

Employment Experiences of Muslim Women in Waterloo Region

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PS 492: Applied Community Research

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Abstract

This project was completed in partial fulfillment of the student researchers' undergraduate PS 492 course. In this study, the lived experience of Muslim women seeking and maintaining employment in the Region of Waterloo was explored to determine what barriers and facilitators exist locally and to determine how intersectionality impacts employment experiences.

Previously, no local level research existed on the employment experiences of Muslim women in the Region. Data collected from one-on-one interviews with local Muslim women was analyzed to determine the impacts of systemic oppression and white male Christian privilege on employment opportunities and quality of life.

Keywords: Muslim, Women, Employment, Barriers, Facilitators

Employment Experiences of Muslim Women in Waterloo Region

Introduction

The amount of literature exploring employment conditions for Muslim women is quite limited. However, in what does exist there are a number of recurring themes. The first theme is that Muslim women in Western culture experience significantly higher unemployment rates than other women and other minorities regardless of the origin country of the study. In his Australian study, Foroutan (2008) found that Muslim women are half as likely as non-Muslim women to be employed which is similar to Canadian results found by Hamdani (2014). This rampant unemployment seems to be the result of several key themes identified by multiple researchers. The most commonly identified barrier to employment appears to be traditional Muslim garb such as the hijab and burka. Marcotte (2010), Jafri (2006), Golesorkhi (2017), Ghumman & Jackson (2010), and Tariq & Syed (2017) discuss how traditional clothing is a visible barrier to employment opportunities and leads to greater instances of discrimination in the workplace in Canada, Germany, USA, and the UK, respectively. Further, studies by Tariq & Syed (2017) and Ali, Yamada, & Mahmood (2015), Marcotte (2010), and Jafri (2006) discovered that the stronger that Muslim women in Western cultures adhere to traditional Muslim cultural values and religious ideology the more they perceived discriminatory actions in regard to employment. It appears that traditional attire is not the only barrier, however. Oreopoulos (2009) and Golesorkhi (2017) both found that interview requests were granted at a much lower rate for applicants with Arabic or non-domestic sounding names than for people with more traditional English or German sounding names. Only King and Ahmad (2010) found that Muslim garb and names did not result in a significant difference in the number of job offers. Researchers also agreed that Muslim women experience a significant devaluation of any foreign education or job experience

that they possessed, making acquiring work much more difficult (Jafri, 2006.; Oreopoulos, 2009.) Jafri (2006) noted that high levels of education did not correspond with greater job opportunities, nor better positions. Finally, the theme of intersectionality is addressed by Syed & Pio (2010), and Hamdani (2014). They agree that the convergence of gender, ethnicity, and religion create a type of “triple jeopardy” (Syed, 2010) which makes employment for Muslim women very precarious. Our study was, in part, informed by the 2016 Environics Institute Survey of Muslims in Canada 2016. In our study we attempted to discover whether the themes noted above are consistent at the local level in Waterloo Region, Ontario to provide information for stronger local level policy development. In addition, where all existing literature discovered by our team focused entirely on barriers to employment, we also attempted to uncover facilitators that may be leveraged by the Muslim community.

Method

Participants

A total of 64 Muslim women participated in the initial online demographics and screening survey with 21 participants indicating a desire to participate in in-person interviews and 6 women continuing to the interview stage. Survey participants were recruited using a snowball technique with the Coalition of Muslim Women initially distributing the survey, via email, to their membership as well to other local Muslim organizations. Initial criteria required all participants to be female, Muslim, 18 years or older, to have resided in the Region of Waterloo for a minimum of 3 years, to have worked or searched for work in the Region of Waterloo in that time, and to have English language proficiency. Potential interview participants were stratified using a case study method where, those who indicated they were willing to be interviewed, were analyzed by demographic information. Participants with completely unique sets of variables

were immediately selected for interviews and those with overlapping sets of variables were placed into groups of like candidates and selected randomly. Interview participants ranged in age from 20 to 53 years (mean age = 33 years). All participants had completed at least some college or university education with 1 participant attending university, 1 held a college diploma, and 4 held graduate degrees. All interview participants were first generation immigrants with Canadian citizenship. Regions of origin included Northern Europe, Southeast Europe, South Asia, the Middle East, and Northern Africa. 4 participants had children and 2 did not. 4 participants were employed at the time of the interview, two were unemployed, and all indicated that they were continuously looking for work.

Instruments

The online survey was created to provide a streamlined method for screening participants for the required gender, age, language, and employment criteria. It also provided additional data such as country of origin, marital status, and number of children which allowed for the further stratification of participants. The final questions of the survey were used to invite participants to indicate whether they would be interested in participating in the interview portion of the study and to collect contact information.

The interview guide was developed to assess the lived experiences of Muslim women searching for and maintaining employment in the Region of Waterloo. It drew on findings from the national Survey of Muslims in Canada (Environics, 2016) and also assessed elements of Sense of Community (McMillan & Chaves, 1986), as well as value of non-Canadian education and work experience (Foster, 2015). Research questions were constructed to help participants explore the intersection of their Muslim identity, gender, and employment experiences.

