities within two prominent religious contexts: Iran's Mosque Cultural-Art Centers (Fahma) and Catholic Cultural Centers (CCC) worldwide, through a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis. Drawing on thematic analysis of expert insights and existing literature, the research constructs comparative SWOT matrices to explore convergences and divergences in their cultural functions. Both institutions emphasize youth engagement, family-oriented programs, and spiritual enrichment. Nevertheless, differences in organizational culture are evident: Fahma's mosque-based, localized structure facilitates grassroots participation but faces challenges in technological adaptation, while CCC benefits from its global networks and rich artistic traditions, yet is constrained by bureaucratic processes. Findings suggest that integrating digital innovation, promoting interfaith and intercultural dialogue, and developing apolitical cultural initiatives are critical strategies to address external threats such as secularization, sanctions, and sociopolitical sensitivities. By comparing two distinct models of faith-based cultural organization, the study contributes to understanding how organizational culture shapes the effectiveness of religious institutions in sustaining cultural vitality and expanding their societal impact.

Keywords: SWOT; Mosque Cultural-Art Centers; Catholic Cultural Centers; Cultural Activities; Religious Institutions; Interfaith Comparison.

1. Introduction

In contemporary society, despite the relative material comfort experienced by much of humanity, religious beliefs, ethical

frameworks, and spiritual practices face profound challenges (Ellor et al., 2021). Eliade (2022) argued that, particularly in Western societies, the practice of religious rituals among

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Christians has declined both in frequency and in the perceived sacredness of these rituals. This trend has been exacerbated by the industrialization processes that originated in Europe and are now spreading globally, accelerating the erosion of religious observance, spiritual values, and cultural religiosity. Nonetheless, this decline is neither universal nor absolute; instances of resilient spiritual life and innovative religious initiatives can still be observed. These developments highlight the ongoing tension between secular modernity and the enduring relevance of faith-based institutions.

Given this landscape, institutions responsible for promoting religious and ethical values have increasingly sought to enhance spiritual enrichment through a variety of cultural interventions (Douglas, 2024). However, debates persist regarding the appropriate role of the state in advancing religious and ethical values. Marcus Cole distinguishes between duty-based ethics—socially mandated behaviors whose violation disrupts societal order—and aspirational ethics, which guide individuals toward realizing their highest potential. While states can regulate duty-based ethics through law and social enforcement, aspirational ethics, which encompass the full cultivation of individual and communal virtues, are less amenable to governmental intervention. Nevertheless, as part of their moral responsibilities, governments have engaged in supporting religious and cultural initiatives that preserve and promote spiritual and ethical development (Douglas, 2024).

One significant approach has been the establishment of faith-based cultural institutions, which seek to foster religious beliefs, moral values, and spirituality through structured cultural activities. Both Islam and Christianity—the two major Abrahamic faiths—have developed such institutions to serve adherents. According to religious texts, cultural faith-based institutions date back to the foundation of religion itself. In Christianity, cultural activities of Jesus' disciples are recorded in the book of Acts. In Islam, cultural activities are administered by the Prophet of Islam and recorded in narrations transmitted and historical records of his time (Hosseini Bushehri, 2001). In this study, two religious countries, including Iran and the Vatican, are studied. These countries seek to promote religious culture and counter cultural alienation through cultural activities. In Iran, for example, Islamic institutions such as mosques, seminaries, the Basij organization, and Mosque Cultural-Art Centers (Fahma) actively provide platforms for cultural, educational, and religious engagement (Rohani, 2025). Similarly, in the Vatican, various spiritual, educational, and ethical needs are responded to through universities, schools, seminaries, and cultural centers (Coordination Headquarters for Cultural and Artistic Centers in Mosques of the Country, 2019a). Among these, Catholic Cultural Centers (CCC) stand out for their extensive geographical reach, organizational centralization, and ability to influence cultural practices within the global Catholic community (Catholic Church, 2000).

Given their scope and systemic approach, this study focuses on a comparative analysis of Fahma in Iran and CCC globally, examining how these institutions organize and implement cultural activities. Both systems aim to cultivate cohesive, faith-oriented communities through diverse initiatives, including religious rituals, communal gatherings, educational programs, and artistic activities. While certain functions may be more pronounced in one system than the other, both share the overarching goal of promoting spiritually enriched and ethically guided social life. Through a detailed examination of these institutions' structures and programs, insights can be gained into effective strategies for

fostering religious engagement, cultural continuity, and community development.

