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The Role of Muslim Organisations in the Integration or Segregation of Migrants

A Literature Review

Abstract

This paper presents a narrative review of journal articles examining the integrating or segregating role of Muslim organisations in the integration process of migrants in Europe. To achieve our goal, we conducted an extensive search of the electronic databases of relevant journals and analysed the findings of the articles regarding the orientations of Muslim organisations. Our focus was on three dimensions of integration, namely: the economic, socio-cultural, and political dimensions of immigrant integration. The reviewed literature reveals a nuanced causal relationship between Muslim organisations and immigrant integration, exploring the contribution of these organisations and emphasising their potential to either act as bridges between migrant communities and their societies of settlement or reinforce social divisions.

Keywords

Muslim Organisations | Integration | Segregation | Migration | Europe

1. Introduction

The European continent, including the European Union (EU), is a diverse mosaic of cultures, histories, and societies. With 29 million citizens of non-member countries in 2024 in the EU alone (Eurostat: 2025), the task of facilitating the integration of these individuals into the broader European fabric is both critical and complex. The EU's action plan on integration and inclusion (2021–2027) signals the importance of this endeavour (European Commission: 2020). Central to this conversation are migrant self-organisations (MSOs), among which Muslim organisations constitute one of the largest groups. These organisations play a pivotal role in the integration process of migrants into the receiving societies.

According to the action plan on integration and inclusion mentioned above, the EU guarantees freedom of religion, aims to combat discrimination on the basis of religious affiliation and belief, and seeks to promote interreligious dialogue. In

the action plan, faith is not conceptualized as an integrative but as a differentiating factor of the European population.

The integration process takes place in a situation that has been dominated by Christianized cultures in many European countries over the past centuries. In some northern and central European countries, state and church were linked together to the extent that being a citizen meant being a member of a Christian church. In other European countries, the vast majority of citizens belonged to one of the Christian churches. The immigration of people of different faiths posed a challenge to the idea of a Christian society (Breton: 2012). Faith was no longer seen as an integrative force but as a differentiating factor or even as a threat to society in the case of radicalized groups of other faiths (Koenig: 2023). The influx of migrants with other faiths, together with a growing number of people leaving Christian churches, has continuously changed the religious landscape over time in many countries so that the Christian churches, which have been in a majority position, find themselves today in minority situations in a growing number of European countries. This poses various challenges to the churches as well as to migrant organisations. For example, churches struggle to keep up their Christian profile especially, in the field of diaconia, as diaconal organisations mirror the plurality of society in their workforce and employ staff from other faiths.

Within this shifting landscape, Muslim organisations have emerged as significant actors that bridge these institutional gaps by being both service providers and cultural mediators. They not only offer an alternative to traditional diaconal structures but also reframe religious identity from a differentiating factor to a resource by facilitating multidimensional integration.

These changes go hand in hand with a fresh look at diaconal organisations. Traditionally, they have been understood within the Christian tradition (Eurich & Swart: 2025). However, as already mentioned, many of them have staff members with backgrounds in differing religions and some offer interreligious programs. One of the key questions for the further development of diaconia and the study of it is whether Muslim (welfare) organisations can be understood as non-Christian diaconal actors (Fazlhashemi: 2017). On the one hand, this understanding could support the incorporation of Muslim diaconal organisations into the respective social security system, while on the other hand it could be viewed by Muslim communities as assimilating too much into the culture of the receiving society.

Migrant communities are challenged to adapt to the culture and laws of the receiving country – a process that often calls their self-understanding and their role in society into question (Barua: 2025; Hu & Cheung: 2024; Sam & Berry: 2010). Between the pole of, on the one hand, falling back on traditional values and emphasising their own (differing) culture, and, on the other hand, fully assimilating into the culture of the receiving country, many shades of integration and disintegration can be observed.

The literature offers mixed findings on whether migrant faith-based organisations help or hinder integration into their European states of settlement (Zanfrini: 2020). In this article, we will focus on the role of Muslim organisations in the integration of immigrants in Europe. There is a considerable amount of research supporting the argument that they contribute positively to integration (cf. e. g. Fernández Suárez: 2020). Their role as service providers, cultural mediators, and facilitators of civic engagement indicates that they help immigrants become active members of society while maintaining their religious identity. However, there are also some research results suggesting that Muslim organisations can contribute to social segregation and foster religious and cultural boundaries that may hinder full integration (cf. e. g. Fernández Suárez: 2020). Our research is designed to systematically examine the literature surrounding the presumed dual-edged role in migrant integration research. This is particularly pertinent in light of the political developments in Europe, such as the strengthening of right-wing parties with anti-immigrant agendas and their tendency to explain the perceived 'inability' of some migrants to integrate through cultural essentialism.

In order to understand the supposed double-edged role of Muslim organisations, we will conduct a review of the literature focusing on two main hypotheses. The hypotheses are established as analytical poles to systematically identify and categorise empirical findings that support either integrating or segregating outcomes of Muslim MSOs in the literature, reflecting the existing mixed findings.

Hypothesis 1:

Muslim organisations can contribute positively to the multidimensional process of immigrant integration, facilitating economic, socio-cultural, and political inclusion while allowing immigrants to maintain their religious identity. Their role as service providers and community organizers supports integration at different levels, although progress may vary across domains and over time.

Hypothesis 2:

Muslim organisations can hinder the integration process by reinforcing religious and cultural boundaries that may foster segregation. These boundaries may limit the immigrants' engagement with the broader society, potentially creating isolated enclaves or exacerbating feelings of political alienation.

The review will include studies that assess the positive and/or negative aspects of Muslim organisations' role in facilitating immigrant integration in Europe. We begin with a discussion of the concept of integration, focusing on three primary dimensions: socio-cultural, economic, and political integration. These dimensions were chosen because they capture the main aspects in which Muslim organisations

interact with both migrant communities and the societies of settlement (cf. e. g., Ager & Strang: 2008; Penninx: 2005). The economic dimension reflects how these organisations support immigrants not only in finding employment, but also in improving their overall economic well-being. The socio-cultural dimension is central, as Muslim organisations often mediate identity formation and intercultural exchange, thereby shaping social integration or segregation. The political dimension is equally relevant, since civic participation and representation are critical aspects of belonging in European contexts. By emphasising these three dimensions, this study seeks to connect the organisational functions of Muslim organisations to the broader processes through which integration or segregation occurs.