Procedure

Interview data were collected via semi-structured, one-on-one or two-on-one, audio recorded interviews. Five interviews were conducted in private rooms at Wilfrid Laurier University and 1 interview, at the participant's request, was conducted by phone. All participants were informed of the nature of the study and were provided a streamlined version of the interview guide in advance. In-depth and personal conversations provided the interviewer(s) with rich information on the employment experiences of each participant. As these experiences were very personal and emotional in nature, participants were reminded that they could pause or stop the interview at any time and were provided time to debrief with the interviewer post interview. All interviews were then transcribed and coded by members of the research team.

Data Analyses

Inductive thematic content analysis, guided by the work of Braun and Clarke (2006), was employed to analyze the interview data. The data were initially coded at an explicit level looking to themes represented in the literature such as barriers in the workplace (Zine, 2012), acts of discrimination due to traditional clothing or Arabic name (Marcotte, 2010; Oreopoulos, 2009), and issues connected to the misunderstanding of Islam (Syed, 2008). In all, 8 initial parent themes and 15 child themes were identified. The parent themes were then condensed from 8 to 3. After initial data were coded and organized for narrative the data was then reexamined, exploring for overarching latent themes. This process revealed three main categories that were then analyzed in greater depth.

Results

Participant responses regarding the barriers and facilitators of Muslim women seeking and maintaining employment in the Region of Waterloo were grouped into 3 parent themes:

visibility vs invisibility, acceptance and valuation, and fundamental needs. These themes were further categorized into sub-themes. These themes revealed a very interesting narrative.

Visibility vs Invisibility

The degree to which one is seen as a Muslim woman posed immediate concerns for all interview participants. Personal attributes and visible identifiers were considered barriers to seeking and maintaining employment. It is important to note that, although each participant identified as a Muslim woman, the intersection of name, skin colour, language proficiency, accent, and level of tradition contributed to each participant's level of visibility when entering the workforce.

People for some reason didn't recognize me or they thought in any way that I was Muslim. Because of my colour, because I am not covered, for my name, I don't know. For many reason they never thought I am Muslim. (Participant 8)

Each participant mentioned physical appearance and personal attributes as one of the most prominent barriers to seeking and maintaining employment. Clothing, accent, skin colour and name were repeated often during the process of recounting personal experiences. Whether the participant was one who wore traditional Muslim clothing or not, there was heavy concern for those wearing the hijab and other traditional garb as it was seen to present a visible barrier to employment by all.

If people they don't really know I'm Muslim, sometimes I say that I'm lucky to not covering my head. And I'm really sad for people who wears hijab. Sometimes I really understand their pain, how they're kind of targeted and they hate the comments. Like you know, the crime and whatever. I shouldn't really feel lucky that I'm not really covering my hair... (participant 6)

In addition to the effect of traditional clothing, participants with lighter skin repeatedly indicated that the ability to pass as a white female in Canadian society could present more benefits in terms of employment opportunities. Fair or white skin colour could be interpreted as a facilitator for

seeking employment in the Region of Waterloo where dark skin was viewed as a potential barrier.

I said, “I’m fasting.” She said “why are you fasting?” I said, “It’s Ramadan.” She said, “but Ramadan is for Muslims!” I said, “I am Muslim.” She was “no you are kidding. You don’t look...” I said, “I don’t look like what?” She said, “No. No. No. Just forget about it.” (Participant 8)

Sometimes it’s like thanks to God I’m don’t have dark skin. I’m still a little bit white so I’m not actually going to be a target for those people. (Participant 6)

Many participants were very vocal about their felt need to hide their Muslim identity in the employment environment as a means to reduce the stigma towards Muslim women. Some participants expressed thoughts about changing Arabic sounding names to more Western names to mask their origins, others struggled with the possibility of compromising their dedication to Islam to blend in with the dominant culture. Examples of such compromises included contemplating taking off a hijab for interviews and shaking hands with male interviewers. Such compromises caused participants great anxiety.

To go in, I don’t know how to tell them I don’t want to shake your hand. So, I’ll just do it, and I’ll feel bad for the next couple days, like I can’t believe I did that. I’m always just hoping that it’s a female interviewer and I can just be spared of this whole thing.” (Participant 3)

There is a lot of discrimination here. Muslim discrimination. I wear hijab. Some people tell me when I go for interview not to wear scarf. “Just look western when you look for job.” I don’t do that. “Just go without your scarf with nice hair style and western. Then after you get the job wear your scarf again.” (participant 5)

Acceptance and Value

A second main theme identified through several interviews relates to the sense that there is a lack of acceptance and value placed on non-Canadian education, experience, and culture. A shared

subtheme with respect to acceptance was the identification of differential treatment for those who were visible minorities or people of colour.

So, at that time, I thought so many woman, especially the covered and the visibly like minority, that you can see, they are not going to feel that they belong.” (Participant 8)

I hope that there will be more opportunities opening up for women and especially women of colour and visible minorities that are not minimum wage and, you know, are a little bit more appreciated and the token Muslim women or black girl. (Participant 2)

Multiple participants also identified that a dominant Canadian culture typically overshadowed and devalued their own personal backgrounds, particularly in respect to clothing in the workplace.

