



Original Article

Hijab, Workplace Discrimination, and Organizational Accommodation: A Systematic Literature Review on Intersectionality, Multicultural Policies, and Advocacy

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Abstract:

This article presents a systematic literature review of hijab, discrimination, and organizational accommodation in workplaces across North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia between 2016 and 2025. The review aimed to synthesize empirical and conceptual studies to understand how visible religious identity intersects with organizational culture, legal frameworks, and socio-political dynamics. Following PRISMA guidelines, searches were conducted using Scopus with keywords related to hijab, multiculturalism, tolerance, discrimination. The results highlight four thematic areas public attitudes, multicultural policies, and acceptance of visible religious identity; organizational and institutional accommodation between legal norms and implementation; discursive and political mechanisms normalizing intolerance; and advocacy architectures and cross-issue comparisons. Findings show that hijabi women face structural and intersectional discrimination influenced by national identity, Islamophobia, and stigma. Implementation gaps persist despite legal mandates, while extremist and populist rhetoric exacerbate resistance to accommodation. However, advocacy coalitions, media literacy programs, and context-sensitive HR strategies offer pathways to strengthen inclusivity. The review concludes that hijab-related workplace discrimination cannot be fully understood through single-identity frameworks; instead, intersectionality, stigma theory, and reasonable accommodation provide robust lenses for analysis.

Keywords: hijab; workplace discrimination; organizational accommodation; multicultural policy; intersectionality

Introduction

The hijab, as a visible marker of religious identity, has become a central focus in contemporary debates about diversity, equality, and inclusion in global workplaces. From 2016 to 2025, a growing body of scholarship has highlighted the persistent barriers



faced by Muslim women who wear the hijab across diverse regions, including North America, Europe, Australia, and Asia. The intersection of visible religious expression and workplace dynamics underscores complex tensions between individual rights, organizational cultures, and broader socio-political discourses. Examining these dynamics is essential not only for understanding discrimination against hijab-wearing women but also for advancing organizational practices that foster inclusion and cultural competence. Recent studies consistently demonstrate that hijab-wearing women experience disproportionately higher levels of workplace discrimination, ranging from biased hiring practices to exclusion from promotion pathways. Prejudicial stereotypes frequently frame these women as either oppressed or associated with extremism, shaping employer perceptions and organizational climates ([Hashem & Awad, 2024](#); [Saleh et al., 2023](#)). For instance, comparative research in several European contexts illustrates how job applicants who wear the hijab are directly disadvantaged during recruitment processes ([Fernandez Reino et al., 2023](#)). These findings highlight systemic inequities that persist despite broader commitments to equality and anti-discrimination laws.

The concept of religious accommodation has become increasingly prominent within both policy and academic discourse, reflecting greater recognition of the rights of religious minorities in professional spaces. In North America, legal frameworks have expanded protections for religious expression; yet evidence indicates a gap between legislative intent and workplace practice. Hijab-wearing women continue to face mixed outcomes, suggesting that organizational resistance and cultural bias frequently undermine formal rights ([Koura, 2018](#)). Meanwhile, in parts of Asia, growing religiosity has influenced levels of acceptance toward hijab-wearing women, though structural and cultural challenges remain prevalent ([Hyder et al., 2015](#)). These cross-regional variations underscore the importance of situating religious accommodation within specific socio-cultural contexts. Policy debates over visible religious symbols, particularly in Europe, reveal deep-seated tensions between principles of secular neutrality and demands for inclusivity. Cases such as *Achbita v. G4S* in Belgium epitomize this tension, as corporate neutrality policies have been invoked to justify the prohibition of hijabs in workplaces, effectively privatizing religious expression ([Van Oost et al., 2025](#)). Similar controversies recur across Western contexts, where discussions often revolve around balancing individual freedoms with public anxieties regarding the visibility of Islam ([Pattison & Davidson, 2019](#)). These debates highlight how regulatory and judicial frameworks may reinforce exclusionary practices under the guise of neutrality.

At the organizational level, workplace culture plays a critical mediating role in determining whether hijab-wearing women experience inclusion or exclusion. Inclusive organizational cultures are more likely to accommodate visible religious expressions, incorporating diversity into their identity and practices ([Garcia Yeste et al., 2021](#)). Conversely, organizations that adhere rigidly to secularist norms frequently create barriers for hijab-wearing employees, perpetuating hostile environments and reinforcing systemic inequality ([Vaughan et al., 2023](#); [Wasserman & Frenkel, 2020](#)). This dichotomy demonstrates that the effectiveness of accommodation policies is contingent upon organizational culture, leadership commitment, and employee awareness ([Vince, 2020](#)). The cultivation of cultural competence within organizations thus emerges as a key strategy for promoting equity and reducing discriminatory practices. Inter-cultural dynamics further shape workplace experiences of hijab-wearing women. Migration flows, shifting notions of national identity, and the design of multicultural policies all

influence societal responses to visible religious identities. In multicultural states such as Canada, strong policy frameworks encourage diversity and, in turn, greater acceptance of hijab-wearing employees ([Stolle et al., 2016](#)). By contrast, societies with strong nationalist ideologies often resist religious pluralism, casting the hijab as a symbol that threatens national identity ([Syed, 2021](#)). These dynamics illustrate that workplace inclusion cannot be divorced from broader cultural and political contexts.

