
**Reinforcement of Family Support to Overcome Religious
Discrimination in Ibtihaj Muhammad and S.K. Ali's *The
Proudest Blue***

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ABSTRACT

The present study analyses family and support systems in addressing religious discrimination, focusing specifically on Islamophobic incidents portrayed in Ibtihaj Muhammad's children's picture book *The Proudest Blue*. Using Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality theory and Talcott Parsons' functionalism, this research examines how religious discrimination manifests in educational settings and how various environmental support mechanisms respond to these challenges. Through the application of a qualitative research method, focusing on textual and visual elements, the study identifies specific instances of Islamophobic behavior, cultural misunderstanding, and social othering. In addition, it explores strategies employed by families in the face of challenges, peer relationships within these communities, and the responses of the community at large. The findings reveal that Asiya experiences religious discrimination rather than generalized racism, with incidents specifically targeting Islamic practices through the degradation of religious symbols. The analysis demonstrates that successful social integration occurs through adaptive processes that allow Muslim students to participate fully in educational communities while maintaining their faith practices. This study contributes to the understanding of the potential of children's literature to shed light on the challenges posed by religious discrimination, as well as the intricate nature of supportive environments within educational settings.

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INTRODUCTION

Literature for children has always played an important role in children's lives. In the early years of their life, more or less, the children need to know what is going on in our earth, even in our country (Junaid, 2017, p. 1). Literature has a profound impact on mental and psychological growth and is most effective when it avoids personal or biased language, instead presenting content in a clear, precise, and formally structured manner. When written appropriately, children's books can foster a sense of belonging and an appreciation for diversity by exposing readers to varied experiences and perspectives. For example, books that depict characters confronting prejudice can help children develop empathy and encourage them to stand against discrimination (Hoffman, 2000). The ability to foster critical thinking and self-reflection is attributed to literature. As a result, kids will have their minds awakened with regard to racism and other issues. Hence, it is important that children's books are written in such a manner that they provoke the readers' minds into critically examining them (Short, et al. 2013). Collier (2000, p. 2)

said that the use of African American children's literature throughout the school curriculum provides a powerful means to greatly enhance the educational experience of African American children by immersing them in the stories of their people and developing a cultural mirror image which would reflect their place in the world as valid, valuable, and voiced. In addition, Tatum (1997) argues that books dealing with racism help unlearn prejudices and teach kids how to assess people based on individual traits rather than relying on stereotypes. Therefore, child-friendly reading materials can create an ideal platform for parents, educators and young ones to talk about race-related matters as well as racism itself. Thus, children's literature offers age-appropriate methods for introducing complex topics and subjects, as well as creating significant dialogues (Tropp & Barlow, 2018). Furthermore, including stories that highlight racial discrimination in children's literature helps society stay alert about pertinent social problems. It provides a basis for teaching children the importance of impartiality, fairness and equal treatment.

Reported by CNN, a 42-year-old woman in Texas has been arrested for trying to drown a 3-year-old. CAIR says the victims were Muslim and Palestinian. CAIR wants the shooting to be called a hate crime. On May 19, Euless Police responded to a disturbance between two women at the pool, where witnesses said Wolf, who was intoxicated, tried to drown the child and argued with the child's mother. Wolf was confronted by police while trying to leave for being drunk in public. When they finished eating, Wolf sat the child's mother down and inquired about her country, and how many kids did she have? When the mother told Wolf, "You're being racist," he decided it was time for him to walk away. She said he told her she was not really American. Statement from CAIR National Executive Director Nihad Awad: "The safety and security of Sudanese-Americans, Muslim families in general" (Elassar, et al., 2024).