The three dimensions are chosen as analytical categories that allow us to systematically examine how Muslim organisations engage with integration processes. Each dimension captures a specific area of interaction between migrants, institutions of the society of settlement, and religious organisations. The variability of integration outcomes across these three dimensions is central to answering the research question about the role of Muslim organisations in integration in a nuanced way. By applying these dimensions, this chapter places the subsequent meta-analysis within the established frameworks of integration research and clarifies how Muslim organisations can influence the outcomes across economic, socio-cultural and political spheres.

We then define Muslim migrant organisations for our research question and examine how they function within European societies of settlement. To understand their impact, we analyse both the positive and negative roles these organisations can play. First, we examine how Muslim organisations contribute positively to integration by acting as cultural mediators, supporting economic opportunities through employment and entrepreneurship, and encouraging civic engagement within political processes. Next, we explore how Muslim organisations may inadvertently hinder integration by fostering social segregation, economic enclaves, and political alienation through the maintenance or cultivation of religious and cultural boundaries. By comparing these perspectives, this article aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the complex and dual role that Muslim organisations play in the integration process of Muslim immigrants.

2. Perspectives on the “Integration of Immigrants”

Even though the term ‘integration’ has been interpreted in many various ways, it is often used in a specific sense with strong connotations of social cohesion: the unification of a diverse population through the construction of a common identity and the establishment of shared institutions and services that enable civic engagement across diverse communities. (cf. Qadeer: 2006, 29; Reitz et al.: 2009;

Favell: 2003, 14; Goksel: 2018, 4). Although there appears to be broad agreement that integration is a normative answer to the challenges arising from diversity in modern liberal-individualistic societies, and a precondition for social cohesion, the academic literature on the integration of immigrants remains highly diverse, fragmented, and multidisciplinary. Historically, as Goksel demonstrates, the meaning of “integration” has shifted between assimilation and multiculturalism, largely in response to public anxieties about whether immigrant diversity poses a risk to national identity, social cohesion, and security (Goksel: 2018, 4–6; 8–12). In many contexts, integration has therefore been framed less as a question of justice for immigrants than as a tool to protect the stability of the host society. When viewed in this way, integration debates often produce simplified oppositions—such as “us” versus “them” or “liberal” versus “illiberal”—which portray certain immigrant groups as culturally incompatible or potentially threatening. This dynamic can result in unfamiliar identities or practices being labelled as problematic, rather than directing attention to structural injustices such as discrimination, inequality, and exclusion, which Goksel identifies as the real barriers to integration (Goksel: 2018, 9–12; 14–17).

The concept of integration has evolved significantly from its early assimilationist roots, recognising that the process of immigrant incorporation is multifaceted and cannot be reduced to a single dimension. Scholars and policymakers increasingly conceptualise integration as a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing various domains of life, acknowledging the complex interplay between immigrants’ experiences and the structures and policies of the receiving society (Penninx & Garcés-Mascreñas: 2016, 12). This shift from unidimensional to multidimensional perspectives stems from the recognition that immigrants may not integrate uniformly across different domains (Fajth & Lessard-Phillips: 2022, 192).

Fajth and Lessard-Phillips identify eight thematic dimensions of integration prevalent in the literature: culture, identity, social integration, discrimination and prejudice, economic integration, civic/political integration, spatial integration, and health and well-being (Fajth & Lessard-Phillips: 2022, 195). Similarly, Heath and Schneider examine ten indicators measuring social, structural, political, civic, and cultural integration (Heath & Schneider: 2021, 67). The specific aspects or indicators included within each dimension or indicator vary across frameworks, reflecting the complexity of conceptualising and measuring integration. This multidimensional approach acknowledges that integration is not a linear or uniform process, and progress in one domain does not necessarily imply progress in others. Different immigrant groups may experience integration differently depending on their backgrounds, the receiving society’s context, and the policies in place (Ager & Strang: 2010, 591). For our review, we will focus on three dimensions namely, the economic, socio-cultural, and political dimension of immigrant integration. The decision to focus on the economic, socio-cultural, and political dimensions was guided by both theoretical and analytical considerations. They are the dimensions in which

Muslim organisations most directly engage through activities such as labour market support, identity and cultural mediation, and political representation. Therefore, focusing on these dimensions allows comparability across studies.

By presenting these dimensions, the chapter grounds the subsequent synthesis in established integration research frameworks and clarifies how Muslim organisations can influence integration outcomes across the economic, socio-cultural and political spheres.

2.1 Economic Dimensions of Migrant Integration

Economic integration refers to the process by which immigrants become participants in the economic system by securing an income that enables them to attain an adequate standard of living and access goods and services (Kuhlmann: 1991, 16).

This involves not only finding employment but also achieving equality with native-born workers in terms of wages, occupational status, and overall economic well-being. Measuring economic integration requires examining a range of indicators that reflect immigrants' labour market performance, socioeconomic mobility, and financial stability (Penninx: 2005, 139). A comprehensive assessment of economic integration should consider multiple indicators that capture different facets of economic participation and well-being.

2.2 Socio-Cultural Dimensions of Migrant Integration

The socio-cultural dimensions of migrant integration encompass the complex processes of cultural exchange and adaptation that occur as immigrants interact with members and institutions of the society of settlement (Fajth & Lessard-Phillips: 2022, 193). Integration, in this context, refers to the extent to which immigrants become included and accepted as members of the society of settlement. This process involves not only changes on the part of immigrants but also adjustments and responses from the receiving society. Socio-cultural integration is often measured through indicators such as language proficiency, cultural adaptation, social interactions, and identity formation.

2.3 Political Dimensions of Migrant Integration

The political dimensions of migrant integration refer to the processes by which immigrants gain access to and participate in the political institutions and processes of the receiving society. This encompasses formal political rights, such as citizenship and voting (Penninx: 2005, 142). Moreover, participation in civil society organisations—such as community groups, advocacy organisations, and migrant

associations—signals immigrants’ involvement in informal political activities and their efforts to address issues affecting their communities (Penninx: 2005, 142f).

