

**IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

MASTER THESIS

**DISSIMULATION AND SURVIVAL: A COMPARATIVE
INQUIRY INTO THE MOTIVATIONS, IMPLICATIONS,
AND PROBLEMS OF IDENTITY CONCEALMENT
AMONG SHI'I, AHMADI, AND SUFI MUSLIMS**

SHAFIU ALIDU

THESIS SUPERVISOR

ASSOC. PROF. ALI ASLAN

ISTANBUL, 2024

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by

SHAFIU ALIDU

**A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
Political Science and International Relations**

THESIS SUPERVISOR

ASSOC. PROF. ALI ASLAN

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THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Political Science and International Relations.

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Title – Name Surname

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I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name Surname: Shafiu Alidu

Signature:



ÖZ

TAKİYYE VE HAYATTA KALMA: Şİİ, AHMEDİ VE SUFİ MÜSLÜMANLAR ARASINDA KİMLİK GİZLEMENİN MOTİVASYONLARI, SONUÇLARI VE SORUNLARINA İLİŞKİN KARŞILAŞTIRMALI BİR ARAŞTIRMA

Alidu, Shafiu

Siyaset Bilimi ve Uluslararası İlişkiler Tezli Yüksek Lisans

Öğrenci Numarası: 224022011

Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORCID): 0000-0002-7337-3030

Ulusal Tez Merkez Referans Numarası: 10633761

Tez Danışman: Assoc. Prof. Ali Aslan

Temmuz 2024, 63 Sayfa

Düşünce ve uygulamada takiyye konusu Müslümanlar arasında tartışma ve ihtilaflara yol açmaktadır. Şii, Ahmedi ve Sufi Müslümanların takiyyeyi nasıl tanımladıkları, yorumladıkları, eleştirdikleri ve inançlarına nasıl uyguladıkları konusunda farklı bakış açıları mevcuttur. Bu çalışma, bu grupların takiyyeyi neden uyguladıklarını ve İslam'ın riya ve samimiyet öğretileri bağlamında bunu nasıl meşrulaştırdıklarını araştırmaktadır. Sosyal kimlik teorisi, rasyonel seçim teorisi, kimlik teorisi ve diğerlerinden faydalanan bu araştırma, bu Müslüman grupların takiyye uygulamalarının ardındaki motivasyonları açıklayan kavramsal bir çerçeve oluşturmayı amaçlamaktadır. Araştırmada, takiyye yapmanın sosyal entegrasyon, güvenlik önlemleri ve kimliğin korunması gibi amaçlarla kullanılan stratejik bir araç olarak görülmesi gerektiği savunulmaktadır. Şii, Ahmedi ve Sufi gruplarını temsil eden 15 katılımcıyla yapılan görüşmeler ve bu alandaki mevcut literatürün incelenmesi yoluyla bu çalışma, takiyye ile ilgili hakim algılara meydan okumaktadır. Bu araştırmanın bulguları, takiyyenin basitçe ikiyüzlü veya samimiyetsiz olmanın ötesine geçtiğini; daha ziyade, sosyal ve siyasi bağlamlarda kişinin benlik duygusunu yönlendirmek için stratejik ve diplomatik bir araç olarak ortaya çıktığını göstermektedir. Bu araştırmadan elde edilen içgörüler, dissimülasyon kavramını nasıl anladığımızın yeniden değerlendirilmesini gerektirmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Dini Çeşitlilik, Dissimülasyon, Kimlik, Sosyal İçerme, Stratejik Seçim.

ABSTRACT

DISSIMULATION AND SURVIVAL: A COMPARATIVE INQUIRY INTO THE MOTIVATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND PROBLEMS OF IDENTITY CONCEALMENT AMONG SHI'I, AHMADI, AND SUFI MUSLIMS

Alidu, Shafiu

MA in Political Science and International Relations

Student ID: 224022011

Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORC-ID): 0000-0002-7337-3030

National Thesis Center Reference Number: 10633761

Thesis Advisor: Assoc. Prof. Ali Aslan

July 2024, 63 Pages

The topic of dissimulation, in thought and practice, sparks debate and controversy among Muslims. Different perspectives exist on how Shi'a, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims define, interpret, criticize, and apply dissimulation to their beliefs. This study digs into why these groups practice dissimulation and how they justify it within the context of Islamic teachings on hypocrisy and sincerity. Drawing upon social identity theory, rational choice theory, identity theory, and others, this research aims to construct a conceptual framework that explains the motivations behind the practice of dissimulation by these Muslim groups. I argued that dissimulation should be viewed as a strategic tool employed for purposes of social integration, safety measures, and the preservation of identity. Through interviews with 15 participants representing Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi groups and an exploration of existing literature in this area, this study challenges dominant perceptions surrounding dissimulation. The findings of this research suggest that dissimulation goes beyond being simply hypocritical or insincere; rather, it emerges as a strategic and diplomatic tool for navigating one's sense of self within social and political contexts. The insights gained from this research call for a reevaluation of how we understand the concept of dissimulation.

Keywords: Dissimulation, Identity, Religious Diversity, Social inclusion, Strategic Choice.


DEDICATION

I dedicate this research work to Allah first and foremost then my parents, family, and loved ones. Their unwavering support, encouragement, and love have been my greatest strength throughout this academic journey.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

IT	Identity Theory
PBUH	Peace be upon Him
RCT	Rational Choice Theory
SIT	Social Identity Theory



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Study Background and Context

Islam is not just a religion but a comprehensive way of life that contains various beliefs, practices, and traditions followed by over a billion Muslims worldwide. Islam is not a monolithic entity but an evolving and multifaceted phenomenon influenced by cultural, political, and social factors. Within the Islamic faith, sects, schools of thought, movements, and groups exist, each with distinct interpretations and expressions of religious convictions. Unfortunately, throughout history, some of these groups have faced persecution and discrimination both within their community as well as from non-Muslims (Stewart, 2013; Eltayeb, 2001; Moten, 2018; Stewart, 2009). To safeguard themselves in environments where their beliefs or identities are at risk of harm or danger these groups have resorted to practicing dissimulation—known as "taqiyya" in Arabic.

The term "Taqiyya" originates from the root word 'waqa' which signifies self-protection. This practice involves concealing one's beliefs to shield oneself from harm or threats (Sachedina, 1998; Friedmann 2003; Ja'fari, 1979; Mariuna, 2014; Aljuran & Brewster, 2023).

Dissimulation practice can be traced back to the early days of Islam when the idolaters of Mecca compelled some followers of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to repudiate their faith under threat of torture or death. A prominent example during this period is that of Ammar ibn Yasir, who endured torture alongside his parents until he uttered words rejecting his beliefs while still holding steadfastly to his faith in his heart. The Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (PBUH), comforted Ammar and assured him that if he ever faced a similar situation again, he could repeat those same words (Ayoub, 2014; Sharafuddin al Amili, 2012). In the same vein, Sunni Muslims in Spain and Sicily

during the 11th century also utilized Taqiyya or dissimulation to safeguard themselves from harm or persecution under Christian rule (Stewart, 2013; Ibrahim, 2008; Davis-Secord, 2007; Del Mar Rosa-Rodríguez, 2010). This scenario reveals an interplay between faith, pragmatism, and societal integration.

Islamic minority sects or groups often grapple with the challenge of preserving their unique identity within diverse socio-cultural contexts. Among these groups are Shi'i, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims, who encounter difficulties in maintaining their distinctiveness. The concept of dissimulation, also known as taqiyya, has emerged as an aspect of how religious communities respond to the challenges they face (Sachedina, 1998; Virani, 2011).

Dissimulation practice raises concerns about its motives, consequences, and how it aligns with the principles of sincerity and hypocrisy in Islam. While dissimulation has historically been used as a response to adversity there is still much to explore regarding why Shi'i Muslims, Ahmadi Muslims, and Sufi Muslims have adopted this practice (An Naim, 2008; Ibrahim, 2010; Sozer, 2012).

Gaining an understanding of the religious context surrounding dissimulation is vital for unraveling its complexities. This research aims to fill the gaps in the current scholarship by conducting a comparative study on the motivations for dissimulation among these distinct Muslim groups. By exploring both historical roots and contemporary expressions of dissimulation, this research seeks to contribute to a nuanced understanding of how religious identity interacts with societal integration, pragmatism, and the interpretation of Islamic principles.

It is interesting to note how the act of dissimulation leads us to rethink the relationship between religious identity and adaptability in changing circumstances. As I dig into the reasons behind this practice, exploring how individuals navigate their beliefs while interacting with pluralistic societies becomes crucial. This research work focuses on the intersection of religious identity, pragmatism, and the reinterpretation of Islamic teachings in various contexts.

By examining the background and context surrounding the practice of dissimulation among Shi'i, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims, this research work aims to provide insights into the wider conversation about religious diversity, preserving one's identity, and navigating complex dynamics within multicultural societies in our world.

1.2. Problem Statement

The concept of dissimulation in thought and practice is highly debated and controversial. Different Muslim groups and scholars have defined, interpreted, justified, criticized, and applied it differently (Kohlberg, 1975; Mozaffari & Shakoori, 2022; Campbell, 2006). Unfortunately, in the context of conflicts between Islam and the West, some non-Muslims have misunderstood, misrepresented, and politicized dissimulation (Bilgrami, 2012; Bassiouni, 2015). This raises questions about identity, authenticity, and loyalty within Islam's boundaries.

Dissimulation practice has been a topic of historical and contemporary discussions. While it has been recognized as a response to adversity, there is still much to explore regarding the motivations behind the practice. Additionally, its implications for collective identities and its alignment with Islamic teachings on sincerity and hypocrisy remain insufficiently investigated. This research aims to delve into the nuanced reasons why Shi'i Muslims, Ahmadi Muslims, and Sufi Muslims adopt dissimulation. By doing so, the research work aims to shed light on the dynamics between religious identity formation and societal integration while interpreting the Islamic principle of sincerity.

1.3. Aims and Objectives of the Research

The main aim and objectives of this study are:

- To explore and compare the motivations, consequences, and challenges associated with concealing one's identity for Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims in different situations.
- To examine and evaluate the dilemmas and debates that arise from concealing one's identity for Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims in relation to Islamic teachings on hypocrisy and sincerity.

- To investigate how these individuals justify their practice in light of Islamic teachings on hypocrisy and sincerity.
- To explore the impact of dissimulation and survival on the identity and integrity of Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims as individuals and communities.

1.4. Research Questions

Based on the research objective, this study revolves around the following primary research questions:

Main Question: Why do Shi'i, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims resort to dissimulation in various situations and environments?

Sub-Question: How do members of these groups justify their practice of dissimulation in relation to Islamic teachings regarding hypocrisy and sincerity?

The main research question can be further subdivided into the following sub-questions:

- What historical and contemporary factors have compelled or facilitated the practice of dissimulation among Shi'i, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims?
- What doctrinal and legal foundations or arguments support or oppose the practice of dissimulation among Shi'i, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims?
- What techniques and strategies have been employed by these three groups in terms of their survival, security, integration, and influence?
- What are the perceptions and reactions that they have generated or provoked with their practices of dissimulation, and how do their fellow Muslims and non-Muslims respond to these practices?

1.4.1. Variables and Main Argument

In this study, the researcher defines the dependent and independent variables as follows:

The dependent variable is the extent of dissimulation practice. This is the variable the researcher wants to measure or observe, which depends on the independent variable. To measure this variable, the researcher uses methods like interviews, observations, and historical records.

Independent variable: The extent of dissimulation practice operationalized in terms of the combined effects of social inclusion, safety precaution, and identity preservation. These combined variables define the specific reasons and motivations behind dissimulation within these Muslim groups; by examining how social inclusion, safety precautions, and identity preservation impact dissimulation, the researcher can delve into their interaction and derive insightful conclusions about this intricate phenomenon.

