



# **Study Of The Labor Force Participation And Education Level Of Muslim Women In The Netherlands**

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## Executive summary

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Muslim women in the Netherlands have obtained several work and education related rights by both the Islam and European law. However, it is notable that the majority of Muslim women in the Netherlands are currently unemployed and have an education degree lower than intermediate vocational education level. Therefore, the aim of this dissertation was to examine whether the low labor force participation and education level of first and second generation Muslim women are due to a lack of awareness of the rights and obligations they hold. Besides the social relevance, this research is also scientifically relevant and innovative, as it has been performed from the perspective of Muslim women. The purpose of this dissertation was to support Muslim women in the Netherlands in becoming more aware of their rights and duties, and to find solutions to improve their low education level and labor force participation rate.

The desk research was based on cultural anthropological theories and European legislation literature. Moreover, verses from the Qur'an were used, and relevant articles were collected via the "SCP" and "CBS". Nevertheless, the preliminary focus of this dissertation depended on field research in the form of a questionnaire, conducted among 213 Muslim women, in combination with six in-depth interviews by means of a focus group of Muslim women.

Evident from the field research is that both generations of Muslim women are aware of the Islamic and legal rights and duties concerning labor and education. Nevertheless, they allow relatives to exert influence on their choices, as result of their collectivistic, high power distance, masculine culture, causing them to act according to traditional gender role division. In addition, desk research has shown that Muslim women experience difficulties while combining their work and religion. Nevertheless, second generation Muslim women are significantly more active on the fields of labor force participation and education compared to the first generation.

In order to increase the labor force participation, the Dutch government has developed a number of courses. However, the results of the conducted study show that Muslim women do not benefit from these courses. Therefore, the suggested recommendations to the government are to focus on facilitating the labor force participation, by promoting the dialogue between Muslim women and Dutch employers. Moreover, to distribute information leaflets to young Muslim women's parents to create awareness of the importance of education. Furthermore, to assign successful role models who can motivate young Muslim women to develop themselves. Finally, the stimulation of the performance of voluntary work and participation in Dutch society. The recommendations addressed to Muslim women are to read female interpretations of Qur'an in order to raise awareness of their rights and to visit employment agencies targeting high educated immigrants.

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## Preface

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This bachelor thesis is my completion of the European Studies program at the Hague University. The choice of this subject was easily made, because I am a Muslim women myself and it has always surprised me how many first and second generation Muslim women in my environment are unemployed and have a low education level. I am curious about the cause of the low labor force participation and education level of this particular group, and I would like to find out if there are different causes within this group which are associated to the first or second generation of Muslim women.

I would like to thank everyone who supported, motivated and helped me during this research, but there are some people that I want to thank particularly. Firstly, I would like to thank the respondents who completed the questionnaire, and especially the interviewees for their openness, without these women this research would not have succeeded. I would also like to thank my supervisor Mr. van der Sluijs, for helping me throughout the process.

Sarah Salhi

May, 2013

## 1. Introduction

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The European Union legislation which is applied in the Netherlands, and Islam grant women work and education related rights and duties (“Women’s rights in Islam,” n.d.) (Van Ooik & Vandamme, 2010, p. 159). It is clear that the first and second generation Muslim women are unemployed, low educated, and confuse cultural practices with Islam. Therefore, as a Muslim women and future European professional myself, it is important to gain more knowledge about the position of Muslim women in the Netherlands, in order to discover the level of awareness of legal and Islamic rights and obligations concerning labor and education.

This dissertation is aimed at exploring the difficulties two generations of Muslim women are coping with in daily life while combining their religion and cultural traditions with the statutory rules applied in the Netherlands, on the fields of labor force participation and education. The final goal of this research is to support Muslim women in the Netherlands in becoming more aware of the rights and duties granted by Islam and European law. Furthermore, to find solutions to help them combine those rights and duties in order to increase their education level and labor force participation.

Besides the social relevance, this research is also scientifically relevant. Many studies have been conducted in relation to the status of women in Islam. What makes this research exceptional and innovative, is the fact that the research will be done from the perspective of Muslim women themselves. Their position within Islam, but also their capability to combine the rights and obligations of Islam with those of the Dutch culture and European legislation will be examined. The comparison of the views of different generations of Muslim women in the Netherlands allows this dissertation to contribute to current social knowledge.

### 1.1 Problem statement

As a result of the problem description above, the following central question has been formulated:

***Is the low labor force participation rate and education level of the first and second generation Muslim women due to a lack of awareness of their legal and Islamic rights and obligations?***

## 1.2 Research questions

In order to answer the central question, the following sub-questions have been produced:

- *What are the main cultural differences Muslim women have to cope with in the Netherlands?*
- *Does the second generation of Muslim women perform better in the fields of labor force participation and education than the first generation Muslim women?*
- *Which labor and education related rights and duties are given to women by Islam?*
- *Which labor and education related rights and duties are given to women by European Union law which is applied in the Netherlands?*
- *What are the measures the Dutch government takes in order to facilitate the participation of Muslim women in the Dutch society?*
- *From which sources do Muslim women in the Netherlands acquire their knowledge of the rights and duties given to them by their faith?*
- *What do Muslim women think of their rights and duties concerning labor force participation and education?*
- *What are recommendations for the Dutch government to increase the labor force participation and education level of Muslim women in the Netherlands?*

## 1.3 Structure of the report

To reach the main goal, this dissertation will be divided in five major parts:

Chapter three of this dissertation describes the differences between the Islamic and Western culture. Chapter four contains literature research concerning the education level and labor force participation rate of different generations of Muslim women in the Netherlands. Subsequently, the rights and duties of Muslim women, given to them by their faith will be described in chapter five. The sixth chapter revolves around the rights and duties given by European law. In addition, the objectives concerning the topic of this dissertation of the former and current Dutch government will be outlined. In the seventh and final chapter the findings from the questionnaire and interviews will be presented. Finally, in the conclusion and recommendations part of this dissertation a connection will be made between the results of the field and desk research in order to answer the central question. In addition, suitable solutions will be offered to the Dutch government, to further enhance the education level and labor force participation rate of Muslim women in the Netherlands.

## 2. Methodology

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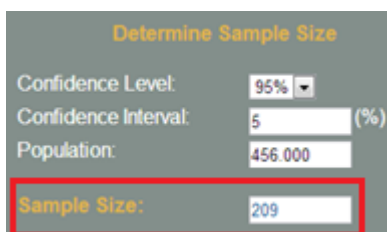
### 2.1 Overview

The term “*Muslim women*” which is frequently used in this report refers to all women who consider themselves Muslim, thus the term is not associated with physical characteristics nor countries of origin, but solely based on the personal definition of the women themselves. In addition, the terms “first and second generation” are also repeatedly mentioned in this dissertation. According to the Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, “CBS”, “*a first generation immigrant is a person who was born abroad.*” “*A person who was born in the Netherlands and of whom at least one parent was born abroad belongs to the second generation immigrants*” (CBS; as cited in “Allochtoon,” n.d.). The focus in this research will lie on the first and second generation Muslim women in the Netherlands, because the third generation is a relatively small group of young age and not yet active on the labor market.

Page 40 of this dissertation contains a list of notations and abbreviations that are displayed in italics.

In order to answer the central question, desk research was of major importance. In the framework of the European Studies program, the desk research was based on cultural anthropological theories and on European Union legislation literature. The literature used for the desk research comprised both online and printed sources, including verses from the Qur’an and statistics retrieved from the “SCP” and “CBS” websites. In addition, European Studies modules have been of great use in both the desk and field research. The European Studies modules used for the most part of this dissertation were: research skills, interviewing, excel and cultural and legal dimension of Europe. Nevertheless, the preliminary focus of this dissertation lies on field research in the form of a questionnaire and six interviews with a focus group of both first and second generation Muslim women.

Currently, there are 456,000 Muslim women living in the Netherlands (“Moslims in Nederland,” n.d.). In order to obtain the view of different generations of Muslim women in the Netherlands in line with this topic a questionnaire has been used. Therefore a sample size for the respondents has been calculated by use of an online sample size calculator (“Sample size calculator,” n.d.).



The image shows a screenshot of a web-based sample size calculator. The title is "Determine Sample Size". It has four input fields: "Confidence Level" set to "95%", "Confidence Interval" set to "5 (%)", "Population" set to "456.000", and "Sample Size" set to "209". The "Sample Size" field is highlighted with a red rectangular border.

Determine Sample Size	
Confidence Level:	95%
Confidence Interval:	5 (%)
Population:	456.000
Sample Size:	209



As shown in the calculation above, for a confidence level of 95%, a group of at least 209 Muslim women should complete the questionnaire (“Sample size calculator,” n.d.). Specifically, a total of 213 respondents from five major cities in the Netherlands were randomly selected for the sample. Along with this primary data, secondary sources in the form of literature were used to support the survey results.

## 2.2 Participants

To be certain that both Muslim women from the first and second generation have equal opportunity to fill in the questionnaire, the questionnaire has been distributed at various locations. Firstly, a digital version of the questionnaire was created on thesistools.nl and uploaded on marokko.nl, hababam.nl, and ansaar.nl, which are popular online forums among young Muslim women. Secondly, a total of 80 hard copies of the questionnaire have been distributed at mosques in the Hague, Leiden, Hoofddorp, Haarlem, Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Maastricht, in order to reach the first generation Muslim women. Finally, 30 hard copies of the questionnaires have been distributed at Islamic shops and local butchers in the above mentioned cities.

As regards the focus group, the recruitment of participants was not very difficult. In total, ten Muslim women were approached, and six of them were willing to cooperate in the research. The remaining four women were not willing to be part of the research, because of privacy reasons. Three of the six interviewees belong to the first generation of Muslim women in the Netherlands, and the others belong to the second generation.

## 2.3 Instruments

The questionnaire, which can be found in appendix 3, was used as the main data gathering instrument for this study. First of all, the respondents were given a brief introduction about the subject of this research at the beginning of the questionnaire, in order to ensure that they would answer the questions in the desired perspective. The questionnaire consists out of 30 questions, divided into five main sections: personal information, education level and labor force participation, Islam, legal rights and vision. The personal information contains socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The rest of the questionnaire sections explored the perception of Muslim women on their Islamic and legal rights and the differences between the Dutch culture and their own culture.

The interviews lasted about thirty minutes per respondent, and took place in their homes. Most of the interviews were performed in Dutch. However, the interview with Fatima Oulmidi was conducted in Arabic, and the interview with Hatice was conducted in Turkish, because this was easier for the interviewees. During the Turkish interview, a friend of mine served as a translator.

## 2.4 Data processing and analysis

After gathering the completed questionnaires, the total data was processed through excel for interpretation as studied in the research skills course. In total, the questionnaire was filled in 147 times online, and the printed version was completed 130 times. Of all online completed questionnaires, 39 were inadequate for this research, because of excessive missing data. Of the printed versions, 24 completed questionnaires were inadequate. The 213 remaining questionnaires were analyzed and compared through excel by the use of pivot tables.

As regards the analysis of the interviews, firstly the interviews were recorded and subsequently written out. Four of the interviewees agreed to be filmed on camera. What should be taken into account in the analysis of the interview results, is that there was a certain group of women who wanted to cooperate in the research and a certain group of women that would or could not. Thus, there is a part of the Muslim women population lacking in this study, therefore, a certain bias in my research should be taken into account.

## 2.5 Ethical considerations

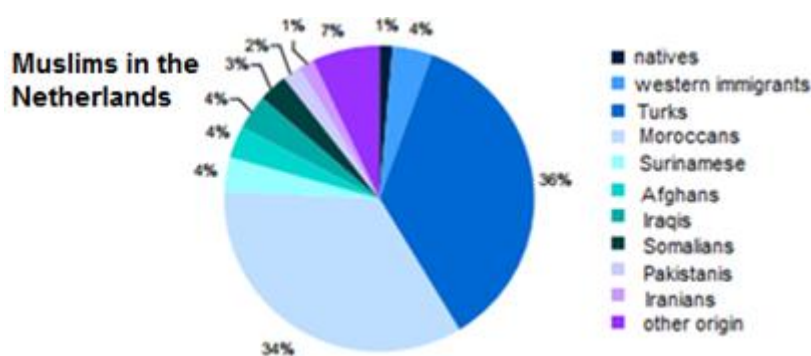
As this study required the involvement of human respondents, certain ethical issues were taken into account. In order to secure the approval of the selected participants, I relayed the aim and purpose of the research. As a result, the respondents were able to understand the importance of their role in the completion of the research. For the purpose of ensuring the privacy of the participants, only relevant details that helped in answering the research questions were included in the report. Moreover, none of the respondents has been forced to cooperate in the research. Four out of the six interviewees agreed on being taped and using their real name. The interviews with the focus group were semi-structured, which gave the women the chance to share their story without feeling pressured to give socially-desirable answers (Hoyle, Harris & Judd, 2002, pp. 144-145).

### 3. Cultural contrasts

The first generation Muslim women experienced a culture shock when they first arrived in the Netherlands, and had to get accustomed to a completely different culture. Subsequent generations have found their selves torn between two conflicting cultures. Therefore, the cultural differences between the Dutch culture and the cultures of Muslim women living in the Netherlands are an important element of this thesis, and should not be ignored in this research (Nunez, Mahdi & Popma, 2007, p. 79).

#### 3.1 Muslim women in the Netherlands

In 2011, there were over 950,000 Muslims living in the Netherlands, which is about 5.5% of the total Dutch population. Of all Muslims in the Netherlands 48% is female, thus, there is currently a group of 456.000 Muslim women living in the Netherlands. As shown in figure 1 below, which is published by the institute for multicultural issues “FORUM”, the majority of Muslim women in the Netherlands has a Turkish or Moroccan background (Harchaoui, 2010, p. 13).



(Harchaoui, 2010, p. 16)

**Figure 1:** Number of Muslims in the Netherlands

According to the “*Emancipatie monitor*” published yearly by the Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau “SCP”, Muslim women are less active on the labor Market than native Dutch women (Merens, Hartgers & Brakel, 2012, p. 56). However, Sociologist Gowricharn states that the difference between the labor force participation of Muslim women and Dutch women is culture related. An example is the making of eye contact and its meaning in different societies. Eye contact in the Netherlands stands for openness and honesty and therefore, is seen as essential during selection interviews with job candidates. However, in the Islamic culture, it is a sign of respect to a party not to directly look in his or her eyes. Furthermore, as the Dutch culture is known as emancipated and modern, the head scarves which are worn by many Muslim women in the Netherlands are seen as a form of oppression. In the following paragraph, further differences between the Dutch and Islamic

culture will be explained (“De culturele kant van achterstand: zmv-vrouwen op de Nederlandse arbeidsmarkt,” n.d.).

### 3.2 Dutch versus Muslim culture

According to Geert Hofstede, an influential Dutch researcher in the fields of organizational culture, the definition of culture is: “*The collective mental programming of the human mind*” (Hofstede, 2007; as cited in Nunez, Mahdi & Popma, 2007, p. 4). Thus, basically human beings are influenced through upbringing, socialization, norms and values. As the members of a particular culture share similar values, beliefs and behaviors, they are identifiable as a distinct group (Nunez, Mahdi & Popma, 2007, p. 4). The Dutch culture is part of the “Western” culture while the culture of Islam is set forth in the Qur’an and Hadith. These cultures vary significantly and even conflict at certain points (“Culture versus Islam,” n.d.). In this paragraph, the Dutch culture and the cultures of the countries of origin of Muslim women in the Netherlands will be compared and contrasted, by using three of Hofstede’s five universal dimensions of cultural variability. The remaining two cultural variability’s, long term orientation and uncertainty avoidance, will not be treated in this chapter as reason of a lack of scores and their irrelevance in this research (Neulip, 2009, p. 38). As result of the different nationalities of Muslims in the Netherlands, in the course of time, Islam is mixed with other cultural factors such as language and ethnicity. In order to understand the behavior of people in Muslim culture, each in figure 1 mentioned Muslim country will be researched separately and the average score of these Muslim countries will eventually be compared to the Dutch culture. These outcomes are systematically displayed in appendix 1.

