

ISLAMIC SCHOOLS VS. PUBLIC SCHOOLS:  
A CASE STUDY OF THE SCHOOL CHOICES OF MUSLIM PARENTS & THE  
SOCIAL & ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS & YOUNG ADULTS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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by

Rafia Hasan

William Paterson University of New Jersey

Wayne, NJ

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WILLIAM PATERSON UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

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\_\_\_\_\_  
(Dr. Janis Strasser)

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Abstract

ISLAMIC SCHOOLS VS. PUBLIC SCHOOLS:

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Rafia Hasan

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Janis Strasser

The purpose of this study is to look at the school choices of Muslim parents in New Jersey and the social and academic experiences of Muslim students and young adults. The participants included 90 Muslim parents, 126 Muslim young adults, and 52 Muslim students currently attending a public, private, or Islamic school. Participants completed surveys, and a few were administered interviews that included questions pertaining to the purpose of this study. Findings showed that Muslim parents who choose Islamic schools do so to teach their child(children) about Islam and to surround them with other Muslims; whereas, Muslim parents who chose public schools do so for the quality of education. Overall, this study demonstrated that most Muslim students in either Islamic or public schools didn't encounter social challenges any different than other students; in addition, an overload of schoolwork was reported as an academic challenge.

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

#### *Overview*

*"Islam is expected to grow to be the second largest religion in the United States during the 21<sup>st</sup> century"*  
(El-Atwani, 2015, p. 145).

Parents' school choice for children can affect them in the long run. They can either have positive or negative school experiences. In my experience, parents sometimes enroll their children in schools where they feel most welcomed; even if the school lacks the education needed for supporting their children's overall development.

Schools should promote success and embrace diversity; however, from my experience as a Muslim American, I feel it's very rare. Some schools don't have the means to build a strong academic foundation in their students. Thus, they can't promote success. On the other hand, there are schools that encourage their students to become high achievers. Some schools also don't promote diversity, because in my opinion, the teachers and administrators aren't educating themselves about diverse cultures.

From my teaching and educational experiences in both private and public schools, I have noticed that children seem to feel safe in a school that supports their overall development and recognizes their culture. In addition, they

learn best when the classroom environment encourages them to be enlightened and grow. Thus, parents should really think twice before enrolling their child in a school where they feel most welcomed, even though that school might not be the best choice for their child.

*Statement of the Problem*

In my opinion, the wrong school choice can cause children to lack in social skills and academic success, which can affect them as they enter society. I have noticed many children are enrolled in schools without parents considering what's best for them. It isn't common for children to have any say in their parents' school choice. However, as they get into the higher grades, their input should be recognized by their parents. Unfortunately, I have seen children become rebellious, because of the school choice their parents made for them. To prevent rebellious behavior, I feel parents need to choose schools that meet their child's needs and help them to grow.

It is common for Muslim families to enroll their children in Islamic schools where their children would feel more comfortable. In the current political climate, Muslim parents have been showing lots of concern for the safety of their children. From my personal experience, I am seeing more often that Muslim parents are enrolling their children

in Islamic schools since their children will feel safe in a Muslim environment.

Another reason why I feel Muslim families enroll their children in Islamic schools is to have their children learn about Islam from an early age. One of the core principles and beliefs of Islam is for Muslims to pray five times a day. The first prayer is Fajr, the dawn prayer; the second is Dhuhr, the noon prayer; the third is Asr, the afternoon prayer; the fourth is Maghrib, the sunset prayer; and the last is Isha'a, the night prayer. From my experience as a Muslim American who attended public schools, it was difficult to get out of class and make time for my prayers, even though it was an obligation. Thus, in my opinion, Muslim parents are more likely to enroll their students in Islamic schools since they can ensure that their children are fulfilling their religious obligations.

In these types of private schools, there are extra subjects that just focus on teaching the religion. However, I feel this can cause a lot of pressure on students since they will need to learn the general subjects and the religious subjects.

#### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this study is to look at the school choices of Muslim parents in New Jersey and to find the

social and academic challenges and benefits Muslim students and young adults report that they experienced in school. I will be communicating with young adults who have completed their high school education in public and/or Islamic schools and students who currently attend a public or Islamic school.

I have noticed that young adults who have graduated from high school encountered some challenges at the university they attend since it's a very different environment for them. I hope to investigate why they encountered the challenges they had and how the school choice their parents made affected their education and social skills.

#### *The Research Questions*

1. How do Muslim parents choose a public school or an Islamic school for their children?
2. What types of social and academic experiences do Muslim young adults that have already completed public or Islamic schools experience?
3. What types of social and academic experiences do Muslim students that are currently attending public or Islamic schools have?

## *Definition of Variables*

### *School Choice*

School choice in this study refers to the decision Muslim parents made for their children to go to either an Islamic school or public school in New Jersey.

### *Islamic Schools*

Islamic schools in this study refers to the Islamic schools for Muslims in New Jersey. The Islamic schools included in my study are from the elementary school grade levels to the high school grade levels. These schools teach academic subjects and subjects that are pertinent to Islam.

### *Public Schools*

Public schools in this study refers to the public schools in New Jersey where the Muslim students from this study attend. The public schools included in my study are from the elementary school grade levels to the high school grade levels.

### *Social Challenges*

Social challenges in this study refers to challenges Muslim students encounter in the areas of interaction and communication with their peers within and outside of the Muslim community. This includes social exclusion and bullying from students outside of the Muslim community and peer pressure from their Muslim peers.

### *Academic Challenges*

Academic challenges in this study refers to the challenges Muslim students identify that they encounter in either public or Islamic schools in the areas of teaching and learning. This includes for those who attend Islamic schools, perhaps, an overload of schoolwork, lack of certified teachers, and other challenges as identified by participants in the study. For those who attend public schools, some similar or different academic challenges may be identified, as well.

### *Hypotheses*

It was generally expected that Muslim parents chose Islamic schools over public schools to surround their children with other Muslims and to learn about Islam. It was hypothesized that Muslim young adults who completed their high school education from an Islamic school encountered many social challenges and Muslim students who are currently attending an Islamic school encountered many academic challenges. It was also hypothesized that in our current political climate, Muslim parents will report that their school choice will be mostly for their child's safety.

### *Hypothesis I*

It was hypothesized that Muslim parents who choose Islamic schools over public schools, say they do so to surround their children with other Muslims and to learn about Islam. Those that choose public schools for their children say that they do so to ensure their children are being given the best education.

### *Hypothesis II*

It was hypothesized that Muslim young adults who have already completed their high school education from an Islamic school encountered many more social challenges than those who attended a public school. It was also hypothesized that Muslim young adults who attended Islamic schools encountered academic challenges since it was difficult for them to keep up with all the subjects that were being taught. However, Muslim young adults who attended public schools didn't encounter as much difficulty since the curriculum was developmentally appropriate.

### *Hypothesis III*

It was hypothesized that Muslim students who are currently attending Islamic schools encountered more social challenges outside of school in comparison to Muslim students who are currently attending public schools. It was also hypothesized that those currently attending Islamic

schools reported many more academic challenges than those who are attending public schools.

*Additional Research Question*

In addition to the formal hypotheses of this study, the researcher was also interested in a related question and observation.

- How do Muslim teachers in public schools and Islamic schools feel about the academic and social experiences Muslim students are encountering in their classrooms or schools?

## CHAPTER II

### *Review of the Literature*

The following literature review will be covering the topics of Islamic education and Islamic schools, Muslim parents' school choice, Muslim youth school experiences, and teachers' perspectives on Muslim students' school experiences. The topics I have chosen for the literature review are based on the main ideas of my research questions and additional question.

#### *Islamic Education & Islamic Schools*

The studies below explore the opportunities for Islamic education and the challenges faced by various Islamic schools.

Alkandri (2014) discussed the attempts to revitalize the role of Islamic education. Two different scenarios were highlighted to show the transformation and challenges of Islamic education. One Islamic educational system was represented by Indonesia and the other was represented by the Egyptian Islamic educational experience.

The Indonesian educational system coped with the issue of dualism. The demand from parents for a religious alternative in the school system led to the teaching of both religious and secular studies. On the other hand, Egypt's educational system is dealing with a debate between

secularists and Islamists. Egypt's educational system focuses more on the reading, writing, and mathematical skills instead to ensure students have the necessary qualification requirements for college admission. The author's hope was to educate others about the struggles that the Muslim world faces in a globalized era and the understanding of how Islamic education promotes open-mindedness and coexistence.

Shah (2014) described the role of the Islamic philosophy of education and the aims of education for the Muslim community. This study looks at the needs of UK Muslims pertaining to their children's education and the challenges of bringing up children while living two different "ways of life." Many Muslims have expressed that state schools don't meet the needs of diverse communities. However, Muslim faith schools have been another option for Muslim youth to attend to their religious and educational needs. The author concludes that for Muslims, faith is a significant element in their lives and education; therefore, future policies regarding citizenship education should recognize its role and significance.

Timani (2006) described the role of American Islamic schools in constructing the identity of Muslim children in the U.S. and how Muslim organizations and educators are

using Islamic schools to bring Muslim children back to their faith. Muslim immigrants in the U.S. believe that if their children aren't taught about Islam, they will drift away from the religion. Islamic schools may be a way for Muslims to secure their Muslim identity, but Muslim children are being alienated from the rest of the society. In Timani's (2006) opinion, Islamic schools are split between either teaching Islam within the American context or de-Americanizing Muslim children to bring their focus back to Islam.

Shah (2012) discussed the issue of Muslim schools from a personal experience as a Muslim and in a secular society, as a Muslim woman educator. The author explains that Muslim parents' and educators' views of educational needs of Muslim children in secular societies.

The persistence Muslim parents have in familiarizing their children with Islamic teachings and values in secular societies is reinforced by a perceived threat to their Islamic identity. In addition, they are feeling resistance due to the alleged threats from the host culture. The author concludes that Muslim parents and youth are facing both resistance and persistence. Therefore, she encourages policy makers to recognize the need of self-preservation among minority groups.

Merry and Driessen (2005) conducted a study to compare Islamic schools in the United States, the Netherlands, and Belgium. Their focus is on the challenges and opportunities Islamic schools have in these three countries. The findings show that in all three countries, Muslims feel Islamic schools are a better alternative to public schools; although in Belgium, there isn't such an urgency for Islamic schools, because Islamic instruction is made widely available in their public schools.

In the Netherlands, there is full funding for Islamic schools, but the lack of Muslim staff makes it difficult to implement. On the other hand, in the United States, Islamic schools are established by communities from generous donations and voluntarism of the Muslim community. The authors conclude that the concerns over the quality of education for children in Islamic schools varies from school to school.

Al-Lawati (2007) conducted a study to explore the instructional and curricular practices in gifted students' experiences in Islamic schools in the United States. The participants of the study were 157 elementary Islamic school teachers in 23 states. The method used for data collection was surveys that were administered at Islamic

schools to see the differentiation for meeting the needs of gifted students.

The findings showed that Islamic Schools in the U.S. have a lack of programs for gifted students and most teachers use little differentiation between gifted and general students during instruction. In addition, the teachers present Islamic teachings and values to all students without differentiation. Thus, Muslim gifted students are limited from establishing a deeper understanding of the Quran and Hadith (the narrations of sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him).

In Islam, Muslims are encouraged to broaden their perspectives through education. The author concludes that if these teachers use differentiation, it is very basic; even though, the use of differentiation will help gifted students to strive to achieve more.

El-Atwani (2015) reviewed the literature of U.S. Islamic schools and the diversity of the U.S. Muslim community. James Banks' multicultural dimensions of education is included as well to start a discussion about developing multicultural education in Islamic schools in the U.S. "Bank's framework includes content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction,

equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture" (El-Atwani, p. 149, 2015).

Amongst Muslims, there is diversity within diversity pertaining to race, class, and nationality. Islamic schools are an educational option for Muslim students who share the same beliefs and reflect complex diversity. The author concludes that both secular educational researchers and Islamic educational researchers should learn more about Islamic schools and their social structures to support multicultural education.

#### *Muslim Parents' School Choice*

The studies below discuss several reasons Muslim parents choose an Islamic school or public school for their children.

Ahmed (2013) conducted a qualitative study to investigate the reasons behind 12 Muslim parents' decisions to send their children to an Islamic school or public school in South-Western Ontario. Out of the 12 participants, one was a male. The participants were categorized in the following groups: parents whose children attend only Islamic school, parents whose children attend only public school, and parents whose children attend both school systems.

The parents who chose Islamic schools for their children did it based on school environment, school language, and subject content and its pedagogy. Parents who chose public schools for their children did it based on their experiences in public schools and their cultural and religious convictions. On the other hand, parents who first placed their children in a public school, but later moved them to an Islamic school did it based on the lack of religious accommodation and acceptance in the school; social behavior, communication patterns, and curriculum content; and pedagogy. The author concludes that parents who are placing their children in Islamic schools are satisfied with their decision, because they know their children are in a safe environment where they won't be excluded for their religious beliefs and cultural traditions.

Denessen, Driessena, and Slegers (2005) conducted a study to explore patterns of group-specific reasons for school choice and their implications for segregation within the Dutch educational system. A method used for data collection was descriptive statistics of 17 possible reasons for school choice that were calculated to assess the importance of the reasons. Table 1 shows these reasons.

Table 1

*Denessen et al. (2005) Possible Reasons for School Choice*

<b>Reason for school choice</b>
School climate
Social background of most of the pupils
No other school available
Order and discipline
Reputation of the school
Pupils attending this school get ahead in society
School pays attention to each child
Other parents are our kind of people
Extra-curricular activities
Denomination of the school (e.g., Catholic, non-religious, Islamic)
School is within easy reach
Possibility to come in contact with other cultures
Quality of education
Attractive school building
Advice of friends
Class size
School is considerate of our religion

The most important reason shown in the statistics was "Quality of education." Two other reasons that were highly rated are "School climate" and "School pays attention to each child." The least important reasons for school choice are "No other school available," "Possibility to come in contact with other cultures," and "Other parents are our kind of people" (Denessen et al., 2005, p. 355). The authors conclude that Muslim migrant parents show a strong preference for Islamic schools which suggests a risk of self-segregation amongst Muslim migrant parents.

#### *Muslim Youth School Experiences*

The studies below discuss Muslim youth school experiences and how it has influenced their Muslim identity, especially post 9/11.

Seward and Khan (2015) explored the experiences of 33 Muslim American adolescents in high school. They were of different racial and ethnic backgrounds and most of them were enrolled in public schools.

