



Discrimination in the Hijab Ban Policy of the 2024 Paris Olympics: A Postcolonial Analysis

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Abstract:

Purpose: To explain how French national and the 2024 Paris Olympic policies are inconsistent with human rights principles leading to public criticism in the Postcolonial analysis framework

Methods: The research was employed qualitative approach designed into a case study. That approach was selected since it focused on the meaning understanding, representation, and power relations included into the policy of Hijab Ban of the 2024 Paris Olympics. Secondary data that were publicly available and verifiable applied in the research, namely policy document (official statement from the International Olympics Committee (IOC) and French authorities regarding to dress codes and religious neutrality in sport), media news (various national and international article in 2024 that discussed Hijab ban), and various studies (indexed journals, books, previous studies about secularism (*laicite*), postcolonialism, and discrimination in sport). The data were collected through a systemic literature study which involved identifying, selecting, and organizing text related to the hijab ban policy. The analysis data was done by applying thematic analysis combined with a postcolonialism analytical lens. This process was conducted interactively through three stages namely data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusion.

Results: The findings show that the inconsistency of French national and the 2024 Paris Olympic policies regarding the ban on hijabs includes differences in impact on French and foreign athletes, conflicts between international and domestic law, lack of proportionality in restrictions, and implications for human rights.

Conclusions: The inconsistency of *laicite* in the context of the 2024 Paris Olympics reveals four points namely claims of neutrality often hide symbolic power operations rooted in history, differences in treatment between French and foreign athletes reveal a protectionist logic of national identity that marginalizes a vulnerable group of citizens, arguments about policy necessity are based on weak evidence and rely more on security discourse laden with colonial influences, and the impact of these policies is the reproduction of complex structural inequalities based on gender, racialization, and colonial legacies.

Keywords:

Laicite, Hijab, Discrimination, Paris 2024 Olympics, Postcolonialism

1. Introduction

Several years ago, France discovered that part of its history was written as a Catholic entity influenced by the period in which it existed, by the Catholic Church, and by the



nobility. The Catholic Church, at that time, wielded great power and, as a result, participated in French government, healthcare, and education. However, this power and authority, in many cases, was disproportionate, leading to injustice towards religious minorities, and in particular, towards Jewish and Protestant minorities. The anger that arose at that time was justified, and France, after the Revolution, became a secular state. This secular status is recognized constitutionally, as enshrined in Article 2, during the Fifth Republic, where it is inseparably secular. It is estimated that the state guarantees every citizen the freedom of religion, so that France, based on these principles, cannot completely, as stated by Gunn (2008), separate religious subjects in France. This specific policy states that France guarantees freedom of religion if religion is considered a private matter for individuals and is personal to those individuals, then the state and religion must be completely separated.

The law separating Church and State in France, or *laïcité*, was introduced in 1905 and has been controversial ever since. Its latest application of this law has attracted the attention of President Macron (Miranda, 2022). As with the Republic's motto (the trio of "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity"), the principle of secularism requires the State to uphold three minimum fundamental rights for every citizen: First, every citizen in France, regardless of race, ethnicity, caste, social status, or religion, has the right to freedom of speech and action, even to the point of believing in their own religion of choice; Second, every citizen is guaranteed justice and equality without discrimination; and third, the State must protect and promote solidarity and unity among all citizens (Putri & Imaduddin, 2021). One of the most valued rights guaranteed by the state is the right to adhere to any religion, or none at all, as guaranteed by the Constitution, which aims to prevent interference from any religious institution in the functions of the State (Marbun et al., 2023). In summary, freedom of religious expression is balanced with social obligations, which require a commitment to maintain and promote unity and peace among different communities and religions. Furthermore, Nainggolan (2020) explained that the French government is neutral towards religion and guarantees freedom of religion, which is then subject to law and public order. In many countries, secularism is understood as a personal right that guarantees everyone the freedom to practice religion, or not.

