

Parental Influence in Randa Abdel-Fattah's *Does My Head Look Big in This?*

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the formation of Muslim identity in Amal, a Palestinian-Australian Muslim teenager in Randa Abdel-Fattah's *Does My Head Look Big in This?* Amal has lived in Australia since she was born, raised in a spiritual family within a diasporic setting. The article further addresses the question of how Amal's parents shape her Muslim identity within a multicultural minority-Muslim context. The analysis focuses on the parental influences on Amal's identity formation as a Muslim who is faithful in her decision to wear hijab. This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with textual analysis. The data were collected from narratives and dialogues in the novel that address parental influence and identity formation. The analysis is situated within postcolonial and diasporic perspectives, while Stuart Hall's concept of cultural identity, particularly identity as "being" and "becoming," serves as the primary analytical framework. The findings demonstrate that Amal's parents shape her Muslim identity in three interconnected ways: as keepers of cultural roots, as providers of emotional support, and as mediators in negotiating identity within a multicultural society. These roles give Amal both cultural grounding and emotional strength to face stereotypes and discrimination. The study concludes that parental influence functions as an important foundation for maintaining cultural continuity while helping Muslim adolescents negotiate identity within multicultural diaspora contexts. The study also contributes to postcolonial and diaspora discussions by emphasizing the family as a significant site of identity formation in literary representations of Muslim minority experience.

Keywords: Parental Influence, Identity Formation, Diaspora, Cultural Identity

INTRODUCTION

Parental influence plays an essential role in shaping an individual's identity, especially during adolescence. According to Erikson (1968), identity formation is a process in which individuals develop a clear sense of identity, encompassing cultural, religious, and personal dimensions. The process of forming identity can be supported on the emotional side and through self-guidance within a supportive environment, thus providing a real contribution to parenting activities (Steinberg, 2013). In the novel *Does My Head Look Big in This?* by Randa Abdel-Fattah, the process of identity formation is shown through how Amal's parents educate, support, and navigate her desire to wear the hijab in a multicultural environment that harbors various negative stereotypes about it. This study addresses the question of how Amal's parents shape her Muslim identity within a multicultural minority-Muslim context.

The issue becomes particularly visible through the experiences of Amal, the novel's protagonist. Amal is a 16-year-old Muslim girl of Australian-Palestinian descent who decides

to wear the hijab despite facing various negative stereotypes and discrimination from some people, especially some of her classmates in high school. This decision is a critical moment for her in committing to her identity as a Muslim woman despite the challenges she faces. Set in multicultural Australia, the novel portrays Amal's experiences with discrimination and identity negotiation as a Muslim teenager. In her efforts to balance her faith and the reality of living in a Muslim minority community, she finds strength and support from her family, especially her parents and friends. Amal's parents are portrayed as central figures who have a positive influence, serving as a source of affection, reassurance, appreciation, and spiritual and cultural guidance as they guide Amal through her situation. Their influence helps Amal in her process of identity formation and in remaining faithful to her beliefs despite social prejudice. These aspects form the basis of this study, which explores how parental contributions shape adolescents' identity formation.

In diaspora narratives, identity formation is often discussed through external conflicts such as discrimination, stereotypes, and cultural marginalization. However, the role of the family as an internal space where identity is preserved, negotiated, and emotionally reinforced frequently receives less analytical attention. This makes parental influence an important area of inquiry for understanding how Muslim adolescents maintain religious and cultural identity within multicultural societies.

Several previous studies have examined Randa Abdel-Fattah's *Does My Head Look Big in This?* from diverse perspectives, including identity, faith, hijab representation, stereotypes, and pedagogy. On identity and belonging, Hassan (2022) highlights Amal's reconciliation of her Muslim and ethnic identities with Western realities, while El Ouardi (2022) and Shalaby (2020) emphasize how Amal resists marginalization and negotiates identity through discourse. Similarly, Zin & Mee (2015) and Zannettino (2007) demonstrate how the novel reconfigures racialized and gendered identities in multicultural Australia. Regarding hijab representation, Ali (2021) views the veil as both a spiritual devotion and a form of cultural empowerment, while Chaoui (2023) emphasizes its limits on female agency. Abdulkadir (2015) and Moufida & Fella (2020) further show how hijab and Islamic teachings contribute to Amal's personal growth and mental resilience. Regarding stereotypes and cultural representation, Haines (2015) notes Abdel-Fattah's use of parody to subvert Orientalist views, while Ayudiana & Rokhman (2019) analyze depictions of tolerance and intolerance toward Muslims in Australia. Beyond identity and representation, several scholars also examine the pedagogical dimensions of the novel. Eriksen (2018) and Edvinsson (2011) discuss the novel's pedagogical value, arguing that it effectively promotes intercultural competence, empathy, and critical engagement in the classroom.