An interview protocol was used to collect data amongst seven focus groups. The questions for the interview are listed below:

- a) Can you talk about your typical day at school?
- b) Are there specific challenges that you face as a Muslim at high school?

c) If you are a racial or ethnic minority, are there specific challenges you face?

d) Do you think your religious or racial background contributes to having unique opportunities or interests in the U.S.? If so what are those opportunities or interests?

“The challenges they described were divided into two categories: difficulty implementing Islamic practices into their school and everyday life, and coping with Islamophobia” (Seward & Khan, 2015, p. 4). The students had to navigate their way around these challenges because of their religious faith, but those obstacles presented opportunities to provoke bias and discrimination. The authors conclude that school counselors play a crucial role in assisting Muslim students. However, it’s important for the school counselors to continue to investigate and understand the experiences of Muslims students to better serve their needs.

Sabry and Bruna (2007) conducted a study to describe the challenges faced by Muslim youth in the United States. Sabry used her own experiences as a member in the local Muslim community as well as interviews with Muslim parents, students, and teachers in a Midwestern city to collect

data. The interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions.

Sabry personally shared many of the same experiences as those of her participants. In addition, she could obtain candid responses, because of her relationships with the Muslim students and their parents in the community. The findings show that Muslim students are facing challenges due to cultural mismatch.

The first challenge is based on the curriculum pertaining to the way that Islam is being portrayed and included in it. The second challenge is that teachers don't create classroom participation structures for students to collectively and effectively work with Muslim students. The third challenge is the absence of understanding from teachers and schools for Muslim students to fulfill religious obligations such as fasting during Ramadan, and praying. The authors suggest that Muslim parents should be proactive and work with schools to improve their children's educational experiences.

Tindongan (2011) conducted a study to describe post 9/11 dispositions for the lived experiences of Muslim immigrant children in U.S. public schools. "Utilizing postcolonial and transnational frameworks, exploring varieties of identities, and interrogating the practices

and policies of some public school environments has served as a construct from which to explicate the lived experiences of Muslim students" (Tindongan, 2011, p. 85).

The findings show that Muslim students are having multiple identity issues as a Muslim presence in the United States past and present. Thus, Muslim students are having to negotiate this complicated lifestyle. The author concludes that even in the new transnational world order, inequality may still occur in U.S. public schools.

Shah (2006) examined the issue of ethnic identity by exploring its effect on leadership effectiveness and student achievement, with a focus on British secondary schools. "The issues discussed include the construction and projection of identities, the interplay between the discourses of identity and the students' achievement, leadership and management as it relates to student identities and the management of conflict and tensions in multiethnic schools" (Shah, 2006, p. 215).

Identities are always changing due to the nature of the political and economic climate between certain groups of people and countries. Thus, understanding a Muslim learner's self-construct can clarify their expectations and responses. In addition, developing a diverse-friendly classroom environment that draws upon the associated values

of knowledge status and the relationship between teacher/learner is helpful. The author concludes that developing school leadership to engage with wider diversity is crucial for a multiethnic society.

*Teachers' Perspectives on Muslim Students' School Experiences*

One of the studies below discusses the education of Muslim students from a teachers' perspective and the other study discusses teachers' preconceived notions of Muslim students' academic competence and behavior.

Niyozov & Pluim (2009) compiled an extensive review of the comparative and international literature on teachers' perspectives on the education of Muslim students in public, Catholic, and Islamic schools. The following implications are made for Western teachers' work with Muslim students: racism and Islamophobia; the exclusion of Muslims' historical and contemporary contributions and perspectives in the school curricula; a lowering of expectation for their Muslim students; cultural and religious insensitivity; and an overall lack of knowledge about Islam.

The authors conclude by proposing a balanced portrayal of teachers' work and how the inclusion of teachers' perspectives in policies, research, and practice will help

to improve the education for Muslim students in a diverse society. They suggest the work of teachers in and out of the classroom, the condition of their work, and the foundation of their knowledge become central for any further research on Muslim education.

Sirin, Ryce, and Mir (2009) conducted a study to examine the implications of how teachers' views of immigrant parents predict their ratings of students' academic competence and behavioral problems. The participants of this study were 39 teachers in the Northeast United States who gathered data on 191 first grade immigrant students attending Islamic and public schools.

When teachers perceived parents as having different values than themselves, students were rated negatively in academic competence and behavior problems. "The type of school students attend, however, moderated the effects of teachers' perceived value differences on their academic ratings, but not on their behavioral ratings" (Sirin, Ryce, & Mir, p. 463, 2009). Islamic school teachers had higher academic expectations than public school teachers with increased value differences. The authors conclude that their findings suggest a system of which children from immigrant families enter a path of diminished expectations.

### *Summary of the Literature Review*

Alkandri (2014) and Shah (2014) shared the struggles Muslims are encountering in a globalized era, because of the lack of knowledge most people have of Islam. Islamic education promotes coexistence and open-mindedness. Furthermore, Islam is a way of life and faith is an essential element of a Muslim's education.

Studies (Timani, 2006, Shah, 2012, Merry & Driessen, 2005) showed that the quality of education in Islamic schools varies from school to school. As a result, there are some pros and cons of Islamic schools. Al-Lawati (2007) mentioned the lack of differentiation between gifted and general students, which doesn't allow children to broaden their perspectives through education. On the other hand, the findings (El-Atwani, 2015) suggest that researchers learn about Islamic schools and their social structure to support multicultural education.

Ahmed (2013) and Denessen et al. (2005) discuss the several reasons Muslim parents send their children to an Islamic school or a public school. Most Muslim parents prefer Islamic schools for their children, because it's a safe environment in which they won't feel excluded for their religious beliefs. However, one of the main reasons

for their school choice is based on the quality of education.

Studies (Seward & Khan, 2015, Sabry & Bruna, 2007, Tindongan, 2011) explored the experiences of Muslim American adolescents in public schools. These adolescents have encountered many challenges in public schools, because of the lack of knowledge people have on Islam and their cultural traditions. These authors suggest school administrators, teachers, and parents to understand the challenges Muslims are encountering in a post 9/11 world to better serve the needs of Muslim students.

Shah (2006) examined ethnic identity and its effect on leadership effectiveness and student achievement. As the political and economic climate changes, identities change as well. Thus, teachers are suggested to create a classroom environment that promotes diversity which is crucial for a multiethnic society.

Studies (Niyozov & Pluim, 2009, Sirin et al., 2009) investigated teachers' perspectives on Muslim students' school experiences. American teachers had shown cultural and religious insensitivity to their Muslim students due to their lack of knowledge about Islam which also resulted in racism and Islamophobia. Islamic school teachers had higher academic expectations for immigrant students than public

school teachers. However, the type of school students attended changed teachers' views on immigrant students' academic competence.

The present study explored the school choices of Muslim parents; the challenges Muslim students and young adults encountered in public and/or Islamic schools and how the school choice their parents made affected their education and social skills.

## CHAPTER III

### Methods

#### *Participants*

The participants in this study were 90 Muslim parents whose children attend a public, private, and/or Islamic school in New Jersey; 126 Muslim young adults who have completed their high school education in a public, private, and/or Islamic school in New Jersey; and 52 Muslim students who currently attend a public, private, or Islamic school in New Jersey. In addition, 6 Muslim teachers from public schools and Islamic schools in New Jersey were included as participants in this study.

The Muslim young adults in this study have either completed their high school education and are currently attending college or they have finished both their high school and college education. The Muslim students in this study are currently in middle school or high school. All the participants of this study come from different ethnic backgrounds, but practice the same religion, which is Islam.

The researcher was a 26-year-old Muslim American female who received a double Bachelor's degree in early childhood education with special education and liberal studies with a concentration in psychology and anthropology

at a university in New Jersey. She was seeking a Master's degree in Curriculum and Learning with a concentration in early childhood. This study was completed as one of the final requirements of the M.Ed. program.

### *Assessment Materials*

#### *Muslim Parent Survey*

The researcher created a survey (Appendix A) for Muslim parents to complete to determine their reasoning for school choice for their child(children). Questions were asked pertaining to the type of school their child(children) currently attend or previously attended, the reasons for school choice, the satisfaction in their school choice, and if the school is providing or has provided positive social and academic experiences for their child(children).

#### *Muslim Young Adult Survey*

The researcher created a survey (Appendix B) for Muslim young adults to complete to determine their perceptions of public schools and Islamic schools. Questions were asked pertaining to the type of school they attended, the reasons for their parents' school choice, the satisfaction in their parents' school choice, and if the school provided positive social and academic experiences for them.

### *Muslim Student Survey*

The researcher created a survey (Appendix C) for Muslim students to complete to determine their perceptions of public schools and Islamic schools. Questions were asked pertaining to the type of school they currently attend, their grade level, the reasons for their parents' school choice, the satisfaction in their parents' school choice, and if the school is providing positive social and academic experiences for them.

### *SurveyMonkey*

All the surveys mentioned above were also created on this online survey development software to be sent through the researcher's email to some of the participants in this study for anonymous data collection.

### *Procedures*

The present study utilized both quantitative and qualitative surveys for data collection. Numbers and narratives are both needed to better understand our world (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1996). The objective of this study was to look at the school choices of Muslim parents; the social and academic experiences of Muslim young adults who've completed their high school education in public and/or Islamic schools; and the social and academic experiences of

Muslim students who currently attend a public or Islamic school.

#### *Pre-Intervention*

Before the intervention procedure began, a group of participants were given a pilot of the surveys to ensure that the quality of the questions would serve best for my thesis.

#### *Intervention*

Participants who are Muslim parents were given the Muslim Parent Survey, which was completed online through SurveyMonkey. A few of the participants were interviewed by the researcher using an interview questionnaire (Appendix D).

Participants who are Muslim young adults were given the Muslim Young Adult Survey, which was completed online through SurveyMonkey. A few of the participants were interviewed by the researcher using an interview questionnaire (Appendix E).

Participants who are Muslim students were given the Muslim Student Survey, which was completed online through SurveyMonkey. A few of the participants were interviewed by the researcher using an interview questionnaire (Appendix F).

Participants who are Muslim teachers were interviewed by the researcher using an interview questionnaire (Appendices G & H).

Table 2 displays the daily schedule for the study.

Table 2

*Daily Schedule for Weeks 1-7*

	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>
<b>Week 1</b>	5/1 Pre- Intervention • Instruments piloted	5/2 Pre- Intervention • Instruments piloted	5/3 Pre- Intervention • Instruments piloted	5/4 Pre- Intervention • Instruments piloted	5/5 Pre- Intervention • Instruments piloted
<b>Week 2</b>	5/8 Distribute each Survey to Participants through SurveyMonkey	5/9 Personal Interviews with Muslim Parents	5/10 Personal Interviews with Muslim Students	5/11 Personal Interviews with Muslim Teachers	5/12 Personal Interviews with Muslim Young Adults
<b>Week 3</b>	5/15 Personal Interviews with Muslim Young Adults	5/16 Personal Interviews with Muslim Parents	5/17	5/18 Personal Interviews with Muslim Teachers	5/19 Personal Interviews with Muslim Students
<b>Week 4</b>	5/22 Personal Interviews with Muslim Young Adults	5/23 Personal Interviews with Muslim Parents	5/24 Personal Interviews with Muslim Students	5/25 Personal Interviews with Muslim Teachers	5/26
<b>Week 5</b>	5/29 Personal Interviews with Muslim Young Adults	5/30	5/31 Personal Interviews with Muslim Students	6/1 Personal Interviews with Muslim Teachers	6/2 Personal Interviews with Muslim Parents
<b>Week 6</b>	6/5 Personal Interviews with Muslim Young Adults	6/6 Personal Interviews with Muslim Parents	6/7 Personal Interviews with Muslim Students	6/8 Personal Interviews with Muslim Teachers	6/9
<b>Week 7</b>	6/12 Personal Interviews with Muslim Young Adults	6/13 Personal Interviews with Muslim Parents	6/14 Personal Interviews with Muslim Students	6/15 Personal Interviews with Muslim Teachers	6/16 Last Day for SurveyMonkey Data Collection

### *Data Collection*

The data collected in this study were used to determine the effects of Muslim parents' school choice on children's social and academic skills by using surveys and personal interviews focusing on the social and academic experiences in public schools and Islamic schools. A formally described classification system clearly identifies the kinds of information the researcher could collect and helps readers of the research understand the pattern of categories into which the data have been organized (Thomas, 2005). The triangulation matrixes (Tables 3 & 4) graphically exhibit and arrange the data collection methods according to the research questions and additional question.

Table 3

*Data Collection Methods for Research Questions*

Research Questions	Anonymous Surveys for Muslim Parents	Personal Interviews with Muslim Parents	Anonymous Surveys for Muslim Young Adults	Personal Interviews with Muslim Young Adults	Anonymous Surveys for Muslim Students	Personal Interviews with Muslim Students
1) How do Muslim parents choose a public school or an Islamic school for their children?	✓	✓	✓		✓	
2) What types of social and academic experiences do Muslim young adults that have already completed public or Islamic schools experience?		✓	✓	✓		
3) What types of social and academic experiences do Muslim students that are currently attending public or Islamic schools have?		✓			✓	✓

Table 4

*Data Collection Methods for Additional Question*

Additional Question	Personal Interviews with Muslim Teachers
1) How do Muslim teachers in public schools and Islamic schools feel about the academic and social experiences Muslim students are encountering in their classrooms or schools?	

## CHAPTER IV

### Results

#### *Overview*

The data collected in this study were used to look at the school choices of Muslim parents and to find the social and academic challenges and benefits Muslim students and young adults report that they experienced in public, private, and/or Islamic schools.

Instruments were piloted prior to being used for the study. Then, changes were made to the surveys and were ready for distribution.

Intervention surveys and interviews for Muslim parents, young adults, and students were administered. Interviews for Muslim teachers were administered as well. All surveys were created through SurveyMonkey and were distributed through email & social media. The surveys and interviews for Muslim parents, young adults, and students included questions regarding school choice, academic challenges and benefits, and social challenges and benefits. Interviews with Muslim teachers included questions regarding teaching experience, academic challenges and benefits of Muslim students, and social challenges and benefits of Muslim students.

In the Muslim parent survey, the question concerning the academic and social benefits and challenges for their children, the data collected weren't needed for supporting any of the hypotheses. In addition, the question pertaining to the satisfaction of school choice for all the surveys was irrelevant to the purpose of this study; therefore, the data won't be discussed in the results below.

The researcher then reviewed the surveys and interviews looking for trends in school choice of Muslim parents, academic challenges and benefits of Muslim students and young adults, and social challenges and benefits of Muslim students and young adults. Analytical or interpretive procedures were used to arrive at findings or theories. Data were placed into Tables for the researcher to review and look for trends. Emergent patterns were uncovered and identified from the data.