If I showed up in a nice abaya with a nice scarf and I’m wearing nice shoes, my nails look good, like that would not be considered professional here. I used to live in Saudi Arabia, that’s professional over there. ... But here, I feel like I have to wear pants and a blouse, and it can’t be too long, or I don’t know. Clothing for me has been a real struggle. Every time I go into work I hope they’re causal about clothing because it’s easier for me to dress modestly. (Participant 3)

Those participants who had entered the workforce repeatedly mentioned that basic religious accommodations were not made by employers.

I think it would be really good if we got one day at least for Eid, Ramadan. That’s usually when people come together, or at least if we don’t have anyone here, it’s giving us time to call back home country and talk to the phone with them or celebrate with them. (Participant 6)

I was looking for a prayer room and then there was no prayer room in our <building>. Like 400 to 500 employees worked there. No prayer room. So sometimes I have to find a place where I can pray, so I can be like anywhere between like any<thing>. It can be health room. It can be any conference room. It can be any empty room anyone isn’t using. (Participant 1)

A barrier to attaining employment was repeatedly identified as the devaluation of non-Canadian work experience.

I think they don't really value my previous education or either my experience because they're looking more at Canadian experience. That's the biggest challenge. (Participant 6)

I have been told by an employer that I am stupid. I have been here 15 years and I don't even bother to put my experience anymore. (Participant 5)

Similar to the devaluation of work experience, a devaluation of non-Canadian education was a barrier that many participants felt caused great difficulty in attaining meaningful employment which met their level of expertise.

I have two university degrees from back home. One in French language and one in accounting and <another> from <Canadian> College thinking I could get some accounting in Canada, but I didn't get. (participant 5)

I struggle to make it. If you want me to have Canadian experience, hire me to get Canadian experience! (Participant 8)

The final factor, identified by nearly every participant, that appears to impact acceptance and value was the influence of what can be considered 'white privilege'. Impressions of this privilege included,

Sometimes I feel the things like, is there any future? Like if there's any <Muslim> girl in this organization? I don't think so because when I'm looking for people who're getting the positions, or who's getting promotions, is more people from their own..." (Participant 6)

I found that a lot of my positions are taken up by white women 50 plus, you know. It's the certain kind of demographic taking it over and that's what I noticed they're looking a lot for. Its almost just same women doing similar positions that I would like to do. (Participant 2)

Because I'm not from their culture. They want the people come and be white culture. So it's something about this that is the good culture that needs to be preserved and kept. I'm thinking there's no other reason. I don't know. There might be, I'm not understanding but why they use me as advisor if I'm not good? If I'm good, why they no hire me? (Participant 8)

The analysis often showed the intersection of a multiple factors which worked against the attainment of any employment for Muslim women, whether lesser than or equivalent to their qualifications. Factors such as accent, skin colour, religious clothing, as well as, lack of Canadian education and/or experience combine in unique combinations to influence each participants experience.

Fundamental Needs for Employment Success

The third theme that emerged was one the impact of community in addressing or not addressing fundamental needs of Muslim women attempting to access the workplace. Within the theme of fundamental needs there appeared to be sub-themes of 1) the impact of community and the available connections, social services and supports, 2) sense of belonging and the impact of tokenism and 3) a need for stability and cultural safety which includes some key support.

The importance of community on Muslim women's ability to access employment was consistent through all interviews. Every participant mentioned the increased difficulties they faced simply accessing work opportunities without the connections from a strong local community. One participant expressed her frustrations with her lack of community network:

I hate it. It's too much for me and there wasn't even these opportunities for me, because we don't really have a community, an ethnic community.... so we're by ourselves and I noticed a lot of people get jobs through their networks, especially in the Toronto area, so that did not work for us." (participant 2)

Participants also mentioned their relative disadvantage caused by this lack of network. One suggested that,

The impression about the Canadian society is fair society. This was my first impression. If you are qualified and you have good experience. But I notice this is not true. It is networking more than fairness. (Participant 8)

With a limited network of community support, local Muslim women indicated that they needed to rely on social services to assist with employment seeking. Many reported that employment and placement agencies were helpful in connecting job seekers with prospective employers. A participant commented,

Agency is a business. They just want to hire people. They make money from us. It doesn't matter for them, black or white, Muslim or not. I didn't <face> much discrimination from the agencies. (participant 5)

However, when employment opportunities such as interviews arise, participants with children mentioned that lack of social and family supports like child care inhibits their ability to take advantage of the opportunity at hand.

I think that's a big issue having credentials from abroad and having a family and not having a support network here so having to do, you know, when you interview, and you have to get something for the kids. (participant 2).