From the previous studies above, the researcher found that all studies focus on Randa Abdel-Fattah's novel *Does My Head Look Big in This?* Using various theoretical frameworks to analyze these topics, none of the studies examines explicitly parental influence on the main character's identity formation in this novel. This absence is theoretically significant because discussions of postcolonial identity and diaspora often emphasize public negotiation with dominant culture while paying less attention to the domestic sphere, where cultural continuity is first constructed. Without examining parental roles, identity formation risks being understood primarily as an individual response to multicultural pressure rather than as a relational process shaped through family interaction, emotional support, and cultural transmission. Examining parental influence, therefore, expands postcolonial and diaspora discussions by showing how identity negotiation is sustained not only through resistance to external stereotypes but also through everyday practices within the family.

Thus, this study aims to fill this gap by focusing on the role of Amal's parents in shaping her Muslim identity, highlighting how parenting provides both emotional and cultural guidance. The significance of this study lies in its emphasis on the family as an active site of identity construction within diaspora literature. While multicultural pressure and discrimination often become the primary focus in discussions of Muslim identity, this study highlights how identity is also shaped through intimate domestic relationships that provide cultural continuity, emotional security, and social guidance. Through Amal's relationship with her parents, the novel demonstrates that Muslim identity in diaspora is negotiated not only in public multicultural spaces but also within everyday family interactions. By analyzing parental influence on Amal's identity formation, this research offers a unique perspective on the novel and contributes to broader debates on cultural identity, diaspora, and the role of parental influence in adolescents' personal development in multicultural contexts. In this study, the role of parents is understood through their basic family functions, including cultural transmission, emotional support, and guidance, because these functions are core to identity formation in diaspora Muslim families.

To analyze these dynamics, this study combines postcolonial and diasporic perspectives with Stuart Hall's concept of cultural identity. These frameworks provide a basis for understanding how Muslim identity in diaspora is shaped through the interaction between inherited cultural traditions and the pressures of a multicultural society, particularly within the context of family relationships. This study employs Postcolonial theory as the broader framework for understanding the cultural tensions experienced by minority Muslim communities in Western societies. Within this broader perspective, the concept of diaspora is used to explain the condition of living between inherited cultural traditions and the social realities of a multicultural environment. The primary analytical lens of this study, however, is Stuart Hall's concept of cultural identity, particularly his notions of identity as "being" and "becoming," which are used to analyze how Amal's parents shape her Muslim identity throughout the narrative.

Ashcroft et al. (2013) explain that Postcolonial theory examines how the legacies of colonialism continue to shape culture, politics, and identity. This theory explores how historical power relations and cultural encounters influence individuals living between inherited traditions and the demands of new social contexts. This perspective provides a foundation for analyzing the dynamics of cultural negotiation in diasporic contexts. Building on this perspective, the concept of diaspora becomes central to how migrant communities maintain ties to their cultural heritage while adapting to life in a new environment. In such communities, parents often serve as key figures in passing down language, traditions, and religious values. They also provide emotional and social support to help their children overcome the challenges of negotiating a dual sense of belonging (Ashcroft et al., 2013). Therefore, a diasporic perspective complements postcolonial theory by illustrating how historical and cultural forces are internalized in everyday family practices.

In this study, these three perspectives operate at different, yet interconnected, levels of analysis. Postcolonial theory provides a broader understanding of how Muslim identities are shaped within unequal cultural relations in Western societies. The concept of diaspora narrows this focus to the lived experiences of migrant families as they negotiate continuity and adaptation across cultural spaces. Stuart Hall's concept of cultural identity then functions as the primary framework for textual analysis, particularly through the concepts of identity as "being" and "becoming." Hall (1990) identified two interrelated ways of conceptualizing cultural identity. The first is identity as "being" or shared culture, which emphasizes cultural

roots, collective memory, and the sense of continuity across generations. In this case, parents act as cultural guardians, ensuring their children remain connected to their heritage and develop a sense of pride in their Muslim identity. The second is identity as “becoming” or positioning, which views identity as fluid and constantly in process, shaped through encounters with history and contemporary social realities. Here, parents act as mediators, helping their children navigate between inherited cultural values and the demands of a multicultural society. This notion relates directly to the role of parents in transmitting values while simultaneously providing their children with the space to define themselves within a multicultural environment.

