



# Insight into the Design of Islamic Dwellings from Cultural Perspective of Visual Privacy

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## Abstract:

This paper examines the conflicts surrounding gender-specific movement within Islamic households, with a particular focus on the principles of visual privacy as outlined in Islamic teachings. Visual privacy, in this context, is defined as the ability to carry out daily activities within the home without being seen or fearing being observed by outsiders. The design of urban dwellings often influences the level of residential visual privacy, especially in homes owned or rented by Islamic families, which may not always conform to the privacy guidelines prescribed in the Quran and Hadith. The study analyzes 22 Islamic dwellings, assessing them based on three key sub-principles of visual privacy. The findings indicate that many homes face challenges in facilitating free movement, suggesting a need for more culturally appropriate zoning solutions to safeguard the privacy rights of Islamic residents. In conclusion, this study underscores the critical importance of visual privacy in residential design, particularly within Islamic contexts. It stresses the need to reduce external intrusion and protect private spaces, especially for females, through thoughtful zoning and design strategies. Key considerations include shielding spaces such as the kitchen from public view and ensuring gender-segregated areas. While minor adjustments, such as window coverings, are commonly made, more comprehensive design solutions are required. Guided by Islamic cultural principles, these designs should ensure that privacy aligns with social values. Future research could further explore the impact of these considerations on privacy in urban neighborhoods with mixed populations and in predominantly Islamic communities.

**Keywords - Visual Privacy, Gendered Space, Islamic Dwellings, Culturally Sensitive Design**

## I. INTRODUCTION

Islamic dwellings should be designed to incorporate the best of contemporary designs with the traditional way of living that respects the cultural and religious practices of the Islamic community and maximize living space while still providing privacy and security. One of the most important features of Islamic dwellings, additionally to general privacy requirements, is the separation of spaces for men and women in case of mahram and non-mahram - someone who is unknown or not closely related (Al Qur'an, 33:53). In traditional Islamic households, these spaces are for socializing, eating, and sleeping. These verses establish boundaries and that everyone has their own space and promotes a sense of privacy and modesty.

The most fundamental aspect of social behavior as per Islam is modesty. In many Islamic sub-castes, women are seen as the protectors of family honor and are expected to maintain a sophisticated level of privacy and modesty. This is why many Islamic women choose to wear the hijab and other forms of modest clothing to maintain their privacy (Al Qur'an, 24:31). This helps to prevent unwanted attention and promotes a culture of respect and dignity. In Islam, men are also encouraged to lower their gaze and behave modestly in their interactions with others everywhere. This adds towards safeguarding female modesty which is mentioned significantly in Islamic scriptures. This includes aspects of social behavior of both men and women, such as being mindful of their actions and words, avoiding arrogance, showing respect for others, to state a few. (Al Qur'an, 24:30). The concept of "permission" in this context is explicitly needed but the broader interpretation of these guidelines expects the same principle to be extended to the dwelling and their social patterns that form within it. As, the idea of every Islamic dwelling to be traditional, is a basic fundamental requisite, the design of traditional Islamic dwelling should therefore derive its planning guidelines from the principles outlined from the Al-Quran. The following points are extracted from Al-Quran and Hadith and interpreted to summarize what constitutes an Islamic dwelling as per Islamic rulings.

- Privacy represents the need for a secure and secluded space
- Modesty reflects a home designed for religious practices, defined by simplicity and sustainability
- Hospitality highlights the importance of creating spaces that foster connections with neighbors and the broader community.
- Respect for others' acoustic privacy is essential, emphasizing the need to minimize sound intrusion between spaces.

The following quote from Sahih Bukhari - Hadith's book (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) reveals the significance of privacy requirements with guests and visitors.

***Permission for entering the house should be sought three times, and if permission is granted to you then go in, otherwise go back - Sahih Bukhari***

The following quote from the Quran (Holy book of Islam) reveals the significance of modesty and respect towards privacy requirements with each individual.

***'Say to the believers that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty that will make for greater purity for them and God is well acquainted with all that they do.'* -Al Qur'an (24:30)**

The following quote from Ahmad and Al-Termedhi - Hadith books (sayings of the Islamic scholars) reveal the significance of respecting the privacy of the members in the house.

***'If a man pushes aside a curtain and looks inside without permission, he has then reached a point which he is not allowed to reach.'* -Ahmad and Al-Termedhi**

The following quote from Sahih Muslim book highlights the gravity of overhearing or intercepting private conversations and the need for zoning of spaces within the dwelling that support the members in following this principle.

***"Whoever listens to the conversation of people, and they do not want him to hear it, molten lead will be poured into his ears on the Day of Resurrection."* - Sahih Muslim (Book 1, Hadith 351)**

These are explored further to establish relationships between spaces within the dwelling. In contemporary scenarios, where the design of the dwellings is similar to each other, they are not fully favorable to Islamic culture because they are not designed for the traditional living of Islamic people as they seem to not have the above guidelines implemented. Dwelling design in urban context always affects residential visual privacy. The aim of this paper is to investigate the main conflicts that arise in free movement of different genders in Islamic houses based on Islamic principles of visual privacy. For the reference of this paper,

visual privacy in dwellings/ residences is defined as the ability to conduct the everyday activities of the home without being observed and without the fear of being observed by outsiders.

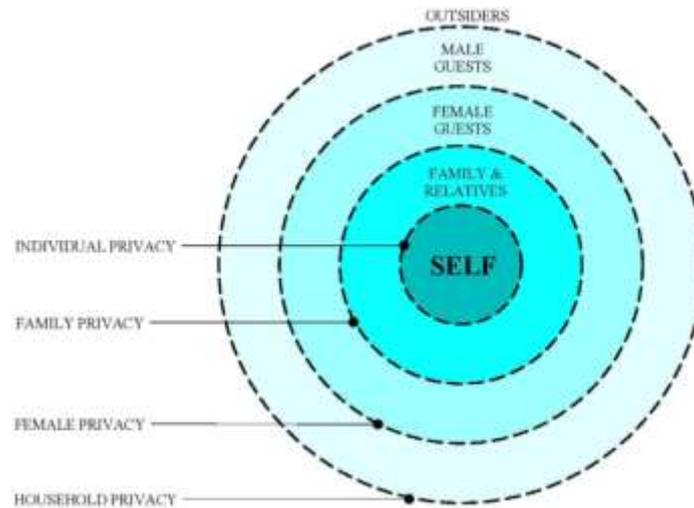


Fig 1: Layers of privacy in traditional Muslim house (Bahammam, 1987)

As per the broader cultural understanding suggested towards Islamic urbanism by (Hakim, 2015), the sill of the windows should be 1.75 m above the ground and is considered high enough to prevent passerby from overlooking. This reinforces the Shariah law (moral code) of Islam. This paper focuses only on zoning analysis of the dwellings with regards to visual privacy and acoustical privacy. Acoustical privacy with regards to scope of material selections and its applications for the dwelling is not covered as a part of the study. The influences of Islamic culture on other elements of design such as window and door designs which too are significant for visual and acoustical privacy are also not a part of the paper's scope.

