

**TO COVER OR NOT TO COVER?
RELIGIOUS IDENTITY NEGOTIATION OF MUSLIM
WOMEN IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN WORKPLACE
REGARDING DONNING THE HIJAB**

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the challenges facing Muslim women who wear hijab in the South African workplace. It covers their experiences in the workplace, as they negotiate their religious identity. It also examines the extent of religious accommodation in the South African workplace and explores the existence of Islamophobia in South African organisations.

A qualitative research approach, using in-depth semi structured interviews was utilised in the study to gain deeper insights into the challenges facing Muslim women who wear hijab in the workplace. Purposive sampling was used to identify 11 Muslim women who were interviewed in the study. Content analysis was conducted in order to analyse the data using the Atlas.ti programme.

The results of the study conclude that Muslim women who wear hijab in South Africa are well integrated in the corporate society. Their religious dress and most of their religious practices are acknowledged by employers, and they are accommodated as a result of this. Muslim women in South African workplaces are also not subjected to Islamophobia, neither do they experience issues relating to entry into the workplace or career advancement as is experienced by Muslim women in other countries.

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TO COVER OR NOT TO COVER?

RELIGIOUS IDENTITY NEGOTIATION OF MUSLIM WOMEN

IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN WORKPLACE REGARDING

DONNING THE HIJAB

1 INTRODUCTION

Islam is the fastest growing religion as well as the second largest religion in the world, with one out of every four people being a Muslim (The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2009). As the Muslim population continues to grow, it will be common for one to have Muslim colleagues in the workplace. According to King, Bell and Lawrence (2009) religious diversity is poorly understood and managed in the work context.

The history of South African Apartheid largely shaped the South African workforce in which women of all races faced inequity. Post 1994, the South African government has introduced a wide range of interventions which are aimed at promoting gender equity. Current legislation addresses imbalances through development, training and educational programmes (Carrim, 2012). With the increased entry of ethnically diverse women into the workplace (Tape, 2011) coupled with the broad diversity of the South African population, the question remains as to how minority women, specifically Muslim women wearing the hijab, are treated and accommodated in the South African workplace and how the corporate culture impacts on their religious identity at work.

1.1 BACKGROUND

Religion plays a significant role in moulding human behaviour. Studies have found that religion influences attitudes and behaviour, ranging from movies to politics (Badaracco, 2004). Religion has also been found to have a positive influence on mental health (Kelly, 1995), physical health and general life satisfaction (Cacioppo & Brandon, 2002). However, religion has also been related to prejudice and violent conflict (Melloan, 2002). The significance of religious diversity in the workplace is evident from employee requests for

religious accommodation as well as the increase in incidences pertaining to religious discrimination (King et al., 2009).

Religious accommodation ranges from employees being permitted to wear religious attire to work, the provision of prayer facilities as well as the provision of food which meets the requirements stipulated by the respective religion. Observing certain religious holidays, fasting and avoiding indecent language and behaviour also falls within the realm of religious accommodation. Discrimination can be regarded as either a social issue or a criminal justice issue. Educational programs should be able to resolve the social issue, whereas punishing unlawful behaviour should be able to change attitudes from a criminal justice perspective (Hamdani, 2005). According to the New York Times, Muslims filed twenty-five percent of religious discrimination claims in 2009, even though they account for only two percent of America's workforce (Durrani, 2012). Religious discrimination is generally directed at a community. However, Muslim women are easier targets due to being easily identifiable because of their dresscode. Hamdani (2005) found that labour markets in Canada discriminated against Muslim women who wore a headscarf. In essence, diverse workplaces provide a greater playing field for conflict and harassment. It is thus essential for employers to be aware of the challenges caused by religion in the workplace.

Religion influences ethics and general workplace behaviour (Von Bergen & Mawer, 2008) and work forms an integral part of one's identity (Hicks, 2003). Swann, Johnson and Bosson (2009) have found that if a person's identity is supported by the organisation they work for, it will lead to increased job performance, organizational commitment and better health and well-being. Muslims attribute 'work' as a means of worshipping God, so long as their duties are performed honestly and to the best of their ability (Akdere, Russ-Eft & Eft, 2006). Respect and dignity, from a business perspective, ensures the payment of fair wages and the provision of decent working conditions which are humane and fair. Von Bergen and Mawer (2008) have found that employees show a keen desire to work at organizations where there is alignment between their religion and workplace practices.

Religious stereotyping as well as Islamophobia (fear of Islam) has an adverse impact on the work experiences of Muslims (Syed & Pio, 2010). Muslim women, who wear hijab or a

headscarf, are stereotyped as being oppressed, submissive and backwards (Hu, Pazaki, Al-Qubbaj & Cutler, 2009). However, scholars have argued that hijab should be understood from a multi-cultural context due to the increase in the number of Muslims in mainstream public affairs. Accordingly, wearing the hijab reinforces the unique religious identity of Muslim women. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (2009) has found that women who wear hijab encounter greater difficulties when trying to access employment. In countries like America, freedom of religious expression exists. However, countries like France have chosen to ban the wearing of religious symbols in public places. In both countries, Muslim women face different challenges in their daily lives. Muslims in South Africa experience a great degree of religious freedom. In spite of this, will existing stereotypes increase the challenges faced by Muslim women who don hijab in the South African workplace because they are identifiable as Muslims?

Diversity as a theme in human resource management has addressed matters of equality in terms of gender, but has failed to focus on other characteristics, such as religion and ethnicity (King et al., 2009), in a diverse workforce. Empirical data has indicated that ethnic minority women need to demonstrate a fit in the organizational culture if they want to be a part of networks within the organization or be granted opportunities for development and advancement of their careers (Kamenou & Fearfull, 2006).

Current research has demonstrated the importance of personal appearance as a means of exhibiting an employee's status as well as fitness for the functional aspects of their job (Kamenou & Fearfull, 2006). Personal appearance ranges from the type of jewellery and cosmetics that one uses to clothing and hairstyles. Furthermore, the credibility and professionalism that an individual presents in respect of organizational demands and expectations relates to organizational acceptance and success (Grey, 1998). Kamenou (2002) has found that ethnic minority women in the workplace are subject to racial and gender stereotypes, are at the lower levels of organizational hierarchies, experience difficulty in identifying mentors and are excluded from elite networks in the workplace. Consequently, it is important for organizations to understand and respect religious and cultural differences in the workplace instead of forcing minorities to assimilate.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

By focusing on the challenges regarding donning hijab in the South African workplace, this study aims to provide insight into a field in which limited research has been conducted. This study will bring to the fore the life experiences of Muslim women in the workplace, how they maintain and negotiate their religious identity, their experiences of discrimination because of their dress code and the extent to which they experience religious accommodation in the South African workplace.

1.3 PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of this study is to explore the challenges facing Muslim women regarding donning the hijab in the South African workplace. Furthermore, it aims to determine how they negotiate their religious, gender and professional identities.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study will consist of primary as well as secondary research questions.

1.4.1 Primary research question

- What challenges do Muslim women face in the workplace regarding donning the hijab?

1.4.2 Secondary research questions

- How do Muslim women negotiate their religious, gender and professional identities in the workplace regarding their religious dressing?
- Do Muslim women perceive that their workplaces accommodate or violate their religious practices?
- Does wearing the hijab make Muslim women vulnerable to Islamophobia or religious discrimination in the workplace?

1.5 ACADEMIC VALUE AND CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This study will provide new insights on the challenges facing Muslim women who wear hijab in the South African workplace. It will also contribute greatly to the field of diversity management, as it is relevant to the multi-cultural South African society. There is a lack of literature on this topic, and thus the study aims to provide a benchmark for comparison to international studies that aim to determine the challenges facing Muslim women who wear hijab in the workplace.

1.6 DELIMITATIONS

The delimitations of a study refer to those inclusionary and exclusionary characteristics that define the boundaries of the study (Maree, 2007; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012; Simon, 2011). This study will focus on Muslim women who wear hijab in the South African workplace. Age will not influence the selection of the sample; however, it is important for the women in the study to have worked in a corporate environment for at least 5 years in order to determine how they have negotiated their gender, religious and professional identities. The study aims to explore the experiences of Muslim women who are based within the Gauteng region. The study will not cover the experiences of a Muslim woman who wears hijab occasionally, but rather intends to focus on those who wear it on a daily basis within their workplace.

A limitation refers to the weaknesses of a study, which is beyond the researcher's control (Simon, 2011). A limitation regarding this study relates to the generalizability of the research findings. Since the study will only be conducted in western organisations, the findings cannot be representative of the challenges facing all Muslim women who wear hijab in the workplace. The study will also not include women from other religious factions who wear traditional clothes in the workplace. The study will only be conducted in the Gauteng region and will not include workplaces in other regions where Islamic dressing may be viewed differently.

1.7 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework of this study consists of a number of topics identified by the researcher through an in-depth literature review. The topics are: Muslim women, hijab, identity and the South African workplace.

1.8 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

1.8.1 Hijab

One of the most visible symbols of Islam presents through the dress code of Muslim women. The religion mandates the wearing of hijab, which refers to a headscarf. Both Muslim men and women are required to dress modestly and wearing hijab aims to shift the focus away from a woman's physical appearance to her character (Webb, 2012).

1.8.2 Islamophobia

This ideology excludes Muslims from positions, rights and involvement in society due to their believed or actual Islamic background (Islamic Human Rights Commission, n.d.). It is a racist theory that sustains a negative idea of Islam and Muslims. Furthermore, the consequences of Islamophobia are exclusion on social, economic and political levels including subjugation to violence (Allen, 2010). Islamophobia is a fear of Islam or a fear of Muslims (Oxford Dictionary, 2013).

Table 1: Abbreviations

ABBREVIATION	MEANING
PBUH	Peace be upon him

1.9 CHAPTER LAYOUT

The structure of the study is indicated below:

Chapter 2 contains the literature review.

Chapter 3 describes the research design and methodology.

Chapter 4 indicates the findings of the study.

Chapter 5 contains a discussion of the findings in relation to current literature.

Chapter 6 marks the conclusion of the study as well as recommendations for future research.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader with a greater understanding regarding fundamental backbones to this topic. The literature review begins by discussing the status of women in Islam, and the employment of women in the modern day. It further explores the concept of hijab and identity within the gender and religious context. Discrimination against Muslims and Islamophobia is then discussed.

2.2 STATUS OF WOMEN IN ISLAM

According to chapter 51 (verse 49) of the Quran, a man and a woman form a pair amongst God's creations (Quran, n.d.). They also have equal rights and obligations, as they unite to constitute a family (Chaudhry, 2002). Chaudhry (2002) further explains that the role of a man is characterised as being the breadwinner whereas a woman is characterised as a caregiver and guardian of the home. Both roles are required in order for humanity to advance. The roles of men and women should therefore be viewed as being complimentary and neither is superior nor inferior to the other. Muslim women are entitled to a high status and great honour in society (Turn to Islam, 2006). They have a complete bill of rights afforded to them by Islam, which encompasses social, cultural, legal as well as economic rights (Nomani, n.d.). Before the advent of Islam, the pagan Arabs engaged in burying their female babies alive as the birth of a daughter resulted in great shame for the parents of the baby (The Express Tribune, 2012). Having a daughter was also deemed as a bad omen (Chaudhry, 2002). Islam abolished this practice and teaches that sons and daughters be treated equally. According to a tradition narrated by the Prophet Muhammed, Peace Be Upon Him (PBUH), if a man raises two daughters, educates them and treats them well, then God will make paradise obligatory for him (Questions on Islam, 2010). This tradition highlights the importance of education as well as the high status associated with raising daughters in Islam.

In terms of legal rights, a Muslim woman is able to choose her own spouse, and must

provide her consent in order for a marriage to be valid (Ahmed, n.d.). Her spouse is obligated to maintain her financially and it is obligatory for him to provide her a dowry upon marriage (Islam Web, 2013). Under certain circumstances, she may also seek a divorce or the dissolution of the marriage (Chaudhry, 2002). A Muslim woman can also acquire and dispose of property as she wishes and is entitled to inheritance upon the death of close relatives (Abdel Azim, n.d.). Participation in social, public and religious gatherings is permissible so long as the Muslim is modestly dressed (Chaudhry, 2002).

In medieval times, women had no status and no rights (Chaudhry, 2002). They were regarded as slaves, and were not involved in social, legal and economic aspects of life. In this period, women were not allowed to own property, they could not inherit, they could not earn a living nor were they granted a dowry at marriage (Chaudhry, 2002). Chaudhry (2002) further states that the fight for equal rights and status has been a continuous struggle for women in the last two hundred years. A book written by Mary Wollstonecraft called *A vindication of the rights of women* was published in 1792 and sparked a feminist movement in Britain which demanded equal rights for women in terms of employment, politics and education. The book demanded that women be treated equal to men. In most countries today, women can vote and have the same rights as men. Both individuals and organisations alike achieved this after centuries of activism. It is important to note that Islam has granted women numerous rights, without Muslim women even fighting for it (Chaudhry, 2002).

2.2.1 Muslim women and employment during the era of Prophet Muhammed PBUH

With reference to Islamic teachings, the earning of sustenance for a family remains the duty of males. However, Islam does not forbid a woman from engaging in business, employment or any kind of profession in order to earn an income or contribute earnings to that of the family (Chaudhry, 2002). The following verse from the holy Quran substantiates a woman's participation in employment:

And do not wish for that by which Allah (God) has made some of you exceed others. For men is a share of what they have earned, and for women is a share of what they have earned. And ask Allah of his bounty. Indeed Allah is

ever, of all things, knowing. (*Holy Quran 4:32*).

*And when he arrived at the watering (place) in Madyan. He found there a group of men watering (their flocks), and besides them he found two women who were keeping back (their flocks). He said: "What is the matter with you?" They said: "We cannot water (our flocks) until the shepherds take back (their flocks): And our father is a very old man". (*Holy Quran 28:3*).*

Earning a livelihood remains the duty of the males in the family; however it is clear that women may also work in order to earn a living. The Quran does not prohibit women from working. Verse 3 in chapter 8 of the Quran refers to the daughters of prophet Shoaib (PBUH) who was an old man and could not attend to his flock of sheep. His daughters used to take the flocks to graze. From this example, it is evident that women can engage in earning a livelihood if such economic compulsions do occur (Chaudhry, 2002).

According to authentic traditions by the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH), he allowed a divorced woman to go to her garden and sell the fruit that had grown. In another tradition, the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) allowed women to prepare food and nurse the wounded in battles. The traditions indicate that women can pursue careers as nurses and businesswomen (Chaudhry, 2002).

Other examples of Muslim women who worked would be that of Asma bint Abu Bakr (may God be pleased with her) who was not married to a wealthy man. The Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) then gave her and her husband some land. She used to farm as well as transport the produce herself. Aisha bint Abu Bakr and Umm Salam also gave many legal rulings. A lady by the name of Qailah was a trader who bought and sold goods. She used to seek advice from the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) regarding trade. During the time of the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) it is evident that women engaged in professions ranging from farmers, nurses, traders and jurists (Mutma'inna, 2007). From this, it is clear that it is lawful for Muslim women to engage in professions in order to earn an income.

Justice Aftab Hussain (1987) has mentioned in his book *Status of the women in Islam* that pursuing a career is not a hobby amongst women. The object of pursuing a career is to

avail oneself to the service of society. Monetary rewards thus remain a secondary consideration. However, if there are economic compulsions, women can engage in sewing and needlework to earn a living. Increased costs of living and inflation govern today's society; therefore, it is common to find women who work in order to contribute to their household income. A prominent scholar by the name of Muhammed Hamidullah is of the same opinion concerning Muslim women and employment:

In every epoch of Islamic history, including the time of the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH), one sees Muslim women engaged in every profession that suited them. They worked as nurses, teachers, and even as combatants by the side of men when necessary, in addition to being singers, hairdressers, etc. Caliph Umar employed a lady, Shifa bint Abdallah, as inspector in the market at the capital (Madinah), as Ibn Hajar records. The same lady had taught Hafsa, wife of the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH), how to write and read. The jurists admit the possibility of women being appointed as judges of tribunals, and there are several examples of the kind. In brief, far from becoming parasites, a woman could collaborate with men, in Muslim society, to earn her livelihood and to develop her talents. (Hamidullah, n.d.).

2.3 MUSLIM WOMEN AND EMPLOYMENT IN THE MODERN DAY

There is undoubtedly a great need for Muslim female professionals such as doctors, psychologists and teachers. Muslim women who enter the work environment are faced with numerous challenges. Examples of this would be when a male employee offers a handshake during a first meeting, discussing private aspects of one's life with colleagues, office parties where alcohol is consumed or even instances where hijab or the religion of Islam is mocked. These situations will add pressure to a Muslim woman as she tries to fulfil her job and maintain her religious identity (Islam Web, 2012). Amongst the challenges facing Muslim women is that there are contrasts between the workplace and the Islamic value system. For instance, Islam does not permit intermingling of the sexes; however, in the workplace there is no segregation. Thus, Muslim women have to communicate with people of the opposite gender, upholding their modesty at all times.