By integrating Postcolonial theory, diaspora perspectives, and Hall’s theorization of cultural identity, this study examines parental influence as both a cultural and relational process. Postcolonial and diasporic perspectives explain the social context in which Amal’s family experiences cultural negotiation as a Muslim minority in Australia, while Hall’s framework provides the primary analytical basis for interpreting how identity is formed through continuity and negotiation. Through this framework, parents are understood not only as transmitters of cultural and religious values but also as mediators who help their children negotiate belonging, discrimination, and self-definition within a multicultural environment.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with textual analysis, focusing on interpreting meanings, dialogues, and narrative representations in literary texts. The study analyzed how parental influence contributes to Amal’s Muslim identity formation in Randa Abdel-Fattah’s *Does My Head Look Big in This?* through the framework of postcolonialism, diaspora, and cultural identity. Secondary sources included journal articles, books on postcolonialism, diaspora, and cultural identity, and previous studies of the novel. These secondary sources were used to support theoretical interpretation and situate the findings within broader discussions of Muslim identity, diaspora, and multiculturalism in literary studies. The researchers served as the primary instrument in this study, serving as the key interpreters of the data. Since this study involved interpretive analysis, the researchers acknowledged their positionality as Muslim scholars examining representations of Muslim identity in literature. To minimize interpretive bias, the analysis focused closely on textual evidence, narrative context, and theoretical consistency rather than personal assumptions or subjective experiences. Interpretations were consistently aligned with Hall’s concept of cultural identity and supported by relevant prior studies on diaspora, Muslim identity, and multicultural negotiation in the novel.

The research was conducted in three steps. First, data collection involved reading the novel to identify quotations, narratives, and dialogues related to parental influence on identity formation. Second, the data were categorized into thematic units such as cultural transmission, emotional support, and mediation of identity negotiations based on the research focus. In total, the researchers identified fifteen textual excerpts related to parental influence and identity formation. These excerpts were then grouped into three thematic categories: cultural transmission (5 excerpts), emotional support (5 excerpts), and identity negotiation (5 excerpts). The categorization process was conducted to ensure that the analysis remained systematically

connected to the research objectives and theoretical framework. Third, data analysis was conducted using textual analysis, in which the selected data were interpreted through the conceptual framework. The interpretation was primarily guided by Stuart Hall's (1990) concept of cultural identity, particularly the notions of identity as "being" and "becoming." These concepts were used to analyze how Amal's parents preserve cultural continuity while simultaneously helping their daughter negotiate identity within a multicultural society. Postcolonial and diasporic perspectives were used to contextualize the broader cultural tensions surrounding Muslim identity in Australia.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that parental influence plays a central role in shaping Amal's Muslim identity within a multicultural diaspora context. Drawing on Hall's (1990) concepts of "being" and "becoming," this study argues that Amal's parents contribute to identity formation through three interconnected roles: as keepers of cultural roots, as providers of emotional support, and as mediators in identity negotiation. These roles illustrate that identity in diaspora is not formed solely through external encounters with multicultural society, but also through everyday family practices that preserve cultural continuity while preparing individuals to negotiate social pressures and stereotypes.

PARENTS AS KEEPER OF CULTURAL ROOTS

Within Hall's (1990) framework, cultural identity as "being" refers to the continuity of shared cultural roots maintained across generations. In diaspora communities, this continuity is often preserved through everyday domestic practices such as language, food, religious rituals, and family traditions. In the novel, Amal's parents function as cultural guardians who sustain Palestinian Muslim identity within a multicultural Australian environment.

Amal's parents played a crucial role in shaping their child's identity. One way they did this was by maintaining their native Palestinian cultural values and traditions amidst the diaspora. This did not have to be a major doctrine; instead, it could be conveyed through small, repetitive daily activities, such as language, rituals, food, and religious symbols. Thus, their home served as a place where these traditional values were preserved, gradually forming the foundation of Amal's identity, despite living in a predominantly non-Muslim Australia.