#### 3.2.1 Individualism versus collectivism

As shown in appendix 1, with a score of 80, the Netherlands belongs to the individualistic cultures, while the average score of the Muslim countries is 32.5 which makes them part of the collectivistic cultures (Nunez, Mahdi & Popma, 2007, p. 57). According to Harry Triandis, who is known for his work on individualism and collectivism, cultural differences Muslim women have to cope with in the Netherlands are related to the fact that their culture stresses the importance of the group over the individual, while the Dutch culture stresses values that benefit the individual person. In Muslim women’s culture, family rank is determined by gender and age, therefore the father or husband dominates the home. Outside their homes, Muslim women are also accustomed to a certain hierarchy. Therefore, it is difficult for Muslim women in the Netherlands to express their selves freely at school or at work, as they are worried of being rude while meantime in Dutch culture independence and assertiveness are encouraged (Neulip, 2009, pp. 40-47).

### 3.2.2 Power distance

In Hofstede's view, power distance is *"the degree in which the less powerful members of a group accept that power is distributed unequally"* (Hofstede, 2007; as cited in Nunez, Mahdi & Popma, 2007, p. 46). As mentioned before, Muslim women are used to a strict hierarchy and accept that their superiors have more power. As shown in appendix 1, Muslim women in the Netherlands are high in power distance with an average score of 67. On the other hand, with a score of 38, the Dutch culture is low in power distance. Dutch children are treated as equals by their parents and taking initiative is much valued. For Muslim women in the Netherlands it is a constant struggle to find the right balance, they adapt to high power distance at home and low power distance at school and at work (Nunez, Mahdi & Popma, 2007, p. 46).

### 3.2.3 Masculinity versus femininity

As shown in appendix 1, for this cultural variable, the Netherlands has a score of 14, which makes it one of the most feminine cultures in the world. The average score of the Muslim countries is 46, indicating masculinity (Nunez, Mahdi & Popma, 2007, p. 51). According to Hofstede, in masculine societies men and women carry out different roles. In Muslim cultures, women are seen as mothers, wives and daughters who are in need of protection from their fathers, husbands and brothers. Women are expected to be modest, tender and family oriented, while men are expected to be assertive, tough and aim at material success. In Muslim culture the private space within the home is considered female space, and public space, on the other hand, is male space. (Neulip, 2009, p. 202). However, in feminine societies like the Netherlands, the gender roles often overlap which makes it difficult for Muslim women in the Netherlands to fulfill their cultural roles (Nunez, Mahdi & Popma, 2007, p. 51).

## 3.3 Conclusion

It is evident that Muslim women in the Netherlands are torn between two diverse cultures, as there are no universal values when it comes to emancipation. As a result, the Dutch values for freedom of expression, the making of eye contact and overlapping gender roles are not supported by Islamic culture. While simultaneously, Islamic values concerning the headscarf, family rank and gender roles are not compatible with Dutch culture (Nunez, Mahdi & Popma, 2007). This chapter has illustrated two completely different, and often conflicting cultures in which Muslim women do not feel completely understood. Muslim women are no longer sufficient traditionally set to act according to the cultural traditions of their country of origin, and simultaneously they are not sufficiently integrated to act according to the cultural traditions of the country in which they are living (Neulip, 2011).

#### 4. Literature study: participation of Muslim women in Dutch society

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Due to a lack of recent data, frequently only the figures of Turkish and Moroccan Muslim women are used in this chapter. According to Dr. Aslan Zorlu, researcher of migration issues at the University of Amsterdam: *“there are no concrete figures on Muslim women, because figures are not registered by faith.”* *“However, you can assume that a large part of the Turkish and Moroccan women is of Muslim origin”* (Zorlu, 2012; as cited in Van Lijssel, 2012).

##### 4.1 First and second generation Muslim women

As a result of the “guest work” their husbands performed for many years in Dutch factories, the first generation of Muslim women came to the Netherlands in the sixties and seventies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century for family reunification purposes. In the nineties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a shift in the nature of the immigration purposes took place, which moved from economic to social and from temporary to permanent (Hooghiemstra & Merens, 1999, p. 13).

Nowadays, the Dutch society demands for independence, participation and the development of competencies more than in the past. Muslim women belonging to the first generation migrants have primarily been busy with surviving in the new society (“Keuzevrijheid is een essentiële levenskwesitie,” n.d.). However, a part of the first generation Muslim women decided to work, the majority of them continued living to the cultural standards of their countries of origin, and according to traditional gender role division, spent their time looking after their children while their husbands worked outdoors (“Migrantengezin, tijdsbesteding,” n.d.). While on the other hand, the second generation Muslim women are more concerned with Dutch cultural values like development of talents and living independently (“Keuzevrijheid is een essentiële levenskwesitie,” n.d.).

##### 4.2 Equality of men and women

Several studies have shown that views about the roles of men and women are a key factor for the division of tasks between partners (Hooghiemstra & Merens, 2000). According to the “SCP” the majority of Muslim women in the Netherlands is in a disadvantaged position in terms of economical independency. This does not correspond with the position Muslim men are in. However, second generation, higher educated Muslim women are significantly less in favor of traditional separate roles of men and women (Keuzenkamp & Merens, 2006, p. 78).

In line with the previous statements are the factual figures, proving that the employment and education rate of male Muslims is indeed higher than that of female Muslims in the Netherlands.

Currently, the percentage of Moroccan women with an intermediate vocational education degree, which is comparable to “*MBO*” degree, or higher is 24%, while the percentage of Moroccan men with a similar degree is 32%. Another example is related to work, 33% of Turkish women is employed, compared to 60% of Turkish men. However, 43% of Turkish women think that men and women should work equally outdoors, considering the figures mentioned earlier this is currently not the case. It is also notable that 24% of women of Moroccan origin believes that the women has to accept it if her husband does not want her to work outdoors. In practice, this statement is uncommon, as figures show that after marriage the labor force participation of Muslim women increases with approximately 3% (“*Moslimvrouwen in Nederland*,” n.d.).

#### 4.3 Education level

An important condition for participation in the labor market and society is the mastery of the Dutch language, approximately 60% of Turks and Moroccans state to have no problems with the Dutch language (Harchaoui, 2010, p. 13). In the seventies and eighties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was often the case that immigrant parents kept their daughters home from school. Nowadays, this gender specific problem does not longer occur (Keuzenkamp & Merens, 2006, p. 45). According to the institute for more and more Muslim women are properly educated and have at least a “*MBO*” degree. The education level of Muslim women has increased substantially in recent years. For instance, of the 18-20 years old Moroccan and Turkish women the share that has a high school degree has tripled between 1995 and 2007, from 14% to 47%. Merely 3% of women of Iranian origin has no education, and 24% of Moroccan women has a “*MBO*” degree or higher (Harchaoui, 2010, p. 12). Muslim women often choose traditional studies, such as healthcare or pedagogy, however many modern Muslim women also choose studies like economics or law (“*Moslimvrouwen in Nederland*,” n.d.).

#### 4.4 Labor force participation

First generation Muslim women perceive finding a job and making money as a personal victory. Besides the confirmation of self-worth as a woman, it gives them a certain sentiment of freedom and independence (Sluyterman & Van Loo, 2011). Nevertheless, the second generation Muslim women are remarkably more often engaged in work outdoors than the first generation Muslim women. Seven out of ten 25 - to 45-year-old second generation Muslim women of Turkish and Moroccan origin have a job, compared to five out of ten first generation Muslim women of same age (Merens, Hartgers & Brakel, 2012, p. 56). However, as mentioned earlier, the employment rate among Turkish and Moroccan women, aged 25 to 50 years old, with a job of 12 hours or more a week remains very low. This low figure is partly due to the differences in employment rates between the first and second generation migrants. In fact, merely 34% out of Turkish and



Moroccan first generation Muslim women has a job compared to 49.5% of Turkish and Moroccan second generation Muslim women (Keizer & Keuzenkamp, 2011, p. 19).

In addition, Moroccan and Turkish women with children are significantly less often active in the labor market. Among Turkish and Moroccan women and other immigrant women with a child under four years the employment rate is even lower than 30% (Souren & de Vries, 2009). However, the willingness to continue working after the birth of a child is greater among Muslim women with a higher education level (Keuzenkamp & Merens, 2006, p. 95).

#### 4.5 Political participation

In order to foster integration into Dutch society, in 1986 non-naturalized immigrants were authorized by the government to vote (Harchaoui, 2010, p. 21). Among Turkish and Moroccan women the political involvement, which is determined by the degree of monitoring and interest for the politics, is 30%. This is a low percentage compared to 55% of the indigenous Dutch women. Research has shown that the education level is an important factor for political participation. Therefore, the low political participation of Muslim women can be explained by the low education level (Keuzenkamp & Merens, 2006, p. 235).

#### 4.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the employment rate of Muslim women in the Netherlands remains very low however, desk research has made clear that second generation Muslim women perform better on the labor market than the first generation. In fact, second generation Muslim women are increasingly higher educated and fulfill 65% of the total employment rate of their ethnic group (Merens, Hartgers & Brakel, 2012 p. 56). In addition, the second generation Muslim women are more concerned with Dutch cultural values such as self-development and independence ("Keuzevrijheid is een essentiële levenskwesitie," n.d.). The fact that highly educated, second generation Muslim women are more willing to continue working after having a child, can be explained by their changing beliefs about the traditional roles of men and women as they have a higher educational degree (Keuzenkamp & Merens, 2006, pp. 95-97).



## 5. The position of Muslim women from Islamic point of view

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### 5.1 The Islam

Islam is a monotheistic religion that arose in the 7<sup>th</sup> century by the revelations received by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) who is regarded as the last prophet. The Arabic word Islam means submission, and stresses the fundamental religious principle that a Muslim surrenders to God's will. ("Islam," n.d.).

Islam has five obligations each Muslim should fulfill in his or her lifetime, they are as follows: "*Shahadah*", confession of faith which expresses the Muslim's complete acceptance of Islam. "*Salah*", prayers which are performed five times a day. Social responsibility is also very important in Islam, therefore "*Zakaat*", almsgiving, which is 2.5% of the net savings is obligatory for each Muslim. For a richer relationship with God, Muslims are obliged to "*Sawm*", which means fasting during the month of Ramadan. The fifth pillar of Islam is Hajj, the pilgrimage to Makkah ("The five pillars of Islam," n.d.).

There are two sources on which Muslims have based their theological jurisprudence. The first is the Qur'an, the holy book of Islam ("What is the Qur'an," n.d.). The second are hundreds of thousands of "*Hadith*", these are statements and examples of behavior of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). The most authentic narrations of the prophet (pbuh) are those mentioned in the books of Imams Bukhari and Muslim ("Hadith authenticity," n.d.). The Qur'an verses used in this chapter can be found in appendix 2 of this report.

### 5.2 The position of women in Islam

Perhaps one of the most controversial topics when it comes to Islam, is that of the position of women. From Islamic perspective the emancipation of women began over 1400 years ago with the revelations to Muhammad (pbuh) ("The status of women in Islam," n.d.).

#### 5.2.1 Equality of men and women

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*"And women shall have rights similar to the rights against them, according to what is equitable; but men have a degree (of responsibility) over them"*  
*(Qur'an, Al-Baqra verse 2:228, n.d.).*

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Multiple verses in the Qur'an confirm that women and men are equal in the eyes of God, for example verses 4:1 and 33:35 which are mentioned in appendix 2 (Qur'an An-Nisa verse 4:124, n.d.). Qur'an verse 2:228 which is displayed above shows that both men and women will be equally rewarded for their right deeds. However, men have a certain responsibility and authority

over women, men and women have similar rights and duties. According to Dr Mohammad Akram Nadwi, a scholar of Islam from the Indian city of Jaunpur and a research fellow at Oxford University, Qur'an verses concerning women's rights, came to Muhammad (pbuh) at a time when women were being treated as slaves and the ancient cultural practice of killing female children from fear of being humiliated in community was unrestrained. Therefore, Islam came to eradicate these ignorant, cultural practices and gave women through Qur'an verse 81:8-9 a status that was previously unthinkable (Shakir, 2007).

As stated in Qur'an verse 49:13, which can be found in appendix 2, the only criterion mentioned in Islam for distinguishing among people is based on their sins and their righteous deeds. Each Qur'an verse mentioned in this paragraph emphasizes equality among human beings. Therefore, it is clear that Islam does not in any case approve unequal treatment of different human races and sexes ("Equality of men and women," n.d.). However, total equality remains impossible due to natural differences in strengths and other qualities people have, which is also mentioned in the Qur'an in verse 51:49, which can be found in appendix 2 of this dissertation.

### 5.2.2 Labor force participation and education

An interesting question which is often asked by Muslim women is: "Can a woman work or not?". This question has been presented to a famous Moroccan scholar from Meknes, Shaykh Dr. Fareed Al-Ansaari. He explains that working is permitted for a woman to ensure that she can meet in her daily necessities. He mentions the example of female companions who traded in the time of the prophet. As we look at the Hadith, it is noticeable that Khadijah, prophet Muhammad's wife, was an eminent businesswomen. According to Shaykh Dr. Fareed Al-Ansaari the answer to above mentioned question is very simple, in Islam the woman has the right to work, the right to own property, the right to inherit, to trade and to manage her gaining's as she wishes, and nobody - not even her husband - can claim her assets or income (Al-Ansaari, 2011). However, there are a few basic Islamic restrictions the work needs to comply with, in order to safeguard the dignity and honor of women. The outside employment should not interfere with a woman's responsibilities as wife and mother, because in Islam taking care of the family is the most important task for a woman. Furthermore, she must maintain her modesty, by wearing correct Islamic dress and avoiding working alone with men. Another rule which applies both to working men and women, is that the work should not require violation of Islamic law, for example working with interest or serving alcohol ("Women's rights in Islam," n.d.).

In Islam, it is the duty of every Muslim man and women to seek knowledge. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) had keen interest in the education of women. And his own wife, Aishah was highly

educated (“Rights of women under Islam,” n.d.). The opinion of women is highly respected in Islam, therefore Muslim women were given the right to vote in the year 600 (“Status of women in Islam,” n.d.).

### 5.2.3 Modestly behavior and the headscarf

According to the Muslim Women’s League, a non-profit American organization committed to implement the values of Islam, Muslims are advised by Islam to maintain their modesty. The most direct reference in Qur’an regarding modesty is found in Qur’an verse 24:31, which is provided in appendix 2. By this verse, women are advised to avoid dressing or behaving, for the purpose of drawing attention. In addition, based on Qur’an verse 24:31, the highest Islamic scholars have agreed by consensus that a headscarf is a requirement for the dress of the Muslim woman. The main purpose of dressing modestly is to protect the woman from harassment (“Social interaction in Islam,” n.d.).

## 5.3 Conclusion

Essentially, from Islamic perspective a woman is an independent individual, who has equal responsibilities and rights as other human beings, and will be fairly punished or rewarded in the hereafter (“Women’s rights in Islam,” n.d.). According to scholars of Islam and also endorsed by Hadith, women have the right to work when their outside employment does not interfere with their main responsibilities as wife and mother (Al-Ansaari, 2011). Furthermore, Islam encourages women to seek knowledge in the form of education (“Rights of women under Islam,” n.d.). In addition, the opinion of women is respected in Islam, this is supported by the right to vote given to women in the year 600 (“Status of women in Islam,” n.d.). According to Qur’an verse 24:31, interpreted by the highest Islamic scholars, a headscarf is a requirement for the dress of the Muslim woman (Qur’an An-Nisa verse 4:124, n.d.).

## 6. The position of Muslim women from government's perspective

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### 6.1 Legislation

The European treaties grant fundamental rights to all citizens of the European Union member states. Article II-14 of the Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union gives everyone the right to education. Furthermore, the article also gives parents the right to ensure the education of their children in conformity with their religious convictions (Van Ooik & Vandamme, 2010, p. 159). Furthermore, the right to engage in work is granted in article II-15. Thus, every European Union citizen has the right to engage in work and to pursue a freely chosen employment. This right is obviously also valid for Muslim women living in the Netherlands. Therefore, it is important for these women to be made aware of this right, allowing them to stand up for their rights in the case that anyone prohibits them from studying or engaging work outdoors (Van Ooik & Vandamme, 2010, p. 160). Another fundamental right that is granted to all citizens of the European Union, is equality between man and women. And Muslim women should be made aware of the fact that they are not subordinate to men, and they should have and express their own opinion (Van Ooik & Vandamme, 2010, p. 161). In addition, the rights and fundamental equality of women are laid down in the UN Women treaty (Schimmel, 2012). Article 39 of the Charter of fundamental rights of the European union, states that every citizen of the European Union has the right to vote, Muslim women should be made aware of this right in order to help them express their opinion through their vote (Van Ooik & Vandamme, 2010, p. 164).