Main Argument: The central argument of this study is that dissimulation, a practice of concealing one's true beliefs or feelings, should not be seen as hypocrisy or insincerity but rather as a tool for social inclusion, safety precaution, and identity preservation. Dissimulation plays a role for Muslims in maintaining their identity and values while also actively participating in inclusive societies. It allows them to navigate diverse environments without alienating themselves. The researcher also argues that dissimulation is not a deviation from Islamic teachings but a means of adapting in various situations and environments. Also, the practice of dissimulation is not a weakness or compromise of Islam but rather strength and strategy to protect one's faith in Islam.

1.5. Significance of the Study

The significance of studying the motivations behind dissimulation among Shi'i Ahmadi and Sufi Muslims is immense for fostering a nuanced understanding of diversity within societies. There are many reasons why this research is relevant. **Firstly**, it contributes to the existing literature on Islam and Muslims by providing an analysis that compares an aspect of thought and practice that is often overlooked and misunderstood: dissimulation. **Furthermore**, this research enhances our understanding and admiration for the variety and intricacy within Islam and the Muslim community. This can be accomplished by shedding light on the perspectives and experiences of these three distinct minority groups. **Moreover**, this research aims to tackle the issues of marginalization and misrepresentation that these groups have faced. The researcher aims to foster dialogue and collaboration among Muslims and between Muslims and individuals with beliefs. This research seeks to achieve this by investigating how dissimulation can facilitate communication and peaceful

coexistence. Also, the study examines the challenges Islam and Muslims encounter in society, focusing on how dissimulation influences identities, authenticity, and loyalty in pluralistic secular societies.

1.6. Study Structure

This research is structured into five chapters. The **initial chapter** presents the background context, problem statement, research objectives, research questions, importance of the study, and organization of the research work. **The second chapter** entails a literature review that assesses existing works on dissimulation in Islam and among Muslims, with an emphasis on the three Muslim groups under examination. It identifies gaps in current scholarship while also situating the study within theoretical frameworks. **The third chapter** discusses the approach taken to gather and analyze the data for this study. It also explains why I chose the research design, approach, methods, and tools used. **The fourth chapter** delves into data analysis and discussion, where findings are presented and interpreted in relation to the research questions and literature review. The conclusion in the last chapter summarizes the points and arguments presented in the study. It addresses the research questions while also offering insights into the implications and recommendations derived from the study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter delves into the organization and structure of the literature review. The first section explores the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that shape this study. The second section provides an overview of existing literature on dissimulation and survival among Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims. The chapter also points out areas where previous research on this topic is lacking. The final section summarizes the literature review's findings and discusses how this study contributes to existing knowledge.

2.2. Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

This research draws upon disciplines such as sociology, psychology, philosophy, and ethics to explore and analyze the phenomenon of dissimulation and survival among Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims. Below are some theories that guide this study:

Social Identity Theory (SIT), developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in 1979, is a crucial theory that informs this research. SIT explains how individuals perceive themselves and evaluate others based on their memberships within groups like ethnic affiliations. These social identities are influenced by context and group relationships. Also, it impacts an individual's self-esteem, attitudes, and behaviors (Tajfel et al., 1979). By applying Social Identity Theory (SIT), we can gain insights into how Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims experience their identity through dissimulation and survival strategies. It also helps us understand how they navigate the expectations and pressures imposed by other groups.

Another relevant theory is Erving Goffman's Dramaturgical Theory. Goffman views interactions as comparable to a performance, where individuals assume different roles depending on the audience and situation (Goffman, 2016). This theory highlights how people present distinct aspects of themselves while interacting with others. Goffman presents the idea of a stage and a backstage, where individuals display facets of their identity and character. Additionally, he distinguishes between managing the impression one gives off and how individuals control the impressions they make on others. Applying Goffman's theory in this research allows us to grasp how Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims employ varying selves or roles in their dissimulation techniques for survival purposes. Additionally, it offers insights into how they navigate situations while managing impressions formed by others.

Michel Foucault's Power/Knowledge Framework is another theoretical framework to consider. This historical framework explores the interconnected nature of power and knowledge and how they mutually influence one another (Foucault, 1980). According to Foucault, power and knowledge are not entities but intertwined processes that shape and perpetuate our understanding of reality, truth, and communication. Foucault argues that power and knowledge are not fixed or uniform but dynamic and dispersed. They operate through techniques, strategies, and mechanisms like discipline, surveillance, normalization, etc. This framework helps us comprehend how dissimulation and survival relate to the dynamics of power and knowledge among Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims. It sheds light on how these Muslims resist and challenge the dominant discourses and practices.

Another theory that guides this study is identity theory (IT). Peter Burke and Jan Stets developed it. It is a theory that helps explain how individuals form and preserve their identity. In addition, it sheds light on how people behave in alignment with their identity (Burke & Stets, 2009). According to IT, identity is a self-concept shaped by the meanings associated with individuals' roles within the structure. Identity is an interactive process that is influenced by the feedback and validation received from others. This identity theory helps us understand the actions and behaviors of Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims and how they construct and maintain their identities while considering dissimulation and survival.

Moreover, the Rational Choice Theory (RCT), developed by James Coleman , is a sociological and economic theory that explains individuals' decision-making processes based on their preferences, beliefs, and constraints (Coleman, 1994). RCT suggests that individuals are actors who aim to maximize utility while minimizing costs. They act in accordance with their expected outcomes and consequences. RCT helps in comprehending why dissimulation practices are a choice for Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims. It also sheds light on how they assess the benefits versus costs of dissimulation in different situations.

Although these theories and concepts provide insights for this research work, it is important to acknowledge their limitations when applied to the contexts of Shia, Ahmadi and Sufi Muslims diverse experiences. Some of the limitations include:

- The theories and concepts must be applied and adjusted to fit the circumstances and experiences of Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims, considering their characteristics.
- A thorough understanding of the factors and various aspects that impact dissimulation and survival is needed. This requires an approach that grasps the intricacies comprehensively and holistically.
- Critical ethical analysis must consider the implications of studying these theories and concepts.

2.3. Related Literature on Dissimulation and Survival among Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims

Numerous scholars from disciplines such as history, sociology, politics, ethics, etc., have delved into the exploration and analysis of dissimulation and survival in the context of Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims. The existing body of literature on this topic can be categorized into four themes: historical, sociological, political, and ethical perspectives. The following sections will address these four themes.

2.3.1. Historical Perspectives

When we examine the historical perspectives on dissimulation and survival among Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims, we can trace the origins, development, and evolution

of dissimulation practices within the Islamic tradition. Factors like persecution, oppression, and migration have greatly shaped these practices.

Numerous scholarly studies, like those conducted by Sachedina (1998) and An-Naim (2008) as well as Kersten (2022), have explored the theological, historical, political, and contemporary aspects of dissimulation (Taqiyya), shedding light on its significance within the Shi'i tradition and other Muslim communities. These studies offer insights into the reasons behind the practice of dissimulation and its consequences for these minority groups. Dissimulation varies across doctrinal contexts, and various factors, including social, legal, and historical conditions, in countries where these minority Muslim communities reside have a negative influence on them. Take Ahmadi Muslims, for example; they experience human rights violations and discrimination in countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Algeria, and in these places, they are often deemed non-Muslims either by the state or by the majority Muslim population (Shaheed et al., 2021). To deal with these circumstances, they employ dissimulation as a survival strategy. This involves concealing their identity or aligning themselves with the majority Muslim sects to avoid persecution, violence, or legal consequences.

Based on Daftary's (1992) research, the Isma'ilis are considered a sect of Shia Islam that developed their unique beliefs and institutions during the rule of the Fatimid caliphate between the 10th and 11th centuries. Over time, the Isma'ilis have had encounters and engagements with Muslim groups, notably with the Sunni majority. They have faced periods of persecution and marginalization in different times and places. One strategy adopted by the Isma'ilis to navigate through these circumstances was practicing dissimulation concerning their beliefs and practices (Daftary, 1992). Daftary argues that taqiyya should not be seen as an act of hypocrisy or weakness but rather as an ethical response to living in an oppressed environment. The author also compares how the Isma'ili community employs the practice of taqiyya with groups like the Twelver Shia, Ahmadiyya, and Sufis. These groups have also resorted to dissimulation to preserve their traditions. He suggests that taqiyya is a phenomenon among minorities in general, showing the Islamic world's diversity and complexity.

In the same vein, Friedmann (2003) delves into the theological origins of taqiyya in Islam, exploring how different Muslim groups interpret and apply it. Friedmann examines the Ahmadiyya perspective on taqiyya and investigates the contexts and circumstances in which it has been practiced. Friedmann argues that the Ahmadiyya is an example of a movement contributing to Islamic tradition's richness and complexity. He further contends that studying the Ahmadiyya case can offer insights into questions concerning authority, innovation, and pluralism within Islam and other religions.

Fusfeld (1981) asserts that leaders or sheikhs from Sufi Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya adopted an adaptable approach toward their interactions with society and state authorities. They employed strategies of dissimulation and adaptation to navigate changing circumstances successfully. Fusfeld categorizes the dissimulation strategies employed by the Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya sheikhs into four types;

- **Taqiyya** involves hiding one's beliefs and practices from adversaries, such as British colonial authorities or orthodox Sunni religious scholars.
- **Tawriya** refers to using ambiguous language in speech or writing to avoid confrontation, controversy, or appeal to different audiences.
- **Kitman**, where partial disclosure of mystical teachings is done to safeguard them from misuse and misunderstanding and test the sincerity and readiness of seekers and disciples.
- **Muruna** encompasses suspending or modifying obligations or norms to adapt to specific circumstances of time and place and attract or influence others.

Exploring the historical perspectives on dissimulation and survival among Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims provides insights into the historical factors that have influenced this practice over time and space. However, there are also limitations and challenges associated with this perspective. These include the tendency to oversimplify and overlook the intricate experiences and motivations of those who dissimulate. Additionally, it can be difficult to distinguish between the normative aspects of dissimulation, requiring a balance between contextual analysis and theological considerations.

2.3.2. Sociological Perspectives

From a sociological perspective, scholars examine how social and cultural factors influence the practice of dissimulation among Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims. They explore how these factors shape social identities and the integrity of communities practicing dissimulation. Furthermore, they analyze the strategies employed by individuals engaging in dissimulation to navigate pressures from groups such as majorities, states, societies, etc.

Pinault (1992) suggests that dissimulation (taqiyya) is not just a defensive or pragmatic strategy, but a practice that carries significant weight in Shiite communities. He explains how Shiites utilize taqiyya as a means to navigate the complexities and contradictions of living in an ever-changing world. This practice not only shapes their beliefs, identity, and outward expressions, but also carries a profound significance throughout Shiite history and culture.

Similarly, Valentine (2008) argues that taqiyya serves as a survival tactic and a sociological phenomenon within the Ahmadiyya Jama'at community. He explores how dissimulation influences their understanding of themselves, their portrayal of others, and their interactions with both Muslims and non-Muslims. Valentine delves into how the Ahmadiyya Jama'at utilized dissimulation to navigate religious challenges in India and beyond. In his exploration, Valentine also delves into the Ahmadiyya Jama'at's use of taqiyya to justify and defend their controversial beliefs. These beliefs include claiming that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was both a prophet and a messiah and asserting that Jesus died naturally and was buried in Kashmir.

Likewise, Gilsenan (1973) argues that dissimulation (Taqiya) serves not only as a survival strategy but also as a sociological phenomenon within the Sufi community. He examines how taqiyya influences the Sufi's understanding of themselves, how they express their identity, and how it shapes their relationships with Muslims and non-Muslims. Gilsenan further explores how Sufis, with their remarkable adaptability, utilize dissimulation to conceal or reveal their affiliation with Sufism while navigating the tensions between their spiritual aspirations and worldly obligations. This

adaptability is a testament to their flexibility and resilience in the face of societal challenges.