This research employs a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analytical framework to evaluate the capacities, potentials, and challenges of Fahma and CCC in delivering cultural activities. The choice of SWOT is particularly apt, as it moves beyond a simple descriptive account to provide a structured, strategic diagnosis of each institution's operational landscape. By systematically identifying internal strengths and weaknesses (such as organizational structure, funding models, and community engagement expertise) alongside external opportunities and threats (including shifting societal attitudes, digitalization, and interfaith policy initiatives), the study seeks to develop actionable, evidence-based strategic recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness and reach of faith-based cultural programming.

Furthermore, the comparative nature of this analysis is central to its value. By analysing the organizational models of CCC, which have long excelled in centralized cultural and educational management through a deeply integrated global network, the study aims to extract transferable principles of institutional resilience and programmatic sustainability. These lessons are not intended for direct replication but are critically examined to provide a blueprint that could inform the development of innovative, locally adapted, and contextually sensitive models for Mosque Cultural-Art Centers. This process of cross-pollination acknowledges the distinct theological and historical contexts while recognizing shared challenges in modern secular societies.

Ultimately, this comparative study contributes to a broader scholarly and practical understanding of how religious institutions can evolve their cultural missions. It investigates the mechanisms through which they can sustain their ethical and spiritual vitality, proactively counter cultural erosion and alienation among youth, and nurture capable, culturally literate individuals who are grounded in their own tradition yet engaged with the wider world. The findings aim to bridge a critical gap in non-Western contexts, offering a structured framework for strategic planning within Islamic communities while also providing fresh perspectives that could revitalize discourse within long-established Christian cultural frameworks.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Organizational Culture of Religious Institutions

Research on religious institutions highlights how organizational culture shapes their role in society and their adaptability to cultural contexts (Bannikova & Mykhaylyova, 2024). Similarities can be found between religious and commercial organizations, with some commercial structures adopting features akin to religious ones (Miller, 2002). Faith-based organizations, however, remain deeply influenced by their founding traditions, creating frameworks of support that adapt to diverse local contexts (Schneider, 2013). Comparative historical studies show that institutional differences often arise not from broad cultural categories but from specific power dynamics and religious authority (Algazi, 2014; Turner, 2013). Even within the same faith, such as Catholicism, organizational culture varies across dioceses, influencing leadership styles and lay participation (Harper & Schulte-Murray, 1998). Alongside organizational features, sacred architecture reflects shared archetypes across Christianity and Islam, including domes, minarets, and bell towers (Kolosovskaya & Ozheshkovskaya, 2024). For instance, acoustical studies reveal similarities between Byzantine

churches and mosques, some of which transitioned from one faith to the other (Fausti et al., 2003). Likewise, in Indonesia, churches and mosques have adopted local Toraja elements to embody cultural integration (Michael et al., 2023). A comparative study of Byzantine and Ottoman religious structures in Thessaloniki further illustrates architectural similarities while noting spatial differences that correspond to distinct worship practices (Antonakaki, 2007). Together, these studies underline the complexity of religious institutions as both spiritual and cultural organizations, bridging worship, architecture, and social life.

2.2. Catholic Cultural Centers (CCC)

Catholic church believes that laity can participate in sacred life by witnessing Christ in exercising secular functions (The Code of Canon Law, canon 225:2) indeed their activities in catholic congregations are the floor of apostolic mission (catechism of the catholic church: 900). Building upon this understanding of religious organizational culture, CCC represent a formalized effort by the Catholic Church to connect faith with contemporary culture (Montero, 1999). These centers act as “public forums” where Christian perspectives are expressed through dialogue on family, society, politics, environment, and the arts (Bruce, 2018; Ives et al., 2023). Their diversity across the globe reflects adaptation to local cultural traditions, but their shared mission is to link the Christian faith with the issues of modern life (Angrosino, 1994). Activities include research, artistic expression, and intercultural dialogue, all rooted in faith in Christ. Historically, the Church’s emphasis on community and dialogue dates back to early Christian assemblies (ecclesia), which embodied both worship and social life. Modern CCCs reflect this heritage, offering spaces of listening, tolerance, and debate, while addressing urgent challenges like secularism and interfaith relations (Poupard, 2005). Papal directives, particularly those of John Paul II, emphasized the necessity of cultural centers for “new evangelization” in the 21st century, framing them as essential instruments for dialogue between faith and culture. Thus, CCCs exemplify the Catholic Church’s structured, global approach to cultural engagement, providing models of centralized organization that remain flexible to local needs.

