

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Research

The issue of discrimination against minorities or subgroups has drawn public attention recently, as people around the world who get discredited share their experiences publicly or through academic papers. A news article published by *Harvard Gazette* in 2021 written by Liz Minoe entitled "Born to Take on Islamophobia." Liz recounts an experience shared by Anan Hafez, who came of age during a time of increasing anti-Muslim sentiment in the United States. Anan Hafez recounted several incidents that targeted his Muslim acquaintances, such as homes being vandalized with spray paint, car windows being smashed, and women having their headscarves forcibly removed by strangers. Another experience is from Samia Omar, the first female Muslim chaplain at Harvard University, who also shared her experience of being verbally abused for wearing a hijab. The last thing that Liz pointed out is that although universities and colleges in the United States incorporate Islam into their curriculums, it is not seen as an object of study but rather as a security risk.

Another article that related to the Muslim experience was published by *Stanford University: School of Humanities and Sciences* entitled "The Muslim Experience in Post-9/11 America." Authored by Rachel M. Gillum in 2020, a researcher at the Immigration Policy Lab at the Stanford Institute for Research in the Social Sciences, the article highlights the findings from her research with The Muslim American National Opinion Survey (MANOS). The study revealed that

American-born Muslims expect the government to uphold its commitments to fairness, equality, and fair legal proceedings. The article shows that there is still injustice toward minority groups in America, even from the American government itself.

The discussion over the Muslim minority in America continues in children's literature. According to a journal article written by Ismail (2023) entitled "Children's Literature: The Significance and Other Impacts" in *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, he explains that children's literature refers to books that are written with the aim of entertaining children while also imparting knowledge that will have a long-lasting impact for children (595). In America, a variety of children's books have emerged that represent minority groups and showcase their diversity in culture, religion, ethnicity, and more. These books can be classified as multicultural literature or children's books that promote cultural diversity. According to Fran Levin (2007), in his journal article entitled "Encouraging Ethical Respect Through Multicultural Literature" in *The Reading Teacher*, he explains that multicultural literature is a vital resource for children in comprehending the world around them; multicultural literature provides them with insights into various cultures, religions, ethnicities, and minority groups, helping them to develop mutual respect and understanding for others in the future (10). It is crucial to introduce children to books that discuss minority groups or diverse cultures. This helps to prevent any misunderstandings or assumptions that may lead to discrimination or racism towards certain groups in the future due to limited knowledge about other people.

There are different types of children's books that are currently available. It is important to identify the appropriate age range and target audience for each book. One of the categories is picture books, which are specifically designed for kids aged 2 to 8. These books typically contain mostly illustrations and simple stories. Chapter books, on the other hand, are designed for children ages 7 to 9, with longer stories and more complex language. These books are usually divided into chapters for better comprehension. Lastly, Middle-grade books, like the books used in this research, are classified as middle-grade books and are for children aged 9 to 12, with stories about friendship and love that typically contain 20,000–40,000 words. Young adult books, targeted at readers aged 12-18 and 16-25, can be either fiction or non-fiction, and can cover any genre, such as crime or romance. These books usually have 40,000-80,000 words.

The writer uses two middle-grade books as the main object of this study *Amina's Voice* and *Amina's Song*. According to an article published by *The Washington Post* entitled “Best Children's Books of 2017”, *Amina's Voice* was successfully recognized by *The Washington Post* as one of the best children's books of 2017 because Hana Khan's storytelling has a profound impact on readers, evoking the same emotions that Amina experienced in the story further; *Amina's Voice* success brings everyone joy and sympathy for Amina and her Muslim community (Barron). Hena Khan, the author of *Amina's Voice* and *Amina's Song*, is an American-Pakistani children's book author. She was born and raised in America. As a Muslim author, she has authored several picture books, including *Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns*, *Under My Hijab*, *Crescent Moons*, and *Like the Moon Loves the Sky*. Many children's books have been written by

Hena Khan, with many of her works featuring Muslim and Pakistani characters, such as *Power Forward*, *On Point*, and *Bounce Back*. This middle-grade book series follows the story of Zayd Saleem, a young Pakistani Muslim boy who dreams of becoming the first of his kind to join the NBA. These books also offer readers a unique insight into the challenges faced by Muslims in their daily lives.