First, Amal's parents use Arabic at home as their daily language to maintain their cultural heritage. Although English is still spoken, some Arabic vocabulary naturally forms part of their daily conversations.

"Even though my parents speak to me predominantly in English there are some Arabic words which part of their everyday vocabulary are instinctively. Yallah means "come on" or "hurry up". When my parents are in a particularly affectionate mood they sometimes prefix my name with ya so I'm "ya Amal", which means "oh Amal" (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 29).

In the quote, short words such as "Yallah," which means "Hurry up," and also the term "ya Amal," which means "Oh Amal", show that the influence of their original culture still plays a role in their family's original identity, namely being of Palestinian blood, even though they live as a diaspora community in Australia.

Second, besides Arabic, which is still used, traditional Middle Eastern dishes are also preserved and served during guest visits or family gatherings.

“My mother has gone all out tonight. She’s cooked a Palestinian dish called mansaf, basically rice mixed with pieces of chicken and pine nuts, dressed with a hot yoghurt soup. It’s in a plate that has the circumference of a semi-trailer tyre. She’s also made a massive bowl of fatoosh, salad topped with pieces of bread dipped in olive oil, with side dishes of pickled cucumber, radish and chillies, minced meat pastries and warak aneb, which are vine leaves stuffed with spicy rice. Everybody’s digging in when my mum announces that I’ve decided to wear hijab.” (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 89).

Palestinian cuisine here is a symbol of the sustainability of the original culture despite living in a new environment where the Muslim minority is present. It is shown in the description of the food’s form, as a detail of the purity of Amal’s parents’ culinary delights from their country of origin. It refers to how Amal’s parents became cultural guardians by introducing homeland traditions to their daughter.

Third, one of the religious symbols that they preserve is the hijab, which was introduced to Amal. As parents, they taught Amal that the hijab is a symbol of Muslim identity and not just a piece of cloth worn on the head. This quote occurs when Amal refers to the hijab as a piece of material. “What’s the big deal? It’s a piece of material.” My mother snorts. “Since when do people see it as a mere piece of material? You and I both know that’s being a tad optimistic, ya Amal.” (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 30). This quote occurs when Amal underestimates the Hijab, treating it as a piece of cloth that, in context, does not affect her. However, her mother explained that the hijab is more than just a piece of fabric, but rather a religious symbol that has profound social and cultural consequences when worn. The hijab has its own influence, especially in Muslim communities living in multicultural environments. This conversation shows that they are also educating Amal about the historical significance of religious practices, using the hijab as an example.

Fourth, other religious symbols in this novel’s narrative include ritual worship activities, such as Ramadan. Ramadan means aligning with the fasting worship taught by Amal’s parents.

“Ramadan begins. We wake up at 3.45 a.m. to eat our suhoor, our predawn meal. I can’t really stomach more than a slice of toast and a hot drink. My dad insists that I drink tea as it quenches the thirst. I remember my first Ramadan fast. I’d begged my mum to let me fast from dawn until dusk, like the grown-ups.” (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 271).

This passage explains how religious ritual scenes have become part of the family’s culture and must be preserved. Amal’s parents also taught her to fast as a small, ongoing spiritual practice. It shaped Amal’s Muslim identity as a resilient Muslim who adheres to her culture and religious values even in the diaspora.

Fifth, the celebration of major Islamic holidays, such as Eid al-Fitr, further underscores parents’ role as guardians of Palestinian culture and traditions.

“The first day of Eid al-Fitr falls on a Tuesday in the last week of school. I wake up early with Mum and Dad and pray the Fajr. We don’t go back to sleep. We read the Koran together in our pyjamas for an hour and then we

watch the sunrise from our veranda over cups of sweet mint tea. We have a couple of hours until we go to the mosque for the Eid prayers.” (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 287).

This scene illustrates how Amal’s parents taught her that after praying, they should not sleep again but read the Koran together, even though they were still in their pyjamas. They shape Amal’s identity as a Muslim teenage girl, steadfast and determined to be good. The practice of this religious ritual is a form of continuing cultural preservation, even though they are in an environment where the majority are non-Muslim.