2.3. Mosque Cultural-Art Centers (Fahma)

While CCCs embody a centralized Catholic approach, Iran’s Mosque Cultural-Art Centers (Fahma) demonstrate a mosque-integrated, grassroots model of cultural development (Taherifard, 2022). Emerging from policies of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution in 1992, Fahma centers were designed originally to counter cultural alienation and to revitalize the mosque’s role as both a spiritual and cultural hub (Ebrahimzadeh & Tabesh, 2016). Located within local mosques, these centers offer religious education, art exhibitions, poetry and music events, workshops on traditional crafts, and lectures on ethical and social issues (Osaareh Nejad Dezfooli, 2023; Vasegh Abbasi & Heidari, 2025). Unlike CCCs, which often operate in secular facilities, Fahma centers are embedded in the mosque space itself, reinforcing their spiritual legitimacy (Feizabadi, 2024). By 2018, Fahma’s articles of association were finally approved, and Fahma’s vision was announced as: “based on the social capacity of mosque attendants becoming the most effective cultural artistic extensive network that is family oriented and mosque based to stream a faithful life in Iran and to inspire Islamic nations” (Coordination Headquarters for Cultural and Artistic Centers in Mosques of the Country, 2019b). Their programs

particularly target youth and families, aiming to strengthen moral values, national identity, and community cohesion (Coordination Headquarters of Cultural and Artistic Centers of Mosques of the Country, 2019b). With branches spread across urban and rural Iran—including Tehran, Qom, Isfahan, Shiraz, and Mashhad—Fahma ensures accessibility while tailoring programs to local needs. Prominent examples include the Fatima Masumeh Shrine in Qom, which combines libraries, museums, and seminaries, and the Nasir al-Mulk Mosque in Shiraz, celebrated for its integration of art and spirituality (Osaareh Nejad Dezfooli & Mostama, 2022). The expansion of Fahma reflects a vision of the mosque not merely as a site of worship, but as a community center fostering cultural creativity, intergenerational dialogue, and social participation (Kiasi & Bromand, 2010; Seyed Hosseini, 2001). In this sense, Fahma parallels CCCs in function but differs in its decentralized, mosque-based structure, showing how Islamic institutions reinterpret the cultural mission of religion within their own organizational and architectural frameworks.

Taken together, studies on religious organizational culture, Catholic Cultural Centers, and Fahma centers illustrate two distinct yet converging models of faith-based cultural engagement. Both CCCs and Fahma centers preserve religious heritage while addressing modern cultural challenges, yet their organizational bases differ: CCCs operate as globally networked cultural institutions, while Fahma centers remain locally embedded in mosques. This comparative perspective highlights how religious institutions, despite theological differences, share a common recognition of culture as a vehicle for transmitting values, fostering dialogue, and sustaining social cohesion.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. SWOT Analysis and Strategy Development

This study employed SWOT analysis (Namugenyi et al., 2019) to evaluate the cultural activities of Fahma in Iran and CCC worldwide. SWOT, an acronym for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, is a widely used framework in strategic management that dates back to the 1960s and 1970s (Arslan & Er, 2008; Gao & Peng, 2011; Sevkli et al., 2012). The method assumes that an organization’s performance depends on the interaction between its internal characteristics (strengths and weaknesses) and the external environment (opportunities and threats), which often lies beyond direct managerial control in the short term (Houben et al., 1999; Rus, 2023).

When applied to faith-based cultural institutions, strengths are defined as internal features that support institutional goals such as (a) raising awareness of religion’s role in cultural development, (b) integrating spiritual, ethical, and artistic activities to build community cohesion, (c) deepening the understanding of cultural programming for social well-being and religious practice, and (d) promoting sustainable connections between faith, society, and cultural heritage. The value of SWOT analysis lies in both mapping these dynamics and guiding the formulation of long-term strategies (Houben et al., 1999; Yüksel & Dagdeviren, 2007). Strategies are typically classified into four categories: SO (using strengths to leverage opportunities), WO (using opportunities to reduce weaknesses), ST (using strengths to mitigate threats), and WT (minimizing weaknesses while reducing threats) (Sevkli et al., 2012).