Before a Muslim woman enters the working world, she should seek consent from her guardian or husband (Chaudhry, 2002). She should also consider how her employment would affect the family as well as its functioning. Muslim women should consider employment that is not in conflict with the religion as working with products and services that are forbidden in Islam is not permissible (Islam Q & A, n.d.). Examples of this would be products such as alcohol and working in banks, where income is tainted by usury. Furthermore, a Muslim woman should not seek employment in organisations that prevent her from maintaining her Islamic identity or prevent her from performing her prayers. It is also advised that Muslim women in the workplace should always uphold their modesty and chastity (Islam Q & A, n.d.).

The following verse in the Quran refers to guidelines that women must comply with should they venture into the working world:

The Believers, men and women, are protectors one of another: they enjoin what is just and forbid what is evil: they observe regular prayers, practice regular charity and obey Allah and His messenger. On them will Allah pour His mercy for Allah is exalted in power, wise - Quran 9:17, Translated by Abdullah Yusuf Ali).

The words ‘protectors one of another’ has been used to describe social changes whereby greater access to educational opportunities and a changing economic environment has led women to engage in employment and thus contribute to household expenses (Islam, 2012). Islam does not prohibit women from working; however, they should follow certain guidelines to ensure their dignity in the working environment (Islam, 2012). Firstly, employment should not prevent a woman from performing her duties as a wife or as a mother. Secondly, the woman’s employment should not cause friction in the home. Thirdly, a woman should ensure that her appearance, behaviour and manners of conducting herself are in line with Islamic principles. According to Islam (2012) these include avoiding unnecessary contact with the opposite gender, dressing correctly and not using perfume or makeup in public places. Lastly, a woman should seek employment in professions that relate to the needs of women and children, for instance being a paediatrician or gynaecologist. Furthermore, Muhammed Salih Al-Munajjid (n.d.) who is an Islamic scholar

has mentioned that if a woman wears hijab, does not neglect her family, and if she has sought the permission of her guardian or husband, it will be permissible for her to work.

2.4 HIJAB

The rules which outline the manner in which a woman dresses in Islam, is from the Quran as well as the traditions of the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH). Chapter 24:30 of the Quran orders Muslim women to lower their gaze and guard their modesty and that they should not display their beauty in front of men who are not close relatives (Asghar, 2008). According to a tradition stated by the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH), he mentioned that if a woman has reached the age of puberty, she should cover her whole body except her face and hands (Islam 101, n.d.). Accordingly, Muslim scholars have ruled that a woman's dress must be loose fitting, covering the entire body except the face and hands. The hijab is one of the many rights, which have been conferred to Muslim women. The modesty of dress is related to obedience to God and is not related to being submissive to men (Al Mujtaba, 2010).

The choice of a Muslim woman to cover or not to cover is freely made, despite it being an obligation in Islam. It is important to note that the term hijab is interchangeable with the word headscarf; however, its meaning is much vaster (Noor's List, 2008). In Afghanistan, hijab refers to the *burqa*, which is a long, loose fitting garment. In Pakistan, it is known as *shalwar khamis*. If a woman covers her body and head, it can be regarded as wearing hijab. Hijab literally means to veil or cover. By wearing hijab, the moral boundaries between unrelated men and women are respected. Hijab therefore represents more than just a modest dress code as it includes modest behaviour. For example, if a Muslim woman wears hijab, she should refrain from indecent language (Stacey, 2009). Many Muslim women view the wearing of hijab as part of an Islamic revival, especially since hijab is forbidden in many European countries (Scott, 2010). Women who wear hijab view themselves as being 'free' and not suppressed as hijab allows women to be viewed for their mind and intellect, as opposed to their looks and body shape (Scott, 2010).

Nazma Khan calls on both non-Muslim women and Muslim women who do not normally wear hijab, to wear hijab on 1 February, instituted as World Hijab Day. The aim of this day

is to foster greater tolerance and understanding of Muslim women who wear hijab by allowing others to experience it (Nye, 2013). According to Khan, hijab is viewed as a symbol of oppression. World Hijab Day aims to counteract these controversies by allowing individuals to understand and experience wearing hijab. Khan has been a victim of discrimination in America post the attack on the World Trade Centre in 2001 due to wearing hijab. Figure 1 indicates a picture of Jess Ross, a non-Muslim woman, who supports World Hijab Day.

Fatima Mernissi is a prominent Muslim feminist who associates the hijab with male domination and social hierarchies that are oppressive in nature. She believes that the hijab isolates women and diminishes their existence (Tuppurainen, 2010). Furthermore, anti-hijab Muslim commentators argue that the hijab is a cultural practice and not a religious practice. These represent minority opposing views on wearing hijab (Read & Bartkowski, 2000).

Figure 1: Pictures of Jess Ross without and with her hijab.



Adapted from Hijab for a day: Non-Muslim women who wear the headscarf

Retrieved May 5, 2013, from BBC Asian Network: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-21283301>

The following is a poem relating to hijab, which explains a Muslim woman's perception of the hijab:

I am a Muslim woman
Feel free to ask me why
When I walk,
I walk with dignity
When I speak
I do not lie

I am a Muslim woman
Not all of me you'll see
But what you should appreciate
Is that the choice I make is free

I'm not plagued with depression
I'm neither cheated nor abused
I don't envy other women
And I'm certainly not confused

Note, I speak perfect English
Et un petit peu de Francais aussi
I'm majoring in Linguistics
So you need not speak slowly

I run my own small business
Every cent I earn is mine
I drive my Chevy to school & work
And no, that's not a crime!

You often stare as I walk by
You don't understand my veil
But peace and power I have found
As I am equal to any male!

I am a Muslim woman
So please don't pity me
For God has guided me to truth
And now I'm finally free!

(Unknown, n.d.)

2.5 IDENTITY

Simple choices, which are made on a daily basis (e.g. food and clothing), add insights on who we are and relay images, both consciously and sub-consciously about the type of person that we think we are (Hussein, 2004). Self-identity constantly changes and

influences others. In turn, it is influenced by external factors such as those around us, culture or the manner in which we live. Noble, Poynting and Tabar (1999) have indicated that identities are a result of physical and cultural differences, which exist amongst groups. Identity is also viewed as the result of interacting with people. Therefore, people possess an identity, which constantly changes. According to Kahani-Hopkins and Hopkins (2002) identities are the result of on-going processes, thus they are changed and transformed by means of interacting socially. Identities are not fixed and are rarely singular, changing all the time (Noble et al., 1999; McCarthey & Moje, 2002). Furthermore, individuals rarely possess only one identity. A person might be a mother, wife, daughter, aunt, employee and so on which results in constantly changing roles and negotiating identities. Similarly, with Muslims, multiple identities are brought to the fore.

Hussein (2004) has established that Muslim identity consists of the self, territory and community.

2.5.1 Self

The Muslim identity of self is formed by many factors, with the most important being the concept of God. Muslim's believe that God is the Creator and that He is One. He is merciful, forgiving and sustains the entire universe. Man is known to be forgetful and is therefore reminded to remember God at all times. God has sent messengers from time to time to guide mankind, bring revelation and to help get people back on the right path. A Muslim's spiritual relationship with God influences the many roles, which he/she takes on in life (Hussein, 2004).

2.5.2 Territory

In the past, it was common to see Muslims living in territories characterised by different ethnic backgrounds in the same geographical area. During the Ottoman era, a fusion between religious, political, economic and social identities existed. This was however abolished by secularism (Hussein, 2004). Furthermore, Hussein (2004) states that during the period of early Islamic history, Muslim scholars referred to different geo-political terms in order to determine how the law should be applied to those Muslims living within or out of

Muslim lands. The areas under Muslim rule were known as *Darul Islam* (abode of Islam), others were referred to as *Darul Kufr* (abode of unbelief) and *Darul Suh* (abode of treaty). Tariq Ramadan (1999) referred to 'a binary vision of the world', which refers to Muslims going outside *Darul Islam* in order to study and trade. *Darul Islam* was characterised as providing security, freedom of religion and justice. Today, many Muslims are fleeing Muslim countries due to war and political problems. Irrespective of the different geo-political terms, it is important to remember that the Quran mentions in chapter 2:115 that 'to God belongs the East and the West', thus overriding these geo-political terms.

2.5.3 Community

Hussein (2004) states that many messengers/prophets were sent to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Hence, there exists a relationship between a Muslim and his/her community, irrespective of belief. The term *ummah* is used to describe Muslims across the world, and does not exclude any one based on ethnicity or language. Concerning the identity in a community, many people question as to whether a Muslim can display the national flag or stand for the national anthem of that particular country (Hussein, 2004). Faisal Mawlali has provided the following insight on this matter:

Muslims living in non-Muslim countries are to respect the symbols of those countries as the national anthem, national flag, etc. This is part of what citizenship dictates as per modern customs... Thus, standing up for the national anthem is not a form of prohibited loyalty. If a Muslim is to change a wrong action in a majority non-Muslim country, let him do that through da'wah (calling to Islam), wisdom and fair exhortation. At the same time - he should not obey any rules that involve disobedience to Allah (God). (Mawlali, 2002).

Another question that is often asked to Muslims in non-Muslim countries is if they are for instance firstly Muslim, or British. According to Hussein (2004) such a question should not be an issue or debated as two identities come to the fore, the first is religious identity and the second is territorial identity. Furthermore, if others can be Christian and British or Hindu and British, there should be no issue if one is Muslim and British. Furthermore, Muslims

are also allowed to engage with non-Muslims in trade, treaties and covenants, which govern each respective country.

2.6 ORGANISATIONAL DRESS AND SOCIAL IDENTITY

Organisational dress can symbolise hybrid identities (having two or more identities at the same time) in the work environment, thus revealing the complex concept of social identity. Social identity refers to self-categorisations, which are used by individuals in order to express their sense of belonging (identification) within groups (Pratt & Rafaeli, 1997). The manner in which individual's dress in an organisation represents two competing social identities. According to Rafaeli and Pratt (1993) dresscode is a symbol of an organisation's culture and identity. This organisational identity is however regarded as self-defining (Hatch, 1993). The manner in which one dresses reflects organisational characteristics that answer the question 'who am I?' Other researchers argue that dress actually represents various social identities for instance gender and professional identities (Pratt & Dutton, 1996).

2.7 RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

Religion has become an important basis for identity formation because of the role that religion plays in society. Apart from just providing spiritual needs, belonging to a religious organisation can offer psychological and social benefits, which include work opportunities, educational resources and a community network (Chen, 2002). Furthermore, religious identity assists an individual to overcome social isolation (Peek, 2005). This eases tensions which may occur due to incongruent immigrant or ethnic identities. Peek (2005) further states that establishing a religious identity also allows one to maintain personal as well as social uniqueness in a multicultural environment. In the aftermath of the attacks on the World Trade Centre on 11 September 2001 (9/11) xenophobic incidents were on the increase (American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, 2003; Council on American-Islamic Relations, 2002). Despite this kind of backlash, Peek (2005) conducted a study on the religious identity of second generation Muslim Americans and found that most participants in the study continued to show their religious identities. In fact, their religious

identities were much stronger than before 9/11. Furthermore, the negative portrayal of Islam caused more students to identify more closely to the religion.

2.8 GENDER IDENTITY

The reasons why Muslim women wear hijab differ drastically. Some Muslim women wear it to express their idea of gender difference whilst others wear it to oppose Western colonialism, which is increasing especially in the Middle East (Read et al., 2000). In research conducted by collecting survey data from women attending universities in the Middle East, it was found that women who wear hijab have conservative gender attitudes and are in favour of women's rights as well as marital equity (Read et al., 2000). Furthermore, the general stereotype that Muslim women are submissive and backwards is thrown into question as Muslim American women have been found to negotiate their religious, gender and ethnic identities in a very creative manner. Read et al. (2000) found that Muslim women in America construct their gender identities on themes of individualism as well as tolerance for diversity. There also appears to be an overlay between gender and ethnic identities. These two identities are negotiated based upon a religious foundation. In the study conducted by Read et al. (2000) regarding the identity negotiation of Muslim women in Austin (Texas), a participant called Hannan stated the following:

The veil serves as an identity for [Islamic] women... [Because I veil], Muslim people know I am Muslim, and they greet me in Arabic.

Hijab expresses a close connection with overlapping religious, gender and ethnic identities, which links Muslim women to the broader community (Read et al., 2000).

2.9 THE CONSEQUENCES OF 9/11

It has been established that identity is relational; in conjunction with 9/11 it was found to have consequences for Muslims in Britain. British Muslims have been sent to Guantanamo Bay or have faced arrest due to suspicion of terrorism, mosques and homes have been

raided and London has been referred to as the ‘hub of Islamic terrorism’ (Hussein 2004). The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) immediately issued a press statement condemning the 9/11 attacks and other Muslim leaders did the same by means of gatherings, leaflets and press statements. However, Muslims were still targets of hate mail, offensive phone calls and arson attacks on mosques. These acts were on the rise. The term ‘Islamophobia’ was coined by the Runnymede Trust that published a report in 1997 called *Islamophobia: A challenge for us all* (Runnymede Trust, 1997).

The European Union Monitoring Centre (EUMC) on racism and xenophobia indicated that an increase exists in physical and verbal attacks on Muslims post 9/11 (Nielsen & Allen, 2001). This issue was also confirmed by the Parekh Report on *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* in October 2000. As a result of 9/11, the British National Party and the Far Right in British Politics launched a campaign aimed at keeping Britain free of Islam (British National Party, 2012). According to these parties, Islam stood for Intolerance, Slaughter, Looting, Arson and Molestation of women. Despite all this negativity, and with Islamophobia on the rise, more opportunities for dialogue were created between institutions, individuals and communities. It is important to note that the event of 9/11 gave rise to Islam being many Muslims’ primary identity, with a secondary affiliation to ethnicity (Uddin, 2011). This religious identity ends up being much more defiant when combined with politics.

According to the EUMC report, it was found that street aggression against Muslims was significantly high (Nielsen & Allen, 2001). Incidents in the United Kingdom included verbal abuse, accusing Muslims of being responsible for 9/11, women had their hijab ripped off from their heads, adult men and women were spat on and Muslim children were called “Osama” as an insult (Allen, 2004). The attacks were motivated by the visual religious identity of the Muslims. In Denmark, a woman who wore hijab was thrown from a moving taxi after she was accused of playing a role in the 9/11 attack. In Italy, a woman wearing hijab was shut in the door of a bus repeatedly. In countries like Austria, Germany, Spain and Ireland, Muslim women were also spat on and were victims of verbal abuse. The most violent assault occurred in Slough, England when men with baseball bats beat up a Muslim woman, merely because she was identifiable as a Muslim (Allen, 2004; Naleemi, 2013)

2.10 THE BAN ON HIJAB

In 1989, a *fatwa* (religious verdict) was issued against Salman Rushdie for his novel *The Satanic Verses*. Muslims accused Rushdie of blasphemy and of mocking Islam through the book (The Guardian, 2012). Later that year, despite numerous press releases made by French and German Muslims denouncing Rushdie, three girls were expelled from a junior high school outside Paris for wearing hijab. France and Germany went on to ban the wearing of religious attire in public schools (Lawrence, 2012). According to Scott (2010) the law also applied to Jewish boys who wore skullcaps as well as Sikhs who wore turbans, but it was predominantly aimed at Muslim girls who wore hijab. Other groups were included in the ban to prevent cries of racism and discrimination from Muslims. Legislation, which is similar in nature, was also approved and implemented in Belgium, Australia, Holland and Bulgaria. In 1923, Turkey became a secular state and banned the wearing of hijab for school and university students, elected officials as well as civil servants (Scott, 2010). In 2010, many universities across Turkey abolished the ban on wearing hijab after the government issued a statement saying that it would support any student that is expelled due to wearing hijab (BBC News, 2010). Furthermore, Press TV (2013) reported that twelve million signatures were obtained in a petition against the ban on hijab in Turkey. The petition was delivered to the Prime Minister's Office by the Confederation of Public Servants' Trade Union.

Scott (2010) stated that just before the law banning religious symbols was passed in France, only fourteen per cent of Muslim women wore hijab. The Netherlands proposed to ban the *burqa* (full body covering) even though only fifty to one hundred women wore it. In England, an increase in the sale of *niqab* (veil) was reported after Jack Straw, ex-foreign secretary, made a proposal to ban it. In 2003, the interior minister of France, Nicolas Sarkozy, raised the issue of wearing hijab once again when he insisted that Muslim women remove their hijab for official identity photographs. Furthermore, in September that year, two girls by the names of Alma and Lila Levy were expelled from their high school because they refused to remove their hijab or to accept a different version of the headscarf that exposed the neck, hairline and ears. This case was of huge public interest as both girls reverted to Islam, and experienced no family pressure to wear hijab; neither did they belong to an Islamic group. In another incident, a girl of North African decent gave up

wearing her hijab as her father beat her up for wearing it. These three incidents are contrary to claims of trying to liberate Muslim women from Muslim men (Scott, 2010).