### 6.2 Dutch government's objectives

Unlike previous governments who attached great importance to the emancipation of minorities, the current cabinet led by prime minister Rutte is not much dedicated to the emancipation of ethnic minorities. This might be due to the economic crisis, causing the politics to lay its focus in recent years mostly on the stabilization of the national economy and less on empowerment and participation of immigrant women. Therefore in this chapter the former government's emancipation policy will be used as a starting point, and simultaneously elements from the current government's emancipation policy will also be covered (Bakker, 2011). The emancipation policy focuses on the position of women in general, hence it covers the position of immigrant women.

#### 6.2.1 Equality men and women

In the emancipation policy of the former government led by Balkenende, the husbands of immigrant women are mentioned as major obstacles in the process to increase immigrant women's economic independency. According to the former government, traditional male and female role division, and the vision of immigrant men regarding the position of women are highly alarming.

Therefore, from governments perspective, in order to develop themselves personally without barriers, Muslim women should know their rights and stand up for themselves and to make their own decisions (Plasterk, 2008 p.49-50).

### 6.2.2 Labor force participation

The former government placed a great emphasis on the labor force participation of Dutch females. The key focus, concerning immigrant women, in the emancipation policy of 2008-2011 lied on increasing their economic independency and their participation in Dutch society. The main forms of social participation that government had in mind were paid and voluntary work. From governments perspective, carrying out paid work is of major importance for immigrant women, because this would increase their feeling of perfection and self-reliance, and serve as a means to compete their lives. Basically, from government's point of view, a women is perfect and emancipated when she is actively visible in society and financially independent (Plasterk, 2008 p.49). According to the latest emancipation policy, the current government, led by Rutte, sees the labor force participation and education of Muslim women as the women's own responsibility. Therefore, the government addresses the strengths and talent of people themselves. Nevertheless, the participation of immigrant women from all levels and sectors of the labor market are still important items in the current political agenda.

Concrete measures to increase the social and labor participation of immigrant women in the Netherlands mentioned by the previous government in the emancipation policy of 2008-2011, are the use of role models, and the support of dialogue with Dutch natives in order to encourage mutual understanding (Plasterk, 2008 p.50). The current government continues its commitment by stimulating mothers to work by ensuring qualitative and affordable childcare, as children play a major role in women's labor participation. Since the introduction of the Childcare Act in 2005, public expenses for childcare in the Netherlands have tripled. The combination of work and care will also be supported by the government through the flexible working opportunities offered to companies. Moreover, a number of programs and courses are being developed by the government, to exploit the talents of women at all levels and in all sectors of the economy. The focus of these programs lies mainly on low educated immigrant women. According to the government, reducing illiteracy among these women will increase their employability. It is remarkable that the government has identified the immigrant women themselves as responsible for their low labor- and social participation. In addition, the government has not defined plans to support the large group of well-educated Muslim women to get a fair chance on the labor market (Rutte, 2011, p. 10).

### 6.3 Conclusion

As inhabitants of a European Union country, Muslim women are granted important fundamental rights through European treaties. Including the right to participate in work and education and the right to vote (Van Ooik & Vandamme, 2010, pp. 159-160). Nevertheless, the labor force participation and education level of Muslim women in the Netherlands remain low (Merens, Hartgers & Brakel, 2012 p. 56). According to the government, one of the main obstacles in the process to increase immigrant women's labor- and social participation are these women's husbands, who strongly adhere to traditional male and female role division (Plasterk, 2008 pp. 49-50). In the past years, the Dutch government has been committed to increase the economic independency and social participation of immigrant women and the emancipation of minorities in Dutch society. According to the government, Muslim women's participation in Dutch society is intertwined with goals in the field of cultural adaptation, such as speaking the Dutch language and associating with Dutch natives. The performance of paid employment is the main aim the Dutch government has for immigrant women. In order to stimulate immigrant women to participate in the Dutch society, the government has suggested to promote dialogue and use role models (Plasterk, 2008 p. 50).

## 7. Muslim women's vision

The data used in this chapter is obtained from the outcomes of the questionnaire, conducted among 213 respondents. This data is supplemented by the outcomes of the interviews that have been done among a focus group of six first and second generation Muslim women, living in the Netherlands. The full transcripts of these interviews can be found in appendix 5, and the questionnaire used for this research can be found in appendix 3 of this dissertation.

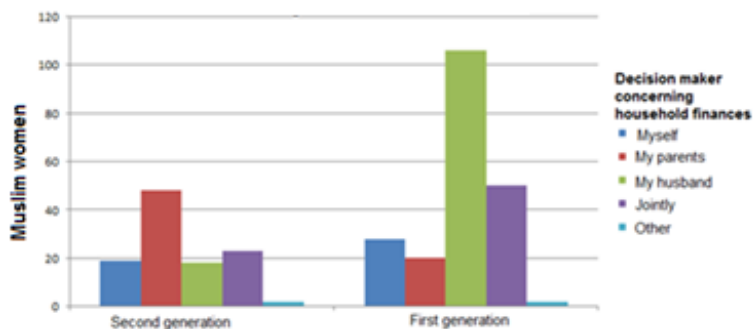
### 7.1 Personal information

The main characteristics of the focus group are displayed systematically in table 2 below.

Characteristics	First generation			Second generation		
Name	Fatima	Nadia	Hatice	Majda	Tugba	Saida
Age	63	42	61	24	26	41
Country of origin	Morocco	Iraq	Turkey	Algeria	Turkey	Morocco
Marital status	Married	Married	Married	Single	Single	Married
Children	Yes, six	Yes, two	Yes, four	No	No	Yes, three
Hijab/khimar/niqab	Hijab	None	Hijab	No	No	Hijab
Education level	Primary s.	Middle s.	None	MBO	WO	MBO
Work status	Housewife	Unemployed	Housewife	Employed	Employed	Employed

*Table 2: Characteristics of the focus group*

As regards the questionnaire, the 213 respondents are aged between 15 and 70 years old. The majority of them, 110 women, belong to the second generation, while the other 103 women belong to the first generation. 49,5% of the surveyed second generation Muslim women are married compared to 68% of the first generation Muslim women.



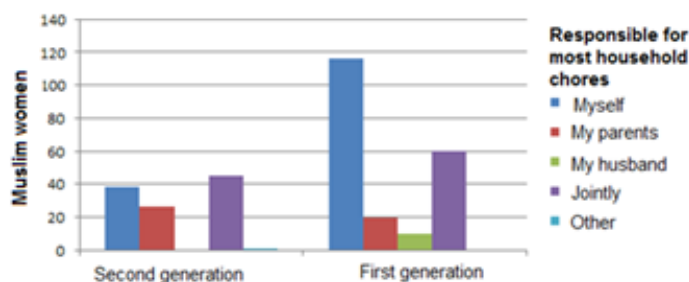
*Figure 3: First and second generation Muslim women 's decision maker concerning finances*

As shown in figure 3, the main decision maker in the second generation Muslim women's households are their parents, while in the households of the first generation Muslim women it is evident that their husbands are responsible for most financial decisions. The survey results have shown that the husbands of married first generation Muslim women are responsible for 79% of all financial decisions. For married second generation Muslim women this is significantly less, merely

12% of these women applies that their husbands make most financial decisions. This can be construed as an expression of women's rights, as second generation Muslim women think of themselves more as equals of their husbands and demand control over financial decisions.

In addition, both first and second generation Muslim women from the focus group state to make the financial decisions within their household jointly.

**Saida:** *“I am actually the one who exactly knows how much money is spent in our family, and what bills need to be paid. I know exactly what we can afford ourselves and what not.”*



**Figure 4:** First and second generation Muslim women 's division of tasks

Figure 4 shows that first generation Muslim women are mostly on their own responsible for most household chores, like cooking and doing groceries. While in the households of the second generation Muslim women the tasks are distributed more equally, which might give them more time to work or to go to school than Muslim women from the first generation have.

From my conversations with the focus group became clear that Majda, Tugba and Saida who belong to the second generation, divide the household chores within their family rather than doing them all by themselves. This can be explained by the fact that these women work and go to school.

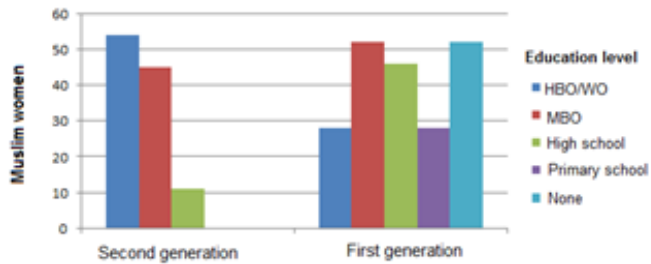
**Majda:** *“At home, my parents are together responsible for all household chores, and sometimes I help them.”*

Although the first generation of Muslim women stated that they are mainly responsible for most tasks themselves, they also get help from their husbands and children.

**Fatima:** *“In our culture it is normal that the husband works outdoors and the wife takes care of the children and does all household chores. My husband is retired, so we divide the tasks. We do groceries together, my husband does the vacuum cleaning and the dishes, and he likes it to join me in the kitchen when I cook the meals. And my daughters also help us.”*



## 7.2 Education level



**Figure 5:** First and second generation Muslim women's education level

As retrieved from the questionnaire results, 89% of all second generation Muslim women has a “HBO”, “WO” or “MBO” degree, compared to 38% of first generation Muslim women. Of the second generation Muslim women, none of the respondents stated that they have only finished primary school or have had no education at all. While 37% of first generation Muslim women stated that they have only finished primary school or have had no education at all. Figure 5 gives a clear overview of the remarkable contrast in education level between the first and second generation Muslim women in the Netherlands.

Muslim women	Supported to get educated	Not Supported to get educated
First generation	32,04%	67,96%
Second generation	81,82%	18,18%

**Table 6:** First and second generation Muslim women's support to get educated

As shown in table 6, over 80% of the surveyed second generation Muslim women were supported by their relatives to get educated, compared to 32% of first generation Muslim women. Second generation Muslim women are more and higher educated than first generation Muslim women. Therefore, it is evident that the education level has a connection with the question whether the respondents were supported by their parents or other relatives to get education.

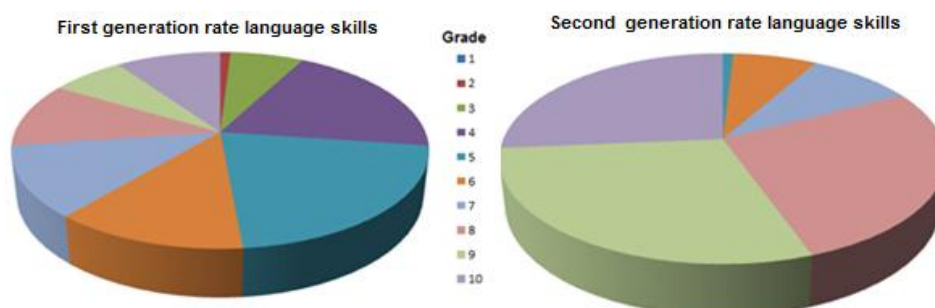
The interviews with the focus group showed that the second generation Muslim women received enough opportunities and support from their environment to seek education. As a result, all three second generation Muslim women from the focus group have at least a “MBO” degree.

**Majda:** “I have worked for four years. Then my parents wanted me to go back to school to finish it. My parents told me that they find it very important that I would get a diploma, so I would also find a better job afterwards. And I agree with my parents, because I prefer having a degree and a nice job and getting married afterwards instead of getting married without having a degree at all.”

**Saida:** “My parents, and especially my father believes that education is more important. I remember that at that time there was a boy who came to ask my hand for marriage. And my father sent him away, and told him that I was not yet ready for marriage.”

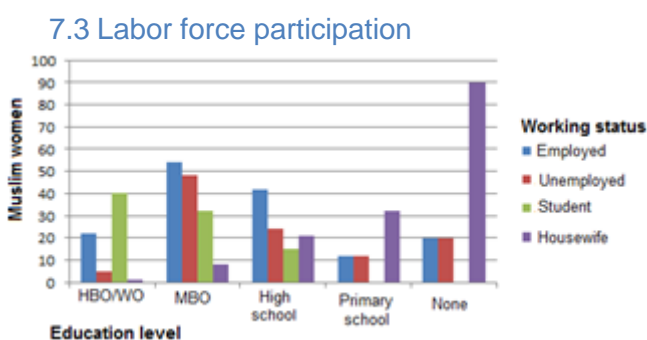
The first generation Muslim women from the focus group has a remarkably lower education level varying from no education at all to middle school. This might be due to the fact that their environment pushed them into marriage instead of school.

**Fatima:** “My parents wanted me to get married instead of getting educated. They saw it as a great chance for me when my current husband came to ask my hand for marriage, because he was living in the Netherlands and his family has a good reputation. In that time it was normal to obey your parents and I did whatever they told me without expressing my own opinion.”



**Figure 7:** First and second generation Muslim women's Dutch language skills

Figure 7 shows that the average grade first generation Muslim women give to their Dutch language skills is a 6.1. The average grade second generation Muslim women give to their Dutch language skills is a 8.5. Therefore, it is clear that second generation Muslim women are more satisfied with their proficiency of the Dutch language.



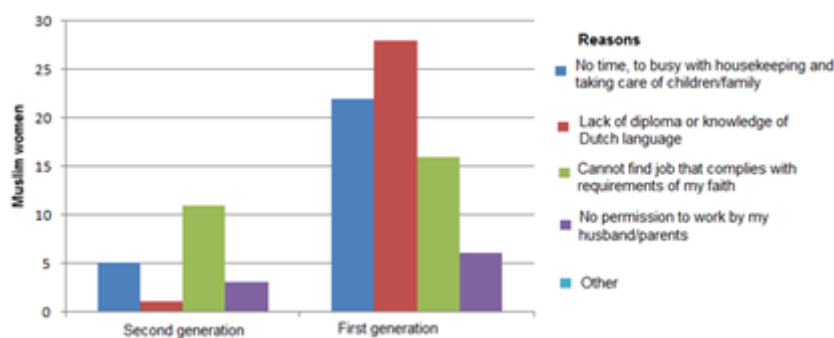
**Figure 8:** Education level versus labor force participation

Figure 8 shows a remarkable difference in the labor force participation rate among women with different education levels. 131 women, which is the majority of the respondents, is currently working or studying. The remaining 82 women are housewives or currently unemployed. The Muslim women with a “HBO”, “WO” and “MBO” degree are strikingly more active in the labor market than Muslim women with only a primary school degree or no degree at all. Nearly 70% of Muslim women with no degree at all is a housewife. The conversations with the focus group have revealed that this is mostly due to the fact that 100% of all respondents without an education degree are first generation Muslim women of high age who have never had the chance to study,

and consequently decided to become housewives. While on contrary, the higher educated Muslim women make the deliberate choice of being housewife, in order to take care of their children or to get accustomed to the life of a married women.

**Hatice:** “When I came to the Netherlands my husband worked and I was pregnant, I could not speak the language and I did not have an education degree. So it was a logical step for me to become a housewife.”

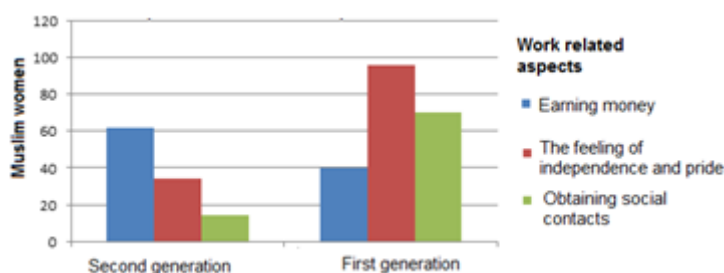
**Saida:** “Taking care of children is also work. For some women performing a paid job makes their lives complete and other women feel complete when they can stay at home and look after their children.”