## II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Islamic dwellings should be designed to reflect and promote the cultural values that foster a strong sense of community. Such designs would ensure that all family members, particularly females, have the flexibility and opportunities to uphold cultural norms related to privacy, modesty, and communal living, while still offering comfortable and functional living spaces. Accordingly, this study aims to explore and address the following research questions:

1. Do the designs of urban Islamic dwellings support the traditional value of visual privacy?
2. Is gender-based zoning more effective in Islamic dwellings within an urban context?
3. What changes in dwelling design would enhance the sense of freedom for females in urban Islamic households?
4. Can the appropriate zoning of these dwellings resolve conflicts related to visual privacy?

## III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this research, zoning of 22 contemporary dwellings is analyzed. The internal zoning is the key component of analysis, therefore focus, on the location of the dwelling in question, is not given. In order to interpret the social behaviors in the selected dwellings, the two types of privacy i.e. visual privacy and the acoustical privacy, which allow the residents to achieve optimum levels of privacy and security for their families, are assessed. This assessment is done using the four main layers suggested by (Mortada, 2011) as a tool. In a certain sample dwelling with two stories, the above floor is not analyzed for conflicts as the visual privacy is high on the top floor and would not impact the zoning strategies much. The various Islamic dwellings are thoroughly examined, summarized and the qualitative analysis is presented in tabular format below.

- Row A - Privacy between neighbors
- Row B - Privacy between family members and guests (males and females)

- Row C - Privacy between family members and outsiders/ strangers
- Row D - Effectiveness of the dwelling with respect to privacy needs of Islamic culture

(Least effective plan indicated with a circle implies multiple privacy conflicts. Partially effective is shown with a half-shaded circle. Full shaded circle implies absence or less significant conflicts/ manageable circulation within the house. )

Table 1: Zoning Analysis of House 1 for Visual Privacy	
	<b>A</b>
	Direct view of bedroom 1 from the main gate
	<b>B</b>
	Access from the kitchen to the attached washroom is disturbed when male guests are accommodated in the living or dining area.
	<b>C</b>
Entry of the house is separated from the main staircase lobby.	
<p>Owner Name: Syed Mubeen House type: Ground floor of a tenement No of family members: 03 members</p>	<b>D</b>
	

Table 2: Zoning Analysis of House 2 for Visual Privacy	
	<b>A</b>
	Direct visual connection from the main entry to the living area.
	<b>B</b>
	Movement of females from the kitchen is restricted when male guests accommodate in the living area.
	<b>C</b>
Individual privacy is disturbed when outsiders pass through the bedroom to access the washroom	
<p>Owner Name: Mohammed Mumtaz Ali House type: Ground floor of an apartment No of family members: 05 members</p>	<b>D</b>
	

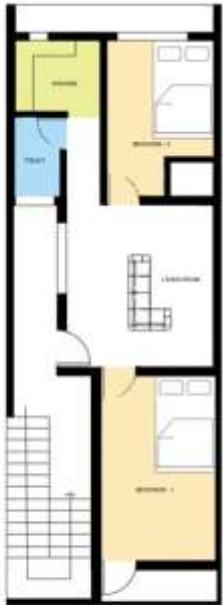
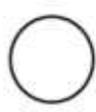
Table 3: Zoning Analysis of House 3 for Visual Privacy	
	<b>A</b>
	Direct view to the inside of the house from the staircase. Direct access and view of the bathroom. Odor privacy is not highly maintained. Staircase is narrow.
	<b>B</b>
	Direct view to bedrooms from living room. Need to screen the kitchen. However, it creates conflict in using the common toilet. Kitchen to bedroom movement of females restricted
Owner Name: Mohammed Azam House type: Ground floor of a tenement No of family members: 02 members	<b>C</b>
	Entrance not staggered. Outsiders having a direct view of the house causes conflict for both male and female members. No attached toilet causes conflict.
	<b>D</b>
	



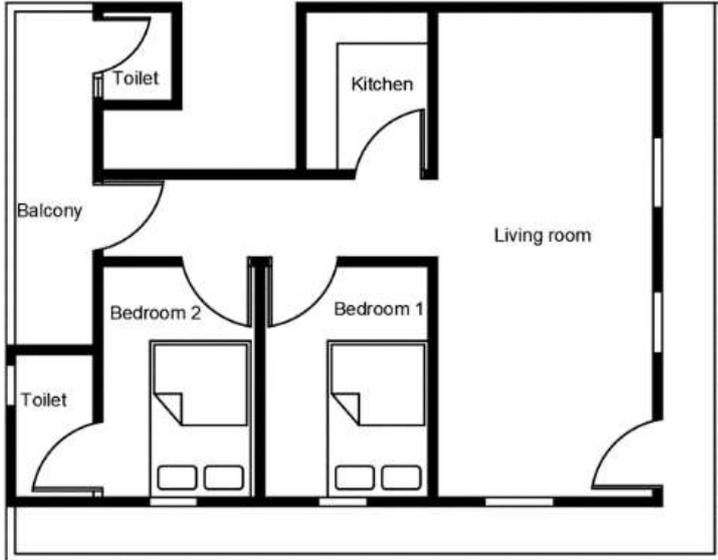
Table 4: Zoning Analysis of House 4 for Visual Privacy	
	<b>A</b>
	Different entry points for other residents of the building.
	<b>B</b>
	Movement of females is restricted all over when male guests are required to use the common washroom.
Owner Name: Syed Yahiya Fayaz House type: First floor of an apartment No of family members: 04 members	<b>C</b>
	The common balcony is also used by the guests hence it disturbs the privacy of the living area and the bedrooms
	<b>D</b>
	

Table 5: Zoning Analysis of House 5 for Visual Privacy	
	<b>A</b>
	Direct visual connection from entry to living room
	<b>B</b>
	Males are confined to living room itself
	<b>C</b>
	Individual privacy is disturbed when male guests use a common washroom as they can have direct visual connection into the bedrooms.
<p>Owner Name: Abdul Rasheed Khan House type: Ground floor of an apartment No of family members: 03 members</p>	<b>D</b>
	