However, secularism (*laïcité*) in France is understood as a doctrine that requires the government to remain neutral and free from the control of any religion. Therefore, religious symbols or other expressions in public spaces are usually restricted. The interpretation of this policy continues to spark debate because some parties feel that this policy contradicts the freedom of religion that others wish to practice. One of the most recent cases that sparked debate was the ban on hijabs for Muslim female athletes at the 2024 Paris Olympics. As highlighted by Akbar & Nanda (2025), the French government restricted members of the national team from wearing hijabs or other conspicuous headgear. This is a clear and glaring contradiction to the claim of *laïcité* as a champion of human rights and religious freedom. It also contradicts the essence of sport as an arena free from prejudice. Similarly, French Sports Minister Amelie Oudea-Castera's decision



to implement this regulation in the name of 'secularization of sport' has actually diminished the position of religion in the public sphere (Nurhalisa, 2024).

This policy has been sharply criticized for its silent and faceless discrimination against Muslim women and, in particular, for the perception that their religious rights are being ignored. Specifically, Amnesty International has also criticized the hijab ban on the grounds that it violates human rights and, more specifically, the right to freely practice religion, which must always be protected, especially in sports. This policy has sparked widespread condemnation because it is justified as a restriction on Muslim women's freedom to practice their religion by wearing the hijab (Alouane et al., 2024). Although this ban is limited to French athletes, its implications are enormous and tell another story about the absence of public religious freedom, the perception of which is fundamentally flawed. The IOC's verbal response is that each country interprets and practices religion differently and that the ban is outside their jurisdiction (Husnah & Ulinuha, 2024). However, while the IOC may not be able to influence the policies of the host country, it should be more assertive in fulfilling its positive obligations to protect athletes' rights and uphold the fundamental value of inclusivity in global sporting events.

France has a history of restricting religious symbols in public spaces, so hijab ban is not a new issue. Since 2004, under the presidency of Jacques Chirac, France has passed laws prohibiting the wearing of conspicuous religious symbols in public schools, including the niqab, large crosses, and the kippah or Jewish skullcap (Degener, 2020). This law was intended to reinforce the principle of *laïcité* of 1905. However, in practice, this policy largely meant targeting the prohibition of the hijab. In 2007, the government expanded the scope of the ban to include public services (Achi, 2021).

Thus, it can be assumed that the principle of *laïcité* is central to French identity and can be said to transcend legal provisions. Various perspectives on *laïcité* have emerged in relation to the 2024 Paris Olympics due to its unique nature. It is a policy that is assumed to reinforce the government's neutrality towards religion and promote unity. However, there are debatable perspective regarding Muslim athletes. Religion is not simply reduced to a sporting trend. It is an active expression of identity and belief. This then leads to questions about the hijab ban, which lies at the intersection of secularism and universal human rights.

This is particularly the case for Muslims in the country, who have experienced discrimination for many years. The presence of Muslim communities has always been controversial for Islamophobic elements in the population. The idea of *laïcité* and its implementation are often seen as a state policy instrument to exclude Islamic symbols from public spaces. Thus, the world is very interested to see how the country will implement secularism ahead of the 2024 Paris Olympics so it encourages this research conducted timely. This research aims to describe the case of French national policy that aims to ban Muslim athletes from wearing the hijab at the 2024 Paris Olympics. This policy is considered a violation of fundamental human rights in the context of the hijab



and the practice of wearing it as an expression of cultural attachment. Therefore, it is natural that this policy has received high criticism at the national and international levels.

The ban on hijabs for Muslim female athletes has received significant media attention, both domestically and internationally. Discrimination justified by the doctrine of *laicite* has caused mental trauma for Muslim female athletes. At least three of these athletes have experienced discrimination based on having to choose between their religious beliefs and their country. This emphasizes the idea that *laicite* has a discriminatory effect on certain religions.

This investigation is subject to a number of constraints, which focus on material and time. In terms of material, this study relates to the psychological pressure and discrimination experienced by Muslim female athletes during the 2024 Paris Olympics as a result of the principle of *laicite*. This is evident because French national policy conflicts with IOC policy, which, to date, has never banned the wearing of the hijab in international sports. This investigation is limited to the duration of the 2024 Paris Olympics, namely July and August 2024, when the country was involved in a hijab discrimination controversy at the national and international levels. This study seeks to answer the question, "How do the inconsistency of the French national and the 2024 Paris Olympic policies towards human rights principles leading to public criticism?" The expected outcome of this research is to understand the inconsistency policies of *laicite* in applying the law in the case of French athletes wearing the hijab at the 2024 International Olympics in Paris, when national laws regulating the hijab are not applied to foreign athletes.