Based on the above presented aspects, we consider that the economic, socio-cultural and political dimensions provide a comprehensive framework for understanding immigrant integration. These dimensions also offer a useful background for examining the roles played by Muslim migrant organisations, which engage in economic, socio-cultural and political spheres in European societies. The next chapter further develops this framework more, by defining what constitutes a Muslim migrant organisation and situating these actors within broader social and institutional contexts.

3. What are Muslim Migrant Organisations?

Following Nagel, we define Muslim migrant organisations in this review as organisations that (1) have emerged from a migration context, with these migration movements occurring primarily after 1950; (2) focus on aspects of religious life and self-affirmation, and maintain a connection to both the here-and-now and the hereafter; and (3) manifest themselves as congregations in a broad sense, characterised by a “higher degree of interrelatedness and commitment” (Nagel: 2017, 142). The term ‘migrants’ here is used as an umbrella category to refer to residents and their descendants who were born outside of that particular state. We are aware that this definition is a simplification, but it reflects existing power structures between an ‘autochthonous’ and a ‘foreign’ population group (cf. the “post-migrant paradigm”, Foroutan et al.: 2018). In spatial terms, we refer to European countries in which Muslim communities have emerged as a result of post-WWII migration movements. These organisations in Europe are characterised by their presence within societies with a Christian heritage (Koenig: 2023, 139) and thus subject to a comparison with Christian structures. While Christian churches have an extraordinarily high degree of formalised organisation with a register of all members, e. g. through baptismal registers, such structures are not common in Islam (cf. Sezgin 2008, 90; Pfündel et al.: 2021, 30). In addition to organised forms in clubs and associations, Muslim religious practices are also possible in a non-organized manner (Silvestri: 2011, 1231). For the purpose of this article, we restrict the focus to *organized* Muslim groups¹. The Muslim populations in Europe migrated from

1 In the examined articles, it was observed that numerous distinct Muslim organisations function across various European nations as aforementioned. It was noted that they are occasionally administered solely by the Muslim communities residing within the respective nation, while at other times, the country of origin also plays a significant role in their management. At this point DITIB, headquartered in Germany, exemplifies this distinction most clearly. The organisation operates in connection with the

different countries of origin, which have different Muslim traditions and currents (Koenig: 2023, 123). It is therefore not possible to speak of a monolithic bloc. Using Germany as an example, Muslim organisations may be divided into Sunni, Shia, Alevi, and Ahmadiyya (cf. Pfündel et al.: 2021, 100; Türkmen: 2024), but they are also differentiated according to ethnic and national backgrounds.

In addition to this inner-Islamic diversity of organisations, there are other factors that determine the orientation of the organisations. These factors vary depending on the specific national and historical context in which they exist. Klevermann suggests looking at the embedding of organisations in a specific societal situation (Klevermann: 2022, 84–93). Various environmental factors thus play a central role for the organisations and their members or participants. Nagel systematizes the orientation of religious (migrant) organisations (RMOs) according to internal and external factors that influence their identity, structure, and interactions within the broader society. Internally, the theological self-image, the migration history of these organisations, the social structure and the demographic changes are important dimensions. Externally, the legal framework, the incentives and opportunity structures, the organisational field and the public discourses affect the orientations of the organisations (Nagel: 2016, 92–94).

Well aware of the aforementioned internal and external factors, we still want to identify general structures and tendencies that are identified in the research landscape. For this reason, we largely refrain from naming the specific organisation or its e. g. national or local context. In some cases, however, we do refer to these, as we consider them to be illustrative.

4. Method and Materials

The theoretical perspectives discussed in chapter 2 guide the methodological approach of this study. Using the economic, socio-cultural, and political dimensions as analytical lenses, the review examines the literature to present how Muslim organisations have facilitated, hindered, or simultaneously promoted both integration

Presidency of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye (cf. Çitak: 2009). However, this situation was not considered as a problem to be solved by omitting the articles concerning DITIB from the sample. This decision is underpinned by two critical justifications. Firstly, like other Muslim organisations, DITIB serves Muslim populations through initiatives carried out by local Muslim communities in their respective areas. Another rationale is that while DITIB is a recognized case by the authors, a comprehensive enumeration regarding other Muslim organisations influenced by their state of origin from diverse Muslim regions remains elusive. In this context, the exclusion of DITIB from the sample would result in a lack of consistency, as other potential state-influenced organisations could not be clearly identified and were subsequently included in the sample.

and segregation processes across these three levels. This approach acknowledges that outcomes are not always dichotomous, and that integration and segregation can co-exist depending on context and perspective.

4.1 Study Design

This study is guided by the SALSA framework (Search–Appraisal–Synthesis–Analysis) to conduct a narrative literature review (Grant & Booth: 2009). The approach allows for an integrative, interpretative synthesis of (empirical) conceptual studies with different approaches, which is suitable for the interdisciplinary nature of research on Muslim organisations and migrant integration in Europe. The objective was to identify and categorize existing research that investigates how Muslim organisations contribute to – or hinder – the integration of migrants across economic, socio-cultural, and political dimensions.

4.2 Search (Identification and Retrieval)

A multi-stage search strategy was employed using the keywords “Muslim AND Organisation AND Integration”. Searches were carried out between 15 October 2024 and 15 November 2024 in:

1. Databases: *ScienceDirect*, *Migration Research Hub*
2. Journal databases: *Journal of Muslims in Europe*, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, *Comparative Migration Studies*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *Ethnicities*, *International Migration Review*, *Journal of Religion in Europe*, *Social Compass*, *Sociology of Religion*, *Central and East European Migration Studies*

The journals were selected based on their thematic relevance to migration, religion, and minority studies, and their established contribution to scholarship on Muslim populations and organisational contexts. The search covered publications from 1985 to 2024, restricted to the English language. Database filters for “research articles” were applied where available. 5,077 articles could be identified as potentially relevant. In addition to database searches, 25 articles known to the authors that addressed the topics represented by the keywords were included in this step. This is consistent with the methodological flexibility of narrative literature reviews (Green et al., 2006; Grant/Booth, 2009).

4.3 Appraisal (Screening and Selection)

We adopted transparent inclusion and exclusion criteria focusing on relevance:

Inclusion criteria: 1. Empirical focus on formally organized muslim organisations (associations, federations, mosque communities) linked to post-1950 migration in

Europe; 2. Explicit discussion of integration or segregation processes; 3. Empirical design (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods), case studies, or comparative analyses; 4. English-language publications.