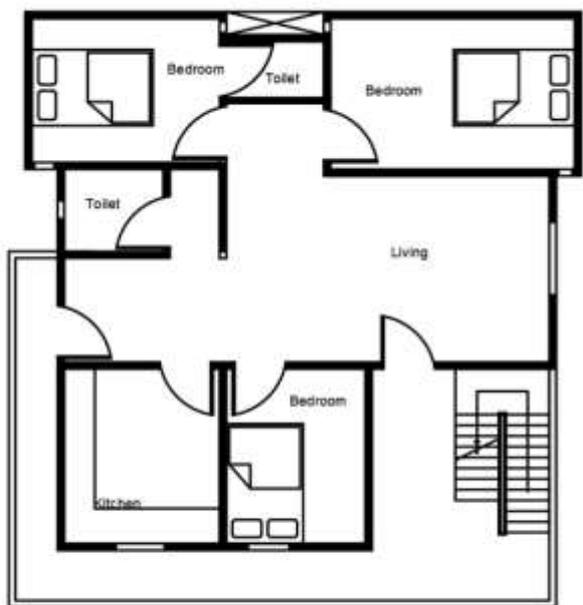
Table 6: Zoning Analysis of House 6 for Visual Privacy	
	<b>A</b>
	Direct visual connection from the main staircase lobby to the living area.
	<b>B</b>
	Privacy of one of the bedrooms is disturbed when guests are accommodated in the living area. Access to the common toilet disturbs the privacy of the bedroom. Movement of females is restricted to the kitchen and balcony when male guests are accommodated in the living area.
	<b>C</b>
	Open balcony from the entrance gives a direct visual connection into the bedroom and kitchen.
<p>Owner Name: Kubra Banu House type: First floor No of family members: 04 members</p>	<b>D</b>
	

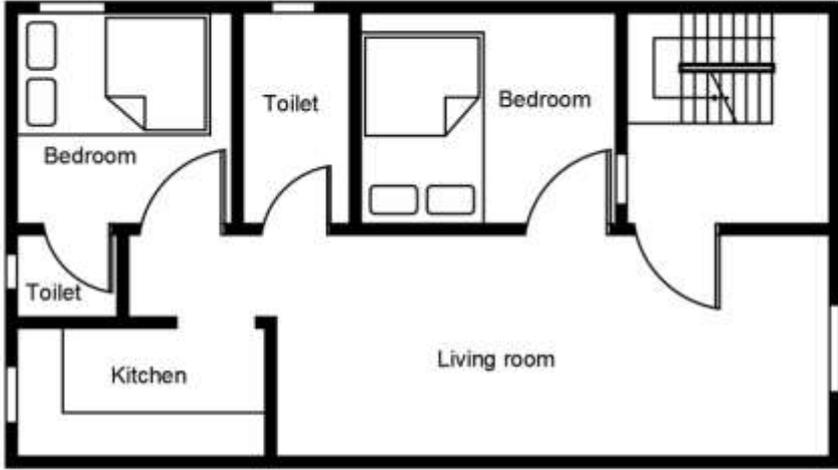
Table 7: Zoning Analysis of House 7 for Visual Privacy	
	<b>A</b>
	Direct visual connection from the main staircase lobby to the living area.
	<b>B</b>
	Direct visual connection from living into the bedroom. Access to the common toilet creates a visual disturbance for people in the kitchen.
<p>Owner Name: Wahid Uddin Bokhari House type: Second floor of an apartment No of family members: 4 members</p>	<b>C</b>
	Direct visual connection from the staircase lobby to the bedroom through the window.
	<b>D</b>
	○

Table 8: Zoning Analysis of House 8 for Visual Privacy	
	<b>A</b>
	Narrow staircase. Allows passersby to see inside the house.
	<b>B</b>
	Direct visual connection from living into bedroom.
<p>Owner Name: Syed Nazeer House type: Second floor of an apartment No of family members: 04 members</p>	<b>C</b>
	Direct visual connection from the main staircase lobby to the living area.
	<b>D</b>
	◐

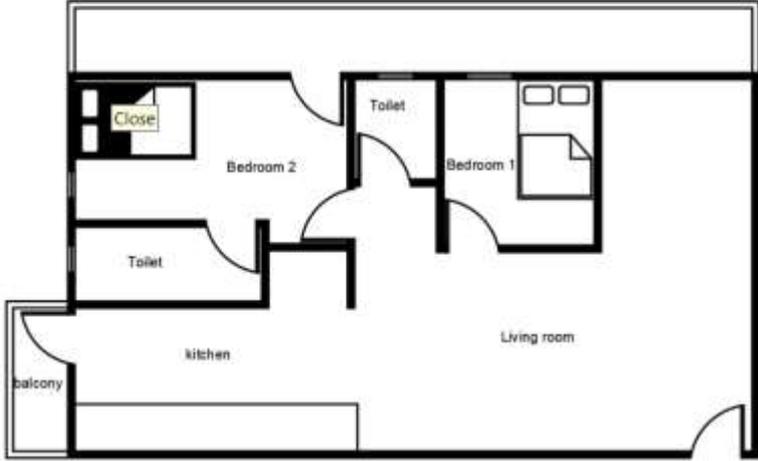
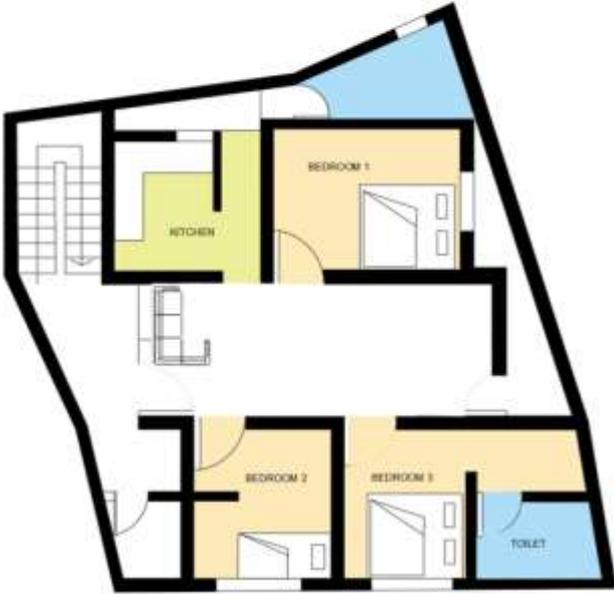
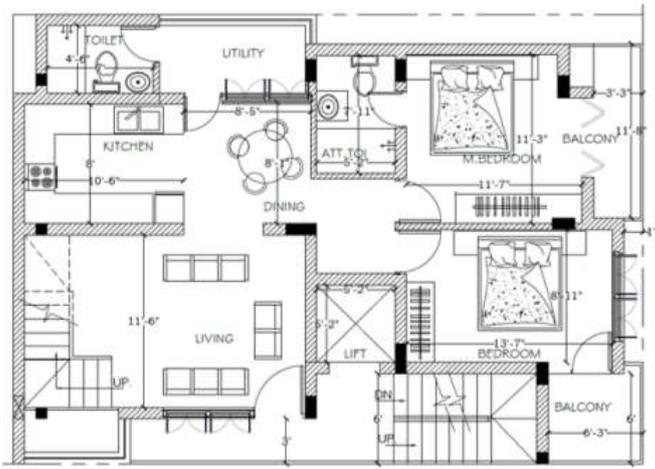
Table 9: Zoning Analysis of House 9 for Visual Privacy	
	<b>A</b>
	Direct visual connection from the main staircase lobby to the living area.
	<b>B</b>
	Access to the common toilet creates a visual intrusion in the bedrooms. Direct visual connection from living into kitchen.
<p>Owner Name: Shaghil Ansari House type: Fourth floor of an apartment No of family members: 02 members</p>	<b>C</b>
	Possible crowd at main entrance due to staircase lobby.
	<b>D</b>
	