In 2013, the French president Francois Hollande called for a law banning women who wear hijab from working with children (RFI, 2013). This call was made despite judges at a French court overturned a ruling in which a woman who wore hijab to work was dismissed in 2008. The court ruled that the dismissal of the employee was tantamount to religious discrimination. A poll in France indicated that 84 per cent of French citizens want women who work in public places to not wear hijab (Socialist Worker Online, 2013).

Prosecutors in Russia have ruled that the expulsion of a female university student for wearing hijab was unlawful. The student was found to be wearing a headscarf on the university campus despite internal regulations that forbade this. In Russia, a ban on wearing hijab in education facilities such as schools exists (Zee News, 2013).

2.11 DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES AGAINST MUSLIMS

The role that religion plays in the workplace can seldom be disregarded in the work setting; individuals as well as their religious beliefs can conflict with religious practices and workplace policies. Tension arises when an employee's religious beliefs are perceived to impinge on another employee's work life. Dress, grooming, ablution, taking breaks to pray, religious quotes as well as exclusion from certain medical examinations all contribute to creating conflict and tension in the workplace (Cavico & Mujtaba, 2011). Furthermore, American workplaces are characterised by an increase in diversity therefore there will be an increase in employees willing to express their religion in that setting (Ruan, 2008). Muslims pose unique 'problems' in the workplace due to the nature of Islamic practices which govern for instance dress, diet and prayers. In today's workplaces, which are increasingly more diverse, individuals seek to express their ethnic, cultural, sexual and religious identity without any prejudice (Kelly, 1995).

Since the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre in America, there has been a considerable increase in cases of discrimination as well as harassment against Muslim employees in the workplace (Mujtaba & Cavico, 2012). The Council on American-Islamic

Relations (CAIR) reported in 2008 that there was an eighteen per cent increase in workplace discrimination when compared to the previous year. In addition, in 2003 only 196 cases of discrimination in the workplace were reported to the Council, however in 2007 this number rocketed to 452 (Solieman, 2009). The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) also found that 6 months after 9/11, 1016 charges of ‘post-9/11 backlash employment discrimination’ was received (Mujtaba et al., 2012). Nine months after 9/11 this figure rose to 2100 charges. These statistics clearly indicate the increase in discrimination experienced by Muslims in the American workplace.

Muslim women in France are struggling to gain recognition due to the secular ruling that prohibits displaying religious symbols in public spheres. These Muslim women are trying to reclaim their rights to live as practicing Muslims in France (Scott, 2010). The struggle they face is to show that they are modern and Muslim. For instance, a Muslim woman mentioned that in France, rights have to be demanded. By going to workplaces wearing hijab, they show that they are qualified and that they exist (Jouili, 2007). In another account, a French university student stated that the Muslims used to pray under a staircase, outside a building. When this was found out, people started to walk their dogs there to dirty the place. They then prayed in a room in the university, but when it was found that they prayed there, the room was locked. They then began to pray in the public hall, after which the room was re-opened for them. This is another example of discriminatory practices against Muslims who wish to keep their Islamic identity visible. Jouile (2007) further states that in France, praying at one’s workplace creates the perception that one lacks integration or that one holds radical views. Muslims in France are constantly engaging in identity negotiation in this secular state.

In Germany, primary school students are allowed to wear hijab but teachers may not do the same. In 2008 a decision was upheld to not recruit a Muslim woman as a teacher because she wore a veil (DW, 2006). The ruling indicated that the wearing of hijab was more of a political symbol as opposed to a religious one. In contrast, veiled Catholic nuns are not forbidden from teaching in state schools. It is also found that there is resistance against the building of mosques due to complaints of noise and traffic; however, the construction of churches and the ringing of church bells do not pose the same problem. Muslims will view such acts as being Islamophobic. A new mosque that was built in Spain

was vandalised after the attacks of March 2004 when ten bombs exploded on four different commuter trains in Madrid (Human Rights Watch, 2004). Pigs were also slaughtered within the boundary of the mosque. Similar incidents have also been reported in France, Netherlands and Germany (Cesari, 2009). In 2015, twenty-six mosques in France were subjected to firebombs, gunfire, pig's heads and grenades as a result of the killing of 12 employees at the offices of the French satirical newspaper called Charlie Hebdo (The Independent, 2015).

According to The Minnesota Daily (2013) two weeks after the identities of the Boston Marathon bombers were revealed, Muslims across America found themselves in a familiar situation post 9/11 as they continued to defend Islam. A biochemistry student by the name of Ali at the University of Minnesota commented:

Everyone in the [Muslim] community shudders because we worry, 'Is this going to be another attack on our community?' (The Minnesota Daily, 2013).

A member of the Muslim Students' Association, Amer Sassila, mentioned that discrimination against Muslims has declined post 9/11; however, after the Boston bombing incident in 2013, hate-crimes against Muslims were expected to increase (The Minnesota Daily, 2013).

Pramila Jayapal, in a report for Yes Magazine (2013), indicated that after the Boston bombings, there has been an improved tolerance of Muslims and other immigrants. However, immediately after the explosion in Boston, a Muslim Bangladeshi was beaten up in the Bronx after his attackers referred to him as an Arab. He was left unconscious and his shoulder was dislocated. Two days later, Heba Abolaban, who is a Palestinian physician, left her home with her baby when a man who called her a terrorist punched her in the face. It is evident that many communities were deemed terrorists simply because of their race and creed (Jayapal, 2013)

2.12 DISCRIMINATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Tape (2011) indicated that when the movement People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD) was associated with numerous bombings in the Western Cape, the group was labelled as a Muslim group. The result of this was that Muslim women were victims of such stereotyping. Muslim women reported harassment because of the association of PAGAD with Islam. Amongst the harassment reported, it was noted that indecent comments were passed to these women in the workplace or when walking in department stores, security guards stopped them to search their bags.

Incidents of Islamophobia in South Africa have been minimal (Asmal, 2008). However, an incident took place where two Muslim men stopped at a fast-food outlet during the month of Ramadan. As they walked into the outlet, two Afrikaans-speaking men taunted them, hurling racial insults at them and pulling the beard of one of the Muslim men. The Muslim men were also referred to as “Bin Laden” and one of the men was slapped across his face. This Muslim man was thrown with a brick, and he passed away with severe head injuries (Nanima, 2013). In another incident, a pig’s head was found on the site where a mosque was to be built in Kwa-Zulu Natal (see Figure 2). The pig’s head symbolised a protest against the building of the mosque (Mbuyazi, 2012). A similar incident also occurred at a site in Emalahleni that was to be used to establish a mosque (Islamophobia Today, 2011). At a mosque in Riverlea, the *adhaan* (call to prayer) was banned after 30 years (Mbuyazi, 2012). At the Nizamiye mosque in Midrand, which is the largest mosque in the Southern Hemisphere, complaints were received regarding the *adhan* being too loud. The trustees of the mosque subsequently turned off the outside speakers (McLean, 2012).

Figure 2: A pig's head thrown on the site where a mosque is being built in Kwa-Zulu Natal



Source: Adapted from "Pig Head Debacle Reported to HRC," by N. Mbuyazi (2012). Retrieved May 6, 2013, from IOL News: <http://www.iol.co.za/news/crime-courts/pig-head-debacle-reported-to-hrc-1.1354053#.UCX6YW0VpLR>

Many instances where students in South Africa were prevented from wearing hijab to school exist. In Senekal, a grade 8 pupil by the name of Rauhah Kathrada arrived at Paul Erasmus High school wearing a headscarf and was told to remove it (The Voice of the Cape, 2013). The school mentioned that their policies did not permit the wearing of any headgear. Furthermore, Sakeenah and Bilal Dramat were forbidden to wear any headgear at Eben Donges High in the Western Cape. According to the Department of Basic Education's National Guidelines on School Uniforms:

If wearing a particular attire... is part of the religious practice of pupils or an obligation, schools should not, in terms of the constitution, prohibit the wearing of such items (Vadi, 2013).

In 2012, a Muslim woman, Quraysha Sooliman, and her daughters were travelling abroad. At Oliver Tambo International Airport's passport control, one of her daughters was asked to remove her hijab in order to be properly identified. The same scenario occurred upon their return to her other daughter. According to Sooliman (2012), they were treated abruptly and in a condescending manner. Sooliman (2012) further wrote a letter to the Department of Home Affairs indicating that such events give rise to Islamophobia in a country that is relatively free of religious discrimination. The Department of Home Affairs then assured Muslims that ID checks should be conducted in private and advised that it is

permissible to take a photograph for one's passport wearing hijab (Sooliman, 2012).

The Constitutional Court noted that religious accommodations should be granted in order to protect an individual's rights to religious freedom. In South Africa, religious and cultural groups should be accommodated due to diversity of our nation. According to Lenta (2007) religious and cultural groups contribute to the creation of social and personal identities that are necessary for individuals' dignity and self-realisation. Furthermore, accommodating cultural and religious groups is required in terms of equality. The Constitutional Court has acknowledged the value that culture and religion holds for its members. The Court has further indicated that it will protect individuals' right to freedom of religion by overriding laws which are generally applied. In order to receive protection from the Constitution in terms of freedom of religion, the onus is on the individual to prove that they are required to perform an act that is a religious obligation (de Vos, 2013). If the wearing of a headscarf were customary and not religious, individuals' would not be protected in terms of the Constitution.

2.13 FAMOUS SOUTH AFRICANS EXPRESSING THEIR IDENTITY

There are South Africans who express their religious and cultural identities in the workplace by means of their dress code (see Figure 3). Ismail Vadi is a member of the Executive Council for Roads and Transport in the Gauteng Provincial Government (South African History Online, 2013). He wears the traditional kurta and dons a topi (or Muslim skull cap). He also sports a beard, which adds to his Muslim identity. Fatima Chohan is the Deputy Minister of Home Affairs and is also a Member of Parliament (Who's Who, 2013). She wears the hijab. Baleka Mbete was the national speaker in Parliament and was often seen wearing traditional African headgear in her workplace (South African History Online, 2013). Frene Ginwala who was also a speaker in South Africa's National Assembly shaped the country's destiny through debate and negotiation, as well as through smaller gestures to ensure equality (Omara-Otunnu, 2000). She gave up wearing the traditional speaker's gown and opted for a more traditional sari. Furthermore, she abolished the rule stating that men who enter Parliament must wear a suit and tie, and that women must wear a hat and gloves. She mentioned that a participatory democracy should not exclude the majority of the population who could not afford such formal clothes. Ginwala stated:

I asked myself, 'This will be the first picture of the free South Africa. Will people want to see me sitting here in funny clothes or see someone they might find walking down the street? (Omara-Otunnu, 2000).

Figure 3: Famous South Africans expressing their identity



Ismail Vadi



Fatima Chohan



Baleka Mbete



Frene Ginwala

2.14 WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

The past few years has seen an increase in the number of women participating in the work environment in order to earn a living. Changes in university populations occurred as women increased in numbers in professions such as law and medicine, which were once reserved for men only (Dobson, 2001; Gill, Mills, Franzway & Sharp, 2008). Mostafa

(2003) indicated that women of all ages are under-represented in certain careers due to misconceptions about female abilities as well as under valuing the skills that women possess. Employers remain reluctant to hire women in managerial positions and they are thus given jobs that prevent networking. Women have also been found to earn significantly less than their male counterparts, find it difficult to be promoted and experience barriers when seeking a mentor (Anderson & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1995; Kirchmeyer, 2002).

In a survey conducted by Dangor (2010) in South Africa, Muslim female respondents mentioned that Muslim women should be able to engage in economic activity as it stimulates your mind, grants independence, earns one an income and allows one to experience life outside the home. Majority of the respondents also agreed that women should be allowed to work as it provides a sense of empowerment and satisfies the need to interact with people outside the home. Furthermore, it was stated that if a woman were to lose her husband, she would be able to support herself. These characteristics emphasise the importance of working women in the world today.

In South Africa, during the period of colonialism which existed before the apartheid era, women were granted secondary status to men, had no power and were not allowed to make decisions (Carrim, 2012). Women in general faced inequality. However, black women experienced more discrimination than white women. Carrim (2012) further states that during apartheid, legislation prevented women from competing equally with men in the workplace. The institution of legislation such as the Employment Equity Act, no 55 of 1998 has allowed for an increase in the number of women entering the South African workplace.

Women who work in a primarily male environment may display masculine qualities, either intentionally or naturally (King et al., 2009). These masculine qualities manifest by showing interest in sports, or using sports metaphors. Women who act 'too' masculine might also be treated negatively as is the case of *Ann Hopkins v. Price Waterhouse*. Ann Hopkins was told to soften her image by wearing more jewellery, not drinking beer and to carry a handbag as opposed to a briefcase if she wanted to be promoted as a partner in the firm (Babcock & Laschever, 2003). With regards to conformity, King et al. (2009) mentioned that if individuals are not forced to conform their individual differences, they will be more positive towards their employing organisation. Furthermore, if an organisation's culture

accepts and respects individual differences (instead of being hostile towards these differences), there will be positive outcomes such as job satisfaction and decreased turnover (Day & Schoenrade, 1997).

2.15 RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION IN THE WORKPLACE

According to King et al. (2009) religion is the most understudied aspect in the field of diversity. Based on the number of cases relating to religious discrimination, religious diversity remains poorly understood and managed in the work context. Religion is able to influence mental health (Kelly, 1995), physical health (Miller & Thoresen, 2003), life satisfaction (Cacioppo & Brandon, 2002) as well as prejudice and brutal conflict (Melloan, 2002). Religion thus represents a powerful phenomenon which is likely to impact on a diverse workforce. In America, the religious ‘norm’ is often Christianity, resulting in religious minorities being stigmatised as they deviate from the ‘norm’ (King et al., 2009). Religious minorities might find the desire to hide or at least minimise their differences so that they can blend in with the majority. For instance, a Jewish professor who worked at a Catholic university was found to put up Christmas decorations at home as some colleagues were coming to visit him. This practice found him denying his religion in his own home (Ragins, 2008).

Lips-Wiersma and Mills (2002) found that in a US survey, conducted by the Tannenbaum Centre, 20 per cent of the surveyed population had been a victim of religious bias. Such bias related to not being able to observe prayers, not being allowed to take time off for religious holidays and fearing to ask for time off in order to observe these duties. Workers have been prohibited from wearing beards and employees who wore clothes of a particular faith were told that it would have negative implications for promotions. Most people wished to express their spirituality at work but feared that they could not do so without offending their colleagues. Religious expression is associated with the negotiation of identity as it evolves through exchanges with other people.

Cases of religious discrimination have been based on harassment, exclusion or the failure of the employer to accommodate an individual’s religious beliefs (Kelly, 1995). In all instances, the onus lies on the plaintiff to prove that it is a case of religious discrimination.

In American workplaces, the employer is required to accommodate the religious beliefs of employees to such an extent that it does not create any hardship on the business (Ritter, 2004). Accommodation in the workplace includes accommodation of religious observances such as Sabbath as well accommodating religious dress codes such as hijab. Morris (2009) indicated that it is important for increased levels of awareness to be created of religious diversity, especially when referring to the New Zealand workplace.

Recent cases of religious discrimination included a Christian lady by the name of Connie Rehm who was granted her job back in a public library of a small town after she was fired for refusing to work on a Sunday (Fields, 2006). The global shipping company, United Parcel Service (UPS) refused to hire a Rastafarian as a driver assistant because of his beard, which he wore due to religious reasons. UPS requested Ronnis Mason to shave his beard if he wished to perform any type of job requiring interacting with customers. This type of demand is also regarded as religious discrimination (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2006). Furthermore, an American female employee reported that she was constantly harassed because of her Middle Eastern background and due to being a Muslim. The harassment only occurred after 9/11. A co-worker mocked the employee's accent and language, cursed her, called her names such as "Mrs Taliban" and "Mrs Osama bin Laden" and even made offensive comments wishing that Arab people could be killed just as the Native Americans were killed (Equal Employment Equity Commission, 2004). Furthermore, the EEOC ruled that Abercrombie & Fitch violated the right of a Muslim woman to wear hijab to work. According to Abercrombie & Fitch, the hijab was in total violation of their 'look policy' (Jasper, 2013).

A study conducted in Australia to determine the experiences of Australian Muslim men in the workplace found that the majority of Muslim men are treated with empathy and tolerance, being allowed to attend prayers and even being allowed time off to go home early during the month of Ramadan, when Muslims fast (Sav, Sebar, & Harris, 2010). The participants indicated that the events of 9/11 and the Bali bombings were often discussed and colleagues would offer sympathy on the impact that these events have had on the Muslim community. Minority incidents of discrimination were also reported whereby Muslim men were told to "get out of our country" and also had indecent gestures made towards them (Sav et al., 2010).