**Figure 9:** First and second generation Muslim women's reasons not to work

Figure 9 reveals that 28% of first generation Muslim women is currently not working because of a lack of diploma or knowledge of the Dutch language, and a relatively large number of Muslim women from both first and second generation experience difficulties in finding a job that meets requirements of their faith. Nearly 13% of all respondents is not working because their husband or parents do not give them permission for it. It is very important for these women to be made aware of their legal and also Islamic rights to not be compelled by anyone to remain unemployed.

**Hatice:** “When our children grew up I thought about getting a job, but my husband wanted me to stay at home. He did not want me to work in an environment where I was exposed to men. I know that I have the legal right to work, but I listened to my husband to avoid an argument.”



**Figure 10:** First and second generation Muslim women's reasons to work

The respondents were asked to choose the work related aspect that is of greatest importance of them. As shown in figure 10, earning money is more important to second generation Muslim women than to first generation Muslim women. According to the details retrieved from the conversations with the focus group, this can be explained by the fact that second generation Muslim women see it as a matter of course that they get educated and start working afterwards, therefore obviously the most important work related feature for them is earning money.

**Tugba:** *“I am still studying and I have a part time job, when I finish school I will continue working to earn my own money. For what else would I study so long?”*

In contrast, first generation Muslim women have experienced less working females in the culture of their countries of origin and they still have the more traditional mindset of their country of origin. When they think about a working female they see her as an independent, successful and strong women. Therefore, the aspect of earning money is remarkably less important to them, the feelings of independence and pride and obtaining social contacts are predominant.

#### 7.4 Awareness of Islamic rights and duties

The results from the questionnaire have revealed that a fourth of the respondents get their information about Islam only from what they hear from others. While, 70% of the second generation Muslim women get their knowledge about Islam from multiple different sources, compared to merely 15% of the first generation of Muslim women.

The focus group was asked about their views concerning the right to work and to seek education Islam gives to women.

**Saida:** *“Islam stimulates people to seek knowledge, to get educated and to develop themselves. Our Faith stimulates this, no matter if it is a boy or a girl, equal treatment. And that is different than what other people think about Islam, the media shows Taliban who kill girls because they are going to school. But that is not real Islam.”*

**Nadia:** *“I read the Qur’an and I know that there are some restrictions as regards performing certain work. For instance, you cannot serve alcohol and you have to keep your modesty. But these restrictions are for both men and women, so Islam gives me, and all other women the right to work. As regards education, when you open the Qur’an you are already learning. Islam supports both men and women to get educated.”*

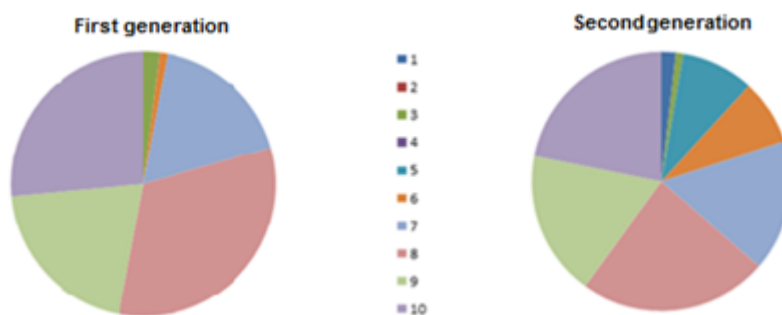
During the conversations with the focus group it was noticeable that the Muslim women are aware of their Islamic right that gives them the power to spend their own money on themselves, and does

not require them to invest it in their family. The women, however, believe that this right is not applicable for them.

**Fatima:** “When I got married my husband gave me a dowry. I bought a lot of golden jewelry from it and I still have it in case of emergency. But if I would work and earn money on a regular basis I would not spend it on myself, I would spend it on my family and also on my husband like he spends his money on me. But I am aware of my Islamic right, and if my husband would force me to give him the money that I earned myself, I would certainly not listen to him.”

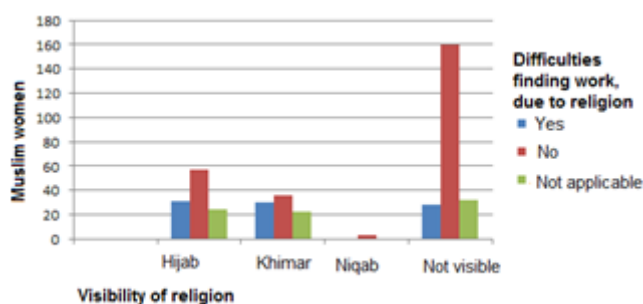
The opinion of the second generation Muslim women, does not differ much from the first generation Muslim women.

**Saida:** “I know that Islam gives me the right to spend my money how I want to, and that I am not required to give it to my husband. I think it is outdated to say the women’s money is for her alone, and her husband cannot invoke it. If I would divorce my husband I could take care of myself financially.”



**Figure 11:** Importance that their religion is taken into account at Muslim women’s work or school

Figure 11 shows that both the first and second generation of Muslim women find it very important that their religion is taken into account at their workplace or school. The average rating the respondents give to the importance of their religion being taken into account at their workplace or school is an 8.1.



**Figure 12:** Visibility of religion versus difficulties finding a job

Figure 12 shows that the vast majority of Muslim women who do not wear a headscarf have never experienced difficulties in finding work due to their religion. While 30% of the respondents who wear a “*hijab*”, “*khimar*” or “*niqab*”, has experienced difficulties finding a job. The respondents were also asked to give specific examples of obstacles they have faced due to their religion. 40 out of 53 respondents stated that they were rejected for a job, because of their “*hijab*” or “*khimar*”. Several respondents were asked during job interviews if they were willing to remove their headscarf, and they were not accepted for the job when they rejected this proposal. Other examples of obstacles the respondents mentioned are the difficulty to find Islamic responsible work where they are not confronted with matters that are not allowed by their faith, such as working together with men, serving alcohol and working with interest. Four respondents stated that their husband’s opinion plays a big role in their decision to work, which makes it even more difficult for them to find a suitable job.

Moreover, the interviews with the target group have revealed that the Muslim women from both first and second generation have experienced difficulties because of their headscarf.

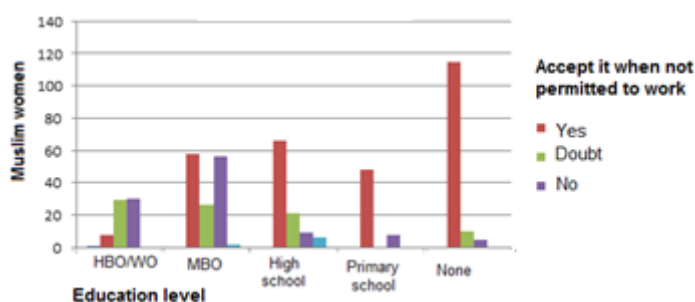
**Saida:** *“When I firstly applied for a job at a lady and we spoke through the telephone she was very enthusiastic and like yes I want you for this job. But when she saw me for the first time, she said that she would prefer someone without a headscarf.”*

**Tugba:** *“I never experienced difficulties at school or at work because of my faith, maybe because I am not wearing a headscarf.”*

The respondents were also asked about the difficulties they have to cope with at their workplace or school on account of their faith. 28% out of 66 respondents mentioned that the difficulties they have experienced have been caused by their colleagues’ or teachers’ incomprehension concerning their headscarf. The respondents have noticed that they are treated differently in a negative way, they believe their colleagues regard them as ignorant because of their headscarf. Another 28% of the respondents mention the lack of time and space to do their prayers as the main obstacle at their workplace. Other obstacles the Muslim women face at their workplace or school are excessive contact with males, the feeling that they constantly have to defend their way of life and incomprehension and disrespect during the Ramadan.

### 7.5 Awareness of legal rights and duties

One of the interesting outcomes is that over 44% of all respondents think of the Sharia, Islamic law, as more important than European law.



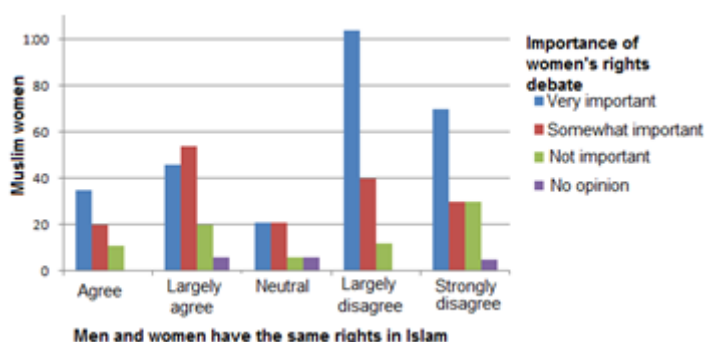
**Figure 13:** Education level versus acceptance when not allowed to work

94 out of 213 respondents would accept it when their relatives prohibit them from working. As shown in figure 13 the higher educated women are, the less they accept it when their husband or parents do not allow them to work.

**Hatice:** “I know that the law in the Netherlands gives me the right to work if I want too, and also the right to get educated. Males and females are equal to law. But in my culture I have to obey my husband, it is not even religion related. I just want to avoid arguments so I do not stand up for my rights.”

**Tugba:** “I am very much aware of my legal rights, because I am a law student. And I think that I get all possibilities from law, I can do whatever I want. I can start my own business as a lawyer or I can work at a law firm or work as a judge. I think the possibilities the law gives me are limitless.”

The questionnaire results have revealed that more than twice as much second generation Muslim women have voted during the last national elections than first generation Muslim women. This might be explained by the fact that second generation Muslim women find it easier to express their opinions, like in Dutch culture where a much valued right is to express yourself freely.



**Figure 14:** Importance women's right debate

As shown in figure 14, the women's rights debate is very important to the respondents who believe man and women do not have the same rights in Islam. This may be caused by subordinate role they have in their household. They do not benefit the same rights as their men, but they should, however



fulfill their duties. Therefore, the women's rights debate is very important to them, and they are in need of a role model to defend their rights.

***Nadia:** "I am very happy that I live in the Netherlands instead of Iraq, my female relatives in Iraq do not have the right to work. I do, the Dutch law is very strong and gives women many rights. But I just do not want to work, my husband is already working and that is enough for us. I have enough other things to do in the house, you know."*

### 7.6 Vision on improving Muslim women's participation

The final part of the questionnaire focused more specifically on the vision of the Muslim women on multiple statements. 42% of the respondents believe that men and women are both allowed to perform the same work outdoors, concerning this statement there is no remarkable difference in the opinions of first and second generation Muslim women.

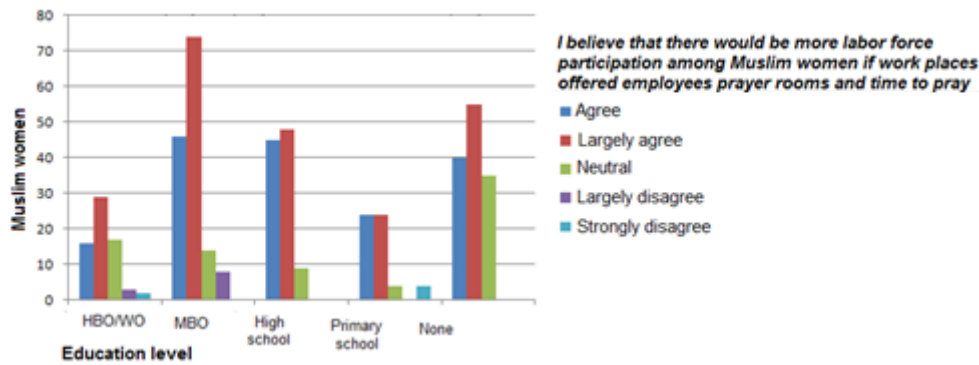
The Dutch government suggests that immigrant women should make their lives complete by performing paid work (Plasterk, 2008 p. 49). However, as retrieved from the questionnaire results, not all women have the ambition to perform work outdoors, and up to 89% of the respondents experience the feeling of wholeness when they put their family on the first place, before paid work. As derived from the conversations with the focus group, Muslim women are not mainly focused on the performance of work outdoors because of their traditional, cultural roles. However, they are interested in other outdoor activities to increase their social participation, such as doing voluntary work or visiting community centers.

***Hatice:** "In my culture it is difficult for a women to work. We often get unexpected guests at our house, and I cannot tell them that they have to leave because I have to work. But I would like to do other things to be socially involved, like going to community centers ."*

***Nadia:** "I just do not want to work, my husband is already working and that is enough for us. I have enough other things to do in the house, you know. I speak the Dutch language and helping others gives my life meaning, therefore I would like to do voluntary work on a regular basis when I have time for it."*

***Saida:** "I always help at my children's school when the teacher asks for it. And I also collect money, clothes and toys for charity. I bring those things to poor people in Morocco."*



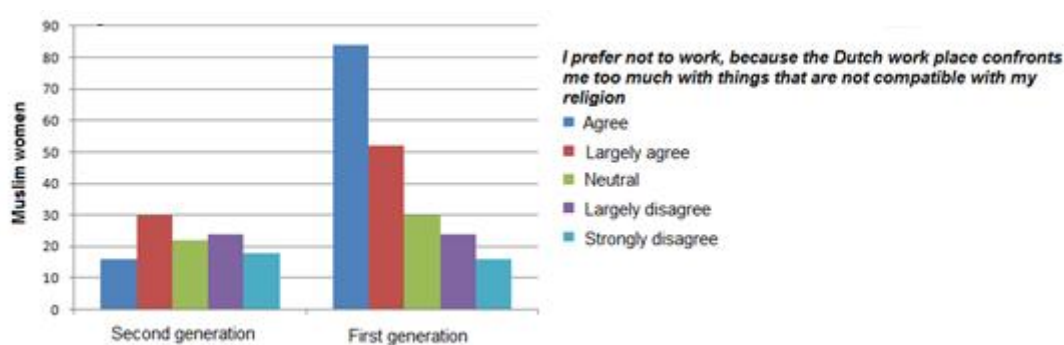


**Figure 15:** Vision on more labor force participation because of prayer rooms at workplace

Muslims are obliged to pray five times a day at a specific time, consequently while at school or at work Muslim women might miss two or three of their prayers on a daily basis. Figure 15 illustrates that 166 of 213 respondents agree with the following statement: "There would be more labor force participation among Muslim women, when work places would offer employees prayer rooms and extra time to pray". This means that it is an obstacle for many Muslim women in the Netherlands that they cannot pray at work and they would probably be more active on the labor market if they were given an extra 20 minutes break per day to perform their prayers.

**Tugba:** "I would find it very motivating if my employer would take my religious duties into consideration, for example by giving me two times a day a five minute break to perform my prayers."

**Nadia:** "I think that it helps if we can pray at work and wear clothes we want, and if Dutch men would understand that we rather talk with female colleagues only. But I think it will take many years until Dutch natives understand our religion and take it into account on the work floor."



**Figure 16:** Vision on Dutch workplace's compatibility with Islamic religion

Figure 16 shows that 54% of the respondents prefer not to work, as the Dutch workplace is not compatible with their religion. However, first generation Muslim women are more inclined not to work when their workplace confronts them with matters that are not compatible with their faith. The immense difference between the view of the first and second generation Muslim women can

be explained by cultural differences. The second generation Muslim women have been confronted with the Dutch culture their whole live, while the first generation Muslim women are more strongly attached to their own culture and religion and are not used to getting confronted with other cultures.

The Muslim women were also asked if training and courses offered to the women by government, would contribute in making Muslim women more active on the labor market, and why (Plasterk, 2008). 13% of the respondents believe this is a suitable solution for first generation Muslim women who are not educated and do not speak the Dutch language. The majority, however, believes that this is not the right solution, because in their opinion it is already too late for those Muslim women who need education. They are dedicated to their household chores and families, and are not seeking a career. These Muslim women do not want to work because of their

In addition, 87% of the respondents thinks that the government should focus on the younger, good educated Muslim women who are not accepted at many companies because of their religious convictions. Which brings us to the next statement of the questionnaire: *“The government should provide awareness campaigns for companies, in order to give Muslim women a fair chance of a job.”* 85% of the respondents agrees with this statement. They think that labor force participation of Muslim women cannot come from one side, it is the government’s responsibility to convince companies to hire a mixed staff with more Muslim women.