By considering the sociological perspectives on dissimulation and survival among Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims, we gain insights into the social and cultural factors influencing the practice of dissimulation. Furthermore, these perspectives shed light on how dissimulation impacts the practitioners and their communities in terms of identity formation and integrity. They also offer real-world observations and firsthand accounts of how individuals engage in dissimulation, along with insights into their reasons and the methods they employ to navigate cultural demands. However, it is important to acknowledge that there are limitations and obstacles involved, such as the nature of various social and cultural influences on dissimulation practices, that must be considered comprehensively.

2.3.3. Political Perspectives

The political viewpoints regarding dissimulation and survival among Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims delve into the political and legal factors that affect and shape the practice of dissimulation. They also analyze how it impacts the rights and status of those who practice dissimulation and their communities. Additionally, these perspectives explore the power dynamics and relationships between practitioners of dissimulation and dominant groups such as the state, majority factions, authorities, etc.

In his remarkable work from 2007, Nasr examines taqiyya's political and strategic implications within Shiism. He explores how Shiites have utilized taqiyya in varying contexts throughout history. Like the authors above, Nasr argues that taqiyya serves not only as a survival strategy but as a political tool that reflects the Shiite community's political and ideological aspects. Furthermore, Nasr discusses how Shiites employed taqiyya during revolutions to mobilize themselves effectively while justifying their Islamic republic's policies and actions. In his exploration, Nasr delves into the utilization of taqiyya by Shiites to conceal or reveal their affiliation and loyalty to Hezbollah. He also examines how they employed this strategy to further their religious objectives during the US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003. Additionally,

Nasr explores how taqiyya played a role in their negotiations and cooperation with the Sunnis and Kurds in the Saddam era.

Similarly, Khan (2003) argues that dissimulation poses not only as a survival tactic but also as a political predicament for the Ahmadiyya community. He sheds light on how dissimulation impacts their self-perception and expression in their relationships with other Muslims and non-Muslims. Khan also investigates how the Ahmadiyya community has utilized dissimulation to navigate challenges while simultaneously challenging laws and policies that infringe upon their human rights. Furthermore, he explores how they have employed this strategy to mitigate violence and threats while concurrently responding to acts of injustice.

Similarly, Sirriyeh (2014) posits that dissimulation serves not as a means of survival but as a political tool within the Sufi community, reflecting its political and ideological dimensions. She illustrates the influence of dissimulation on the self-perception and expression of Sufis as its impact on their relationships with fellow Muslims and non-Muslims. Sirriyeh examines how Sufis employ dissimulation to safeguard and preserve their traditions and identity while finding ways to reconcile their beliefs and values with mainstream and modern Islam. Additionally, Sirriyeh explores how Sufis utilize dissimulation to adapt and update their traditions and identity, engaging in dialogue with Muslim and non-Muslim communities.

The political viewpoints regarding dissimulation and survival among Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims offer insights into the political and legal factors that shape this practice. They shed light on how it influences the rights and status of those who practice dissimulation. Moreover, they provide analytical data on the power dynamics between practitioners of dissimulation and dominant groups. However, there are also challenges associated with the political perspectives. These include;

- The lack of political recognition or legal protection for practitioners of dissimulation and their communities exposes them to vulnerability from threats.
- The act of politicizing and exploiting the practice of dissimulation and disregarding its spiritual elements.

2.3.4. Ethical Perspectives

The ethical viewpoints regarding dissimulation and survival within Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi communities involve examining and assessing the ethical and moral dilemmas presented by dissimulation for those who engage in it and their respective communities. This perspective also involves discussing and debating the moral arguments used by practitioners to justify dissimulation and the criticisms raised by opponents who condemn it.

Kohlberg (2020) argues that dissimulation is not just a pragmatic or defensive strategy but also a moral and religious obligation that reflects the ethical and theological aspects within the Shi'i community. The author examines the roots of taqiyya, which is based on love- for God, the Prophet, and the twelve imams in Shiite Islam—, and how dissimulation works to protect and promote Islam. In this study, Kohlberg explores the concept of taqiyya as a way to resist and confront the injustice and oppression imposed by tyrants and usurpers. Also, he emphasizes how taqiyya serves as a means to prepare for and support the emergence of the Mahdi. This anticipated 12th imam will establish justice and peace in our world.

Regarding the Ahamdis, Ahmad (2016) presents an argument that goes beyond viewing dissimulation as a rational strategy. According to him, it is also a religious duty that reflects the theological aspects of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community. The author demonstrates how dissimulation is rooted in truthfulness towards God, Prophet Muhammad, and the community. He further illustrates how dissimulation is driven by a desire to serve and propagate Islam based on peace. Ahmad discusses how dissimulation helps preserve one's identity while exhibiting courage and confidence in the Ahmadi community and teachings.

Likewise, Cornell (1998) argues that dissimulation extends beyond reasoning; it encompasses obligations within spiritual realms within Sufi communities. The author elucidates how dissimulation is founded on axially—the balance between spirituality and outward religious expression—and aims to serve transformation alongside societal change. The author explores how dissimulation is used to improve oneself and how it signifies humility and sincerity within the Sufi path.

The ethical perspectives on hiding one's beliefs and survival among Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims offer insights into the moral issues raised by this practice. They also provide critical and analytical data on the arguments used by those who practice taqiyya to justify it as the criticisms raised by opponents of this practice. However, there are challenges and limitations associated with this perspective. Such as:

- The various ethical and moral frameworks that influence dissimulation are diverse and complex, requiring us to respect and understand them.
- The boundaries and criteria that define and regulate dissimulation can sometimes be uncertain, necessitating clarification. Finding a balance between the values of dissimulation can be challenging.

Overall, exploring the ethical perspectives sheds light on the complexities surrounding dissimulation in terms of ethics and morality.

2.4. The Definition and Understanding of Dissimulation and Survival and the Terms and Concepts Used to Describe Them

Different viewpoints and interpretations exist regarding the definition and understanding of dissimulation and survival, with varying terms and concepts used to describe them;

- Historically, viewpoints on dissimulation and survival within Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslim communities tend to portray dissimulation as a phenomenon that has evolved and changed over time and in different contexts. They employ terms like taqiyya, tawriya, kitman etc. that are derived from Islamic traditions and history (Daftary, 1992; Friedmann, 2003; Fوسفeld, 1981).
- From a sociological perspective, dissimulation and survival among Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims are often understood as cultural phenomena influenced by various social and cultural factors. Identity and integrity describe these dynamics based on social theories and concepts (Pinault, 1992; Valentine, 2008; Gilseman, 1973).

- Politically, dissimulation and survival among Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims can be seen as matters affected by political factors. Legal aspects also come into play, with terms like rights and status employed to discuss these phenomena based on political theories and legal concepts (Nasr, 2007; Khan, 2003; Sirriyeh, 2014).
- The ethical viewpoints regarding dissimulation and survival among Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims typically understand dissimulation as a moral occurrence that raises various ethical and moral concerns. They use terms like hypocrisy, sincerity, etc., that are derived from moral theories and values (Kohlberg 2020; Ahmad, 2016; Cornell, 1998).

2.4.1. Reasons for Practicing Dissimulation and Survival

Various perspectives exist on this topic, with differing motivations behind practicing dissimulation. Additionally, different factors influence these practices.

For instance;

- When examining the historical aspects of dissimulation and survival within Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi communities, there is often a focus on understanding the reasons behind persecution, oppression, migration, colonization, and other factors that have compelled practitioners of dissimulation to conceal or alter their religious identity, beliefs, and practices. Additionally, scholars explore the historical and contextual influences that have shaped these communities (Daftary, 1992; Friedmann, 2003; Fوسفeld, 1981).
- From a sociological standpoint, examining dissimulation and survival among Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims highlights the significance of survival strategies such as adaptation and integration. Dissimulation practitioners are motivated by the desire to navigate social and cultural pressures from other groups while conforming to societal expectations. Scholars also explore how social and cultural factors shape these communities (Pinault, 1992; Valentine, 2008; Gilsenan, 1973).

- The political viewpoints regarding dissimulation and survival among Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims often highlight the factors like rights, status, power, resistance, etc., that have driven those practicing dissimulation to protect and assert their political and legal rights and interests. These individuals are also influenced by political and legal factors that impact them (Nasr, 2007; Khan, 2003; Sirriyeh, 2014).
- From an ethical standpoint, dissimulation and survival among Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims tend to focus on reasons like necessity, morality, legitimacy, etc. These reasons justify why dissimulation practitioners defend and legitimize their moral values and principles. Additionally, moral factors shape their decisions (Kohlberg, 2020; Ahmad, 2016; Cornell, 1998).

2.4.2. The Implications of Practicing Dissimulation on Identity and Integrity

Perspectives on this subject also have varying implications for individuals who practice dissimulation and their communities. The consequences of dissimulation can impact both these individuals' identities and their communities' overall integrity. For instance;

- When examining the historical viewpoints regarding dissimulation among Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims, the focus often lies on the outcomes and repercussions of preservation, transformation, innovation, etc. These practices have influenced both the doctrinal identity of those who practice dissimulation and their communities (Daftary, 1992; Friedmann, 2003; Fushfeld, 1981).
- From a sociological perspective, when studying dissimulation among Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims, attention is drawn to the implications and consequences of fragmentation, diversity, and pluralism. These factors have emerged due to practicing dissimulation and have impacted the social and cultural identity of those who engage in it and their communities (Pinault, 1992; Valentine, 2008; Gilson, 1973).

- Looking at it from a political standpoint, dissimulation among Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims has led to consequences such as recognition, protection, and empowerment. These political effects have shaped the identity of practitioners engaging in dissimulation and their communities (Nasr 2007; Khan 2003; Sirriyeh 2014).
- The ethical viewpoints regarding dissimulation within Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslim communities often emphasize the implications and outcomes of deception, sincerity, authenticity, and so on. These aspects are closely associated with the practice of dissimulation and impact the ethical values and moral integrity of those who engage in it and their respective communities (Kohlberg, 2020; Ahmad, 2016; Cornell, 1998).

2.4.3. The Ethical and Moral Issues and Dilemmas that Practicing Dissimulation Raises and Entails

The ethical and moral implications of practicing dissimulation and survival vary among the different perspectives. Arguments are put forth by those who practice dissimulation to justify and defend it, as well as criticisms from opponents who condemn and reject the practice.

When examining the historical perspectives on dissimulation within Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims, we encounter moral dilemmas related to necessity, loyalty, authority, and more. Practitioners of dissimulation often anticipate these challenges. According to Kohlberg (2020), Shia Islam has a historical context for the practice of taqiyya, also known as dissimulation in this study. This practice is based on interpretations of the Quran and Sunnah and the authority of 12 Shi'ite imams and jurists. Kohlberg argues that dissimulation is considered essential by Shia Muslims to safeguard their faith and community when facing persecution from majorities or unjust rulers. He emphasizes that taqiyya should not be seen as hypocrisy or cowardice but rather as a display of loyalty and devotion to the principles of Islam and its leaders. Kohlberg acknowledges that Sunni Muslims and other groups have criticized taqiyya, accusing Shia Muslims of being dishonest, deceitful, and disloyal. These critics question the legitimacy and morality of taqiyya, asserting that it deviates from the

teachings of the Quran, Sunnah (sayings, actions, and tacit approval of Prophet Muhammad), and Islamic values (Campbell, 2006).

From a sociological perspective, dissimulation practices among Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims raise moral dilemmas related to identity, integrity, and belongingness, among other issues. For instance, Valentine (2008) argues that dissimulation is a socio-cultural phenomenon observed among Ahmadi Muslims in various contexts. This practice is rooted in social and contextual analysis and the construction and preservation of Ahmadi Muslim's identity and integrity.