Exclusion criteria: 1. Theoretical, conceptual, or purely historical works without empirical grounding; 2. Studies of informal or non-organised religious practices (e.g., small Quranic circles, commercial initiatives); 3. Research conducted outside Europe.

The screening process is shown in table 1 (see appendix). After title and abstract screening 247 articles were included for full-text reading and 70 remained in the corpus after this final selection step.

4.4 Synthesis (Organisation and Categorisation)

A standardized data extraction sheet was used to record author(s), year, country/-countries; integration dimensions (economic, socio-cultural, political); reported direction of effect (integration or segregation). The articles were then categorised according to three dimensions, whereas each article could be coded for multiple dimensions:

1. Economic: employment, training, socio-economic mobility
2. Socio-cultural: language, cultural adaptation, identity, counter-radicalization, interreligious dialogue;
3. Political: civic participation, minority rights, advocacy, and state relations.

This categorisation formed the structural basis for the results section.

4.5 Analysis (Interpretation and Theorisation)

In line with the narrative orientation of this review and the flexibility of the SALSA framework, the results were synthesised using a narrative synthesis approach. Analytical interpretation and theorisation were therefore embedded within the presentation of results and further developed in the discussion and conclusion sections, rather than treated as a distinct procedural stage. The categorised evidence provided the analytical foundation from which interpretative insights and theoretical connections were iteratively derived.

4.6 Data Management and Reproducibility

All search strings, retrieved records, and coding tables were systematically documented, with changes tracked over time. The data extraction and categorisation are documented in table 2 (see appendix), following the structure: Country – Author/Year – Dimension – Integration/Segregation Effect.

5. Results

Following a systematic selection process involving more than 5,000 articles and an in-depth review of 70 full-text studies (see table 2 in the appendix), we synthesised the reviewed research articles according to the previous presented hypotheses. The multifaceted nature of the topic means that individual articles could be assigned to both hypotheses as well as to different dimensions. Overall, 49 articles were identified that indicate integrative effects, while 10 articles indicate segregating effects. In addition, 11 articles indicate both directions.

5.1 Hypothesis 1: Muslim Organisations Contribute Positively to the Economic, Socio-Cultural and Political Integration of Immigrants.

The reviewed literature in relation to this hypothesis supports the argument that Muslim organisations contribute positively to integration. Their role as service providers, cultural mediators, and facilitators of civic engagement indicates that they advance the economic integration of migrants through training and socio-economic mobility, foster socio-cultural adaptation and interreligious dialogue, and strengthen political integration by helping immigrants become active members of socio-political system while maintaining their religious identity.

5.1.1 Economic Integration

Explicit discussion of aspects of economic integration can be found in only five articles in our corpus. Muslim organisations can serve as hubs for social and commercial activities, offering direct economic support for those in need (cf. Stojkow: 2018; Nagel: 2023) or help with gaining access to the labour market (Boland: 2020). For example, Herz and Munsch (2019) highlight the spaces provided by Muslim organisations for social and commercial activities. Bolognani and Stratham (2013) and Stojkow (2018) report that many organisations prioritize social welfare holistically, benefiting both Muslims and the wider community in areas such as housing, health, education and childcare services.

5.1.2 Socio-Cultural Integration

In the category of socio-cultural integration (number of articles = 41), we identified four distinct ways in which Muslim organisations strive to integrate their members. The two first relatively clear categories are the adaptation of elements of the society of settlement into the organisation's practices, and the provision of non-religious services. The third category, strengthening Muslim self-confidence, promoting

collective and individual responsibility and applying practices of counter-radicalization, is more complex and depends on the political and social situation in each respective state. The fourth category is the religious integration, which involves becoming part of the broader Muslim landscape in the societies of settlement.

Adapting of Practices to the Local Context

Sözeri and Altinyelken (2019) examine mosque education by Turkish groups (Diyanet, Milli Görüş, and Süleymanlıs) in the Netherlands, highlighting efforts such as the use of bilingual materials and standardized textbooks. Similarly, Langer and Weineck (2017), Bøe and Flakerud (2017), and Sözeri and Altinyelken (2019) note that the organisations they studied incorporate local languages (German, Norwegian, Dutch) into their sermons and rituals, as well as for communication with non-Muslim groups (Bøe/Flakerud: 2017).

Beyond language use, socio-cultural integration practices from the societies of settlement include advocating for modesty-compliant sports participation, particularly for women. Shavit and Wiesenbach mention Muslim organisations' engagement for "Muslim swimming hours" (Shavit & Wiesenbach: 2012, 53), which allow Muslims to adhere to Islamic rules of modesty while still participating in sports, an important aspect of Western culture.

Non-Religious Social Services

Some researchers have analysed how Muslim organisations facilitate the integration of their members into the broader society through non-religious social services (cf. Öcal: 2020; Fernández Suárez et al.: 2020). Examples include language courses (cf. Doomernik: 1995; Bartels & de Jong: 2007; Sezgin 2008; Yildiz & Verkuyten: 2013), computer courses and bicycle courses for women (Doomernik: 1995), tutoring for pupils (cf. Bartels & de Jong: 2007; Sezgin: 2008), information meetings on social systems (Bartels & de Jong, 2007), or simply providing spaces for social and commercial activities (Herz & Munsch: 2019).

It can be concluded that these organisations address the evolving needs of their communities through a complex interplay of social and material dimensions (Herz & Munsch: 2019). Additionally, Nagel (2023) highlights the concrete personal support provided by members of Muslim organisations in the form of cultural capital (e. g., skills and time) to assist refugees.

Self-Responsibility and Counter-Radicalisation

The reviewed articles show that Muslim organisations play a key role in navigating cultural adaptation, identity preservation, and integration within European societies. According to Kortmann (2015), the organisations he studied prioritise self-responsibility and cultural identity in shaping the identity formation of Muslim immigrants. Bolognani and Statham (2013) note for British Muslim organisations

a shift away from “homeland” identities, focusing instead on cultural integration. Similarly, Warner and Wenner (2006) classify Muslim organisations in Germany and France as either “separatist” (see 5.2) or “integrationist,” with integrationist groups advocating for active participation in European societies (see also Yükleyn & Yurdakul: 2011). Sezgin (2008) supports this view, noting that Turkish Muslim organisations in Germany promote interreligious dialogue and tolerance, while in some cases rejecting “parallel societies” and adopting values of the society of settlement (Rosenow-Williams: 2014).