Table 10: Zoning Analysis of House 10 for Visual Privacy	
	<b>A</b>
	Narrow staircase creates hindrance for the male and female of one house to opposite genders of the other house. Windows in the staircase lobby shows visual connect
	<b>B</b>
	Movement of females is restricted from the kitchen to the bedroom when male guests are accommodated in the living area. Access to the common toilet creates a visual disturbance for people in the kitchen.
	<b>C</b>
	Access of utility by the female is disturbed by a common staircase lobby. Direct visual connection from the entry into the bedroom.
<p>Owner Name: Mohammed Aatif House type: Ground floor of a tenement No of family members: 05 members</p>	<b>D</b>
	

**Table 11: Zoning Analysis of House 11 for Visual Privacy**



Owner Name: Nabila Suhani  
 House type: First floor of an apartment  
 No of family members: 04 members

**A**

Staggered entrances.

**B**

The access to common toilets for the visitors invades kitchen privacy therefore the female privacy is hindered.

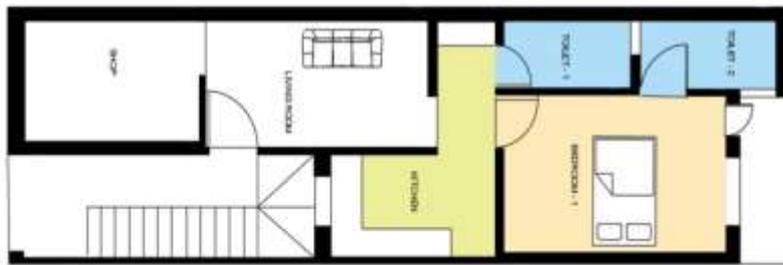
**C**

Dining is centrally zoned and therefore opens to the bedroom, kitchen and living.

**D**



**Table 12: Zoning Analysis of House 12 for Visual Privacy**



Owner Name: Mohammed Azam  
 House type: Ground floor of a tenement  
 No of family members: 02 members

**A**

Visual connection to kitchen.  
 No staggered entry

**B**

Access to the common toilet gives a visual connection to the bedroom.

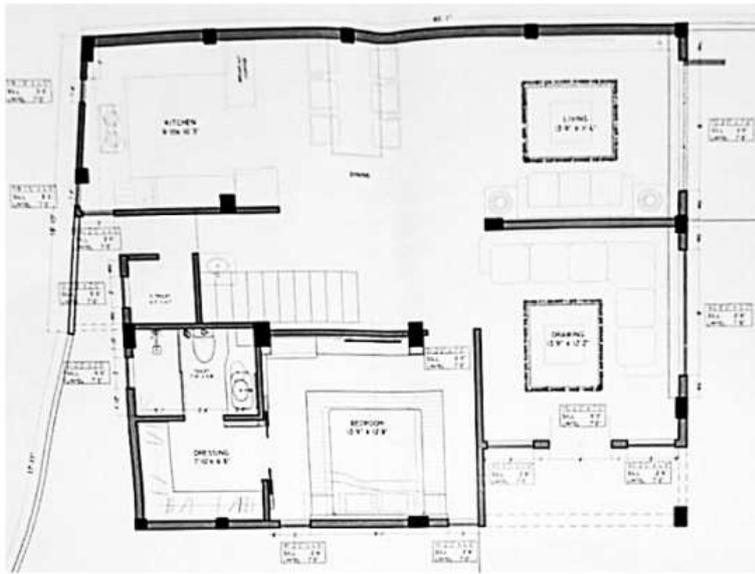
**C**

Females have bedrooms and kitchen, unrestricted movement if a screen is provided

**D**



**Table 13: Zoning Analysis of House 13 for Visual Privacy**



Owner Name: Aarish Ghazi  
 House type: Ground floor  
 No of family members: 04 members

**A**

Direct view inside the house but into the provided drawing space for the guests

**B**

Kitchen, dining and living are all visually connected.  
 It might create restrictions in female movement in presence of male guests.  
 Access to toilet creates conflicts with female movement.

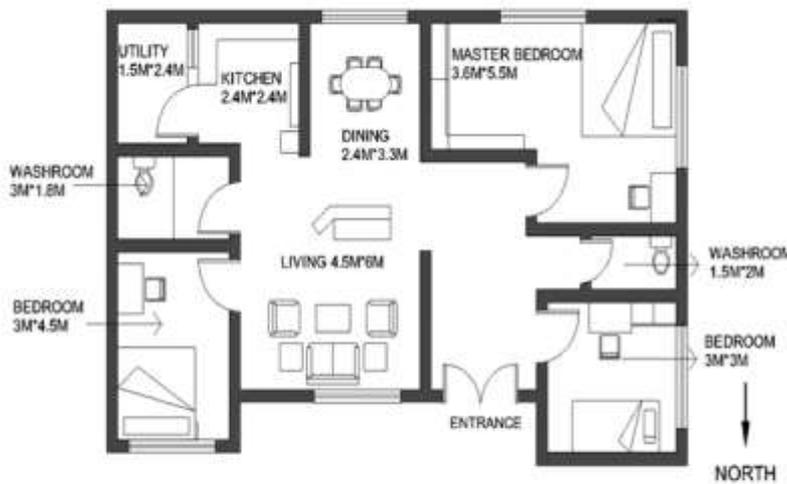
**C**

No conflicts as it is a single dwelling.

**D**



**Table 14: Zoning Analysis of House 14 for Visual Privacy**



Owner Name: Israth  
 House type: Ground floor  
 No of family members: 05 members

**A**

Staggered entrances for all the spaces within the house

**B**

Access to the common toilet gives direct visual connection to the kitchen and bedroom.

**C**

Females move from bedrooms to kitchens with restriction.

