

# Human, cultural, and social capital and discrimination: Muslim immigrant women's labour market participation in Iceland

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# Introduction

- In 2021, there were 1447 registered members in the three Muslim Associations in Iceland.
- This number does not show the actual number of Muslims in Iceland because not all are registered in Islamic associations.

# The Research

- The research team is:
  - Fayrouz Nouh, PhD student at the University of Iceland
  - Supervisors
    - Dr. Guðbjörg Linda Rafnsdóttir Professor of Sociology Faculty of Sociology, Anthropology and Folkloristics and Pro-Rector of Science, University of Iceland.
    - Dr. Unnur Dís Skaptadóttir Professor of Anthropology, Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, University of Iceland
    - Dr. Moa Bursell Associate Professor in Sociology Stockholm University and research leader at the Institute for Futures Studies

- The method is based on qualitative interviews with Muslim immigrant women living in Iceland, municipality representatives, and if applicable other public bodies.
- Preliminary findings from 18 interviews with Muslim immigrant women.



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# The Aim

The aim is:

- To examine the factors affecting Muslim immigrant women's participation in the labour market in Iceland.
- To examine how Muslim women's class, ethnicity, and gender shape their position in the labour market.
- The main research question guiding the study is: *How do Muslim immigrant women perceive their situation and position in the Icelandic labour market, and how do their human capital, social capital and identity as Muslim influence their employment?*

## Significance of the study

- Studies of the experiences of Muslim immigrant women's participation in the labour market have mainly been examined in diverse societies with a higher degree of diversity than Iceland and longer immigration history.
- Very few qualitative studies have focused on the experiences of Muslim women in the European labour market from the women's perspective.
- little has been written about how Muslim immigrant women fare in the Western labour market and how they perceive their employment.

# Background and literature

Human capital (Becker, 2009)	Cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986)	Social capital (Bourdieu, 1986)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Knowledges</li><li>• Educations</li><li>• Experiences</li><li>• Skills</li><li>• Attitudes towards work</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Values</li><li>• Beliefs</li><li>• Attitudes</li><li>• Behaviours</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Networks and contacts</li><li>• Friends</li><li>• Relationships</li><li>• Sense of belonging</li></ul>

# The experiences of accessing the Icelandic labour market

- Accessing the Icelandic labour market was not challenging for all refugee participants.
- Easier for immigrant women outside the capital area as they get more help from the municipalities.
- Difficult for immigrant women who live in the capital area so they used social connections to get jobs.



# The advantages and disadvantages of participating in the Icelandic labour market

- The women were accepted in the work environment but felt lonely.
- This could be due to the lack of language or the women trying to protect their religious and cultural background, so they kept their distance between the two cultures.
- Most women didn't know about their rights in the workplace.

## The lack of recognition of educations and experiences

- All educated and experienced women reported experiences of underemployment.
- Most participants felt frustrated and marginalized in the Icelandic labour market because their education from their home countries was not recognized. As a result, they had to work in low-paying jobs in Iceland.



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# The attitudes towards the Islamic lifestyle requirement and way of dressing

- Most women faced negative attitudes toward their appearance and religious practice, such as fasting for long hours during Ramadan.
- They felt that they always had to defend themselves against their co-workers. For example, the stereotype applies to the image of Muslim women who wear headscarves as oppressed victims.
- They needed more help to dispel negative stereotypes of their appearance and religious practices.

## The social and cultural values

- The participants need more empowerment to help them to get equal rights to their men inside and outside the house.
- The participants' cultural duties towards their families slow their integration process into the labour market. Three women quit their jobs because they were under pressure working inside and outside the house.



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Thank you



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