Overall, the role of Amal’s parents as guardians of the culture and traditions of their homeland, as Muslim Palestinians, can be reflected in several aspects, including language, cuisine, religious symbols, and worship rituals. It shows that small practices carried out daily can have an impact on how children respond and influence the formation of their identity, so that they do not lose their roots as Palestinian Muslims even though they live in Australia. This finding extends Hassan’s (2022) discussion of Muslim identity negotiation by emphasizing that identity formation is shaped not only by external multicultural encounters but also by repeated family practices within the domestic sphere. Similarly, Zin and Mee (2015) argue that Muslim adolescents in the novel negotiate identity through cultural continuity, specifically through parental transmission of language, food traditions, and religious rituals. According to Hall (1990), these practices express identity as “being,” a cultural continuity passed down from generation to generation. It is the role of parents, as guardians of cultural values, to ensure that their children remain connected to their traditional roots, even as they grow up in a diaspora environment. The role of immigrant parents is very influential in the formation of the national and cultural identity of second-generation children, primarily through efforts to preserve language as an integral part of cultural heritage, where the emphasis on language maintenance at home is an important factor supporting the creation of a balanced bicultural identity (Loh et al., 2024).

PARENTS AS A SOURCE OF EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

While cultural continuity strengthens Amal’s sense of identity as “being,” emotional support enables identity as “becoming,” in which identity develops through social experience and negotiation. Hall (1990) emphasizes that identity is continuously shaped through interaction with surrounding realities. In this context, Amal’s parents provide emotional security that helps her negotiate discrimination, stereotypes, and social pressures as a Muslim teenager in a multicultural society.

In addition to being guardians of tradition, Amal’s parents also serve as crucial providers of emotional support. Emotional support itself serves as a child’s self-reinforcement, particularly in providing a sense of security, affection, and validation for their daughter’s choices. As a Muslim teenager living in a Muslim-minority environment, Amal is often viewed negatively by non-Muslims for wearing the hijab. These are Amal’s parents, who not only instilled religious values but also created a stable emotional environment where Amal felt appreciated, embraced, and loved. It makes her home a safe space where Amal’s identity is nurtured and strengthened before she faces the outside world.

Amal’s decision to wear the hijab full-time became a turning point in the emotional support that ensued. When Amal expressed her intention to wear the hijab on the first day after the holidays, namely in the first grade of high school, her father responded warmly and attentively, “Ya Amal, calm down,” my dad says, smiling at me. “We’ll support you, but you

have to think this through. Are you sure you are ready to cope with such a huge change in your life?" (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 30). This quote shows how Amal's father supports her decision to wear the hijab full-time, but he still worries about the social consequences his daughter will face if she does. This attitude reflects a form of protective parental love, in which parents give their children space to make their own choices while still acting as protectors. Amal's parents want to prepare her mentally for when she actually decides to wear the hijab full-time in a multicultural environment.

While the debate about the hijab was going on, Amal's mother responded not with lengthy arguments, but with a hug: "My parents don't say anything for a couple of seconds, and then my mum pulls me into a hug." (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 30). At the same time, when Amal and her parents were arguing about Amal's desire to wear the hijab, her mother responded not with a lengthy argument but with a hug. Her mother knew that her daughter's choice was a good one, but she could not deny that she was still worried because she did not want Amal to be marginalized by the society around her. Amal needed emotional reassurance and validation from her parents. Emotional support also comes in the form of public affirmation. After Amal won the debate competition at her school, her parents celebrated with pride.

"My parents take me out for gelato in Lygon Street and make me feel even better, if that's possible. So articulate, ya Amal. So persuasive. So confident. So needing a bigger scarf now that my head has expanded and is blocking the car's rear window." (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 266).

This praise was not just a lighthearted joke, but rather a validation that connected Amal's academic achievements to her identity. Her parents not only celebrated her academic accomplishments but also associated them with family pride, which strengthened Amal's confidence in wearing the hijab in public.