The framing of hijab-related workplace debates has evolved significantly in recent scholarship, shifting toward the paradigms of equality, diversity, and inclusion. Studies suggest that the decision to wear the hijab represents an ongoing negotiation between personal religious identity and societal expectations, a negotiation that directly influences workplace interactions and outcomes ([Alkadi et al., 2025](#)). This scholarship emphasizes the necessity of reasonable accommodation, not only to comply with legal standards but also to advance ethical organizational practices that respect cultural and religious diversity ([Okocha & Giorga, 2024](#); [Sewerynik, 2023](#)). Moreover, it highlights the pivotal role of organizational cultures in moving beyond formal compliance toward authentic inclusivity ([El Yattouti, 2025](#)). This systematic literature review (SLR) seeks to synthesize empirical and conceptual findings from 2016 to 2025 to illuminate how workplace discrimination against hijab-wearing women is manifested and explained across contexts, how organizational accommodations are practiced and evaluated, and how inter-cultural and intra-community dynamics influence workplace experiences. By examining research conducted in North America, Europe, Australia, and Asia, this review identifies gaps in the literature and proposes directions for future research and policy design. The scope of the review includes themes of discrimination, accommodation, intra-community debates, and organizational practices, with a particular focus on the intersection of religious identity and workplace inclusion.

Theoretical Framework

Theories of Discrimination and Visibility

Structural Discrimination and Intersectionality

Intersectionality has become a critical analytical tool in understanding the layered discrimination experienced by hijab-wearing Muslim women. This perspective highlights how overlapping identities gender, religion, and ethnicity interact to produce complex experiences of marginalization ([Alkhatib et al., 2023](#); [Tariq & Syed, 2018](#)). Studies show that hijabi women face unique barriers in recruitment and promotion, where both gender and religious bias operate simultaneously ([Dana et al., 2019](#)). Intersectionality thus provides a holistic lens for comprehending workplace marginalization dynamics.

Stigma Theory

Stigma theory further explains how social perceptions of the hijab affect professional experiences. Hijab wearing individuals are often perceived through negative stereotypes linking the veil with extremism or cultural backwardness. These stigmatizing views undermine evaluations of competence and career opportunities ([Alhussainy et al., 2024](#); [Khan et al., 2025](#)). Research has shown that hijab stigma can reduce job satisfaction, deteriorate mental health, and limit promotion prospects ([Baqai et al., 2023](#)). By combining intersectionality and stigma theory, we obtain a more comprehensive conceptual framework to explain how visible religious identity shapes workplace dynamics and professional trajectories.

Organizational Accommodation

Legal Frameworks

Legal frameworks governing religious accommodation vary across jurisdictions. In

Europe, rulings by the European Court of Justice (e.g., Achbita and Wabe) emphasize balancing corporate neutrality with individuals' rights to manifest religion through attire. However, these neutrality policies have been widely criticized for potentially discriminating against certain faith groups, including Islam, Judaism, and Sikhism (Karayigit & Ilhan, 2022). In the United States, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act requires employers to provide reasonable religious accommodations unless such accommodations cause undue hardship to the organization (Griffiths, 2016). Yet, implementation is often inconsistent and depends heavily on employer interpretation (Tabesh & Jolly, 2019).

HRM and Organizational Behavior Perspectives

From a human resource management (HRM) perspective, religious accommodation is framed through diversity management and organizational culture. HRM strategies emphasize fostering inclusive environments that value religious diversity and encourage open dialogue around accommodation (O'Sullivan, 2017). Social Identity Theory underscores the importance of recognizing employees' identities as a foundation for authentic inclusion, positively influencing motivation and retention (Maali et al., 2024). In addition, cultural intelligence practices help organizations navigate and negotiate diverse religious expressions (O'Sullivan, 2017). These theories illustrate that HRM approaches not only ensure legal compliance but also cultivate a truly inclusive organizational culture.

Debates and Controversies

Secularism, Religious Freedom, and Neutrality

The intersection of secularism, religious freedom, and neutrality policies creates significant challenges in workplace practice. For instance, in France, the principle of *laïcité* restricts religious symbols in public spaces, including workplaces. In contrast, U.S. law under Title VII emphasizes the necessity of religious accommodation (Cohu et al., 2020). These differing legal contexts highlight how legal frameworks can produce contradictory outcomes concerning the inclusion of hijab in the workplace.

Intra-Muslim Debates

Internal debates within Muslim communities regarding the obligation of hijab and concepts of modesty also shape advocacy and accommodation dynamics. Some interpret the hijab as a religious obligation, while others negotiate its significance against social norms and professional expectations (Cintas et al., 2020; Thiessen, 2016). These divergences affect solidarity among Muslims in advocating for workplace accommodation (McKim, 2017). Moreover, intra-community dynamics influence organizational policies, resulting in varied levels of support for inclusion depending on dominant interpretations within specific contexts (Schumann et al., 2017; Sharma & Pande, 2024).