*Saida: “The government’s focus should lie on the Muslim women of recent generations And the negative publicity about Muslims also makes it difficult for these young women. They do not get a fair chance for an internship, they are rejected for jobs even if they are highly educated. Have you watched the news? How many Turkish high educated women go back to Turkey, because they do not get a fair chance for a job here in the Netherlands, because they are discriminated.”*

Another concrete measure by the government to increase the social and labor force participation of immigrant women in the Netherlands is the support of dialogue with Dutch natives in order to encourage mutual understanding (Plasterk, 2008 p. 50). However, specific events to support the dialogue have not been pointed out by the government, the Muslim women of the focus group were positive about this idea.

*Saida: “I believe that we should see it as a strength and a power that we are raised within two cultures. Because of these cultural differences, we have the benefit that we understand both cultures. So we just need to explain Dutch natives about our culture, so they can understand us too.*

In addition, the government proposed the use of role models (Plasterk, 2008 p. 50). However concrete role models were not appointed, the Muslim women of the focus group were positive about this proposal.

**Tugba:** *“I think it is a good initiative, but where is the government going to find role models? I think they should use Muslim women role models for the young, third generation girls who are in high school.”*

## 7.7 Conclusion

To conclude from this chapter, both first and second generation Muslim women are aware of their rights and duties concerning labor force participation and education. The education level and employment rate of second generation Muslim women has increased significantly compared to the first generation. As a result, the traditional gender role divisions are increasingly fading into the background among the second generation of Muslim women. This can be inferred from the shift in division of household tasks, and financial decision making authority. This shift can be construed as an expression of women's rights. Nevertheless, getting married and having children remain the most important aspects that are indispensable in a Muslim women's life. Essentially, Muslim women are increasingly demanding their rights and they see themselves more as equals of their husbands. Nevertheless, the Muslim women encounter difficulties in finding a job that is compatible with their religion, therefore they believe that a higher labor force participation of Muslim women cannot come from one side. In addition, high educated Muslim women are often turned down for a job because of their expression of their religious beliefs by wearing a headscarf. The women believe that the government should play a role in increasing awareness about the importance of education among the Muslim society by use of role models and by promoting the dialogue. However, the idea of offering language courses is not highly appreciated.

## 8. Conclusion

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The purpose of carrying out this dissertation was to examine whether the low employment rate and education level of first and second generation Muslim women in the Netherlands are due to a lack of awareness of their legal and Islamic rights and obligations. This dissertation has revealed that the employment rate and education level among Muslim women in the Netherlands are low (Merens, Hartgers & Brakel, 2012 p. 56). As derived from this research, Muslim women's low labor force participation rate and education level cannot be explained by a lack of knowledge of their legal and Islamic rights and duties. However, it is caused by their culture, which assigns them a role as mother and wife whose first priority is to take care of the family (Neulip, 2009 p. 202). In addition to this, according to Hofstede's five dimensions theory, the Muslim women's culture is: collectivistic, high in power distance and masculine. Therefore, it stresses the importance of the group over the individual, and Muslim women are willing to act to this role by staying at home and look after the children. As reason of the high power distance the opinion of superiors such as the husband is highly respected (Nunez, Mahdi & Popma, 2007 pp. 46, 51,57).

The preliminary focus of this dissertation lied on field research in the form of a questionnaire, conducted among 213 Muslim women, combined with six interviews.

Moving on to the conducted interviews, Muslim women are aware of the fact that no one has the legal, nor Islamic right to prohibit them from education or working outdoors. Moreover, Muslim women feel supported by Islam in their decisions to work outdoors or to get educated. However, the Muslim women's decisions to work and to get educated are influenced by the opinions of relatives. In fact, 13% of the respondents state that they are currently unemployed, as their parents and husband did not allow them to work. Despite being informed of their rights 94 out of 213 respondents state that they will obey their husband when the permission to work is not given. Nevertheless, the field research has shown that second generation Muslim women are increasingly more focused on getting well educated and having a career. Apparently, Muslim women's views about gender role division become more emancipated as their education level is higher.

Additional outcomes that have been derived through the field research are that increasingly more Muslim women speak the Dutch language, are properly educated and employed (Merens, Hartgers & Brakel, 2012, p. 56). The second generation Muslim women are significantly better developed compared to the first generation with their increasing level of education and employment rate ("Moslimvrouwen in Nederland," n.d.). On the other hand, the field research has also revealed that 30% of the Muslim women experience difficulties at their workplace as reason of their Islamic

faith. The obstacles faced by the respondents are rejection caused by their headscarf and confrontation with matters that are not allowed by their faith.

From the analysis of the Dutch emancipation policy regarding immigrant women, it appears that the Dutch government suggests that immigrant women should complete their lives by performing work outdoors (Plasterk, 2008 p. 49). However, as retrieved from the questionnaire results, not all women have the ambition to work, and up to 89% of the respondents experience the feeling of contentment when they put their family on the first place.

This dissertation has provided a realistic overview of the vision of Muslim women, as these women have given their opinion through a questionnaire and an interview. However, it should be taken into account that there was a certain group of women who wanted to cooperate in the research and a certain group of women that would or could not participate as reason of the language barrier. Therefore, there is a part of the Muslim women population lacking in this study and a certain bias in this research should be taken into account.

## 9. Recommendations

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This paper has revealed that, as reason of their high power distance culture Muslim women greatly value the opinion of superiors such as their parents or husband (Nunez, Mahdi & Popma, 2007 p. 46). The government could make use of this by distributing information leaflets to parents of young Muslim women in order to increase their awareness of the importance of education.

In order to exploit the talents of immigrant women, and consequently to increase their labor force participation, the Dutch government has developed a number of programs, including language courses as reducing illiteracy among immigrant women will increase their employability (Rutte, 2011, p. 10). However, 87% of the respondents believe that this is not the right solution, as Muslim women who would benefit from these language courses are already too old and not able to work.

By insisting on the performance of paid labor, the Dutch government ignores the ideals of a successful life that Muslim women apply (Plasterk, 2008 p. 45). Instead of focusing on their own ideals of an emancipated Muslim woman, the government should stimulate factors that give meaning to Muslim women's lives, in order to increase their social participation. For instance: performing voluntary work, visiting community centers, or helping at their children's primary school.

The field research has revealed that 30% of the educated Muslim women experience obstacles in finding work as reason of their faith. And 85% of the respondents agrees that it is the government's responsibility to facilitate the access to the labor market by convincing companies to hire different nationalities. A concrete measure suggested by the government to increase the social and labor force participation of immigrant women in the Netherlands is to support the dialogue between Dutch natives and immigrants in order to encourage mutual understanding (Plasterk, 2008 p. 50). However, specific events to support the dialogue have not been pointed out, the Muslim women of the focus group were positive about this idea. By promoting the dialogue between young, educated Muslim women and Dutch employers, the government will stimulate mutual understanding, which might result in less prejudice about the Islamic religion on the workplace.

In addition, the government proposed the use of role models (Plasterk, 2008 p. 50). The government has not appointed concrete role models, however, the interviewees agreed that the role models should be women that young Muslim women can identify themselves with. Therefore it is recommended to appoint female Muslim politicians or Muslim women with a high education level and high job position as role models, in order to encourage young Muslim women to develop themselves further in the fields of education and labor force participation.

Additional recommendations are directed to Muslim women:

The questionnaire and interview results have revealed that Muslim women let others exert influence on their choices whether or not to work or to get educated, even if they know that is against Islamic and legal law. Therefore, young Muslim women should read female interpretations of the Qur'an, which will help them to hold on to the actual rights and obligations that Islam gives them.

For the 30% of the Muslim women who experience difficulties at their workplace or are rejected for work as reason of their Islamic faith, it is recommendable to visit Colourfulpeople and Diversity Recruitment. These are special employment agencies targeting high educated immigrants for companies that want more diversity.

The final piece of advice for Muslim women is to continuously seek ways to develop and to be socially involved in Dutch society. For example by playing an active role at the schools of their children or by visiting community centers to converse with neighbors.

## Notations and abbreviations

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<b>CBS</b>	Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek
<b>SCP</b>	Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau
<b>FORUM</b>	Dutch institute for multicultural issues
<b>PDI</b>	Power distance
<b>IDV</b>	Individualism collectivism
<b>MAS</b>	Masculinity femininity
<b>UAI</b>	Uncertainty avoidance
<b>LTO</b>	Long term orientation
<b>Hijab</b>	Headscarf that covers the head but not the face
<b>Khimar</b>	Headscarf that covers the head but not the face, that hangs above the waist
<b>Niqab</b>	Headscarf that veils the totality of the face and hair, except of the eyes
<b>Hadith</b>	Examples of behavior of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)
<b>Surah</b>	Qur'an verse
<b>Pbuh</b>	Peace be upon him
<b>Shahadah</b>	Confession of faith
<b>Salah</b>	Prayer
<b>Zakaat</b>	Almsgiving
<b>Sawm</b>	Fasting
<b>MBO</b>	Intermediate vocational education
<b>HBO</b>	Higher vocational education
<b>WO</b>	University



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## Appendices

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### Appendix 1 Hofstede's country scores

Country	PDI *	IDV *	MAS *	UAI *	LTO *
<b>The Netherlands</b>	38	80	14	53	44
<b>Morocco</b>	70	46	53	68	
<b>Turkey</b>	66	37	45	85	
<b>Surinam</b>	85	47	37	92	
<b>Afghanistan</b>	58	14	50	70	
<b>Iraq</b>	80	38	52	68	
<b>Somalia</b>	64	27	41	52	25
<b>Pakistan</b>	55	14	50	70	0
<b>Iran</b>	58	41	43	59	

\* PDI = Power distance

\* IDV = Individualism collectivism

\* MAS = Masculinity femininity

\* UAI = Uncertainty avoidance

\* LTO = Long term orientation

(Nunez, Mahdi & Popma, 2007, pp. 57-58)

## Appendix 2 Qur'an verses

*“O Mankind! Fear your Lord who has created you from a single soul, and from it He created its mate; and from them both, He brought forth multitudes of men and women. Be mindful of Allah through Whom you demand your mutual (rights), and revere the wombs that bore you. Surely, Allah is ever watching over you.” (Qur'an, 4:1)*

*“The submitting men, the submitting women, the believing men, the believing women, the obedient men, the obedient women, the truthful men, the truthful women, the steadfast men, the steadfast women, the reverent men, the reverent women, the charitable men, the charitable women, the fasting men, the fasting women, the chaste men, the chaste women, and the men who commemorate GOD frequently, and the commemorating women; GOD has prepared for them forgiveness and a great recompense.”(Qur'an, 33:35)*

*“...and when the female child, buried alive, will be asked: For what sin was she killed.” (Qur'an: 81:8-9)*

*“ O people, we created you from the same male and female, and rendered you distinct peoples and tribes, that you may recognize one another. The best among you in the sight of GOD is the most righteous. GOD is Omniscient, Cognizant.”(Qur'an, 49:13)*

*“And tell the believing women to reduce [some] of their vision and guard their private parts and not expose their adornment except that which [necessarily] appears thereof and to wrap [a portion of] their head covers over their chests and not expose their adornment except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers, their brothers' sons, their sisters' sons, their women, that which their right hands possess, or those male attendants having no physical desire, or children who are not yet aware of the private aspects of women. And let them not stamp their feet to make known what they conceal of their adornment. And turn to Allah in repentance, all of you, O believers, that you might succeed.” (Qur'an, 24:31)*

## Appendix 3 Questionnaire

<b>Enquête</b> <b>“Positie van Moslimvrouwen in Nederland”</b>
---

Beste Moslima,

Het kost veel Moslimvrouwen moeite om de stap naar betaalde arbeid te maken. De overheid wijt dit aan het lage opleidingsniveau, maar dat verklaart niet waarom ook hoogopgeleide Moslimvrouwen moeilijk aan de slag komen. Deze enquête is een onderdeel van mijn scriptie waarin ik de positie van verschillende generaties Moslimvrouwen in Nederland wil onderzoeken op het gebied van arbeidsparticipatie en onderwijs.

Om een goed beeld te krijgen van de positie van Moslimvrouwen in Nederland wil ik u vragen om deze enquête eerlijk in te vullen. Uiteraard zal er zorgvuldig met privacygevoelige informatie worden omgegaan en informatie verkregen uit deze enquête zal uitsluitend voor dit onderzoek gebruikt worden. Het invullen van de enquête zal ongeveer 10 minuten van uw tijd in beslag nemen.

**Ik dank u hartelijk voor uw medewerking.**

<b>Persoonlijke informatie</b>
--------------------------------

**1. Wat is uw leeftijd?**

- ☐ 15-25
- ☐ 26-35
- ☐ 36-45
- ☐ 46-55
- ☐ 56+

**2. Bent u in Nederland geboren? Zo nee, waar dan?**

- ☐ Ja
- ☐ Nee, ik ben geboren in: .....

**3. Uw burgerlijke staat:**

- ☐ Gehuwd
- ☐ Weduwe
- ☐ Gescheiden
- ☐ Ongehuwd

**4. Heeft u kinderen?**

- ☐ Ja
- ☐ Nee

**5. Wie in uw huishouden beslist over de (meeste) financiële uitgaven?**

- ☐ Ikzelf
- ☐ Ouders
- ☐ Echtgenoot
- ☐ Gezamenlijk
- ☐ Anders, namelijk: .....

**6. Wie in uw huishouden is verantwoordelijk voor de (meeste) huishoudelijke klusjes?**

- ☐ Ikzelf
- ☐ Ouders
- ☐ Echtgenoot
- ☐ Gezamenlijk
- ☐ Anders, namelijk: .....

**Educatie niveau en arbeidsparticipatie****7. Wat is uw opleidingsniveau?**

- ☐ HBO / WO
- ☐ MBO
- ☐ Middelbare school
- ☐ Basis school
- ☐ Geen
- ☐ Anders: .....

**8. Werd/wordt u door uw naasten gestimuleerd om uzelf verder te ontplooien middels scholing?**

- ☐ Ja
- ☐ Nee

**9. Welk cijfer geeft u uw beheersing van de Nederlandse taal?***(1 = zeer slecht, 10 = zeer goed)*

- ☐ 1    ☐ 2    ☐ 3    ☐ 4    ☐ 5    ☐ 6    ☐ 7    ☐ 8    ☐ 9    ☐ 10

**10. Wat is voor u van toepassing betreffende uw huidige werkstatus?**

- ☐ Werkzaam (ga verder naar vraag 12)
- ☐ Werkloos
- ☐ Student (ga verder naar vraag 12)
- ☐ Huisvrouw

**11. Wat is de voornaamste reden waarom u momenteel niet werkt?**

- ☐ Geen tijd, te druk met huishouden en zorg voor de kinderen
- ☐ Door gebrek aan diploma's / onvoldoende beheersing van de Nederlandse taal
- ☐ Ik word tijdens sollicitaties vaak (onterecht) afgewezen
- ☐ Ik kan in Nederland geen baan vinden die voldoet aan de eisen van mijn geloof
- ☐ Ik krijg van mijn man / ouders geen toestemming om te werken
- ☐ Anders, namelijk .....

**12. Welk van de volgende werk gerelateerde aspecten is het belangrijkste voor u?**

- ☐ Geld verdienen
- ☐ Het gevoel van onafhankelijkheid / trots
- ☐ Verkrijgen van sociale contacten
- ☐ Anders, namelijk .....



<b>Islam</b>
--------------

**13. Tot welke hoofdstroom van de Islam rekent u zichzelf?**

- ☐ Soennitisch
- ☐ Sjiitisch
- ☐ Anders, namelijk .....