Certain companies have taken steps to ensure religious accommodation in the workplace. Whirlpool Corporation began to serve more chicken in their canteen because Muslims cannot eat pork. The company also had religious sensitivity training and allowed Muslims to begin work earlier in order to attend congregational prayers. Intel Corporation allows its employees to use conference rooms for prayer sessions, and hosts a multicultural celebration that lasts three days in order to promote diversity (Huang & Kleiner, 2001).

Ghumman and Jackson (2010) conducted a study in order to determine the expectations of women who wear hijab regarding receiving job offers. Stereotype threat theory, which indicates expectations about performance and actual performance in a stereotyped situation, is useful in explaining why those who wear hijab have lower expectations of being offered a job than those who do not wear hijab. Women who don the hijab are regarded as stigmatized individuals, and this has an influence on their expectations about work. Individuals who are stigmatised are rejected interpersonally and they also devalue their social identity. Muslims have been stereotyped as being fanatics, barbaric, oppressors of women and uncivilised. Individuals such as women who wear hijab display their stigma, and thus experience more discrimination than those who conceal their stigma. Workplace discrimination statistics against Muslims confirms that Muslims are stigmatised in the workplace. It was found that women who wear hijab had lower expectations of receiving job offers when compared to those Muslim women who did not wear hijab due to their experience of the stereotype threat in the workplace (Ghumman & Jackson, 2010).

2.16 RELIGION AND THE LAW

In American legislation, religion is covered under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which is the most inclusive civil rights legislation in the USA. Title VII prohibits employers to discriminate against employees or applicants for a job because of their religious practices or beliefs. Applicants for a job may thus wear religious symbols that make their religious affiliation obvious, such as a cross, yarmulke (Jewish skull cap) or hijab (King et al., 2009).

A constitution refers to ideas and principles which are collated into one document and upon which the political system of a state is based (SA Politics, 2013). The South African constitution could be regarded as the most progressive in the world due to its ideals relating to freedom, tolerance and human rights. The Bill of Rights is a human rights charter that ensures civil, political as well as socio-economic rights of South African citizens. According to the Bill of Rights Section15:

Everyone has the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion. (South African Government Information, 2009).

Freedom to practice ones religion is thus enshrined in the South African constitution as a basic human right.

Section 187(1)(f) of the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 states that if an employer discriminates against an employee on any arbitrary ground which includes religion, and the employee is subsequently dismissed, such a dismissal would be regarded as being an ‘automatically unfair dismissal’ (van Niekerk, Christianson, McGregor, Smit & van Eck, 2012). Section 6(1) of the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 furthermore states that no person may be unfairly discriminated against on any grounds relating to religion (van Niekerk et al., 2012).

2.17 CONCLUSION

The literature review conducted in this chapter forms the theoretical framework of this study. This section focussed on understanding the concept of women in Islam and the religious stance on employment. Focus was also placed on religious accommodation in the workplace as well as Islamophobia and the banning of hijab. Chapter 3 will describe the research design and methodology which is applied in this study.

3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the design and methodology that was used for this research study. It also focusses on the sample selection, and how the data was collected and analysed. Ethical considerations are also discussed.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design refers to the general plan about how the research question will be answered (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 159). The research design also specifies how the data is to be collected and how it will be analysed. Ethical issues relating to the research are also documented in this section. The first methodological choice relating to this study is for it to follow a qualitative design. Qualitative research often involves data collection techniques and data collection methods that use non-numerical data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013).

3.2.1 Research philosophy

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005) qualitative research is related to an interpretive philosophy. The reason for this philosophy is because the researcher has to understand the subjective and socially constructed meanings which are articulated about the phenomenon which is being studied.

3.1.2 Characteristics

Qualitative research is descriptive and exploratory, with the main aim of unfolding human experiences (Maree, 2007) and offering insight into human behaviour (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This type of research aims to study the meanings of participants by means of developing a conceptual framework. The collection of data is not standardised, and may change during the research process. The researcher is required to operate in a natural

setting so that trust, access to meanings and an in-depth understanding can be obtained. It is important for the researcher to connect with the participants by establishing trust and gaining cognitive access to the data of the participants (Saunders et al., 2012). Qualitative research does not depend on mathematical measurements and usually focuses on a small number of cases from which a great amount of knowledge is obtained (King, Keohane & Verba, 1994). Qualitative researchers do not attempt to simplify what they have observed and tend to recognize that phenomena have dimensions and layers. Thus, they try to portray the acquired data in its multifaceted form (Leedy et al., 2013).

3.1.3 Requirements for researchers to engage in a qualitative study

Leedy et al. (2013) outlined characteristics that should characterise a qualitative researcher as follows:

- Must be well trained in conducting interviews as well as observation techniques.
- Must have a firm knowledge of previous knowledge relating to the research problem so that important information can be separated from unimportant details which are observed.
- Must be able to filter through large amounts of data and be able to organise it meaningfully.

3.1.4 Choosing a qualitative approach

The reason for choosing this approach is that the researcher would like to document first-hand accounts of the challenges experienced by Muslim women who don the hijab in the workplace. The participants may undergo identity negotiation, and the researcher would like to explore how their religious and professional identities are negotiated. The researcher would also like to understand how the participants overcome challenges that may be encountered due to wearing hijab. Qualitative research will allow the researcher to obtain subjective responses from the participants relating to the research problem, thus ensuring that rich and meaningful data is obtained which is relevant to answering the research questions.

3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A paradigm can be described as a worldview or a set of basic beliefs that guide the researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The paradigm that has guided this research is subjective or ‘interpretive’. A fundamental characteristic of interpretivism is that the researcher relies on the participants’ views of the subject that is being researched (Creswell, 2007). Hence, interpretive approaches are idiographic, relying on the uniqueness of each specific situation (Maree, 2007). Interpretivism is a characteristic of qualitative research.

3.2.1 Ontology

This refers to the nature of reality (Maree, 2007). Ontology raises questions about the assumptions that researchers make regarding the manner in which the world operates as well as the commitment of particular views (Saunders et al., 2012). Maree (2007) states that the subjective view of the world is made up of names, concepts and labels which are social and historical creations. These entities, which are human-constructed, are used to describe and make sense of the external world. According to the interpretivist paradigm, realities are constructed through human relationships and focus is placed on the social construction of people’s ideas and concepts (Maree, 2007). These constructions are numerous, and thus multiple realities exists (Lee, 2012).

In terms of this research study and the interpretivist paradigm, human behaviour cannot be observed from the outside through observation. Human behaviour should be understood from an emic (insider’s) point of view and insight should be gained from the meanings that the participants provide of their life experiences. Each participant’s experience of the same factor in the workplace will not necessarily be the same, hence in this research study, multiple realities will exist, each relative to the respective participants. Interpretivists believe that reality is constructed socially and personally through subjective experiences, and the participant is actively involved in the process (Schurink, 2009). The researcher will therefore be interested in the deeper meanings of social actions, the manner in which they are understood by individuals and how they are influenced by social, political, gender and ethnic factors. The resulting crystallisation is taken as ‘reality’ (Maree, 2007).

3.2.2 Epistemology

According to Maree (2007), epistemology is related to how things can be known. It refers to how truths, facts or laws can be discovered or disclosed, should they exist. Epistemology thus describes how one knows reality or how one comes to know about reality. This refers to the relationship between the ‘knower’ and the ‘known’ (Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2008). Qualitative researchers believe that the world consists of people who possess their own assumptions, beliefs and values. The only way of knowing what a reality is, is to explore that reality by asking questions about it. In the interpretivist paradigm, the researcher and the participant work together to create meaning. In qualitative research, human activities are viewed holistically. Thus, human activities should be interpreted through meanings and should be linked to other human events to ensure a better understanding (Maree, 2007). By conducting semi-structured interviews with the participants, the researcher will be able to gain insight into the participants’ daily lives in the workplace. When such information is divulged, the researcher will be able to probe the participants further for greater clarity, or to find connections to other related information. Hypothetically speaking, if a participant says she is experiencing a glass ceiling in her career due to wearing hijab, the researcher would probe her to find out what her experiences were trying to gain entry into her current job, or during her first entry into the workplace. In this way, the researcher will gain insight into the subjective experiences of the participants as well as the meanings that they attach to their experiences. This will lead the researcher to ‘know’ reality.

3.4 THE INTERPRETIVIST TRADITION

According to Maree (2007), interpretivism has its roots in hermeneutics, which refers to the study of the theory and practice of interpretation. Interpretive researchers follow the assumption that the access to reality, which is given or socially constructed, is transmitted through social constructions such as language, documents, consciousness, shared meanings and other objects that have meaning in people’s lives (Carrim, 2012). In interpretive studies, an attempt is made to understand phenomena through the meanings that people allocate to them. Saunders et al. (2012) described humans as social actors who possess different roles. This metaphor emphasises that as humans we play a part on

the stage of human life. In the same way that actors play their part (which they interpret in a particular way), we interpret our daily social roles and give meaning to those roles. Similarly, we interpret the social roles of others against our own set of meanings. It is also important for the researcher to adopt an empathetic stance in interpretivist philosophy. The reason for this is that the researcher enters the social world of the research subjects, and attempts to understand their world from their point of view.

The aim of interpretivist research is to give insight on how a group of people make sense of a situation or phenomena that they experience. Amongst the greatest strengths of qualitative research is that it yields data, which is in-depth, rich and descriptive. The weakness of interpretivism is that it is wholly subjective and that the approach cannot generalise findings beyond the phenomena that is studied. Figure 4 provides a summary of interpretivism. According to Maree (2007) interpretivism is based on the following assumptions:

3.3.1 Human life can only be understood from within

The focus of interpretivism is on the subjective experiences of people and how they 'construct' their social world by sharing meanings. When studying a phenomenon, research techniques assist the researcher to understand how people interact and interpret their social environment. Reality can also not be viewed externally.

3.3.2 Social life is a distinctively human product

By placing people in their social contexts, researchers will be able to understand the perceptions that people have of their own activities. Reality is thus socially constructed and is not determined objectively. It is important to understand the context of each unique situation so that the researcher can interpret and understand the meanings that are constructed.

3.3.3 The human mind is the purposive source of origin and meaning

Researchers should attempt to understand how meanings are constructed so that they can understand the creation of meanings holistically. The richness, depth and complexity of phenomena are studied in order to understand the meanings that people associate with the phenomena within the social context.

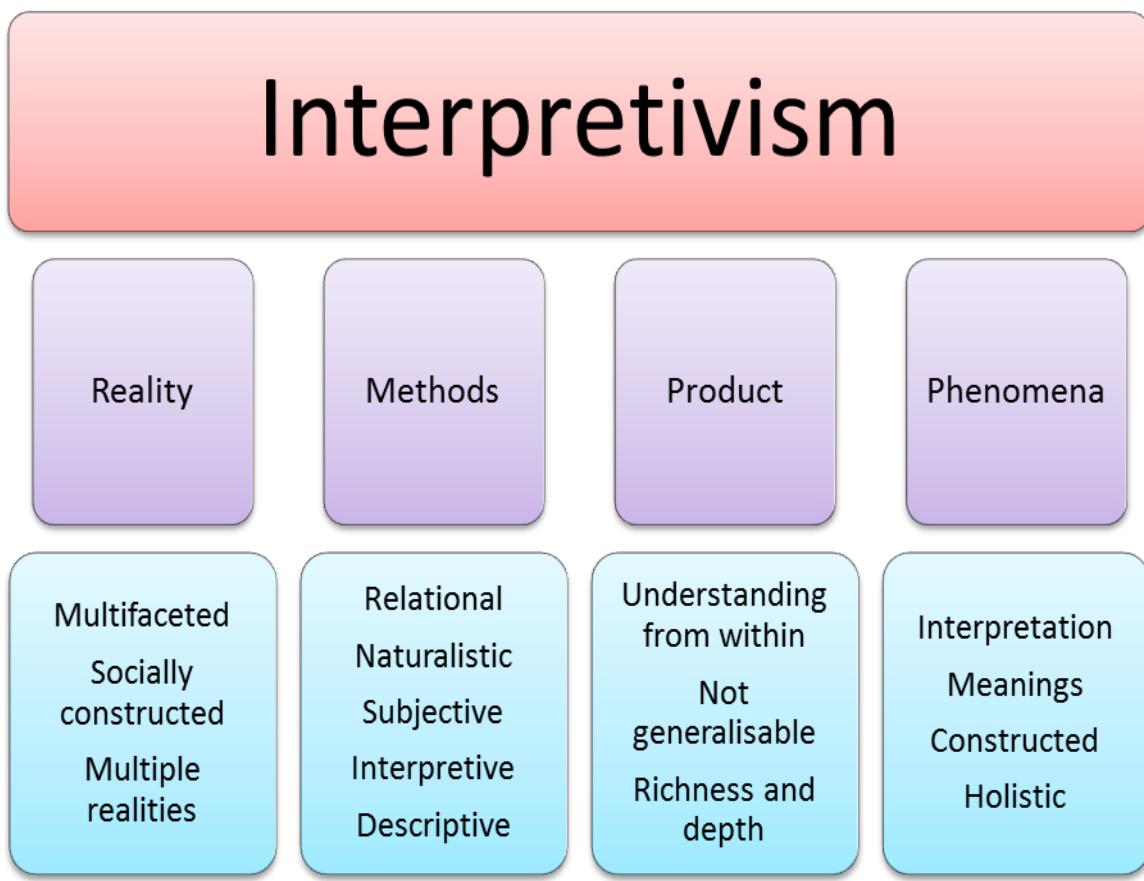
3.3.4 Human behaviour is affected by knowledge of the social world

According to interpretivism, multiple realities exist. These realities differ across time as well as place. Social theory allows researchers to understand issues and make sense of the world. A theory is therefore abstract, as it gives a multifaceted account of the social world.

3.3.5 The social world does not exist independently of human knowledge

The knowledge and understanding which interpretative researchers possess influences them in terms of the type of questions that they ask and the manner in which they conduct research. Knowledge and understanding is limited to situations that we have been exposed to, and the meanings that we have imparted from our own unique experiences. As the researcher proceeds through the research process, intuition, beliefs and prior knowledge helps the researcher to understand the phenomena that is under investigation.

Figure 4: A summary of interpretivism.



Source: Adapted from Maree (2007)

3.5 RESEARCH STRATEGY

According to Saunders et al. (2012) a research strategy refers to a plan of action in order to achieve a goal. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) referred to it as the methodological link between the philosophy and the choice of methods used to collect and analyse data. Case study research will be utilised during this study.

In a case study, an individual, program or event is studied in order to gain a greater understanding about phenomena (Leedy et al., 2013). A researcher may study two or more cases in order to draw comparisons or build theories. This is referred to as a multiple case study approach. A case study is suitable when trying to learn more about a situation which little is known about. In terms of interpretivism, a case study strives to provide a holistic understanding of how participants relate and interact in a specific situation. The purpose of case study research is thus to gain a greater insight and understanding of a

specific situation (Maree, 2007). By using a case study approach, the researcher will be able to gain rich and in-depth information from the participants when trying to answer the research question.

3.6 RESEARCH SAMPLE

Sampling techniques allow a researcher to reduce the amount of data that needs to be collected by focussing only on a subgroup rather than all possible cases (Saunders et al., 2012). Sampling provides an alternative to collecting data from every single case, which is called a census. This method is utilised when it would be impractical to sample the entire population, or if the researcher has budget and time constraints. Non-probability sampling is a technique used to select a sample and is influenced by subjective judgement (Saunders et al., 2012). For this study, the researcher used purposive sampling that is characterised by choosing participants due to a defining characteristic that makes them the key holders of the data required to conduct the study (Maree, 2007). Sampling decisions were made in favour of obtaining the richest possible information in order to answer the research questions. In qualitative research, the sample size is relatively small when compared to quantitative studies and the research process continues until data saturation occurs, whereby no new themes emerge (Maree, 2007). In this study, the sample consisted of 11 Muslim women who wear hijab in their workplace. The ladies in this sample shared their experiences on hijab in the workplace. The participants in the study were based within the Gauteng region. After interviewing the 11th participant, the researcher deemed the data to be saturated. Saunders et al. (2012) mentioned that purposive sampling cannot be regarded as being statistically representative of the whole population. Instead, it is utilised to gain information that is rich in nature. Each participant was also allocated a pseudonym in order to ensure anonymity. The biographical information of the participants can be viewed in Table 2.