Methods

The literature search was conducted using Scopus, a leading multidisciplinary database recognized for its extensive coverage of peer-reviewed journals. To ensure a comprehensive retrieval of relevant studies, a combination of keywords was employed. The search string ("hijab" OR "multiculturalism") AND ("tolerance") AND ("discrimination") yielded a robust set of relevant studies. The time frame was restricted to 2016–2025, in line with the objectives of capturing recent empirical and conceptual developments. The geographical scope was set to North America, Europe, Australia, and Asia, reflecting the comparative focus of the study. This strategy allowed for a balanced

inclusion of studies across diverse sociocultural and legal contexts. To maintain consistency and relevance, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied. The inclusion criteria were as follows: (1) studies explicitly addressing workplace contexts; (2) studies discussing discrimination related to visible religious symbols, particularly the hijab; (3) peer-reviewed empirical or conceptual studies published between 2016 and 2025; and (4) articles written in English. Exclusion criteria comprised: (1) studies not explicitly focused on workplace contexts; (2) publications lacking empirical data or theoretical grounding; (3) non-peer-reviewed sources such as blogs, commentaries, or opinion pieces; and (4) studies exclusively examining non-Muslim populations without direct relevance to hijab-related experiences. These parameters ensured that the review synthesized literature most relevant to the research objectives while minimizing noise from tangential sources.

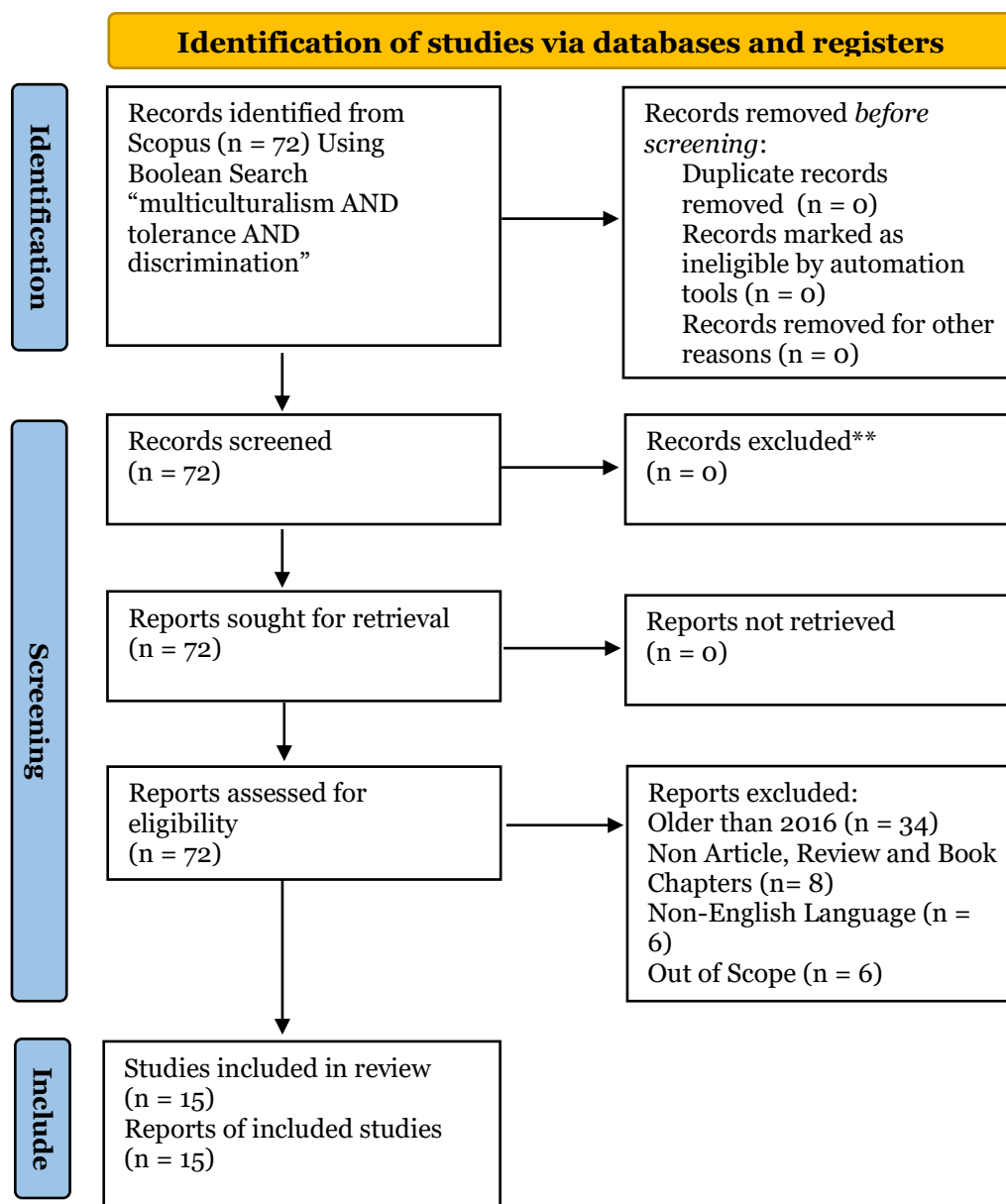


Figure 1. The PRISMA flow diagram detailing the screening and selection process of literature

A two-phase process was used for study selection. In the first phase, titles and abstracts of retrieved articles were screened against the inclusion and exclusion criteria. In the second phase, full-text reviews were conducted to confirm eligibility. This rigorous approach minimized the risk of including irrelevant or low-quality studies. To ensure methodological transparency, the screening and selection process is illustrated using the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) flow diagram. The diagram details the number of records identified, screened, excluded, and included at each stage.