According to Valentine's (2008) stance, dissimulation serves as a survival strategy for Ahmadi Muslims to navigate pressures from groups such as mainstream Muslims, non-Muslims, state institutions, and society at large. The author also contends that dissimulation does not indicate insincerity or a lack of authenticity. Instead, it serves as a means for Ahmadi Muslims to uphold their identity and integrity while considering themselves progressive followers of Islam. He also acknowledges that dissimulation has faced criticism from Muslims and others who accuse Ahmadi Muslims of deviating from the faith, being apostates, and betraying their community. These critics question the legitimacy and moral implications of dissimulation, claiming it goes against Islamic teachings and values, posing a threat to the Muslim community's identity and integrity.

The political perspectives surrounding dissimulation within Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslim communities often give rise to dilemmas regarding rights, status, power dynamics, and resistance strategies, among related issues faced by those who practice dissimulation. For instance, according to Sirriyeh (2014), dissimulation is a political and legal phenomenon observed among Sufi Muslims in specific environments or contexts. It is rooted in their political and legal analysis of affairs and their pursuit to protect and assert their rights and status within society. She also contends that Sufi Muslims employ dissimulation as a means of safeguarding and asserting their political and legal rights while resisting the dominance of groups and entities such as the state authorities and orthodox Muslims. Moreover, she argues that dissimulation does not indicate weakness or compromise; rather, it symbolizes strength and strategy among Sufi Muslims who view themselves as adherents to the spiritual aspects of Islam.

Additionally, she also acknowledges that dissimulation has faced criticism from Muslims and others who label Sufi Muslims as innovative rebels, questioning the legitimacy and morality of dissimulation while asserting that it contradicts Islamic principles and values, thereby posing a threat to the rights and status of the Muslim community.

The ethical perspectives surrounding dissimulation for Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims inevitably give rise to dilemmas concerning deception, sincerity, authenticity, etc., which practitioners of dissimulation must navigate. For instance, according to Ahmad (2016), the concept of dissimulation is seen as an ethical practice among Ahmadi Muslims in certain situations. It is rooted in their ethical and moral analysis of values, principles, and the interpretation of their faith. Ahmad argues that dissimulation serves as a duty for Ahmadi Muslims to safeguard their beliefs and community against persecution by other Muslims or unjust rulers. He emphasizes that dissimulation should not be viewed as deceit or dishonesty but rather as an expression of sincerity and honesty by Ahmadi Muslims who identify themselves as believers seeking reform. It is important to note that dissimulation has faced criticism from Muslims and others who accuse Ahmadi Muslims of heresy, apostasy, and betrayal.

On the one hand, the practice of dissimulation raises moral dilemmas, supported by different arguments and justifications from its practitioners. On the other hand, opponents of this practice reject it, presenting their own set of criticisms and objections. These contrasting views reflect the varying perspectives and frameworks within the study of dissimulation and the ongoing debates surrounding it. This complex phenomenon is ambiguous, emphasizing the need for thorough investigation and evaluation.

2.5. Gaps and Limitations in the Current Literature

The existing literature on dissimulation among Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims, as shown above, has a wealth of knowledge. However, there are still gaps that require attention. For instance;

- One limitation in the existing literature is the lack of interdisciplinary studies that explore dissimulation in relation to other forms of dissimulation or identity management among different religious minorities or groups like the Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufis and highlight similarities and differences among these groups in terms of their experiences with dissimulation practice.
- There is a scarcity of empirical and contextual research that delves into the real-life experiences, motivations, challenges, and outcomes of dissimulation practice among present-day Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims in different regions and circumstances.
- There are insufficient critical and constructive studies that assess the consequences and challenges associated with dissimulation in terms of the genuineness, sincerity, and integrity of minority Muslim groups and identities. Additionally, these studies should propose supplementary approaches to address persecution, discrimination, or oppression-related issues.

2.5.1. How this Study Aims to Fill the Gaps and Address the Limitations

In order to address the gaps in the current literature, this study intends to undertake a comparative and cross-disciplinary analysis of dissimulation and survival strategies employed by Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims. This research approaches this topic from perspectives such as history, sociology, politics, and ethics to identify similarities and differences among these groups regarding their motivations for practicing dissimulation while surviving in different environments.

Additionally, the research endeavors to investigate the phenomenon of dissimulation among Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims in different contexts and settings. These may include scenarios such as living in a diaspora as a minority or majority group. This study aims to capture the lived experiences and contextual realities faced by individuals practicing dissimulation in their respective communities. It also seeks to evaluate this phenomenon in light of Islamic teachings and values while offering innovative recommendations and alternative solutions for those involved.

In conclusion, this chapter, literature review, has analyzed the subject of dissimulation and survival among Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims from multidisciplinary perspectives, including history, sociology, politics, ethics, etc. Gaps and limitations within the current literature have been identified while highlighting how this study intends to address or fill those gaps. Moreover, this chapter has situated the research within theoretical and conceptual frameworks such as the sociology of religion, politics of identity, and ethics of deception. The next chapter will delve into this study's research methodology and design.



CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

In this section, I present and justify the research design and methodology utilized in this research work. This section additionally describes how the research question and sub-questions are addressed and answered through the collection and analysis of the data. Also, the researcher looks into the research paradigm and approach and the methods and tools used for data collection in this study.

3.2. Research Paradigm

The research paradigm is the philosophical and theoretical framework that shapes and guides the research process. It takes account of the researcher's beliefs about reality, knowledge, and methodology. In other words, the research paradigm comprises the research's ontological, epistemological, and methodology (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

In this study, I have chosen the interpretivist paradigm as my guiding framework because, this paradigm recognizes that reality is socially constructed and subjective, focusing on understanding participants or interviewees experiences and meanings using qualitative research methods (Bryman, 2016). I find this paradigm suitable for exploring dissimulation practice among Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims from their viewpoints. Through this approach, the researcher aims to capture the experiences and motivations of participants as well as analyze the implications, consequences, and ethical considerations they face or anticipate.

3.2.1. Research Method, Approach and Strategy

This research mainly relies on qualitative data to understand and interpret the perspectives and encounters of those involved in dissimulation among the three Muslim groups. It also helps recognize the data's recurring themes, patterns, and variations across the three groups. Additionally, utilizing qualitative data enables me to explore the outcomes, ethical concerns, and moral challenges linked with the subject being studied-dissimulation practice (Braun & Clarke, 2019). On the other hand, quantitative data is a complementary data type for this study. It allows for measuring and describing the frequency and distribution of practitioners involved. Furthermore, it aids in exploring variables and indicators related to the phenomenon being studied. It also examines correlations and associations among these variables or indicators while determining the statistical importance and generalizability of findings (Field, 2018).

The research methodology and plan serve as the guiding principles or, better still, the roadmap that directs and molds the research journey. I have embraced exploratory and comparative methods as my chosen research methodology and strategy. It also involves the purpose, design, and techniques employed in the study (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019). These approaches aim to investigate a phenomenon that has not been thoroughly studied. Additionally, they allow the researcher to compare and contrast similarities and differences among diverse groups (Yin, 2018).

The comparative approach is appropriate for this study because it enables the researcher to delve into the phenomenon of dissimulation and survival among Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims, which has not been sufficiently addressed in the existing literature. Furthermore, it allows the researcher to analyze their practices' experiences, motivations, implications, and consequences and the ethical issues they face or anticipate across these three distinct Muslim minority groups.

3.3. Data Collection Sources and Sampling

This study incorporated primary and secondary data to merge theories with empirical data effectively. Semi-structured and in-depth interviews were conducted to gather

primary data. In contrast, secondary data was obtained from various sources such as academic books, reports, articles, journals, and electronic resources related to the research topic. Using secondary sources helped validate the information acquired from the primary sources. This approach facilitated an informed account of dissimulation and survival among Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims from different perspectives. The literature review was carried out using a comprehensive search strategy along with a comparative synthesis and analysis method.

The semi-structured and in-depth interviews are the primary data source for this study, and they are used to collect and record the qualitative data from the participants, who are members of the Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi sects and who have practiced or are practicing dissimulation in different situations and environments. The Interviews primarily took place either face-to-face or over the phone. In all, I interviewed 15 members of Shia, Ahmadis, and Sufis from Ghana, Senegal, Singapore, and Turkey, and some participants who have lived in Pakistan and India.

The interviews were conducted using an interview guide, allowing open-ended discussion. These topics include;

- Understanding the participants' backgrounds and profiles, such as their sect, location, and migration history.
- Comprehending the concepts of dissimulation and the word or term they use to describe it: taqiyya, tawriya, or kitman.
- Exploring the reasons behind practicing dissimulation and survival and examining the factors that influence them, such as persecution, oppression, discrimination, survival strategies, adaptation methods, and integration efforts.
- Examining the implications and consequences of practicing dissimulation on identity and community integrity. This includes aspects like preservation, transformation, safety, innovation within their community, and fragmentation.
- Addressing the dilemmas associated with practicing dissimulation. This involves discussing the arguments used by participants to defend or legitimize this practice while also acknowledging opponents' or critics' criticisms or objections.

- The ways and methods individuals employ to handle and adjust to the cultural, political, and ethical demands and expectations of groups and individuals, including the majority, minority, government, society, etc., as well as the obstacles and restrictions they encounter or anticipate while practicing dissimulation.

3.3.1. Purposive Sampling

Participants for this research were selected using purposive sampling, a method aimed at choosing samples expected to provide information relevant to the research's goals, as described by Gall et al. (1996). Thus, purposive sampling helps us obtain rich and detailed data from a relevant and representative sample. Purposive sampling is important when you want to focus in-depth on relatively small samples that have particular characteristics that match your research objectives (ibid).

I chose this type of sampling because I want to study the phenomenon of dissimulation among Shias, Ahmadis, and Sufis in depth with a small number of cases. Also, I have access to a limited number of people who have the desired information or experience and are willing to share their stories and experiences for this research work.

3.4. Data Analysis Methods

The primary approach employed in this study for analyzing and interpreting data from interviews and literature review is the thematic and comparative data analysis method. It involves identifying, describing, and examining the data's emerging themes, patterns, and categories (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Moreover, it facilitates comparisons highlighting similarities and differences between cases or groups and allows for a discussion and explanation of the findings obtained through data analysis and interpretation (ibid).

This study utilizes a deductive method, which is deemed ideal for achieving the research goals. The deductive approach involves initiating a research with a theory or hypothesis and subsequently verifying it through evidence (Bryman, 2016). The variables are derived from the research questions and then coded and analyzed

thematically. The themes are based on the theoretical frameworks and the research questions.

The method and technique of comparative data analysis involve three steps in this study. First, the researcher examines, codes, and categorizes the data based on emerging themes, patterns, and categories. Next, the data is interpreted using four frameworks: historical, sociological, political, and ethical. The researcher then compares and contrasts the data across three sects, Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi, to identify their similarities and differences. Finally, the researcher integrates the data with existing literature reviews and the theoretical and conceptual frameworks and discusses and explains the findings and results of the data analysis and interpretation.

The findings of this study are not intended to be generalized. However, they can be replicated in similar settings and with similar theories, with some adjustments for new situations and dynamics. This study aims to offer a deeper insight into the phenomenon of dissimulation among three distinct groups in different contexts in Islam, Shia, Ahmadis, and Sufis. This could lead to identifying some common patterns that could enhance the generalizability of the results.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I delve into the intriguing phenomenon of **dissimulation** as observed among members of three distinct Islamic sects: **Shi'i**, **Ahmadi**, and **Sufi**. This research involved interviews with 15 participants representing each of these sects. The insights gained from these interviews shed light on the motivations, justifications, and nuances surrounding dissimulation within their respective communities. The chapter also reports and discusses the main findings and results of the data analysis and answers the research question and sub-question.