Parental support was also clearly visible when Amal experienced an emotional crisis before the debate competition began. Her mother calmed her down with words of encouragement, making Amal feel much better. It is safe to say that emotional support can have a profound impact on an individual. "You're so silly, ya Amal. You can do anything you want; don't you know that? You're going to make us proud up there. It will only be a problem if you make it one" (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 261). The dialogue reflects Amal's mother offering encouraging words when she was feeling down. However, with this motivation, Amal felt not only revived but also validated in her feelings. Amal's mother emphasized that her daughter was capable of overcoming challenges and that whatever the outcome, she would remain a source of pride for the family. This verbal emotional support strengthened Amal's courage to appear with her Muslim identity, namely, wearing a hijab in public spaces where her non-Muslim school friends often discriminated against her.

Furthermore, parental emotional support is not only present during significant moments but also in small, everyday actions. For example, when Amal feels stressed, her mother offers her patience. "She doesn't say anything, just hugs me tightly and gently helps me into the car." (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 261). This simple act shows how parents normalize affection as a response to emotional stress. Physical and emotional presence becomes a psychological fortress that protects Amal from feeling alienated in her social environment.

The search for identity in adolescents can be shaped by various forms of emotional support, such as words, hugs, or recognition from parents. Amal's parents provide a safe space that fosters their daughter's confidence in overcoming challenges. This finding supports Abdulkadir's (2015) argument that Islamic values in the novel contribute to Amal's personal

growth and resilience. However, this study further demonstrates that such resilience is reinforced not only through religious teachings but also through emotional validation and affection provided by parents in everyday interactions. Within Hall's (1990) theoretical framework, this emotional support allows Amal to move from an identity as a being (inherited cultural and religious roots) to a becoming (a process of negotiation in a multicultural society). Her identity can develop because she has a solid emotional foundation at home, making her better prepared to face external challenges. Thus, parents, as a source of emotional support, can help Amal in her journey of identity formation. The mediating role of parental support in the relationship between bicultural acceptance and self-esteem among multicultural adolescents confirms that integrated cultural acceptance, supported by parental involvement, contributes to healthy psychological development, underscoring the importance of developing policies and conducting further research to strengthen parent-child relationships and enhance adolescent self-esteem (Um, 2024).

PARENTS AS MEDIATORS IN IDENTITY NEGOTIATIONS

Hall's concept of identity as "becoming" highlights identity as an ongoing process shaped through negotiation with historical and social realities. In diaspora settings, parents often mediate between inherited traditions and the demands of a multicultural society. In the novel, Amal's parents do not impose identity rigidly but guide their daughter in negotiating the challenges of wearing the hijab within a predominantly non-Muslim environment.

In addition to preserving the roots of cultural traditions for the next generation and providing emotional support for their daughter, Amal's parents also play an important role as mediators in their daughter's identity negotiation process. Living in a non-Muslim majority country, Australia, Amal faced negative stereotypes when she began wearing the hijab, leading to discrimination from most of her schoolmates. Parents play a significant role in helping Amal remain steadfast in Islamic values while adapting to social expectations in a multicultural school and society. In this situation, parents act as mediators, balancing tradition and social demands. They did not force Amal to continue wearing the hijab or not but gave her space to examine her own choices while still guiding her in facing the consequences. In this way, the family becomes a safe space and not a space of coercion.

One form of mediation was seen when her mother suggested a trial period of wearing the hijab to see how Amal felt about it, given various societal views. "How about you give it a go until Monday?" (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 30). This scene comes after Amal expresses her desire to wear a hijab at a multicultural school with a Muslim minority. Instead of opposing or immediately agreeing, her mother suggested a gradual approach, namely, wearing the hijab for a few days first. This suggestion serves as a practical mediation to train Amal to navigate new situations without immediately falling into long-term pressure. It demonstrates how parents use transitional strategies to help children maintain their traditions while preparing them for the social realities of Australia. Mediation is also seen when the father adds a more challenging element by presenting a real social arena in Amal's trial of wearing the hijab.

"So how about we go for a test run tonight?" Mum asks me. "Let's go to Chadstone." My dad snorts. "How did I know you'd suggest that? It's your second home. Jamila, Amal normally takes an hour to get ready when she goes to Chadstone. If she can cope with Chadstone, she can cope with anything." (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 31).

This excerpt depicts a family discussion about Amal's readiness to wear the hijab in public. Chadstone is a large shopping mall in Melbourne, described as a social arena full of stares and interactions with strangers. By bringing Amal into a crowded public space, her parents provide her with a real-life simulation to prepare her for public reactions. This mediation is not only symbolic but also a social exercise in which the parents connect the religious value of wearing the hijab with the practicalities of adapting to a multicultural public space.