**D**



**Table 15: Zoning Analysis of House 15 for Visual Privacy**

	<b>A</b>
	Direct visual connection into living room
	<b>B</b>
	Access to common toilet gives direct visual connection to kitchen and bedroom
<p>Owner Name: Sayed Aabaan House type: Ground floor No of family members: 05 members</p>	<b>C</b>
	Individual privacy is disturbed
	<b>D</b>
	○

**Table 16: Zoning Analysis of House 16 for Visual Privacy**

	<b>A</b>
	Direct visual connection from entry to dining.
	<b>B</b>
	Privacy provided for male and female movement
<p>Owner Name: Abdul Azeez House type: Ground floor No of family members: 06 members</p>	<b>C</b>
	Can get a visual connection directly through informal living to master bedroom. When one wants to use toilet, he should pass through lobby dining where he can get direct visual connection to living room informal living.
	<b>D</b>
	◐

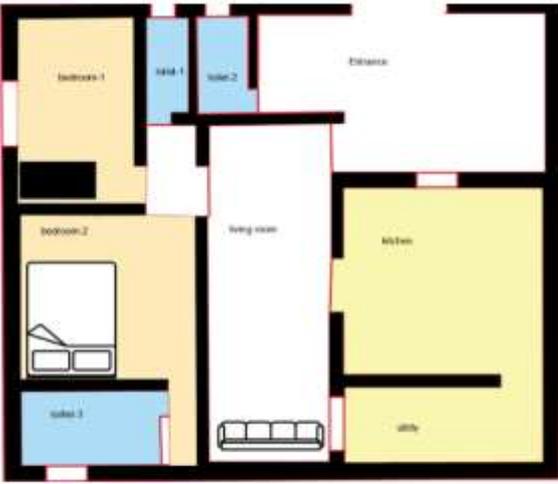
Table 17: Zoning Analysis of House 17 for Visual Privacy	
	<b>A</b>
	Staggered entry.
	<b>B</b>
	Females get restricted to the kitchen.
<p style="text-align: center;">Owner Name: Aftab House type: Ground floor of a single dwelling No of family members: 03 members</p>	<b>C</b>
	Females have to cross the male circulation path in order to use the toilet.
	<b>D</b>
	



Table 18: Zoning Analysis of House 18 for Visual Privacy	
	<b>A</b>
	Direct visual connection to dining through living room and entrance.
	<b>B</b>
	Proper privacy is maintained for male and female movement Separate dining and an informal living are provided There is a back door provided which can be accessed by females when there are males in dining and living
<p style="text-align: center;">Owner Name: Sameer Ibrahim House type: Ground floor No of family members: 06 members</p>	<b>C</b>
	To use the washroom, one has to cross the living room and dining which gives them a direct visual connection to the private dining and the kitchen.
	<b>D</b>
	

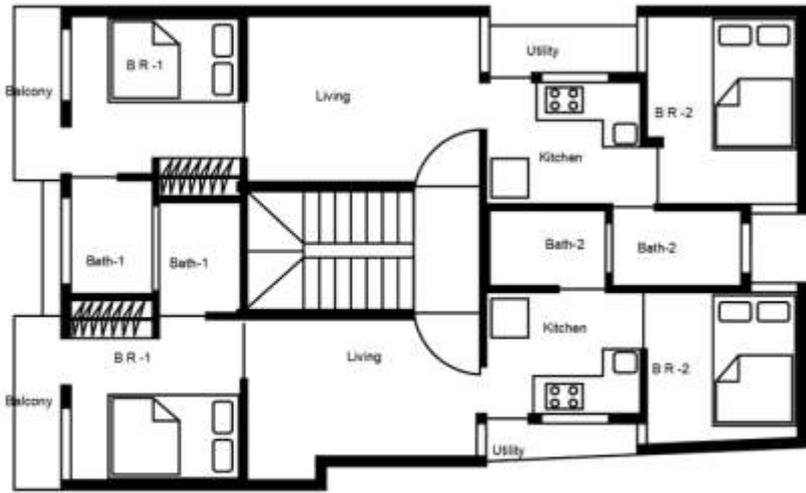
Table 19: Zoning Analysis of House 19 for Visual Privacy	
	<b>A</b>
	Staggered entry.
	<b>B</b>
	Females can use the kitchen and bedroom whereas the males in living can use the other room and attached toilet. There are no male and female movement conflicts
	<b>C</b>
	If some male guest wants to use the common toilet he can get a direct visual connection to the bedroom. Individual privacy is disturbed but occasionally.
<p>Owner Name: Syed Mubeen Ahmed House type: First floor of tenement No of family members: 04 members</p>	<b>D</b>
	●

Table 20: Zoning Analysis of House 20 for Visual Privacy	
	<b>A</b>
	Staggered entry.
	<b>B</b>
	The direct view from dining and living to the bedroom 1 and 2 is cut with appropriate planning looking into the visual privacy of spaces.
	<b>C</b>
	The kitchen has a separate back door, which helps in entry and exit for women when the men are in the living or dining space.
<p>Owner Name: Ayyoob House type: Ground floor of a duplex No of family members: 06 members</p>	<b>D</b>
	●