3.2. Analytical Procedure

The study followed an iterative, comparative approach (Yom,

2015). First, a pilot literature review was conducted alongside consultations with 20 experts, including scholars of religion, administrators of cultural centers, and participants in interfaith dialogue. These initial, semi-structured interviews were crucial for grounding the research in practical realities and ensuring the subsequent survey was both academically rigorous and contextually relevant. Experts provided open-ended insights into the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing both Fahma and CCC. Their input revealed areas of agreement as well as divergence, which served as the basis for refinement, ensuring the final survey instrument captured the nuanced landscape of faith-based cultural engagement.

In the second phase, a structured survey was distributed to a broader sample of 50 experts. This two-stage design was intentional; the qualitative depth of the initial interviews informed the quantitative and qualitative breadth of the survey, allowing for both exploratory and confirmatory analysis. This survey explicitly addressed the four guiding questions applied to both Fahma and CCC:

1. What are the strengths of their cultural activities in advancing spiritual, ethical, and cultural engagement?
2. What are the weaknesses of these activities in achieving such engagement?
3. What opportunities in the broader societal or global context could support these activities?
4. What threats in the broader societal or global context could undermine them?

Responses were analyzed thematically using a hybrid inductive-deductive coding process. Recurrent ideas were consolidated into comprehensive SWOT matrices for each institution, allowing for a direct, side-by-side comparison of organizational postures. This visual aggregation of data was pivotal in moving from descriptive analysis to strategic prescription. From these matrices, SO (Strengths-Opportunities), WO (Weaknesses-Opportunities), ST (Strengths-Threats), and WT (Weaknesses-Threats) strategies were deductively derived. This systematic generation of strategies ensured they were directly emergent from the empirical data, forming a robust and evidence-based foundation for recommendations on enhancing faith-based cultural programming across both Islamic and Catholic contexts.

4. Results

4.1. SWOT Analysis of Fahma and CCC Cultural Centers

The SWOT analysis was developed through pilot literature

reviews, expert consultations, and structured surveys, with the resulting themes categorized under strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Figure 1 presents a radar chart comparing Fahma (Mosque Cultural-Art Centers) and CCC. As shown, CCC scores slightly higher across all four categories, reflecting broader global networks, richer opportunities, and more pronounced external threats, while Fahma demonstrates a more localized but cost-effective model. The strategic responses derived from this analysis follow a deductive logic based on the SWOT matrices:

- **SO Strategies (Leverage Strengths for Opportunities):** Fahma can use mosque integration and youth networks to capitalize on government cultural policies and adopt emerging technologies. Similarly, CCC may draw on its global networks and artistic heritage to expand digital outreach and foster interfaith dialogue.

- **WO Strategies (Address Weaknesses via Opportunities):** Fahma may mitigate resource limitations through AI adoption and stronger international networking, while CCC can reduce bureaucratic delays by implementing digital innovations and tailoring programs to local contexts.

- **ST Strategies (Use Strengths to Counter Threats):** Fahma's close community ties offer resilience against political biases and sanctions, especially through non-political cultural exchanges, whereas CCC's strong ethical and volunteer frameworks can help counteract secularization and reputational challenges.

- **WT Strategies (Minimize Weaknesses and Threats):** Both institutions can strengthen training and pursue financial independence to better withstand global pressures such as sanctions, secularism, and sociocultural fragmentation.

4.2. SWOT Matrix for Fahma

Table 1 summarizes the thematic findings for Fahma. Its strengths are rooted in mosque integration, inclusivity, and community synergy, which make it cost-efficient and spiritually aligned. However, weaknesses such as limited technological presence, resource shortages, and weak international connections restrict its growth potential. Opportunities lie in leveraging government cultural policies, AI tools, and specialized centers, while threats include politicization, sanctions, and limited global recognition.