Amina's Voice is a story about Amina, the main character of the book, she is a girl who was born and grew up in America but often faced bullying from her classmates because of her background as a Muslim and Pakistani descent. The book recounts Amina's experiences, including her struggles to make friends at school and how others perceive her. One of the most impactful events in Amina's life was when her mosque was vandalized by unknown individuals, who also labeled Muslims as terrorists. This incident left Amina and her Muslim community in a state of shock. That experience hurt her and the Muslim because they did not do anything that hurt others, but still people hate them.

While in *Amina's Song*, the story begins with Amina having a chance to travel to Pakistan during the school holidays to visit her relative there. This journey gives her an opportunity to learn more about Pakistani culture and her family's origins. Upon returning home to America, Amina shares her experiences and newfound knowledge of Pakistani culture with her friends. Then the storyline continues to uncover how Amina and her Muslim community prove themselves to people who misunderstand her culture and religion. And she tries hard to show them that their perspective about Muslims and Pakistan is wrong. Amina said that Muslims and Pakistanis are not just about going to Masjid and wearing a hijab. However, there are also people from Pakistan who could make a big change in the

world, like Malala Yousafzai, a female Muslim from Pakistan who won the Nobel Peace Prize.

Compared to *Amina's Voice*, a unique aspect of *Amina's Song* is that Hena Khan focuses on how Amina deals with her issues in this book. In contrast, *Amina's Voice* simply narrates Amina's various experiences without emphasizing how she overcame them. In addition, in *Amina's song*, Amina gains a new perspective on her cultural origins during her visit to Pakistan. She also meets Zohra, who has a different perspective on America. After arguing with Zohra regarding America, she eventually realized how people from other countries perceive America. Upon her return to America, she already gained more knowledge about her cultural origins. These collective experiences helped her to more mature and become better equipped to deal with issues related to diversity that she still struggles with. In general, these two books, *Amina's Voice* and *Amina's Song*, address the challenges faced by Muslim minorities in America, primarily from Amina's perspective, who still struggle to overcome diversity issues when they live in America.

The definition of a *minority* is a subgroup that differs from a majority group in terms of its distinct social, religious, ethnic, racial, or other features (Perkins and Wely 1192). Pakistani is not the majority in America as well as the religion of Islam. *Pew Research Center* published an article in 2021 written by Basher Mohamed entitled "Muslims Are a Growing Presence in U.S., but Still Face Negative Views from the Public". According to the article, there is a growing Muslim population in the United States, with approximately 2.3 million Muslims currently residing in the country. Unfortunately, despite this increase in

numbers, some Muslims still face discrimination. It is evident that Muslims and Pakistanis living in America constitute a minority group that still encounters adverse incidents due to their religious beliefs and ethnic background.

During her interview with *NBCNews* in 2017, Hena Khan revealed that the character Amina was inspired by her own experience as a Muslim Pakistani who was born and raised in the United States. *Amina's Voice* and *Amina's Song* are two of Hena Khan's most notable literary works. *Amina's Voice* is a collection of stories about the experiences of Amina, a young Muslim girl from Pakistan, while in *Amina Song*, the story continues by showing Amina's fight to encounter negative sentiment towards her culture and Islam religion in America. Hena Khan, who authored both books, not only tells a story about the experiences of Muslims and Pakistanis as a minority in America but also demonstrates how to combat these challenges through the life of Amina. Based on the explanation above, the purpose of this research is to explore the experiences of the Pakistani Muslim minority depicted in *Amina's Voice* and *Amina's Song*, including how they tackle discrimination and racism against them and what the cultural values of the Pakistani Muslim minority are promoted by Hena Khan in *Amina's Voice* and *Amina's Song*.