ABC News also reported a heartwarming moment when Hanan Shaheen, Wadea Al-Fayoume's mum, made a public statement calling for love and understanding for the first time since her sweet six-year-old daughter was tragically killed in an alleged hate crime. The awful incident, which took place on October 14

in their suburban Chicago home, seems to have been triggered by the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas. Shaheen and her son were victims of a terrible crime. Both of them were Palestinian and Muslim. Their landlord, 71-year-old Joseph Czuba, was responsible for this awful act of violence. Wadea was fatally stabbed 26 times, while Shaheen managed to survive despite being stabbed a dozen times. In a highly charged and truly moving manner, President Joe Biden addressed the nation recently, giving a status report on the tragedy of the killing of 6-year-old Wadea Al-Fayoume and the feeling of fear that Jewish communities are feeling due to the conflict going on between Israel and Hamas. He urged everyone to stand against both antisemitism as well as Islamophobia. After his speech, Biden had a heartfelt conversation with the boy's father and uncle, as reported by the White House. The Department of Justice is now investigating Wadea's death as a case of federal hate crimes (Deliso, 2023)

Reported by Public Integrity, Hai Au Huynh, a mother from Texas, talked to her local school board after trying for months to stop her two young kids from being bullied because they are Asian

at their elementary school. Even though many parents complained, the school did nothing about the racist incidents. I think the Huynh family is a good example. The Huynh family is quite illustrative of this point. Some people were being unkind to them. They used a lot of epithets and terms such as 'ching-chong-wing-wong', which was painful. His shirt, which was once worn by her older son, was soiled with a scribble of a swastika. Huynh was annoyed that the school did not intervene. She asked them to release a "stay away" order, but they declined. What the situation with two of her children shows is that it is only logical that their feeling of security and companionship was shattered (Sandhu-Longoria, 2024)

A study in the Journal of Osteopathic Medicine reveals a rise in reported racial incidents faced by Indigenous and Black children in the U.S. from 2016 to 2020. Conducted by Dr. Micah Hartwell and Amy Hendrix-Dicken, the study used data from the National Survey of Children's Health. CNN has stated that it found that reports of discrimination among minority children increased from 6.7% in 2016 to 9.3% in 2020, compared to a rise from 1% to 1.7% for White children.

Indigenous children faced discrimination at rates of 10.8% in 2016 and 15.7% in 2020, while Black children's rates rose from 9.69% in 2018 to 15.04% in 2020. Hendrix-Dicken emphasized the long-term health impacts of early discrimination, and both Hendrix-Dicken and Hartwell stressed the importance of culturally competent care and education to address these issues (Moges-Gerbi, 2024).

It is of great concern that children are experiencing racial and religious discrimination on numerous occasions. It is difficult to comprehend that any individual, particularly a child, should have to endure such treatment. With the availability of picture books that not only capture the interest of children but also adults, there is an opportunity to further emphasise the crucial role that the environment plays in addressing racism against children. By using the picture book that tells us about the experience of the author with facing racism, like in Ibtihaj Muhammad's book, *The Proudest Blue*, it can be seen how significant the role of the environment is in dealing with the racism.

The Proudest Blue: A Story of Hijab and Family is a children's picture book written

by Ibtihaj Muhammad, an Olympic medallist and social justice activist, in collaboration with S.K. Ali, with illustrations by Hatem Aly. The book was published on 10 September 2019 by Little, Brown Books for Young Readers and has subsequently become a New York Times bestseller. Muhammad draws upon her personal experiences of wearing a hijab to inform the narrative, which is addressed to children aged 4 to 8. This New York Times bestseller was recommended by the Saitama Prefectural Health and Youth Development Council, which discussed the books that young people should read for Reading Week and Sai no Kuni Education Week, among the books recommended for residents in the prefecture and publishers. There are 30 books selected and one of them is 'Neesan no Aoi Hijab'. The story is hosted by Faizah who tells the story of the first day her sister, Asiya, wears the hijab to school and makes it look like she is a princess and together they go through the people who say bad things and laugh at her (Food Diversity, 2024).

This book presents a unique opportunity to examine issues from a different perspective. The book presents an alternative perspective to the typical approach of combating bullying by emphasising

socialisation and understanding. Instead, it explores a range of alternative strategies. The book illustrates the significance of familial and social support in fostering resilience and assertiveness in children. It thus appears appropriate to analyse the role of neighbourhood support in overcoming racism.