Table 2: Biographical summary of participants

Pseudonym	Age	Industry
Participant 1	35 - 44	Banking
Participant 2	25 - 34	Banking
Participant 3	25 - 34	Banking
Participant 4	25 - 34	Consulting
Participant 5	25 - 34	Consulting
Participant 6	25 - 34	Legal
Participant 7	25 - 34	Consulting
Participant 8	35 - 44	Consulting
Participant 9	35 - 44	Academic
Participant 10	25 - 34	Academic
Participant 11	25 - 34	Academic

3.7 PILOT STUDY

A pilot study refers to a small scale study in order to test a questionnaire, interview checklist or observation schedule (Saunders et al., 2012). The purpose of this pilot study is to reduce the likelihood of respondents having problems with answering the questions as well as to identify any problems relating to the recording of the data. Furthermore, the responses from the participants will provide greater insight into the suitability of the interview questions with reference to clarity and ambiguity. Two participants were interviewed for the pilot study and the responses were used to reformulate the interview questions.

3.8 DATA COLLECTION METHOD

Maree (2007) states that qualitative research is based upon a naturalistic approach which aims at understanding phenomena in a real-world setting. Therefore, the researcher is not required to manipulate the phenomenon that is being studied. Research is thus carried out

in real-life situations and not experimental environments. Due to this, unobtrusive data collection techniques are used such as interviews, which is dominant in the interpretive paradigm.

3.7.1 The role of the researcher

In quantitative studies, objectivity is the goal, whereas in qualitative studies, the researcher's subjectivity cannot be eliminated. The researcher is viewed as the 'research instrument' during the data collection process in qualitative research (Maree, 2007).

3.7.2 Interviews

The primary means of gathering data in this study was by conducting interviews. Maree (2007) documented an interview as being a two-way conversation in which the interviewer poses questions to the participant in order to collect data and understand the ideas, beliefs, viewpoints, opinions and behaviours of the participant. The purpose of an interview in qualitative research is to view the world through the eyes of the participant. With this intention, the aim is to gain rich, meaningful and descriptive data that will assist the researcher to understand how the participants construct social reality as well as knowledge. Trust is very important when conducting an interview because if the participant trusts the researcher, they will provide all the necessary detail that cannot be gathered in any other way.

3.7.3 Type of interviews

Interviews can be highly formalised and structured, using questions that are standardised for each participant (Saunders et al., 2012). They can also be informal. For this study, semi-structured interviews were used. Semi-structured interviews are non-standardised and are often referred to as qualitative research interviews (King, 2004). In this kind of interview, the researcher utilises a list of themes as well as key questions which are to be covered during the interview. The researcher may thus omit some questions or vary the order of the questions depending on the flow of the conversation (Saunders et al., 2012). Additional questions may also be asked to explore the nature of events discussed. In a

semi-structured interview, the interview schedule is also likely to contain comments that are open to discussion, comments to close the discussion and promotes the elicitation of further discussion.

3.7.4 Using semi-structured interviews

This study is exploratory in nature. Therefore, using semi-structured interviews will allow the researcher to understand the attitudes and opinions of the participants (Cooper & Schindler, 2008). The researcher will also be able to probe for answers should the participants need to explain or expand on their responses. This is important in interpretivist epistemology, as the researcher aims to understand the meanings that each participant ascribes to phenomena. The participants may also use certain words or express ideas, and the researcher will be able to probe these meanings, thus gaining in-depth and rich data. A semi-structured interview could also lead the researcher and participant to explore other areas that the researcher may not have considered. This information could be significant in understanding the data and could possibly help the researcher to address the research question or formulate a new question (Saunders et al., 2012). Conducting a semi-structured interview will also allow the interviewee to ‘think aloud’ about topics they may not have previously considered, thus allowing the researcher to collect rich data. Saunders et al. (2012) further mentions that it is import for researchers to be aware of how they interact with their participants and ask questions as this could influence the data that is collected.

Another advantage of using an interview as a means of collecting data is that an interview allows a participant to reflect on events without having to write anything down (Saunders et al. 2012). Furthermore, in establishing personal contact, the researcher can assure the participant about the manner in which the collected data will be used. Saunders et al. (2012) also notes that using interviews could yield a higher response rate as participants might be reluctant to provide sensitive information in a written form to people they do not know.

Probing will be used by the researcher in order to gain full insight into the participant’s response and to verify that what was heard is actually what the participant meant to

convey (Maree, 2007). Detail-oriented probes help the researcher to understand the ‘where’, ‘what’ and ‘why’ of the answer that is provided by the participant. An elaboration probe allows the researcher to get the ‘full picture’ and involves requesting more detail from the participant regarding a certain example or event. Clarification probes are used to verify accuracy of understanding. Paraphrasing is useful in this regard, whereby the researcher will provide the gist of what the researcher thinks they heard (Maree, 2007).

Leedy et al. (2013) have argued that in an interview, when a researcher asks about past events, behaviours and perspectives, interviewees rely on their memories, which is not accurate. Furthermore, it is argued that a person’s memory is subject to distortion. People are thus able to recall what might or should have happened, as opposed to what actually did happen (Schwarz, 1999). Corallo, Sackur, Deheane and Sigman (2008) also point out that people can be intentionally dishonest when talking about their attitudes and feelings.

3.7.5 Issues relating to data quality in semi-structured interviews

It is important that the researcher considers any issues that may influence the quality of the data obtained from an interview. It is imperative that these issues are also avoided. According to Saunders et al. (2012), interviews are not standardised and this may affect the reliability of the interview. Reliability is determined if other researchers would be able to reveal similar information should they conduct the research. Reliability is also related to interviewer bias, which occurs when the tone, comments and non-verbal behaviour of the interviewer creates bias in the manner in which interviewees respond to the questions that are posed to them. This may occur because the interviewer imposes their own beliefs and frame of reference through the questions that are being asked. Furthermore, bias could also be demonstrated when interpreting the responses from interviewees. Saunders et al. (2012) also points out that trust and credibility must be established in the interview to ensure validity and reliability.

Saunders et al. (2012) also mentions response bias which is related to perceptions about the interviewer. In a semi-structured interview, the interviewer wishes to explore and seek explanations. The interviewee may be willing to participate but will be reluctant to explore certain themes thus choosing not to reveal certain aspects of the topic under discussion.

The result is that the interviewee may only provide a partial overview of the situation, affecting the richness of the data. Generalizability can be regarded as the extent to which the findings of a research study can be applied to other settings (Saunders et al., 2012). This is often raised as an issue in qualitative research as the research is based on relatively small sample sizes. However, the generalizability of the study will depend on the sample upon which it is based.

In response to issues of reliability relating to this study, it is important to note that the findings derived are not necessarily intended to be replicated as they are a reflection of reality at a particular point in time, in a situation that is susceptible to change (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Using semi-structured interviews assists in exploring the complex and dynamic nature of the research topic, allowing the data collection process to be flexible. Marshall and Rossman (2006) suggested that researchers should justify the use of a non-standardised approach to turn a perceived weakness into a strength, which is based on the realistic assumption about the replication of the findings in the study. Interviewer and interviewee bias can be overcome by preparing for the interview and conducting it in a skilled manner (Saunders et al., 2012). Concerning generalizability, it is important to note that studies conducted using semi-structured interviews cannot be used to make statistical generalisations about an entire population especially if data is collected from a small non-probability sample (Saunders et al., 2012). The validity relating to semi-structured interviews is high as the ability to probe meanings and clarify questions allows the researcher to explore responses holistically (Saunders et al., 2012). Figure 5 provides a summary about overcoming bias.

Figure 5: Overcoming bias

Overcoming interviewer and interviewee bias

understand the organisation or culture of the person being interviewed

choose an appropriate location

dress appropriately

use probing appropriately

listen attentively

summarise responses to test your understanding

record data accurately

Source: Saunders et al., 2012

3.9 RECORDING THE DATA

When conducting an interview, it is beneficial to record the interview using an audio device (Maree, 2007; Saunders et al., 2012). For this study, the interviews were recorded and notes were taken in order to assist the researcher to maintain concentration and assist to develop other questions. Saunders et al. (2012) further illustrates that taking notes demonstrates to the participant that their responses are important. Notes also allow the researcher to record non-verbal cues that may be explored at a later stage. Permission was also obtained from the participant before recording the interview as this assists to establish trust (Maree, 2007). Once the interview was conducted, the researcher reflected on the interview and the notes in order to identify any gaps that need to be explored. In order to improve the value of the interview, contextual data was also detailed (Saunders et al., 2012). Contextual data includes the location of the interview, the date and time, the interview setting (noisy or quiet) and the researcher's immediate impression as to whether the interview went well or badly. The interview was also transcribed to assist with data analysis. Furthermore, recording the interview, making notes, transcribing the interview and recording the contextual data relating to the interview are all means of eliminating bias and producing reliable data (Saunders et al., 2012).

3.10 DATA ANALYSIS

It has been established that qualitative data is based on interpretive philosophy, which is aimed at extracting meaningful and symbolic content from data. It attempts to establish the meanings that participants associate with specific phenomena through their perceptions, understanding, attitude, knowledge and feelings. The best manner to achieve this is to use inductive analysis of qualitative data, which will allow research findings to emerge from frequent or significant themes identified in the raw data (Maree, 2007). A deductive approach was not utilised as it may render key themes invisible. In a deductive approach, key themes are formulated in advance. The main aim of analysing qualitative data is for the researcher to summarise themes in order to understand the phenomena. Maree (2007) further states that since the data is not numerical or statistical, the aim is to interpret the data and make sense of it. It is important for the researcher to keep the research questions in mind, as these will assist to guide the study.

3.9.1 Content analysis

The data in this study will be analysed using content analysis, which identifies and summarises the message content (Neuendorf, 2002). According to Maree (2007) the process involves looking for data from different angles and identifying themes in the text that will help the researcher to understand and analyse the raw data. Content analysis is an inductive approach, where similarities and differences are sought in the text. This technique of analysis was selected since it concentrates on the content and the contextual significance of the text that is transcribed (Lyons, 2007). According to Leedy et al. (2013) the researcher must first identify the materials to be studied, which are the interview transcriptions. The researcher must then define the themes and analyse the data with reference to these themes.

3.9.2 Transcribing the data

According to Saunders et al. (2012) a transcription refers to the written account of the audio-recorded interview. In this study, the researcher transcribed the interviews and provided an indication of the tone in which words were said (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The researcher also documented non-verbal communication. This additional information added to the richness of the data collection.

3.9.3 Coding the data

Maree (2007) points out that coding is a process that involves reading through the transcribed data and then dividing it into analytical units called themes. If a meaningful segment in the data is found, it will be assigned a code or a label. The advantage of coding data is that it provides ‘objective representations of facts’ and helps the researcher to make discoveries about reality which is related to the codes (Maree, 2007). After the data was coded, the codes were organised into themes that were assigned an identifying name by the researcher.

3.9.4 Recognising relationships

The researcher will embark on recognising relationships by reorganising the data into the themes that have been generated. This is an active process in analysing the data (Saunders et al., 2012). The categories could be revised and rearranged as the researcher tries to find meaning in the data. The researcher will utilise data display techniques, recommended by Saunders et al. (2012), which involves assembling the data into a visual diagram. This was done by means of matrices (a tabular diagram with rows and columns in which data is entered into the cells) and networks (boxes that are joined by lines).

3.9.5 ATLAS.ti

The qualitative data analysis for this study was supported by making use of computer-aided software called ATLAS.ti which can be used to analyse text, visual and audio data (Smit, 2002).

3.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics form an important aspect of any research study and involve thinking about each stage of the research process from an ethical perspective. Gravetter and Forzano (2009) defined research ethics as the responsibility of the researcher to be truthful and reverential to all individuals involved or affected by the research study. The researcher abided by the following ethical considerations as cited by Saunders et al. (2012):

3.10.1 Integrity of the researcher

The researcher aimed to exercise integrity which is expressed by acting openly, being honest and reporting accurately. It also includes avoiding misrepresenting the research findings and being dishonest.

3.10.2 Respect for others

The researcher aimed to establish trust and respect to all those involved in the research study. Furthermore, the rights of individuals were not violated at any stage of the research process.

3.10.3 Avoiding harm

The researcher undertook to ensure that the participants in the study will be protected from any harm, be it mental or physical. Harm could be caused by embarrassing, stressing or causing discomfort to the participants. It could also take effect by violating trust regarding confidentiality and anonymity (Leedy et al., 2013).

3.10.4 Privacy

By means of respecting the participant, avoiding harm, ensuring confidentiality and taking responsibility of the findings, the researcher ensured that the privacy of the participants is protected.

3.10.5 Voluntary participation

The researcher assured participants that participation in the research project is voluntary. Participants were also made aware that they can withdraw at any time and may refuse to answer any questions that may be posed during the data collection phase of the study (Leedy et al., 2013).

3.10.6 Informed consent

The researcher informed participants about the implications of taking part in the study by providing them with an ‘informed consent form’ that will provide a brief definition, overview and purpose of the research and what it aims to achieve.

3.10.7 Confidentiality

In line with improving the reliability of the research study, the researcher undertook to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. This also aids in preventing harm to the participants.

3.10.8 Data analysis

The researcher undertook to ensure that privacy, confidentiality and anonymity are respected when analysing the data and reporting the findings. The data will not be made up or falsified and the results and findings will be reported accurately, irrespective of whether it is in contradiction of the outcomes of the study or not.

3.10.9 Data management

The researcher protected all personal data that was collected and ensured that this information is not made available to the public.

3.12 TRUSTWORTHINESS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Trustworthiness is exceptionally important in qualitative research (Fink, 2000; Maree, 2007). Therefore, the researcher is obliged to keep all procedures that can be used to assess the trustworthiness of the data analysis in mind. In order for a research study to be regarded as credible, it is important for the researcher to ensure the quality of the research inquiry. Data which is of a high quality represents the researcher's involvement in the research (Neuman, 2003). Saunders et al. (2012) cites that Guba and Lincoln (1994) altered the names for quality criteria in qualitative research. 'Reliability' is known as 'dependability', 'internal validity' is known as 'credibility' and 'external validity' is known as 'transferability'.

3.11.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the ability of the researcher to demonstrate that the findings depict a true picture of the phenomenon that is being studied (Maree, 2007).

3.11.2 Dependability

The researcher ensured that the study is dependable by ensuring a research process that is carefully designed, structured and planned (Lyons, 2007).

3.11.3 Transferability

The researcher aimed to provide a clear indication as to the context within which the data was collected so that other researchers can use the criteria if they wish to replicate the study in another setting (Guba, 1981).

The researcher enhanced the trustworthiness of the research study by means of the following as cited by Maree (2007):

3.11.4 Verification of raw data

After transcribing the interviews, the researcher submitted the transcript to an independent person in order for them to correct any errors. In this manner, the raw data was verified.

3.11.5 Coding

The researcher attempted to ensure intercoder reliability (consistency amongst different coders) as well as intracoder reliability (reliability of a single coder). In order to achieve this, the researcher sought the assistance of an independent person to code a sample of the data. The person was informed about the research study and its objectives and was granted a sample of the raw data for coding. The independent person's coding was then compared to the researcher's coding to ensure reliability.

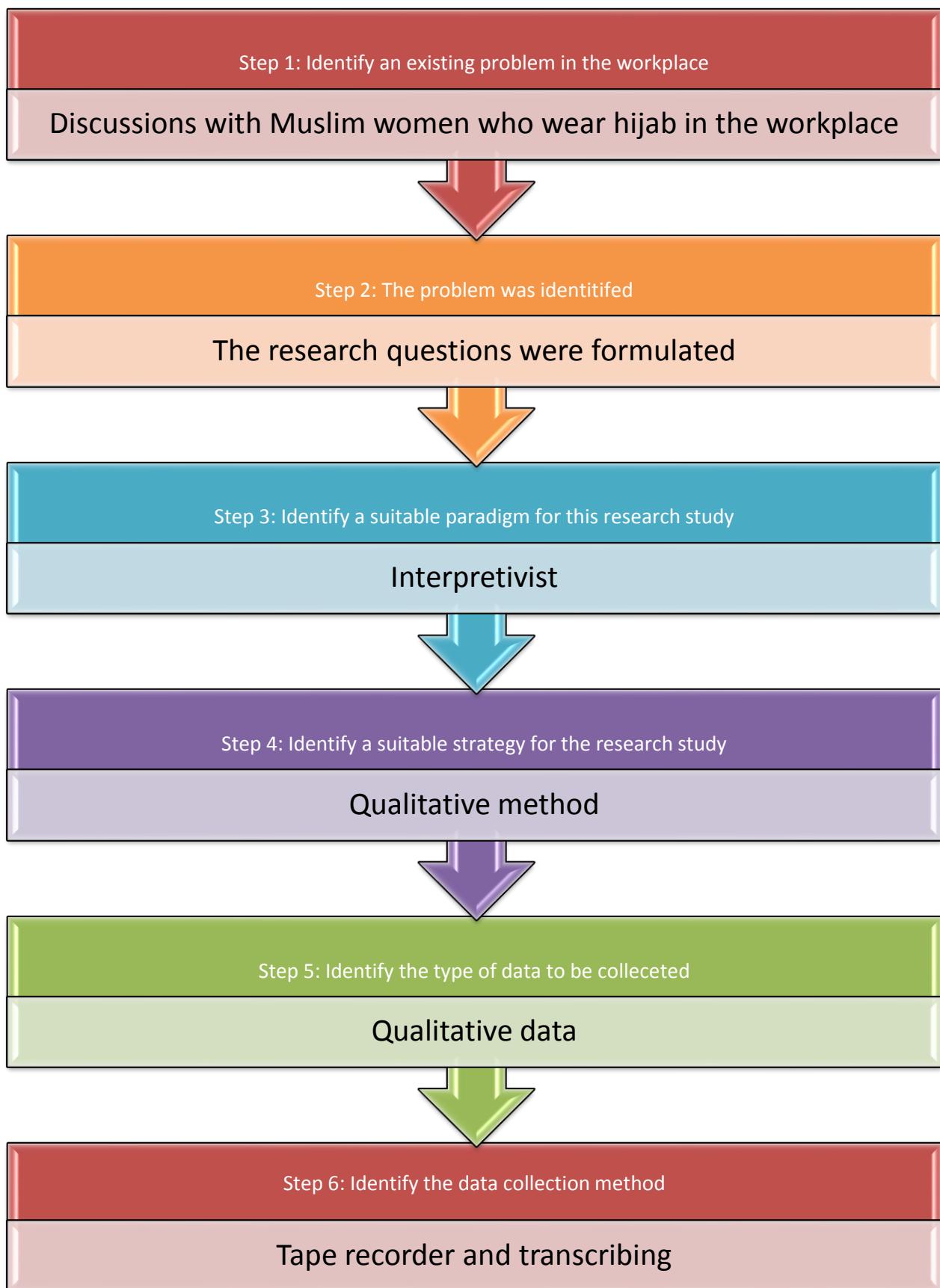
3.11.6 Avoid generalisations

The researcher will adhere to the basis that a qualitative study is not aimed at generalising findings across a population, but it rather aims to understand the unique experiences and meanings of participants.