1.2. Identification of the Problems

Hena Khan once said that Amina, the story's main character, was inspired by her own experience. Through her books, Hena Khan hopes that her books will inspire individuals who have faced discrimination due to their differences to unite and confront their challenges. *Amina's Voice* and *Amina's Song* are two of Hena Khan's books that delve into the experiences of the Muslim minority residing in

the United States of America. Through this research, the writer wants to discover the kinds of experiences that have been through by Pakistani Muslims, as a minority in the said novels. Secondly, the writer investigates the solution to the problems experienced by the Pakistani Muslim minority through multiculturalism in the said novels. Lastly, the writer wants to find out how the author promotes the culture of Pakistani Muslims in the said novels. To analyze these books, the writer uses multiculturalism to find out how to deal with diverse people and how to overtake discrimination.

1.3. Review of Related Literature

The first is from a journal article by Nelly Trisna Raja Guk-Guk and Mike Wijaya entitled “Multiculturalism Values in Hena Khan’s *Amina’s Voice*.” (*Dialektika: Journal Bahasa, Sastra dan Budaya*, Vol. 8, No. 2(2021), pp. 153-163). This journal uses a multiculturalism approach to find a multiculturalism value that appears in Amina's life. The authors of this journal point out six values of multiculturalism, such as learning in diversity, mutual understanding, mutual trust, mutual respect, interdependence, and open-mindedness. These multicultural values have successfully transformed Amina's family's perspective from one of a conservative family that is very strict about Islam and Pakistani culture to one that can accept and respect the diversity in society.

This journal differs from the writer's research because this journal only uses *Amina's Voice* as the primary source. In contrast, the writer in this research uses both books that serve the complete story of Amina's life which are *Amina's Voice* and *Amina's Song*. Amina's journey to overcome her problem as a Muslim minority in America does not end in the book *Amina's Voice*. Her journey

continues into a new chapter in *Amina's Song* as she already has more knowledge about her cultural origin, has met various people during her trips to Pakistan, and has already had many experiences that shape her into an individual who is more aware of social dynamics and issues. Therefore, this research will be completely different from the writer's analysis, as this journal only uses *Amina's voice*, or half of Amina's journey, as the main object of this journal.

The second is from an undergraduate thesis written by Umi Kulsum (2022), entitled "Being an Immigrant and a Moslem: A Social Identity Analysis of Hena Khan's *Amina's Voice*." In this study, Umi Kulsum used the social identity theory proposed by Tafel in 1978. Umi Kulsum divides social identity into three categories in her research: social identification, social comparison, and social interaction. From her analysis, she found that the Amina family believes that their group is better than others, and they strictly defend their group from others. It makes them closed-minded, and its results make them have no significant changes in language, accent, or behavior despite living in America for a long time. And because of that, Amina and her community often face discrimination.

This thesis gives the writer new insight into Amina's family because Umi Kulsum reveals new facts about why Amina and her community often face discrimination. This undergraduate research uses social identity as the main theory of this analysis, which is different from the writer's analysis. Furthermore, this research is totally different from the Wirters analysis as this research only focuses on the analysis of *Amina's Voice*, which is not the complete experience of Amina. There are many aspects that Hena Khan reveals in the sequel book of *Amina's Voice*, such as the development of Amina's character after she meets

various people and has many experiences in the past. It shapes her into a different person compared to when he was in *Amina's Voice* and had not yet traveled to Pakistan. Therefore, the writer's analysis will offer a totally different result, as many aspects of this undergraduate research differ from the writer's analysis, such as the theory that was used and the main object of this research, as the writer uses both books *Amina's Voice* and *Amina's Song* and this researcher only uses *Amina's Voice*.

The third is from a journal article written by Rika Handayani entitled "Being Muslim Immigrants in America: Preservation, Resistance, and Negotiation of Identity in Ayad Akhtar's 'American Dervish'" (*Vivid: Journal of Language and Literature* - Vol. 9 No. 2 (2020)). In this journal, the author uses the theory of identity by Stuart Hall and Diasporas by James Clifford. Rika Handayani focuses on the three main analyses in the *American Dervish* such as preservation, resistance, and negotiation. The Muslim family in the novel tries to retain their faith or beliefs by making limitations on interacting with other religions. Furthermore, as time passed, they realized they could not ignore others because they lived among diverse people with diverse religions, cultures, and races. The novel of the *American Dervish* has a similarity with *Amina's Voice* and *Amina's Voice*, where religion and culture become the main concerns. Amina's parents try hard to ask and remind Amina to keep her native identity. Amina's parents do that because various religions and cultures surround Amina's life.