Table 1. SWOT Matrix for Fahma (Islamic Cultural Centers in Mosques)

Category	Key Themes
Strengths	Integration with mosques for cost efficiency and spiritual alignment (e.g., activities for God that enhance ethics). Inclusivity for Sunni minorities and focus on youth/teens. Role as cultural arms of mosques with networking (e.g., elite connections, media like Shabestan News). Attention to families, local elites, and community synergy. Potential as regional influencers and specialized centers (e.g., military, prisons).
Weaknesses	Ambiguity in defining mosque-appropriate cultural activities and boundaries with other mosque functions. Limited presence in arts, virtual spaces, and technology; generational gaps (youth vs. mosque elders). Resource shortages (funding, training, management skills); unclear target audiences. Weak international ties, local adaptation issues, and economic challenges (e.g., no entry into cultural production). Competition with virtual spaces and lack of interaction with Islamic seminaries.
Opportunities	Serve as the government's cultural arm in mosques for policy implementation. Leverage capillary networks for cultural damage assessment. Use specialized centers (e.g., historic mosques, nomadic) for exchanges. Adopt modern tech and AI for broader reach.
Threats	Politicization and lack of insight into cultural flows. Western sanctions limiting international expansion and funding. Influence from mosque politics; lack of global recognition for centers.

4.3. SWOT Matrix for CCC

Table 2 outlines the SWOT findings for CCC. The strengths

are anchored in rich religious-art traditions, strong global networks, and adaptability. Yet, weaknesses such as

bureaucratic structures, declining youth participation, and ethical scandals challenge sustainability. Opportunities arise from digital innovation, interfaith dialogues, and

collaborations with NGOs, while threats include secularism, demographic shifts, and competition from secular media.

Table 2. SWOT Matrix for CCC (Catholic Cultural Centers)

Category	Key Themes
Strengths	Emphasis on religious art in design, spiritual growth, and human dignity. Focus on youth, families, local environments, and diverse formats (e.g., seminars, exhibitions). Global networks, collaborations, and adaptability (e.g., with elites, artists; flexible naming and orientations). Rich heritage (art, architecture like the Sistine Chapel); structured education and crisis management. Role in evangelization, cultural inculturation, and interfaith dialogue; volunteer networks reduce costs. Potential for active regional roles, value enhancement of cultural resources, and creative evangelization.
Weaknesses	Secular nature conflicting with sacred church functions; not usable in active churches. Dependency on founders' motivation and varying managerial directions. Declining youth participation in secular societies; financial reliance on external aid. Bureaucracy, ethical scandals (e.g., abuse cases reducing trust), generational leadership gaps. Limited language diversity and centralization in decision-making.
Opportunities	Digital tech (VR, apps, AI chatbots) for virtual heritage tours and education. Intercultural dialogues amid global tensions; environmental campaigns (e.g., Laudato Si'). Define pastoral roles for centers; use research, media, and sports for broader reach. Bridge distant realities and promote "civilization based on Christian love"; address modern needs like family tensions. Evangelize through cultural projects; collaborate with universities and NGOs.
Threats	Secularism, atheism, and competition from non-religious media (e.g., Netflix). Anti-Christian policies in some countries (e.g., China); rival religious movements. Demographic shifts (low birth rates); feminist criticisms on issues like abortion. Global challenges: economic globalization, cultural fragmentation, misinformation overload. Internal risks: over-focus on centers themselves; evolving paradigms in family/society leading to isolation.

4.4. Comparative SWOT Analysis

Table 3 provides a side-by-side comparison of Fahma and CCC. Both share an emphasis on youth, family, and spiritual enrichment, but their organizational differences are pronounced. Fahma's localized, mosque-integrated model

contrasts with CCC's globally networked and artistically enriched framework. While both face resource limitations and youth engagement challenges, Fahma's obstacles stem largely from local politics and sanctions, whereas CCC's derive from bureaucracy and secular pressures.

Table 3. Comparative SWOT Analysis of Fahma and CCC

Aspect	Fahma (Islamic, Mosque-Centric)	CCC (Catholic, Globally Networked)	Similarities	Differences
Strengths	Localized integration with mosques; inclusivity for minorities; youth/family focus; cost-effective via mosque proximity.	Global heritage and networks; flexible, diverse formats; emphasis on art, ethics, and interfaith; strong volunteer base.	Both emphasize spiritual/ethical growth, youth/family engagement, and cultural networking.	Fahma is more localized and mosque-bound; CCC is globally centralized with artistic freedom.
Weaknesses	Definitional ambiguities; tech/resource gaps; generational disconnects; limited international scope.	Bureaucratic and scandal-related trust issues; financial dependencies; secular-sacred conflicts.	Both face resource shortages, youth gaps, and adaptation challenges.	Fahma struggles with local politics and virtual competition; CCC with global secularism and centralization.
Opportunities	Government policy alignment; tech/AI adoption; specialized cultural exchanges.	Digital innovations; interfaith/environmental dialogues; pastoral integration.	Both can leverage technology and cultural bridges for expansion.	Fahma focuses on national/mosque networks; CCC on global evangelization and crises.
Threats	Sanctions and politicization; lack of global recognition.	Secularism, rival faiths, and demographic shifts; anti-religious policies.	Both threatened by globalization, cultural shifts, and external pressures.	Fahma impacted by Western sanctions; CCC by internal scandals and secular media competition.