According to Sunier (2021), the biggest challenge for Muslim organisations concerns the deteriorating climate for Muslims. Several researchers point out that Muslim organisations work toward counter-radicalisation in response to terrorism and widespread resentment against Muslims. For example, Yildiz and Verkuyten (2013) demonstrate how Turkish Muslim organisations in the Netherlands and Germany make a discursive effort to distance themselves from terrorism and construct a Muslim identity that aligns with the values of their societies of settlement. André et al. (2015) emphasize that mosques are more than just places of worship; they can serve as counter-radicalisation hubs, providing spaces for socialisation, education, and civic engagement. These activities help young Muslims feel a sense of belonging and purpose, which potentially diverts them from anti-social or extremist tendencies. In Flyvholm (2020), the leaders of the Muslim organisations argue that hate crime can be seen as an indicator of lack of integration.

On an organisational level, integration can become a precaution against hate crimes. This precaution can be seen as a way to position the organisation and its members as well-integrated. Lillevik (2020) highlights the role of Muslim organisations in promoting integration, particularly in larger, more diverse cities, where concerns about radicalisation and Islamophobia have spurred collaborations with Muslim organisations for outreach and counter-radicalisation efforts. A concrete example is provided by Harms-Dalibon (2017), who examines the emergence of Muslim prison chaplaincies in three German federal states (Lower Saxony, Berlin, and Hesse) as a measure to prevent radicalisation. Muslim chaplaincy is presented as a means to promote social integration and rehabilitation. Focusing on members of a prominent Muslim organisation in France, Dazey (2023) analyses how organised Muslims respond to and cope with anti-Muslim hostility. The authors consider the destigmatisation of Islam could be achieved through a strict policing of Muslims’ own conduct and a permanent attention to self-discipline. More precisely, the prime ways in which they seek to rebut anti-Muslim hostility entail moral improvement and self-management.

Religious Integration and Integration into the Broader Muslim Landscape

Religious integration provides a more specific focus on religious aspects. In accordance with diverse references, two categories are found.

First, Muslim organisations help to localize Islam into the culture of settlement. This varies by context. Sunier (2021) emphasizes the production of locality and spiritual homemaking through infrastructure by Dutch Muslim organisations. Toronto (2008) highlights certain efforts in fostering an “Italian Islam”, similarly a “Norwegian Islam” was referred to by Walseth (2016) through sports activities offered by the organisations, while Lynch and Veale (2015) describe being Muslim in Ireland as already a localised identity. Geaves (1996) addresses the Barelwi tradition’s adaptation in Britain to engage younger generations. Arkilic (2015) examines Turkish Muslim organisations’ responses to local policies in France and Germany, and Doormernik (1995) highlights that the organisations are a symbiosis of the respective interpretation of Islam with the requirements of a secular and modern society, similarly to Glynn (2002).

Second, Muslim organisations play a crucial role in uniting Islam either from diverse nationalities or into better-established organisations and providing inter-faith dialogue. Schoeneberg (1985), Bartels and de Jong (2007), Stojkow (2018), Timmerman et al., (2003) and Verkuyten and Yıldız (2009) – in terms of Alevi communities – emphasize that the organisations transcend their religious functions by uniting members and promoting collective identity. Renaerts (1999) discusses Belgium’s Muslim Council and Islamic education as unifying forces, a sentiment echoed by Sözeri et al. (2022) for Turkish Dutch Muslims. Scharbrodt (2011) finds that Shiis in Ireland gain recognition as part of Islam albeit as a moderate expression. Langer and Weineck (2017) demonstrate how Shiite organisations in Germany create shared spaces for dialogue and cooperation across ethnic and national divides. Kassimeris and Samouris (2012) focus on organisations of Bangladeshi and Pakistani descent in Greece and highlights their role for newcomers in their integration in the existing Muslim associations, a role also identified by Nagel (2023) in Germany. Furthermore, Bøe and Flaskerud (2017) and Sezgin (2008) underscore Muslim organisations’ contributions to interfaith dialogue, while Phalet et al. (2013) extend this to include community engagement across the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden, and Belgium.

5.1.3 Political Integration

Within our corpus, 19 articles focus on political integration. Muslim organisations, especially Islamic umbrella organisations, play a key role in political integration by serving as intermediaries between Muslim communities and the state (Rosenow-Williams: 2014). Overall, the literature explores three crucial aspects of Muslim organisations’ involvement with political integration: state-Muslim group relations, civic education of Muslim groups, and minority rights advocacy.

A Bridge between Muslim Groups and the State

The literature highlights that Muslim migrant organisations serve as key intermediaries between Muslim communities and the state (cf. Kortmann & Rosenow-Williams: 2013; Kortmann: 2015; Annette: 2011; Peucker & Ceylan: 2017; Dyduch & Skorek: 2024; Martikainen: 2014). Dumont (2008) argues that migrant organisations can serve as substitutes for formal political representation by addressing gaps in political inclusion and emphasizing integration into national political systems. According to Abid (2006), Muslim organisations in Austria actively contribute to a relatively low-conflict integration process by promoting democracy and participation. Similarly, Mourão Permoser et al., (2010) investigates how the Austrian government is increasingly collaborating with minority religious organisations, particularly Muslim and Eastern Orthodox groups, as representatives of immigrants. Similarly, Arkilic (2015) highlights how Turkish Islamic organisations in France and Germany have gained a voice in policy discussions and decisions impacting Muslim communities, actively advocating for their interests and promoting civic participation. Triviño-Salazar (2018) investigates the mutual benefits of alliances between political parties and immigrant organisations, where political parties gain strategic support, while immigrant organisations secure greater leverage in policy making based on two case studies in Catalonia/Spain.