Many of the women intimated that, whether in the job search process or in the workplace, they feel a lack of belonging and a sense of isolation:

They told me there was no work yet they hired the two Asian girls who just came. They gave them a full job. I was working there for four months and normally after three months they get hired ... Anyone who worked for the agency got hired. But I never get this offer. (participant 5)

In last one year I worked in 10 different places. Anyplace I go I feel disconnected. In all these 10 places. (participant 5)

If you wear hijab people think your somebody your parent might have forced you to wear that or if you practice faith you pray 5x a day oh you're very religious person they distance themselves like oh you know, they avoid talking about certain things. Common practices. (Participant 1)

This sense of isolation appeared to have a strong negative impact on self-esteem thus impacting the participants ability to find work. One participant, in tears, described her state of mind,

Its very hard and depressing, of course. I just stay home crying. I don't want to talk to anybody. I feel like I'm useless. You don't get the respect. (participant 5)

Another prevalent theme raised by several participants was that of the pressure placed on them by Muslim tokenism in the workplace. One woman shared the following story:

She would talk to me about child brides and stuff, and like, really heavy stuff like that and then look to me as someone to, I don't know, affirm or deny my association with stuff like that or stuff she heard in the news. She would ask me about my family, or how my family views certain things. At the time I was like, this was my first job ever. And I was like, "OK. I guess I have to answer all these questions, from this person, from this company." (Participant 3)

The participant's fear of negatively impacting her employment that led her to answer her co-worker's questions was akin to the fear that dictated how another participant responded to inappropriate remarks in the workplace. She described,

So, when she left, my co-worker said, "I don't know, it's in their Holy book to not discipline their children." OK. So, OK. At that time, I struggled to find this job. I just want to shut my mouth. I don't want to make any <trouble>, or advocate, or educate anybody. I just want to shut my mouth. And this happened many times. (Participant 8)

Participants repeatedly touched on the desire to bridge a cultural divide through cross-education and interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims. One participant asked,

If I am not Muslim and I never interact with Muslim, I don't know about anything, but I hear this in the media? I won't hire you as a Muslim to come to my company. (Participant 8)

Ultimately, the most pervasive theme within the context of fundamental needs for employment success appeared to be a consistent desire for stable and fair working conditions and workplaces with cultural understanding and safety.

I hope <for> fair treatment and to be able to have a job. I worry about my kids, you know? When they reach the age where they have to work, I worry about them. Are they going to have the same treatment? (participant 5)

I think it's more, kind of, accommodation. It's proving safe place. Or more, kind of, welcoming place. My colleagues, I think that's one thing they are missing. People and kids, they are learning more negative things about the Islam through social media, through TV, through everywhere. There is no really positive education for people or for the children. Can you imagine you're living in this society and you put up with these people? In future, they're going to be your colleagues, and how are you going to work <together>?" (Participant 6)

Discussion

The primary purpose of this study was to identify the barriers and facilitators experienced by Muslim women when seeking and maintaining employment in the Region of Waterloo. A secondary purpose was to determine how intersectionality affects Muslim women's experiences of employment. During the course of data analysis, 3 main themes emerged: visibility vs invisibility, acceptance and value, and fundamental needs for employment success. The degree of intersection of the three parent themes, and child themes within the parent, directly impact the degree to which one experiences systemic oppression, and white, male, Christian privilege. Indeed, it was discovered that each theme was able to act as both barrier and facilitator for employment.

Visibility vs invisibility

In Canadian society, being a visibly Muslim woman can impose a heavy burden due to negative stigmatization of Islam. The components of visibility include traditional clothing, skin colour, accent, and name. Consistent with current literature, data revealed that having a visible Muslim identity is, itself, a barrier towards seeking and maintaining employment in the dominant Christian society. Wearing the hijab, niqab, or other traditional Muslim clothing make Muslim women an easier target for discrimination due to preconceived negative assumptions about Islam (Ghuman & Jackson, 2010). Women who dress in traditional Islamic clothing become direct targets to Islamophobia and hate crimes (Marcotte, 2010). To add, if a Muslim woman is also a racialized minority in terms of skin colour, it has been shown that she will have fewer employment opportunities due to the dominance of white privilege (Tariq & Sayed, 2017). It has been shown that a strong accent can also lead to negative assumptions about one's identity. For instance, stereotypes arising from a non-North American accent can lead to misconceptions about level of education, the ability to communicate well with others, and the ability to effectively practice Westernized values. Oreopoulos (2009) found that applicants with domestic sounding names received interview requests at 3 times the rate of those with non-domestic sounding names.

Conversely, participants with fair skin discussed the benefit of being able to "pass" as white in Canadian society. This effect was compounded if they did not wear traditional clothing. Many of the participants, whether fair skinned or not, noted that by not wearing traditional clothing and hiding their identity that they were able to achieve a higher level of privilege and gain greater employment opportunities. Ghuman & Jackson (2010) found that women who do not wear or remove their traditional clothing receive many more interviews than those who do not. Tariq &

Sayed found similar effects in their 2017 study. Zane (2012) echoed this with her own experience, “I learned to “pass” as an assimilated foreigner who had disavowed my ethnic and religious identity in favour of performing Canadianness.” On a similar topic, several participants reported considering changing their names to non-Arabic names to help with resume screening. One participant mentioned that her faith prevented her from shaking men’s hands which proved to be very problematic in employment situations as the hand shake is a cornerstone practice in western business. She reported that she had forced herself to shake hands so not to stand out as she had been punished for avoiding it in the past. In a sense, these women found benefit from hiding their association with Islam to pursue “equal opportunity” in the workplace. Participants reported that the practice of hiding one’s identity created significant anxiety as they felt that the practice required them to compromise their faith to survive in an oppressive system that favours white Christians and oppresses non-Christians.