The fourth comes from Hasbi Anwar's journal article entitled "The Strategy of Muslim Communities in Encountering Islamophobia in the United States." (*Afkaruana: Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol.

17, No. 1(2021), pp. 80-97). He stated that because of the impact of Islamophobia, many Muslims in America face discrimination, harassment, humiliation, and violence. Muslims do not keep silent when facing various phobias against their religion. Many Muslim communities in the US, including mosque communities and Muslim leaders, play the same role in correcting and educating people about Islam. As a result, the efforts of these Muslim organizations are gradually having a positive impact. Muslims in this country keep growing year by year. Yes, Islamophobia is still a negative sentiment in America, but as time passes, this perception can be overtaken by showing them what true Islam is. In the end, Islamophobia can be gradually eliminated in America. This journal is essential to give new insight to the writes the condition of Muslims in America.

The last is from a journal article by Smit, Johannes A., and Denzil, Chetty, entitled "Debunking Marvel Comics' First Pakistani-American Born Muslim Female Superhero: Reading Religion, Race, and Gender in Ms. Marvel (Kamala Khan)." (*African Journal Gender and Religion*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (2020), pp. 1-24). The author of this journal uses social constructionism to conduct this study. In this journal, he describes a girl named Kamala Khan, who became a Marvel superhero. Kamala Khan is a young Muslim girl from Pakistan who lives in America. She is the first Muslim female superhero from Marvel Comics. Furthermore, issues discussed in this journal are related to religion, race, and gender. G. Willow Wilson, the author of the Ms. Marvel comic book, is a Muslim from Pakistan. In his interview on the Late Night Show with Seth Mayer, he said that when he created Ms. Marvel (Kamala Khan), it came from his personal experience as a Muslim who struggles to live in America, he also said he wanted to promote

Muslim women and those who are underrepresented (10). This journal gives the writer a new perspective on Muslims in America from another story. The writer sees similarities between Kamala Khan and Amina because their fighting is commonly the same as Pakistani Muslims, who struggle in life in America.

1.4. Research Questions

The main focus of this research is the experience of Muslims and Pakistani culture represented in *Amina's Voice* and *Amina's Song*. The investigated questions are:

1. What are the experiences of Pakistani Muslims as a minority in *Amina's Voice* and *Amina's Song* by Hena Khan?
2. In the books *Amina's Voice* and *Amina's Song* by Hena Khan, how does multiculturalism address the challenges Pakistani Muslims face as a minority?
3. What are the cultures of the Pakistani Muslim minority promoted by Hena Khan in *Amina's Voice* and *Amina's Song* ?

1.5. Scope of the Research

In this research, the writer only pays attention to the Muslim minority experiences presented in Hena Khan's books, namely *Amina's Voice* and *Amina's Song*. Therefore, the study is limited to three discussions related to the topic. Firstly, the writer discusses the kinds of experiences that have been through by Pakistani Muslims as a minority in the said novels. Secondly, the writer investigates the solutions to the problems experienced by the Pakistani Muslim minority through multiculturalism in the said novels. Lastly, the writer wants to

find out how the author promotes the culture of Pakistani Muslims in the said novels.

1.6. The Objectives of the Research

This research discusses the experiences of the Pakistani Muslim minority in the middle of American society and how multiculturalism helps them solve their diversity problems, as presented in Hena Khan's books entitled *Amina Voice* and *Amina's Song*. There are three objectives of this research. The first objective is to reveal the experiences of the Pakistani Muslim minority as portrayed in both books. The second objective is to investigate the role of multiculturalism in solving the problems experienced by the Pakistani Muslim minority in the diversity of American society in both books. The last objective is to discover the promotion of Pakistani Muslim cultures depicted by the author in her books.

