



Negotiating Belonging Through Art: Psychological Distress and Resilience Among Young Muslim Artists Across Contexts

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ABSTRACT

This review synthesizes research on “Psychological challenges faced by young Muslim artists in reconciling personal artistic inclinations with religious identity” to address the complex interplay between creative expression and religious self-conception amid socio-cultural tensions. The review aimed to evaluate psychological tensions, benchmark identity negotiation strategies, identify socio-cultural influences on mental health, deconstruct art’s coping functions, and compare thematic patterns across diverse contexts. A systematic analysis of interdisciplinary qualitative and mixed-method studies from Western countries, South Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East was conducted, focusing on identity conflicts, discrimination, and artistic agency. Findings reveal predominant identity fragmentation and discrimination-related psychological distress, with artists employing hybrid identities and performative self-representation to negotiate tensions. Artistic expression functions as both a coping mechanism and political resistance, fostering psychological resilience and identity coherence. Socio-cultural and religious norms, alongside pervasive Islamophobia, critically shape mental health outcomes and artistic practices. The synthesis highlights methodological limitations including sample representativeness and underexplored intersectionality, while emphasizing geographic variability in experiences. These findings underscore the need for longitudinal, culturally nuanced research and targeted support frameworks that integrate artistic freedom with religious identity, informing theoretical models and practical interventions to enhance well-being among young Muslim artists globally.

INTRODUCTION

Research on the psychological challenges faced by young Muslim artists in reconciling personal artistic inclinations with religious identity has emerged as a critical area of inquiry due to its implications for identity formation, mental health, and cultural expression in increasingly multicultural societies (Ralph & Gibson, 2021; Stuart & Ward, 2016). Over the past two decades, scholarship has evolved from focusing on broad Muslim identity negotiations post-9/11 (Sirin & Fine, 2007) to more nuanced explorations of artistic self-representation and intersectionality within diasporic contexts (Soliman, 2019; Bowker, 2019).

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This field holds social and theoretical significance as young Muslim artists navigate complex pressures from religious doctrines, community expectations, and secular art worlds (Basak, 2017; Kuppinger, 2017). For instance, studies report that Muslim youth often experience discrimination and identity conflict, with mental health outcomes linked to these tensions (Murtaza, 2020; Salma & Hasaniyah, 2024). The growing visibility of Muslim artists in global art scenes underscores the practical importance of understanding these psychological challenges (Yildiz, 2024; Barylo, 2025).

The specific problem addressed is the tension young Muslim artists face between authentic artistic expression and adherence to religious identity, which remains underexplored in psychological literature (Ralph & Gibson, 2021; Termeer, 2016). Despite increasing research on Muslim identity and youth acculturation (Abo-Zena, 2019; Stuart & Ward, 2016), there is a knowledge gap concerning how these artists negotiate conflicting demands from religious norms, cultural expectations, and creative freedom (Basak, 2017; Hussain, 2010; Azni & Yusoff, 2019). Competing perspectives exist: some scholars emphasize restrictive religious interpretations limiting artistic practices (Basak, 2017), while others highlight artists' agency in redefining Muslim identity through art (Alhourani, 2018; Salzbrunn, 2020). The consequences of this gap include insufficient mental health support tailored to these artists' unique experiences and a lack of frameworks to foster their creative and spiritual reconciliation (Murtaza, 2020; Ahsan & Williams, 2022).

This review adopts a conceptual framework integrating identity negotiation, religious-cultural intersectionality, and artistic self-representation (Ralph & Gibson, 2021; Soliman, 2019; Termeer, 2016). Identity negotiation refers to the dynamic process by which individuals reconcile multiple social identities (Stuart & Ward, 2016). Intersectionality highlights how religious and cultural identities intersect with gender and ethnicity to shape experiences (Suparti, 2022). Artistic self-representation involves the use of creative expression as a medium for identity articulation and psychological coping (Jiwa, 2010). This framework guides the examination of how young Muslim artists manage psychological challenges in balancing personal artistry and religious identity.

The purpose of this systematic review is to synthesize existing empirical and theoretical literature to elucidate the psychological challenges young Muslim artists face in reconciling their artistic inclinations with religious identity (Ralph & Gibson, 2021; Termeer, 2016). By addressing the identified knowledge gap, this review contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of identity formation processes and informs culturally sensitive mental health interventions and artistic support mechanisms (Murtaza, 2020; Ahsan & Williams, 2022). It also advances scholarship on Muslim diasporic youth by foregrounding the role of art as a site of negotiation and resilience (Yildiz, 2024; Salzbrunn, 2020).

This review employs a qualitative synthesis methodology, including thematic analysis of peer-reviewed studies focusing on Muslim youth, art, identity, and mental health (Leong et al., 2023; Behiery, 2015). Inclusion criteria encompass empirical research and critical theoretical works published in the last two decades. Findings are organized thematically to reflect identity negotiation processes, religious-cultural tensions, and psychological outcomes. This structure facilitates a coherent narrative linking artistic practice with religious identity challenges among young Muslim artists (Ralph & Gibson, 2021; Termeer, 2016; Hussain, 2010).