Acceptance and value

One of the most notable characteristics of the sample of participants in this study is the extremely high level of education. Although our sample appears to be somewhat better educated than indicated by the Environics survey data it holds some similarity. 45 percent of Canadian Muslims have a university degree compared to the national average of 25 percent. Unfortunately, according to Jafri (2006) this does not translate to equivalent job opportunities, nor, according to Adams (2007) does it correlate with income levels where Canadian Muslims are lower than average. The key explanation for this is the devaluation of non-Canadian education and work experience. Canadian employers require Canadian experience and credentials which according to Foster (2015) “normalizes whiteness” and reinforces a “cultural hierarchy”. Within this hierarchy Muslim Canadians are themselves devalued and systemically oppressed. Participants gave

examples of lack of basic religious acceptance and accommodation to illustrate their point.

Examples included an inability to provide time or places for daily prayer, unwillingness to accommodate religious holidays like Eid and Ramadan, as well as giving Muslim women as sense that modest clothing is not acceptable for work. Participants relayed that the result of such treatment is a sense of despair. Zine (2012) in her book, *Islam in the Hinterlands*, discusses how such examples of gendered Islamophobia operate in many levels to limit opportunities for Canadian Muslim women.

Fundamental needs for employment success

The final theme deals with the impact of having a sense of belonging and assistance that comes from having a strong and established community for support. As the Muslim community is very diverse, many participants indicated that they felt very detached and isolated from Canadians. The 2016 Environics Survey indicated that women are less likely to visit mosques than Muslim men, are very aware of local discrimination, and are the most likely to have personally experienced abuse by non-Muslims. According to Statistics Canada (2015) Muslim women experience the highest rate of hate crime against female victims. As a result, Muslim women report a lessened sense of belonging. As many participants in this study voiced that the most important factor determining success in the job market is a strong network, feeling detached and isolated is detrimental. In addition, several participants discussed the added strain that motherhood placed on them. For the mothers with weak community supports, this extra burden was very limiting.

Zine (2012) wrote that employment opportunities for Muslim women are not limited by blatant Islamophobia rather by “exclusion and systemic discrimination.” This is in spite that the latest Environics Survey (2016) found that religion-based discrimination happens in the workplace.

The extent to which a woman has experienced exclusion and isolation directly impacts her ability to connect with others and thus will limit the number of employment opportunities she may otherwise experience.

Conclusion

Muslim women carry a significantly heavier burden than the non-Muslim population due to the many factors. When viewed as a whole, depending on her willingness to hide her identity, a Muslim woman in the Region of Waterloo is likely to experience a “multiple jeopardy” scenario. Syed and Pio (2010) described multiple jeopardy as the intersection of gender, ethnicity, religion, and country of origin. We propose that multiple jeopardy is significantly more complex and in addition to gender, includes accent, language skill, name, country of origin, skin colour, religious visibility, and strength of community. The degree to which each of the 7 factors, other than gender, vary from the white Christian normativity will impact a Muslim woman’s success in seeking and maintaining employment.

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APPENDIX A: Recruitment Email from Organization**Recruitment Email – From CMWKW to Participants**

Dear [NAME],

With this email I am introducing you to a research study that the Coalition of Muslim Women K-W (CMWKW) is conducting, in collaboration with a research team at Wilfrid Laurier University. The research topic is the experiences of Muslim women seeking and maintaining employment in Waterloo region. CMWKW Canada is undertaking this research initiative in order to support our membership with leadership in this important and highly relevant topic. This research work will also support the development of practical resources that our members and local businesses can use; to increase employment opportunities and improve workplace and job search experiences for all Muslim women.

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you are interested in participating please visit [link to online survey] to fill out a short online survey. If you are chosen to continue in the study you will be invited to participate in a 1 hour interview by student researchers, Emina Hodzic, Arleana Rajkumar, and Emily Schmid. CMWKW will not be informed whether or not you choose to participate and no personally identifying information will be shared by the Wilfrid Laurier University research team. Your decision to participate or not participate in this study will have no effect on your relationship with CMWKW.

Thank you, in advance, for your consideration.

Best regards,

[Name of Representative]

[Position], Coalition of Muslim Women Kitchener-Waterloo

APPENDIX B: Participant recruitment email from researchers**Recruitment Email – Interview Participants**

Dear [NAME],

With this email I am inviting you to participate in a study being conducted on the experiences of Muslim women seeking and maintaining employment in Waterloo region. We are interested to hear your insights on the experience with searching for and/or maintaining employment in the region. Your name and email address have been provided to us by [CONTACT AT CMWKW] at the Coalition of Muslim Women of Kitchener-Waterloo (CMWKW) to allow us to invite you to participate in this project. CMWKW Canada is part of a leadership group working closely with our research team at Wilfrid Laurier University.

