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**Exploring the Unique Challenges Faced by  
Female Muslim Immigrants in America**

**Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
Master's Degree in Literature and Civilization**

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## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to the ones who have been my guiding lights - whose love, patience, and unwavering belief carried me through every challenge and obstacle. To my parents, whose sacrifices built the foundation of my dreams; to my siblings, whose encouragement reminded me I was never alone; and to my dearest friends, whose laughter and support kept me going even on the hardest days. This journey was not mine alone - it was yours, too.

Thank you for walking beside me, step by step.

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## **Abstract**

This study examines the challenges faced by female Muslim immigrants in America, focusing on their experiences within American society. It explores how these women navigate their lives while balancing cultural and religious norms as well as the impact of discrimination, stereotypes and harassment. Using a qualitative approach, the research incorporates case studies and coping strategies to analyze key obstacles. Findings reveal that female Muslim immigrants encounter multifaceted challenges due to their religious, gender and cultural identities, with workplace discrimination being particularly prevalent. Additionally, the research project highlights the role of intersectionality in shaping their social experiences. The thesis concludes by advocating for supportive measures to improve their social and cultural integration in the U.S. Future researchers are recommended to deepen the understanding of the situations of female Muslim immigrants in USA. Additionally, they are required to focus on various group age and critically consult the impact of negative issues on them.

***Keywords:*** *America, Challenges, Discrimination, Female Muslim Immigrants, Intersectionality.*

## **List of Abbreviations and Acronyms**

<b>BAI</b>	Beck Anxiety Inventory
<b>ESL</b>	English as a Second Language
<b>ICM</b>	Inter-Cultural Mentoring
<b>IMO</b>	Immigrant Muslim Older
<b>ISIS</b>	The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
<b>ISPs</b>	Immigrant Service Providers
<b>MENA</b>	Middle Eastern and North African
<b>MWEs</b>	Migrant Women Entrepreneurs
<b>OCA</b>	Online Collective Action
<b>PTSD</b>	Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
<b>STEM</b>	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
<b>UAE</b>	United Arab of Emirates
<b>US</b>	United States
<b>USA</b>	United States of America
<b>USCIS</b>	U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

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# General Introduction

## 1. Background of the Study

Female Muslim immigrants in America face distinct challenges shaped by their cultural, religious and immigrant identities. These women often experience discrimination and stereotypes related to their religion, clothing and gender, which are made more complex by issues like Islamophobia and gender inequality. While much literature has focused on Muslim communities in general, the specific experiences of Muslim women have been underexplored. Several Muslim women face a tension between maintaining their religious practices, like wearing the hijab and adapting to American norms. This leads to challenges in areas such as the workplace, education and social interactions. Additionally, these women often balance traditional family roles with the desire for independence and career opportunities.

The United States, a nation historically built on immigrants, has a complex system regulating the entry and stay of foreign nationals. For immigrants from Muslim-majority countries, navigating this system is particularly difficult due to structural barriers, discriminatory policies and pervasive Islamophobia. These challenges intensified after the 09/11 terrorist attacks, creating a more hostile environment for Muslim immigrants. Islamophobia is an extreme fear of and hostility toward Islam and Muslims which often leads to hate speech, hate crimes, as well as social and political discrimination. It can be used to rationalize policies such as mass surveillance, incarceration (imprisonment), disenfranchisement and influence domestic and foreign policy (Syed, 2024)

Islamophobia plays a significant role in shaping the experiences of Muslim immigrants in the US immigration system. Fear, prejudice, and hatred against Islam and Muslims have been fuelled by political rhetoric, media portrayals and public misconception, especially after 9/11. Political rhetoric and media portrayals have often framed Muslim immigrants as security

threats. Media outlets disproportionately focus on stories linking Muslims to terrorism, perpetuating harmful stereotypes and creating an environment of fear. This climate of Islamophobia affects public opinion and the decision-making process in the immigration system. Muslim immigrants also face social and economic challenges due to Islamophobia. Discriminatory hiring, practices, housing inequality and social alienation are common. Visible Muslim women, particularly those who wear hijabs, are often targets of harassment and hate crimes, creating an environment of fear and exclusion (Syed, 2024).