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

Statement of Purpose

The objective of this report is to examine the existing research on "Psychological challenges faced by young Muslim artists in reconciling personal artistic inclinations with religious

identity" in order to elucidate the complex interplay between creative expression and religious self-conception among this demographic.

This review is important as it addresses the nuanced tensions young Muslim artists encounter when navigating cultural, spiritual, and societal expectations that influence their artistic practices and mental well-being.

By synthesizing interdisciplinary findings, the report aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of identity negotiation processes, psychological resilience, and the socio-cultural factors shaping these artists' experiences.

Ultimately, this review seeks to inform future research directions and support mechanisms that foster healthy identity integration and artistic freedom within religious frameworks.

Specific Objectives:

1. To evaluate current knowledge on psychological tensions experienced by young Muslim artists balancing faith and creativity.
2. Benchmarking of existing approaches to identity negotiation and artistic self-representation among Muslim youth in diverse cultural contexts.
3. Identification of socio-cultural and religious factors influencing mental health outcomes in young Muslim artists.
4. To deconstruct the role of artistic expression as a coping mechanism for identity conflicts within Muslim communities.
5. Compare thematic patterns across studies regarding the reconciliation of personal artistic inclinations with religious identity.

METHODOLOGY OF LITERATURE SELECTION

In this article, several targeted queries were:

- Psychological challenges faced by young Muslim artists in reconciling personal artistic inclinations with religious identity
- Exploring the intersection of artistic expression, identity formation, and psychological resilience among young Muslim artists in contemporary contexts.
- Investigating the impact of cultural narratives on the artistic expressions and psychological resilience of young Muslim artists navigating their identities.
- Examining the influence of societal narratives and mental health on the artistic expressions of young Muslim artists navigating cultural identity conflicts.
- Exploring the impact of cultural identity and mental health on artistic expression among young artists in multicultural contexts.

Screening Papers

We then run each of the queries with the applied Inclusion & Exclusion Criteria to retrieve a focused set of candidate papers for our always expanding database of over 270 million research papers. during this process we found 149 papers

Citation Chaining - Identifying additional relevant works

Backward Citation Chaining

For each of the core papers we examine its reference list to find earlier studies it draws upon. By tracing back through references, we ensure foundational work isn't overlooked.

Forward Citation Chaining

We also identified newer papers that have cited each core paper, tracking how the field has built on those results. This uncovers emerging debates, replication studies, and recent methodological advances. A total of 97 additional papers are found during this process.

Relevance scoring and sorting

We take our assembled pool of 246 papers (149 from search queries + 97 from citation chaining) and impose a relevance ranking so that the most pertinent studies rise to the top of our final papers table. We found 239 papers that were relevant to the research query. Out of 239 papers, 50 were highly relevant.

RESULTS

Descriptive Summary of the Studies

This section maps the research landscape of the literature on psychological challenges faced by young Muslim artists in reconciling personal artistic inclinations with religious identity, revealing a diverse and interdisciplinary body of work.

The studies encompass qualitative, ethnographic, and mixed-method approaches, focusing on geographic contexts including Western countries, South Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. Key themes include identity negotiation, socio-cultural pressures, discrimination, and the role of artistic expression as both a coping mechanism and a form of resistance.

This comparative analysis elucidates how young Muslim artists navigate complex intersections of faith, creativity, and societal expectations, providing critical insights relevant to the research questions on psychological tensions, identity strategies, and contextual influences.

Table 1: Descriptive Summary of the Studies

Study	Psychological Challenge Types	Identity Negotiation Strategies	Socio-Cultural Influences	Artistic Expression Functions	Contextual Variability
(Ralph & Gibson, 2021)	Identity scrutiny and pigeonholing stress	Embracing and resisting identity markers	Community and art sector expectations	Visibility and debate facilitation	Australian Muslim women artists
(Alhourani, 2020)	Sexuality-religion conflict anxiety	Claiming Islamic identity via aesthetics	Heteronormative Islamic interpretations	Self-perfection and empowerment	LGBTIQ Muslims in Cape Town
(Leong et al., 2023)	Identity fragmentation and mental health struggles	Art as self-exploration and history rewriting	Cultural dislocation and belonging	Coping with ambiguity and fostering connection	BIPOC and immigrant artists in US
(Barth et al., 2023)	Conflicting emotions over religious practices	Negotiating veiling and secular norms	Family and societal expectations clash	Identity formation through personal choices	Young Muslim women in Germany
(Muftee, 2023)	Intersectional oppression stress	Using poetry for feminist archives	Racism, classism, patriarchy	Creating creative homeplaces and voice	Young Muslim women in Sweden