Accordingly, the objective of this study is to examine the extent to which the environment plays a role in addressing racism in children's picture books. The imperative for literature addressing racism to be composed in a way that is commensurate with the age of the target audience and that acknowledges diverse cultural backgrounds is pivotal. The analysis will consider not only the narrative and illustrations but also how metaphor, symbolism, and other literary elements are used to provoke critical thought and dialogue among young readers. It is vital for works addressing racism to be crafted in alignment with the developmental and cultural needs of children and to serve as a springboard for broader educational initiatives fostering fairness and social justice. When guided by these principles, literature has the power to catalyse positive

social change, engendering empathy, inclusivity, and resilience in its readers.

METHODOLOGY

This study applies the qualitative research method of content analysis, guided by the principles outlined by Creswell and Creswell (2018) and Creswell and Poth (2018). Qualitative research methodologies are selected for two principal reasons. Firstly, they are chosen for their ability to provide an in-depth understanding of non-numerical data. Secondly, they are considered to be particularly well-suited to the exploration of complex phenomena, such as individual thoughts, behaviors, and interactions. This study focuses on the analysis of the American children's picture book *The Proudest Blue* by Ibtihaj Muhammad, which serves as the primary data source. Secondary sources, including academic journals and books, are also utilized to establish a theoretical framework and ensure the reliability of the findings.

The primary data for this research is the American children's picture book *The Proudest Blue* by Ibtihaj Muhammad. Analysis focuses on both textual and visual elements, including character

actions, dialogue, narrative structure, facial expressions, and artistic style, as recommended by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). The data collection and analysis procedure follows these systematic steps. Firstly, thorough and repeated reading/observation of the book. Secondly, the extraction of key textual and visual data related to the research questions. Last but not least, categorization of this data into thematic codes relevant to racism, social support, and identity.

To ensure academic rigor and reliable interpretation, secondary sources, such as peer-reviewed journal articles and scholarly books, are integrated to frame the analysis and substantiate findings. However, the central analytic process is explicitly designed to answer the study's main research questions, focusing on how supportive environments are portrayed in addressing racism within the book.

In addressing the subject of data analysis, this study employs Kimberlé Crenshaw's Intersectionality Theory to explore themes of racism, incorporating racialized Islamophobia, stereotyping, and cultural and gender racism. The framework assists in

highlighting the interconnected nature of identity and discrimination in the narrative. Additionally, Talcott Parsons' Functionalism Theory is applied to examine the supportive environment depicted in the book, emphasizing how social harmony and role fulfilment contribute to the minimization of racial issues. The analysis involves the organization of data, the application of theoretical lenses, and the interpretation of findings to draw meaningful conclusions.

This study concludes with a discussion of the findings from both the picture book and the theoretical frameworks, offering a comprehensive understanding of anti-racism strategies and supportive environments. This study combines qualitative content analysis with intersectionality and functionalism in order to provide a nuanced perspective on how children's literature can address complex social issues such as racism and cultural identity. This approach not only provides a response to the research objectives but also contributes to broader discourses on inclusivity and representation in media.

As demonstrated in the studies conducted by Yousef and

Alford (2023) and Permatasari and Murtiningrum (2023), the book plays a pivotal role in challenging stereotypes associated with the hijab. It is portrayed as a symbol of strength, faith, and resilience, rather than oppression or radicalism. Whilst the extant literature focuses on cultural representation and symbolic meaning, this study employs Intersectionality Theory and Functionalism Theory to analyze the book, thereby offering a more profound examination of systemic racism and social structures.

Other studies, including Shonibare's (2021) work on intersectionality in education and Sarah's (2022) analysis of digital learning through functional structural theory, provide additional context for the theoretical frameworks applied in this study. Shonibare's findings reveal how students perceive discrimination in straightforward ways, underscoring the need for intersectional approaches in education. Concurrently, Sarah's research highlights the capacity of functionalism to facilitate comprehension of systemic adaptations, such as the transition to online learning during the pandemic. These insights serve to

reinforce the applicability of intersectionality and functionalism in the analysis of social and educational dynamics. This study extends these concepts to *The Proudest Blue*.