4.5. SWOT Quadrant Visualization

Table 4 reorganizes the SWOT findings into quadrants for clearer visualization. For Fahma, mosque integration and inclusivity appear as strengths, while ambiguity in mosque-related activities and weak global ties emerge as critical

weaknesses. For CCC, artistic heritage and interfaith roles dominate the strengths, with bureaucracy and declining youth participation standing out as weaknesses. Both face overlapping global threats, such as cultural fragmentation and secularism.

Table 4. SWOT Quadrant Visualization for Fahma and CCC

Fahma	
Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
Mosque integration & cost efficiency Inclusivity (youth & minorities) Family/community synergy Media & elite networks Potential as regional influencers	Ambiguity in mosque activities Limited arts & tech presence Resource shortages Weak international ties Competition with virtual spaces
Opportunities (O)	Threats (T)
Gov't cultural policy alignment Mosque capillary networks Specialized centers (historic/nomadic) Adoption of AI & modern tech	Politicization & sanctions Influence of mosque politics Lack of global recognition
CCC	
Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
Religious art & human dignity Youth & family focus, diverse formats Global networks & adaptability Rich heritage & education structures Role in evangelization & interfaith	Secular–sacred conflicts Dependency on managers/founders Declining youth participation Bureaucracy & scandals Limited language diversity
Opportunities (O)	Threats (T)
Digital innovations (VR, AI, apps) Intercultural/environmental dialogues Pastoral role integration Evangelization via universities/NGOs	Secularism & media competition Anti-Christian policies Demographic shifts & critiques Global fragmentation & misinformation

4.6. Coding-Based Thematic Analysis

Table 5 presents the coding of themes under each SWOT category. CCC demonstrates a slightly wider distribution of strengths, opportunities, and threats (6, 5, and 5 coded themes respectively) compared to Fahma's narrower coding range.

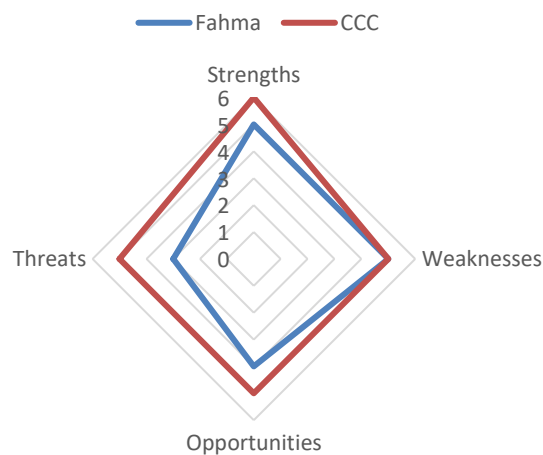
This indicates CCC's global scope brings both greater opportunities and more threats, while Fahma is more narrowly challenged by localized weaknesses such as sanctions and mosque politics.

Table 5. Coding-Based Thematic Analysis of SWOT Themes

Category	Fahma – Themes Coded	CCC – Themes Coded
Strengths	5	6
Weaknesses	5	5
Opportunities	4	5
Threats	3	5

Finally, Figure 1 (textual line diagram) illustrates the comparative distribution of coded SWOT themes. On the X-axis, the four SWOT categories are shown, while the Y-axis reflects the number of coded themes. The trend lines show CCC consistently scoring slightly higher than Fahma across all

categories, suggesting a broader but more complex organizational culture. Fahma, by contrast, remains more localized and consistent, with fewer threats but also fewer opportunities.