Study	Psychological Challenge Types	Identity Negotiation Strategies	Socio-Cultural Influences	Artistic Expression Functions	Contextual Variability
(Yildiz, 2024)	Social isolation and discrimination impact	Oral histories and self-representation	Anti-Islamic rhetoric and gender bias	Storytelling for visibility and collaboration	Bay Area Muslim artists
(Uddin, 2023)	Identity marginalization and Islamophobia	Sub-cultural expression on digital platforms	Islamophobia and racial stereotyping	Cultural contestation and counter-publics	British Muslim youth
(Abo-Zena, 2019)	Developmental and societal pressures	Drawing on peer, family, and faith support	Societal and family challenges	Negotiating gender and religious identities	Early adolescent Muslim females
(Oikarinen-Jabai, 2017)	Belonging ambiguity and identity multiplicity	Performative and participatory art methods	Immigrant youth cultural negotiations	Identity negotiation through art	Immigrant Muslim youth in Finland
(Stuart & Ward, 2016)	Balancing multiple identity demands	Alternating, blending, minimizing identities	Family, community, and societal pressures	Integration via identity balance	Muslim immigrant youth in New Zealand
(Soliman, 2019)	Disappointment with alternative self-misrepresentation	Offering representations	Stereotypes and power exertions	Counterpublic challenging dominant narratives	German Muslim women artists
(Alhourani, 2018)	Identity contradictions and pluralism	Art as transformative and politicizing force	Religious and secular discourse tensions	Authenticity and identity coherence	Muslim artists in Cape Town
(Jiwa, 2010)	Post-9/11 identity conflict and stigma	Contesting normative frames in art	Media stereotypes and marginalization	Minority identification through art	NYC Muslim visual artists
(Van Tilborgh, 2018)	Struggles for artistic autonomy	Navigating art and religion intersections	Gender, race, and ideological differences	Artistic and social autonomy efforts	UK and US Muslim performing artists
(Van Tilborgh, 2017)	Career tension between belief and art	Formalization and informalization phases	Religious ideological orientations	Career development and identity congruity	UK and US Muslim performers
(Van Tilborgh, 2023)	Tensions from religious and state pressures	Edutainment blending art and spirituality	Salafi influences and civilizing attempts	Cultural transformation and empowerment	UK Muslim performing artists
(Termeer, 2016)	Culturalist discourse resistance stress	Exit strategies and authorship	Dominant integration discourse impact	Emerging subjectivities via art	Young Muslims in the Netherlands

Study	Psychological Challenge Types	Identity Negotiation Strategies	Socio-Cultural Influences	Artistic Expression Functions	Contextual Variability
(Basak, 2017)	Religious prohibition anxiety	Negotiating figurative art limits	Interpretations of Islamic texts	Art practice within religious boundaries	Muslim artists and figurative art
(Senay, 2020)	Moral-religious tension in music	Explorative knowing of Islam and music	Debates on piety and art	Music as identity and knowledge exploration	Istanbul Muslim music community
(Naggare, 2022)	Risk of religious visibility backlash	Humor and spiritual narrative in comics	Media representation tensions	Spiritual journey in popular culture	Muslim comic artist in France
(Suparti, 2022)	Gender and religious identity conflicts	Hybrid gender and religious storytelling	Intersectionality of media and religion	Visual representation of Muslim femininity	Muslim tween girls in Canada
(Huang, 2025)	Sociopolitical tension and identity stress	Art as resistance and reconciliation	Conflict and stereotype challenges	Peace narratives and interfaith understanding	Muslim women artists in Thailand
(Abdali, 2023)	Belonging and outsider status anxiety	Negotiating home and identity discourses	War on Terror and nationalism effects	Art as identity and belonging expression	Pakistani-American Muslim artist
(Barylo, 2025)	Identity commodification through Islamic and moral conflict	Subversion pop-art	Colonialism and consumerism critique	Art as political and spiritual contestation	Muslim social media artists
(Bolghiran, 2024)	Ethical dilemmas and systemic oppression	Muslim futures imagination and ethics	Socio-ethical and aesthetic frameworks	Spiritual and decolonial artistic praxis	Young Muslim artists in Berlin
(Ibrahim, 2022)	Identity tension in celebrity culture	Alternative Muslim identity assertion	Islamist movement influences	Cultural negotiation through popular culture	Nigerian Muslim cultural producers
(Bowker, 2019)	Marginalization and political antagonism	Public network engagement and activism	Social and political context pressures	Art as Muslim identity articulation	Australian Muslim contemporary artists
(Alim, 2006)	Cultural conflict and identity threat	Hip Hop as verbal mujahidin	Global and ideological identity formation	Music as alternative media and nationhood	Muslim Hip Hop artists globally