Results

Public Attitudes, Multicultural Policies, and Acceptance of Visible Religious Identities in the Workplace

Public attitudes and multicultural policy orientations play a pivotal role in shaping the acceptance of visible religious identity, such as the hijab, in workplace contexts. As illustrated in Table 1, these macro level determinants including multicultural support, national identity, perceived intentionality of discrimination (PIRD), and Islamophobia directly influence organizational climates and readiness to accommodate religious attire in professional settings. [Rochira et al. \(2024\)](#) examined dominant ethnic groups in Southern Europe and identified five distinct profiles through latent profile analysis (Cosmopolitans, Glocals, Parochials, Resilient Intolerants, and Disengaged). These profiles reveal heterogeneous orientations toward multiculturalism and intolerance, demonstrating that acceptance of visible religious symbols depends not only on national identity but also on psychosocial resilience and universalistic values. Importantly, national identity was not always exclusive, indicating opportunities for inclusive policy design. The implications for HR include the necessity of segmentation strategies that tailor diversity and inclusion (D&I) interventions to the specific orientations of employee groups. [Kamp et al. \(2017\)](#), in a nationally representative Australian survey, highlighted a paradox: while a majority supported cultural diversity, significant levels of Islamophobia and endorsement of assimilationist policies persisted. This polarization suggests that even in contexts with broad support for multiculturalism, hijab-wearing women may face contested acceptance. Organizationally, this necessitates anti-bias training and proactive HR policies that navigate the tension between pro-diversity rhetoric and assimilationist pressures.

[Apfelbaum et al. \(2017\)](#) contributed conceptually by operationalizing PIRD, showing that perceived intentionality of discrimination predicts whether individuals adopt colorblind or multicultural preferences. When discrimination is perceived as unintentional, individuals tend to prefer colorblind approaches, potentially undermining support for visible religious expression. These findings align with stigma theory, where attributions of bias significantly shape workplace outcomes. HR interventions must therefore emphasize structural explanations of inequality to foster greater support for accommodations. [Lizotte \(2023\)](#) mapped ethnic intolerance in Canada, demonstrating significant variation across groups and provinces. The analysis highlighted that perceptions of Canada's multicultural mosaic differ, with vertical hierarchies of acceptance resulting in differentiated workplace experiences for minorities, including Muslim women. This underscores the importance of context sensitive HR mapping to identify areas where hijab wearing employees may be at heightened risk of discrimination. [Sahrasad et al. \(2024\)](#) reflected on Australia's multiculturalism and noted its relative success in fostering diversity. However, persistent Islamophobia

undermines this framework, disproportionately affecting Muslim communities. The authors argue for the urgent need of a national anti-racism framework, robust public education, and leadership to translate multicultural ideals into equitable workplace practices. These findings demonstrate the enduring influence of stigma and legal frameworks, reinforcing the necessity for systemic solutions. The findings from these five studies converge with theoretical frameworks presented. Intersectionality explains how hijabi women experience compounded discrimination shaped by both gender and religious identity (Dana et al., 2019). Stigma theory illuminates how negative stereotypes, particularly Islamophobic narratives, influence perceptions of competence and organizational belonging (Baqai et al., 2023; Garcia Yeste et al., 2021). Reasonable accommodation frameworks emphasize that without supportive legal and organizational infrastructures, multicultural policy orientations alone cannot guarantee inclusion (Griffiths, 2016; Karayigit & Ilhan, 2022). The hypothesis proposed that workplace discrimination against hijabis emerges not only from overt prejudice but from the interplay of structural bias, organizational culture, and socio-political anxieties finds strong support in this thematic review. Table 1 shows that public attitudes toward multiculturalism and Islamophobia are critical mediating variables shaping organizational inclusion. Moreover, PIRD clarifies how discrimination is perceived and internalized, affecting workplace satisfaction and retention. These findings reinforce the necessity for HR strategies that move beyond compliance to cultivate authentic inclusivity.

Table 1. Determinants of acceptance of visible religious identity at work

Author/Year	Country/Region	Population/Sample	Key Constructs	Main Findings (Implications for Hijab)	HR/Accommodation Implications	Method/Design	Limitations
Rochira et al. (2024)	Italy, Portugal, Spain	N=636 (dominant ethnic group members)	Multicultural support; national identity; resilience; universality	Identified 5 profiles; intolerance highest in certain profiles; national identity not always exclusive	Segmentation strategies for D&I interventions	Latent profile analysis; cross-national survey	Limited generalizability beyond Southern Europe; cross-sectional design
Kamp et al. (2017)	Australia (national)	N=6,001	Diversity attitudes; migration; Islamophobia; assimilation preferences	Majority pro-diversity; persistent Islamophobia and assimilation support to	HR must navigate diversity vs. assimilation; anti-bias training	National survey	Online sample bias; excludes post-2016 dynamics

Apfelbaum et al. (2017)	USA (multi-context)	8 studies	PIRD (perceived intentionality of discrimination)	contested acceptance of hijab PIRD predicts colorblind vs. multicultural orientations; unintentional attributions to colorblind preference	HR messaging should emphasize structural inequality	Multi-method experiments and surveys	Focused on race; cross-religious implications need testing
Lizotte (2023)	Canada	Provincial survey	Ethnic intolerance; hierarchy of groups	Varied intolerance across provinces; vertical mosaic affects acceptance	Context-sensitive HR mapping for discrimination risk	Secondary quantitative analysis	Data from 2014; limited temporal validity
Sahrasad et al. (2024)	Australia	Policy reflection	Multiculturalism; Islamophobia; need for anti-racism	Success of multiculturalism tempered by persistent Islamophobia	Need for national anti-racism framework, education, leadership	Policy reflection/essay	Limited empirical evidence; Australia-specific focus