3.11.7 Confidentiality and anonymity

The researcher undertakes to maintain confidentiality and anonymity by not mentioning the names and other characteristics of participants as well as other information that may reveal their identity. Figure 6 provides a summary of the research process that is utilised in this study.

Figure 6: A summary of the research process used in the study



Adapted from Carrim (2012)

3.13 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the research design and methodology for this research study was described. The ontological and epistemological stance used in this study was also explored. Content analysis was used to identify themes from in-depth semi-structured interviews. Ethical considerations were also discussed.

Chapter 4 focusses on the analysis of the results of the study.

4 ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to determine the challenges facing Muslim women who wear hijab in the workplace. A literature review (Chapter 2) was conducted in order to understand the concept of hijab, religious accommodation in the workplace and discriminatory practices against Muslims. The research design and methodology was discussed in Chapter 3. The main findings of the study will be discussed in this chapter.

4.2 HIJAB

4.2.1 Defining the concept of hijab

The participants in the study were asked to explain their understanding of the concept hijab. It is evident that hijab relates to two characteristics: wearing a headscarf and dressing modestly. Participants further elaborated that wearing a cloak and veil constituted hijab, but have acknowledged that only wearing a headscarf would also signify the hijab. Hijab is also defined as dressing modestly, with loose fitting clothing which does not reveal the shape of the body, indicating modesty. Participant 8 indicates that hijab should not reveal the form of a woman's body:

My interpretation of hijab is to dress modestly. To cover my head and my hair. To wear loose fitting clothing that doesn't fully reveal my form. But from an Islamic perspective I understand you can cover your face completely but you are allowed to keep your face, your hands and your feet open. So that is generally how I dress, very seldom you will find me in short sleeves, it is normally long sleeves, more loose fitting clothing and my head is always covered with my scarf.

The definition of hijab according to the participants goes beyond just wearing a headscarf. The participants indicated that by wearing hijab, a woman displays her Muslim identity. As a result of this, she should behave in a good manner, as she is representing Islam to the public. Hijab is thus regarded as a holistic concept that involves wearing a headscarf and

conducting yourself in a manner that clearly describes the principles of Islam, such as having good manners and good character. Like the other participants, this point is highlighted by Participant 9, who believes that the hijab should govern one's behaviour and conduct with other people:

I have a flexible definition of Hijab. I do think it is about modesty and modesty is not only about the way you dress, it's about the way you behave. So for me Hijab is not just the outer it's also the inner. It's about the way we engage with people, it's about your manner, and about modesty and God consciousness. So I don't think it's only about the way you dress, I think it's about the way you behave.

Participant 1 provided a holistic view on wearing the hijab:

By wearing hijab, we create a positive identity which must be exemplified by good character and manners, good morals, dressing decently and modestly.

4.2.2 Reasons for wearing hijab

It was also evident that all the participants were not forced by any family members to start donning the hijab. It was a clear cut decision made at different stages in their lives and through different experiences, such as when they were at university, at the funeral of a close relative, during the month of Ramadan or after returning from pilgrimage. Participant 2 indicated how she came to wear the hijab:

Wearing hijab wasn't forced upon us as young girls. So for me it was a personal choice and it's something I wanted to do.

As mentioned above, there are many reasons that have been cited by participants as to why they wear hijab. Five of the participants started wearing hijab after they had performed pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia. Participant 1 described her reasoning:

It was a spiritual enlightenment for me. I had gone with my family for Umrah (pilgrimage) and I decided that it was now my time to change and get a Muslim identity... So it was more about reform and spirituality. I feel at peace now and I feel naked without my hijab.

Participant 5 felt the need to change her life:

I went for Umrah and one of the things that I wanted to come out from that was to wear it (hijab), to change my life in some way.

Two of the participants started wearing hijab after a death in their respective families. According to Participant 4:

I think I just lost my granny at that time, so it was quite a sad period and I think I just decided to change my lifestyle.

Another participant started to wear hijab before she got divorced from her husband. She mentioned:

Wearing hijab was a decision based on the route that my life was taking, and I thought, this is what I wanted for myself, to feel spiritual enlightenment.

Participant 11 stated she wore the hijab because she wanted to fit in with the community in which she lived, and therefore she had to conform:

Wearing hijab comes from the desire from wanting to fit in with the crowd, and the crowd that I was surrounded by were mostly people who were wearing scarves.

Participant 6, started wearing hijab during the month of Ramadan, and just continued with it. She attributed this to:

A natural progression of my own ideal and my relationship with Islam which made me feel I was ready to start wearing hijab.

4.2.3 Hijab and fashion

Another factor that has drawn participants to wearing hijab is that it has become more fashionable. It has evolved from traditionally wearing a black cloak and scarf to women now donning civilian clothes and adding the headscarf. Participant 1 indicated the following:

Hijab these days is also quite blingy and fashionable so it doesn't feel like I am not keeping up with fashion. You get different makes, styles, you can tie them differently. There is too much choice so it is not like before, where there were only 2 or 3 standard styles. Muslim women are now more innovative and this innovativeness makes me keep my hijab on.

Participant 7 has a co-ordinated wardrobe of scarfs, and she ensures that her dressing, with her scarf, always maintains a professional look:

I do have probably every colour and style of scarf you could possibly think of, I have like hundreds, and yes that would be to match most of my outfits, so that I am co-ordinated and that I do still look professional and you know, because I mean that's what it is, it's almost the same thing as somebody walking in here with red hair I think you need to look professional and since we are given the privilege of actually being able to wear it in an open environment then you need to make sure you're still looking professional within it. Yes my cupboard is very well co-ordinated with scarves to match most of my outfits. It's quick I'm like a two minute scarf timer, I'm not one of those that sits, and takes time to put on the scarf, I'm just like over, pin, down.

4.2.4 Responses to wearing hijab

I thought that it was important to ask participants how their family, spouses and colleagues responded to their decision to start donning the hijab.

It was evident that in the workplace, when participants started to wear hijab, it was not something that went unnoticed by colleagues. However the situation improved over time and the hijab was accepted. Participant 1 comments on this feeling of uneasiness as follows:

I know people looked at me funny and some people kept their distance at first.

Colleagues also expressed curiosity, and participants found themselves explaining their decision to don the hijab. Participant 2 elaborates about her experiences with her colleagues when she initially wore the hijab:

They didn't say anything out loud to me, but I know obviously people were looking at me. Some colleagues wanted to understand why it is that I was doing that straight after I came back from Umrah and I had to explain quite a number of times it was a personal choice, it's not something that was forced on me.

The responses from friends and family were of a mixed nature according to the participants. Participant 1 describes her initial experiences wearing hijab as a "disaster". She mentioned the following:

I received criticism from some friends and family for wearing hijab. I was told that I was too young, that I am being old fashioned. I was even told that I was not "smart" (beautiful) any-more and that my husband would find a second wife!

Participant 3 came from a religious background, and her brothers were very strict in terms of her dressing. Her family supported her decision to wear the hijab, and she found that she was accepted by her friends and family:

Our friends were very supportive. Also growing up in a community like Cape Town - Islam is very wide spread and people are very accommodating

because the Cape Malays are all there, so they were very accommodating. For them to see a Black Muslim wearing the hijab was normal as most Malay women also wear hijab.

Participant 1 also expressed that she received a lot of support from a Muslim friend who did not wear hijab:

My greatest support was from my husband and a particular friend. She never wore hijab but I used to tell her everything about my experiences wearing the hijab. She encouraged me to continue wearing it which I thought was strange since she never wore the hijab.

4.2.5 Answering questions relating to Islam and hijab

The participants have found themselves answering questions about Islam in their workplace. These questions are posed by their colleagues. When Participant 1 started wearing hijab in her workplace, she was faced with a lot of stares and questions relating to the religion and the hijab. She found herself defending Islam in many instances. According to her, the greatest challenge facing Muslim women is misunderstanding as people tend to misinterpret and judge Muslim women as a result of the hijab. Therefore she states that:

Muslims need to drive educating others about Islam so people will not judge us.

According to Participant 6, she managed to establish relationships with several clients after a few meetings and once they got to know her better and on a more personal level, they asked her questions about her hijab and being Muslim. She also finds herself defending Islam as some of her colleagues believe that Islam is the cause of a lot of problems in the world:

Some colleagues believe that every kind of conflict that is going on out there in the world, or wherever it is dangerous, it is because of Islam.

Participant 10 found herself answering questions about Islam as well, even though she may not be well versed with the answer. She indicated:

I had a colleague questioning why Islam was racist and why they don't allow Christian men to marry Muslim women. I am still trying to find an answer for him.

4.3 HIJAB AND THE WORKPLACE

4.3.1 Career progression

The participants indicated differing views as to whether wearing hijab impacts job placement and career progression, with some feeling that it does hinder them, whilst majority felt that wearing hijab did not impact their career advancement. Participant 1 indicated that since she started wearing hijab, she was promoted twice. However she stated that sometimes she feels that her hijab does hinder her on certain assignments, although it is not conclusive:

I think they promoted me based on merit, but I won't lie, sometimes I do feel like I don't get to work on projects and other opportunities because of my hijab.

Participant 2 indicated that she applied for a new job and did not get appointed. She believes it is because she wore hijab to the interview but cannot prove that was the reason why she did not get the job:

Wearing the hijab has impacted my prospects of obtaining a new job. I went for an interview and wore the hijab but I didn't get the job. Look, the thing is because I couldn't confirm it, I couldn't take it further, that's just where it ends.

Participant 7 didn't wear hijab to an interview as she had an inner feeling that it would impact her negatively during the interview:

I went for two interviews. The first one, I didn't wear the hijab and in the second one I did. And in my mind I think in the first interview, I did believe that wearing the hijab would make a difference and impact me negatively, which I hate saying out loud because I feel very hypocritical in saying that, but I mean that is exactly how I felt.

Participant 6 found the job application process very daunting as she wasn't even granted interviews despite being a top student:

Coming into the workplace, I felt that I was prejudiced. A lot of the application forms required you to send a photo. I was a top grade student, I qualified with distinctions - there's no reason I shouldn't have been called for some interviews and I wasn't. I also went to a few interviews where literally upon seeing me there was almost like a visible change in body language and you know going through the actual interview process I really felt that after they had seen me physically they had decided that I was not going to be a candidate, irrespective of what happened in that interview process. So I do feel that in some areas it (hijab) did prejudice me, but where I am now, I mean they didn't seem to have a problem.

Participant 8 is seeking to adopt wearing an abaya (long cloak) full-time. However she has reservations as to if she will be employable if she wore it to an interview. She believes that Islam has a negative image in the world due to the acts of violence that is being perpetrated in Muslim countries, and she questions if the company she joins would be comfortable to send her to clients wearing an abaya. This could allow the clients to have a negative impression of her. She states that this is her fear:

I have doubt in my mind about if I apply to another organisation, and if I had to go with a cloak for an interview, will I get the job or not?

Participant 10 related that she had just begun wearing hijab and had applied for a new position in an academic institution. She deliberated whether she should wear the hijab or not to the interview. A friend of hers had indicated that if she wanted the job, she should

not wear the hijab. She eventually did not wear hijab to the interview, and was appointed into that position. However, when she started working she started to don the hijab. This came as a shock to her employer who questioned her regarding it. She responded as follows:

I told her that I didn't wear it to the interview because I felt that it would not have worked in my favour. She (the employer) didn't say anything... I know it was underhanded not wearing the scarf and not disclosing it but at the end of the day why should my abilities be hindered by the fact that I wear a scarf, I have the same capabilities whether I wear the scarf or not.

According to Participant 3, career growth in the corporate environment is strongly linked to merit and qualifications. She attributes her success in her job to her personality and regards her hijab as her selling point when she deals with directors and influential people in her environment as they refer to her as “the lady who wears the scarf.” This participant also exhorted Muslim women to never believe that they will lose their job, or not be promoted if they wore hijab, as God would open the way for them. They should not compromise in this regard. Referring to hijab, she goes on further to state that:

Wearing hijab has never been a hindrance to promotions and so forth, I've achieved a lot within the industry, I'm well known within the industry, and whatever promotions I've gotten were based on merit.

Participant 6 is of a similar opinion:

I've never ever got the feeling that hijab is a hindrance, like at the moment I'm eligible to apply for partnership and they are supporting me and have always been very supportive of me.

Participant 9 who work at an academic institution indicated that:

You have the right to wear your hijab but then you have the responsibility to do your job properly, and I do believe that I've not been discriminated based on that.

4.3.2 Conflicts at work

A question was posed to the participants as to whether wearing hijab conflicted with them performing their daily work tasks. All the participants are involved in work which is based in an office environment, and thus they did not perceive any challenges. Participant 1 indicated the following:

I am in customer relations; it is more of a PR position. I am the face of the business. I am not working on a production line, and there is no hazard in performing my job. I work mostly with my laptop and so there is no fear of me being a danger to colleagues or myself.

4.4 SOCIAL INTERACTION IN THE WORKPLACE

The participants were asked about their involvement with colleagues beyond normal work tasks at work functions. The participants all agreed that they did not have any problem participating in these work functions. However they did feel uncomfortable when alcohol was served, halal food was not provided or when music was played. Participant 2 indicated that she does attend these functions as it is important to integrate with other colleagues and if she doesn't attend, her colleagues look down on her and she feels guilty. Therefore, she tries her best to attend to avoid offending her colleagues. However she states that when alcohol is served, she leaves:

I just keep away from the function when my colleagues start to drink alcohol and you know when it becomes out of hand, then I stay away, and I let them know, that look now is my time to leave because I have family responsibilities.

Participant 4 tries to avoid activities and functions that take place after work as a result of

the music that is played and the availability of alcohol. However, she still tries to maintain a balance by attending off-site functions. During such functions, being with other Muslim colleagues makes her feel more comfortable, as opposed to leaving early:

And when you know that things look like they getting out of hand then you can kind of walk away from it, so then I walk away or hang around with other Muslim colleagues that are in the same category.

When participant 3 attends work functions, she keeps her hijab on. She indicated that she does not feel odd as there is always one of her colleagues who don't drink alcohol or dance and therefore she links herself to such people. A very important point brought up by her is that she doesn't impose her religious belief on colleagues who drink alcohol and who dance and that she respects their decision. She indicates that her colleagues know that she is Muslim, and they understand that she cannot drink alcohol and they are aware that her food must be halal. She states:

I definitely socialise and I am exposed to the liquor and I am exposed to the music... I'm inclusive in my work environment, but they will not even see that I'm not drinking like they're drinking, I'm not dancing like they're dancing, they will see that I was present and I was part of the meeting and the function but I would not do what they are doing.

In Islam, there should be segregation of men and women and they should also not touch each other by means of shaking hands, if it is someone whom you can marry. I posed the question to the participants to find out if they shake hands with their male colleagues. The majority of the participants do not shake hands with their male colleagues. Participant 2 said that she doesn't feel comfortable to shake hands with men. However, she does it to avoid an awkward situation. In spite of this, she would like to develop courage to tell the other person that:

Based on my religion, I'm avoiding this (shaking hands).