Study	Psychological Challenge Types	Identity Negotiation Strategies	Socio-Cultural Influences	Artistic Expression Functions	Contextual Variability
(Shouhayib, 2016)	Bicultural identity conflict and discrimination	Mixed-method identity integration	Political and social environment impact	Art as visual bicultural expression	Arab-American youth post-9/11
(Sirin & Fine, 2007)	Discrimination and identity conflict	Hyphenated selves and policing	Post-9/11 societal hostility	Identity mapping and narrative	Muslim-American youth in US
(Behiery, 2015)	Gender and religious identity challenges	Online support networks for artists	Volunteerism and organizational limits	Artistic agency and success facilitation	Muslim women artists in US
(Green et al., 2023.)	Discrimination and mental health stigma	Cultural integration and resistance	Online community support	Mental health advocacy and identity	Second-generation Arab Americans
(Salzbrunn, 2020)	Stigmatization and political stress	Artivism and aesthetic counter-narratives	Terrorism suspicion and marginalization	Art as political resistance	North African Muslim artists in Europe
(Mardiansah et al., 2024)	Spiritual inspiration and creativity	Wahyu as artistic influence	Religious symbolism and historical change	Art connecting to transcendence	Islamic art and creativity
(Ali et al., 2024)	Islamophobia emotional trauma	Emotional fields of disgust	Everyday spatial politics of contact	Art making Islamophobia legible	Young Muslim adults in Canada
(Kuppinger, 2017)	Religious identity and creativity	Faith-based urban cultural production	Urban cultural participation	Creative contributions to society	Muslims in Germany
(Hussain, 2010)	Identity under siege and resistance	Subversive Muslim punk identity	Post-9/11 antagonism	Hybrid identities and dissent	Muslim youth in Canada
(Rogers-Sirin & Gupta, 2012)	Mental health symptom trajectories	Ethnic and U.S. identity development	Ethnic group differences	Ethnic identity as protective factor	Asian and Latino youth in US
(Salma & Hasaniyah, 2024)	Adolescent mental well-being stress	Artistic expression for self-confidence	Social pressure coping	Art enhancing mental health	Adolescents in artistic activities
(Saktanber, 2007)	Cultural dilemmas and self-reflexivity	Individual identity transformation	Political and cultural social context	Identity shifts in youth	Islamist youth in Turkey
(Suparti, 2022)	Gender and religious identity intersection	Hybrid gender and religious narratives	Media and religious value influence	Visual storytelling of identity	Muslim tweens in Canada

Study	Psychological Challenge Types	Identity Negotiation Strategies	Socio-Cultural Influences	Artistic Expression Functions	Contextual Variability
(Azni & Yusoff, 2019)	Familial conflict and identity sustainment	Navigating family misconceptions	Psychological dissociation effects	Identity nurturing amid conflict	New Muslim revert in Malaysia
(Fiandini, 2025)	Tradition and globalization tension	Bildung as cultural formation	Cultural and intellectual interplay	Art as resilience and dialogue	Indonesian Muslim artist practice
(Chaudhry, 2013)	Post-9/11 identity development stress	Family and community coping resources	Media and government impact	Gendered stereotypes and identity	Muslim American college women
(Sabry, 2021.)	Victimization and stereotype resistance	Performative identity enunciations	Orientalist discourse challenges	Artistic resistance to objectification	Muslim-Canadian women artists
(Murtaza, 2020)	Racial and religious discrimination	Intersectionality and resilience	Spirituality buffering mental health	Discrimination effects on well-being	Muslim young adults in US
(Protska et al., 2024)	Cultural identity and artistic reflection	Archetypes and interpretation	Cultural relativism and tolerance	Identity expression in performing arts	Global performing artists
(Balkaya-Ince et al., 2024)	Minority youth virtue development	Contextualized positive psychology	Non-WEIRD youth conceptualization	Uplifting minority youth experiences	Muslim American adolescents
(McDowell, 2019)	Media-induced anti-Muslim attitudes	Media influence on identity	Islamophobia and stereotyping	Identity struggle in punk rock	Muslim punk youth in US
(Ahsan & Williams, 2022)	Mental health and racial stress	Anti-racism in clinical psychology	Race, education, and arts intersection	Poetry as therapeutic practice	British Muslim poet and psychologist

Psychological Challenge Types:

- 15 studies identified identity conflict and discrimination as primary psychological challenges, often linked to societal marginalization and internal tensions (Ralph & Gibson, 2021; Shouhayib, 2016; Murtaza, 2020).
- 7 studies highlighted specific mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and emotional trauma related to Islamophobia and cultural dislocation (Ali et al., 2024; Rogers-Sirin & Gupta, 2012; Ahsan & Williams, 2022).
- 5 studies emphasized intersectional stressors involving gender, sexuality, and familial conflict impacting psychological well-being (Alhourani, 2020; Suparti, 2022; Azni & Yusoff, 2019).

- Several studies noted the complexity of negotiating multiple identities leading to fragmentation or hybridity stress (Leong et al., 2023; Sirin & Fine, 2007; Saktanber, 2007).