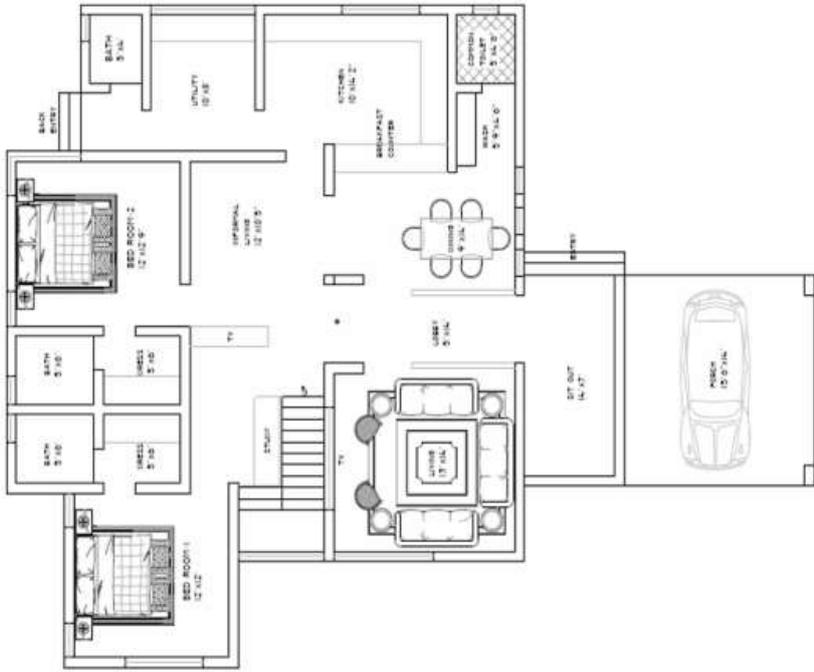
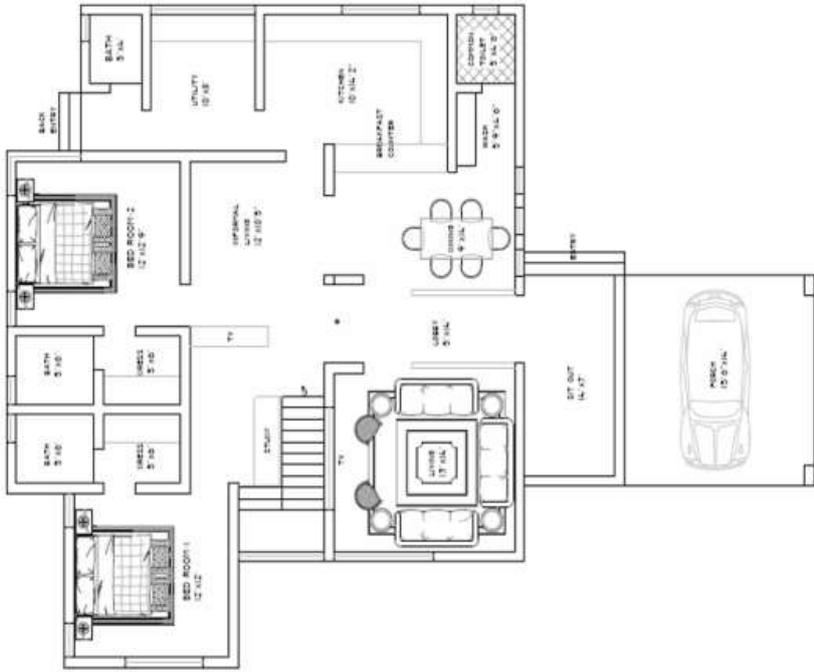
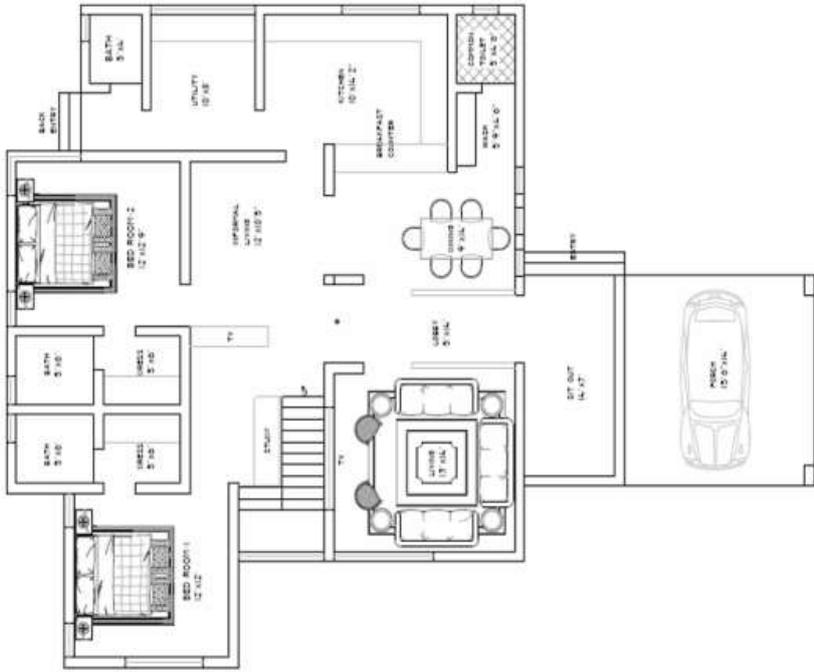
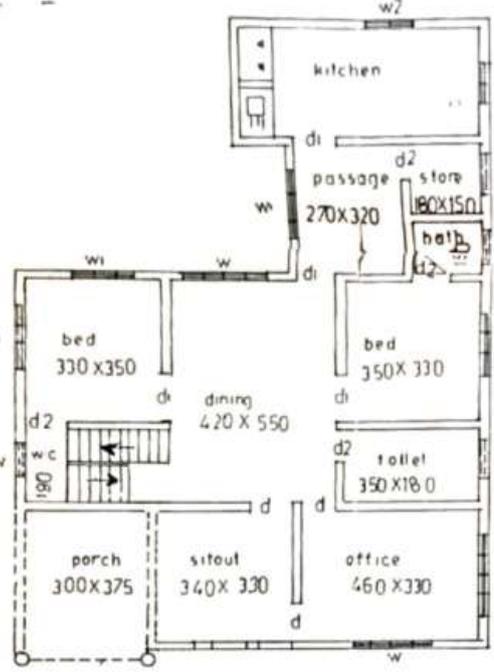
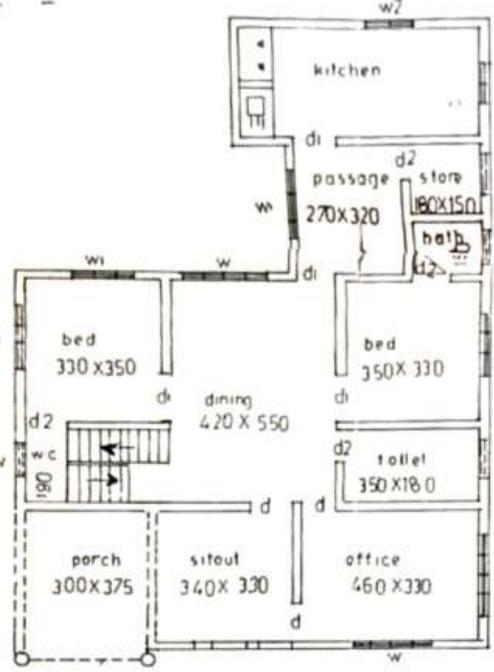
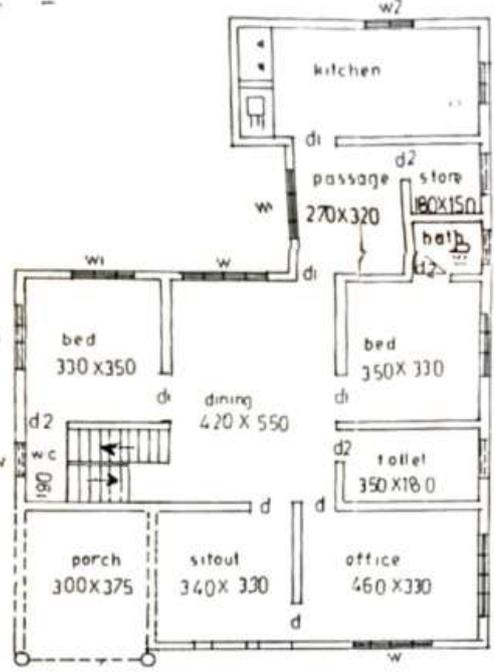
Table 21: Zoning Analysis of House 21 for Visual Privacy	
	<b>A</b>
	The central axis gives a direct view to the bedroom.
	<b>B</b>
	Different spaces for male and female interactions are present.
	<b>C</b>
	The kitchen has a separate toilet and back door, which helps in entry and exit for women when the men are in the living or dining space.
	<b>D</b>
<p style="text-align: center;">Owner Name: Abdul Azeez House type: Ground floor of a duplex house No of family members: 06 members</p>	

Table 22: Zoning Analysis of House 22 for Visual Privacy	
	<b>A</b>
	Buffer veranda is present around the entrance.
	<b>B</b>
	Both the bedroom doors open up to the dining space.
	<b>C</b>
	Access to the toilet for females is disturbed in presence of male guests.
	<b>D</b>
<p style="text-align: center;">Owner Name: Aisha Shaddha House type: Ground floor of a villa No of family members: 04 members</p>	

The quantitative analysis is done based on answers acquired from the questionnaire presented to the residents. For this purpose, the male head and the female member of the household were asked to answer the same set of questions. Below are the responses that were recorded.