**14. Waar haalt u uw informatie over de Islam vandaan? (meerdere antwoorden mogelijk)**

- ☐ Koran en Hadith
- ☐ Ik bezoek lezingen in de moskee
- ☐ Ik baseer mijn kennis op wat anderen (ouders, echtgenoot, familie) mij vertellen
- ☐ Internet
- ☐ Boeken
- ☐ Televisieprogramma's

**15. In hoeverre bent u het eens met de volgende stelling?**

*"Mannen en vrouwen hebben gelijke rechten volgens de Islam."*

- ☐ Volledig mee eens
- ☐ Grotendeels mee eens
- ☐ Neutraal
- ☐ Grotendeels mee oneens
- ☐ Volledig mee oneens

**16. In welke mate bent u zichtbaar Moslim?**

- ☐ Ik draag een hijab
- ☐ Ik draag een khimar
- ☐ Ik draag een niqab
- ☐ Niet zichtbaar

**17. In hoeverre hangt uw carrière af van de plichten die u volgens de Islam heeft als vrouw?**  
(1= mijn carrière gaat voor alles, 10 = mijn Islamitische vrouwelijke plichten zoals zorgen voor het huishouden en gezin gaan voor alles)

- ☐ 1    ☐ 2    ☐ 3    ☐ 4    ☐ 5    ☐ 6    ☐ 7    ☐ 8    ☐ 9    ☐ 10

**18. Heeft u ooit moeilijkheden ondervonden bij het vinden van werk, die te maken hebben met uw religie? Zo ja, noem een voorbeeld.**

- ☐ Ja, namelijk .....
- ☐ Nee
- ☐ Nvt.

**19. Heeft u tijdens uw studie of werk ooit struikelblokken ondervonden die het voor u bemoeilijkten om uw geloof uit te oefenen? Zo ja, noem een voorbeeld.**

- ☐ Ja, namelijk.....
- ☐ Nee
- ☐ Nvt.

**20. In hoeverre is het voor u belangrijk dat er op uw werk of school rekening wordt gehouden met uw geloof. (1= niet belangrijk, 10 = zeer belangrijk)**

☐ 1    ☐ 2    ☐ 3    ☐ 4    ☐ 5    ☐ 6    ☐ 7    ☐ 8    ☐ 9    ☐ 10

#### Rechten

**21. In hoeverre bent u het eens met de volgende stelling:**

*“Sharia staat voor mij boven de Europese wet.”*

- ☐ Volledig mee eens
- ☐ Grotendeels mee eens
- ☐ Neutraal
- ☐ Grotendeels mee oneens
- ☐ Volledig mee oneens

**22. Heeft u gestemd tijdens de laatste nationale verkiezingen?**

- ☐ Ja
- ☐ Nee

**23. Hoe belangrijk is de vrouwen rechtenkwestie voor u?**

- ☐ Zeer belangrijk
- ☐ Enigszins belangrijk
- ☐ Niet belangrijk
- ☐ Geen mening

**24. Volgens artikel II-75 De vrijheid van beroep en het recht te werken van de Europese grondwet heeft iedere Europese burger het recht te werken en een vrijelijk gekozen beroep uit te oefenen. Zou u het accepteren als iemand (ouders/echtgenoot) u verbiedt om buitenshuis te werken?**

- ☐ Ja
- ☐ Twijfel
- ☐ Nee

#### Visie

**25. In hoeverre bent u het eens met de volgende stelling?**

*“Vrouwen mogen buitenshuis hetzelfde werk als mannen verrichten.”*

- ☐ Volledig mee eens
- ☐ Grotendeels mee eens
- ☐ Neutraal
- ☐ Grotendeels mee oneens
- ☐ Volledig mee oneens

**26. In hoeverre bent u het eens met de volgende stelling?**

*“Door het aanbieden van gebedsruimtes en voldoende tijd om te bidden op de werkplek zou de arbeidsparticipatie van Moslima's in Nederland toenemen.”*

- ☐ Volledig mee eens
- ☐ Grotendeels mee eens
- ☐ Neutraal
- ☐ Grotendeels mee oneens

- ☐ Volledig mee oneens

**27. In hoeverre bent u het eens met de volgende stelling?**

*“Ik werk liever niet, omdat ik op de Nederlandse werkvloer teveel geconfronteerd word met zaken die niet bij mijn godsdienst passen.” (bijvoorbeeld: teveel omgang met mannelijke collega's)*

- ☐ Volledig mee eens  
☐ Grotendeels mee eens  
☐ Neutraal  
☐ Grotendeels mee oneens  
☐ Volledig mee oneens

**28. De overheid heeft geld beschikbaar gesteld voor cursussen en scholing, om voor (Moslim) migranten vrouwen de stap naar de arbeidsmarkt te verkleinen. Is dit naar uw mening de juiste oplossing om de arbeidsparticipatie van Moslimvrouwen te verhogen?**

- ☐ Ja, want .....  
☐ Nee, want .....

**29. In hoeverre bent u het eens met de volgende stelling?**

*“De arbeidsparticipatie van moslimvrouwen kan niet van één kant komen, er moet door de overheid ook gekeken worden naar de vraagzijde van de arbeidsmarkt, want veel organisaties houden hun deuren – al dan niet bewust – dicht voor Moslimvrouwen. Dus er moet door de overheid voorlichting aan bedrijven worden gegeven over cultuurverschillen, zodat Moslimvrouwen een eerlijke kans krijgen op een baan.”*

- ☐ Volledig mee eens  
☐ Grotendeels mee eens  
☐ Neutraal  
☐ Grotendeels mee oneens  
☐ Volledig mee oneens

**30. De overheid lijkt te suggereren dat betaalde arbeid verrichten een voorwaarde is om een volwaardig persoon te kunnen zijn. In hoeverre bent u het eens met de volgende stelling?**

*“Ik bereik het gevoel van volmaaktheid door mijn gezin op de eerste plek te zetten, vóór betaald werk.”*

- ☐ Volledig mee eens  
☐ Grotendeels mee eens  
☐ Neutraal  
☐ Grotendeels mee oneens  
☐ Volledig mee oneens

**Einde van de enquête, bedankt voor uw medewerking!**

## Appendix 4 Supporting evidence

Number of questionnaires filled in online:

**ThesisTools**

**Enquête Resultaten**

Versie: 2 (# 147)

Menu: Resultaten  
 Resultaten: [Resultaten overzicht](#)  
 Extra: [Extra diensten](#)  
 Homepage: [Hoofdmenu](#)  
 Enquête: [Enquête wijzigen](#)

Questionnaire on the Islamic website Ansaar Forum:

forums.ansaar.nl/islam-jij-algemeen/63950-enquete-voor-moslimvrouwen.html#post799758

**ANSAAAR FORUM**

**Enquete voor moslimvrouwen**

Salaam Moslimvrouw123. Welkom terug!  
 Je laatste bezoek: Vandaag om 13:45

Vandaag, 13:48

**Moslimvrouw123**  
 Komt net kijken

Geslacht: Vrouw  
 Moslim: Ja  
 Geregistreerd: 13 april 2013  
 Berichten: 1

**Enquete voor moslimvrouwen**

Assalaamu aleikom allemaal,

Ik ben bezig met mijn afstudeerscriptie en het onderwerp daarvan is arbeidsparticipatie en educatie van verschillende generaties Moslimvrouwen in NL. Ik heb speciaal een account aangemaakt om alle vrouwen op dit forum te vragen om mijn enquête in te vullen. Je zou me er heel erg mee helpen!

De enquête staat in een word bestand dus als je er interesse in hebt kun je mij een PM sturen met daarin jouw email adres en dan mail ik je de enquête. De ingevulde enquête kun je naar mij terugmailen op [moslimvrouw123@hotmail.com](mailto:moslimvrouw123@hotmail.com)

Questionnaire on the online forum for Turkish youth:

forums.hababam.nl/showthread.php?t=159469&p=6737136#post6737136

Vandaag 13:30

**Moslimvrouw123** ♀  
 Amateur

Status: Online

Lid sinds: 13-04-2013

Geslacht: Vrouw

Reacties: 1

**Enquete voor moslimvrouwen**

Assalaamu aleikom allemaal,

Ik ben bezig met mijn afstudeerscriptie en het onderwerp daarvan is arbeidsparticipatie en educatie van verschillende generaties Moslimvrouwen in NL. Ik heb speciaal een account aangemaakt om alle vrouwen op dit forum te vragen om mijn enquête in te vullen. Je zou me er heel erg mee helpen!

De enquête staat in een word bestand dus als je er interesse in hebt kun je mij een PM sturen met daarin jouw email adres en dan mail ik je de enquête. De ingevulde enquête kun je naar mij terugmailen op [moslimvrouw123@hotmail.com](mailto:moslimvrouw123@hotmail.com)

Alvast bedankt allemaal!!! Groetjes

Questionnaire on the online forum for Moroccan youth:

Vandaag 12:23

**Moslimvrouw123** MVC Lid

**Enquete voor moslimvrouwen**

Assalaamu aleikom allemaal,

Ik ben bezig met mijn afstudeerscriptie en het onderwerp daarvan is arbeidsparticipatie en educatie van verschillende generaties Moslimvrouwen in NL. Ik heb speciaal een account aangemaakt om alle vrouwen op dit forum te vragen om mijn enquête in te vullen. Je zou me er heel erg mee helpen!

De enquête staat in een word bestand dus als je er interesse in hebt kun je mij een PM sturen met daarin jouw email adres en dan mail ik je de enquête. De ingevulde enquête kun je naar mij terugmailen op [moslimvrouw123@hotmail.com](mailto:moslimvrouw123@hotmail.com)

Alvast bedankt allemaal!!! Groetjes

## Appendix 5 Transcripts interviews focus group

### Interview Saida Hamouci

#### Interview with Saida Hamouci, second generation Muslim women

##### Personal information

**Q:** Could you please give us a short introduction of yourself?

**A:** I am Saida Hamouci, I was born in Moocco and I came to the Netherlands when I was a baby of six months. My age is 41 years old and I have three children, a 13 years old, a 11 years old and a 6 years old.

##### Education level

**Q:** What is your education level?

**A:** I went from MAVO to MBO, then I wanted to study further on HBO level. I started my first year HBO, but then my younger brother got seriously ill, he got stomach cancer, as a result I had to help my mother at home and at the hospital. This caused me to quit school after the first year of HBO.

**Q:** Were you stimulated by your relatives to seek education?

**A:** In my family going to school and getting educated was very normal. My parents thought it was more important for me to go to school and have a good education level instead quitting school and ending up with a poor job. My parents wanted me to get proper education. My mother is illiterate herself, therefore she thinks that school is the most important thing for her children.

**Q:** Did your parents want you to get educated instead of getting married?

**A:** My parents, and especially my father believes that education is more important. I remember that at that time there was a boy who came to ask my hand for marriage. And my father sent him away and told him that I was not yet ready for marriage. However, my father did not know that I wanted to get married myself. My sister Touria is 27 years old, and my father is very proud of her because she went to university. My mother thinks that my sister should get married now that she has finished her education. In my mother's opinion marriage would make my sisters life complete.

**Q:** What if your husband would have a different opinion about education, would you still stimulate your daughters to go to school?

**A:** I would not get married with a man who does not agree that education is important. I think education is the most important tool for a women to become independent and to participate in society. Without education you have nothing.

##### Labor force participation

**Q:** Are you currently employed?

**A:** At this moment, I am employed as a domestic worker. I have not always worked, when I got my first daughter I quit working, and now I am working again since two years. I have also worked for seven years as a administrative assistant. When I got my first daughter I quit, to raise my children. Now I am working again, but I do not think that I will keep doing this work as a domestic worker for much longer. I am looking for a job in a different field. I am not sure what kind of field, so I need to be retrained.

**Q:** Was it your own choice to quit working to look after your children? Or did your husband influence your decision?

**A:** Well, my husband thinks it is important that one of us would stay at home for the children. It was not an option to drop the children at my parents so we could both work. And we never considered baby day care, because it was too expensive for us. And I was also quite depressed in



that time which also influenced my decision to not work. I did not want to work anymore, I just wanted to take care of my family. And I think it was the best decision.

**Q:** Have you ever experienced difficulties in finding a job because of your faith and headscarf?

**A:** I think that cultural differences are everywhere, for example in Turkey it is different than in Morocco. Here in the Netherlands it is just like that. I have an example. When I go to work, and when I firstly applied for a job at a lady and we spoke through the telephone she was very enthusiastic and like yes I want you for this job. But when she saw me for the first time however, I saw that she really was shocked that I was the person she spoke with through the phone. She was thinking like, is she really the right person this women wearing a headscarf. So then I went inside her house, and the first thing she said to me was: "I did not expect that you would look like this, because I thought that you were Dutch". I said, well I told you my name through the phone and I do not have a Dutch name. Then she said: "Well I prefer someone without a headscarf." Well as the conversation progressed, she said I will give you a chance and your Dutch is very good and I think you will do your job very good. And now I am working there for two years, she said: "I cannot believe I had such a narrow mind about a women with a headscarf." I grew up within two different cultures, so I know how women who never spoke with and never were confronted with Muslims think. Therefore I gave this women a chance to get to know me, instead of walking away when she appealed to me so rudely. I just listened to the women's opinion, and I understood why she reacted this way. And I even proposed a probation period so she could see that I do my job properly. Now after two years, my employer said that she does not even notice my headscarf anymore, and she sees me as a fun person and she always hugs me when I walk in. She really loves me now.

**Q:** So you mention that Dutch natives do not understand the Islamic culture. How do you think this problem be solved?

**A:** In my opinion, if you want understanding from someone, you need to explain more yourself. For instance these cultural differences, we are raised here, we know how Dutch people think, I only had native Dutch friends when I was little. Until I was 18 years old, I never came into contact with people from my own culture. To conclude, I believe that we should see it as a strength and a power that we are raised within two cultures. Because of these cultural differences, we have the benefit that we understand both cultures. So we just need to explain Dutch natives about our culture, so they can understand us too.

### **Social participation**

**Q:** Are you engaged in social activities?

**A:** I always help at my children's school when the teacher asks for it. And I also collect money, clothes and toys for charity. I bring those things to poor people in Morocco.

**Q:** Do you also engage socially with Dutch natives?

**A:** Not really, I decide who my friends are and I do not choose them regarding their origin. I live in a neighborhood with a lot of Moroccan and Turkish people, so therefore I have a lot of contact with them. But before I got married, when I lived with my parents there were more Dutch people in my neighborhood so I was always hanging out with Dutch girls.

### **Cultural gender role division**

**Q:** Could you please tell me about cultural differences you experience in your life?

**A:** When I was a girl of 15-20 years old, I felt torn between two cultures. I did not understand why my Dutch friends had more freedom and were allowed to go to parties and to a swimming pool. I also wanted to join them, but I was not allowed. At that point of my life I was struggling with the question why I did not have this freedom. Sometimes I thought: I wish I grew up in a different family, then I could also do whatever my friends did. But on the other hand, I thought no it is not appropriate what my friends do. Sometimes I did something and then I got feelings of guilt, and I regretted it because I knew that it was not appropriate in my culture and in my religion. And I



knew that my parents would not approve. This is the feeling of being trapped in between two cultures I had during my youth. I wanted to do certain things my Dutch friends did, but on the other hand I knew it was wrong in my culture, so I really felt trapped.

**Q:** Who in your household is responsible for most chores?

**A:** In our household, I am mainly responsible for the household chores. And my children also help, my oldest daughter washes the dishes and does the vacuum cleaning. And my son cleans the table, so the tasks are divided equally. And my husband also helps, but less than I do. He brings out the garbage. But he is more busy with the children, he takes them to sports and takes them outside to play. I also do that, but my husband is more active in it.

**Q:** Do you think this is culture related?

**A:** I do not think the role division in my family is culture related, it is just personal. I think it is important that if my husband works full-time and I work part-time, I have to do more, and vice versa. I also think it is important that when I (the women) am ill, my husband is able to take over my tasks like taking the children to school and cooking and making sure the kids are showered, brushed their teeth and wear their pajamas. It would not be right if the women is responsible for all tasks no matter what, when I am sick, gladly my husband takes over.

**Q:** And who in your household is responsible for the financial decisions, and why?

**A:** As regards our finances, me and my husband both have an income and the money is together on one account of which we pay our rent, the groceries, and other bills. So we pay everything together. It is not like this is my money and this is yours. Everything just needs to be paid and hopefully the remaining money goes to our savings account. I am actually the one who exactly knows how much money is spent in our family and what bills need to be paid. I know exactly what we can afford ourselves and what not.