4.2. Data Presentation

This section on data presentation compiles and showcases the data gathered from the primary source (Interviews) through aids like tables, charts, and graphs. Additionally, it offers insights into the backgrounds of the participants and the variables and indicators associated with the concepts of dissimulation within the Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslim communities.

It is important to note that the Shia Muslims interviewed were from the Twelver Shia tradition. Additionally, the Sufis interviewed were from the Tijaniyya, Shadhiliyya, Muriddiya, and Ba'alawiyya Sufi orders. The Ahmadis were from the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community (AMC).

The data collected from the primary source, which is the semi-structured and in-depth interviews, consists of the qualitative data from 15 participants from each of the three sects: Shia, Ahmadi and Sufi, who have practiced or are practicing dissimulation in diverse situations and circumstances. The data collected from the secondary source,

which is the literature review, consists of the qualitative and quantitative data from the existing literature on the topic of dissimulation and survival among Shia, Ahmadi and Sufi Muslims from different perspectives and disciplines, such as history, sociology, politics, ethics, etc.

The below charts show the frequency and distribution of the participants by sect, gender, and location. Figure 4.1 shows the pie chart of the participants by sect. Figure 4.2 shows the bar chart of the participants by gender. Figure 4.3 shows the chart of the participants by location.

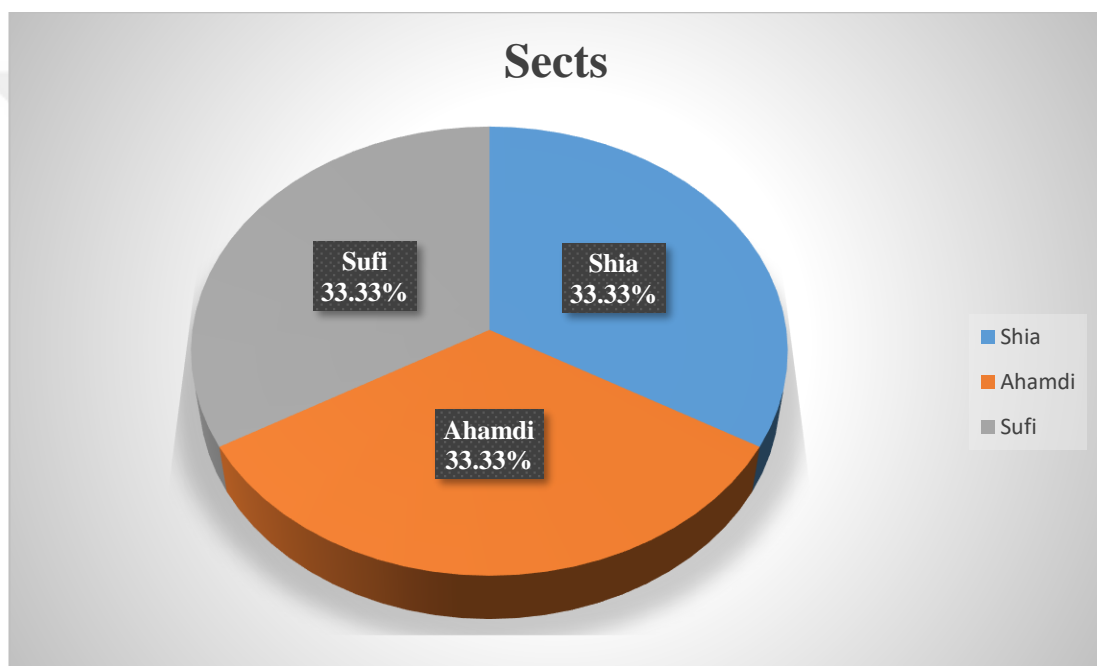


Figure 4.1. Pie Chart of the Participants by Sects

Source: Author's compilation based on primary data from Interviews

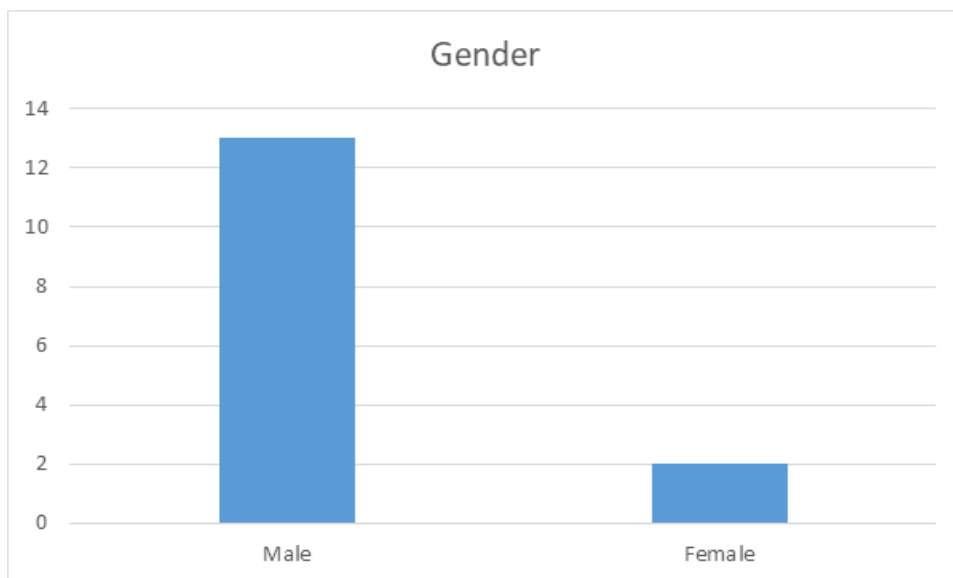


Figure 4.2. Bar Chart of the Participants by Gender

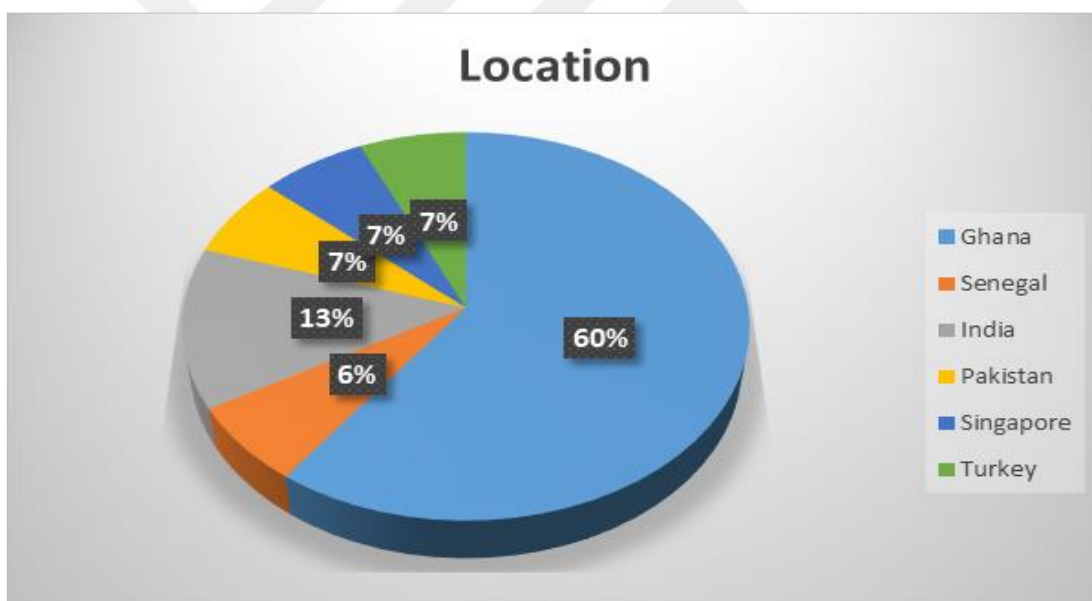


Figure 4.3. Chart of the Participants by Location (Countries)

Source: Based on data from the Interviews conducted

The researcher labels and categorizes the data based on the themes, patterns, and groups that surface from the data. The researcher employs a combination of deductive and inductive coding, drawing on predetermined codes from existing literature and theoretical models alongside emerging codes derived directly from the data. Additionally, the researcher utilizes a mix of qualitative and quantitative coding

methods incorporating codes that reflect the content and significance of the data as well as those that represent numerical aspects and occurrences within the data.

4.3. Data Analysis and Results

4.3.1. Ahmadi Muslims

The Ahmadi participants expressed varying perspectives on dissimulation. Three of the participants from the Ahmadi sect opined that practicing dissimulation or hiding their faith or beliefs in the face of persecution or harm is a sign of **weak faith (Interview 4; Interview 10; Interview 11)**. They argued that those Ahmadis with strong faith never hide their identity, no matter how dire the situation. One Ahmadi scholar¹ mentioned, “ In all situations, I do not hide my identity, if I am persecuted in a place, the earth is wide and spacious, I will migrate to a different land where i can practice my beliefs safely. He cited Quran 4:97 to support his argument, which states that ‘While the angels are gathering the souls of those who wronged themselves, they will wonder, "What was the matter with you?" They will say, "We were oppressed in our land." [The angels] will ask, "Was not God's earth vast enough for you to run away? He went on to say that, in Ghana, because it is a secular state, he does not hide his identity, but when it comes to the pilgrimage (Hajj), he identifies as one of the mainstream Muslims and does not specify his sect because Ahmadis are banned from performing Hajj.

Another Ahmadi² adherent who resided in Pakistan stated, “ In Pakistan, we Ahmadis are supposed to denounce our Ahmadi beliefs in order to acquire a passport; in that situation, we either bribe the authorities or we identify as the mainstream Muslims’. When questioned whether that act was deception, he argued that it was not a form of lying or deception but rather a pragmatic way of living and avoiding controversy. Another Ahmadi³ adherent offered a pragmatic viewpoint. He argued that allowing oneself to be needlessly harmed would be akin to **suicide**, which is strictly forbidden

¹ Interview 3 on 4th January, 2024

² Interview 10 on 11th January, 2024

³ Interview 1 on 3rd January, 2024

in Islam. Therefore, he advocated for concealing one's identity when faced with danger and prioritizing the importance of saving one's life and religious identity.

The Ahmadi participants in Ghana who were interviewed mentioned that the Ghana Hajj Board, which functions under the supervision of Saudi Arabian authorities, does not allow them to participate in the Hajj pilgrimage. In response to this issue, Ahmadis opt to classify themselves as orthodox Muslims, enabling them to complete their quest for Hajj. This adjustment guarantees their ability to engage in this spiritual journey in the face of challenges.

4.3.2. Shia Muslims

The Shia interviewees cited historical evidence to justify their practice of dissimulation. When their lives are at risk or to prevent fitna (discord), they engage in taqiyya (dissimulation). All of the Shia interviewees argued that practicing dissimulation (Taqiyya) is part and parcel of the Islamic faith, and it has its basis in the Quran and the Sunnah (sayings, actions, and tacit approval) of Prophet Muhammad. Four of the Shia interviewees mentioned that during the reign of the Umayyad Dynasty, the followers of Ahlu Bayt (Shias) were killed and persecuted. So, the Shias practiced dissimulation to save their lives. In situations where their lives are endangered, they practice dissimulation (Interview2; Interview 5; Interview 12; Interview 15)

Interestingly, one Shia respondent in Ghana highlighted the context-specific nature of dissimulation. He mentioned that 'In an environment like where I live, dissimulation might be perceived as deception because I am not threatened due to my beliefs, but in places where we are minority or Sunni-dominated countries or area it is not a deception. This is because we can practice our ideologies and beliefs without harassment or persecution.' However, they all opined that when personal safety is jeopardized, dissimulation transforms into a **survival strategy** rather than mere deception or lying.

4.3.3. Sufi Muslims

A consistent pattern emerged among the Sufis. They strategically conceal certain beliefs when interacting with non-Sufi Muslims. Ambiguous language and selective disclosure allow them to avoid confrontation and controversy and maintain harmony. Their approach is rooted in a nuanced understanding of their audience, and they adapt their communication based on context.