2. Methods

The research was employed qualitative approach designed into a case study. That approach was selected since it focused on the meaning understanding, representation, and power relations included into the policy of Hijab Ban of the 2024 Paris Olympics. Meanwhile, case study design was used since it was directed to investigate deeply a tied phenomenon namely policy in real context. Secondary data that were publicly available and verifiable applied in the research, namely policy document (official statement from the International Olympics Committee (IOC) and French authorities regarding to dress codes and religious neutrality in sport), media news (various national and international article in 2024 that discussed Hijab ban at the 2024 Paris Olympics), and various studies (indexed journals, books, previous studies about secularism (*laicite*), postcolonialism, and discrimination in sport). There are several inclusive criteria on source data such as having direct relevance with the policy of Hijab ban on the 2024 Paris Olympics, publication period during 2024, then credible and verified source. The data were collected through a systemic literature study which involved identifying the kinds of ban faced by Muslim athletes at 2024 Paris Olympics and every policy on it, selecting the news and information related to hijab ban at 2024 Paris Olympics, and organizing texts from source data related to the hijab ban policy. Academic database (Scopus, Google Scholar) and reputable media outlets were used to gather materials. The analysis data was done by applying thematic analysis combined with a postcolonialism analytical lens representing social identity theory and stereotypes. The process was conducted interactively through three stages



namely data reduction (reducing the data which unrelated to hijab ban at 2024 Paris Olympics, data display (displaying data based on the need to kinds of bans faced by Muslim athletes at 2024 Paris Olympics), and verification (drawing conclusion as data interpretation) as proposed by Miles, et al (2014). The process was carried out continuously until the comprehensive understanding could be achieved.

3. Results and Discussion

Inconsistency of French national and Olympic Policies with Human Rights Principles Leading to Public Criticism in the Postcolonial analysis framework

Secularism (*laicite*) is implemented by the French government as a guarantee of the state's neutrality towards religion. However, in practice, the French state exhibits systemic discrimination, especially against Muslim women who wear the hijab. In this context, the researchers who develop a postcolonial framework point out the state's inconsistency in applying the law in the case of French athletes wearing the hijab at the 2024 International Olympics in Paris, when national laws regulating the hijab are not applied to foreign athletes. The researchers provide the evidences of these inconsistency policies as in table 1.

Table 1: The Evidence of The Inconsistency Policies

Aspect	Policy / France National Practice	Policy/ the 2024 Paris Olympics Practice	Evidence
Who is affected by Hijab Ban	French Sport Federation has extended the national laws prohibiting religious symbols (hijabs/headgear) in sporting competitions, even in amateur/youth levels, to the French government's wider restrictions across the sporting activities.	The ban on the hijab for athletes representing France is seen as part of public service mission, contrast, foreign athletes are allowed to wear hijab during competitions and ceremonies.	Reuters: "Hijab ban at Paris 2024 Olympics was only for French athletes, not foreign competitors." (https://www.reuters.com/fact-check/hijab-ban-paris-2024-olympics-was-only-french-athletes-2024-08-16)
International Legal Requirements vs Domestic Law	National policy employs <i>laicite</i> as its justification, and some prohibitions are established by sports law or through federative regulations.	Regulations set by the Olympics/The International Federation (FIBA, FIFA, IOC) do not ban the hijab either from their federations, meanwhile the national policy is often contrasted with the international sport and human rights norms and agreements.	Amnesty International: "Hijab bans in multiple sports in France ... bans contradict clothing rules of international sports bodies." (https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/07/france-hijab-bans-olympic-and-paralympic)



Proportionality & necessity of restrictions	The Government/Federation contended that a ban is necessary in the interest of public neutrality as well as to preserve the secularity of the state, prevent communalism, or radicalization.	The international critique states that the restrictions set in place lack proportionality, do not serve any purpose, and, rather, are based on assumptions or stereotypes, neither on facts, nor on the claims that the hijab threatens safety or public order.	OHCHR: “Decisions ... are disproportionate and discriminatory ... infringe on their rights ... any limitations ... must be proportionate, necessary ... not by presumptions ...” (https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/10/france-hijab-bans-sports-are-discriminatory-and-must-be-reversed-say-experts)
Impact on Human Rights	Certain national legislations permit the prohibition of the wearing of religious symbols in the school/public setting and the sports federations ban the wearing of the hijab; all this results in the exclusion of Muslim female athletes from sports.	During the Paris 2024 event, there were reports claiming that Muslim women wearing hijabs were given the ultimatum to either remove the hijab or be barred from the chance to perform on an international stage. This denotes the denial of freedom of religion, freedom of expression, and the denial of equal opportunities.	Amnesty: “Violations of Muslim women’s and girls’ human rights through hijab bans in sports in France ... Muslim players ... discriminated against” (https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur21/8195/2024/en/)