The capacity of Muslim organisations to influence policy making and integration outcomes is often shaped by state political cultures and frameworks. Doomernik (1995) explains how the political culture of the state by recognising an organisation as an interlocutor determines the extent to which an organisation can participate in the political debate or not. Allen and Isakjee (2015) note that relations between Muslim representative organisations and the government in the UK have improved and are more professional than they were in the 1990s. However, this progress must be balanced against the frustration of Muslim actors in controlling narratives about their communities. According to Mikkelsen (2019), the third historical wave of organisation building in Denmark, the so-called homegrown organisations, attempted to unite Muslims in Denmark and worked for a dialogue with the Danish majority population. Some of these Muslim organisations engaged in politics and took on a politic-Islamic identity.

State authorities can also involve Muslim organisations in programs to counter extremism and radicalisation. Buijs (2009) discusses how, after the 9/11 attack and the murder of Theo Van Gogh, Dutch authorities' collaboration efforts with Muslim organisations in counter-extremism programs highlighted how even purist Salafi groups may act as barriers against jihadism. Similarly, Feldblum (1993) focuses on the "affaire des foulards" (headscarves affair) of 1989 as a case-study and provides information regarding the role of Muslim organisations as mediators and advocates.

Civic Education and Leadership Training

Muslim organisations play a vital role in fostering civic education and leadership training for immigrants, educating them about the political system, their rights, responsibilities, and effective advocacy strategies (cf. Just et al.: 2014; Kuppinger, 2015). Bartels and de Jong (2007) emphasise the importance of mosques for creating opportunities for Muslims to develop the skills and knowledge necessary for active citizenship and participation in the Dutch political processes. Moreover, Sunier (2021) highlights how Muslim organisations have represented Muslim interests since the 1990s, with a younger generation increasingly fighting for their position beyond the migrant status in the Netherlands.

From a gender perspective, Güner & Abbas (2024) find that the Turkish Muslim organisations can amplify the voices of Muslim women in the Netherlands amidst rising sexism, racism and Islamophobia. The Dutch-Turkish Muslim women organisations engage in various talking-back practices to challenge the marginalisation they face from both the Dutch society and the secular Turkish community. Lewicki & O'Toole (2017) analysed provision of women's prayer spaces and inclusion on mosque committees as peripheral to a more radical vision of women's inclusion, based on an interpretation of Islamic scriptures that attributed equal responsibility in ritual leadership to women, including the delivery of sermons and prayers to mixed congregations.

On the other hand, the findings might vary from one country to another. To illustrate, Yukleyen (2010) argues that varying state policies on multiculturalism shape different levels of integration of Muslim organisations, using Milli Görüş as a case study to compare Germany and the Netherlands, where its organisational efforts, such as public recognition, Islamic education, and engagement with state authorities, politicians, and media, facilitate integration in the Netherlands, while its controversial approach in Germany limits its effectiveness.

Advocacy for Minority Group Rights

Muslim organisations might also actively work to ensure integration by demanding adjustments to guidelines and laws to accommodate practices like slaughtering animals according to Islamic principles, upgrading the legal status of the imam, providing pastoral care in the army and prisons, ensuring burial according to Muslim principles, equating Muslim and Christian holidays, and establishing Muslim schools (cf. Shadid: 1991; Carol & Koopmans: 2013; Cinalli & Guigni: 2013; Boland: 2020, Harms-Dalibon: 2017).

Langer and Weineck (2017) examine ongoing efforts of the umbrella organisation for Shiite Muslims in Germany (IGS e. V.) to gain influence in German politics. They mention that IGS demonstrates a desire to participate in political processes and to advocate for the interests of Shiite Muslims. Verkuyten and Yıldız (2009) highlight

that the Alevi organisations support Alevi interests in terms of advocating for their rights and Alevi recognition. Finally, Yurdakul and Korteweg (2013) explore the varying influence of Muslim organisations in shaping policy responses to “honour-based violence” (HBV), noting that Dutch Muslim organisations have experienced greater success compared to their German counterparts.

5.1.4 Synthesis of Findings for Hypothesis 1

The literature review provides broad but uneven support for Hypothesis 1. Among the reviewed studies, we noticed that Muslim organisations are predominantly presented as facilitators of integration, particularly in the socio-cultural and political dimensions. Evidence for positive economic integration effects exists but is limited. Overall, our findings suggest that Muslim organisations contribute in a very consistent manner to the integration by mediating between migrants and institutions, fostering civic engagement and enabling localised forms of religious practice, rather than through direct economic interventions.

5.2 Hypothesis 2: Muslim Organisations Hinder Integration by Fostering Segregation and Maintaining Religious and Cultural Boundaries.

There are some results suggesting that Muslim organisations can contribute to social segregation and foster religious and cultural boundaries that may hinder full integration. Our review shows three categories of adverse effects: social segregation, religious boundaries and political segregation. Interestingly, we found no indications of economic segregation, e. g. in the form of economic enclaves.

5.2.1 Socio-Cultural Segregation

The socio-cultural dimension also plays the most prominent role in articles addressing adverse effects (number of articles = 17). Fernández Suárez et al. (2020) report that Muslim immigrant organisations may reinforce socio-cultural separation when their activities are predominantly inward-oriented, when religious identity is emphasized defensively, or when conservative norms are reproduced in ways that limit sustained intercultural engagement with the wider society. Warner and Wenner (2006) categorised some Muslim organisations as separatist and resisting integration and promoting distinct Muslim communities, viewing European societies as incompatible with Islamic values. Carlbom (2006) argues that Islamic institutions, like schools, may perpetuate segregation by isolating Muslim children. Renaerts (1999) also sees such institutions as limiting Muslim interaction with wider society. Timmerman et al. (2003) highlight that some Islamist organisations reinforce traditional gender roles and strict religious practices, creating barriers

to integration and intercultural exchange. Emmerich (2020) notes Salafi groups' theological differences and strict practices further segregate them from broader British society. Yükleven and Yurdakul (2011) describe the Süleymanlı community's inward focus, resisting public engagement and promoting separation from German society.

Lynch and Veale (2015) show Irish Muslim youth grappling with dual identities shaped by faith, ethnicity, and societal perceptions. In Spain and France, differing state investment has shaped young Muslims' sense of mixed belonging, with contrasting outcomes in fostering integration or segregation (Eseverri Mayer: 2019). Lathion (2008) points out that there can be a desire to separate the two worlds: the secular institutions of the society of settlement (such as the state, schools and the military) and Muslim organisations, which are often associated with the country of origin or local Muslim communities.