One Sufis interviewed mentioned that ‘we practice ‘kitman’(partial disclosure of mystical teachings to safeguard those teachings from misuse or misunderstanding from non-sufi Muslims.’ He went on to say that ‘In situations where non-sufi Muslims will call me a Kafir (disbeliever), I never reveal my true beliefs’⁴.

All the Sufis interviewed stated that everything they say or do could be traced back to Islamic and prophetic teachings and that they try to speak and act in accordance with non-sufi Muslims' understanding. One Sufi intimated that 'the Sufis move through the world like shadows, leaving footprints of compassion and kindness. We occasionally engage in dissimulation to safeguard the spiritual elements of our belief system, which might not be readily grasped or valued by those who interpret Islam in a literal manner. Dissimulation, therefore, serves as a means of shielding the teachings and enigmatic aspects of our heritage from those who lack understanding or have not been initiated into our Sufi traditions.’⁵.

4.4. The Main Findings and Results

Before I discuss the findings of this research, let me briefly recap the methodology I employed. I conducted semi-structured interviews with participants, allowing them to share their experiences, beliefs, and perspectives on dissimulation. The interviews were guided by open-ended questions, encouraging participants to express themselves freely.

⁴ Interview 6 on 6th January, 2024

⁵ Interview 7 on 7th January, 2024

4.4.1. Thematic Analysis

Through rigorous thematic analysis, I identified recurring themes across the interviews conducted. Here are the key findings:

i. Dissimulation as Social Inclusion

Dissimulation emerged as a strategic tool for social inclusion. Participants often felt compelled to downplay their religious identity in specific environments to avoid exclusion or discrimination.

Participants across all three groups highlighted the importance of dissimulation as a means of social inclusion within predominantly Sunni communities. They expressed concerns about facing discrimination or persecution due to their minority status and emphasized the need to conceal their true beliefs or practices to avoid ostracisation. For instance, a Shi'i participant stated, "In the community where I live, being openly Shi'i can lead to sidelining, unnecessary hatred, or even violence. In Shi'ism, we do not fold our arms in prayers, and we wipe our feet as opposed to washing them during ablution, but to avoid controversy or harm, sometimes when I pray in a Sunni mosque in my community. I wash my feet and hold my arms as they do. Dissimulation helps me maintain social harmony and acceptance."⁶

Participants from all three groups highlighted the pervasive societal norms that favor majority Muslims and marginalize minority sects such as Shi'a, Ahmadi, and Sufi. They shared experiences of feeling excluded from community events, religious gatherings, and, in some situations, even employment opportunities due to their religious affiliations. Dissimulation, therefore, becomes a strategic tool to navigate these social dynamics and gain acceptance within and among mainstream Muslim communities. Participants emphasized the importance of maintaining outward appearances and avoiding behaviors or statements that could mark them as 'other' in predominantly majority Muslim spaces.

⁶ Interview 14 dated 11th February, 2024

Moreover, participants discussed the historical context of persecution and discrimination faced by minority Muslim groups, which reinforces the need for dissimulation as a means of survival. They recounted instances of violence, property damage, and systemic discrimination targeting their communities in various regions. For instance, one Ahmadi recounted that “Nine Ahmadi Muslims were brutally murdered in a mosque in Burkina Faso in January 2023”. In this context, dissimulation is not merely a matter of personal preference but a pragmatic response to systemic injustices and threats to physical safety and well-being.

ii. Dissimulation as a Safety Precaution

Safety measures emerged as an important motivator for practicing dissimulation, particularly in countries where religious extremism and intolerance pose significant risks to minority groups. The participants described occasions where openly professing their beliefs could lead to threats or violence from extremist groups. One Ahmadi participant stated, "In Pakistan, openly identifying as Ahmadi can put your life at risk. Dissimulation becomes a matter of survival in such hostile environments or situations."⁷

Participants shared disturbing accounts of targeted attacks, hate crimes, and even state-sanctioned persecution against Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan, Sufi, and Shia communities, respectively. Dissimulation, therefore, becomes a matter of life and death in such hostile environments, where openly professing one's religious beliefs could invite violence and persecution from extremist factions.

Also, participants discussed the psychological toll of living under constant threat, where even ordinary activities such as attending prayers or wearing religious attire carry the risk of violence or harassment. Dissimulation offers a smokescreen of safety and normalcy in these precarious circumstances, allowing individuals to go about their daily lives without fear of reprisal or persecution.

⁷ Interview 11 dated 8th January, 2024

iii. Dissimulation for Identity Preservation

Despite the imperative to conceal certain aspects of their beliefs or practices in public settings, participants emphasized maintaining a strong sense of religious identity and commitment in private spheres. Ahmadi participants, in particular, emphasized the need to protect their distinct beliefs within a predominantly Sunni environment.

Participants described how dissimulation enables them to navigate diverse social contexts while remaining steadfast in their faith and spiritual practices. For instance, a Sufi participant shared how they continue to engage in dhikr of “Hu” (one of the names of God which means “HE”) and other devotional practices within their homes and spiritual communities, even if they refrain from outward displays of religious identity in public. A Sufi participant articulated, "Dissimulation does not mean we compromise our spiritual beliefs. It is about adapting to different circumstances while staying true to our core values."⁸

Participants also discussed the cultural and historical significance of their traditions, which informs their sense of identity and belonging within the broader Muslim ummah. Dissimulation, therefore, is not merely a pragmatic strategy but a means of preserving centuries-old traditions, rituals, and spiritual lineages that define their religious identities.

iv. Degrees of Dissimulation

The data collected revealed a spectrum of dissimulation practices. Some participants engaged in subtle concealment, while others adopted more overt strategies. Here, I break down the spectrum:

I. Subtle Concealment:

Some participants engaged in subtle forms of dissimulation. They carefully chose their words, adjusted body language, and selectively revealed aspects of their religious

⁸ Interview 7 dated 7th January, 2024

identity. For instance, a Shi'i participant shared how they would avoid explicitly mentioning their affiliation during casual conversations, especially in mixed religious settings. Another Sufi participant also expressed how Sufis employ 'Kitman'—partial disclosure of Sufi mystical teachings—to safeguard their mystical teachings from misunderstanding by other non-Sufi Muslims.

II. Strategic Ambiguity:

Several participants adopted a strategic approach. They blurred the lines between disclosure and concealment, depending on the context. An Ahmadi participant described how they would emphasize commonalities with Sunni beliefs while downplaying their distinct Ahmadiyya doctrines. A Sufi participant also described how they would use ambiguous language to avoid confrontation or controversy with other non-Sufi Muslims.

III. Overt Strategies:

At the other end of the spectrum, some participants practiced overt dissimulation. They openly concealed their true beliefs, even if it meant presenting a different religious facade. Participants recounted instances where they participated in Sunni rituals without revealing their affiliations. A Shia participant mentioned that “there are several occasions where I had to wash my feet during ablution, fold my arms in prayers even though in Shia Islam we only wipe our feet and leave our hands in prayers.”

4.4.2. Context Matters: Nuances of Practicing Dissimulation

Participants unanimously agree that dissimulation is a multidimensional tool. Its credibility or legitimacy heavily relies on context.

- **Family and Community:**

Participants felt more comfortable expressing their true beliefs within close-knit families and religious communities. All participants emphasized that dissimulation

was unnecessary among their fellow brothers and sisters and even would amount to hypocrisy if they practiced it. In such situations, they openly discuss their faith.

- **Majority VS Minority Context:**

When participants found themselves in a majority environment or situation where their religious beliefs aligned with the prevailing norm, they saw little or no reason for dissimulation.

A Shi'i interviewee expressed, "Among fellow Shi'is, I do not need to hide my faith. It is pointless to practice "Taqiyya"- It is a safe space." A Sufi interviewee also remarked that it is needless to hide my mystical beliefs when I am with other Sufi brothers'. All participants from all the sects concurred that dissimulation would indeed be perceived as hypocrisy or even a sin in such contexts.

The dynamics shifted dramatically when participants were in a minority context. Here, dissimulation became either a safety strategy or preserving their unique identity.

An Ahmadi participant shared, "In a non-Ahmadi-dominated environment or society, I tread carefully. Revealing my Ahmadiyya beliefs could endanger my life, property, or my family members."⁹ In these situations, dissimulation was seen as a tool for social inclusion rather than hypocrisy or deception.

- **Workplace and Social Circles:**

In professional environments or social gatherings, participants often adjusted their level of dissimulation. A Sufi participant shared how they avoided discussing Sufi teachings in social circles or among literalists (Wahhabis) to prevent potential backlash¹⁰.

⁹ Interview 1 dated 3rd January, 2024

¹⁰ Interview 8 dated 8th January, 2024

- **Safety and Perceived Risks:**

The need for safety influenced dissimulation. Participants weighed the risks of disclosure against the benefits of blending in. Participants often stressed that perceived risks played an important role in practicing dissimulation. When they felt vulnerable, whether due to religious differences or potential backlash, they resorted to dissimulation.

A Sufi interviewee explained, “When anti-Sufi sentiments are high, I conceal my affiliation. It is about safety.”¹¹ Participants mentioned that they tread with extreme caution in regions or places where anti-sentiments of their beliefs are high.

- **Valid and Unjustified Dissimulation: A Thin Line**

Participants drew a clear line between valid dissimulation and unjustified dissimulation. The difference between the two forms emerged as a central theme. Among the Shia participants, Dissimulation was valid if one is trying to protect oneself, family, property damage, or persecution from others.

A Shia participant, Hassan,¹² shared that, “In a hostile environment, taqiyya becomes a shield. Safety measures and preserving my identity. It is not hypocrisy for these reasons; it is permitted in Islam.”

Ahmadi participants faced a unique challenge. Their distinct beliefs often clashed with mainstream Sunni Islam. Hafsa, an Ahmadi participant, explained, “When my safety is at stake, I choose silence or conceal my identity. I do want I have to do to save my life and that of my loved ones.”

Sufis viewed dissimulation as a spiritual journey. It was not merely about survival; it was about other non-Sufis misunderstanding their mystical beliefs to the extent of calling them disbelievers. A Sufi participant, Nyass, mused, “Sometimes, hiding our

¹¹ Interview 13 dated 30th January, 2024

¹² Names of interviewees have been anonymized to protect their privacy.

truth allows us to promote peace and harmony among the ummah (community) of the Holy prophet Muhammad.”

All the participants agreed that practicing dissimulation without a reason crossed the line into being hypocritical or a form of deception, a sin. One participant from the Shi’i community stressed, "When I am with Shi’is, dissimulation becomes unnecessary, and practicing it turns into a wrongdoing or a form of lying." Furthermore, dissimulation lacked justification in a majority context, where they could practice their beliefs and rituals. Participants felt no need to hide their faith.

To sum up, and to put it simply, dissimulation is not always a clear-cut or black-and-white issue. There are grey areas. Its similitude is like walking a tightrope—a balance between faith, safety, and genuineness. As we respect the stories of these participants, let us keep exploring the nuances that shape their experiences.

➤ **Below are other findings;**

- The participants from the three sects have different definitions and understandings of dissimulation and survival. They use different terms and concepts to describe them, such as taqiyya, tawriya, kitman, and so on. They also have different perspectives and frameworks that guide their dissimulation practices.
- The participants from the three sects have different reasons and motivations for practicing dissimulation and survival and different factors and dimensions that influence and shape them, such as persecution, oppression, discrimination, survival, adaptation, social integration, etc. They also have different strategies and mechanisms that they use to cope and adapt to the social, cultural, political, and ethical pressures and expectations from different groups and actors, such as the majority, the minority, the state, the society, etc., and different challenges and limitations that they face or anticipate in practicing dissimulation.
- Participants from the three groups each encounter moral challenges when practicing dissimulation. They use different arguments and reasoning to

support their actions while also facing criticism from those who oppose their tactics. Additionally, they interpret Islamic teachings on hypocrisy and sincerity in diverse ways, leading to varying perspectives on the justification or critique of their behavior.