Questions	Analysis
<p>Q1. Are you comfortable in your own house with the level of privacy you have with regards to your culture?</p> <p>If yes - select the options below in which you think the privacy is maintained.</p> <p>If no - where all and in what manner you suggest it can be achieved?</p>	<p>The responses suggests that privacy needs, particularly for females, may not be fully met in the current design or cultural practices, highlighting a need for more tailored approaches to ensure both genders feel comfortable in their homes.</p> <p>Male privacy is primarily achieved through strategic spatial arrangements, such as separating guest and private areas, and ensuring minimal disturbance between key rooms. Screens or partitions also contribute to privacy but are less central. In contrast, female privacy is more focused on allowing uninterrupted movement within the home and the use of screens or partitions</p> <p>18.2% of females identified the openness of areas as a primary concern, while others pointed out issues with movement between key spaces like the kitchen and living areas. This suggests that for females, the main privacy concerns revolve around open layouts and visibility within the home.</p>
<p>Q2. What is privacy to you? Select relevant options that make the most sense to you</p>	<p>Privacy for females is primarily defined by the ability to adapt their environment to cultural norms and maintaining control over their personal space whereas for males, it suggests that personal autonomy is the key aspect of privacy for most males</p>
<p>Q3. How important is privacy to you in your own house for your activities.</p>	<p>Both males and females consider privacy to be a critical aspect of their household.</p>
<p>Q4. Which all of the spaces stated below are the women of the house allowed/able to move in front of guest freely.</p>	<p>The kitchen and bedroom are identified as the most private and accessible areas for women. In contrast, the living room is viewed as the most restricted space, where women may feel less comfortable or free to move in front of guests. The dining room falls somewhere in between, suggesting it serves as a transitional space where privacy is somewhat compromised. This shows the structured use of space within Islamic households, with clear distinctions made between areas based on gender and the presence of outsiders.</p>
<p>Q5. How do you think the women of your house try to achieve privacy when there are non mahram present in their house?</p>	<p>Both males and females reveals that women in Islamic households prefer using physical barriers, such as curtains or partitions, to ensure privacy when non-mahram (unrelated men) are present, which allows for effective privacy without significant alterations to the home's structure. Whereas the parda system and redesigning spaces highlight a more flexible and immediate solution.</p>
<p>Q6. Do you think that the females of this house feel that they would want to move freely within the house when they are not related/ associated with the guest/visitor present?</p>	<p>A significant majority of both males and females express a desire for greater freedom of movement for women, even in the presence of non-mahram guests, reflecting a growing independence and autonomy among women.</p>
<p>Q7. Do you think your privacy is achieved as per your cultural needs?</p> <p>If no, then what changes (major/minor) would you suggest?</p>	<p>Both males and females report occasional inadequacies in privacy, but women experience more significant dissatisfaction, with a larger proportion feeling their privacy needs are not met at all.</p> <p>The majority of males favor temporary physical barriers as a practical solution for immediate privacy concerns while females show a strong preference for layout changes suggesting for more permanent solutions</p>

<p>Q8. How has the notion/function of using the living room by the members of your family changed over time? Select approximately relative answers.</p>	<p>Majority of the males indicate a shift towards a more public use of the living room, with increased accessibility and openness, followed by a smaller segment that sees the space evolving to offer greater privacy.</p> <p>Whereas, the females indicate an increase in privacy (semi-public to semi-private), suggesting that some households are redesigning or reinterpreting the living room to offer more personal space, followed by a significant number of females who observe that the living room remains or has become more public (fully public), indicating that it continues to serve as a central hub for social activities.</p>
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Table 23: Gender-Based Response Analysis (Source: Author's Original)

#### IV. FINDINGS

The findings point towards the current lifestyle of contemporary Islamic dwellings. By examining the plans of the Islamic dwellings, the below understanding is achieved.

**Privacy between neighbors (A):** In most of the sample dwellings, there is a direct visual connection to the living room of the houses and most parts of the house through the front façade of the house. This provides an inconvenience to the people as they are not always in their modest clothing within the house and disturbs the visual privacy of the opposite gender within the house which goes against the principles of Islam where women and men exhibit utmost privacy between them. In situations where this conflict is not observed, are mostly single dwellings with certain buffers.

**Privacy between family members and guests (males and females) (B):** In most of the sample dwellings, the access to the kitchen from bedroom or the living room is restricted for females and the access to the common toilet for male guests is restricted when the common toilet is surrounded by female dominant timeframe spaces. This provides discomfort and inconvenience for the transitioning of females from male-occupied spaces and male guests within the house as it disturbs the privacy of one another. In most of the scenarios, this disturbance can be overcome by full modest attire or screenings which include a temporary curtain, a solid panel, a buffer wall, or slight changes in the zoning of the dwelling.

**Privacy between family members and outsiders/ strangers (C):** In most of the sample dwellings, individual privacy is disturbed when strangers use common toilets as they can have direct visual connection into the bedrooms. The common balcony does not restrict strangers' movement which also causes disturbance in the visual privacy. This provides a discomfort for the people within the dwelling as their visual privacy is disturbed which goes against the principles of Islam where women and men exhibit utmost privacy between them. In most of the scenarios, a staggered entrance can overcome this inconvenience. A common bathroom near the living room is most favorable for the circulation of females as they would use the inner bathroom given that the living room is occupied by male.

**Qualitative Analysis - Inference from the Questionnaire:** Overall understanding of female expression by male and female members is not very distinct. Each gender feels that the female movement, circulation, interaction can be restricted and yet expressive to the other females. Integration of the same in zoning of the dwelling plan in initial stages seems evident. In scenarios wherein the planning cannot be changed, possible screening interventions will help to follow the requisites of the culture. However, the purdah system is an additional control to achieve that sense of privacy and free expression and also is custom based on more careful study of that respective dwelling with regards to its possibility.

## V. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that visual intrusion from external sources into the home should be minimized. The entrance should serve to protect the privacy of the homeowner and family members. While windows are essential for natural light and ventilation, it is important to reduce visual connections with the outside world and maintain the privacy and modesty of the inhabitants.

Special attention must be given to the design of private and public spaces, with a high priority placed on maintaining a clear distinction between these areas. In traditional Islamic dwellings, it is common to segregate rooms based on gender. One of the key areas requiring privacy protection is the kitchen, which should be shielded from view from the living room, as females typically spend a significant amount of time there, often in the presence of guests. The layout and zoning of a dwelling can influence the female experience of visual privacy. This consideration extends beyond the individual household to the neighborhood level, reflecting the importance of privacy in traditional living arrangements. Failure to protect visual privacy may lead to females avoiding common or outdoor spaces, as their sense of privacy is compromised.

It is also noted that families generally do not make substantial physical alterations to their homes to enhance privacy. Instead, minor modifications such as covering windows, using screens, and staggering entryways are common practices to create buffers where necessary. The following zoning options (Fig 1 and Fig 2) may serve as a starting point for designers seeking to address female privacy in urban residential settings.