For the parties who affected for this policy, the ban on the wearing of the hijab at the Paris 2024 Olympics will affect French citizens who are Muslim, especially women, who are required to adhere to the *laïcité* policies of the State. The policies put forth by the French Football Federation, along with the subsequent policies from other national sports federations, regard any French national representative athletes as performing a public service mission then requiring them to refrain from using any religious symbols in the public sports arena (Pandey, 2025). This is in line with the 2004 law as part of the national policy prohibits the wearing of religious garments, headscarves included, in public institutions of primary and secondary education (Mazza, 2017). Thus, a number of French Muslim women athletes experience a form of marginalization is a direct consequence of the inability to contest in officially sanctioned competitions. This is a sentiment shared by Sadeghi et al., (2018) which points to the fact that such policies affect even grassroots athletes, as federations at that level also impose a hijab ban. Such policies constitute discrimination driven by a specific agenda, which hinders freedom of expression and worship in public spaces, and lack of inclusivity and diversity (Petersen, 2021).



On the other hand, foreign athletes who are not French citizens participating in the 2024 Paris Olympics are not subject to the restrictions or regulations discussed above, as long as they represent their respective countries and comply with the rules of the International Federation for their respective sports. Thus, some Muslim athletes from other countries are still allowed to wear the hijab during the competitions and the ceremonies as prescribed by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), who upholds the right to the freedom of expression of religion as long as it doesn't contradict public safety (Agustina et al., 2024). This contrast highlights the inconsistency of France's policies which imposes strict neutralism of religion to its citizens, but it allows the use of religious symbols to foreign athletes in the same competition. This inconsistency has led to public debates internationally and it has drawn the anger of Human Rights organizations who have pointed out that France's policies are misaligned with the foundational tenets of the Olympics which are participation, equality, and diversity (Nurhalisa, 2024).

Sociologically, the bans reinforce the existing stigmas towards Muslim women in France and it limits their public life, fully documented in postcolonial feminism which regards extreme secularism as a symbolic state control over the bodies of minority women (Pandey, 2025). Therefore, the impact of the Paris 2024 Olympic on the proposed the hijab ban goes beyond sports and it illustrates the unresolved tension in the French national identity over recognition of secularism and freedom of religion, which are universally acclaimed.

The primary problem in the context of the Paris 2024 Olympics lies in the conflict between obligations under international law which advocate non-discrimination, freedom of religion, and inclusivity of sports and the domestic French legal framework which is based on the doctrine of *laïcité*. As a matter of constitutional practice, France interprets *laïcité* as a prohibition of all forms of public representation to embrace, including the athletes who compete on behalf of the state. This is the reason why several national sports confederations, including the French Football Federation and the French Basketball Federation, have imposed a blanket ban on the wearing of religious symbols, including the hijab, in a reason that national athletes execute a public service mission (Idriss, 2005). The application of this principle is endorsed by the French government that empowers the federations to formulate rules which comply with the law on secularism (Cohen-Almagor, 2022).

Nevertheless, these domestic policies run contrary to the international sports law framework, in particular, the rules and regulations that come from the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The IOC does not expressly prohibit the wearing of religious symbols, but they do regiment the expression of political sentiments and do permit some forms of identity expression in the interest of upholding neutrality. FIBA dan FIFA have also revoked the blanket ban on the wearing of hijabs that head coverings do not pose a safety risk and that it is consistent with the values of inclusiveness (Hamzeh, 2015). This means that there is no international legal basis supporting the ban on hijabs and the domestic policy of France seems to exist outside the global norms of the sport.