Organizational & institutional accommodation: Between legal norms and implementation

Organizational and institutional accommodation practices are critical to understanding the tension between legal norms and their practical implementation. Focusing on education, public services, and legal frameworks, this section highlights how formal policies on diversity and religious freedom often diverge from on-the-ground realities. As summarized in Table 2, gaps between legal mandates and implementation reveal structural barriers that undermine the effectiveness of accommodation, including for issues related to the hijab. [Muthalib et al. \(2022\)](#) examined public services in Aceh, which operate under a sharia framework while being legally obliged to respect the rights of non-Muslim minorities. Their study found that fundamental rights such as worship, access to legal services, education,

and healthcare were generally well accommodated. However, external perceptions associating Aceh with strict sharia enforcement created stereotypes that strained its inclusive image. This finding illustrates institutional capacity for accommodation while also showing how stigma can undermine inclusivity. [Forrest et al. \(2017\)](#) investigated public schools in New South Wales, Australia, focusing on the implementation of anti-racism and multicultural education policies. Teachers largely supported these policies, but practical implementation varied. Minority groups such as Aboriginal students and those with Language Backgrounds Other Than English (LBOTE) continued to experience intolerance. The gap between policy design and resource-constrained implementation highlights challenges directly relevant to religious accommodation, such as the hijab.

[Utomo and Wasino \(2020\)](#) conducted an ethnographic study of Indonesian universities, focusing on history-based tolerance education. Case studies revealed that tolerance values could be reinforced in multicultural classrooms and, in some cases, transferred into students' behaviors. However, challenges in curriculum design and campus culture remained, showing that accommodation depends not only on formal rules but also on pedagogical adaptation and institutional culture. [Kartono et al. \(2025\)](#) studied secondary schools in Batu City that introduced religious literacy programs to promote tolerance. Although initiatives were present, the lack of strategic planning and coordination limited their impact. Teachers and student leaders (OSIS) demonstrated potential for enhancing tolerance, but without systematic design, intolerance persisted. This underscores the importance of institutional capacity and human resources for successful accommodation programs. [Singh \(2018\)](#) analyzed Indian policies addressing tensions between freedom of expression (FOE) and freedom of religion. The study found that state censorship was often employed as a political compromise to reduce inter-religious conflict. For workplaces, this indicates that political and legal contexts can constrain religious expression, including the hijab, suggesting that organizational policies must remain sensitive to contested dynamics between secularism and religiosity.

The findings in Table 2 confirm that organizational and institutional accommodation is deeply intertwined with theoretical perspectives on structural discrimination, intersectionality, and reasonable accommodation. Structural discrimination is evident where formal policies fail to be applied consistently ([Forrest et al., 2017](#)). Intersectionality is reflected in the layered experiences of minority students and staff from both religious and ethnic backgrounds, compounding accommodation barriers ([Kartono et al., 2025; Utomo & Wasino, 2020](#)). Meanwhile, the legal principle of reasonable accommodation stresses the necessity of consistent application to prevent mere formal compliance without substantive inclusion ([Singh, 2018](#)). The initial hypothesis that discrimination against hijabi women and other minorities arises from the interplay of legal norms, organizational culture, and social barriers is supported here. The studies in Table 2 demonstrate that while legal frameworks endorse accommodation, implementation is hindered by institutional bias, limited resources, and politicized contexts. Practically, organizations must go beyond formal compliance by ensuring leadership commitment, curriculum design, anti-bias training, and context-specific strategies to secure authentic inclusion.

Table 2. Organizational & Institutional Accommodation Practices: Legal Norms vs Implementation

Author/ Year	Sector/ Institution	Accommodat ion	Implemen tation	Impact on Minority	Barriers/ Conflicts	Evidence/ Methodolog
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		Mechanism/ Rights	Status	Groups		y
Muthalib et al. (2022)	Public services (Aceh)	Rights to worship, legal access, health & education	Generally well implemented in three main aspects	Rights of non-Muslim minorities fulfilled; institutional capacity	External stereotypes about sharia	Qualitative; interviews with religious leaders, service providers, community figures
Forrest et al. (2017)	Public schools, NSW (Australia)	Anti-racism policies; multicultural education	Strong teacher support, uneven implementation	Minorities (Aboriginal & LBOTE) still face intolerance	Policy practice gap; resource constraints	Online teacher survey; descriptive analysis
Utomo and Wasino (2020)	Universities (Indonesia)	History based tolerance education	Case study implementation; tolerance values mapped	Reinforced tolerance; partial transfer to behavior	Curriculum design challenges; campus culture	Ethnography; Grounded Theory; interviews & observations
Kartono et al. (2025)	Secondary schools (Batu City)	Religious literacy program for tolerance	Initiatives present, lacking strategic planning	Potential for tolerance gains; intolerance persists	Coordination issues; teacher capacity	Qualitative case study; interviews with student leaders and informants
Singh (2018)	Policy/society (India)	FOE vs religious freedom	Requires contextualization; state censorship common	Minority religious groups affected; relevance for workplace	Secularism religiosity tension; politicization	Qualitative; interviews, desk research, narrative analysis