Identity Negotiation Strategies:

- 12 studies reported artists employing hybrid or blended identity strategies, alternating between cultural and religious orientations to reconcile tensions (Stuart & Ward, 2016; Termeer, 2016; Shouhayib, 2016).
- 9 studies described the use of artistic self-representation and performative practices as active negotiation tools to assert agency and counter stereotypes (Uddin, 2023) (Soliman, 2019; Sabry, 2021).
- 6 studies emphasized spiritual or aesthetic frameworks, such as claiming Islamic identity through art or music, to foster self-perfection and empowerment (Alhourani, 2020, 2018; Bolghiran, 2024).
- Some studies noted exit strategies or resistance to dominant cultural narratives as forms of identity negotiation (Termeer, 2016; Hussain, 2010).

Socio-Cultural Influences:

- 18 studies underscored the impact of community expectations, family pressures, and religious norms as significant external influences shaping artists' experiences (Barth et al., 2023; Abo-Zena, 2019; Azni & Yusoff, 2019).
- 14 studies highlighted discrimination, Islamophobia, and media stereotyping as pervasive socio-cultural stressors affecting mental health and identity (Yildiz, 2024; Jiwa, 2010; Murtaza, 2020).
- 7 studies discussed the role of digital platforms and social media in providing spaces for cultural contestation and identity expression (Uddin, 2023; Barylo, 2025; Green et al., 2023).
- Several studies pointed to the influence of political contexts, such as post-9/11 environments and nationalist discourses, on identity challenges (Abdali, 2023; Shouhayib, 2016; Chaudhry, 2013).

Artistic Expression Functions:

- 20 studies found that art serves as a coping mechanism, enabling self-exploration, emotional expression, and mental health support (Leong et al., 2023, Salma & Hasaniyah, 2024; Ahsan & Williams, 2022).
- 15 studies emphasized art as a form of resistance and political activism, challenging stereotypes and fostering social change (Huang, 2025; Salzbrunn, 2020; McDowell, 2019).
- 10 studies highlighted art's role in identity formation, providing a medium for negotiating belonging and cultural narratives (Ralph & Gibson, 2021; Oikarinen-Jabai, 2017; Bowker, 2019).
- Some studies noted art's function in creating alternative counterpublics and feminist archives, especially for marginalized Muslim women (Muftee, 2023; Soliman, 2019).

Contextual Variability:

- 13 studies demonstrated geographic and cultural variability, with experiences differing across Western countries, South Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East (Alhourani, 2020; Yildiz, 2024; Huang, 2025).
- 9 studies showed that local socio-political climates, such as post-apartheid South Africa or post-9/11 America, uniquely shape identity negotiation and psychological challenges (Jiwa, 2010; Shouhayib, 2016; Sirin & Fine, 2007).
- 7 studies highlighted the role of immigrant and diaspora contexts in complicating identity processes and artistic expression (Oikarinen-Jabai, 2017; Ibrahim, 2022; Green et al., 2023).
- Several studies pointed to intra-community diversity, including gender, ethnicity, and religious sect differences, influencing experiences (Suparti, 2022; Murtaza, 2020).

DISCUSSION

The literature on psychological challenges faced by young Muslim artists in reconciling personal artistic inclinations with religious identity reveals a rich but complex landscape marked by diverse methodologies and interdisciplinary approaches. Several studies provide nuanced insights into identity negotiation, resilience, and socio-cultural influences, yet there remain gaps in longitudinal data and broader demographic representation.

While qualitative methods dominate, offering depth in understanding lived experiences, the generalizability and integration of findings across different cultural contexts are limited. Moreover, the intersectionality of religion, gender, ethnicity, and societal pressures is well acknowledged but often underexplored in terms of psychological outcomes and coping mechanisms. This synthesis critically evaluates key thematic aspects, highlighting both the contributions and limitations of the current body of research.

Table 2: Aspect & Weakness

Aspect	Weaknesses
Methodological Approaches	The reliance on small, often convenience samples limits the representativeness of findings, with many studies focusing on specific subgroups (e.g., women visual artists in Australia or Muslim youth in Germany) (Ralph & Gibson, 2021; Barth et al., 2023). There is a scarcity of longitudinal research to track identity development and psychological outcomes over time. Additionally, some studies lack detailed methodological transparency, which challenges reproducibility and critical appraisal (Shouhayib, 2016).
Intersectionality and Identity Negotiation	Despite acknowledging intersectionality, few studies systematically analyze how intersecting identities specifically influence psychological resilience or distress. The nuanced effects of gender, sexuality, and minority status within Muslim communities are underexplored, with limited comparative analyses across different cultural or geographic contexts (Alhourani, 2020; Abdali, 2023). This gap restricts comprehensive understanding of identity negotiation processes.
Role of Artistic Expression	While the therapeutic and emancipatory potential of art is emphasized, empirical evidence linking artistic engagement to measurable mental health outcomes remains limited. Few studies employ psychological assessments to quantify benefits or challenges associated with artistic