#### *Analysis of Data*

##### *Hypothesis 1 - Muslim Parents' Reasons for School Choice*

It was hypothesized that Muslim parents who choose Islamic schools over public schools, say they do so to surround their children with other Muslims and to learn about Islam. Those that choose public schools for their children say that they do so to ensure their children are being given the best education. To test this hypothesis,

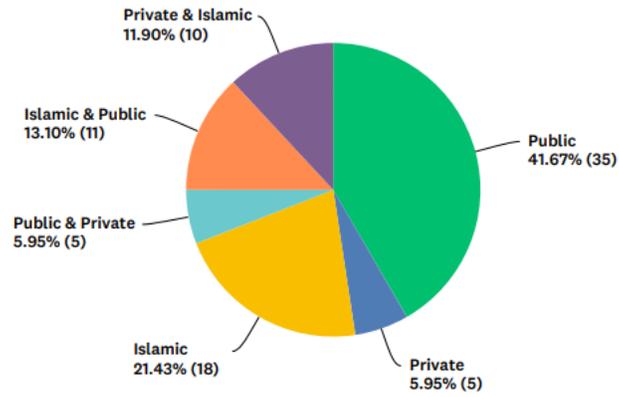
anonymous surveys were distributed to Muslim parents, young adults, and students. In addition, personal interviews were completed with Muslim parents. Through SurveyMonkey, all question responses were analyzed, and data included answer choice percentages with total number of responses. Muslim parent interviews were reviewed by the researcher and responses were included in the results based on the first Hypothesis.

A total of 84 Muslim parents completed the Muslim Parents' School Choice survey. Thirty-five Muslim parents (41.67%) reported their child(children) attended public schools. Eighteen Muslim parents (21.43%) reported their child(children) attended Islamic schools. Eleven Muslim parents (13.1%) reported their child(children) attended Islamic and public schools. Ten Muslim parents (11.9%) reported their child(children) attended private and Islamic schools. Five Muslim parents (5.9%) reported their child(children) attended private schools and 5 Muslim parents (5.9%) reported their child(children) attended public and private schools. Figure 1 displays these data graphically.

Figure 1

*Muslim Parents' School Choice*

*n=84*



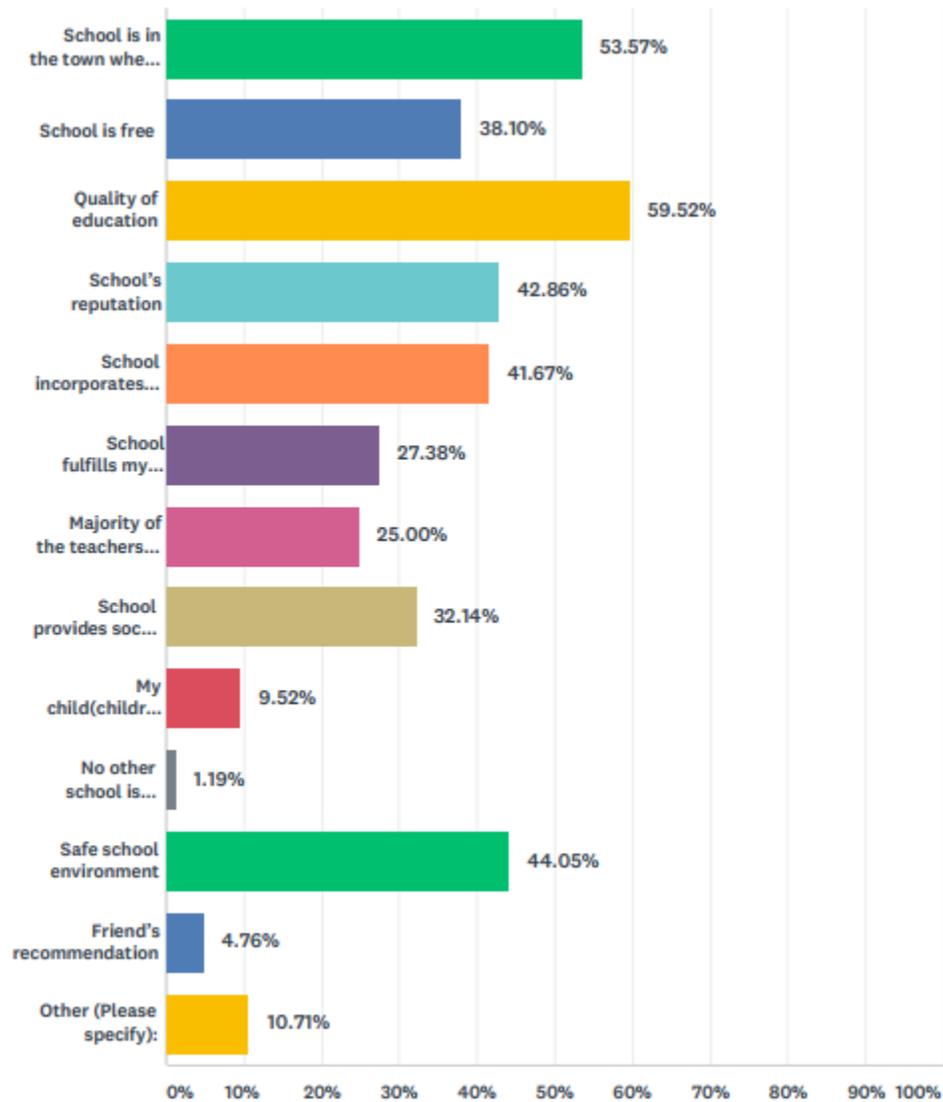
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Public	41.67%	35
Private	5.95%	5
Islamic	21.43%	18
Public & Private	5.95%	5
Islamic & Public	13.10%	11
Private & Islamic	11.90%	10
No	0.00%	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>84</b>

A total of 84 Muslim Parents chose the reasons given for school choice, more than one option could be chosen. Fifty Muslim parents (59.5%) reported quality of education as a reason for school choice. Forty-five Muslim parents (53.6%) reported school is in the town where I live as a reason for school choice. Thirty-seven Muslim parents (44%) reported safe school environment as a reason for school choice. Thirty-six Muslim parents (42.9%) reported school's reputation as a reason for school choice. Thirty-five Muslim parents (41.7%) reported school incorporates Islamic education as a reason for school choice. Thirty-two Muslim parents (38.1%) reported school is free as a reason for school choice. Twenty-seven Muslim parents (32.1%) reported school provides social opportunities for my child(children) as a reason for school choice. Twenty-three Muslim parents (27.4%) reported school fulfills my child(children's) religious obligations as a reason for school choice. Twenty-one Muslim parents (25%) reported majority of the teachers and children are Muslim as a reason for school choice. The following reasons were reported by less than 10 Muslim parents: other (10.7%), my child(children) have special needs (9.5%), friend's recommendation (4.8%), and no other school is available for my child(children) (1.2%). Figure 2 displays these data visually.

Figure 2

*Muslim Parents' Reasons for School Choice*

n=84



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
School is in the town where I live	53.57%	45
School is free	38.10%	32
Quality of education	59.52%	50
School's reputation	42.86%	36
School incorporates Islamic education	41.67%	35
School fulfills my child(ren's) religious obligations	27.38%	23

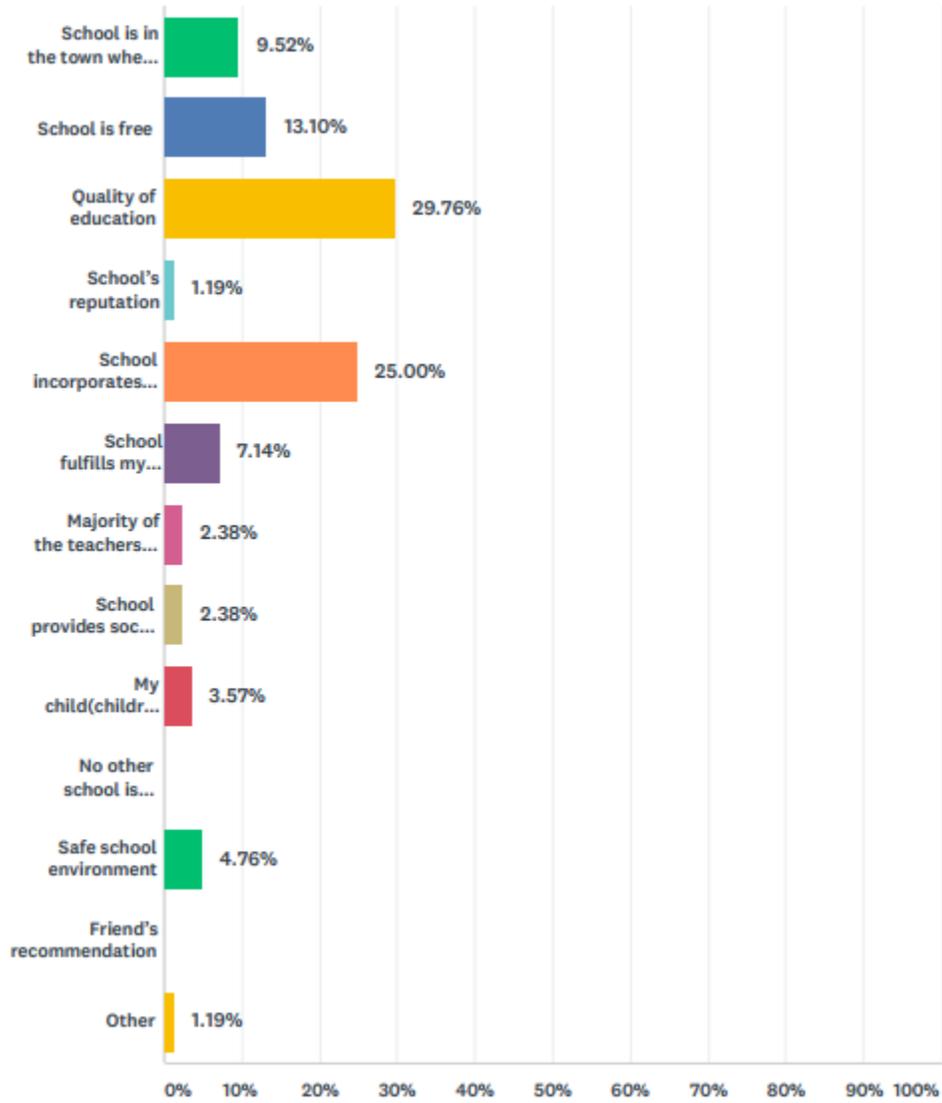
Majority of the teachers and children are Muslim	25.00%	21
School provides social opportunities for my child(children)	32.14%	27
My child(children) have special needs	9.52%	8
No other school is available for my child(children)	1.19%	1
Safe school environment	44.05%	37
Friend's recommendation	4.76%	4
Other (Please specify):	10.71%	9
Total Respondents: 84		

A total of 84 Muslim parents chose the most important reason for school choice. Twenty-five Muslim parents (29.8%) reported quality of education as the most important reason. Twenty-one Muslim parents (25%) reported school incorporates Islamic education as the most important reason. Eleven Muslim parents (13.1%) reported school is free as the most important reason. Eight Muslim parents (9.5%) reported school is in the town where I live as the most important reason. Six Muslim parents (7.1%) reported school fulfills my child(children's) religious obligations as the most important reason. The following reasons were reported by less than 5 Muslim parents: safe school environment (4.8%), my child(children) have special needs (3.6%), majority of the teachers and children are Muslim (2.4%), school provides social opportunities for my child(children) (2.4%), school's reputation (1.2%), and other (1.2%). These data are shown visually in Figure 3.

Figure 3

*Muslim Parents' Most Important Reason for School Choice*

*n=84*



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
School is in the town where I live	9.52%	8
School is free	13.10%	11
Quality of education	29.76%	25
School's reputation	1.19%	1
School incorporates Islamic education	25.00%	21
School fulfills my child(children's) religious obligations	7.14%	6

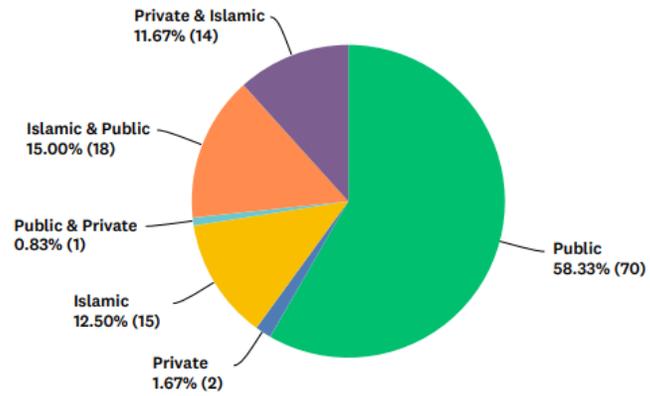
Majority of the teachers and children are Muslim	2.38%	2
School provides social opportunities for my child(children)	2.38%	2
My child(children) have special needs	3.57%	3
No other school is available for my child(children)	0.00%	0
Safe school environment	4.76%	4
Friend's recommendation	0.00%	0
Other	1.19%	1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>84</b>

A total of 120 Muslim young adults completed the Muslim Young Adults' Past School Experience survey. Seventy Muslim young adults (58.33%) reported they attended public schools. Eighteen Muslim young adults (15.00%) reported they attended Islamic and public schools. Fifteen Muslim young adults (12.50%) reported they attended Islamic schools. Fourteen Muslim young adults (11.67%) reported they attended private and Islamic schools. Two Muslim young adults (1.67%) reported they attended private schools and 1 Muslim young adult (0.83%) reported he/she attended public and private schools. These data are displayed visually in Figure 4.