We are hoping to recruit approximately 12 local Muslim women with experience searching for and/or maintaining employment to complete one interview (up to 60-minutes, but can be shorter) about your personal experiences.

Your participation is completely voluntary. CMWKW will not be informed whether or not you choose to participate. Your decision to participate or not participate in this study will have no effect on your relationship with CMWKW.

If you are interested in learning more about this study, or in participating, please see the attached information letter and/or contact the research team of Arleana Rajkumar, Emina Hodzic, and Emily Schmid, directly by email at lauriercpresearch@gmail.com.

Thank you for your consideration.

Emina Hodzic, Arleana Rajkumar, Emily Schmid – Co-Investigators, Wilfrid Laurier University

Please note that this project, *Employment Experiences of Muslim Women in Waterloo Region*, has been reviewed and approved by the Wilfrid Laurier Research Ethics Board (REB #XXXX).

APPENDIX C: Consent Form**WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY, PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT
INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT****Employment Experiences of Muslim Women in Waterloo Region**

Student Researcher: Emina Hodzic, Arleana Rajkumar, Emily Schmid, PS 492

Supervisor: Dr. Ciann Wilson, Sue Weare, Bianca Dreyer

INFORMATION

You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted by student researchers, Emina Hodzic, Arleana Rajkumar, and Emily Schmid under the supervision of Dr. Ciann Wilson, Assistant Professor, Wilfrid Laurier University. This project is being completed in partial fulfillment of the student researchers' undergraduate PS 492 course. In this study, we are interested in understanding the lived experience of Muslim women seeking and maintaining employment in Waterloo region.

In collaboration with the Coalition of Muslim Women of Kitchener Waterloo, we are recruiting 12 Muslim women from Waterloo region to take part in interviews that will be facilitated by one of the student researchers, their faculty supervisor or their mentor. If you choose to participate you will take part in a 60-minute-long interview and be asked to fill out a short demographics survey. The interview will be audio recorded. During the interview, you will be asked to talk about your experiences, both positive and negative, while seeking and maintaining employment.

RISKS

There are only minimal risks involved in this study. However, because some aspects of the research ask you to reflect on your own experiences, thoughts and behavior, you may experience some negative emotions. These feelings are normal and should be temporary. You are free to skip any question or procedure and/or withdraw from the study at any time. If you experience any persistent negative feelings as a result of participating in this study, please contact the researchers and/or Laurier Counselling Services c/o the Student Wellness Centre (Student Services Building, 519-884-0710 ext. 3146, wellness@wlu.ca).

BENEFITS

As a participant in this study, you will have an opportunity to share your experiences with university researchers, contribute to the body of knowledge on the experiences of Muslim women in our community and add to the academic literature on employment experiences while providing our community partner with accurate local information. This research will contribute insights across a number of different research areas including community psychology, organizational psychology, human resource management, sociology) This knowledge may be used to increase employment opportunities and improve workplace and hiring experiences as well as facilitate social inclusion for Muslim women in the region.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All data will be confidential. Only the student researchers and the supervisors, listed above, will have access to collected data. No personally identifying information will be shared nor used in any reporting. Any hardcopy data, such as written notes, will be stored in a locked cabinet within a restricted-access office at Wilfrid Laurier University. The audio file will be saved on a password-protected computer and transcribed for analysis by the researchers. No personally identifying information (e.g., name, contact information) will be stored with transcribed data. Only an ID code and/or pseudonym will be used to identify participant data. The spreadsheet linking your ID to your own name, as well as the electronic copies of the consent forms, will be saved on Dr. Ciann Wilson's password-protected computer in a locked office at WLU and will be destroyed by April 30th, 2018. The de-identified data will be kept indefinitely and may be reanalyzed as part of a separate project (i.e., secondary data analysis). We may use direct quotations from you in reports, publications, and presentations. We will take steps to ensure that the quotations cannot be linked to you personally. You will be asked at the end of this form to indicate your consent for the use of your quotations in research publications (i.e., quotes may be used in any way or you would like to review the quotes before they are used). If you are not willing to be quoted please do not sign this form and/or participate in the focus group.

CONTACT

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study), you may contact the student researcher, Emily Schmid, schm9650@mylaurier.ca or the supervisor, Dr. Ciann Wilson, 519-884-0710 ext. 4911, ciwilson@wlu.ca. This project has been reviewed and approved by the Wilfrid Laurier University Research Ethics Board (REB #####), which is supported by the Research Support Fund. If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Dr. Robert Basso, Research Ethics Board Chair, Wilfrid Laurier University, 519-884-0710 ext. 4994, rbasso@wlu.ca.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose to participate, you may skip any question or procedure, or completely withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you choose to withdraw from the study, your data will be destroyed. Your data cannot be withdrawn once data collection is complete because data are stored without identifiers. Please note that there is no compensation being offered for participating in this study.