Aspect	Weaknesses
Socio-Cultural and Religious Influences	practices. Moreover, the diversity of art forms and their differential impacts are insufficiently differentiated (Salma & Hasaniyah, 2024).
Impact of Discrimination and Societal Narratives	There is a tendency to generalize religious influences without adequately addressing intra-faith diversity or the dynamic interpretations of Islamic teachings related to art and creativity. The impact of specific religious authorities or movements on artistic freedom and mental health is often mentioned but not deeply analyzed (Basak, 2017; Van Tilborgh, 2017). Additionally, the influence of globalization and transnational flows on identity and artistic expression requires further exploration (Fiandini, 2025).
Cultural and Geographic Contextualization	Despite recognition of discrimination's effects, there is limited research on intervention strategies or support systems that effectively mitigate these psychological challenges. The focus remains largely descriptive, with insufficient attention to resilience factors beyond spirituality or artistic engagement (Murtaza, 2020; Ahsan & Williams, 2022). Moreover, the variability of discrimination experiences across different national contexts is underexamined.
Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks	However, many studies are context-specific and lack cross-cultural comparative frameworks that could elucidate universal versus localized psychological challenges. The overrepresentation of Western contexts may skew interpretations, while regions with significant Muslim populations remain underrepresented (Ibrahim, 2022; Saktanber, 2007). This limits the generalizability of findings and the development of globally relevant support mechanisms.

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Theoretical Implications

The findings underscore the complexity of identity negotiation among young Muslim artists, highlighting that identity is multifaceted and fluid rather than fixed.

This challenges monolithic or essentialist views of Muslim identity by illustrating how artists navigate intersecting cultural, religious, and artistic domains, often experiencing internal conflicts and external pressures (Ralph & Gibson, 2021; Shouhayib, 2016; Sirin & Fine, 2007).

The reviewed literature supports and extends intersectionality theory by demonstrating how gender, race, religion, and socio-political contexts simultaneously shape the psychological experiences and artistic expressions of young Muslim creatives. This is evident in the nuanced ways Muslim women artists, for example, resist stereotypical

representations and assert agency through their art (Muftee, 2023; Soliman, 2019; Suparti, 2022).

The role of art as both a site of identity formation and a coping mechanism aligns with psychosocial theories of resilience and self-expression. Artistic engagement facilitates self-exploration, emotional regulation, and community belonging, thereby contributing to mental well-being despite experiences of discrimination and marginalization (Leong et al., 2023; Salma & Hasaniyah, 2024; Murtaza, 2020).

Theoretical models of acculturation and integration are refined by evidence that young Muslim artists employ diverse strategies—such as blending, alternating, or minimizing differences—to reconcile religious and artistic identities within multicultural societies.

This suggests a dynamic, context-dependent process rather than a linear acculturation trajectory (Stuart & Ward, 2016; Saktanber, 2007).

The concept of artistic autonomy within Islamic frameworks is problematized by findings that Muslim artists occupy varied ideological positions regarding the relationship between art and religion, ranging from strict adherence to religious restrictions to radical artistic reinterpretations that challenge orthodox authority (Van Tilborgh, 2017, 2018; Basak, 2017).

The literature contributes to postcolonial and decolonial theoretical perspectives by illustrating how Muslim artists contest dominant Western narratives and Islamophobic discourses through creative practices that reimagine Muslim subjectivities and futures (Bolghiran, 2024; Salzbrunn, 2020; Ali et al., 2024).

Practical Implications

For mental health practitioners and counselors, the findings highlight the importance of culturally and religiously sensitive approaches that recognize the unique psychological challenges faced by young Muslim artists, including identity conflicts and experiences of discrimination. Integrating art-based therapeutic modalities may enhance engagement and resilience (Leong et al., 2023; Murtaza, 2020; Ahsan & Williams, 2022).

Educational institutions and arts organizations should foster inclusive environments that validate diverse Muslim identities and provide platforms for artistic self-representation. Supporting Muslim artists' visibility can counteract marginalization and promote intercultural dialogue (Yildiz, 2024; Uddin, 2023; Bowker, 2019).

Policy frameworks addressing multiculturalism and integration need to acknowledge the complex identity negotiations of Muslim youth, moving beyond assimilationist models to support pluralistic expressions of faith and creativity.

This includes recognizing the role of art in social cohesion and empowerment (Stuart & Ward, 2016; Van Tilborgh, 2023; Termeer, 2016).

Community-based initiatives and online networks that connect Muslim artists offer critical support systems for navigating socio-religious tensions and enhancing artistic agency. Investment in such networks can strengthen collective resilience and cultural capital (Behiery, 2015; Barylo, 2025).

The arts sector and cultural policymakers should consider the diverse ideological orientations within Muslim artistic communities when developing guidelines or funding criteria, ensuring respect for varying interpretations of religious permissibility and artistic freedom (Van Tilborgh, 2017, 2018).

Anti-discrimination efforts must address the intersecting impacts of racial and religious bias on Muslim artists' mental health and social participation. Promoting spirituality

and community solidarity can serve as protective factors against these stressors (Ali et al., 2024; Murtaza, 2020).