Figure 4

*Muslim Young Adults' Past School Experience*

*n=120*



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	COUNT
Public	58.33%	70
Private	1.67%	2
Islamic	12.50%	15
Public & Private	0.83%	1
Islamic & Public	15.00%	18
Private & Islamic	11.67%	14
No	0.00%	0
TOTAL		120

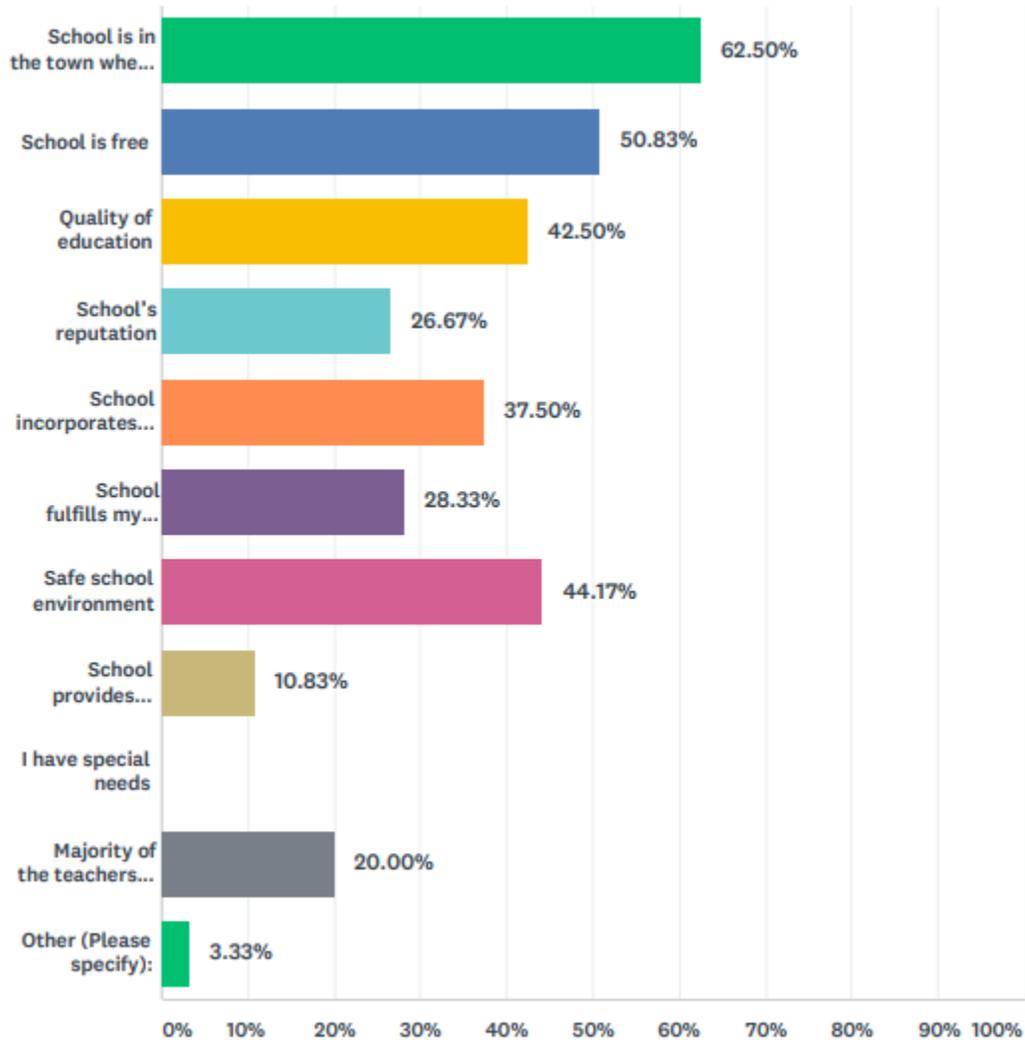
A total of 120 Muslim young adults answered the question asking for the reasons for their parents' school choice. More than one option could be chosen. Seventy-five Muslim young adults (62.50%) reported school is in the town where I live as their parents' reason for school choice. Sixty-one Muslim young adults (50.83%) reported school is free as their parents' reason for school choice. Fifty-three Muslim young adults (44.17%) reported safe school environment as their parents' reason for school choice. Fifty-one Muslim young adults (42.50%) reported quality of education as their parents' reason for school choice. Forty-five Muslim young adults (37.50%) reported school incorporates Islamic education as their parents' reason for school choice. Thirty-four Muslim young adults (28.33%) reported school fulfills my religious obligations as their parents' reason for school choice. Thirty-two Muslim young adults (26.67%) reported school's reputation as their parents' reason for school choice. Twenty-four Muslim young adults (20.00%) reported majority of the teachers and students are Muslim as their parents' reason for school choice. Thirteen Muslim young adults (10.83%) reported school provides extracurricular activities as their parents' reason for school choice. Four Muslim young adults

(3.33%) reported other as their parents' reason for school choice. Figure 5 displays these data.

Figure 5

*Muslim Young Adults' Reasons for Parents' School Choice*

*n=120*



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
School is in the town where I live	62.50%	75
School is free	50.83%	61
Quality of education	42.50%	51
School's reputation	26.67%	32
School incorporates Islamic education	37.50%	45
School fulfills my religious obligations	28.33%	34
Safe school environment	44.17%	53
School provides extracurricular activities	10.83%	13
I have special needs	0.00%	0
Majority of the teachers and students are Muslim	20.00%	24

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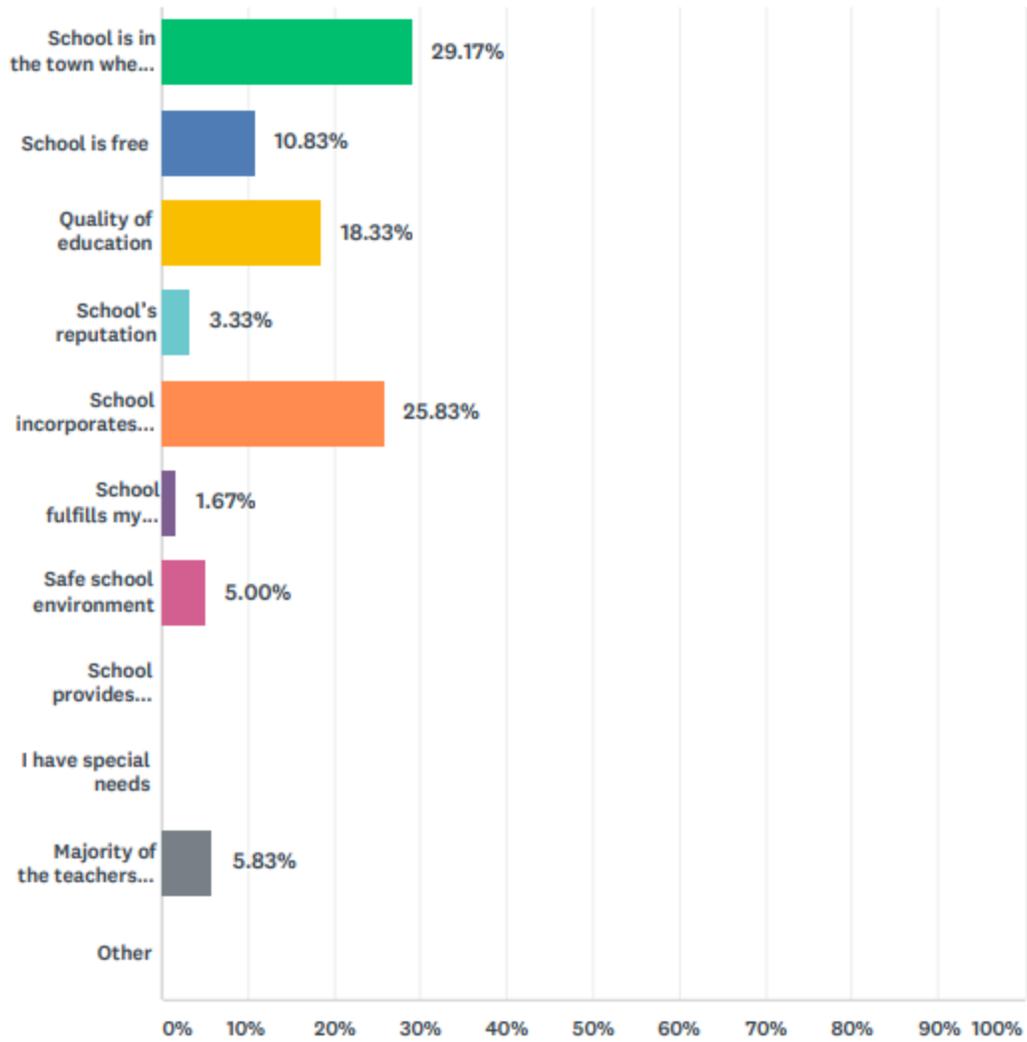
Other (Please specify):	3.33%	4
Total Respondents: 120		

A total of 120 Muslim young adults chose the most important reason for their parents' school choice. Thirty-five Muslim young adults (29.17%) reported school is in the town where I live as the most important reason. Thirty-one Muslim young adults (25.83%) reported school incorporates Islamic education as the most important reason. Twenty-two Muslim young adults (18.33%) reported quality of education as the most important reason. Thirteen Muslim young adults (10.83%) reported school is free as the most important reason. The following reasons were reported by less than 8 Muslim young adults: majority of the teachers and students are Muslim (5.83%), safe school environment (5.00%), school's reputation (3.33%), and school fulfills my religious obligations (1.67%). These data are shown visually in Figure 6.

Figure 6

*Muslim Young Adults' Most Important Reason for Parents' School Choice*

n=120



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
School is in the town where I live	29.17%	35
School is free	10.83%	13
Quality of education	18.33%	22
School's reputation	3.33%	4
School incorporates Islamic education	25.83%	31
School fulfills my religious obligations	1.67%	2
Safe school environment	5.00%	6
School provides extracurricular activities	0.00%	0
I have special needs	0.00%	0

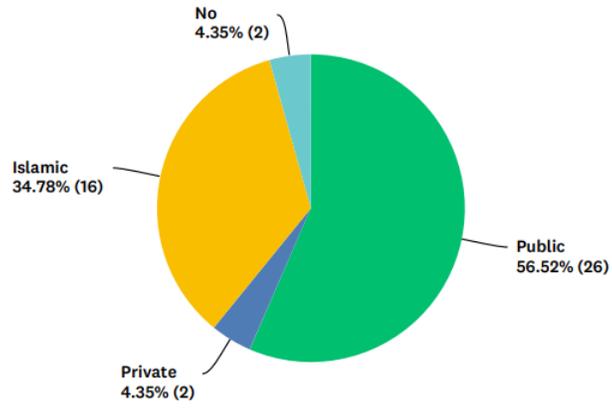
Majority of the teachers and students are Muslim	5.83%	7
Other	0.00%	0
TOTAL		120

A total of 46 Muslim students completed the Muslim Students' School Experience survey. Twenty-six Muslim students (56.52%) reported they attend public schools. Sixteen Muslim students (34.78%) reported they attend Islamic schools. Two Muslim students (4.35%) reported they attend private schools and 2 Muslim students (4.35%) reported they attend no school. These data are visually displayed in Figure 7.

Figure 7

*Muslim Students' School Experience*

*n=46*



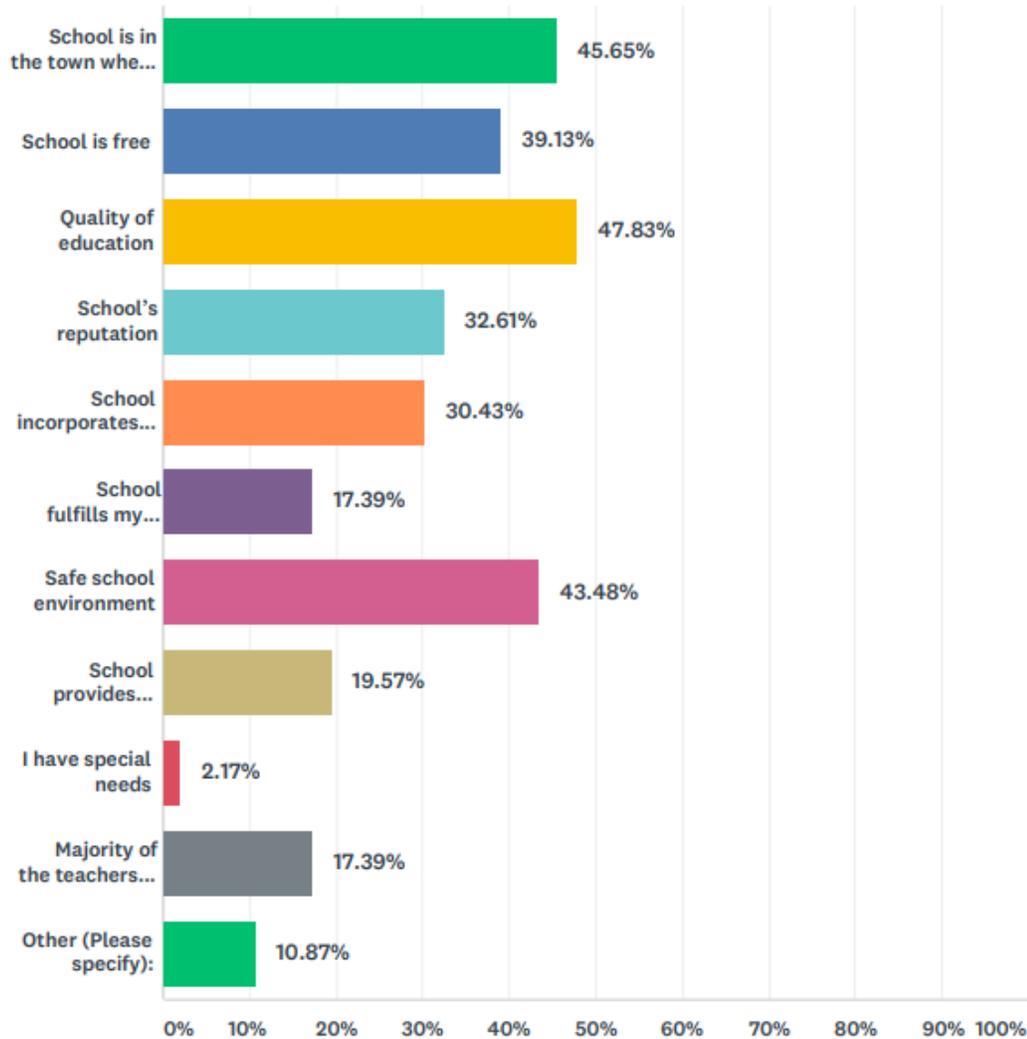
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Public	56.52%	26
Private	4.35%	2
Islamic	34.78%	16
No	4.35%	2
TOTAL		46

A total of 46 Muslim students identified reasons given for their parents' school choice. More than one option could be chosen. Twenty-two Muslim students (47.8%) reported quality of education as their parents' reason for school choice. Twenty-one Muslim students (45.6%) reported school is in the town where I live as their parents' reason for school choice. Twenty Muslim students (43.5%) reported safe school environment as their parents' reason for school choice. Eighteen Muslim students (39.1%) reported school is free as their parents' reason for school choice. Fifteen Muslim students (32.6%) reported school's reputation as their parents' reason for school choice. Fourteen Muslim students (30.4%) reported school incorporates Islamic education as their parents' reason for school choice. The following reasons were reported by less than 10 Muslim students: school provides extracurricular activities (19.6%), school fulfills my religious obligations (17.4%), majority of the teachers and students are Muslim (17.4%), other (10.9%), and I have special needs (2.2%). Figure 8 shows these data.