**Figure 1.** Line Chart of SWOT Coding Comparison between Fahma and CCC

5. Discussion

The comparative SWOT analysis of Fahma and CCC

underscores the pivotal role of organizational culture in shaping the effectiveness of cultural activities within religious

institutions. Both models exhibit notable convergences, such as a strong emphasis on youth engagement, family-oriented programs, and spiritual enrichment, which align with their shared mission to foster ethical values and community cohesion amid global challenges like cultural erosion and declining religious observance (Eliade, 2022; Schneider, 2013). These similarities reflect a broader pattern in faith-based organizations, where cultural activities serve as vehicles for transmitting aspirational ethics, as distinguished from duty-based ethics by Cole (as referenced in the Introduction). For instance, Fahma's grassroots integration with mosques and CCC's global networks both facilitate inclusive programming that targets intergenerational participation, echoing findings from comparative studies on religious institutions that highlight shared archetypes in sacred architecture and community functions across Islam and Christianity (Antonakaki, 2007; Kolosovskaya & Ozheshkovskaya, 2024). However, the analysis also reveals divergences: Fahma's localized, mosque-centric structure enables cost-efficient, spiritually aligned activities but limits international outreach and technological adaptation, while CCC's centralized, artistically rich framework provides adaptability through volunteer networks and heritage resources yet is hampered by bureaucratic delays and ethical scandals (Harper & Schulte-Murray, 1998).

These differences are deeply rooted in organizational culture, influenced by religious traditions as independent variables shaping values, norms, and practices (Mazur, 2021; Parboteeah et al., 2009). In Fahma, the embedded mosque model fosters high community synergy and inclusivity for minorities, supporting grassroots participation but exacerbating weaknesses like generational gaps and resource shortages, particularly in virtual spaces (Tarahi, 2024). Conversely, CCC benefits from a global heritage that enhances evangelization and interfaith dialogue, yet faces threats from secularism and demographic shifts that erode youth participation (Jensen, 2021). Secularization emerges as a common external threat, restricting the role of religion in modern societies and transforming sacred spaces by diminishing their cultural authority (Berger, 2005; Van Der Tol & Gorski, 2022). This process, as evidenced in Western contexts, leads to fragmented religious identities where adolescents blend religiosity with secularism, impacting cultural activities by reducing traditional attendance while opening avenues for individualized spiritual expressions (Khan, 2024). In diverse cultural settings, such as those in Indonesia, management differences between mosques and churches further illustrate how majority-minority dynamics influence organizational effectiveness, with minorities often developing more structured systems to navigate regulatory and social challenges (Jan et al., 2024).

Opportunities identified in the SWOT matrices, such as digital innovation and intercultural dialogue, offer pathways to mitigate these threats. Expert insights and literature confirm that adopting technologies like AI and virtual reality can expand reach, as seen in Swiss churches where leaders view digital tools as supplements to analog ministry, enhancing ethical debates and media literacy (Schlag et al., 2025). Similarly, U.S. Christian leaders negotiate AI adoption to align with redemptive missions, prioritizing human dignity and community solidarity (Cheong & Liu, 2025; Monday et al., 2025). For Fahma, leveraging government policies and capillary networks could address weaknesses in technological

presence, while CCC's opportunities in environmental campaigns (e.g., *Laudato Si'*) align with global tensions, promoting a "civilization based on Christian love." The concept of a "civilization of love" originates in Christian social teaching and has been used by theologians and Church leaders to describe a faith-based vision of society grounded in love and moral responsibility (Osewska & Simonič, 2019). However, the analysis's reliance on thematic surveys and expert consultations presents limitations, including potential biases from self-reported data and a focus on qualitative insights rather than quantitative metrics of program impact. Future studies could incorporate longitudinal data to assess long-term outcomes.

5.1. Implications

The findings offer actionable strategies for faith-based cultural institutions to enhance relevance and resilience. For Fahma centers, leveraging their mosque-based integration presents a unique opportunity to adopt digital tools—such as AI-driven content, mobile apps, and virtual exhibitions—to engage youth and counter secular online competition. To mitigate weaknesses like resource scarcity and political entanglement, Fahma should develop apolitical, family-oriented programs that emphasize shared ethical values and foster partnerships with seminaries, universities, and cultural organizations. Such collaborations can transform mosques into dynamic hubs of artistic and intergenerational dialogue while reducing vulnerability to sanctions and politicization.