LIMITATIONS OF THE LITERATURE

Table 3: Limitations Of The Literature

Area of Limitation	Description of Limitation	Papers which have limitation
Small Sample Sizes	Several studies rely on small or limited sample sizes, which restricts the generalizability and external validity of their findings. This limitation constrains the ability to draw broad conclusions about the psychological challenges faced by young Muslim artists.	(Leong et al., 2023; Shouhayib, 2016; Chaudhry, 2013)
Geographic Bias	Research is often concentrated in specific regions such as Western countries, limiting the understanding of diverse cultural contexts. This geographic bias reduces the applicability of findings to Muslim artists in non-Western or underrepresented settings.	(Ralph & Gibson, 2021; Barth et al., 2023; Yildiz, 2024; Uddin, 2023; Stuart & Ward, 2016)
Methodological Constraints	Many studies employ qualitative or mixed methods with subjective interpretations, which may introduce researcher bias and limit replicability. Ambiguities in interview questions and reliance on self-reported data can affect the reliability and validity of psychological assessments.	(Shouhayib, 2016; Chaudhry, 2013; Behiery, 2015)
Underrepresentation of Intersectional Identities	There is insufficient exploration of intersecting identities such as gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and socio-economic status, which are crucial for understanding the nuanced experiences of young Muslim artists. This gap limits comprehensive insights into identity negotiation processes.	(Alhourani, 2020; Suparti, 2022)
Limited Longitudinal Data	A lack of longitudinal studies restricts understanding of how psychological challenges and identity reconciliation evolve over time. This limitation affects the ability to assess developmental trajectories and long-term mental health outcomes.	(Rogers-Sirin & Gupta, 2012; Stuart & Ward, 2016)

Area of Limitation	Description of Limitation	Papers which have limitation
Focus on Specific Art Forms	Research often centers on particular artistic mediums (e.g., visual arts, spoken word) while neglecting others, which narrows the scope of understanding regarding how different forms of artistic expression impact identity and psychological resilience.	(Muftee, 2023; Jiwa, 2010; Hussain, 2010)
Insufficient Attention to Societal and Structural Factors	Some studies inadequately address broader societal narratives, discrimination, and structural Islamophobia that significantly influence mental health and identity struggles, thereby limiting the contextual depth of psychological challenges faced by young Muslim artists.	(Ali et al., 2024; Murtaza, 2020; Uddin, 2023)
Lack of Comparative Cross-Cultural Analysis	Few studies systematically compare experiences across diverse cultural and geographic contexts, which limits understanding of how local socio-cultural factors shape identity reconciliation and artistic expression among Muslim youth globally.	(Oikarinen-Jabai, 2017; Ibrahim, 2022; Saktanber, 2007)

Gaps and Future Research Directions

Table 4: Gaps and Future Research Directions

Gap Area	Description	Future Research Directions	Justification	Research Priority
Longitudinal studies on identity development	Existing research predominantly uses cross-sectional designs, limiting understanding of how psychological challenges and identity negotiation evolve over time among young Muslim artists.	Conduct longitudinal mixed-method studies tracking identity integration, psychological resilience, and artistic expression trajectories over multiple years in diverse Muslim artist populations.	Longitudinal data are essential to capture dynamic processes of identity reconciliation and mental health outcomes, which cross-sectional studies cannot provide (Leong et al., 2023; Shouhayib, 2016).	High
Intersectional analysis of	While intersectionality	Employ intersectional	Understanding nuanced	High

Gap Area	Description	Future Research Directions	Justification	Research Priority
psychological outcomes	is acknowledged, few studies systematically examine how intersecting identities (gender, sexuality, ethnicity) specifically affect psychological resilience or distress in young Muslim artists.	quantitative and qualitative frameworks to analyze differential mental health impacts and coping strategies across gender, sexual orientation, and ethnic subgroups within Muslim artists.	intersectional effects is critical for tailored mental health interventions and identity support (Alhourani, 2020; Suparti, 2022; Abdali, 2023).	
Empirical measurement of art's mental health impact	The therapeutic role of artistic expression is widely discussed but lacks empirical evidence linking specific art forms to measurable psychological benefits or challenges.	Design studies incorporating validated psychological assessments pre- and post-artistic engagement, differentiating impacts by art medium (visual, music, poetry) among young Muslim creatives.	Quantitative evidence is needed to substantiate art as a coping mechanism and inform clinical or community-based mental health programs (Salma & Hasaniyah, 2024; Ahsan & Williams, 2022).	High
Intra-faith diversity and religious authority influence	Research often generalizes Islamic influences without deeply exploring how intra-faith differences and specific religious authorities shape artistic freedom and psychological well-being.	Investigate the role of diverse Islamic sects, theological interpretations, and authoritative voices on artistic practices and identity tensions among Muslim artists in various contexts.	Detailed understanding of intra-faith dynamics can clarify constraints and supports affecting artists' identity reconciliation (Van Tilborgh, 2017, 2018; Basak, 2017).	Medium
Intervention and support mechanisms for discrimination effects	Studies document discrimination's psychological toll but rarely explore effective interventions or	Develop and evaluate culturally sensitive mental health interventions,	Addressing this gap can improve mental health outcomes and social inclusion for marginalized	High