Figure 8

*Muslim Students' Reasons for Parents' School Choice*

n=46



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
School is in the town where I live	45.65%	21
School is free	39.13%	18
Quality of education	47.83%	22
School's reputation	32.61%	15
School incorporates Islamic education	30.43%	14
School fulfills my religious obligations	17.39%	8
Safe school environment	43.48%	20
School provides extracurricular activities	19.57%	9
I have special needs	2.17%	1
Majority of the teachers and students are Muslim	17.39%	8

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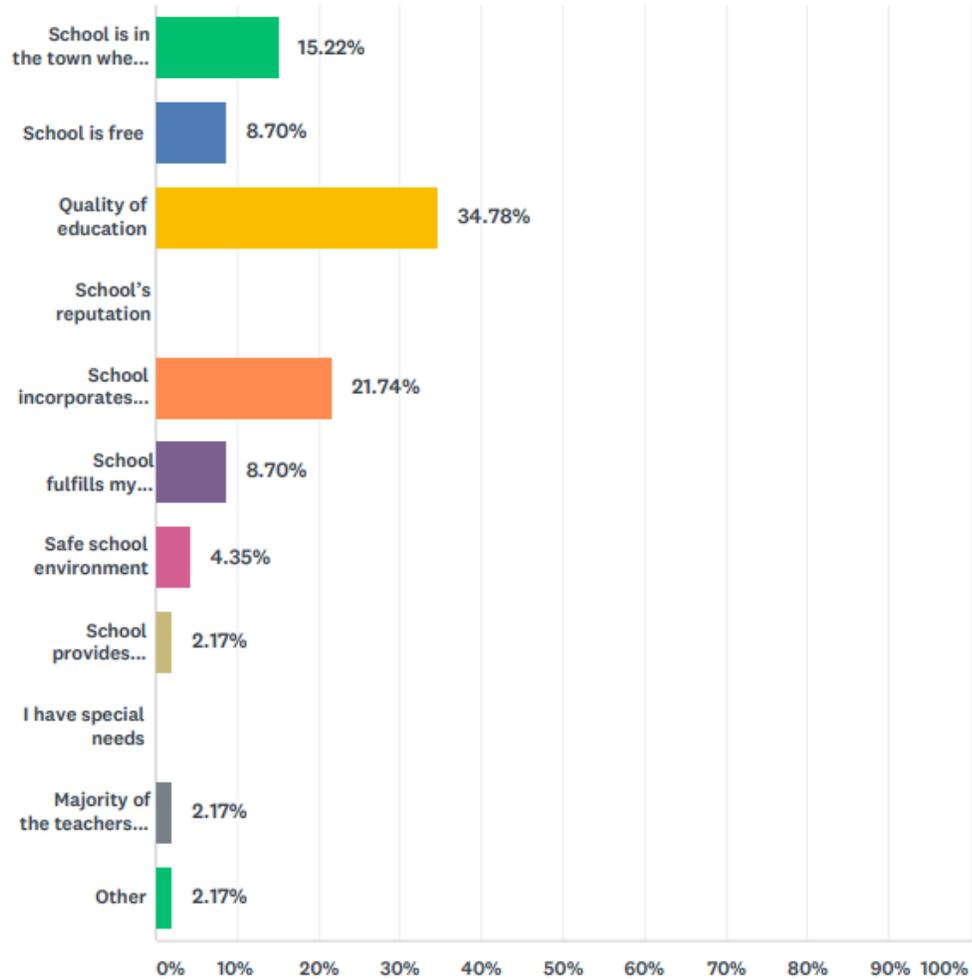
Other (Please specify):	10.87%	5
Total Respondents: 46		

A total of 46 Muslim students chose the most important reason for their parents' school choice. Sixteen Muslim students (34.8%) reported quality of education as the most important reason. Ten Muslim students (21.7%) reported school incorporates Islamic education as the most important reason. Seven Muslim students (15.2%) reported school is in the town where I live as the most important reason. The following reasons were reported by less than 5 Muslim students: school is free (8.7%), school fulfills my religious obligations (8.7%), safe school environment (4.3%), school provides extracurricular activities (2.2%), majority of the teachers and students are Muslim (2.2%), and other (2.2%). These data are visually displayed in Figure 9.

Figure 9

*Muslim Students' Most Important Reason for Parents' School Choice*

n=46



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
School is in the town where I live	15.22%	7
School is free	8.70%	4
Quality of education	34.78%	16
School's reputation	0.00%	0
School incorporates Islamic education	21.74%	10
School fulfills my religious obligations	8.70%	4
Safe school environment	4.35%	2
School provides extracurricular activities	2.17%	1
I have special needs	0.00%	0
Majority of the teachers and students are Muslim	2.17%	1

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Other	2.17%	1
TOTAL		46

Overall, for Hypothesis 1, with respect to the answers given in the written questionnaire surveys about parents' school choice, most parents that had children in public schools said they chose those schools because school is in the town where they live, school is free, and/or quality of education. Most parents that had children in Islamic schools reported that they did so because school incorporates Islamic education and/or majority of the teachers and children are Muslim. Most parents that had children in private schools reported that they did so because quality of education, safe school environment, and/or school's reputation.

Most young adults that attended public schools said their parents chose those schools because school is in the town where they live and/or school is free. Most young adults that attended Islamic schools reported that their parents did so because school incorporates Islamic education, school fulfills their religious obligations, safe school environment, and/or majority of the teachers and students are Muslim. The young adults that attended private schools reported that their parents did so because school is in the town where they live, school incorporates Islamic education, school fulfills their religious obligations, safe school environment, majority of the

teachers and students are Muslim, school's reputation, and/or other.

Most students that attend public schools said their parents chose those schools because school is in the town where they live and/or school is free. Most students that attended Islamic schools reported that their parents did so because school incorporates Islamic education and/or safe school environment. The students that attended private schools reported that their parents did so because quality of education, school incorporates Islamic education, school fulfills their religious obligations, and/or safe school environment.

Muslim parent interviews were completed with six parents. Two parents had children in Islamic schools and two parents had child(children) in public schools. One parent had children in private school and one parent had children in public and private schools.

M.H. has children currently attending Islamic school. His response to the reasons for school choice was based on Muslim identity. The most important reason for his school choice was limited exposure to violence, sex, drugs, and alcohol. M.Q.'s children attended and currently attend Islamic school. His response to the reasons for school choice was to learn about Islam and to practice their

faith. The most important reason for his school choice was Islamic mannerism and safe environment.

S.Q. has a child with special needs currently attending public school. Her response to the reasons for school choice was based on academics. The most important reason for her school choice was specialized teachers.

K.A.'s children attended public school. His response to the reasons for school choice was financial reasons and availability. The most important reason for his school choice was convenience based on transportation.

A.E.'s children attended and currently attend public and private school. Her response to the reasons for school choice was based on their exposure to a diverse population. The most important reason for her school choice was the academic strength of the school. A.A. has children currently attending private school. Her response to the reasons for school choice was based on the teacher to student ratio. Her most important reason for school choice was that it saved her a year, because the school didn't meet the cutoff date.

Based on the interview data from the six interviews above, the following trends emerged. The parents whose children attend or had previously attended Islamic schools said they chose those schools because of Muslim identity;

limited exposure to violence, sex, drugs, and alcohol; to learn about Islam; to practice their faith; Islamic mannerism; and safe environment. The parents whose child (children) attend or had previously attended public schools said they chose those schools because of academics, specialized teachers, financial reasons, availability, and convenience based on transportation. The parent who has children attending private school said she chose this school because of the teacher to student ratio and saving a year since the school doesn't meet the cutoff date. The parent who has a child attending and children whom had previously attended public and private schools said she chose those schools because of the diverse population and the academic strength of the school.

*Hypothesis 2 - Social & Academic Experiences of Muslim Young Adults*

It was hypothesized that Muslim young adults who have already completed their high school education from an Islamic school encountered many more social challenges than those who attended a public school. It was also hypothesized that Muslim young adults who attended Islamic schools encountered academic challenges since it was difficult for them to keep up with all the subjects that were being taught. However, Muslim young adults who

attended public schools didn't encounter as much difficulty since the curriculum was developmentally appropriate. To test this hypothesis, anonymous surveys were distributed to Muslim young adults. In addition, personal interviews were completed with Muslim parents and young adults. Through SurveyMonkey, all question responses were analyzed, and data included answer choice percentages with total number of responses. Muslim parent and young adult interviews were reviewed by the researcher and responses were included in the results based on the second Hypothesis.

A total of 120 Muslim young adults chose the academic challenges given for their past school experience, more than one option could be chosen. Forty-three Muslim young adults (35.8%) reported overload of schoolwork as an academic challenge. Thirty-nine Muslim young adults (32.5%) reported none. Thirty-five Muslim young adults (29.2%) reported lack of teacher involvement as an academic challenge. Twenty-five Muslim young adults (20.8%) reported other. Twenty-two Muslim young adults (18.3%) reported lack of special education resources as an academic challenge. Figure 10 display these data visually.

Figure 10

*Muslim Young Adults' Academic Challenges*

*n=120*



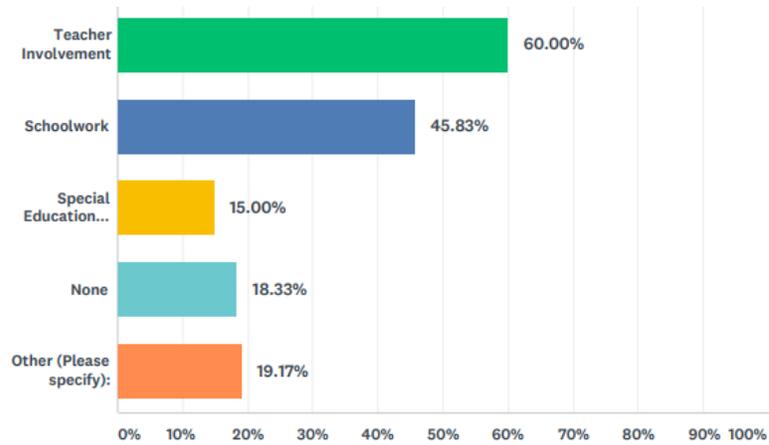
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Lack of Teacher Involvement	29.17%	35
Overload of Schoolwork	35.83%	43
Lack of Special Education Resources	18.33%	22
None	32.50%	39
Other (Please specify):	20.83%	25
Total Respondents: 120		

A total of 120 Muslim young adults chose the academic strengths given for their past school experience, more than one option could be chosen. Seventy-two Muslim young adults (60%) reported teacher involvement as an academic strength. Fifty-five Muslim young adults (45.8%) reported schoolwork as an academic strength. Twenty-three Muslim young adults (19.2%) reported other. Twenty-two Muslim young adults (18.3%) reported none. Eighteen Muslim young adults (15%) reported special education resources as an academic strength. These data are shown visually in Figure 11.

Figure 11

*Muslim Young Adults' Academic Strengths*

*n=120*



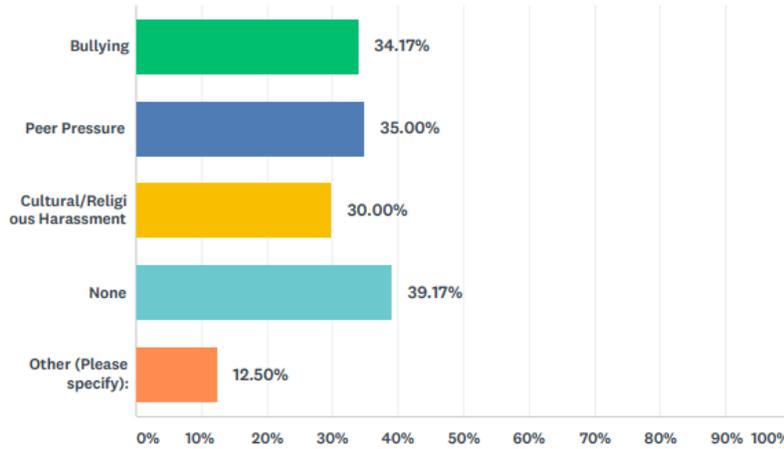
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Teacher Involvement	60.00%	72
Schoolwork	45.83%	55
Special Education Resources	15.00%	18
None	18.33%	22
Other (Please specify):	19.17%	23
Total Respondents: 120		

A total of 120 Muslim young adults chose the social challenges given for their past school experience, more than one option could be chosen. Forty-seven Muslim young adults (39.2%) reported none. Forty-two Muslim young adults (35%) reported peer pressure as a social challenge. Forty-one Muslim young adults (34.2%) reported bullying as a social challenge. Thirty-six Muslim young adults (30%) reported cultural/religious harassment as a social challenge. Fifteen Muslim young adults (12.5%) reported other. These data are displayed visually in Figure 12.

Figure 12

*Muslim Young Adults' Social Challenges*

*n=120*



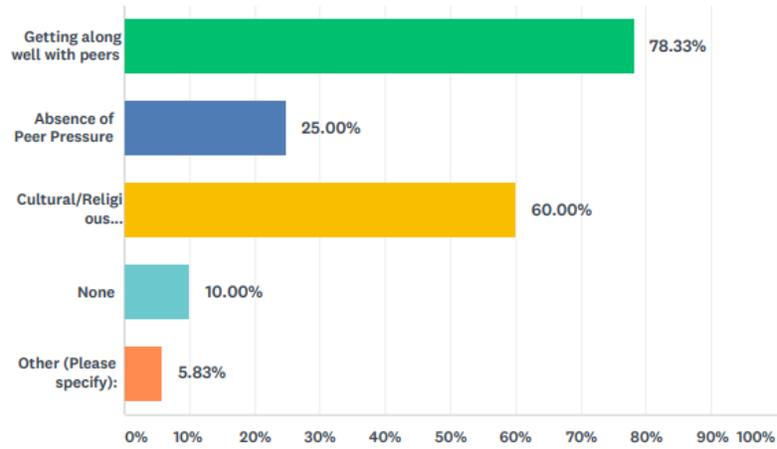
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Bullying	34.17%	41
Peer Pressure	35.00%	42
Cultural/Religious Harassment	30.00%	36
None	39.17%	47
Other (Please specify):	12.50%	15
Total Respondents: 120		

A total of 120 Muslim young adults chose the positive social experiences given for their past school experience, more than one option could be chosen. Ninety-four Muslim young adults (78.3%) reported getting along well with peers as a positive social experience. Seventy-two Muslim young adults (60%) reported cultural/religious relationships with peers as a positive social experience. Thirty Muslim young adults (25%) reported absence of peer pressure as a positive social experience. Twelve Muslim young adults (10%) reported none. Seven Muslim young adults (5.8%) reported other. Figure 13 displays these data.