### **Awareness Islamic rights**

**Q:** Where do you acquire your knowledge about Islam?

**A:** I attend lectures at the mosque, there are lectures done by a women. And I trust her as a good source of information about our faith. But if someone on the streets would say something about Islam, I would not trust it as a proper source and I would do my own research. I think that I need to do more research and seek more knowledge, visit more lectures etcetera.

**Q:** Are you aware of your Islamic rights and duties concerning labor force participation and education?

**A:** Islam stimulates people to seek knowledge, to get educated and to develop themselves. In my family it is like, if you cannot get educated properly in the Netherlands, you can also go abroad. Try to learn as much as possible even if you are 80 or 70 years old, education is not limited to age. My mother is illiterate, and since three years she started with Arabic courses. Before, she had never hold a pencil in her hand, and now she can read Qur'an and my father helps her. She goes to school once a week. She already speaks Dutch not as good as her children, but she can express herself. And I am very proud of her. She is an older lady that studies! Our Faith stimulates this, no matter if it is a boy or a girl, equal treatment. And that is different than what other people think about Islam, the media shows Taliban who kill girls because they are going to school. But that is not real Islam.

**Q:** If you would work and earn your own money, would you take your Islamic right and spend your money on yourself?

**A:** I know that Islam gives me the right to spend my money how I want to, and that I am not required to give it to my husband. I think it is outdated to say the women's money is for her alone, and her husband cannot invoke it. I think if I kept my money for myself, we would have financial problems. I think it is selfish for a women to say: this is my money and I will spend it on myself. That would not work for us, my husband and I put our two incomes together and build our future together. This was different in the past, because women got a large dowry and bought herself gold with it. She could use this gold when for example her marriage did not work out. Then she would have something left to live from, because the women in the past were not independent and could not maintain themselves financially. But times have changed, we have studied, we are independent.

If I would divorce my husband I could take care of myself financially. So therefore I think that this is not applicable anymore in this time.

### **Awareness legal rights**

**Q:** Do you think relatives have the right to forbid a women from working?

**A:** In my opinion, parents have the right to forbid their child to perform a certain job. When they think, this job is not suitable for my child because of our faith. I would not agree if my daughter would want to work in a restaurant until the middle of the night, I would prefer if she would work in day time. Also night shifts are not suitable for women. But, basically, I think it depends on the kind of work. I think that a women also knows herself which work is suitable for her, and I don't think that her husband would have to prohibit her.

**Q:** And what about the Dutch legal rights to engage in employment of your own choice?

**A:** I believe that women have equal rights as men to perform the same job. I do not care if it concerns a job as garbage collector or prime minster, why would a Muslim women not be capable to perform such a job? In fact, I think that Muslim women are very good capable of performing a job because a Muslim women is raised in different cultures. She is Dutch, Moroccan and Muslim. She has many viewpoints.

### **Vision**

**Q:** Do you think that the government should have influence on the decision of immigrant women whether or not to work?

**A:** The government is not in the position to decide for me what completes my life. There are many women who want to stay at home and not work, to take care of their children. Taking care of children is also work. For each women wholeness and perfection have different meanings. For some women performing a paid job makes their lives complete and other women feel complete when they can stay at home and look after their children. I think that it is perfect for the government if all women would work, not for the women themselves. Not all women have the ambition to work outdoors.

**Q:** Do you think it is a good initiative from the government to offer language courses for immigrant women, in order to increase their labor force participation rate?

**A:** I think that the government's policy and actions are focused to the wrong target group. The first generation women are our mothers, the government can offer them a language course to help them speak the language, but these women are not going to enter the labor market. The government should focus on the third generation or the second generation of Muslim women. The focus should lie on the Muslim women of recent generations, they should be properly educated. And the negative publicity about Muslims also makes it difficult for these young women. They do not get a fair chance for an internship, they are rejected for jobs even if they are highly educated. Have you watched the news? How many Turkish high educated women go back to Turkey, because they do not get a fair chance for a job here in the Netherlands, because they are discriminated. So the government should focus on this target group who were born here. The government should help them to get properly educated and to get a proper job and internships. Instead of focusing on the first generation Muslim women who are not likely to enter the labor market anymore. My father is 70 years old, he already worked his whole life, he does not speak the language. So if the government wants to give him a language course, they cannot expect him to do something with it in their benefit. We are the second generation, we already speak the language we are Dutch and Moroccan. But if you apply for a job, you come on the second place, after a Dutch native. So what can be a solution for this? What can the government do? That is a difficult question. The government should just not focus on the illiterate first generation women, it is already too late for them. It is logical that they do not speak the language, but in that time it was not even required. The Dutch society has hardened.

**Q:** This was the end of the interview. Thank you very much for your cooperation.



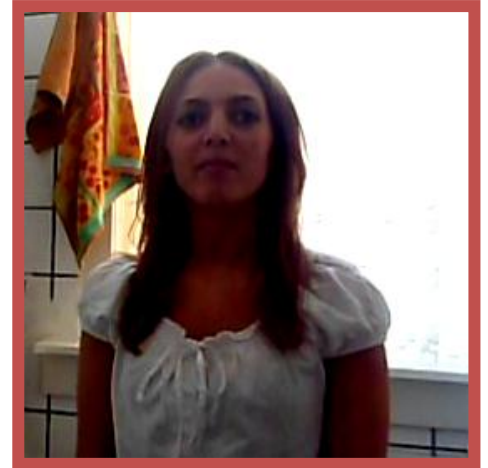
### Interview Majda Azdoud

#### Interview with Majda Azdoud, second generation Muslim women

##### Personal information

**Q:** Hello Majda, could you please give us a short introduction of yourself?

**A:** Hi, I am Majda, I am 24 years old. I come from Algeria but I was born here, in the Netherlands. I am not married and I do not have children. I live with my parents and I have one older brother and one younger brother.



##### Education level

**Q:** What is your education level?

**A:** At this moment I study legal services on MBO level.

**Q:** What have you done before this study?

**A:** Before I have worked for four years. Then my parents wanted me to go back to school to finish it. My parents told me that they find it very important that I would get a diploma, so I would also find a better job afterwards. And I agree with my parents, because I prefer having a degree and a nice job and getting married afterwards instead of getting married without having a degree at all.

##### Labor force participation

**Q:** Are you currently employed?

**A:** Besides going to school, I am currently working at a restaurants in the weekends. I think that is very important, because I need to earn my own money.

**A:** I think a women should choose herself if she wants to work or not. And for a women it is also important to earn her money, whether or not she is married.

**Q:** Are you planning to quit working when you have children and when you are married?

**A:** I am not sure, maybe I will work part-time, because I think that I will be very busy raising my children.

**Q:** Would your husband have a say in your decision to work or not?

**A:** I would listen to his opinion, however, it is still my own decision he cannot prohibit me anything.

**Q:** Have you ever experienced difficulties at school/work regarding your faith?

**A:** I have never experienced difficulties at school or work. Maybe because I do not wear a headscarf. I, myself also never experienced difficulties with Dutch society, I think that I am well established in the Netherlands. I also never experienced negative comments from Dutch natives when I tell them I am Muslim, so I never experienced problems.

##### Social participation

**Q:** Are you engaged in social activities?

**A:** Let me think about that. I do not think so, I am not engaged in voluntary work or something like that, but I am open for new things and I would like to do something for society.

**Q:** Do you also engage socially with Dutch natives?

**A:** Yes, I have many Dutch friends and we get along very well.

### **Cultural gender role division**

**Q:** Who in your household is responsible for most chores and financial decisions?

**A:** At home, my parents are together responsible for all financial decisions. And for the household chores, also my parents. I also help sometimes with the chores

### **Awareness Islamic rights**

**Q:** Where do you acquire your knowledge about Islam?

**A:** Islam is for me the most important thing in my life. Since I was little Islam is number one for me. My parents have learned me the basics about Islam, and when I grew up I have read books on my own and I also often use the internet to gain information. When I was little I also went to an Islamic school and I learned a lot about Islam there.

**Q:** Are you aware of your Islamic rights and duties concerning labor force participation and education?

**A:** I know that according to Islam men and women have the same rights. Many people are not aware of the fact that women have a very high position within the Islam. A women is seen as most important within an Islamic family. Islam gives me the right to work and to go to school, Islam is not a religion that prohibits things without a reason.

### **Awareness legal rights**

**Q:** Are you aware of your rights and duties that are given to you by Dutch law?

**A:** I believe that I am aware of my rights and duties, I grew up in the Netherlands and I went to school when I was four years old, then I started working when I was 15 years old during my study. So I know that I can study and work if I want to, and I am glad that my parents stimulated me to go back to school.

### **Vision**

**Q:** What comes on the first place for you, working or taking care of your family when you are married?

**A:** My family is far more important to me than a paid job. For me, working is necessary because I need to earn money. I do not think that my life would not be complete if I would not engage in work. And in contrary, a family does make my life complete.

**Q:** What do you think the government's role is in increasing the labor force participation and education level of Muslim women in the Netherlands?

**A:** I think that the government could help by informing companies about Islam and cultural differences. So companies can for example create prayer rooms and are not scared when they see a co-worker wearing a headscarf. In this way, the government can help create more jobs for Muslim women.

**Q:** The government has suggested to promote the dialogue between Dutch natives and Muslim women and appoint role models to increase the labor force participation of Muslim women in the Netherlands, what is your opinion about that?

**A:** I would like to participate in a dialogue with Dutch natives, because I know everything about their culture and then I can also explain them about mine. I think role models are also a good idea, but not for older women. It is a good initiative for young, third generation Muslim women who are at the point of making their own decision for the rest of their lives. Role models can stimulate them to seek education and look for a job instead of getting married at young age and wasting their capabilities and knowledge.

**Q:** This was the end of the interview. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

## Interview Tugba Kaymaz

### Interview 5: Tugba Kaymaz

#### Personal information

**Q:** Please introduce yourself briefly.

**A:** I am Tugba Kaymaz, I am 26 years old, I was born in the Netherlands but I am from Turkish origin. I am not married and I do not have children.

#### Education level

**Q:** What is your educational background? And did your environment stimulate you to seek education?

**A:** Actually the only person in my environment who has stimulated me to seek education is my father. I have an MBO degree and now I am studying law on the University.

**Q:** And why do you think that your father is the one that mostly stimulated you to seek education?

**A:** I am his oldest daughter, and we are just like friends of each other. And he really wants me to get educated and have a proper degree, because that is important for my future.

#### Labor force participation

**Q:** Are you currently employed?

**A:** At this moment I am fulltime studying, and I also have a part-time job. My highest focus is on my study, because I want to finish it as soon as possible. And after I finish my education when I finish school I will continue working to earn my own money and to build my own future. For what else would I study so long?

**Q:** Have you ever experienced difficulties at school or at work because of your faith?

**A:** I never experienced difficulties at school or at work because of my faith, maybe because I am not wearing a headscarf

#### Social participation

**Q:** Are you engaged in social activities?

**A:** I am currently not engaged in social activities.

#### Culture

**Q:** Can you tell me about the role division within your household? Who takes financial decisions and who is responsible for the household chores?

**A:** The financial decisions are taken by my father and my mother. And the household chores are mostly done by my mother, myself and my brother. But we do not have a specific division of the tasks like someone does this and the other is responsible for something else.

**Q:** So it is not the case that the women do more than the males in your household?

**A:** In our household not, not really.

**Q:** What are the main cultural differences that you experience in the Netherlands at your work and school? And do they make you feel torn between two cultures?

**A:** Honestly, I do not experience that and I do not experience problems because of my culture.

**Q:** So there are no cases of conflicting cultures you have noticed between your own culture and the Dutch culture?

**A:** Yes, of course there are differences but I do not experience difficulties because of them.



**Awareness Islamic rights**

**Q:** Do you believe that your faith stimulates you to get educated?

**A:** Partly yes and partly not, I am Muslim, and the only practices that I do in the Netherlands regarding my faith are praying and doing the Ramadan. All other things that I should do for my faith, the five pillars of Islam, I am currently not doing. I only pray and participate in the Ramadan and that does not influence my education or work.

**Q:** Do you think that Islam motivates you to get educated?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** To what extent?

**A:** Very much

**Q:** Because you have read Qur'an verses that justify that?

**A:** Yes, that is true. I often read Qur'an and for example via the internet, when I feel down I turn to my faith and I watch video's with verses of Qur'an to become calm.

**Awareness legal rights**

**Q:** Which rights are given to you by the Dutch law to work and to seek education in the Netherlands as a women? And I think this is not a very difficult question for you because you are a law student so you can tell me about it.

**A:** Yes that is true! I am very much aware of my legal rights, because I am a law student. And I think that I get all possibilities from law for now and in the future, I can do whatever I want. I can start my own business as a lawyer or I can work at a law firm or work as a judge. I think the possibilities the law give me are limitless.

**Q:** And would you ever accept it when your husband or your parents would not allow you to work or to get educated?

**A:** No I would definitely not accept it. Let me tell you something, I have a aunt and her sister has studied law four years ago on the same university as myself. And she finished her education and she worked at a large law firm. And then she wanted to get married, and the people around her, who are also Muslims, told her that working as a women or as men in the field of law, for example like a lawyer or as a judge is forbidden by Islam. They said that judges or lawyers have a function to judge other people and to determine if actions are good or wrong. And because of this opinion of others, this girl I mentioned quit her job as a lawyer.

**Q:** Do you know that Islam does not forbid people to work on the fields of law, and thus, that these statements of these people are false?

**A:** Yes I do, I know that Islam does not prohibit me from that.

**Vision**

**Q:** Do you think that the low labor force participation rate and education level of Muslim women is due to their lack of their knowledge of their rights and duties?

**A:** I agree and disagree. This applies for the women of the first generation, so the generation of my grandma, my mother and my aunts, because they are often not aware of their rights and duties and they do not know what their capabilities are and they do not know who can help them and motivate them. On the other hand, the women of the current generation are very much aware of their rights and duties and their own capabilities.

**Q:** Do you think the Dutch government is responsible to find a solution for this problem? So yes, what could be a solution?

**A:** No, I do not think that the Dutch government is required to do something about this problem. The reason why I have this opinion is because even in the country of origin of these women, like Morocco, Turkey, Afghanistan, Iran the government does not do anything about this problem. So therefore I think that the Netherlands is obviously not responsible or required to do something for these women to increase their labor force participation rate or education level. It is the women's own life and they are responsible themselves.

**Q:** Well the governments thinks that they should contribute to increase the employability of Muslim women by offering language courses, by attributing role models and by promoting the dialogue between Dutch natives and Muslim women. What is your opinion about these measures?

**A:** I think it is a good initiative, but where is the government going to find role models? I think they should use Muslim women role models for the young, third generation girls who are in high school. Language courses are not necessary I think, because we already speak Dutch. My mother also speaks Dutch, and my grandmother does not speak Dutch but she also does not need to speak Dutch. Promoting the dialogue is always positive, in that way everyone can share their opinion.

**Q:** According to the Dutch government, performing paid work is a priority for women to complete their lives. Do you agree with this statement?

**A:** Excuse me, could you please repeat your question?

**Q:** According to the Dutch government, performing paid work is a priority for women to complete their lives. Do you agree with this statement?

**A:** I think that besides performing paid employment, there are other factors that can complete a women's life. For example having your own family, your own house, children and having your own personal life.

**Q:** Do you believe that your employer should take your faith into account?

**A:** I would find it very motivating if my employer would take my religious duties into consideration. Everyone has his own faith and everyone should respect each other, one is Muslim and one is Christian and as long as everyone treats each other with respect, there is no problem. I would find it very motivating if my employer would take it into account, for example by giving me two times a day a five minute break to perform my prayers.

**Q:** This was the end of the interview. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

## Interview Fatima Oulmidi

### Interview with Fatima Oulmidi, first generation Muslim women

#### Personal information

**Q:** Assalaamu aleikom Fatima, could you please give us a short introduction of yourself?

**A:** Assalaamu aleikom, my name is Fatima Oulmidi, I am 63 years old and I came to the Netherlands from my home country Morocco in November 1975. I am married for almost 40 years now and I have 6 children.