CCCs, while benefiting from global networks and rich artistic heritage, must address bureaucratic inertia and declining youth participation. Decentralizing decision-making would empower local leaders to adapt programming—such as environmental initiatives inspired by *Laudato Si'* or digital storytelling—to community-specific needs. CCCs should also embed transparency and trauma-informed practices into their operations to rebuild trust after ethical scandals. Strategic investment in digital evangelization—through virtual reality tours, AI chatbots, or interactive apps—can revitalize spiritual engagement in increasingly secular societies.

Both models would gain significantly by institutionalizing interfaith and intercultural dialogue as core—not auxiliary—activities. Such efforts can reduce polarization, foster mutual understanding, and position religious centers as credible contributors to social cohesion and peacebuilding. Governments, in turn, should support these institutions through non-intrusive policies that enable cultural autonomy, following models like Morocco's interfaith-driven heritage and sustainability programs.

Practically, staff training in digital literacy and emotional intelligence is essential to bridge generational divides and ensure cultural programming remains resonant. Financial diversification and sustainable funding models are also critical to reduce dependency and enhance long-term viability. Ultimately, Fahma and CCC must balance fidelity to tradition with openness to innovation—embracing technology, local adaptation, and inclusive dialogue to remain spiritually nourishing and socially impactful in the 21st century. By doing so, they can serve as exemplars for faith-based cultural resilience across diverse religious and geopolitical contexts.

5.2. Limitations and Future Directions

This study is not without limitations. First, the analysis was

primarily based on secondary data, policy documents, and available reports, which may not fully capture the diverse and localized realities of Fahma centers across different provinces. Future research should incorporate field-based qualitative and quantitative data, including interviews with cultural managers, clerics, youth participants, and community members, to gain a more nuanced understanding of the centers' effectiveness. Second, while the SWOT framework provided a structured approach, it may oversimplify complex sociocultural dynamics and overlook interactions between internal and external factors. Integrating complementary methods such as PESTEL or stakeholder analysis could provide a more holistic view. Third, the study was limited to the Iranian context, which may restrict the generalizability of findings. Comparative studies with similar cultural-religious institutions in other Muslim-majority or multi-faith societies could enrich insights and identify transferable best practices.

Importantly, future comparative research could extend beyond the Iran–Vatican binary to include other faith-based cultural models—such as Sunni Muslim initiatives in Malaysia, which similarly mobilize mosques for Gen Z engagement through arts, ethics, and community programs. A three-way comparative study involving Iran (representing Shia Islam), Malaysia (Sunni Islam), and Western Christian contexts (e.g., Europe or North America) would offer a richer, more inclusive framework for understanding how diverse religious traditions foster cultural resilience, intergenerational dialogue, and peacebuilding in an era of global uncertainty. Such a study could also illuminate intra-Islamic diversity and the shared challenges faith-based institutions face in responding to secularization, digital transformation, and youth alienation.

For future directions, researchers should focus on evaluating the long-term social impact of Fahma centers, particularly in areas such as youth empowerment, religious literacy, and resilience against cultural alienation. Additionally, the role of digital platforms, social media, and creative industries in enhancing the reach of Fahma programs warrants further investigation. Finally, there is a need for policy-oriented studies that examine mechanisms for sustainable funding, capacity-building of cultural leaders, and strategies for fostering inclusive participation across gender and generational divides. Such directions would contribute to strengthening the strategic role of Fahma centers in promoting cultural vitality and social cohesion.

6. Conclusion

The assessment of Mosque Cultural-Art Centers (Fahma) through a SWOT framework highlights their pivotal role as cultural hubs in strengthening religious identity, promoting community engagement, and fostering artistic and educational development within Iranian society. The analysis revealed significant strengths, including their nationwide presence, deep-rooted connection to Islamic traditions, and capacity to

mobilize youth for cultural activities. At the same time, weaknesses such as limited financial resources, managerial inefficiencies, and inadequate digital infrastructure present challenges to achieving their full potential. External opportunities, such as the growing demand for culturally grounded programs and the expansion of digital cultural platforms, offer avenues for strategic growth. However, threats stemming from globalization, cultural homogenization, and competing recreational alternatives require careful navigation. In conclusion, the future success of Fahma centers depends on their ability to adapt to contemporary cultural needs while preserving their religious and social mission. By addressing internal limitations, leveraging emerging opportunities, and adopting innovative approaches, Fahma centers can strengthen their position as vital institutions for cultural sustainability and social cohesion. This strategic orientation will ensure that they remain not only relevant but also influential in shaping Iran's cultural landscape in the years ahead.

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