The outcome is a conflict of norms between the national law of France and the international law. France's secular policy is perceived as a defense relative to the



international community's accusation that the policy is discriminatory, a charge that is supported by international human rights as well as international sport bodies. The IOC itself has called on the French government to lift the ban on the headscarf which is deemed a violation of the commitment to the freedom of religion. This situation reflects the way in which the application of *laïcité* has the potential to isolate Muslim women athletes from global participation and set discriminatory precedents in international sport. The conflict between international legal requirements and domestic law in the case of the hijab ban at the Paris Olympics does not only highlight regulatory differences but it also reveals the tension between national sovereignty and the universal values of human rights recognized by the world.

The French government and sports federations that support the ban on hijab in the context of athletes representing the country argue that restrictions are necessary to maintain public neutrality, prevent communitarianism, and protect public order, which are formally recognized as legitimate objectives within the framework of French national law. This argument places athletes who represent the country in a position of public service mission, so that visible religious symbols are considered to interfere with the neutral role of the state in the public sphere. Idriss (2005) explained that every athlete representing France is considered to be carrying out a public service mission and it is required not to display religious symbols that could interfere with the image of the state's neutrality. France's long tradition of secularism also considers religion to be a private matter and should not be displayed in public spaces. In the context of sports, this policy is implemented to maintain social unity and prevent radicalism (Cohen-Almagor, 2022).

However, human rights institutions and international organizations consider the hijab restriction to be inconsistent with the principles of necessity and proportionality stipulated in international human rights law. The OHCHR considers that there is no empirical evidence that the use of the hijab poses a threat to safety in sports (Husnah & Ulinuha, 2024). Within the framework of proportionality analysis, restrictions on rights must satisfy three elements namely having a legitimate purpose, being necessary to achieve that purpose, and being proportionate to the level of violation caused. Pandey (2025) explained that France's hijab ban policy fails to meet proportionality and necessity because no alternatives have been explored and its social impact on Muslim women is far greater than the public benefits claimed by the state. Thus, it can be assessed that the French government does not have a factual basis, otherwise the international public would consider that the justification of preventing radicalization is often used politically to maintain extreme secularism, but empirically, the policy has nothing to do with individual religious practices.

This kind of ban is more ideological than functional. In the context of the 2024 Paris Olympics, the difference in treatment between French and foreign athletes shows the inconsistency in the application of *laïcité*. Overall, although the state's goal of maintaining secularism can be considered legitimate, the ban on the hijab does not meet the requirements of necessity and proportionality. This policy does not protect public safety but rather marginalizes Muslim women, a minority group. Therefore, the ban on hijab at the 2024 Paris Olympics is seen more as a political expression of France's secular national identity than a real need in the management of public sports.



The ban on hijab for athletes representing France at the 2024 Paris Olympics is not purely an administrative restriction in the sporting arena. It also has direct and structural implications for athlete fundamental rights, particularly their right to freedom of religion and freedom of expression, as well as their right to equal opportunities in athletics and public life. The regulation requiring athletes to remove religious attributes transforms customary religious practices into conditions for national participation, therefore it effectively disqualifies Muslim women who choose to wear the hijab from equal access to the sporting arena both domestically and internationally (Idriss, 2005).

The impact of disqualifying Muslim women from equal access to the sporting arena is multidimensional. At the individual level, it eliminates religious freedom and personal expression. At the institutional level, a pattern of structured and continuous discrimination emerges from the sports federation and state sectors that embed discriminatory policies, and at the collective level, the participation of Muslim women in amateur and competitive sports is eroded to the lowest level in terms of fulfilment of equal rights (Harkness & Islam, 2011). Normatively, restrictions that require the prohibition of religious freedom must be based on reasonable legal justification, relevant and tangible evidence of necessity, and exploration of alternatives (Cohen-Almagor, 2022). Furthermore, from a policy perspective, the dimension of discrimination in which positive and pro-women policies are present still shows exclusion where Muslim women, in sports, are at the forefront of policies based on secularism and colonialism (Kiwani, 2023). In the context of sports, policies prohibiting Muslim women, as permitted by federations or countries, clearly burden them by reducing their access to training, competitions, scholarships, and networking opportunities in professional sports (Hamzeh, 2017). Broadly speaking, in the context of Paris 2024, from a human rights perspective, the ban on the hijab is not only an issue of clothing, but also a form of systemic barriers to religious freedom, gender inequality, and social exclusion that require strict policy evaluation and non-discriminatory alternative policies.