Figure 13

*Muslim Young Adults' Positive Social Experiences*

*n=120*



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Getting along well with peers	78.33%	94
Absence of Peer Pressure	25.00%	30
Cultural/Religious relationships with peers	60.00%	72
None	10.00%	12
Other (Please specify):	5.83%	7
Total Respondents: 120		

Overall, for Hypothesis 2, with respect to the answers given in the written questionnaire surveys about young adults' past school experience, most young adults that attended public schools said they had no academic challenges; teacher involvement was considered an academic strength; peer pressure was considered a social challenge; and getting along well with peers was considered a positive social experience. Most young adults that attended Islamic schools reported overload of schoolwork as an academic challenge; teacher involvement as an academic strength; no social challenges and/or bullying as a social challenge; and getting along well with peers as a positive social experience. Most young adults that attended private schools reported teacher involvement, lack of special education resources, and/or other as an academic challenge; no academic strengths and/or teacher involvement as an academic strength; no social challenges, bullying, and/or peer pressure as a social challenge; and getting along well with peers, absence of peer pressure, and/or cultural/religious relationships with peers as a positive social experience. A young adult that attended public and private schools reported overload of schoolwork as an academic challenge; teacher involvement as an academic strength; no social challenges; and getting along well with

peers as a positive social experience. Most young adults that attended Islamic and public schools reported lack of teacher involvement as an academic challenge; schoolwork as an academic strength; cultural/religious harassment as a social challenge; and getting along well with peers and/or cultural/religious relationships with peers as a positive social experience. Most young adults that attended private and Islamic schools reported overload of schoolwork as an academic challenge; teacher involvement as an academic strength; no social challenges; and getting along well with peers as a positive social experience.

The Muslim parent interviews included one parent who had children in public school, one parent who had children in Islamic school, and one parent who had children in public and private schools.

K.A. had children in public school. His response to the academic strengths and/or challenges his children previously encountered in school was about his children facing hardships with subjects that were challenging and how they managed to handle it by seeking help with his guidance and their teacher's guidance. His response to the positive social experiences and/or challenges his children previously encountered in school was regarding the culture and religion his children carried on while attending public

schools, which allowed them to blend in and become accepted by others. M.Q. had children in Islamic school. His response to the academic strengths and/or challenges his children previously encountered in school was regarding their excellent education. His response to their positive social experiences and/or challenges his children previously encountered in school was about them having good friends and strong faith. A.E. had children in public & private schools. She stated her young adult children encountered no academic challenges.

Muslim young adult interviews were completed with six young adults. Three young adults attended public schools. One young adult attended Islamic school. Two young adults attended public and Islamic schools.

S.A. attended public school. Her response to the academic strengths and/or challenges from her past school experience was based on the ability to participate in honors classes. Her response to the positive social experiences and/or challenges from her past school experience was about her not having many friends and the school not being extremely diverse. H.K. attended public school. His response to the academic strengths and/or challenges from his past school experience was about him facing plenty of academic challenges. His response to the

positive social experiences and/or challenges from his past school experience was about him having positive social experiences and one experience he mentioned was joining the basketball team. Z.M. attended public school. Her response to the academic strengths and/or challenges from her past school experience was about how Mathematics was challenging for her and writing was her strength. Her response to the positive social experiences and/or challenges from her past school experience was about how she found friendships in peers and colleagues throughout her schooling and how she built positive relationships with teachers.

I.S. attended Islamic school. Her response to the academic strengths and/or challenges from her past school experience was about how she had difficulty with understanding the content and struggled with application due to her having a learning disability. Her response to the positive social experiences and/or challenges from her past school experience was about how she built relationships with girls that she could meet outside of school and she mentioned there were many cliques with girls.

A.G. attended public and Islamic schools. His response to the academic strengths and/or challenges from his past school experience was about how in Islamic school there

were strong and challenging academics; regular and honors level classes were offered; and extracurricular activities were heavily encouraged. His response to the positive social experiences and/or challenges from his past school experience was about how he felt welcomed by classmates; however, the gender dynamic was challenging to navigate. H.A. attended public and Islamic schools. His response to the academic strengths and/or challenges from his past school experience was about how English was challenging for him, but his strengths were in Mathematics and Science. His response to the positive social experiences and/or challenges from his past school experience was about how he made friends that influenced him in a positive way. The social challenges he mentioned was about he had difficulty in behaving well and how he made friends that were a bad influence.

Based on the interview data from the 6 interviews above, the following trends emerged. The young adults who attended public schools said they had the ability to participate in honors classes, but they also encountered plenty of academic challenges. In addition, they had positive social experiences; however, one young adult mentioned not making any friends since her school wasn't diverse. The young adult who attended Islamic school

encountered academic challenges due to her learning disability. She had positive social experiences with her peers, but she mentioned there being many cliques with girls in her school. The young adults who attended public and Islamic schools mentioned many academic strengths from their schooling. They encountered positive social experiences and challenges as well. One of them mentioned the gender dynamic in Islamic schools being a challenge.

### *Hypothesis 3 - Social & Academic Experiences of Muslim Students*

It was hypothesized that Muslim students who are currently attending Islamic schools encountered more social challenges outside of school in comparison to Muslim students who are currently attending public schools. It was also hypothesized that those currently attending Islamic schools reported many more academic challenges than those who are attending public schools. To test this hypothesis, anonymous surveys were distributed to Muslim students. In addition, personal interviews were completed with Muslim parents and students. Through SurveyMonkey, all question responses were analyzed, and data included answer choice percentages with total number of responses. Muslim parent and student interviews were reviewed by the researcher and

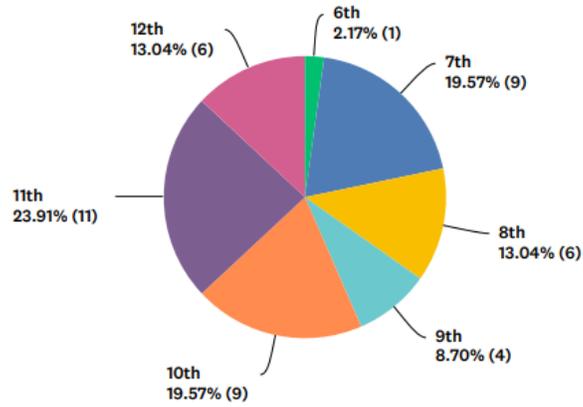
responses were included in the results based on the third Hypothesis.

A total of 46 Muslim students completed the Muslim Students' School Experience survey. Eleven Muslim students (23.9%) reported they are in 11<sup>th</sup> grade. Nine Muslim students (19.6%) reported they are in 7<sup>th</sup> grade and 9 Muslim students (19.6%) reported they are in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Six Muslim students (13%) reported they are in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and 6 Muslim students (13%) reported they are in 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Four Muslim students (8.7%) reported they are in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. One Muslim student (2.2%) reported he/she is in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. These data are visually displayed in Figure 14.

Figure 14

*Muslim Students' Grade Level*

*n=46*



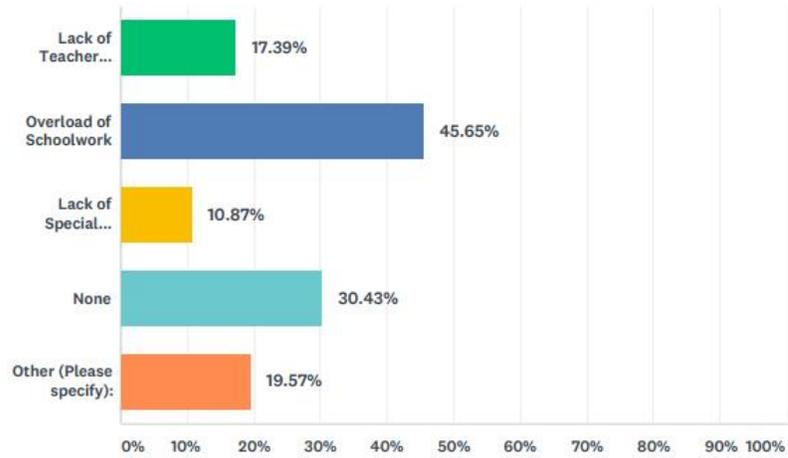
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
6th	2.17%	1
7th	19.57%	9
8th	13.04%	6
9th	8.70%	4
10th	19.57%	9
11th	23.91%	11
12th	13.04%	6
TOTAL		46

A total of 46 Muslim students chose the academic challenges given for their school experience, more than one option could be chosen. Twenty-one Muslim students (45.7%) reported overload of schoolwork as an academic challenge. Fourteen Muslim students (30.4%) reported none. Nine Muslim students (19.6%) reported other. Eight Muslim students (17.4%) reported lack of teacher involvement as an academic challenge. Five Muslim students (10.9%) reported lack of special education resources as an academic challenge. Figure 15 display these data visually.

Figure 15

*Muslim Students' Academic Challenges*

*n=46*



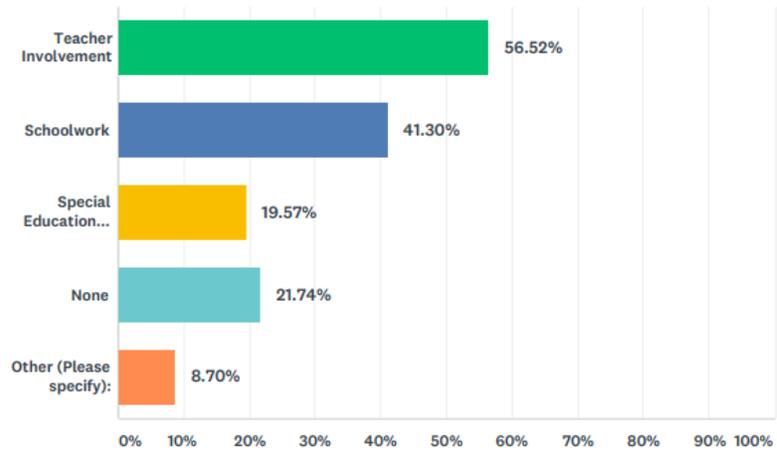
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Lack of Teacher Involvement	17.39%	8
Overload of Schoolwork	45.65%	21
Lack of Special Education Resources	10.87%	5
None	30.43%	14
Other (Please specify):	19.57%	9
Total Respondents: 46		

A total of 46 Muslim students chose the academic strengths given for their school experience, more than one option could be chosen. Twenty-six Muslim students (56.5%) reported teacher involvement as an academic strength. Nineteen Muslim students (41.3%) reported schoolwork as an academic strength. Ten Muslim students (21.7%) reported none. Nine Muslim students (19.6%) reported special education resources as an academic challenge. Four Muslim students (8.7%) reported other. These data are shown visually in Figure 16.

Figure 16

*Muslim Students' Academic Strengths*

*n=46*



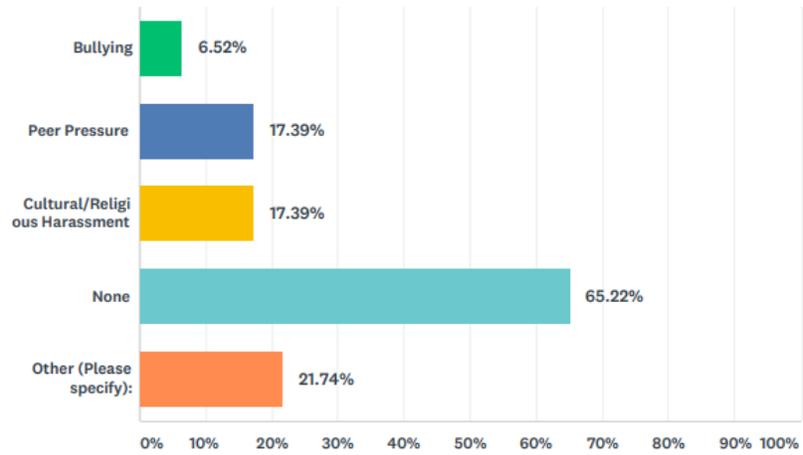
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Teacher Involvement	56.52%	26
Schoolwork	41.30%	19
Special Education Resources	19.57%	9
None	21.74%	10
Other (Please specify):	8.70%	4
Total Respondents: 46		

A total of 46 Muslim students chose the social challenges given for their school experience, more than one option could be chosen. Thirty Muslim students (65.2%) reported none. Ten Muslim students (21.7%) reported other. Eight Muslim students (17.4%) reported peer pressure and 8 Muslim students (17.4%) reported cultural/religious harassment. Three Muslim students (6.5%) reported bullying. These data are displayed visually in Figure 17.

Figure 17

*Muslim Students' Social Challenges*

*n=46*



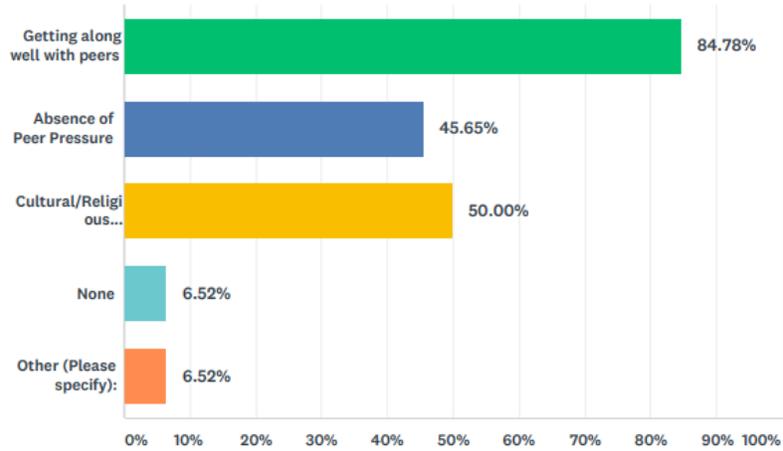
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Bullying	6.52%	3
Peer Pressure	17.39%	8
Cultural/Religious Harassment	17.39%	8
None	65.22%	30
Other (Please specify):	21.74%	10
Total Respondents: 46		

A total of 46 Muslim students chose the positive social experiences given for their school experience, more than one option could be chosen. Thirty-nine Muslim students (84.8%) reported getting along well with peers as a positive social experience. Twenty-three Muslim students (50%) reported cultural/religious relationships with peers as a positive social experience. Twenty-one Muslim students (45.7%) reported absence of peer pressure as a positive social experience. Three Muslim students (6.5%) reported none and 3 Muslim students (6.5%) reported other. Figure 18 displays these data.