- The participants from the three sects have different levels and degrees of dissimulation and survival and different types and forms of dissimulation and survival, such as partial, complete, temporary, permanent, etc.

4.5. Comparison Across the Three Distinct Groups

Table 4.1. Comparison Across the Three Sects

Aspect	Shi'i	Ahmadi	Sufi
Motivations	Historical evidence, survival	Faith, Social Inclusion	Contextual understanding, Identity preservation
Implications	Fitna (Strife) prevention, safety	Survival, Identity	Harmony, non-confrontation
Challenges	Balancing sincerity and survival	Addressing weak faith	Navigating diverse audiences

Source: Author's compilation based on primary data gathered from the interviews.

Based on the information in the table above, it can be deduced that practices of concealing one's beliefs among Ahmadi Muslims, Shia Muslims, and Sufi Muslims are rooted in the desire for safety and security in unfriendly surroundings. However,

each group has reasons, consequences, and obstacles associated with this practice. Ahmadi Muslims struggle with the conflict between expressing their faith and ensuring their survival; some see hiding their beliefs as a lack of strong faith, while others view it as a necessity. Shia Muslims justify concealing their beliefs by citing historical instances and aiming to prevent discord. Sufi Muslims selectively hide aspects of their beliefs to maintain peace and avoid conflicts by adjusting how they communicate depending on who they are speaking to and trying to convey their beliefs without causing division or disagreement. Despite all three groups facing challenges in balancing sincerity with self-preservation, the variations in their motivations and strategies showcase distinct theological and cultural viewpoints.

4.6. Justifications in Light of Islamic Teachings

Despite potential tensions with Islamic teachings on sincerity and honesty, participants drew on religious principles to justify the practice of dissimulation in certain circumstances. They referenced Quranic verses and hadiths that emphasized the importance of wisdom, safety, and adaptability in navigating life's challenges. Participants also highlighted dissimulation among Shi'a Muslims, which permits concealing one's faith under duress or in hostile environments. A Shi'i participant explained, "Taqiyya is not hypocrisy; it is a means of protecting ourselves and our community from harm, sanctioned by our faith."¹³

Sufi participants highlighted the more significant spiritual purpose behind dissimulation. For them, it was a path toward inner transformation and closeness to God. Ahmadi participants grappled with the tension between their loyalty to the community and the need for dissimulation. Some justified it as a pragmatic necessity, while others struggled with feelings of weak faith.

Moreover, participants emphasized the broader ethical imperative of preserving life and safeguarding community cohesion, which may necessitate temporary compromises in outward expressions of religious identity. They rejected the notion that dissimulation equates to hypocrisy or insincerity, arguing instead that it reflects a

¹³ Interview 2 dated 4th January, 2024

deep-seated commitment to social inclusion, resilience, and collective well-being within minority Muslim communities.

The practice of dissimulation finds its roots in Islamic teachings related to **hypocrisy** and **sincerity**. While dissimulation may appear contradictory to sincerity, almost all the practitioners of dissimulation interviewed argued that it is a pragmatic response to protect life and maintain peace. The delicate balance between these principles remains a subject of ongoing discourse within these groups. As we explore these diverse perspectives, we recognize that dissimulation is not merely a matter of hypocrisy but reflects the intricate interplay of faith, context, and individual circumstances within the Islamic religion.

4.7. Answering the Research Question and Sub-Question

- **The research question and sub-question are as follows:**
- Research Question: Why do Shi'i, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims resort to dissimulation in different situations and environments?
- Sub-Question: How do they justify this practice in relation to the Islamic teachings on hypocrisy and sincerity?
- **The answer to the research question based on the primary and secondary data gathered is as follows:**

Shi'i, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims sometimes practice dissimulation in different situations and environments for various and complex reasons. They use dissimulation to safeguard and preserve their faith and community from threats posed by hostile groups or actors like the majority who do not practice dissimulation, non-Muslims, the state, or society. Additionally, they practice dissimulation to adapt to the expectations of different groups they engage with, such as majority Sunni Muslims, non-Muslims, the state, or society. Dissimulation is also used to uphold their rights and interests in the political and legal contexts while opposing oppression and injustice from entities like the state or orthodox authorities. Furthermore, dissimulation serves as a means to defend and legitimize their values and principles in ethical and moral spheres by

justifying and rationalizing their innovations from the traditional Islamic teachings, like the Quran or, Sunnah or the Ijma (Consensus of scholars).

- **The answer to the sub-question is as follows:**

Shi'i, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims have varying reasons for justifying their practice of dissimulation in line with Islamic teachings on hypocrisy and sincerity. They support their practice of dissimulation by drawing upon historical and doctrinal interpretations and authority, as well as their social and cultural identities, their political and legal rights and interests, and their moral values and principles. Their argument centers around viewing dissimulation not as hypocrisy or deception but instead as a display of loyalty to Islam, its principles, and its leaders like the Imams, Mahdi, Messiah, and Prophet.

Additionally, they maintain that dissimulation is not contrary to Islamic teachings but rather a contextual reinterpretation or application driven by necessity, duty, safety, adaptation, rights, morality, and identity preservation. They also admit that the act of dissimulation has encountered and still encounters disapproval and opposition from those who disagree with their practice of dissimulation. These opponents criticize them for being untruthful, deceptive, and disloyal, questioning the moral aspects of their practice. The critics argue that dissimulation goes against Islamic teachings on sincerity and truthfulness and poses a risk to the Islamic faith and unity of the Muslim community (umma) by deviating from principles of honesty and integrity.

To summarize this chapter, data analysis from interviews with Shi'i, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslim participants reveals that dissimulation is a multifaceted tool for social inclusion, safety precaution, and identity preservation in various contexts. These research findings show that dissimulation practice is not monolithic but differs among the three groups. Whether motivated by beliefs, practicality, safety, social inclusion, or self-preservation, it highlights the nature of affiliation and the nuanced relationship between honesty and calculated secrecy. Despite potential tensions with Islamic teachings on sincerity, participants justify this practice through religious principles and the prioritization of self-preservation in challenging circumstances. The findings underscore the complex interplay between religious doctrine and practical

considerations in shaping individuals' behaviors and attitudes towards dissimulation within minority Muslim communities. Dissimulation practice is not about insincerity; instead, it demonstrates the complex dynamic between faith, surroundings, and personal situations within the diverse fabric of Islamic customs.



CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

In this concluding chapter, the researcher interprets the study's findings about existing works on dissimulation practices among Shi'i, Ahmadi, and Sufi followers. Additionally, this section provides perspectives on the implications and suggestions drawn from the research while also discussing the theoretical contributions and limitations of the study.

5.1. Interpretation of Findings

The findings of this research reveal a nuanced understanding of dissimulation among Shi'i, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims. Contrary to the perception of dissimulation as hypocritical or insincere, I argue that dissimulation is a legitimate tool for social inclusion, safety precaution, and identity preservation in the face of changing and challenging circumstances. Across these three groups, dissimulation serves as a means of protecting themselves and preserving their identity and integrity while engaging with diverse and pluralistic societies.

Ahmadi Muslims often practice dissimulation in nations where they are deemed non-Muslims by the government or the broader Muslim community, like in countries such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Indonesia. They believe that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835–1908) was the awaited messiah and a secondary prophet of Islam, which goes against the belief in the finality of prophethood with the Holy Prophet Muhammad. Consequently, they encounter prejudice, violence, and legal limitations in Muslim-majority regions, where they are accused of apostasy and sacrilege. To evade persecution and intimidation, Ahmadi Muslims might choose to keep their association with the Ahmadiyya movement hidden or deny it altogether.

Also, for the Ahmadi participants interviewed, the practice of dissimulation is seen as a balance between expressing one's faith and the need to protect oneself. While some consider it a compromise on sincerity or a display of weak faith, others consider it a measure to ensure safety in challenging circumstances. This tension highlights a nuanced perspective on devotion, where maintaining one's identity is weighed against the world's demands.

For Shia Muslims, dissimulation, known as *taqiyya*, is rooted in historical precedent and context and the necessity to prevent discord or strife. Dissimulation serves not as a form of concealment but as a defense mechanism against persecution, oppression, and discrimination. Through it, Shia Muslims navigate the complexities of their beliefs while upholding unity within their community.

In contrast, Sufi Muslims use dissimulation to promote harmony and avoid conflict or confrontation. Sufi followers often resort to concealing their mystical beliefs to avoid being called heretics or disbelievers by Salafists or Wahabbis, who mainly focus on the exoteric meanings of Islamic texts. The Sufi approach to Islam focuses on esotericism, spirituality, and mysticism, highlighting the importance of experiences with God and the inner aspects of faith, love, and devotion. To avoid criticism or accusations of deviating from orthodox beliefs, Sufi practitioners may keep their Sufi affiliations hidden or communicate using language conveying their principles in a certain way. Their selective concealment of doctrines demonstrates a pragmatic approach to engaging diverse audiences.

All in all, the results of this study question the classification of dissimulation as hypocritical or sincere. Instead, they shed light on the tactics utilized by these groups to manage the intricacies of their religious beliefs amid evolving and demanding circumstances.

It is noteworthy to state that the tension of practicing dissimulation among the participants interviewed, especially the Ahmadi Muslims, is indeed real and palpable. This delicate balance between maintaining one's identity and adapting to the world's demands is a profound aspect of devotion. For some, it may feel like a compromise

on their sincerity or a sign of weak faith. They might worry that adapting to external pressures dilutes their true beliefs and values.

5.2. Implications of the Study

This research carries implications for understanding the dynamics of dissimulation practice within the three Muslim communities and its broader impact on religious identity, harmony, and peaceful coexistence. Below are several key insights that emerged after exploring the practice of dissimulation among Shi'i, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims:

- I. Enhanced Understanding of Religious Identity:** This study enhances our understanding of how dissimulation serves as a diplomatic tool for navigating identity within various social and political environments. By acknowledging the multifaceted aspects of this practice, decision-makers, academics, and spiritual figures can craft intricate strategies to deal with the complex processes of forming and displaying religious identities.
- II. Promotion of Religious Tolerance:** Recognizing the practice of dissimulation as a tool for social integration or inclusion questions stereotypes and misunderstandings about Muslim groups that engage in it. Embracing the legitimacy of dissimulation in Islamic traditions can enhance initiatives to encourage tolerance and interfaith dialogue among Muslims. This insight nurtures increased compassion and respect for various customs and faiths in Muslim societies.
- III. Empowerment of Marginalized Groups:** The findings of this research work highlight the agency and resilience of minority Muslim groups who employ dissimulation as a means of social inclusion and self-preservation. This research work contributes to the empowerment of these communities and underscores the importance of recognizing their religious autonomy and rights by amplifying their voices and experiences,

IV. Ethical Considerations in Research and Practice: The ethical implications of dissimulation raise important questions for researchers, scholars, and professionals involved in the study of social sciences. Researchers have the opportunity to adopt more reflexive and culturally sensitive approaches to studying dissimulation practices and recognize the complexities of dissimulation and its implications to help them delve deeper into their studies.

5.2.1. Practical Implications

The practical implications of this study go beyond academic discussions, providing insights for shaping policies, fostering interfaith dialogue, and enhancing community engagement. Acknowledging the importance of dissimulation as a means of social inclusion and preserving identity within Muslim communities can empower policymakers, religious figures, and civil society activists to support religious freedom, tolerance, and social harmony proactively.