Postcolonial Analysis of French's *Laïcité* Policy Towards French Muslim Athletes in Paris 2024 Olympics

In post-colonial analytical framework, the implementation of the hijab ban on French athletes creates an interesting regulatory paradox. The principle of secular neutrality, or *laïcité*, is used to limit religious expression among citizens and it has historical roots similar to colonial practices. These practices place the culture of the majority as the universal standard, while cultural and religious differences are marked as foreign elements that need to be controlled. Legal arguments similar to Marcel's approach emphasize the importance of neutrality in public spaces; however, historical and juridical analysis shows that this principle developed in France in a political context that justified surveillance of Muslim women's practices, including the banning of symbols deemed excessive since the 2004 law (Idriss, 2005). As a result, this neutral policy has a disproportionate impact on certain minority groups.

The first inconsistency is evident in who is affected by the hijab ban policy. The ban only applies to French athletes, while foreign athletes are allowed to follow international federation rules. This indicates that the ban is not purely based on reasons of sports safety



or technical regulations, but rather relates to the management of national identity. From a post-colonial perspective, the state's move to force its citizens to remove religious attributes in the international arena reinforces the post-colonial state's authority to demand symbolic equality, which means a fully (republican) public image attached to groups that have long been distinguished by colonial history and migration. The negotiation of Muslim identity in France shows how such policies promote symbolic uniformity while socially excluding Muslim women, thereby transforming policies are claimed to be neutral into instruments of control over minority groups (Croucher, 2008).

The second inconsistency arises from the difference between international legal requirements and French domestic law. International sports federations generally allow the use of head coverings that are safe and do not compromise safety, while French domestic policy extends the application of *laïcité* to the national sports arena, including for athletes representing the country. This phenomenon highlights the conflict between France's claim to secular universality and the mechanisms of sports governance at the national level, which, in a post-colonial analytical framework, can be interpreted as a strategy by the state to maintain symbolic dominance in the face of global institutions, even if it means setting aside the plurality of cultural practices and cross-cultural normative arrangements (Hamzeh, 2017). Consequently, this imbalance creates a dilemma of compliance for French athletes, who must contend with more accommodating international standards.

This third inconsistency relates to the principles of proportionality and necessity. The French government argues that these restrictions are necessary to maintain public order and prevent communitarianism, although the empirical evidence supporting these security claims is weak and tends to rely on stereotypes rooted in colonial views of Muslims as cultural or political threats. From a postcolonial perspective, this kind of justification is an example of preventive rhetoric that obscures the actual function of reconstructing the boundaries of citizenship and public morality. In other words, restrictions that are claimed to be necessary are often considered a practice to reinforce the dominance of hegemonic national identities through the rearrangement of symbolic spaces (Cohen-Almagor, 2022). Thus, it can be assumed that public needs are rarely examined against less restrictive options, rendering the proportionality faulty test when assessed from the perspective of empirical evidence and human rights.

Fourth, from a human rights perspective, the ban on the hijab has important implications for freedom of religion, freedom of expression, and equal opportunity as systemic and gender-oriented impacts. Postcolonial analysis highlights that these consequences are not only individual, such as restrictions on access to sports competitions and respect for personal identity, but also structural. Such regulations perpetuate historical patterns of marginalization in communities with colonial experiences (e.g., Algeria and Morocco), reinforcing stigma based on race and religion and reducing Muslim women's ability to control their bodily expression and beliefs (Kiwani, 2023). Thus, the experiences of Muslim women in sports reveals a withdrawal of access to facilities, training networks, and advocacy opportunities. These policies as aggregate the socio-economic and symbolic rights of marginalized communities.



Based on the analysis above, the inconsistency of *laïcité* in the context of the 2024 Paris Olympics regarding the ban on hijabs includes differences in impact on French and foreign athletes, conflicts between international and domestic law, lack of proportionality in restrictions, and implications for human rights. There is a significant opportunity to formulate policy recommendations. Policy reforms are needed to be more inclusive and evidence-based, for example, by revising the French framework of *laïcité* to align with International Olympic Committee (IOC) guidelines, thereby avoiding the polarization of national identities that marginalizes minority groups such as Muslim female athletes, and strengthening proportionality tests through empirical risk assessments to prevent reliance on colonial stereotypes. Furthermore, this approach promotes the protection of human rights through the integration of anti-discrimination training in sports programs, which can address gendered and racialized impacts to ensure equal access and reduce the reproduction of structural inequalities.