Gap Area	Description	Future Research Directions	Justification	Research Priority
	support systems mitigating these impacts for young Muslim artists.	community support networks, and digital platforms aimed at reducing discrimination-related distress and fostering resilience.	Muslim artists (Murtaza, 2020; Green et al., 2023; Ahsan & Williams, 2022).	
Cross-cultural comparative frameworks	Most research is context-specific with limited cross-cultural comparisons, leading to insufficient understanding of universal versus localized psychological challenges and identity strategies.	Conduct comparative multi-site studies across Western, Middle Eastern, African, and Southeast Asian contexts to identify commonalities and divergences in identity negotiation and psychological experiences.	Cross-cultural insights are necessary to develop globally relevant theories and support mechanisms (Ralph & Gibson, 2021; Yildiz, 2024; Huang, 2025).	Medium
Theoretical development of resilience models	Current psychological resilience frameworks are often Western-centric and inadequately tailored to the specific cultural and religious experiences of young Muslim artists.	Formulate and validate culturally grounded resilience models incorporating Islamic spirituality, artistic expression, and community factors relevant to Muslim youth.	Culturally appropriate models enhance explanatory power and intervention design for this population (Balkaya-Ince et al., 2024; Azni & Yusoff, 2019).	Medium
Digital platforms as identity negotiation spaces	Although digital media's role is noted, there is limited research on how online platforms specifically facilitate or	Explore the psychosocial effects of digital artistic communities, social media activism, and online support	Understanding digital influences can inform strategies to leverage technology for empowerment and mental health	Medium

Gap Area	Description	Future Research Directions	Justification	Research Priority
	hinder psychological well-being and identity integration for Muslim artists.	networks on identity formation and mental health among young Muslim creatives.	(Uddin, 2023; Barylo, 2025; Green et al., 2023).	
Differentiation of artistic genres and identity functions	Research often treats artistic expression monolithically, lacking detailed analysis of how different art forms uniquely contribute to identity negotiation and psychological coping.	Conduct genre-specific studies examining how visual arts, music, poetry, and performance differently mediate identity conflicts and mental health among Muslim artists.	(Leong et al., 2023; Muftee, 2023; Senay, 2020).	Medium
Impact of globalization and transnational flows	The influence of globalization and transnational cultural exchanges on identity reconciliation and artistic expression remains underexplored.	Investigate how global Islamic discourses, diasporic networks, and transnational artistic collaborations affect psychological challenges and identity strategies of young Muslim artists.	(Fiandini, 2025; Van Tilborgh, 2023).	Low

CONCLUSION

The collective body of literature reveals that young Muslim artists face multifaceted psychological challenges as they strive to reconcile their personal artistic inclinations with their religious identity.

Central to these challenges are identity conflicts characterized by feelings of marginalization, discrimination, and the pressure to conform to both religious and cultural expectations. These tensions often manifest as identity fragmentation, intersectional stress involving gender and sexuality, and the emotional impacts of Islamophobia and societal stereotyping.

The internal negotiation process is further complicated by external socio-cultural influences, including family expectations, community norms, and broader political contexts such as post-9/11 societal climates and nationalist discourses.

In navigating these complex dynamics, young Muslim artists employ a range of identity negotiation strategies that blend, alternate, or resist dominant cultural and religious narratives. Artistic expression emerges as a crucial mechanism in this negotiation, serving not only as a form of self-exploration and identity formation but also as a powerful tool for resistance and reclamation of agency.

Through various art forms, these artists create alternative counterpublics that challenge stereotypes, foster empowerment, and facilitate psychological resilience. Artistic practices are instrumental in providing safe spaces where ambiguity and hybrid identities can be embraced, enabling artists to rewrite personal and collective histories while fostering a sense of belonging.

The literature also underscores the significant role of socio-cultural and religious factors in shaping young Muslim artists' experiences. Community and familial pressures, as well as religious interpretations—often divergent and contested—frame the boundaries within which artistic expression is negotiated.

However, the influence of intra-faith diversity and transnational cultural flows is less thoroughly examined, indicating an area for deeper exploration. Discrimination, especially intersecting racial and religious biases, exerts a profound impact on mental health outcomes, yet research on effective supports and interventions beyond spiritual and artistic engagement remains insufficient.

Contextual variability across geographic and cultural settings highlights the diversity of experiences among young Muslim artists, with distinct challenges and approaches shaped by local socio-political environments. Nevertheless, much of the research is context-specific, particularly focused on Western contexts, limiting broader generalizability.

Methodologically, the predominance of qualitative studies offers rich, nuanced insights but calls for more longitudinal and mixed-methods research to better understand developmental trajectories and measurable outcomes related to mental health and identity integration.

Overall, the literature points to the vital importance of interdisciplinary approaches that consider intersectionality, socio-cultural complexity, and the transformative potential of art in supporting young Muslim artists' psychological well-being and identity reconciliation.

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