Figure 18

*Muslim Students' Positive Social Experiences*

*n=46*



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Getting along well with peers	84.78%	39
Absence of Peer Pressure	45.65%	21
Cultural/Religious relationships with peers	50.00%	23
None	6.52%	3
Other (Please specify):	6.52%	3
Total Respondents: 46		

Overall, for Hypothesis 3, with respect to the answers given in the written questionnaire surveys about students' school experience, most students that attended public schools said overload of schoolwork was considered an academic challenge; teacher involvement was considered an academic strength; no social challenges; and getting along well with peers was considered a positive social experience. Most students that attended Islamic schools reported overload of schoolwork as an academic challenge; teacher involvement and/or schoolwork as an academic strength; no social challenges; and getting along well with peers as a positive social experience. The two students that attended private schools reported no academic challenges; teacher involvement and/or schoolwork as an academic strength; no social challenges; and getting along well with peers and/or absence of peer pressure as a positive social experience. The two students that answered no to the first question regarding the type of school each respondent is attending will not be included in this summary of data.

The Muslim parent interviews included one parent who has a child in public school, one parent who has children in Islamic school, and two parents who have child(children) in private schools.

S.Q. has a child with special needs in public school. Her response to the academic strengths and/or challenges her son has in school was about the school having special Teachers of the Deaf (TOD) and speech therapists who have helped him in his listening and speaking skills. Her response to the positive social experiences and/or challenges her son has in school was about how her son encounters other peers with similar disabilities.

M.H. has children in Islamic school. His response to the academic strengths and/or challenges his children have in school was about the small classroom size and level of attention his children receive. In addition, he mentioned an academic challenge that one of his children has in school is that she misinterprets information regarding the reasoning behind wearing a hijab (Muslim headscarf). His response to the positive social experiences and/or challenges his children have in school was about how they have developed strong social skills and experienced bullying.

A.E. has a child with an IEP who previously attended public school and now, attends a private school. Her response to the academic strengths and/or challenges her son has in school was regarding his experience in public school compared to his experience in private school. In

public school, her son would be pulled out of class and/or given special attention in class. In private school, her son is completely supported by the special education team. Her response to the positive social experiences and/or challenges her son has in school was about how there is a general feel of acceptance in the private school and the general atmosphere is that of inclusion.

A.A. has children in private school. Her response to the academic strengths and/or challenges her children have in school was about how her children are receiving one on one attention from the teachers, because the classes are smaller. Her response to the positive social experiences and/or challenges her children have in school was about how her children know everyone at school, because it's a small private school. In addition, she mentioned that there is no bullying at school and all the students help each other.

Muslim student interviews were completed with 6 students. Four students attended public schools. One student attended public and Islamic schools and 1 student attended Islamic and private school.

L.C. attends public school and is in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Her response to the academic strengths and/or challenges from her school experience was about how Mathematics is challenging for her, but English and writing are her

strengths. Her response to the positive social experiences and/or challenges from her school experience was about how she has found people with similar qualities who understand her. In addition, she mentioned that some of the students do make rude comments.

D.A. attends public school and is in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. His response to the academic strengths and/or challenges from his school experience was about how Language Arts is challenging for him, but Mathematics is his strength. His response to the positive social experiences and/or challenges from his school experience was about it being positive, because he has friends.

E.S. attends public school and is in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. His response to the academic strengths and/or challenges from his school experience was about how studying is a challenge for him. His response to the positive social experiences and/or challenges from his school experience was about how he could learn how to communicate with everyone better and deal with all types of people.

S.H. attends public school and is in 12<sup>th</sup> grade. His response to the academic strengths and/or challenges from his school experience was regarding the challenges he encountered in the classes he was placed in, because there was a big gap between regular classes and honors classes.

He mentioned in the honors classes, there was a constant workload and in the regular classes, there was a ton of work as well, but the classes went slower. His response to the positive social experiences and/or challenges from his school experience was about how he had no positive social experiences, because most of the students would regularly drink or get involved in drugs.

S.A. previously attended Islamic school and now, attends public school and is in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Her response to the academic strengths and/or challenges from her school experience was about how she is eager to participate in class. In addition, she mentioned she enjoys the learning process so much that she tutors after school. Her response to the positive social experiences and/or challenges from her school experience was about how she is the Student Council President at her school. She mentioned that in her previous school, her peers were mostly of the same religious and ethnic group, but in her current school, she has a very diverse group of friends that respect her culture and beliefs.

S.H. attends Islamic and private school. Her response to the academic strengths and/or challenges from her school experience was about how she is good in some subjects, but has difficulty in History. Her response to the positive

social experiences and/or challenges from her school experience was about how she has no problem in making friends.

Based on the interview data from the six interviews above, the following trends emerged. The students who attended public schools had many academic strengths and challenges. Two of them mentioned the strengths and challenges they had with Mathematics and Language Arts. The other two public school students mentioned the academic challenges they encountered in their schools. One of them mentioned the difficulty he had with studying, while the other mentioned the big gap between regular classes and honors classes. The student who previously attended Islamic school and now, attends public school, mentioned the academic strengths from her school experience and the different social experiences she had in Islamic school versus the social experiences she had in public school. The student who attends Islamic and private school mentioned the academic strengths and challenges she had with the school subjects and how she had no problem in making friends at school.

#### *Additional Research Question*

In addition to the formal hypotheses of this study, the researcher was also interested in a related question

regarding the academic and social experiences Muslim students are encountering in public schools and Islamic schools from a teacher's perspective. Personal interviews were administered with Muslim teachers in public schools and Islamic schools for an informal observation. Muslim teacher interviews were reviewed by the researcher and responses were included below.

Muslim teacher interviews were completed with six teachers. Two teachers are in public schools, one is a teacher in a public charter school, one was a former teacher in public school, and two were former teachers in Islamic schools.

M.K. is a high school teacher in public school. She identified her own challenges in teaching Muslim students in her classroom as the inability to effectively teach every student in the classroom due to the class size exceeding 21 students after a major funding cut. In addition, she mentioned that another challenge is poverty, because rich families have the means to send their children to Islamic and private schools. Her response to the social benefits and challenges for the Muslim students in her classroom and/or school was bullying and how it has a profound impact on the learning of students.

A.H. is a grade 10 Biology teacher in public school. His response to the academic benefits and challenges of the Muslim students in his classroom and/or school was about how Muslim students have no different challenges or benefits than any other students. His response to the social benefits and challenges of the Muslim students in his classroom and/or school was about how these students benefit from the Muslim brotherhood that Islam gives to them. In addition, he mentioned that Muslim students have a clear challenge for identity when it comes to who they are, especially in today's world.

M.K. is a teacher at a public charter school in grades 4-8. He mentioned that most of the Muslim students in this school are children of recent immigrants from West Africa. His response to the questions regarding the academic and social benefits and challenges for the Muslim students in his classroom and/or school included how the Muslim students experience a very close-knit community, the teachers are very supportive towards them, and they are shown unconditional love and support by their peers. In addition, he mentioned that their challenges are not very different from challenges of other students at their age in this current sociopolitical climate.

B.A. is a former teacher. She taught 12 years in a public school and 8 years as an adjunct professor at a state university. She taught in a myriad of classroom settings; for example, multiply disabled and inclusion at an early childhood level. Her response to the questions regarding the academic and social benefits and/or challenges of the Muslim students in her classroom and/or school was based on her experience in a school environment with a diverse population. She mentioned that Muslim students would benefit from cultural awareness/sensitivity and a challenge they would encounter is their family's lack of understanding for how to effectively support a child with special needs. Regarding the social benefits and challenges of Muslim students, she mentioned that they would offer a multicultural perspective to their peers and they may confront bullying/harassment due to the rise of Islamophobia.

S.A. is a former teacher who taught in an Islamic school in grades 4 and 5. Her response to the academic and social benefits and/or challenges of the Muslim students in her classroom and/or school are as follows. The academic benefits are the small classroom size and increased student engagement due to the small group size. The academic challenges are that the curriculum isn't completely

reviewed or implemented to service the needs of all students and there is a limitation in resources pertaining to supplies. The social benefits are that students and staff share common cultural dynamics and have a better understanding of each other's upbringing. In addition, she mentioned that since the school community knows each other at a deeper level, people acknowledged a sense of genuine care for each other at school. The social challenges are that students had difficulty in embracing their true feelings at heart due to their culture having behavioral expectations and limitations. Another social challenge she mentioned was their lack of understanding for outside school dynamics, because the students started their schooling at this school from Preschool.

A.S. is a former teacher. She taught in a private Islamic school as a 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher in English and History. Her response to the academic benefits and challenges of the Muslim students in her classroom and/or school was about how the students benefit on learning about Islam, but the school has a lack of resources and funding which prevents teachers from giving students with learning disabilities their proper education. Her response to the social benefits and challenges of the Muslim students in her classroom and/or school was about how they benefit from

the school being an Islamic and family environment in which they all have a mutual understanding. In addition, she mentioned that the school doesn't prepare them for the "real world," because the students aren't exposed to many things that children in public school are exposed to. A major point she mentioned was about how some students, their families, and staff take advantage in school, because they know the school community on personal terms.

Based on the interview data from the six interviews above, the following trends emerged. Two of the teachers from the public schools mentioned that generally, the Muslim students don't have any different challenges than other students. One of them mentioned how they have the brotherhood in Islam which keeps them together and the other teacher mentioned how in his school, it's a close-knit community where the Muslim students are provided with support from their teachers and peers. The other teacher from a public school and the former teacher from a public school both mentioned bullying as a challenge that Muslim students encounter. One of them mentioned larger class size and poverty being a challenge for Muslim students academically. The other teacher mentioned Muslim students offering a multicultural perspective to peers as a social benefit and in terms of an academic challenge, she

mentioned Muslim students' families lacking the understanding of special education. The two former Islamic school teachers mentioned how the Muslim students aren't prepared for the "real world," because of the lack of understanding for outside school dynamics since they are at these schools from the start of Preschool. In addition, both teachers mentioned the lack of resources, funding, and supplies being an academic challenge for Muslim students. One of them mentioned learning about Islam as an academic benefit and the other teacher mentioned the small classroom size as an academic benefit, because it increases student engagement. Regarding the social benefits, both teachers mentioned the school community being an Islamic and family environment where they all share common cultural dynamics. One of them mentioned how the students, their families, and staff take advantage in school, because they have close relations with the school community.

#### *Summary of Results*

The results supported the hypothesis about the reasoning for Muslim parents to choose an Islamic school over a public school and the reasoning for Muslim parents to choose a public school over an Islamic school. As expected, most Muslim parents chose Islamic schools, because the school incorporates Islamic education and/or

majority of the teachers and children are Muslim. Most Muslim parents who chose public schools did so because school is in the town where they live, school is free, and quality of education.

The results supported the hypothesis about the academic and social experiences Muslim young adults that have already completed public or Islamic schools experience. As expected, most Muslim young adults in public schools experienced no academic challenges. Most Muslim young adults in Islamic schools reported overload of schoolwork as an academic challenge. However, contrary to expectations, most young adults that attended Islamic schools either experienced no social challenges or bullying.

The results didn't support the hypothesis regarding the academic and social experiences Muslim students that are currently attending public or Islamic schools have. In fact, Muslim students both in Islamic schools and public schools mostly reported no social challenges and overload of schoolwork as an academic challenge.

## CHAPTER V

### Discussion

The results of this study supported, overall, the reasons Muslim parents reported that they chose the types of schools they did for their children. It also supported, overall, the benefits and challenges reported by Muslim students currently attending distinct types of schools, and the young adults who have graduated from distinct types of high schools. There were, however, several unexpected findings regarding the social benefits and challenges Muslim young adults and students experienced. The following discussion attempts to explore the implications of the findings that both support and challenge the hypotheses of this study.

#### *Hypothesis 1 - Muslim Parents' Reasons for School Choice*

As expected, most Muslim parents placed their child(children) in Islamic schools because they wanted to surround them with other Muslims and to learn about Islam. This finding held up for all survey respondents based on the reasons for Islamic school choice for Muslim parents. In contrast to expectations, however, another reason reported for Islamic school choice was quality of education. This finding suggests, therefore, that Muslim

parents choose Islamic schools to ensure their child(children) are also provided with a good education.

In Islam, Muslims are encouraged to pursue knowledge. For example, the call for education and acquiring knowledge in Islam is based on its significant role in modifying a person's humanity and its impact on the social life of human beings (Al-Lawati & Hunsaker, 2007). Therefore, Islamic schools are to provide a level of education for Muslim children to learn and grow by becoming responsible Muslims in this society. However, it should be noted that not all Islamic schools have the resources to provide students with a high quality of education.

From my Muslim teacher interviews, two Islamic school teachers mentioned the lack of resources and supplies in their schools. One of them stated that their Islamic school lacks the special education resources needed to support a child with special needs. The other teacher stated how the curriculum isn't fully reviewed or implemented to serve the needs of all students. In addition, both teachers mentioned how the students aren't prepared for the "real world," because they aren't exposed to outside school dynamics.

As expected, most Muslim parents placed their child(children) in public schools because of the quality of education. This finding held up for the Muslim parent

survey respondents. In contrast to expectations, however, most Muslim young adult and student survey respondents reported their parents' reasons for public school choice were that the school is free and the school is in the town where they live. This finding suggests, therefore, that Muslim parents choose public schools because there is no cost and the schools are conveniently located, regarding transportation.

*Hypothesis 2 - Social & Academic Experiences of Muslim  
Young Adults*

As anticipated, most Muslim young adults experienced no academic challenges in public schools and in Islamic schools, they reported an overload of schoolwork as an academic challenge. These findings held up for the academic experiences of the Muslim young adult survey respondents. In contrast to expectations, however, most Muslim young adults who attended Islamic school experienced bullying or no social challenges, whereas, in public schools they experienced peer pressure. This finding suggests, therefore, that irrespective of the school a Muslim student attends, he/she will more than likely encounter social challenges throughout his/her school experience. However, it is important to note that there was an experimental flaw pertaining to this hypothesis, because the survey and

interview questions regarding social experiences didn't ask about the social benefits and/or challenges Muslim young adults encountered after graduating from high school and while attending a university.

The finding regarding the social experiences of Muslim young adults in Islamic schools is in marked contrast to the literature that stated Islamic schools have become an option for Muslim students who share the same religion and can reflect complex diversity (El-Atwani, 2015). However, it should be noted that all Islamic schools only have Muslim students in attendance, but many Muslim young adults have previously encountered social issues with their peers in Islamic schools.