Discursive & Political Mechanisms Normalizing Intolerance

Discursive and political mechanisms play a central role in normalizing intolerance against minority groups, including hijab wearing women, by shaping public opinion and influencing organizational climates. Through populist rhetoric, far right narratives, and the spread of misinformation on social media, intolerance is shifted from

the margins to the mainstream, thereby impacting acceptance of religious symbols in the workplace. Table 3 presents three key studies that demonstrate how these discourses operate and their implications for hijab accommodation. [Preston \(2024\)](#) analyzed far right discourse in Canada using social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. The study found that everyday language (mundanity) was employed to disguise extremist claims, making them more palatable to broader audiences. By framing identity homogenization and authoritarian ideas as apolitical topics, far right groups successfully expanded their reach. For workplaces, this implies a rising resistance to visible religious symbols, including the hijab, as anti-minority sentiments increasingly enter mainstream discourse. [Amune \(2022\)](#) examined populist politics in Italy, demonstrating how issues of security, identity, and employment were exploited to construct minorities immigrants, Muslims, and Roma as threats. This strategy fueled exclusionary policies and rejection of religious symbols in both public and workplace settings. The findings align with stigma theory, showing how negative stereotypes are legitimized through identity politics, thereby normalizing workplace discrimination against hijab wearing women as socially acceptable. [Kurniawan et al. \(2019\)](#) investigated media literacy initiatives in Indonesian universities as strategies to counter misinformation and intolerance among students. The study revealed that improving media literacy reduced the circulation of intolerance and promoted more critical organizational cultures. Although focused on a campus context, the implications extend to workplaces, as media literacy programs can equip individuals with skills to recognize and reject intolerant narratives, thereby fostering inclusive environments.

The three studies in Table 3 can be understood through the frameworks of structural discrimination, stigma, and intersectionality. [Amune \(2022\)](#) and [Preston \(2024\)](#) show how political and media discourses function as structural discrimination by mainstreaming bias. Extremist and populist narratives shape public perceptions, creating cultural barriers for hijab-wearing women at work. [\(Kurniawan et al., 2019\)](#) presents a counterpoint, illustrating how strengthening media literacy aligns with organizational accommodation frameworks that emphasize institutional interventions to advance inclusion. The initial hypothesis that discrimination against hijabi women emerges not only from individual prejudice but also from broader socio-political mechanisms is supported here. [Preston \(2024\)](#) demonstrates how the normalization of extremist language fosters resistance to religious symbols. [Amune \(2022\)](#) underscores how populist politics reinforces institutional exclusion, while [Kurniawan et al. \(2019\)](#) shows that educational interventions can reduce the impact of intolerant narratives. These findings affirm that organizations must go beyond formal policies by actively countering intolerant discourses through training, media literacy, and inclusive leadership.

Table 3. Discursive & Political Mechanisms Normalizing Intolerance

Author /Year	Platform /Context	Discursive Mechanism	Target Group	Indicator of Normalization	Implications for Policy/Workplace Climate	Methodology
Preston (2024)	Social media (Facebook, Twitter)-	Use of everyday language (mundanity) to mask	General public/potential supporters	Apolitical framing of identity homogenization &	Heightened anti-minority sentiment; resistance to religious	Content analysis of 300 posts from 3 far-right

	Canada	extremism	rs	authoritarianis m	symbols	groups
Amune (2022)	Politics & media- Italy	Populism exploiting security, identity, employe nt issues	Immigra nts, Muslims, Roma	Construction of minorities as threats; calls for beyond integration	Stronger exclusionary policies; rejection of religious symbols in public/workpl aces	Policy and analytical review; economic & crime data
Kurnia wan et al. (2019)	Universit ies & media- Indonesi a	Media literacy to counter hoaxes and intoleranc e	Students	Improved literacy to reduced spread of intolerance	Recommendati ons for literacy curriculum; critical organizational culture	Student survey; strategic recommen dations

Advocacy Architectures & Minority Status Comparisons

Advocacy architectures and minority status comparisons provide important insights into how coalitions and cross issue strategies influence policy and organizational change, including the accommodation of religious identities such as the hijab in workplaces. Although this theme carries comparatively lower relevance than others, it remains informative by illustrating the transnational nature of advocacy and by drawing lessons from non-religious minority issues. Table 4 summarizes two main studies and one cross reference that illustrate advocacy configurations and their implications for the acceptance of religious symbols. [Ryu \(2022\)](#) examined multicultural advocacy in South Korea using a governmentality and genealogical approach. The study found that advocacy was supported by conservative configurations that integrated multiculturalism into nationalism. This produced a post-national discourse that repositioned nationalism in ways compatible with immigrant minority recognition. The implication for hijab accommodation is that advocacy strategies must frame policies in ways consistent with national ideologies to achieve political and social acceptance.