The main differences between this study and the referenced ones are the specific focus on *The Proudest Blue* as a case study for the application of both Intersectionality and Functionalism theories. Whilst earlier works have explored related theoretical frameworks in different contexts, such as education policy or digital learning, this study is specifically concerned with the manner in which these theories offer insights into themes of racism, identity, and social support within the book. By undertaking this action, it contributes to broader discourses on representation, anti-racism strategies, and the role of literature in fostering inclusive societal structures.

DISCUSSION

Form of Religious Discrimination

By employing the lens of intersectionality, it can be investigated how the characters' multifaceted identities collectively shape their experiences, extending beyond the boundaries of

discrete categorizations such as race or religion (Adhitya et al., 2025). The forms of racism portrayed through texts and pictures in *The Proudest Blue*, according to Intersectionality theory, are racialized islamophobia, stereotyping and othering.

Racialized Islamophobia

Asiya, the older sister, is subjected to a form of racism that is compounded by her religious identity. Upon donning her hijab at school for the first time, Asiya becomes the target of racial and religious prejudice.

"Someone laughs from nearby. A boy, pointing at Asiya"



Figure 1. Students at school mocking Asiya (Muhammad & Ali, 2019, 18-19)

"I'm going to pull that tablecloth off your head"



Figure 2. Students at school makes fun of Asiya (Muhammad & Ali, 24-25)

Asiya's choice to wear hijab creates a stark contrast with her non-hijab wearing friends, demonstrating how religious

visibility fundamentally alters social experiences and peer interactions. Asiya experiences targeted religious discrimination that specifically attacks her Islamic practice and identity. The evidence demonstrates Islamophobic behavior rather than generalized racism, as the attacks focus directly on her religious symbols and practices. The most explicit example of religious discrimination occurs when a peer threatens, "I'm going to pull that tablecloth off your head" (Muhammad & Ali, 2019). This statement represents several forms of Islamophobic behavior that align with documented patterns of religious discrimination in educational settings (Torres-Zaragoza, 2024).

The comparison of the hijab to a "tablecloth" deliberately reduces a sacred religious garment to an ordinary household object. This linguistic choice demonstrates ignorance of Islamic practices while intentionally minimizing the religious significance of the hijab. Such degradation of religious symbols constitutes a form of cultural racism that targets religious identity markers (Hasan, 2023). The threat to forcibly remove the hijab represents more than verbal harassment, it suggests

potential physical violation of religious observance. Research indicates that Muslim students, particularly girls wearing hijab, face significantly higher rates of bullying and harassment in schools, with incidents often involving threats to remove religious coverings (CAIR, 2024; Torres-Zaragoza, 2024)

Stereotyping and Othering

The book provides further insight into processes of othering and stereotyping, especially through dialogue between Faizah and her classmates. The narrative reveals stereotyping and othering processes primarily through curiosity-based interactions rather than overt discrimination, with much of the tension filtered through Faizah's protective perspective as narrator (Traesar & Saktiningrum, 2024).



Figure 3. Students at school targeting Asiya (Muhammad & Ali, 2019, 11)

"What's that on your sister's head?" the girl in front of me whispers.
"A scarf," I whisper back.
I don't know why a whisper came out.

I try again, louder now. "A scarf. Hijab."
"Oh," She whispers
(Muhammad & Ali,
2019, 12-13)



Figure 4. Students at school being curious toward Asiya (Muhammad & Ali, 2019, 11)

When Faizah's classmate whispers, "What's that on your sister's head?" and receives the explanation "A scarf. Hijab", the interaction demonstrates cultural unfamiliarity rather than malicious stereotyping. The whispered exchange reflects what research identifies as natural childhood curiosity about religious differences, where "children are less restricted by social norms and conventions governing what people should look at", allowing them to "observe openly and unflinchingly" without adult social constraints (Ouellette, 2022). However, this curiosity creates othering effects by positioning Asiya as an object of examination rather than a typical peer, with the illustrations showing children pointing and staring that isolate her despite their non-hostile intentions. The othering process manifests not

through explicit rejection but through the marking of difference. Asiya becomes a curious spectacle among her peers, creating social distance even when interactions lack discriminatory intent.