From my Muslim young adult interviews, one young adult who attended Islamic school mentioned a lot of tension amongst families due to the various cliques with girls in her school. From my Muslim young adult anonymous surveys, two respondents reported favoritism as a social challenge in their Islamic schools. One respondent mentioned the emphasis of not interacting with the opposite gender in Islamic schools causing students to either not know how to have boundaries when interacting with the opposite gender or not know at all how to interact with the opposite gender. Another respondent stated that there is racism in

terms of Middle Eastern students versus South Asian students in his/her Islamic school. Furthermore, this respondent mentioned the difficulty in adapting at college due to the sheltered Islamic school environment.

*Hypothesis 3 - Social & Academic Experiences of Muslim Students*

Contrary to expectations, Muslim students in Islamic schools and public schools mostly reported no social challenges and an overload of schoolwork as an academic challenge. However, it is important to note that there was an experimental flaw pertaining to this hypothesis, because the survey and interview questions regarding social experiences didn't ask about the outside school experience. As indicated by Seward and Khan (2015), many Muslim students felt that their experiences as Muslim Americans were not much different from their non-Muslim peers; except, for when they implemented Islamic practices or when they were encountered with Islamophobia. Thus, these students shared commonalities with other Americans while in public school.

From my Muslim parent interviews, one Muslim parent who has children in an Islamic school mentioned bullying being swept under the rug at Islamic schools. The researcher was later notified by this parent that the

children were taken out of this Islamic school and are now placed in a public school. This finding ran counter to the literature stating that parents value the support children get from Islamic schools (Ahmed, 2013).

In addition, from my Muslim student anonymous surveys, one respondent who currently attends public school, but previously attended Islamic school mentioned the academic challenge of the Islamic school is a huge lack of education. The respondent stated there was an advantage for gaining Islamic knowledge and being surrounded by Muslims at Islamic schools. Furthermore, the respondent mentions that the public school provides many academic strengths and a diverse population of students, which the Islamic school wouldn't have been able to provide.

#### *Additional Research Question*

Informal observations suggested that perhaps Muslim students don't have different academic and/or social challenges than other students in public schools. However, in Islamic schools, Muslim students are encountering academic challenges due to the lack of funding, as this may be the case with other religious based private schools. As indicated by El-Atwani (2015), Islamic schools in the United States don't receive federal or state funding,

because they are considered private schools. As a result, this may affect the quality of their education.

### *Conclusions*

In general, this study indicates that Muslim parents who choose Islamic schools for their child(children) do so to teach them about Islam and to surround them with other Muslims and Muslim parents who chose public schools for their child(children) do so for the quality of education. Islamic schools provide a comfortable environment for Muslim students to practice their religion (El-Atwani, 2015). However, in Islamic schools, students are encountering many academic challenges due to the lack of resources and funding. Therefore, Islamic schools may not provide students with a high-quality of education to prepare them for the "real world." Further investigation is needed to help us better understand Islamic school dynamics.

In addition, the fact that no social challenges were reported by most Muslim students and young adults calls into question the argument that the school environment doesn't influence their social skills. However, initially, the focus was to look at the social experience outside of school. But there was an experimental flaw in the surveys and interviews for young adults and students regarding the

questions pertaining to their social experiences. The questions shouldn't have asked about the social challenges and/or benefits in school, instead it should have focused on the social experiences outside of school and while attending university, for Muslim young adults.

Finally, results of the present study had very special meaning to the researcher, who grew up in a town in New Jersey where there weren't many Muslims. She and her brother were enrolled in public schools, because of the quality of education that their mother had heard about from their neighbors regarding the school district. Her mother was a single parent who worked full-time to support the family.

The researcher didn't encounter any difficulty socially or academically in the public schools she attended; thus, she was content with the school decision her mother made for her. She did encounter some difficulties in fulfilling religious obligations due to the lack of awareness of Islam in the schools she attended. However, her mother resolved the issue of fulfilling prayers and fasting during Ramadan by speaking to the school administration. The present study added much clarity about how school choice has affected other Muslim students and raised some additional questions for future research.

### *Educational Implications*

The observations for the school choices of Muslim parents and its effect on children's academic success and social skills should be adhered to by the administration at Islamic schools and public schools. It is important for the administration at both types of schools to see the experiences of Muslim students currently attending these schools and Muslim young adults who've graduated from these schools. This provides them with a distinct perspective of what the school is offering to students academically and socially.

Overall, this study demonstrated that most Muslim students in Islamic and public schools don't, perhaps, encounter social challenges any differently than other students and most of them reported an overload of schoolwork as an academic challenge. Further investigation is needed to see if the schoolwork being provided at Islamic schools is developmentally appropriate. In addition, in public schools, further investigation is needed to see if teachers are implementing the school curriculum to help meet the needs of their students.

### *Limitations of the Study*

This study was only focused on the school choices of Muslim parents and the school experiences of Muslim young

adults and students in one region on New Jersey. Additionally, as mentioned previously, an experimental flaw occurred with the Muslim young adult and student surveys and interviews for the questions pertaining to their social experiences in school. As a result, two out of the three hypotheses were not completely supported, hence, other unexpected findings were shown. It is important to point out that many of the survey respondents and interviewees have attended only a few Islamic and/or public schools. Therefore, the findings are limited to those schools.

#### *Implications for Future Research*

This study could be conducted with a larger population from a variety of urban, suburban, and rural settings around the United States. Due to the experimental flaw found in the surveys and interviews, it is recommended that researchers observe the social experiences of Muslim students outside of school and the social experiences of Muslim young adults while attending a university. To expand upon the present research, other researchers can look at the social and academic experiences of students at other faith-based schools and find the similarities and/or differences between them all.

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## APPENDIX A

### Muslim Parents' School Choice Survey

As Salaam Alaikum, my name is Rafia Hasan. I am currently completing my Master's degree in the curriculum and learning of early childhood. As a final requirement, I am writing a thesis on the school choices of Muslim parents. I would appreciate if you would fill out the survey below. The purpose of this survey is to help others understand why Muslim parents choose a public school or an Islamic school for their child/children.

**ALL ANSWERS ARE ANONYMOUS**

**\* 1. Do you have one or more children that attend or attended a public school, a private school, and/or an Islamic school in New Jersey?**

- Public
- Private
- Islamic
- Public & Private
- Islamic & Public
- Private & Islamic
- No

**If no, DO NOT complete the questions below.**

\* 2. Please check the following reasons for your school choice (Choose all that apply):

- School is in the town where I live
- School is free
- Quality of education
- School's reputation
- School incorporates Islamic education
- School fulfills my child(children's) religious obligations
- Majority of the teachers and children are Muslim
- School provides social opportunities for my child(children)
- My child(children) have special needs
- No other school is available for my child(children)
- Safe school environment
- Friend's recommendation
- Other (Please specify):

\* 3. Which is the MOST important reason?

\* 4. Overall, how satisfied are you with the school choice you made for your child(children)?  
(Please choose only 1)

Not at All Satisfied      Slightly Satisfied      Somewhat Satisfied      Very Satisfied      Completely Satisfied

\* 5. Please check the following academic challenges your child(children) is having or has previously encountered in school (Choose all that apply):

- Lack of Teacher Involvement
- Overload of Schoolwork
- Lack of Special Education Resources
- None
- Other (Please specify):

\* 6. Please check the following academic strengths of the school your child(children) attends or attended (**Choose all that apply**):

- Teacher Involvement
- Schoolwork
- Special Education Resources
- None
- Other (Please specify):

\* 7. Please check the following social challenges your child(children) is having or has previously encountered in school (**Choose all that apply**):

- Bullying
- Peer Pressure
- Cultural/Religious Harassment
- None
- Other (Please specify):

\* 8. Please check the following positive social experiences your child(children) is having or has previously encountered in school (**Choose all that apply**):

- Getting along well with peers
- Absence of Peer Pressure
- Cultural/Religious relationships with peers
- None
- Other (Please specify):

9. If there is anything else you would like to add about your child(children's) school experiences, please use the space below:

APPENDIX B

Muslim Young Adults' Past School Experience Survey

As Salaam Alaikum, my name is Rafia Hasan. I am currently completing my Master's degree in the curriculum and learning of early childhood. As a final requirement, I am writing a thesis on the school choices of Muslim parents. I would appreciate if you would fill out the survey below. The purpose of this survey is to help others understand the effects of Muslim parents' school choice on children's academic success and social skills.

ALL ANSWERS ARE ANONYMOUS

\* 1. Did you attend a public school, a private school, and/or an Islamic school in New Jersey? **If no, DO NOT complete the questions below.**

- Public
- Private
- Islamic
- Public & Private
- Islamic & Public
- Private & Islamic
- No

\* 2. Why do you think your parents chose the school you attended? Please check the following reasons (Choose all that apply):

- School is in the town where I live
- School is free
- Quality of education
- School's reputation
- School incorporates Islamic education
- School fulfills my religious obligations
- Safe school environment
- School provides extracurricular activities
- I have special needs
- Majority of the teachers and students are Muslim
- Other (Please specify):

\* 3. Which reason do you feel was their MOST important?

\* 4. Overall, how satisfied were you with your parents' school choice? (Please choose only 1)

Not at All Satisfied	Slightly Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Completely Satisfied
<input type="radio"/>				

\* 5. Please check the following academic challenges you encountered in school (Choose all that apply):

- Lack of Teacher Involvement
- Overload of Schoolwork
- Lack of Special Education Resources
- None
- Other (Please specify):

\* 6. Please check the following academic strengths of the school you attended (Choose all that apply):

- Teacher Involvement
- Schoolwork
- Special Education Resources
- None
- Other (Please specify):

\* 7. Please check the following social challenges you encountered in school (Choose all that apply):

- Bullying
- Peer Pressure
- Cultural/Religious Harassment
- None
- Other (Please specify):

\* 8. Please check the following positive social experiences you encountered in school (**Choose all that apply**):

- Getting along well with peers
- Absence of Peer Pressure
- Cultural/Religious relationships with peers
- None
- Other (Please specify):

9. If there is anything else you would like to add about your past school experience, please use the space below:

## APPENDIX C

### Muslim Students' School Experience Survey

As Salaam Alaikum, my name is Rafia Hasan. I am currently completing my Master's degree in the curriculum and learning of early childhood. As a final requirement, I am writing a thesis on the school choices of Muslim parents. I would appreciate if you would fill out the survey below. The purpose of this survey is to help others understand the effects of Muslim parents' school choice on children's academic success and social skills.

ALL ANSWERS ARE ANONYMOUS

\* 1. Do you currently attend a public school, a private school, or an Islamic school in New Jersey? **If no, DO NOT complete the survey.**

- Public
- Private
- Islamic
- No

\* 2. What is your grade level?

- 6th
- 7th
- 8th
- 9th
- 10th
- 11th
- 12th

\* 3. Why do you think your parents chose the school you attend? Please check the following reasons (Choose all that apply):

- School is in the town where I live
- School is free
- Quality of education
- School's reputation
- School incorporates Islamic education
- School fulfills my religious obligations
- Safe school environment
- School provides extracurricular activities
- I have special needs
- Majority of the teachers and students are Muslim
- Other (Please specify):

\* 4. Which reason do you feel is their MOST important?

\* 5. Overall, how satisfied are you with your parents' school choice? (Please choose only 1)

Not at All Satisfied	Slightly Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Completely Satisfied
<input type="radio"/>				

\* 6. Please check the following academic challenges you are encountering in school (Choose all that apply):

- Lack of Teacher Involvement
- Overload of Schoolwork
- Lack of Special Education Resources
- None
- Other (Please specify):

\* 7. Please check the following academic strengths of the school you are attending (**Choose all that apply**):

- Teacher Involvement
- Schoolwork
- Special Education Resources
- None
- Other (Please specify):

\* 8. Please check the following social challenges you are encountering in school (**Choose all that apply**):

- Bullying
- Peer Pressure
- Cultural/Religious Harassment
- None
- Other (Please specify):

\* 9. Please check the following positive social experiences you are encountering in school (**Choose all that apply**):

- Getting along well with peers
- Absence of Peer Pressure
- Cultural/Religious relationships with peers
- None
- Other (Please specify):

10. If there is anything else you would like to add about your school experience, please use the space below:

## APPENDIX D

### Muslim Parent Interview

#### **Interview Questions:**

**\*The PURPOSE of this interview is to help others understand why Muslim parents choose a public school or Islamic school for their child/children.\***

1.) What type of school do your child(children) attend or had previously attended? (i.e. a public school, a private school, and/or an Islamic school)

2.) What are the reasons for your school choice?

2a.) Which is the MOST important reason?

3.) Are you satisfied with the school choice you made for your child(children)? Please explain how and why.

4.) What are the academic strengths and/or challenges your child(children) is having or has previously encountered in school? Please explain further.

5.) What are the positive social experiences and/or challenges your child(children) is having or has previously encountered in school? Please explain further.

Is there anything else that you would like to say about your child(children's) school experience which may be helpful for my research?



## APPENDIX F

### Muslim Student Interview

#### Interview Questions

**\*The PURPOSE of this interview is to help others understand the effects of Muslim parents' school choice on children's academic success and social skills.\***

1.) What type of school do you currently attend? (i.e. a public school, a private school, and/or an Islamic school)

2.) What is your grade level?

3.) Why do you think your parents chose the school you attend?

3a.) Which reason do you feel is their MOST important?

4.) Are you satisfied with your parents' school choice? Please explain how and why.

5.) What are the academic strengths and/or challenges you are experiencing in school? Please explain further.

6.) What are the positive social experiences and/or challenges you are having in school? Please explain further.

Is there anything else that you would like to say about your current school experience which may be helpful for my research?

## APPENDIX G

### Muslim Teacher Interview

**Interview Questions:**

**\*The PURPOSE of this interview is to help others understand the effects of Muslim parents' school choice on children's academic success and social skills from a teacher's perspective.\***

1.) What type of school are you currently teaching in? (i.e. a public school, a private school, or an Islamic school)

2.) Which grade level are you teaching?

3.) Describe the academic benefits and challenges you feel that Muslim students are having in your class and/or in school. Please provide some specific examples.

4.) Describe the social benefits and challenges you feel that Muslim students are having in your class and/or in school. Please provide some specific examples.

Is there anything else that you would like to say about your teaching experience which may be helpful for my research?

## APPENDIX H

### Muslim Former Teacher Interview

**Interview Questions:**

**\*The PURPOSE of this interview is to help others understand the effects of Muslim parents' school choice on children's academic success and social skills from a teacher's perspective.\***

1.) What type of school did you previously teach at? (i.e. a public school, a private school, or an Islamic school)

2.) Which grade level did you teach?

3.) Describe the academic benefits and challenges you feel that Muslim students had in your class and/or in school. Please provide some specific examples.

4.) Describe the social benefits and challenges you feel that Muslim students had in your class and/or in school. Please provide some specific examples.

Is there anything else that you would like to say about your past teaching experience which may be helpful for my research?