- **Policy Adjustment or Reform:** The research outcomes underscore the necessity for policymakers to create measures that uphold the rights of religious minorities and protect freedom of belief and expression. Understanding the obstacles that Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi communities encounter in unwelcoming environments can guide the formulation of laws and regulations that embrace inclusivity, diversity, and mutual respect for religious autonomy.
- **Interfaith Dialogue:** Interfaith discussions between people of faiths can significantly benefit from understanding dissimulation as a multifaceted concept influenced by faith, culture, and socio-political factors. Those engaging in interfaith dialogues can promote greater empathy, understanding, and mutual respect across religious boundaries or divides by recognizing the adaptive approaches used by Muslim communities to navigate their religious beliefs and identities.

- **Community Engagement:** Leaders within communities and religious figures play an important role in encouraging acceptance of Muslim sects, understanding, and collaboration within the diverse Muslim populations. By acknowledging the array of viewpoints on dissimulation and facilitating respectful dialogue, they can establish environments where individuals feel empowered to share their beliefs without fear of mistreatment or bias.
- **Educational Programs and Initiatives:** Efforts to enhance education and knowledge about religions and promote tolerance can be enriched by including discussions on dissimulation in their curricula. By nurturing critical thinking abilities and encouraging dialogue on religious matters, educators can empower individuals to navigate religious diversity with empathy, regard for others, and understanding.
- **Legal Protections:** Legal frameworks need to be reinforced to ensure that individuals are shielded from discrimination or persecution based on their religious convictions or practices. Recognizing dissimulation as a tool within the context of freedom of religion can strengthen protections to uphold the rights of religious minorities and foster a more inclusive and diverse society.

In short, this research highlights the significance of understanding dissimulation, a practice of concealing one's true beliefs or identity, among Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi communities with a contextual perspective. By acknowledging dissimulation as a multifaceted concept influenced by faith and preserving identity, we can encourage empathy, acceptance, and appreciation for the religious customs and beliefs that enhance our diverse societies.

Furthermore, the practical implications of this study emphasize the importance of addressing the issues encountered by these Muslim communities in navigating their religious identities and expressions. Recognizing the validity of dissimulation and advocating for policies that support freedom and tolerance can help build inclusive and cohesive societies where individuals feel empowered to express their beliefs openly without facing discrimination or prejudice.

5.3. Theoretical Contributions and Limitations of the Study

This research adds to the theoretical understanding of dissimulation practice within Muslim communities by questioning current frameworks and providing fresh perspectives on the intricate relationship between religious convictions and sociocultural and political environments. It emphasizes the significance and resilience of maneuvering through socio-political terrains. Nevertheless, it is crucial to note certain limitations in my research approach and the scope of my sample group.

5.3.1. Contributions

- **Rethinking the Concept of Dissimulation:** This study proposes a perspective on dissimulation, viewing it as a means of social inclusion, ensuring safety, and safeguarding personal identity rather than mere hypocrisy or insincerity. By reframing dissimulation in this light, this research contributes to the theoretical discourse on the identity and practices of some Muslims. This fresh interpretation enhances our understanding of how religious groups navigate their beliefs and principles amidst various challenging circumstances.
- **Consideration of Contextual Influences:** This study stresses the significance of considering the societal, cultural, and historical backgrounds in which dissimulation is practiced. By emphasizing the impact of persecution, isolation, and conflict on shaping dissimulation practices, we deepen our understanding of how religious identities are constructed and sustained or maintained.
- **Validation of Varied Experiences:** By examining dissimulation practices among Shi'i, Ahmadiyya, and Sufi Muslims, we validate the experiences and viewpoints within Muslim communities. Recognizing this diversity challenges portrayals of Islam as a monolithic religion and emphasizes the necessity of inclusive approaches, which consider and respect the diversity of religious identities and that acknowledge the intricate nature of religious identities.

5.3.2. Limitations

- **Sample Size and Scope:** One drawback of this study is the relatively small number of participants and the focus on specific branches of the Muslim faith. While my research sheds light on the experiences of Shi'i, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims, it may not fully capture the dissimulation practices across the broader Muslims around the world.
- **Self-Reporting Bias:** Another potential limitation is that the data relies on self-reported information, which biases and social expectations could influence. Participants might have hesitated to share specific details and portrayed their experiences inaccurately.
- **Geographical Context:** It is important to note that this study is contextualized within timeframes and geographical locations (Ghana, Senegal, Turkey, Singapore, Pakistan, and India), which could limit how broadly applicable my findings are. Dissimulation practices may differ across eras and regions, so future studies should delve into these variations to comprehensively understand the phenomenon.

Despite these constraints, this research provides insights into the dynamics of dissimulation among the three Muslim groups. It sets a foundation for further exploration into how religious identity intersects with safety strategies and socio-political environments. By recognizing these constraints and expanding on these discoveries, upcoming academics can further develop our understanding of dissimulation and its impacts on religious diversity and coexistence.

5.4. Summary of Key Findings

In this research, I explored the practice of dissimulation among Shi'i, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims. My central argument goes against the perception of dissimulation as mere hypocrisy or deception. I propose that dissimulation is a multifaceted tool that facilitates social inclusion, ensures safety, and preserves religious identity. Through a blend of primary data (interviews) and secondary sources, several vital findings

emerge, shedding light on the motivations, implications, and challenges associated with dissimulation:

- **Diverse Motivations or Reasons:** Among Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims studied, dissimulation is apparent through a range of motivations rooted in convictions, social integration, safety concerns, and identity preservation. Through dissimulation, Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims can actively engage in the broader Muslim community while staying true to their faith. It is a barrier against exclusion and discrimination in unfriendly or hostile surroundings. For Ahmadi Muslims, there exists a struggle between expressing their beliefs and ensuring safety. Shia Muslims justify dissimulation by citing historical precedents as well as the need to prevent discord. Sufi Muslims strategically choose to conceal beliefs to maintain harmony and avoid conflicts, demonstrating a nuanced approach towards interfaith dialogue and coexistence.
- **Complex Implications:** Dissimulation presents complex implications for identity and integrity. While it acts as a method of ensuring safety and survival, it also raises questions about authenticity and genuineness. Ahmadi Muslims encounter the challenge of balancing faith with practical considerations, whereas Shia Muslims navigate ethical dilemmas related to dissimulation. Sufi Muslims face the dilemma of striking a balance between communication and the risk of being misunderstood or misrepresented, showcasing the complexities involved in engaging with diverse audiences.
- **Adaptive Strategies:** The conclusions drawn from this study highlight the adaptive strategies utilized by Muslim communities to navigate through evolving and challenging environments. The practice of dissimulation is not seen as a sign of weakness or compromise, particularly among Shia and Sufi Muslims. However, some Ahmadi Muslim participants worry that adapting to external pressures dilutes their true beliefs and values, viewing it as a sign of weakness. Participants have shown a deep attachment or connection to their religious beliefs and identities. Dissimulation serves as a way to maintain this connection while navigating or adapting to different social settings. By

adopting dissimulation, Muslims can navigate their religious identities in diverse societies while staying true to themselves.

- **Contextual Nuances:** The research emphasizes the significance of considering the factors influencing dissimulation practices among Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi communities. Dissimulation reflects the interplay between faith, culture, and socio-political dynamics, whether influenced by historical precedent, safety concerns, cultural identity preservation, or the pursuit of harmony. Appreciating these nuanced contexts is essential for understanding the complexities of forming and expressing religious identities.
- **Future Research Directions:** This study sets the stage and lays the groundwork for future research into the intersectional aspects of dissimulation, such as how it relates to gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic backgrounds. Conducting studies may shed light on how practices of dissimulation evolve and how they impact the development of religious, social, or tribal identities. Furthermore, a comparative study of the differences in dissimulation practices among different sects, whether Muslims or non-Muslims, could provide valuable and further insights into the diversity and variability of dissimulation practices.

5.5. Conclusion and Final Thoughts

My exploration of the practice of dissimulation among Shi'i, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims has revealed a diverse and nuanced landscape that challenges perceptions and stereotypes. It questions the notion that the practice of dissimulation is merely a display of hypocrisy or insincerity and contradicts or violates the Islamic teachings on honesty and truthfulness.

I have proposed or, better still, argued that dissimulation within Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims represents not a departure from the Islamic principles and teachings but rather a reinterpretation and adaptation to varying circumstances and times. Dissimulation should not be seen as a compromise but as a strategic behavior.

I would be remiss if I do not mention the tension of practicing dissimulation, especially among the Ahmadi Muslims. For some, it may feel like a compromise on their sincerity or a sign of weak faith. Some participants worried that adapting to external pressures repeatedly might dilute their true beliefs and values.

This research serves as a clarion call for academics, practitioners, and policymakers to embrace a nuanced and holistic approach to tackling the issues encountered by these Muslim groups.

As the dust settles on my research into dissimulation practice among these three groups, we stand at the crossroads of faith, guardians of safety and custodians of identity. Let us weave together the intricate strands of experiences of Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims. Let us acknowledge the nuanced nature of dissimulation and its impact on individual lives. By valuing differences, showing respect, and fostering understanding of others, we can build bridges of cooperation that go beyond differences and promote inclusivity in our world. Dissimulation becomes our compass that helps us make strategic choices that help us survive and preserve our identities without hiding who we are.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Interview Request

Dear.....

I am a Master's degree student at Ibn Haldun University's Department of Political Science and International Relations. I am researching about dissimulation practices among Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims in various situations and environments.

The main goal of my research is to examine and evaluate the dilemmas and debates that arise from concealing one's identity for Shia, Ahmadi, and Sufi Muslims in relation to Islamic teachings on hypocrisy and sincerity. The main argument of this study is that dissimulation should not be seen as hypocrisy or insincerity but rather as a tool for social inclusion, safety precaution, and identity preservation.

I will ask you a series of questions on your knowledge, views, and experiences about dissimulation practice during the interview. It will take between 40 and 60 minutes to complete. The interview will be taped or notes will be taken with your consent. Your replies will also remain private and confidential. After the study, all information gathered for the purpose of this academic exercise will be discarded. Upon request, a summary or portions of the study will be made accessible to you.

Please read the accompanying statement and choose Yes or No if you accept or refuse to participate in this research.

I give consent to the researcher to record this interview. Yes, No

I give permission to the researcher to use my replies in the study. Yes,
No

Signature of Participant

Date

Some of the semi- structured and unstructured Interview Questions

- What is your understanding of dissimulation and what motivates individuals to engage in this practice within your religious beliefs?
- Could you share the advantages and obstacles associated with dissimulation, for you and your community?
- How do you navigate the emotional challenges that may surface due to engaging in dissimulation?
- In what ways do you strike a balance between your allegiance to your faith and your respect for differing beliefs and values?
- How do you communicate with Muslims who may not follow the practice of dissimulation or are affiliated with sects or schools of thought?
- How do you Interpret and apply Islamic teachings on insincerity and hypocrisy concerning dissimulation?
- Is there a situation or environment where practicing dissimulation in your sects is not allowed? if yes, which situation(s)?

CURRICULUM VITAE

Name and Surname:

Shafiu Alidu

Education:

2011 – 2015 BA in Religious Studies, IUG/University of Ghana, Ghana

2020 – 2022 MA in African Studies and International Relations, Istanbul
Ticaret University, Turkey

2022– 2024 MA in Political Science and International Relations, Ibn Haldun
University, Turkey

Work Experience:

2022 – 2024 Teaching Fellow, Ibn Haldun University, Turkey

Publications :

Alidu, S. (2024). Exploring the Mechanisms Linking Self-Recognition, Cultural Identity, and External Respect: A Theoretical Inquiry. *İbn Haldun Çalışmaları Dergisi*, 9(1), 101-109.

Alidu, S. (2022). The Concept of İnsan Kamil (Perfect Man) in Sufi Mysticism: A Comparative Study with the Last Man and Democratic Man in Nietzsche and Rawls' Political Thought.

ALIDU, S. (2022). China in Ghana: a Benefactor or an Exploiter?.