Figure 5. Students at school asking Asiya about her hijab (Muhammad & Ali, 2019, 16-17)



Figure 6. Asiya running from her bully (Muhammad & Ali, 2019, 28-29)

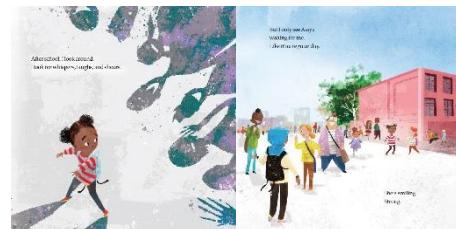


Figure 7. Asiya avoiding students at school (Muhammad & Ali, 2019, 30-31)

Faizah's protective anxiety serves as the primary lens through which readers experience these othering dynamics, reflecting research on sibling relationships where "siblings manage, utilize and are impacted by discrimination experiences" of family members (Szweada, 2013). Her whispered response "I don't know why a whisper came out", reveals her

internalized worry about her sister's visibility and potential social consequences. As the narrator, Faizah's perspective amplifies the significance of seemingly innocent encounters because she anticipates negative outcomes and protective needs throughout the story. This aligns with research on child narrators who "can openly examine volatile, offensive, tragic, controversial, or even repulsive issues in ways less likely to repel readers" while providing emotional authenticity to family protective dynamics (Seraphinoff in Ouellette, 2022). Faizah's consistent concern about her sister's reception demonstrates how sibling anxiety about discrimination can heighten the perceived threat of othering behaviors, even when peer reactions stem from curiosity rather than hostility.

The application of intersectionality to *The Proudest Blue* is not only a fitting approach but also a crucial one for achieving a comprehensive understanding of the story's themes and characters. This framework enables us to gain insight into the intricate nuances of the characters' identities and experiences, elucidating both the obstacles they confront and

the fortitude they derive from their intersectional identities. From this perspective, the book can be seen as an illustrative account of the beauty and resilience that can be found at the intersections of race, religion, and gender.

The Support of the Environment

By using Parsons' functionalism theory, the support of the surroundings can be classified into three parts. The first is social integration, the second is the role of family, and the third is norm reinforcement that would be discussed below:

Social Integration

The Proudest Blue illustrates the complex process of social integration through the lens of Muslim students navigating educational environments while maintaining their religious identity. The narrative follows Faizah as she witnesses her sister Asiya's inaugural day wearing hijab to school, demonstrating how religious visibility affects the socialization process within educational institutions. This experience reflects what Parsons (1951) describes as the transition from particularistic family values to universalistic societal standards, where

students must learn to function within broader social systems while maintaining their cultural and religious identities.



Figure 8 (Muhammad & Ali, 2019, 6-8)

"The first day of wearing hijab is important", Mama has said. "It means being strong".
(Muhammad & Ali, 2019, 15)



Figure 9. Asiya feeling assured of her decision to wear hijab (Muhammad & Ali, 2019, 15)

Her mother's guidance exemplifies how families prepare children for this social integration process by reinforcing religious values while acknowledging the challenges they may face in educational settings. Studies show that teaching kids about Islam in a way that is open and accepting can help them understand the world better and make them treat others with respect. It also helps them fit in well with other cultures at school (Mislani, 2025).

The socialization process depicted in the narrative demonstrates how Muslim students negotiate their identities within educational contexts that may not fully understand their cultural and religious practices. According to functionalist theory, schools serve as "focal socializing agencies" that bridge the gap between family-specific values and broader societal expectations (Parsons, 1951). For Asiya and Faizah, this process involves maintaining their Islamic identity while adapting to school environments where their religious practices may be unfamiliar to peers and educators. The narrative shows how this integration process requires both individual resilience and family support, as students must develop strategies for maintaining religious identity while participating fully in educational activities. Research indicates that "Muslim students in their developmental period need to be equipped with the skills to understand and appreciate cultural differences and empathize with various perspectives" to achieve successful social integration (Construct Social Emotional Learning, 2024). The family's preparation and ongoing support help students navigate this complex process

while building confidence in their religious identity.