#### Education level

**Q:** Did you study, when you were still living in Morocco, if not why did you stop studying?

**A:** When I grew up in Morocco in the sixties, I did primary school, because my parents could afford it and we had a cleaning lady who helped my mother with household chores. I really liked school and I enjoyed learning things. However, after primary school there was no possibility for me to study further. I quit school because I wanted to get married. It was a logical step for me that I would get married when I reached a certain age and a potential husband came to ask permission to my father to marry me.

**Q:** Was this your own choice?

**A:** No, in the past my parents made decisions for me, and I obeyed them. This was not my own decision.

**Q:** So, what is your education level?

**A:** I studied until the last year of primary school.

**Q:** How would you grade your knowledge of the Dutch language?

**A:** I know how to express myself at the doctor's, in the supermarket and with my friends and neighbors. So I would grade my knowledge of the Dutch language with a four.

**Q:** Can you tell us a little more about your female relatives and their education?

**A:** When I was in Morocco, I went to school. I have 10 brothers and sisters and we all went to school. My brothers and sisters have studied very high. My father had a firm and my brothers helped him. But I was the oldest one so I quit early together with my other sister. I also used to sew, I made sweaters and socks.

**Q:** To what extent did your parents stimulate you to get educated?

**A:** My parents wanted me to get married instead of getting educated. They saw it as a great chance for me when my current husband came to ask my hand for marriage, because he was living in the Netherlands and his family has a good reputation.

**Q:** What did you think about this, because you were basically married off?

**A:** In that time it was normal to obey your parents and I did whatever they told me without expressing my own opinion. But I never regret it.

#### Labor force participation

**Q:** Did you have a lot of female relatives in Morocco that worked? Or did you see females working for the first time when you came to the Netherlands?

**A:** In my family I have and had a lot of females working. I come from a wealthy family, so I think that that is the reason why my relatives had the chance to study. My sister owned her own shop. My relative females who live in Morocco studied in Russia and France, they were already very modern and high educated in that time. However, in the Netherlands I have obviously more



relatives who work. I think it is very good and positive that women work, so they are independent and they can develop themselves.

**Q:** When you first came to the Netherlands, was your husband working? And did you start working yourself also?

**A:** I did not work when I lived in Morocco. When I came to the Netherlands, my husband was working. And he also worked many extra shifts so we could make ends meet. He started early in the morning, then he came back at 16:00 p.m and he went straight to pray, then he read the Qur'an as I prepared dinner. After dinner he went back to work until 23:00 p.m.. After a while, also I started working because we bought a house so we needed extra money. However, after about a year, when we got more children I had to quit working, because I needed to take our children to school. In that time, the schools were very good, and also our neighbors were very friendly, so I really liked living in the Netherlands.

**Q:** Are you happy with the decision that you quit working or are you regretting that decision now?

**A:** I am satisfied with the fact that I only worked for one year, because my husband was always working hard and long days. So I had to stay at home for our children. It was a difficult time, we did not visit our family in Morocco for three years because we did not have the money.

**Q:** Did your husband have a say in the decision that you quit your job?

**A:** No, I wanted to quit myself because I wanted to be there for my children. And I say alhamdulillah, even if we had little money, it was enough for us. My family was most important for me.

**Q:** Now your children are all grown up, would you like to start working again?

**A:** No, I am very proud that I raised them well. They are all high educated and working, and after I went to Hadj I am very satisfied and I feel like I completed my tasks at earth. Working is irrelevant for me now, because I think I have accomplished everything I want. I never experienced difficulties here in the Netherlands, I have great neighbors.

### **Social participation**

**Q:** When you came to the Netherlands, did you make contact with Dutch natives? And do you have Dutch friends?

**A:** When I came to the Netherlands I had Dutch neighbors and they asked me if I would like it to learn the Dutch language. And I said I would, so they stimulated me to go to training courses to learn the basics of the Dutch language. When I learned the basics I quit the training course. Learning the language was not difficult for me, because I already speak French so I knew the alphabet for example. My Dutch friends also always visit me at home, they are still my friends. In the past I often baby-sitted their children when they went working. I practically raised some of their children. I brought their children to school together with my own children. My friends also helped me when I had to go to the hospital for example. They really took care of me and my family. When sometimes I got shy and told them that I really appreciated their help, one of my friends used to say: you don't have relatives here, we are the only people you have. If I was living in a strange country I would also need people who would help me.

**Q:** Are you engaged in social activities?

**A:** No..

### **Cultural gender role division**

**Q:** Who in your household is responsible for most chores?

**A:** In our culture it is normal that the husband works outdoors and the wife takes care of the children and does all household chores. My husband is retired, so we divide the tasks. We do groceries together. My husband does the vacuum cleaning and the dishes, and he likes it to join me in the kitchen when I cook the meals. And my daughters also help us.

**Q:** You mention your daughters as a help, however, if you would have sons instead of daughters, would you also expect them to help with household chores?

**A:** Yes, they are equal to me. My daughters also work hard outdoors so there is no difference nowadays between boys and girls.

### **Awareness Islamic rights**

**Q:** How do you acquire your knowledge about Islam?

**A:** When I still lived in Morocco my grandmother used to teach me everything about Islam. She had a lot of knowledge and me and my sisters used to sit with her and then she started explaining. I also read the Qur'an myself, and my husband reads Qur'an everyday and then I listen to that. About six years ago my husband and I went to Makkah for our pilgrimage, before we went I read a lot of books and when we came back I brought new books with me.

**Q:** Do you know your Islamic rights and duties concerning labor force participation and education?

**A:** Education is of major importance in Islam. Did you know that the first word the revelation of Qur'an started with is "Iqrah" which means "read". According to the Qur'an seeking knowledge is a duty of both men and women. As regards labor, I think that the women is allowed to work, but she has to give priority to her household chores.

**Q:** If you would work and earn your own money, would you take your Islamic right and spend your money on yourself?

**A:** When I got married my husband gave me a dowry. I bought a lot of golden jewelry from it and I still have it in case of emergency. But if I would work and earn money on a regular basis I would not spend it on myself, I would spend it on my family and also on my husband like he spends his money on me. But I am aware of my Islamic right, and if my husband would force me to give him the money that I earned myself, I would certainly not listen to him.

### **Awareness legal rights**

**Q:** Are you aware of the laws applied in the Netherlands who give women the right to seek education and to work?

**A:** Yes I am, and I think those laws are important. Currently they are also busy in Morocco with those kind of laws for women. I am happy that my daughters can benefit from this legal right.

### **Vision**

**Q:** As you said earlier in this interview, you have daughters. How is your opinion about their education?

**A:** Education is important! I wanted them to get educated and all of them did. Afterwards they got married and got children. I say girls need to get educated and languages are also important to learn. I am happy that my daughters also think education is important and I am very proud of them.

**Q:** What is more important for a girl in your opinion, getting educated or getting married?

**A:** Personal development comes on the first place, so education is most important. However, marriage and having children are also important but that comes afterwards. After you get a job you can have children.

**Q:** How do you think the Dutch government should stimulate Muslim women to increase their low labor force participation and education level?

**A:** That is a difficult question, I think that the government should not focus on education, because the women who are ready to enter the labor market are already educated. The government should give them opportunities to find a job. My daughters were rejected very often for a job because of their Moroccan name or headscarf. That disturbs me a lot. And boys have the same problem here in the Netherlands, not only girls.

**Q:** This was the end of the interview. Thank you very much for your cooperation.



## Interview Nadia

### Interview with Nadia, first generation Muslim women

#### **Personal information**

**Q:** Assalaamu aleikom Nadia, could you please give us a short introduction of yourself?

**A:** I am Nadia, I am 42 years old, I am married and I have two daughters. I live in the Netherlands for 18 years now, before I lived in Iraq.

#### **Education level**

**Q:** What is your education level?

**A:** I finished middle school, and then I quit school. Here in the Netherlands I noticed that the women are high educated.

**Q:** Would you like to participate in a course to increase your knowledge?

**A:** Yes, I am interested in that, I would like to increase my knowledge about Islam. I am already attending Islamic courses at the mosque and I read several books to increase my knowledge. But I am not interested in following courses about other subjects, because I think I can gain knowledge about what is happening in the world from the television. And I do not need other knowledge about specific subjects, because I am not going to use it for work. I also think my knowledge of Dutch language is sufficient, I am very pleased and I can manage myself very good in society.

#### **Labor force participation**

**Q:** Are you currently engaged in paid employment?

**A:** No, I am currently unemployed but I have worked for three years as a hairdresser. I liked the work and I had a lot of contact with other women. I learned to cut hair when I was still in Iraq, but I am specialized in fixing eyebrows. A lot of clients used to ask for me when I was working in the salon. I think that I was good at my job. But now I do not have time to work anymore. My husband earns our money and I take care of our children.

**Q:** Is the lack of time the only reason why you are not employed anymore?

Yes, because I speak the Dutch language and helping others gives my life meaning, therefore I would like to do voluntary work on a regular basis when I have time for it.

#### **Social participation**

**Q:** When you came to the Netherlands, did you make contact with Dutch natives? And do you have Dutch friends?

**A:** When I came to the Netherlands I had to get used to certain things. For Dutch people for example you always need to make an appointment to visit them, while I was used to just visit friends without making an appointment. So in the beginning it was difficult for me to make Dutch native friends. Also because of the language barrier. But I think that I can speak Dutch very well now, and I have made a lot of contacts in the Netherlands, also with Dutch natives. They like my cooking and I enjoy their company.

**Q:** Are you engaged in social activities?

**A:** A little, sometimes I bake cake's or other things for the mosque so people can buy it and the yield will go to charity. In addition, I like to help at the school of my children when they need a mother to drive them to activities or something else.

#### **Cultural gender role division**

**Q:** Who in your household is responsible for most chores?

**A:** I am responsible for everything and I am not complaining, because my husband also works very hard and he deserves a nice meal when he comes home. It is my duty as a wife to take care of my husband and children, I quit working at the hair salon so I could focus on my household chores. And of course my husband helps me sometimes, but not regularly.

**Q:** And who is responsible for most financial decisions?

**A:** Both me and my husband. We both have access to our bank account and I do not have to ask him for permission to buy small things. But when we purchase expensive things we talk about it together before making a decision.

### **Awareness Islamic rights**

**Q:** What rights does your faith give you concerning education and labor?

**A:** I read the Qur'an and I know that there are some restrictions as regards performing certain work. For instance, you cannot serve alcohol and you have to keep your modesty. But these restrictions are for both men and women, so Islam gives me, and all other women the right to work. As regards education, when you open the Qur'an you are already learning. Islam supports both men and women to get educated.

### **Awareness legal rights**

**Q:** Are you aware of the legal laws applied in the Netherlands concerning your right to get educated and to work if you want to?

**A:** I am very happy that I live in the Netherlands instead of Iraq, my female relatives in Iraq do not have the right to work. I do, the Dutch law is very strong and gives women many rights. I think women in the Netherlands are nearly as educated as men, and a lot of women work even if they have small children. But I just do not want to work, my husband is already working and that is enough for us. I have enough other things to do in the house, you know.

### **Vision**

**Q:** Do you think that the labor force participation of Muslim women in the Netherlands increases when companies take the Islamic religion in account?

**A:** I think that it helps if we can pray at work and wear clothes we want, and if Dutch men would understand that we rather talk with female colleagues only. But I think it will take many years until Dutch natives understand our religion and take it into account on the work floor. I do not notice a lot of understanding of Dutch natives for our religion, every year with Ramadan I need to explain the same things that we cannot drink water or chew chewing gum. They make jokes and say I think you eat during Ramadan when you are alone in a room, and nobody can see you. Then I answer, Allah can see everything. I understand their religion and culture, I know what they do for Christmas, for Easter, so why is it so difficult for them to remember that Muslims have Ramadan.

**Q:** The government has suggested to promote the dialogue between Dutch natives and Muslim women and appoint role models to increase the labor force participation of Muslim women in the Netherlands, what is your opinion about that?

**A:** I think it is a good idea, because role models can have a good influence on young Muslim women. For example if a female Muslim lawyer or doctor visits a middle school and explains the young Muslim women that they also have the right to get educated and the right to have a successful career, and that their focus should not lie on getting married and having many children. But it is important that the role model is Muslim, otherwise the Muslim girls do not feel connected or they cannot compare themselves with her. The word dialogue is chosen very well. I think that Dutch people will understand us better, when we have a dialogue about certain things and we explain each other our ways of thinking and our beliefs.

**Q:** This was the end of the interview. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

## Interview Hatice

**Interview with Hatice, first generation Muslim women****Personal information**

**Q:** Assalaamu aleikom Hatice, could you please give us a short introduction of yourself?

**A:** Assalamu Aleikum my name is Hatice, I am 61 years old, I was born in Turkey. Me and my husband came to the Netherlands when I was about 26 years old. I am married and I have four children.

**Education level and labor force participation**

**Q:** What is your education level, and are you currently employed?

**A:** When I came to the Netherlands my husband worked and I was pregnant, I could not speak the language and I did not have an education degree. So it was a logical step for me to become a housewife.

**Q:** have you never thought about getting a job?

**A:** When our children grew up I thought about getting a job, but my husband wanted me to stay at home. He did not want me to work in an environment where I was exposed to men. I know that I have the legal right to work, but I listened to my husband to avoid an argument. In my culture it is difficult for a women to work. We often get unexpected guests at our house, and I cannot tell them that they have to leave because I have to work. But I would like to do other things to be socially involved , like going to community centers .”

**Q:** Can you tell us a little more about your female relatives and their education?

**A:** My children have finished middle school and two of them have an MBO degree. All my children are married and have children of their own. My female relatives in Turkey are not very well educated, they are focused on their families just like myself.

**Social participation**

**Q:** When you came to the Netherlands, did you make contact with Dutch natives? And do you have Dutch friends?

**A:** I have some Turkish and Moroccan neighbors, I see them often and we talk about our lives. My Moroccan neighbor sometimes gives me Moroccan food to taste, and I also give her my Turkish dishes. Sometimes I see Dutch women in the supermarket and we have a little conversation, but because of my low understanding of the Dutch language we cannot become close friends.

**Cultural gender role division**

**Q:** Who in your household is responsible for most chores?

**A:** I am responsible for cooking, but as you can see because of my health I am not really capable of doing household chores. When I was still young, before I needed support to walk, I did all household chores on my own. Sometimes my husband helped me, but he was busy working. But now I am weak, I just cook our meals and my husband does the rest. Sometimes my children come visit us and they clean our whole house.

**Q:** Who in your household takes important financial decisions?

**A:** My husband does, however he almost always asks my opinion.

**Awareness Islamic rights**

**Q:** What rights does your faith give you concerning education and labor?

**A:** I am a Muslim alhamdulillah, and I am very happy that there are no restrictions in Islam for both men and women to seek education. I know a lot of Qur'an verses, which I use to pray. The Qur'an is written in Arabic and I also say the verses in Arabic. For labor there are restrictions. As a women

you should not interfere with male colleagues and you should stay away from pork and alcohol. But these are things a Muslim should stay away from anyway.

### **Awareness legal rights**

**Q:** Are you aware of the legal laws applied in the Netherlands concerning your right to get educated and to work if you want to?

**A:** I know that the law in the Netherlands gives me the right to work if I want to, and also the right to get educated. Males and females are equal for the law.

**Q:** Then why did you obey your husband when he did not allow you to work?

**A:** In my culture I have to obey my husband, it is not even religion related. I just want to avoid arguments so I do not stand up for my rights.”

### **Vision**

**Q:** Do you think that the government should have influence on the decision of immigrant women whether or not to work?

**A:** Absolutely not! Every women is different. I am not like Dutch women and I have other priorities besides working. My husband has the duty to take care of me financially and he does it very good. My family in Turkey would also find it strange if I started working now, I am old and my health is also not very good. If the government wants to help, they should help my niece who is already looking for a job over six months and she still has not found anything.

**Q:** Do you think it is a good initiative from the government to offer language courses for immigrant women, in order to increase their labor force participation rate?

**A:** If the governments offers those language courses for free I would like to participate. But I do not think that that would be in the governments advantage, because I will not use my skills to work.

**Q:** This was the end of the interview. Thank you very much for your cooperation.