FEEDBACK AND PUBLICATION

The findings of this study may be published in peer-reviewed journals, presented at academic conferences, and/or made available through Open Access resources. The results will be part of the student researcher's class project and will be presented at the Wilfrid Laurier University Undergraduate Research Celebration Week in March 2018 and shared with the community partner, Coalition of Muslim Women Kitchener-Waterloo. At CMWKW's request, the results may be published as a community report. You may contact the researcher(s) via email to request an electronic copy of the results, which will be available by May 15, 2018.

QUOTATIONS

We will only use your quotations if you provide consent, and this consent is completely voluntary. Your responses will still be included in aggregated (group) results even if you do not consent to the use of the quotations.

CONSENT

(Please check the appropriate box)

I have read and understand the above information. **I agree to participate** in this study. ____

I have read and understand the above information. **I do not want to participate** in this study. ____
Please indicate how we may quote you in publications:

CONSENT FOR QUOTATIONS

(Please check the appropriate box)

I have read and understand the above information. **I give consent for my de-identified quotes to be used in any way (publications, presentations, etc.).** ____

I have read and understand the above information. **You can quote me, but I would like an opportunity to review how the quote is used before it is used.** ____

Please contact me at: _____

I have read and understand the above information. **I do not give consent for my quotes to be used in any way** ____

Signature _____ Date _____

We recommend that you print or save a copy of this form for your records

APPENDIX D: Interview Questions

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL – EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN WATERLOO REGION

Introductory script

Hello! My name is _____, and I am an undergraduate student researcher from Wilfrid Laurier University. This study is part of my community research project at WLU in collaboration with the Coalition of Muslim Women Kitchener Waterloo – I am supervised by Prof. Ciann Wilson and Sue Weare. I'm here to learn about the experiences of Muslim women seeking and maintaining employment in the Region of Waterloo. Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. Have you had a chance to read the informed consent letter that was sent to you? Do you have any questions about the consent letter or about the study in general? *[Answer any questions before proceeding.]* I want to emphasize a few points from the consent letter: There are no right or wrong answers; no desirable or undesirable answers. I would like you to feel comfortable saying what you really think and how you really feel. Also, if it's okay with you, I will be tape-recording our conversation since it is hard for me to write down everything while simultaneously carrying an attentive conversation with you. If at any time you would like to say something "off the record", please let me know and I will turn the recorder off during that time. Everything you say will remain confidential, meaning that only I and my research team will be able to identify your answers, so we know whom to contact should we have further follow-up questions after this interview. When this information is shared, all potentially identifying information has been removed. You will have a chance to review any quotes from your interview that we are planning to use before we will include them in any publisher report. Do I have your permission to proceed?

[Turn on the recorder and state interviewee ID, date, and start time]

Interview Questions and Prompts

Script: First, we will start with a few questions about your job search and what happens when you seek employment.

1. When was the last time you were actively looking for work?

PROMPTS:

- a. Probe: was job search successful?
- b. Still looking for job?
- c. Experience

1. How do you go about looking for work?**a. Do you look for work in any specific location?****b. Are you applying to positions equivalent to your level of training or expertise?
(Getting at what types of jobs are you applying to?)****i. Why or why not?**PROMPTS

- a. Resources (employment agency, online, friends/personal connection?)
- b. Devaluation of foreign work experience/ education
If no, → Barriers

2. How is the experience of looking for work in the Region of Waterloo?PROMPTS

- a. Barriers
- b. Clothing
- c. Cultural values
- d. Religiosity
- e. Facilitators

Script: I know that everyone's experience may differ when it comes to the job search. I know I have had some difficulties trying to figure out how and where to apply. I am interested in the interview process. To that note...

0. Have you had a job interview in WR or since arriving in Canada?**1. Do you have any concerns when going into an interview? If yes, please elaborate****2. As a Muslim women, what strengths do you feel you are bringing to the interview?****3. How do you feel about the interview process?**PROMPTS

- a. Level of comfort
 - i. With Interviewer
 - ii. With organization

- 1. Do you feel that you experienced any barriers or had any difficulties in an interview?**
- 2. Do you feel that you experienced some positive support in the interview process?**

Script: Thank you for sharing your interview experiences. Next, I would like to talk to you about maintaining employment.

0. Have you been employed in WR?

- 1. Can you tell me about any times where you felt supported or had help in maintaining your employment?**
- 2. Do you feel that you have experienced any barriers or had any difficulties in maintaining employment?**

PROMPTS

- a. Clothing
- b. Cultural Values (holidays)
 - i. Cultural sensitivity
- c. Religiosity (time/ space for prayer)

Ok, this concludes our interview then. Thank you so much for making this time and serving as a key informant. Once we have finished the interviews and have analyzed them, we will be in touch with you if there are any specific quotes we would like to use from your interview. I will now turn off the recorder.