The book demonstrates that successful social integration for Muslim students does not require abandoning religious identity but rather involves developing skills to maintain faith commitments while participating in diverse educational communities. Parsons' theory suggests that education functions as a mechanism for role allocation and value transmission, helping students prepare for adult roles in society (Parsons, 1951). For Muslim students like Asiya, this process involves demonstrating that religious practice is compatible with academic achievement and active participation in society. The narrative's resolution, where Asiya maintains her hijab while continuing normal school activities, illustrates what research identifies as adaptive integration, the ability to maintain religious identity while successfully participating in broader social institutions. Research indicates that the establishment of inclusive school environments that embrace religious diversity has been demonstrated to engender enhanced student well-being and augmented academic outcomes. This finding lends further credence to the assertion that

the acceptance of religious identity is conducive to both personal well-being and social inclusion (Religious Identity, Bullying and Wellbeing at School, 2025). The book ultimately argues that social integration is most successful when educational institutions adapt to accommodate religious diversity rather than requiring students to suppress their religious identities.

Family's Role

Through this children's picture book, it can be seen how the role of the institution plays a significant part through Faiza and their mother's supportive reactions toward her sister.



Figure 10. Asiya conversing with her sister (Muhammad & Ali, 2019, 20-21)

"Some people won't understand your hijab", Mama has said.
"But if you understand who you are, one day they will, too".
(Muhammad & Ali, 2019, 21)

In class, I draw picture.
Two princesses in hijab having a picnic on an island
Where the ocean meets the sky.
(Muhammad & Ali, 2019, 22)

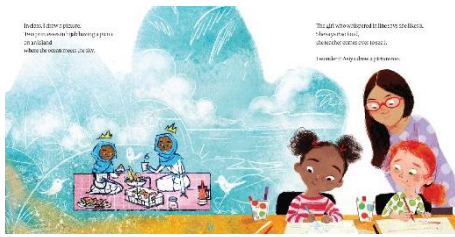


Figure 11. Faiza putting her vision into a picture (Muhammad & Ali, 2019, 22-23)

Saying I'll always be here,
"Like sisters.
Like me and Asiya".
(Muhammad & Ali, 2019, 35)

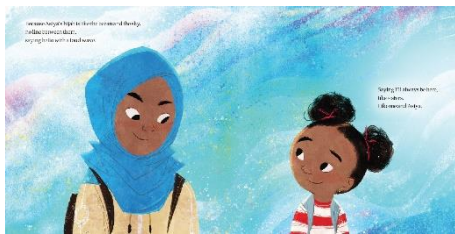


Figure 12. Faiza making a promise (Muhammad & Ali, 2019, 34-35)

Asiya's hijab isn't a whisper.
Asiya's hijab is like the sky
on a sunny day.
The sky isn't a whisper.
It's always there, special and
regular.

...
The first day of wearing hijab
is important, Mama has said.
It means being strong.



Figure 13. Asiya's empowered by her mother (Muhammad & Ali, 2019, 14-15)

Mama: "Don't carry around the hurtful words that others say. Drop them. They are not yours to keep."

They belong only to those who said them."



Figure 14. Asiya's mother's empowering words (Muhammad & Ali, 2019, 26-27)

Their mother and Faiza's support and affirmation of Asiya's hijab reflect the family's role in maintaining cultural traditions and passing them on to the next generation.

Parsons' theory is based on the idea that the family is the main way people learn social skills and values. This helps them to fit in with other people and to understand the wider society (Parsons, 1951). In this way, the family can help to keep traditions alive, even when they are different from the ideas of the wider culture. This can give girls a sense of stability and identity, even when they are facing pressure from other sources.