[Adihartono and Jocson \(2020\)](#) compared the status of homosexual men in Indonesia and the Philippines. Their research revealed that differences in minority treatment were shaped by the interplay of cultural, religious, and ethnic factors in each country. In Indonesia, repression was more dominant, whereas the Philippines provided a relatively more tolerant space. Although the issue investigated was sexual orientation, the findings offer a comparative lens for understanding the dynamics of minority acceptance, including religious symbols like the hijab. This underscores the importance of cross-issue comparisons to enrich advocacy strategies. [Lizotte \(2023\)](#), discussed earlier, serves as a cross-reference demonstrating patterns of ethnic intolerance stratification in Canada. The vertical mosaic analysis showed that minority groups are hierarchically positioned in society, influencing the success or failure of their advocacy efforts. This pattern offers lessons for hijab advocacy movements, which must navigate similar forms of social stratification. The three studies in Table 4 can be connected to the frameworks of intersectionality and structural discrimination. Intersectionality is relevant because minority experiences are shaped by the interaction of religion,

ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation, as demonstrated by [Adihartono and Jocson \(2020\)](#). Structural discrimination is evident in the ways advocacy must negotiate national ideologies and state policies ([Ryu, 2022](#)). In addition, the framework of reasonable accommodation highlights the importance of designing policies that are compatible with dominant societal values to secure effective acceptance. The initial hypothesis that discrimination against hijab wearing women is influenced by the interaction of legal norms, organizational cultures, and socio-political dynamics is reinforced by these findings. [Ryu \(2022\)](#) demonstrates that national ideologies shape advocacy success. [Adihartono and Jocson \(2020\)](#) show that cross-issue factors can offer new perspectives for advancing religious minority rights. [Lizotte \(2023\)](#) adds the dimension of social stratification, illustrating that advocacy effectiveness depends on the relative position of minorities in social hierarchies. The practical implication is the need for strategic, cross-issue, and transnational advocacy coalitions to strengthen the struggle for hijab accommodation.

Table 4. Advocacy Architectures & Minority Status Comparisons

Author/Year	National Context	Minority Type/Issue	Advocacy Architecture/Coalition	Mechanism of Change	Relevant Religious Accommodation	Methodology
Ryu (2022)	South Korea	Multiculturalism (immigrant minorities)	Governmentality & genealogy; conservative support for multiculturalism	Formation of post-national discourse; repositioning of nationalism	Policy framing strategies compatible with religious accommodation	Genealogical theoretical analysis
Adihartono and Jocson (2020)	Indonesia & Philippines	Sexual orientation (homosexual men)	Cross-national comparison; cultural religious ethnic factors	Identification of divergent treatments (repression vs tolerance)	Comparative lens for minority acceptance & identity symbols	Comparative analysis; policy/society studies
Lizotte (2023)	Canada	Ethnic minorities	Analysis of intolerance stratification	Identification of vertical mosaic (group hierarchies)	Relevant for hijab advocacy strategies in stratified societies	Secondary quantitative analysis

Discrimination against hijabi women in workplaces is shaped by multi-layered and intersecting forces. Section public attitudes and multicultural policy orientations reveal that national identity, Islamophobia, and perceived intentionality of discrimination (PIRD) serve as mediating variables influencing organizational inclusivity. These macro-level determinants confirm that the broader socio-political climate permeates organizational practices and influences how hijabi employees are perceived and accommodated. Formal legal frameworks and organizational policies do

not automatically translate into effective implementation. Studies of public services in Aceh (Muthalib et al., 2022), schools in New South Wales (Forrest et al., 2017), Indonesian universities (Utomo & Wasino, 2020), and secondary schools in Batu City (Kartono et al., 2025) demonstrate persistent gaps between policy mandates and everyday practices. While rights and anti-discrimination norms exist, cultural biases, resource limitations, and weak institutional leadership hinder their effective application. Singh (2018) further highlights the political tensions between freedom of expression and religion in India, illustrating how state mediation can compromise minority rights. Then, the role of discourse and political mechanisms in normalizing intolerance is made evident. Preston (2024) and Amune (2022) show how extremist and populist rhetoric, through mundanity and securitization discourses, shift societal boundaries of acceptability, thereby legitimizing exclusionary practices. By contrast, Kurniawan et al. (2019) illustrate that media literacy interventions can mitigate intolerance, offering proactive tools for organizations and educational institutions. These findings align with stigma theory, demonstrating how discourse contributes to embedding bias in organizational cultures. Then, thru advocacy architecture and a comparison of minority statuses, a broader understanding of this issue can be provided.

Ryu (2022) highlights how governmentality and genealogy frame multiculturalism in South Korea, whereas Adihartono and Jocson (2020) illustrate cross-issue insights from LGBTQ+ rights struggles. Lizotte (2023), referenced again, demonstrates stratified intolerance across ethnic groups in Canada. These studies emphasize the importance of coalition-building, policy framing, and comparative learning in advancing religious accommodation. While most studies converge on the persistence of discrimination and implementation gaps, some divergences are noteworthy. For instance, Rochira et al. (2024) reveal profiles where national identity coexists with inclusive orientations, suggesting that nationalism need not always be exclusionary. This finding contrasts with Amune (2022), who documents the use of nationalist rhetoric in Italy to reinforce xenophobic exclusion. Such contradictions suggest that the relationship between nationalism and accommodation is context-dependent, influenced by political leadership and institutional framing. Similarly, Muthalib et al. (2022) portray public services in Aceh as capable of accommodating minority rights, while Forrest et al. (2017) and Kartono et al. (2025) highlight failures in education sectors. These contrasting results indicate that institutional design and governance capacity play a decisive role in determining outcomes, even when similar rights frameworks exist.