Religious Boundaries

Religious boundaries can serve as significant obstacles to integration, often arising from religio-cultural codes or intentional choices made by Muslim organisations. For example, Kassimeris and Samouris (2012) highlight that Muslim associations of Bangladeshi and Pakistani descent in Greece prioritize the preservation of Islamic traditions, while Diehl and Koenig (2013) discuss the presence of competitive Turkish organisations in Germany. Additionally, Sheikhzadegan (2020) points out that gender-specific activities for Salafi women in Switzerland may unintentionally or intentionally contribute to Muslim women's segregation from the broader society.

National, ethnic, and linguistic differences may lead to separation among Muslim groups, hindering integration into broader society. Langer and Weineck (2017) note that such diversity impedes the integration of Shiites in Germany. Similarly, van den Bos (2012) observes the lack of a pan-European Shiite identity, as organisational structures in the Netherlands and Britain are shaped by ethnic and national identities. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Qasmiyeh (2010) identify a similar divide in the UK, where linguistic differences contribute to divisions between Muslims from the MENA region and South Asia.

5.2.2 Political Segregation

Muslim organisations can also cause political segregation (number of articles = 4), if they emphasize the "otherness" of Muslim identity in predominantly secular societies (Kortmann, 2015). According to Mikkelsen (2019), the fourth generation of Muslim organisations include some political Muslim youth organisations and networks that have chosen an alternative strategy that challenges mainstream Danish institutions and values. Öcal (2020) focuses on the critics regarding DITIB's role in probable segregation due to its strong ties with the Turkish state and conse-

quent perceived “Turkish-ness” alongside potential political influence over Turkish Muslims. Jones et al. (2015) argue that Muslim organisations in the UK whose representatives are mostly unelected may cause struggles not only with state authorities but also within group members for recognition of specific identities. Dobbernack et al. (2015) argue that a “Muslim Vote” may limit political agency of immigrants and hinder their political integration.

5.2.3 Synthesis of Findings for Hypothesis 2

The literature review provides selective and context-dependent support for Hypothesis 2. Among the reviewed studies, Muslim organisations are occasionally portrayed as contributing to socio-cultural and political forms of segregation, particularly when organisational practices are inward-oriented, when religious or cultural boundaries are emphasised defensively, or when engagement with wider societal institutions is limited. These dynamics are most frequently observed in relation to conservative or separatist organisational orientations, as well as in contexts characterised by restrictive integration regimes or politicised discourses on Islam.

Our findings suggest that segregating effects are mainly socio-cultural and political, being visible in reinforcement of intragroup boundaries, gender norms, or alternative political identities that may hinder sustained intercultural interaction. It is important to mention that such effects are not uniform across Muslim organisations, and they vary significantly by national context, organisational ideology and state–religion relations.

The literature does not provide evidence for systematic economic segregation related to Muslim organisations. Our findings suggest that while certain Muslim organisations may contribute to boundary maintenance and limited forms of segregation, these effects are only partial, uneven and contingent, and they cannot be generalised across Muslim organisational life.

6. Conclusions

The literature suggests a nuanced causal connection between Muslim organisations and immigrant integration. While there are strong indications that the organisations provide crucial services that help immigrants integrate, there are also instances where they may contribute to social segregation.

Muslim organisations pursue various strategies to integrate themselves and their communities into society. These strategies can be practical in nature, such as economic support (money, space, skill development), social support (housing, health, education, childcare) and the incorporation of elements of the society of settle-

ment in their practices. The strategies can also be discursive, such as positioning themselves as self-responsible and in contrast to Islamist terrorism. Christian organisations like diaconal care givers or church based social service providers are encouraged to establish good working relations with Muslim organisations. Muslim organisations can benefit from their experience in professional work, educational systems, and state relationships (Ceylan & Kiefer: 2016). The establishment and growth of specialized Muslim social services, care givers, prison and hospital counsellors etc. can foster the acknowledgement of Muslim organisations in society and pave the way to further integration (Sigrist: 2023). Christian organisations like diaconia may profit themselves from their support to Muslim organisations: In a pluralistic society, in which the state guarantees freedom of religion and acknowledges a variety of religious organisations, the further existence of diminishing Christian organisations will be protected likewise under the umbrella of the plurality of faiths.

On the religious level, it is often the case that Muslim organisations develop a version of Islam that evolves specifically for the new national context (e. g., “Dutch Islam”) and aims to overcome ethnic and national boundaries among Muslims. Politically, the organisations frequently act as a bridge between the Muslim population and the respective state, providing civic education and advocating for the rights of the group, e. g. the recognition of the group as a minority.

The possibility that organisations may have an adverse effect by further separating their members from the rest of society is addressed in only a few articles. Factors contributing to this include a community-oriented inward focus and an active rejection of the culture of the country of settlement, perceived as incompatible with Islam (e. g., rigid gender norms). Institutions with specific orientations, such as Muslim schools or sports facilities, can further separate individuals from the broader society. Additionally, the focus on one’s own group can lead to mixed identities, particularly among young people, which are seen as problematic. Similarly, the emphasis on group identity in a political sense can widen the gap between societal segments (“otherness”). Furthermore, tendencies to organize Muslim institutions along national, ethnic, or linguistic lines can lead to exclusions.

This dual role of Muslim organisations can depend on several factors, such as the socio-political context of the country of settlement, the organisation’s mission, and its relationship with local communities and government institutions. Orientations towards integration must be seen in connection with the specific nation-states’ political cultures and corresponding policies towards Muslim organisations and Muslims. Consequently, Muslim migrant organisations represent diverse perspectives and approaches to integration, influenced by the specific and historically changing national contexts and political opportunity structures they operate within (cf. Doomernik: 1995; Kortmann: 2015). This has been examined in a comparative study of the Netherlands and Germany (Doomernik, 1995), in an analysis of policy changes driven by economic reasons in Spain (Fernández Suárez et al., 2020),

and in research on political recognition structures in Austria (Abid, 2006). Here again, Christian churches can help to build bridges between Muslim organisations, themselves and other actors in society. A case in point are local contexts where the leading persons of Muslim and Christian organisations can establish personal relationships or even friendships allowing personal trust to bridge situations of tensions or misunderstandings (Sigrist: 2023). Mutual support and assistance are a prime way of creating bonds within society and building social trust. This is particularly fruitful in the field of social services, as helping is not an explicitly Christian activity, but diaconal work can be carried out by any human being. Diaconal organisations can benefit from opening up to interreligious endeavours and learning from other faiths since this processes help to strengthen their own identity as a religious organisation (Eurich: 2021).