Participant 4 is very strict around the matter of shaking hands with male colleagues. At her previous company, her manager would explain to clients that she doesn't shake hands with men. At her current company she has to explain this herself:

I would have to tell people I am sorry I cannot shake your hand due to religious reasons.

4.5 CHALLENGES IN THE WORKPLACE

4.5.1 Adapting to the workplace

The participants expressed that they have adapted well in the South African workplace. According to Participant 6, the majority of Muslim women have fit in seamlessly into the workplace as they have adapted themselves to a Western lifestyle. She further states:

Muslim women have adopted an identity that is the same as everyone else around them.

4.5.2 Challenges wearing hijab in the workplace

The participants did express that they experienced certain challenges in the workplace. Participant 7 indicated that delegates at a training course she presented were reluctant to build relationships with her as they felt they cannot be open with her, sharing their experiences due to her covering herself, which created a barrier in terms of body language. Once the barrier is broken and the delegates are comfortable with her, can she then add true value by means of the training course. She adds:

I do think that we have to work a little bit harder in building those relationships on a professional basis with our clients and with our colleagues because of wearing the hijab in the workplace.

Participant 8 feels that wearing hijab in the workplace places unnecessary pressure on her as she is always responsible to answer questions on religious principles and she is perceived as being traditional. She mentions:

Wearing the scarf means you are more religious, you are more conservative, you are more orthodox... that is the way people see you.

4.6 RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION IN THE WORKPLACE

4.6.1 Booking leave days for Eid

A question was posed to the participants regarding the taking of leave for religious holidays such as Eid. None of the participants were ever prohibited from booking leave for Eid. It was evident that company policies dictated how leave for Eid was treated. Participant 1 indicated:

For Eid, I have to book annual leave.

Participant 10 is allowed to use ‘compassionate’ leave allocated to them to take leave for religious holidays:

Actually you are entitled to five days of compassionate leave, and of those five days three days may be used for religious leave.

Participant 5 receives 2 days of religious leave which she indicates is:

Additional to annual leave.

4.6.2 Halal food

South African companies are not consistent in providing halal food to their Muslim staff with some accommodating Muslim staff whilst others don’t. According to Participant 11, functions at her workplace are organised by the Marketing & Communications department. Despite the fact that people know she is Muslim, they never cater halal food for her. She states:

I'll mention that I eat halal food three times and if I see there is no response, I will decide if I want to make it a big thing (by taking the request for halal food further or if I want to ignore it.

Participant 11 mentioned that all diverse dietary requirements must be catered for. If halal food is not catered, she refuses to eat:

There is nothing worse than going to a work party and you can't eat because you fear contamination because your dietary requirements are not met.

Participant 1 indicated that her employer does supply halal food at functions, however:

Although my employer provides halal food, it is hard to integrate when there is alcohol and pork at parties and on the tables.

Participant 3 contributes on a monthly basis to a social club that uses the money collected for functions and to cater for halal food:

Halal food is accommodated for because we also contribute towards a social club for functions and so forth, so you cannot pay and not eat your portion you have been paying for every month. So you could either be part of the social club... in order to make sure that you get your Halal food....

Participant 4 indicated that supplying halal food at her place of work was not feasible:

There was an initiative to try to bring Halal food into the business but I don't think it worked because we were getting food externally and it was quite expensive and I think the nature of the job often the Muslims were not at the company itself (based off-site) so therefore it didn't work.

Participant 5 says that the canteen at her workplace is not halal. However she eats from the vegetarian section which is totally separate to the rest of the kitchen:

The canteen staff can see I'm a Muslim from the way I'm dressed and immediately they know they need to change their gloves. The section allocated for vegetarians is also separate.

Participant 5 has also had a similar experience:

When I go down to the canteen, we don't have a halal canteen, but the moment they see my scarf, they know that I want my meals on the veg toaster, purely because I don't want it on the same toaster that has bacon or anything else. So for me, the scarf again, helps so much.

Other companies are more accommodating. Participant 6 indicated that the legal firm she works at caters for Muslims:

We've got a Halal restaurant.

4.6.2 Prayer facilities and time to pray

The majority of the participants have a dedicated prayer facility on-site at the companies they work for. Participant 6 stated:

We have a prayer room with a little basin so we can make ablution.

Participant 8 appreciates that her employer has accommodated Muslims:

They have also accommodated me, they have prayer facilities, in the building.

Participant 1 says that employers should accommodate Muslim prayer times within reason:

If a person takes 2 hours to pray, then it is not fair on the employer.

Participant 5 further stated:

When it's prayer time they (colleagues) acknowledge the fact that it's prayer time and you can't attend a meeting, you have that flexibility of declining or scheduling your day around it.

4.7 ISLAMOPHOBIA

4.7.1 The experience of Islamophobia

The participants were asked a question regarding Islamophobia and if they have experienced it. Majority of the participants have never experienced any kind of discrimination in their workplaces as a result of being Muslim. However there have been isolated incidents. Participant 1 indicated that she has been a victim of verbal jokes and mockery about the Taliban and Osama Bin Laden, about hijab and Muslims in general but she has never been harassed or injured as a result of this. She further stated:

Some people are being killed for wearing hijab, but we are very lucky as we don't experience Islamophobia in our workplaces.

Participant 6 has been a victim of passing comments regarding wearing hijab, but she states that it is not a vicious attack. She has found herself defending Islam regarding the violence in Muslim countries as her colleagues feel that Islam is to blame:

Wherever there are travel warnings issued for countries, the reason amongst my colleagues and my friends is always that it's because of Islamic extremism, or there's a risk that you are going to be captured by a terrorist or Islamic terrorist. Some of the conflicts have nothing to do with Islam, but there is this perception that every kind of conflict that is going on out there, or wherever it is dangerous, it has something to do with Islam.

4.7.2 Banning hijab

The participants were asked regarding their opinions about the ban on hijab in certain countries abroad. The majority of the participants indicated that they would oppose any such ban on the hijab if it had to be instituted in South Africa. Participant 4 indicated that she believes if any ban had to be imposed in South Africa, the Muslim community will oppose it and help people understand the importance of wearing the hijab:

I would like to teach people about the religion of Islam and the reasons why Muslim women wear the hijab. I would like to help them see that covering a person's hair would not impact, or change a person themselves.

If legislation banning the hijab was passed in South Africa, participant 6 would strongly oppose it:

Well firstly I would definitely actively oppose any legislation that seeks to ban wearing the hijab and I will join whatever groups, or legal groups, to oppose it.

Participant 8 indicated that if hijab was banned, she would emigrate:

I would seriously consider leaving South Africa if the hijab was banned in this country.

Participant 9 expressed similar sentiment:

Obviously my religious is more important to me then my work. So if I was not allowed to wear a Hijab then I would not take that employment.

Participant 3 believes that banning hijab actually imposes on a person's way of life and infringes on the freedom of people to live the lives they want to live:

You cannot have someone legislate to say that you are not allowed to wear a dress, or you are not allowed to wear pants. I think if the dress attire is appropriate, it should be allowed. So I find it very frustrating.

4.7.3 Practicing Islam in South Africa

The participants were asked about practicing Islam in South Africa. It was evident that all of the participants are very thankful for the fact that they can practice Islam freely in South Africa. Participant 1 stated:

I am grateful that we can practice Islam freely. We have mosques all over the place and we can wear hijab. This is unlike other countries. My children go to a Muslim school that promotes the Islamic ethos. We can walk the malls, walk the parks, drive around without the fear experienced by other Muslims in other countries.

Participant 2 says that living as a Muslim in South Africa is actually very ‘pleasant’ when compared to what is heard in the news regarding Muslims in other parts of the world. She indicated that:

Our laws allow for us to freely practice Islam which is a good thing.

Participant 4 feels that non-Muslims in South Africa are more accepting of Muslims:

I haven't had any specific incidents of Islamophobia at my workplace, or experienced any discrimination. In fact I've seen more the opposite of it, where people were more forthcoming and accepting of Islam and wearing the hijab and they were more respectful to me in terms of making sure that I received halal food. If you are in Hijab, they know that you are a Muslim and that you go perform your prayer at a stipulated time and if you don't go, they ask why I haven't gone to pray as yet. So my colleagues have been much more accommodating of Islam and hijab and I think that's been much more of an advantage for us here in South Africa compared to other countries.

Participant 9 indicated that she has chosen not to emigrate from South Africa due to the religious freedom experienced here. She has indicated that it is important to determine why Muslims are perceived so negatively and then Muslim women need to don the hijab to change perceptions through their attitude and actions. She further stated that:

I have full belief in our constitution; I think historically we come from a society that understands the importance of personal freedom.

4.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter shed light on the various reasons why Muslim women wear hijab and the respective reactions from friends and family members after donning the hijab. It is evident that Muslim women are also accommodated in their workplaces regarding halal food, days off to celebrate religious holidays such as Eid, and taking time off to perform daily prayers. They are also seldom subject to Islamophobia and will actively oppose any ban on hijab. The next chapter focuses on the main findings of the study, which will be compared to the available literature on the subject.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to examine and compare the key findings of the study that has been reported in the previous chapter with current literature that relates to this topic. During the interviews that were conducted, it was evident that there is an increased number of Muslim women who wear hijab in the workplace. These women also occupy very senior positions within their companies and are educated. This will be discussed in more detail in subsequent sections, and will also detail essential themes that have emerged from the study that relate to the topic under discussion. These include religious accommodation in the workplace, Islamophobia and the challenges that Muslim women face in the workplace.

5.2 MAIN FINDINGS

Participants in the study indicated that hijab relates to three dimensions; wearing a headscarf, dressing modestly and behaving appropriately. Participants have also considered wearing a veil to constitute hijab. According to the participants, hijab furthermore indicates dressing modestly and with loose fitting clothing that doesn't actually reveal the form of the body. Hijab is further described by them as going beyond a dress code. The participants indicate that wearing hijab should condition a Muslim woman's inner soul by allowing her to behave and act in a manner that is righteous, displaying good manners and God consciousness. Additionally, they add that women who wear hijab are exhorted to behave in a good manner by the Quran, as in essence they are representing Islam to the public. Hijab is therefore regarded as a holistic concept that involves not only wearing a headscarf but conducting yourself in a manner that clearly exhibits the principles of Islam. According to Stacey (2009) hijab encompasses more than just a dress code which includes a headscarf, hijab should exemplify modest dressing as well as modest behaviour. Stacey (2009) indicates that if a Muslim woman wore hijab, but used bad language at the same time, then she would not be fulfilling the requirements of hijab.

The participants were asked about their reasons for wearing hijab. Numerous reasons were cited. Some of the participants wear the hijab as a symbol of their religious identity,

stating that it reflects spiritual enlightenment. Others started to don the hijab during certain events or milestones in their lives. Some participants made the decision to wear hijab after the death of a family member which indicated to them a sign to amend their lifestyle and adopt the Islamic dress code. The participants who had been for pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia to perform the rights and rituals related to Umrah found the journey to be a turning point in their lives, resulting in them starting to wear the hijab. A participant who wore hijab after getting a divorce from her husband saw the life-changing event as a means of actually get closer to her Creator. Whilst Muslim women are commanded to wear hijab in Islam (Asghar, 2008), it is evident from the narratives of the Muslim women that the decision was made by choice as opposed to an authority enforcing it. Perves (2013) indicated that Muslim women are engaging in life-long journeys to rediscover their own selves. Wearing hijab is part of this journey, which is a spiritual journey. Further research by Perves (2013) states that the common perception that Muslim women are forced to wear hijab is far from the truth. Despite this freedom of choice, Western media portrays the hijab as oppressive and strives for Muslim women to be 'free' from wearing hijab (Omair, 2011). Wearing hijab remains a very personal and independent decision for women in the South African workplace.

The narratives from the participants also indicate that hijab has drawn away from simply being a black scarf to cover the hair, to actually allowing Muslim women to be fashionable at the same time. The manner in which the hijab can be tied is numerous, with many different styles to choose from. Participants feel that Muslim women have become more innovative in terms of wearing hijab, and this innovation spurs them to keep their hijab on. The different colours, designs and styles allow them to remain fashionable but at the same time modest as well. Khalil (2010) indicated that Muslim women have successfully been able to blend fashion with modest dress. Young Muslim women are looking for fashion that doesn't set them apart from society. After 9/11, Muslim women have become more aware of their identity, prompting women to wear hijab but combining this with styles to allow them to fit in with society. This boost in religious identity has resulted in a greater need for style (The Economist, 2014). Today, hijab's are available in bright colours, with floral designs and bling, making them look far from frumpy (Seligson, 2014).

The participants in the study have expressed a need to be identifiable as Muslim by wearing their hijab. The hijab is thus a very powerful symbol of a woman's Muslim identity (Omair, 2011). They also try to maintain a professional dress code in the work environment whilst keeping their hijab on. In this way the participants negotiate their Muslim identity to blend in with the corporate identity. While maintaining Islamic attire, they blend this in with Western clothes. Some companies have also introduced the headscarf to form a part of the uniform for those who wish to wear it, creating a further sense of corporate identity. This need to dress in a professional manner whilst maintaining the hijab is referred to as a professional identity (Omair, 2011).

Wearing hijab in South Africa appears to be more acceptable than in other countries. As a result of 9/11, there has been an increased bias and negative public opinion towards Muslims in Western countries (Reeves & Azam, 2012). According to Clair, Beatty and MacLean (2005), when religion is viewed negatively, an individual could be stigmatised if they disclose their religious affiliation in the workplace and this can have negative consequences on the stigmatised person (Reeves & Azam, 2012). Some people choose to display their stigma and experience the bias that results (Ragins, 2008). This disclosure takes place through clothing in some religions, for instance women who choose to wear hijab (Williams & Vashi, 2007). When we belong to groups, we develop a personal social identity. Invisible social identities are common in organisations and religion is included as an invisible social identity (Reeves & Azam, 2012). A Muslim woman displays her social identity by discussing religion with co-workers or by wearing hijab. By wearing hijab, the Muslim woman's social identity is clearly stated and challenges her co-workers to address any preconceived stereotypes about Islam, Muslims and Muslim women in the workplace (Creed & Scully, 2000). Reeves and Azam (2000) indicated that if Muslim women who wear hijab speak up about stereotypes and misconceptions regarding Muslim women, they could be regarded as social change advocates.

Individuals who are subject to stigmatizing characteristics often try to conform by concealing their true identity (Hewlin, 2009). These individuals face a huge amount of uncertainty that could impact their work relationship if the identity is disclosed. Uncertainty leads to workplace stress and anxiety which results in emotional exhaustion (Chang, Johnson & Yang, 2007). According to social exchange theory, employees who conceal

stigmatizing characteristics will display behaviours that do not benefit the organisation whilst organizational citizenship behaviours remain positive if employees do not experience concealment of identity (Reeves & Azam, 2012). It is evident from the current study that the participants have chosen to challenge all stereotypes about Muslims and have continued to wear their hijab in the workplace. The result is that they display outward-directed citizenship behaviours that could enhance the image of Muslims if the employee in hijab is seen in a favourable light (Reeves & Azam, 2012).

Some of the participants in the study expressed concern about applying for other jobs and attending interviews wearing the hijab. The concern amongst the participants is that if they wore hijab, they would be discriminated against and as a result would not progress in the recruitment process. What is evident is at their current companies, where they wear hijab, they have no fear in terms of future career progression and actually feel very respected and comfortable with the work environment. If organisations display a climate of diversity or if their culture, policies and practices support people with visible differences, diverse groups may regard the organisation as a ‘safe haven’ where they feel valued and protected (Ragins, 2008). According to Imtoual (2010), Muslim women in Australia who wear hijab find themselves uncomfortable in not only job interviews but in the work place in general. This is in stark contrast to South Africa where Muslim women feel comfortable in their work environments.

The educational backgrounds of the participants in the study are diverse, with backgrounds ranging from academics, accounting, banking, human resources and law. This indicates that women in South Africa have advanced, as previously Apartheid legislation restricted women from reaching top management positions whilst non legislative discrimination actually prevented women from reaching their productive potential (James et al, 2006). Ahmed (2014) also found that the country’s Constitution and legislation such as Black Economic Empowerment have led to greater opportunities for women to advance themselves in the workplace. Compared internationally, Goodstein (2009) reported that American Muslim women are more likely to have a college and post-graduate degree than American Muslim men. They are also more educated than women in other religious groups, with exception of Jews.