Several methodological gaps are apparent in the reviewed studies. First, much of the evidence is cross-sectional (e.g., Forrest et al., 2017; Rochira et al.), limiting the ability to assess causal dynamics or long-term changes in attitudes and practices. Second, many studies rely heavily on surveys and secondary data, which may not capture lived experiences or the subtle dynamics of resilience. Third, certain regions, notably Africa and the Middle East beyond Aceh, remain underrepresented, creating geographic blind spots in understanding hijab accommodation. Qualitative innovations such as ethnography (Utomo & Wasino, 2020), participatory approaches, and mixed-methods combining resilience scales with organizational analysis offer models for future research. These methods better capture systemic bias and resilience, yet they are underutilized in current hijab-focused workplace research. Furthermore, the overemphasis on majority populations' attitudes risks sidelining the voices of hijabi women themselves, whose perspectives remain crucial. The findings reinforce intersectionality as a crucial

analytical lens. Hijabi women embody overlapping marginalized identities of gender, religion, and often ethnicity, creating compounded forms of discrimination (Mehra et al., 2023; Schneider et al., 2024). This intersectional framing elucidates why hijabi women may experience distinct stereotypes that cannot be explained by gender or religion alone. Similarly, stigma theory highlights how negative discourses, particularly Islamophobic rhetoric, shape perceptions of competence and belonging (Garcia Yeste et al., 2021; Utomo & Wasino, 2020). Finally, reasonable accommodation frameworks demonstrate that legal norms must be supplemented with proactive organizational strategies to be effective (Griffiths, 2016; Karayigit & Ilhan, 2022). The studies on advocacy and minority comparisons (Adihartono & Jocson, 2020; Ryu, 2022) extend theoretical insights by showing that coalition-building and cross-issue solidarity can reframe dominant ideologies. This suggests that future theory building on workplace inclusion should integrate insights from broader social movements and minority rights struggles.

From a practical perspective, the synthesis underscores that organizations must move beyond compliance to actively foster inclusive cultures. First, HR and leadership strategies should directly address stigma and PIRD by framing inequality as structural rather than individual (Apfelbaum et al., 2017). Second, targeted interventions, such as anti-bias training, context-sensitive HR mapping (Lizotte, 2023), and tailored D&I segmentation (Rochira et al., 2024), can better accommodate diverse employee profiles. Third, institutions must strengthen the link between formal policies and practical implementation, ensuring adequate resources, training, and leadership (Forrest et al., 2017; Kartono et al., 2025). Media literacy programs (Kurniawan et al., 2019) and advocacy coalitions (Li, 2023; Tariq & Syed, 2018) also provide important pathways for countering intolerance. Organizations can collaborate with civil society actors to create broader social support for accommodation. Drawing from LGBTQ+ advocacy successes, hijab inclusion efforts could benefit from grassroots mobilization, storytelling, and transnational advocacy networks (Adihartono & Jocson, 2020; Zamroni & Fajri, 2023).

Future research should prioritize three areas. First, longitudinal studies are needed to capture how attitudes and policies evolve over time, especially in light of shifting political climates and global migration patterns. Second, greater attention must be given to hijabi women's lived experiences, using participatory and qualitative methods to foreground their agency and resilience (Tabakakis et al., 2025). Third, comparative and transnational analyses should be expanded to explore how advocacy strategies and policy frameworks travel across contexts (Celeste et al., 2019; Sarian, 2018). Additionally, future work should address under-researched geographies and minority intersections, such as Black hijabi women, who may face layered discrimination (Mehra et al., 2023). Mixed-methods approaches combining quantitative resilience metrics with qualitative narratives would enrich understanding of systemic barriers and coping strategies (Han et al., 2023; O'Dowd et al., 2018). This discussion highlights that hijab-related workplace discrimination is not merely a matter of individual prejudice but is embedded within broader public attitudes, institutional designs, political discourses, and advocacy architectures. Intersectionality, stigma, and reasonable accommodation remain indispensable theoretical lenses. Yet, the reviewed literature also underscores the need for methodological innovation and advocacy coalitions to effectively promote inclusivity. By bridging gaps between policy and practice, amplifying marginalized voices, and learning from comparative struggles, both scholarship and organizational practice can move toward genuine equality for hijabi women in workplaces globally.

Conclusion

This systematic review analyzed how hijab, as a visible marker of religious identity, interacts with discrimination, organizational culture, and policy frameworks across diverse contexts. The findings demonstrate that workplace discrimination against hijabi women emerges not only from overt prejudice but also from complex intersections of public attitudes, institutional policies, political discourse, and advocacy configurations. Public perceptions of multiculturalism, national identity, and Islamophobia strongly mediate organizational inclusion. At the same time, institutional and organizational frameworks often struggle to translate legal mandates into effective implementation, with gaps arising from leadership, cultural biases, and resource limitations. Discursive and political mechanisms, particularly extremist and populist rhetoric, normalize intolerance, but interventions such as media literacy offer promising avenues to mitigate bias. Comparative insights from advocacy movements highlight the importance of coalition-building and transnational solidarity. The study addresses the research questions by showing how discrimination manifests in subtle and structural ways, how accommodation practices vary in effectiveness, and how intercultural and intra-community dynamics influence workplace experiences. Its contribution lies in synthesizing empirical findings with theoretical frameworks of intersectionality, stigma, and reasonable accommodation, offering a holistic understanding of the challenges faced by hijabi women. The review underscores that advancing genuine inclusion requires organizations to move beyond compliance toward proactive, culturally sensitive strategies.

Suggestion

Future research should deepen participatory, longitudinal, and transnational approaches to capture evolving dynamics and amplify the lived experiences of hijabi women, thereby enriching theory and practice in organizational diversity and inclusion.

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