Our aim was to identify the integrating and segregating tendencies of Muslim organisations as they have been elaborated in the research landscape on the topic so far. In doing so, conscious decisions were made to narrow down the subject of research, at the risk of overlooking important research. To address this, in future research, we intend to expand the corpus to include other languages than English and other forms of publication (such as monographs and anthologies and materials from higher-level organisations, like the EU or the OECD as well as grey literature from organisations themselves). Furthermore, the Muslim world is multifaceted, and a variety of different denominations and religious groups exist next to each other (see chapter 3.). It would be interesting to investigate the interrelatedness between different religious groups, their societal embedding, and their effects on integration, in order to identify the interplay of different factors that foster or hinder integration.

To fully understand the integrative and segregating effects of Muslim organisations it would be also necessary to look at concrete state action towards the various organisations. The respective state holds the powerful position of deciding which organisations it recognises as a dialogue partner and thus as a political and social partners. To understand the different positions and strategies of Muslim organisations, these must be examined and compared in their respective state and social contexts.

Tables

Table 1 Screening Process

Step		No. of publications
1	Database Hits	5.077
2	Additional sources from prior research	+ 25
3	After title/abstract screening	247
4	After full-text reading	70

Table 2 Reviewed Articles

Reference	Integration Dimension (Political, Economic, Socio-cultural)	Integration or/and Segregation
Austria		
Abid (2006)	socio-cultural	Integration
Mourão Permoser et.al. (2010)	Political	Integration
Belgium		
Renaerts (1999); Timmerman et al. (2003)	socio-cultural	Integration and Segregation
Denmark		
Mikkelsen (2019); Flyvholm (2020)	Political	Integration and Segregation
Finland		
Martikainen (2014)	socio-cultural	Integration
France		
André et.al. (2015); Dazey (2023)	socio-cultural	Integration
Feldblum (1993); Dumont (2008)	Political	Integration
Germany		
Diehl/Koenig 2013	socio-cultural	Integration and Segregation
Kortmann/Rosenow-Williams (2013); Kuppinger (2015); Harms-Dalibon (2017)	socio-cultural and political	Integration
Langer/Weineck (2017)	socio-cultural and political	Integration and Segregation
Herz/Munsch (2019); Nagel (2023)	economic and socio-cultural	Integration
Yükleyen/Yurdakul (2011); Öcal (2020)	socio-cultural	Integration and Segregation

Reference	Integration Dimension (Political, Economic, Socio-cultural)	Integration or/and Segregation
Sezgin (2008); Shavit/Wiesenbach (2012); Rosenow-Williams (2014); Schoeneberg (1985)	socio-cultural	Integration
Greece		
Kassimeris/Samouris (2012)	socio-cultural and political	Integration and Segregation
Ireland		
Lynch/Veale (2015)	socio-cultural	Integration and Segregation
Scharbrodt (2011)	socio-cultural	Integration
Italy		
Toronto (2008)	socio-cultural	Integration
Norway		
Walseth (2016); Bøe/Flaskerud (2017)	socio-cultural	Integration
Lillevik (2020)	socio-cultural	Integration
Poland		
Dyduch/Skorek (2024)	Political	Integration
Stojkow et.al. (2018)	socio-cultural and economic	Integration
Spain		
Boland (2020)	political and economic	Integration
Fernández Suárez et al. (2020)	socio-cultural	Integration and Segregation
Triviño-Salazar (2018)	Political	Integration
Sweden		
Carlbom (2006)	socio-cultural	Segregation
Switzerland		
Lathion (2008); Sheikhzadegan (2020)	socio-cultural	Segregation
The Netherlands		
Bartels/de Jong (2007); Verkuyten/Yildiz (2009); Sunier (2021)	socio-cultural and political	Integration
Buijs (2009)	Political	Integration
Shadid (1991); Sözeri/Altinyelken (2019); Sözeri et al (2022); Güner/Abbas (2024)	socio-cultural	Integration
United Kingdom		
Allen/Isakjee (2015)	Political	Integration
Bolognani/Statham (2011)	economic and socio-cultural	Integration

Reference	Integration Dimension (Political, Economic, Socio-cultural)	Integration or/and Segregation
Dobbernack et al (2015); Jones et al (2015)	Political	Segregation
Fid-dian-Qasmiyeh/Qasmiyeh (2010); Emmerich (2020)	socio-cultural	Segregation
Geaves (1996)	socio-cultural	Integration
Glynn (2002)	socio-cultural	Integration
Lewicki/O'Toole (2017)	socio-cultural	Integration
Western Europe (18 countries)		
Just et al. (2014)	Political	Integration
United Kingdom; France; Germany; The Netherlands; Switzerland		
Cinalli/Guigni (2013)	Political	Integration
The Netherlands; United Kingdom		
van den Bos (2012)	socio-cultural	Segregation
Spain; France		
Eseverri Mayer (2019)	socio-cultural	Segregation
Germany; Australia		
Peucker/Ceylan (2017)	Political	Integration
Germany; Belgium; The Netherlands; Sweden		
Phalet et.al. (2013)	socio-cultural	Integration
Germany; Switzerland; The Netherlands; Belgium; France; United Kingdom		
Carol/Koopmans (2013)	Political	Integration
Germany; The Netherlands		
Yildiz/Verkuyten (2013)	socio-cultural	Integration
Doomernik (1995)	socio-cultural and political	Integration
Kortmann (2015)	socio-cultural and political	Integration
Yukleyen (2010)	Political	Integration
Germany; The Netherlands; United Kingdom		
Yurdakul/Korteweg (2013)	Political	Integration
France; Germany		
Arkilic (2015)	socio-cultural and political	Integration
France; Germany; United Kingdom		
Warner/Wenner (2006)	socio-cultural	Integration and Segregation

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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