[Record end time and turn off the recorder]

APPENDIX E: Survey Questions

2018 CMWKW Survey

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Q0 Welcome to the Employment Experiences of Muslim Women in Kitchener-Waterloo Region research study, which is being conducted by Wilfrid Laurier University undergraduate students in collaboration with the Coalition of Muslim Women Kitchener Waterloo (CMWKW). The results of this study will aid in the development of resources that CMWKW members and local businesses can use to increase

employment opportunities and improve workplace and job search experiences for all Muslim women. This study will gather information on the employment experiences of local Muslim women and help to understand how Muslim women experience hiring processes and the workplace. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. CMWKW will not be informed on whether or not you choose to participate, and no personally identifying information will be shared with any third parties. Next, please complete this short demographics survey. The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration. Please click the arrow to proceed.

Q40 Do you identify as Muslim?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Do you identify as Muslim? = No

Q1 What is your gender identity?

☐ Female (1)

☐ Male (2)

☐ Non-binary (3)

☐ Other: (4) _____

☐ Prefer not to say (5)

Skip To: End of Survey If What is your gender identity? != Female



Q2 Please indicate your age:

Skip To: End of Survey If Please indicate your age: < 18

Q3

Are you currently married?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Q4

Do you have children? If yes, how many?

☐ Yes (please specify): (1) _____

☐ No (2)

Skip To: Q6 If Do you have children? If yes, how many? = No

Q5 Does your child/children attend a daycare centre or have private childcare?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Q6 Do you currently have any adult family members who are dependent on you? (i.e., rely on you as a caregiver)

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Q7 Were you born in Canada?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Display This Question:

If Were you born in Canada? = No

Q8 Where did you immigrate from? (ie: Bosnia, Pakistan, etc.)

Q9 How long have you resided in Canada?

☐ Less than 3 years (1)

☐ 3-5 years (2)

☐ 6-10 years (3)

☐ 11 years or more (4)

Skip To: End of Survey If How long have you resided in Canada? = Less than 3 years

Q10 Were your parents born in Canada?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Display This Question:

If Were your parents born in Canada? = No

Q37 Where did they immigrate from?

Q11 Are you a Canadian citizen?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Display This Question:

If Are you a Canadian citizen? = No

Q12 Are you a landed immigrant?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Q16 How long have you lived in Waterloo Region?

☐ Less than 3 years (1)

☐ 3-5 years (2)


☐ 5-10 years (3)

☐ More than 10 years (4)

Q13 How would you rate your English literacy skills?

	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced	Fluent		
	1	2	3	5	6	7

Slide arrow to indicate response (1)



Skip To: End of Survey If How would you rate your English literacy skills? < Slide arrow to indicate response

Q14 What is your highest level of education achieved to date?

- ☐ Have not completed High School or equivalent (1)
- ☐ High School Diploma or equivalent (2)
- ☐ Some College or University (3)
- ☐ College or University Diploma/Degree (4)
- ☐ Graduate Degree (5)
- ☐ PhD or professional degree (6)
- ☐ Registered trade (ie: skilled trades, electrician, mechanic, etc.) (7)

Q15 Did you receive your most recent degree/diploma at a Canadian institution?

- ☐ Yes (please specify the name of the institution) (1)

- ☐ No (2)

Q17 In the last 3 years, have you looked for a work or been employed in Ontario?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If In the last 3 years, have you looked for a work or been employed in Ontario? = No

Q19 Are you currently employed?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Skip To: Q22 If Are you currently employed? = Yes

Display This Question:

If Are you currently employed? = No

Q20 In which city were you last employed?

Display This Question:

If Are you currently employed? = Yes

Q22 What city do you currently work in?

Q21

Are you self-employed? (i.e., own your own business)

☐ Yes (1)☐ No (2)

Q23 How religious do you consider yourself?

☐ Not religious (1)☐ Spiritual but not practicing (2)☐ Occasionally practicing (holidays, etc.) (3)☐ Daily practicing (4)

Q24 Do you wear traditional/religious clothing? (ie: Hijab, Burka, skirts, etc.)

☐ Yes (1)☐ No (2)☐ Sometimes (3)

Q25

Please indicate how worried you are about each of the following issues related to Muslim women in Waterloo Region.

	Not at all worried (1)	Not too worried (2)	Somewhat worried (3)	Very worried (4)
Unemployment (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discrimination against Muslim women in the community (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discrimination during the interview process (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discrimination against Muslim women in the workplace (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q26 The second stage of this research study involves personal interviews.

We are recruiting 12 interview participants from those who meet the eligibility requirements to discuss their employment experiences in audio recorded, 60-minute-long, individual, face-to-face interviews. Eligible participants are Muslim women, who are 18+ years of age, are competent in English, have lived in Waterloo Region for at least 3 years, and have experience searching for or maintaining employment. Depending on the number of people who respond, you may not be selected to participate in the interview. Interview participants will be selected randomly.

If you indicate 'yes' your survey data will be collected with your contact information. Only indicate 'yes' if you would like to be contacted by our research team.

Would you like to participate in an interview with our research team?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If The second stage of this research study involves personal interviews. We are recruiting 12 interv... = No

Q27 Please enter your contact information.

☐ First Name Only (1) _____

☐ Phone Number (2) _____

End of Block: Default Question Block