Option 1: Detached – Shorter side , Option 2: Detached – Longer side

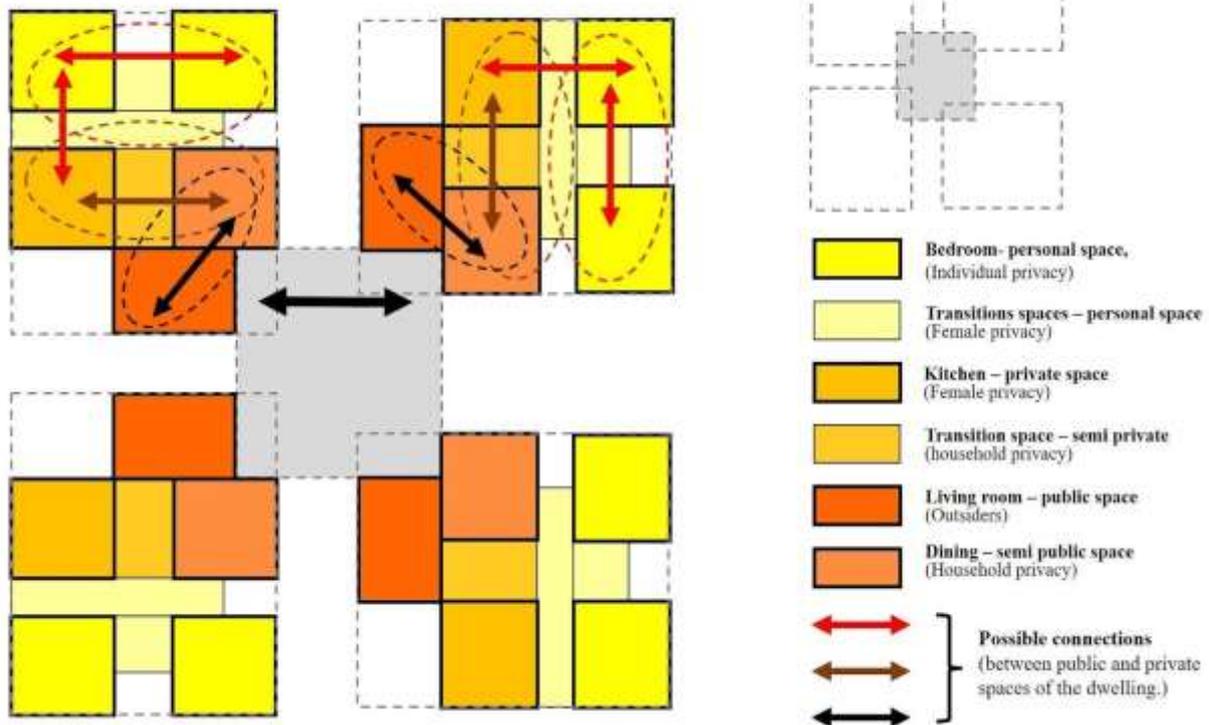


Fig 2: Zoning options 1 and 2 for dwellings based on Islamic Teachings (Source: Author's Original)

Option 3: Attached – Shorter side , Option 4: Attached – Longer side

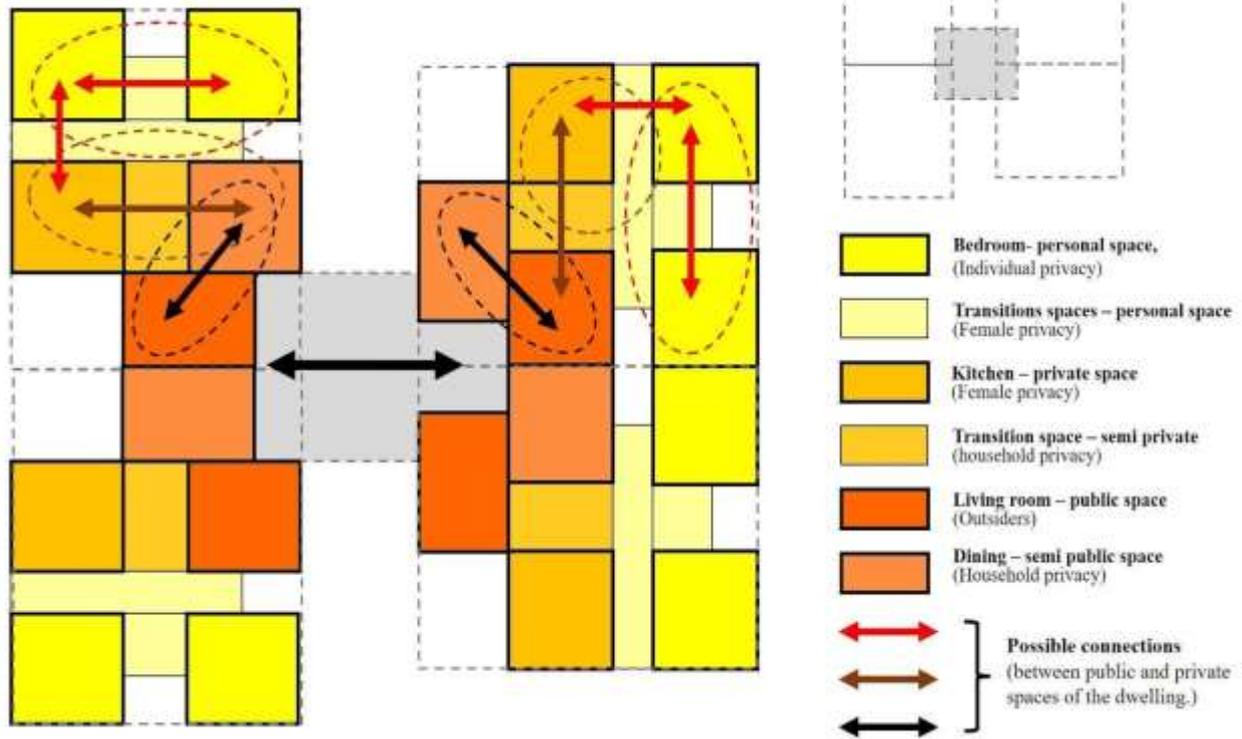


Fig 3: Zoning options 3 and 4 for dwellings based on Islamic Teachings (Source: Author's Original)

Islamic cultural teachings encourage designers to follow specific principles that support both the physical environment and the social values of Islam within the home. As females typically spend the majority of their day indoors, designs must be responsive to this context, which should be viewed as an obligation rather than a mere consideration. Designers should interpret these principles as clarifications from Islam that safeguard the rights to privacy and duty. In the design process, the potential ramifications of zoning decisions should be carefully considered. However, it is important to note that these considerations should not be misconstrued as an imposition of control over personal freedoms within this micro-context.

This study can be extended to examine a broader range of dwellings, including those in mixed-population urban cores and neighborhoods with a predominantly Islamic demographic, to better understand the implications of these design principles at the neighborhood or community level.

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