Her parents also helped Amal deal with the social consequences of her decision. Her father asked her if she was mentally prepared. "Why are you doing it if you know what you're up for? Are you mentally prepared for the staring and small-minded stereotyping and misconceptions?" (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 51). The interaction indicates a serious family discussion about the parents' response to Amal's desire to start wearing the hijab full-time. Amal's father did not immediately reject his daughter's wishes, but instead asked her gently but firmly whether she was ready to accept all the risks of wearing the hijab in a multicultural environment dominated by non-Muslims. Mental readiness is an essential requirement for Amal from her parents, considering the reality of discrimination and negative stereotypes that exist. It also served as a way to educate and train Amal in anticipating external pressures. As a mediator, Amal's father sought to balance support and realistic readiness so that the decision to wear the hijab was not merely a symbol of faith but also a mature action.

The mother added a broader structural perspective, "You see how people react and look at me, at my age! You're still young and starting out. You've got university and then looking for a job. Have you thought all of it through?" (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 51). This statement followed her father's emphasis on mental preparedness. This conversation reflects the family's thoughts on the long-term impact of wearing the hijab, not only at school, but also in education and employment. By linking her personal experience of how others view her to Amal's future, the mother places her daughter's decision in a broader structural framework. This mediation demonstrates the role of parents as interpreters of their experiences, not only supporting but also teaching their children to weigh the social and economic consequences of religious identity.

In the end, Amal's father simplified the entire debate with one key question: "It's really very simple, Amal. All your mum and I need to know is one thing. Are you convinced?" (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 51). This quote marks the climax of a family discussion about Amal's desire to wear the hijab. After considering social risks, personal experiences, and long-term consequences, the parents left the decision to Amal herself. This sentence demonstrates ethical mediation: for the parents, the most important thing is their child's choice, despite the risks discussed. In other words, Amal's chosen identity must come from within herself, not from external coercion.

Through this series of interactions, it is clear that Amal's parents act as mediators in navigating their child's identity. They provide transition strategies in the form of short-term trials, simulations of wearing the hijab in public places, such as Chadstone, realistic reflections on social challenges, and an emphasis on the child's final personal choices. All of this shape how Amal learns to negotiate her identity in a multicultural society full of negative stereotypes about people who wear the hijab. This finding complements El Ouadi's (2022) discussion of identity negotiation by demonstrating that negotiation occurs not only through public discourse but also through family mediation within domestic spaces. The study also supports Zannettino's (2007) argument that Muslim identity in multicultural Australia is shaped through continuous interaction between cultural tradition and dominant social expectations. Within

Hall's framework, identity is understood both as "being," which refers to continuity with cultural roots and inherited traditions, and as "becoming," which refers to the ongoing negotiation of identity through social experience. By acting as mediators, Amal's parents maintain cultural continuity while also creating space for their daughter to negotiate her identity within a multicultural society. Parents who actively engage in cultural socialization by encouraging children's interaction in co-ethnic environments and instilling positive values about their culture of origin play an important role in shaping the stability of ethnic identity and self-esteem in adolescents in the long term (Wang et al., 2019).

Taken together, these three parental roles demonstrate that identity formation in diaspora is neither entirely inherited nor entirely self-constructed. Within Hall's framework, Amal's Muslim identity develops through the interaction between "being," reflected in the preservation of Palestinian and Islamic cultural roots, and "becoming," reflected in her ongoing negotiation of identity within a multicultural society. Through cultural transmission, emotional support, and mediation, Amal's parents function not only as guardians of cultural continuity but also as facilitators who help her navigate external pressures, stereotypes, and social expectations as a Muslim adolescent in Australia.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study highlights the significant role of parental influence in shaping Amal's Muslim identity in *Does My Head Look Big in This?* Amal's parents function not only as keepers of cultural roots but also as providers of emotional support and mediators in negotiating identity within a multicultural diaspora context. Through Hall's concepts of "being" and "becoming," the study demonstrates that Amal's identity develops through the interaction between cultural continuity and social negotiation. Thus, the study contributes to postcolonial and diaspora discussions by emphasizing the family as an important site where cultural identity is preserved, negotiated, and adapted within minority-Muslim experiences in multicultural societies.

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