Social Identity Theory Analysis of French's *Laïcité* Policy Towards French Muslim Athletes in Paris 2024 Olympics

The policy of banning hijabs for female athletes who are French citizens in the 2024 Paris Olympics shows the complex dynamics of collective identity as explained in Social Identity Theory by Henri Tajfel and John Turner. According to this theory, every social group naturally forms identity boundaries through the process of categorization and social comparison to maintain a positive image of their own group (Harwood, 2020). In the context of French national policy, Muslim women who wear the hijab are symbolically placed as an out-group, a group that is considered outside the norms of a secular and uniform national identity. The ban on the hijab in sports has not only function as an administrative decision, but it has become a representation of the state's efforts to assert ideological boundaries between 'ideal citizens' and 'the others'. Thus, *laïcité* does not only signify religious neutrality, but it is a practice of political identity that maintains the narrative of national homogeneity through the symbolic exclusion of differences.

At the field of international relations, this policy plays a broader role in shaping France's image and position on the global stage. Through the framework of social identity theory, the policy of *laïcité* can be understood as a performative tool used by the state to present itself as part of a global in-group, namely the Western world, which is associated with modernity, rationality, and universal values. Adler-Nisse (2016) pointed out that national identity is not static, but is constantly constructed and negotiated through symbolic interactions between countries. In this case, France presents itself as 'the guardian of universal secularism' that upholds the principle of absolute neutrality, even when this principle conflicts with individual rights. This attitude becomes a kind of identity performance that shows that France still relies on its colonial heritage as a way of viewing Islam as 'the other' that needs to be controlled so it does not disrupt the image of national modernity.

However, this construction of identity creates a paradox situation. On the one hand, the policy strengthens domestic legitimacy because it is considered to protect the values of *laïcité*, which have become part of national pride. Otherwise, the policy opens up space for international criticism because it is considered to violate the principles of religious



freedom and gender equality upheld by the global community. Firmonasari, et al (2020) noted that secularism in Europe is not only a religious issue, but it is rather an arena of identity politics in which countries such as France continue to negotiate the boundaries between individual freedom and national homogeneity. In this context, the ban on the hijab at the 2024 Paris Olympics is not just a matter of clothing or sports regulations, but it is a reflection of how the state manages the tension between a global image that seeks to be inclusive and a domestic legacy that still maintains the boundaries of colonial identity.

On the other hand, identifying research gaps is crucial to enriching further understanding, highlighting the lack of data on the long-term effects of the hijab ban policy on the participation of Muslim female athletes in global events, so that future research needs to track changes in access to facilities and training networks over time. Furthermore, comparative studies between countries, such as between France and countries with similar colonial histories, remain under-explored in order to uncover patterns of national identity protectionism. In-depth analysis of gender aspects and Muslim women's agency, for example through ethnographic approaches, can fill the void in understanding how these policies limit autonomy and reinforce stigma. Overall, these recommendations not only offer a path toward more equitable policies but also encourage comprehensive academic dialogue, with a solid foundation in validated sources, to achieve historical justice in the global sports arena.

4. Conclusion

The inconsistency of *laicite* in the context of the 2024 Paris Olympics can be seen in four aspects namely claims of neutrality often hide symbolic power operations rooted in history, differences in treatment between French and foreign athletes reveal a protectionist logic of national identity that marginalizes a vulnerable group of citizens, arguments about policy necessity are based on weak evidence and rely more on security discourse laden with colonial influences, and the impact of these policies is the reproduction of complex structural inequalities based on gender, racialization, and colonial legacies. In frame of Social Identity theory, Muslim women who wear the hijab are symbolically placed as an out-group, a group that is considered outside the norms of a secular and uniform national identity. Otherwise, the policy of *laicite* can be understood as a performative tool used by the state to present itself as part of a global in-group, namely the Western world. The ban on the hijab in sports has not only function as an administrative decision, but it has become a representation of the state's efforts to assert ideological boundaries between 'ideal citizens' and 'the others'. This research suggests that normative solutions should not be limited to technical improvements alone; rather, a rebuilding of public politics is needed that values diversity of identity, assesses evidence before restricting rights, and implements a policy framework that is sensitive to historical justice that is beyond formal consistency with secular doctrine.



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