Norm Reinforcement

The concept of norm reinforcement in *The Proudest Blue* operates on multiple interconnected levels, demonstrating how individual actions both reflect and strengthen the social norms of religious and cultural

communities. From Parsons' functionalist perspective, norm reinforcement occurs through the process by which individuals internalize societal expectations and express them through their roles and behaviors, thereby maintaining social cohesion and cultural continuity (Parsons, 1951). Asiya's decision to wear the hijab represents what Parsons describes as normative compliance—the voluntary adherence to shared value systems that have been "introjected to form a constitutive element of the personality itself" (Bicchieri, 2011). This internalization process means that her choice is not merely external conformity but reflects deep personal commitment to the religious and cultural norms of her Islamic community. The mother's guidance that wearing hijab "means being strong" (Muhammad, 2019) exemplifies how families serve as primary agents of norm transmission, ensuring that religious values are passed from one generation to the next through socialization processes that begin in early childhood.

The mechanism of norm reinforcement operates through what Parsons identifies as role performance, where individuals demonstrate their commitment to

social expectations through consistent behavioural patterns. Asiya's visible religious practice serves multiple reinforcement functions: it strengthens her own religious identity through behavioural commitment, reinforces family values by demonstrating successful socialization, and contributes to community norm maintenance by providing a positive example for other young Muslims. Research confirms that "norms are clusters of normative attitudes in a group, combined with the knowledge that such a cluster of attitudes exists" (Brennan et al., 2013), meaning that Asiya's hijab-wearing becomes part of the collective knowledge about what it means to be a practicing Muslim girl. It creates what functionalists call positive feedback loops, where individual compliance with norms strengthens the norms themselves, making them more likely to be maintained and transmitted to future generations. The narrative demonstrates how religious identity formation becomes a mechanism for norm reinforcement, as "individuals' cognitive and motivational states give rise to structural group characteristics" while "group characteristics, such as structures, roles and norms, are internalized as part of an

individual's sociocognitive system" (Greenfield & Marks, 2007).

However, the book also reveals the complex dynamics of norm reinforcement when religious community norms encounter conflicting societal expectations. Parsons' theory suggests that strain occurs when individuals face competing normative systems, potentially leading to deviant motivation or social polarization (Alexander, 1981). Asiya's experience illustrates this tension: while she reinforces Islamic norms through hijab-wearing, she simultaneously challenges broader societal norms that expect religious invisibility in educational settings. The narrative shows how successful norm reinforcement requires not just individual commitment but also environmental support that validates and protects the expression of religious norms. The family's consistent affirmation of Asiya's choice demonstrates what Parsons identifies as social control mechanisms that help individuals maintain normative behavior despite external pressures. Research indicates that "when norms are internalized norm-abiding behavior will be perceived as good or appropriate, and people will typically feel guilt or

shame at the prospect of behaving in a deviant way" (Bicchieri, 2011). It is why Asiya maintains her religious practice despite facing discrimination—the internalized religious norms create stronger motivational forces than external social pressures. The book ultimately demonstrates that effective norm reinforcement occurs when individual actions, family support, and community values align to create what functionalists call system maintenance, ensuring that important cultural and religious traditions persist across generations even when facing external challenges.

CONCLUSION

This study offers a significant contribution by highlighting the impact of Faizah's narrative perspective as a protective sibling on the significance of discriminatory incidents. Furthermore, it emphasises the pivotal role of family solidarity in addressing instances of religious discrimination. Her anxious observations throughout the narrative illustrate how sibling anxiety regarding discrimination can amplify awareness of othering behaviours, even when peer responses are more rooted in curiosity than hostility (Szweida, 2013). The book

ultimately contends that effective educational inclusion necessitates institutional adaptation to accommodate religious diversity, as opposed to the expectation of Muslim students in suppressing their faith identities. The analysis indicates that when environmental support systems, comprising family preparation, sibling solidarity and community affirmation, function collectively in a cohesive manner, Muslim students can concurrently sustain robust religious identity and accomplish social integration and academic success. This finding carries significant weight for educators and policymakers seeking to establish inclusive educational environments that support religious diversity, whilst addressing the specific challenges faced by visibly religious students in contemporary school settings.

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