The participants expressed that they would attend work functions that took place after hours, however they were weary when alcohol was being served and would often leave at the function at this point in time after making sure that their presence were felt. According to Nilan, Samarayi and Lovat (2012) Muslim female employees also sought to avoid functions and workplaces where alcohol was served. This alludes to the basic tenant of Islamic faith that forbids Muslims to partake in alcohol consumption. It appears that the participants in this study feel uncomfortable being in the presence of alcohol. The question remains as to whether South African employers have noticed that Muslim colleagues leave functions early as a result of alcohol consumption, and it would be interesting to note the impact of this on social interaction amongst colleagues. The participants have expressed that they feel very uncomfortable at after work parties were alcohol is served. Employers should thus be aware that Muslims will not be comfortable in an establishment where alcoholic beverages are served. According to Patel (2012), Muslim female employees in Britain experience great difficulty in attending social gatherings in pubs which provide opportunities for networking and are often where managers seek out candidates for potential promotions. Furthermore, there is a lack of awareness of Muslims who may feel uncomfortable around colleagues who drink alcohol which results in Muslim women feeling that there is a lack of respect for Islam. When Muslims decline attendance to gatherings where there is alcohol, this should not be interpreted as bad manners but rather it should be respected as a difference in culture.

Kwintessential (2014) developed a guide for HR Personnel with regards to accommodating Muslims in the workplace. Included in this reference material is mention of touching between men and women, such as shaking hands, which must be avoided in Islam. People are advised to see if the Muslim woman extends her hand first before extending their hand for a handshake. The participants in the study indicated discomfort with shaking hands with men, with some taking the stance of politely declining a handshake whilst others shaking hands in the moment.

The Pluralism Project at Harvard University documents religious diversity in the United States of America. According to The Pluralism Project (2014), Muslims in America have had to negotiate the accommodation of prayer times that fall within working hours whilst others have also been able to negotiate for a specific place to pray at the workplace.

Ablution facilities have also been provided by employers. During the month of Ramadan, employees are also accommodated to allow them to break their fast on time. The participants in this study have indicated that their workplaces also have in-house prayer and ablution facilities and that employers have expressed reasonable degrees of flexibility in terms of time to perform prayers and even leaving the office early during the month of Ramadan. It is important for organisations to be aware of these events in the lives of Muslims to prevent offence if a Muslim co-worker had to decline a team lunch during the month of Ramadan.

Creating a workplace that is free of discrimination will help to attract, retain and motivate staff (ACAS, 2014). Therefore a key retention factor is to accommodate employee religious beliefs. With regards to Muslims, there are numerous practices that employers can accommodate in the workplace. The participants made reference to the provision of Halal food. Halal is a term that is used in Islamic Dietary law and it means “permitted, lawful” (Wan-Hassan & Awang, 2009). The Quran also prohibits Muslims from consuming pork. It is a concern that most employers do not recognize or consider that Muslims have specific dietary requirements. The participants choose either to not eat at such functions, or to opt for a vegetarian option. Employers have also found that the cost of halal food is expensive, and therefore do not accommodate Muslim staff in this regard. The participants also make use of the vegetarian canteen facility if the canteen is not fully halal. However, there are some company canteens that are fully halal. According to the Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission (2012), employers should willingly accommodate Muslims by sourcing halal food or at least give them a choice that could possibly meet Muslim dietary requirements such as vegetarian or fish dishes.

The participants were asked about booking leave for religious holidays such as Eid. It is evident that employees are definitely allowed to take leave for Eid, and this leave will be allocated to either annual leave or special leave. Some of the participants are also entitled to ‘religious leave’, whereby they can use the 3 days allocated for religious celebrations or observances. According to the ASBBS (2014), if employers deprive Muslims from celebrating their religious holidays, it will be offensive and demoralizing.

Muslims are compelled to pray five times a day. It is evident that most of the participants have special prayer and ablution facilities in their workplace, and if this isn't provided, they are allowed to pray in their offices. The participants are well accommodated in terms of taking time off to pray. In a normal working day (9am – 5pm), a Muslim will be required to pray after midday (1pm) and late afternoon (4pm). The participants have also mentioned that there are also ablution facilities available at their places of work.

A study conducted in Australia found a direct association between Muslim dress, customers and religion with terrorism (Nilan et al., 2012). The result was that Muslims felt that they were discriminated against in the workplace. Wearing hijab was also associated with Islamic extremism. Religious stereotyping and Islamophobia have also had adverse implications for Muslims in the workplace in Western countries (Kamenou & Fearfull, 2006). Despite reports in the media regarding terrorism and the association with Islam, the Muslim female participants are sparsely impacted by the negative publicity that Muslims are subject to elsewhere in the world and especially in the workplace. The participants are grateful for the fact that they can practice Islam freely. Acts of Islamophobia against the participants has been relatively non-existent, with the exception of mockery or verbal jokes of for instance The Taliban, Osama bin Laden, Muslims or hijab.

5.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided interesting findings regarding the challenges that Muslim women face when they wear hijab in the workplace. It is apparent that the participants in the study have adopted the wearing of hijab out of their own free will and are not forced to wear it by their families or husbands. They are also seldom subjected to any form of Islamophobia and discrimination in their workplaces as a result of them wearing hijab. All the participants also possess a tertiary degree which indicates that there is no barrier against the education of Muslim women and them seeking career prospects. Overall, Muslim women's requirement to pray, fast and eat halal food is acknowledged and provided for in most workplaces. The participants negotiated their Muslim identity to a limited extent by not wearing abayas. However, they did not compromise on eating halal food, remaining until the end of work functions where alcohol is served, performing prayers at the workplace

and shaking hands with men. This indicates that Muslim women who wear hijab negotiate their Islamic identities to a limited extent.

The chapter that follows will focus on the conclusion of my study, limitations and recommendations for future research.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to explore the challenges facing Muslim women who wear hijab in the workplace. Comprehensive insights regarding these experiences were obtained by means of qualitative interviews through which the experiences of the participants were evaluated. Themes were identified by means of analysis using Atlas Ti, and these assisted to understand the perceptions of the participants. The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the research questions and the findings of this study. This is followed by the implications and limitations of this study and recommendations for future research.

6.2 LIMITATIONS

The sample of participants in this study was limited to the Gauteng Province. The data can therefore not be generalised to all Muslim women who wear hijab in the workplace. Despite this limitation, this study is very helpful in gaining an understanding of the challenges faced by Muslim women who wear hijab in the workplace. There is very little research regarding this matter within the South African context, thus making the findings of this study a valuable contribution to the field. This study will allow for a comparison with the experiences of Muslim women who wear hijab in different countries

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

From the findings of the study, it has emerged that despite Islam being one religion, Black South African Muslim women face different challenges to those faced by Indian Muslim women (who make up the majority of the population). It would be interesting to explore the experiences of Black Muslim men and women in South Africa, and the challenges that they face in the workplace.

Future studies relating to this topic should also be explored taking into consideration a larger sample size, which could be used to triangulate the findings with the aim to

generalise it for the Muslim female working population who wear hijab in the South African workplace.

Future research should also consider a sample of organisations where Muslim women form the minority to determine their perspectives regarding challenges faced as well as how the organisation accommodates religious diversity.

Future studies could also explore the challenges facing Muslim men in the South African workplace.

6.4 CONCLUSION

This study was aimed at exploring the challenges facing Muslim women who wear hijab in the workplace.

Muslim women have defined the wearing of hijab in the work context as merely wearing a headscarf. This is not limited to the colour black. They therefore adopt a professional corporate dress and wear a headscarf with it. In some organisations where a uniform is required to be worn by staff, the corporate company provides a defined headscarf in a particular colour to be a part of the uniform thus allowing the women to retain their Muslim identity. Muslim women continue to manifest their religious identity by adhering to their religious principles in the workplace, such as praying and eating halal food. Some Muslim women still face challenges regarding dealing with men in the workplace as some view the shaking of hands with male colleagues as something that cannot be avoided even though it is not permissible in Islam. Muslim women therefore shake hands, in the interest of preserving and fostering good corporate relationships.

Muslim women possess degrees and post graduate degrees and have demonstrated good career progression and advancement. They are employed at prominent consulting, financial and academic institutions and have progressed up the corporate ladder. Wearing hijab does not limit their career opportunities; however there is a certain amount of doubt whether they will be appointed in a job should they wear hijab to the interview. Therefore,

there is no real issue relating Muslim women's access to employment in the South African workplace.

It remains a reality that Muslim women in countries like Britain and Australia experience discrimination in the workplace, from application stage through to interviews and in the workplace itself. Reports have indicated that women have even removed their hijabs and changed their names to obtain employment. In South Africa, it is evident that Muslim women are not subject to Islamophobia or religious discrimination. In fact, South Africans are more forthcoming to religious differences as a result of the diversity of the population. The Muslim women had not directly experienced any verbal or physical abuse as a result of being Muslim, but occasionally some have been subject to jokes regarding Islam.

South African organisations have been found to be very tolerant of religious diversity on numerous aspects. Most of the workplaces from which the Muslim women were sampled have prayer and ablution facilities on site. If this is not available, they are permitted to pray in their offices. Providing halal food at corporate functions still remains a challenge. This can be attributed to organisations regarding Muslims as being a minority in the workplace that are therefore not accommodated, or a lack of understanding regarding halal food and what it actually means to be 'halal'. Muslim women will attend after work functions, but leave the function once colleagues start drinking alcohol. During the month of Ramadan, organisations remain flexible regarding allowing the Muslim women to leave early or to amend their working times accordingly. Some South African organisations allow Muslim staff to utilise 'religious leave' when booking leave for Eid. In other organisations, Muslims employees are forced to use their 'annual leave'. There exists some need for organisations to recognise diversity by introducing 'religious leave'.

It can successfully be concluded that Muslim women who wear hijab in South Africa are well integrated in the corporate society. Their religious dress and practices are acknowledged by employers, and they are accommodated as a result of this. Muslim women in South African workplaces are also not subject to Islamophobia or issues relating to entry into the workplace or career advancement as experienced by Muslim women in other countries.

6.5 PERSONAL REFLECTION

During my Honours year at the University of Pretoria, my favourite subject was presented by Dr Nasima Carrim and it was related to Diversity in the Workplace. During class sessions we spoke about diversity in the work context and this topic really resonated with me as an Indian female who had just entered the workplace setting. I then applied to complete my MCom in Industrial Psychology and I remember that during my interview, I mentioned that if I was accepted, I would like to work on a thesis in the field of diversity. My topic, the challenges facing Muslim women who wear hijab in the workplace, was an interesting one. Considering that there was substantial literature on this topic in other countries, it was clear that there was a need for similar research within a South African context. I have heard of harassment and abuse of Muslims abroad, and how they find it difficult to gain employment opportunities. The question remained as to whether the experiences were the same for Muslims in South Africa.

My journey through both my Honours and Masters programme at the University of Pretoria has been very interesting and quite unique. In 2010, I found myself pursuing a new found freedom and liberation from a marriage that saw me putting my undergraduate degree, energy and knowledge to no use. After treading the path to gain employment, I was encouraged by my mother to study further. I found this to be a mammoth task, as I had not studied in the past 5 years. I also considered my two little children, Uzayr and Isa, who were toddlers at that time. They lived with my parents in Ladysmith, whilst I tried to build a career for myself in the “City of Gold.” In 2012, I was accepted to complete my Honours degree in Human Resource Management and it was quite a challenging year. Apart from my full-time job, I also had to fit in my studies (exams, assignments and group work) amidst travelling 700kms every weekend to visit my children in Ladysmith. I also have very fond and vivid memories of Uzayr and Isa occasionally attending evening lectures with me and joyfully fascinating my classmates with cute drawings as they entertained themselves during the lecture. With the help of the Almighty and support of my family, I had successfully passed my Honours degree Cum Laude! What a great motivation that was! The next step in my journey was pursuing my Masters degree in Industrial Psychology...

In 2013, I followed the same routine of juggling my job, studies and travelling to Ladysmith every weekend. After completing my course work for my Masters, I was adamant that I would complete my thesis by June 2014. My plan was focused, and it clearly indicated by when each section of the thesis would be completed. But then, life happens! During 2014, my children started schooling in Johannesburg and had begun to reside with me. I also began my internship in Industrial Psychology which took up most of my time. Now I had to juggle my job, my internship, my thesis and my children!

Despite the well thought out plan and enthusiasm to complete my thesis in one year, it became clear to me that there were other priorities that I had to focus on, and my thesis was kind of given the backseat.

Sourcing and analysing the literature for this study was one of the best experiences for me. There is substantial literature on the challenges that Muslims face abroad and it made me feel like Muslims in South Africa don't experience half of what others experience in terms of Islamophobia and discrimination. Being a young Muslim girl, I could relate their experiences to my experiences wearing hijab to interviews, interacting at parties where alcohol is served, shaking hands with men and attending functions where they do not cater halal food for you. Believe me, it is quite a challenge!

Finding participants to interview proved to be a daunting task at first due to getting people to commit to times and dates for the scheduled interview. I adopted a large degree of flexibility, and went out of my way to accommodate my participants, which they appreciated. From the content of the interviews, I have earned a great deal of respect for these Muslim women who enter their workplace, and do not compromise their Islamic values and beliefs regarding wearing the hijab. I also found it amazing that South African employers are cognizant of the needs of Muslims. The participants in the study also brought in a bubbling energy, which was evident from their responses. They have inspired me to maintain the belief that we should never compromise on our principles and that we can be a diverse nation, promoting tolerance and respect for all.

Transcribing the interviews was one of the most tedious tasks for me. Listening to the recordings and typing the content down took a lot of time, and the good thing is that I

discovered that I talk very fast and that I need to slow down... some personal learning. I used to find myself locking myself in my room, with earphones and my laptop, trying to capture the entire interview and often rewinding to make sure that I typed the correct words.

The analysis of the interview data and the discussion proved to be the most interesting part of my research. Comparing what participants had to say, comparing previous research and finding similarities and differences really adds true meaning to the study. At times I found myself confusing the sub-headings but thank you to Dr Carrim, I managed to structure my thoughts logically.

Here I am now, writing up my thoughts as I conclude my study. Completing my Masters coursework and this thesis has stretched me to the limits and has taken me to new heights in terms of understanding what I am capable of achieving. I believe that as people, we should never stop learning and bettering ourselves, thus I am thankful for this opportunity to further my studies. Napolean Hill said: "Whatever the mind of man can perceive and believe, it can achieve" and I hope that my personal journey will serve as a pillar of strength and beacon of motivation for students, single mothers and people with physical limitations who believe that "the sky is the limit."

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APPENDIX A

- Proposed data collection instrument -

Interview questions

Open Ended Interview Questions

Background

1. Tell me a little bit about your background
2. How is life for you in South Africa as a Muslim from the point of view of practicing your religion

The Hijab

3. When did you start wearing the hijab?
4. Could you briefly describe your initial experiences when you first started wearing the hijab? For example, in public and at your workplace.
5. Did your family/friends/support networks influence or support your decision at all? How?

Hijab and the workplace

6. Does wearing hijab conflict with fulfilling your tasks in your job?
7. What were some of the challenges that you had to overcome when you started wearing hijab in the workplace, how did you do it, and what perceived challenges still remain ahead?
8. Has wearing hijab impacted on your employment or hampered career growth?
9. A legislation has been in discussion in Canada recently which would ban religious headgear, such as Islamic hijabs, Sikh turbans, Jewish s, in the broader public sector workplaces such as childcare workers in day cares, staff and nurses in hospitals, public servants in government jobs, police officers, judges, prison guards, school and university teachers. How do you feel about this?
10. What if South African workplaces banned hijab...? How would you react?
11. How accommodating is your employer towards your religious practices?
12. What do you believe should be done to address the religious accommodations debate (including visible religious symbols, values and beliefs, food restrictions, holidays, prayer times, or other religious practices in the South African workplace and society?)

Hijab and discrimination

13. Have you been a victim of religious discrimination or Islamophobia due to wearing hijab?

Conclusion

14. In retrospect, if you got another chance, what would you personally do anything differently? Why?

15. Do you have any other comments/thoughts that you would like to add to this topic?

APPENDIX B

- Informed consent form -



Informed consent for participation in an academic research study

Department of Human Resource Management

TO COVER OR NOT TO COVER?

RELIGIOUS IDENTITY NEGOTIATION OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN WORKPLACE REGARDING DONNING THE HIJAB

Research conducted by:

Ms. Z Paruk (24190285)
Cell: 079 175 7861

Dear Respondent

You are invited to participate in an academic research study conducted by Zeenat Paruk, a Masters student from the Department of Human Resource Management at the University of Pretoria.

The purpose of the study is to explore the challenges facing Muslim women regarding donning the hijab in the South African workplace. Furthermore, it aims to determine how they negotiate their religious, gender and professional identities.

Please note the following:

- This study involves conducting an interview with you. The interview data will be treated as strictly confidential. The interview will be recorded to assist the researcher to accurately capture the participants' insights in their own words. No other person will have access to the audio recordings except the researcher. Should you feel uncomfortable with the recording of the interview, you may ask for the recorder to be turned off.
- Your participation in this study is very important to us. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without any negative consequences.
- The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. We will provide you with a summary of our findings on request.
- Please contact my supervisor, Dr Nasima Carrim (nasima.carrim@up.ac.za), if you have any questions or comments regarding the study.

Please sign the form to indicate that:

- You have read and understand the information provided above.
- You give your consent to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.

Respondent's signature

Date