The problem of anti-Muslim discrimination, complicated as it is by the historical relationship between Muslim societies and the West, has become especially pronounced in the United States since the September 11 attacks. The FBI, along with local law enforcement agencies, has reported a huge increase in harassment of Muslims and Arabs, as well as violent crimes against their persons and their property. These cases involved women, most commonly their wearing of a head covering. Women in hijab (costume) are targets of strong anti-Muslim feelings ranging from hate crimes and violence to discrimination in employment and education. Women wearing headscarves have been spat upon, shoved and beaten. School children have been harassed by their teachers and classmates and by the parents of other children (Haddad & Smith, 2006).

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Female Muslim immigrants encounter several obstacles in the US. These difficulties stand as an obstacle to them to practice their daily lives normally. These challenges are often experienced on the basis of their gender, religion and immigrant status. While much research has focused on the challenges that Muslim men face in America, little research have explored the challenges faced by female Muslim immigrants in US. Without a deeper understanding of these issues, support systems and policies are not likely to fully address their needs. This

investigation aims to explore the unique challenges faced by female Muslim immigrants, helping to better understand their experiences and contributions to American society.

### **3. Aims of the Study**

The work seeks to focus on the situation of Female Muslim immigrants in America, especially the difficulties that they face at different levels. By extension, this improves the understanding of their problems and challenges. Therefore, the sub-aims are:

- a. To explore the distinct challenges faced by female Muslim immigrants in America, examining the intersection of gender, religion and immigrant status.
- b. To investigate the impact of societal stereotypes, Islamophobia and discrimination on the different aspects of the lives of Muslim women in the U.S.
- c. To understand how female Muslim immigrants balance their cultural and religious practices with American social and cultural norms.
- d. To analyze the barriers that Muslim women face in areas such as education, employment and social integration.

### **4. Research Questions**

This academic work raises the following questions:

- a. What are the distinct challenges faced by female Muslim immigrants in America about various aspects of their lives?
- b. How do societal stereotypes and Islamophobia impact the different aspects of the daily lives of female Muslim immigrants?

- c. How do female Muslim immigrants balance their cultural and religious practices with the expectations of American society?
- d. What barriers do female Muslim immigrants encounter in education, employment and social integration?

## **5. Research Hypotheses**

In light of the questions listed above, the hypotheses are:

- a. The intersection of gender, religion and immigrant status significantly and negatively impacts the lives of female Muslim immigrants in the U.S. in terms of mental health, employment opportunities and social interactions.
- b. Female Muslim immigrants experience difficulty balancing their cultural and religious practices with American societal norms, leading to challenges in personal identity formation and social acceptance.

## **6. Research Methodology**

The study applied qualitative research because it is interested in getting in depth information and narratives about the challenges of female Muslim immigrants in America. As for the practical part of the study, the study analysed a set of case studies and coping strategies. This is done through thematic analyses and descriptive analyses. The approach helped in meeting the research questions and hypotheses that are set in the study.

## **7. Significance of the Study**

The present research contributes by filling a gap in the literature by focusing specifically on the challenges faced by female Muslim immigrants in America. Most existing studies address Muslim immigrants generally or focus on men, leaving out the unique experiences of

women. The analysis delves into how Muslim women navigate issues related to gender, religion and immigration, especially in the face of Islamophobia and cultural adaptation. It provides new insights into their struggles contributing to a deeper understanding of their experiences in the U.S.

## **8. Delimitation of the Study**

The study investigates challenges encountered by Muslim immigrants in the USA. Its scope is limited to obstacles faced by three specific groups: females, Muslims, and immigrants. Future research may explore the research problem of the study states further, which could provide strategies to help female Muslim immigrants navigate life more effectively in the American context.

## **9. Structure of the Study**

The dissertation is divided into two main chapters. Chapter One reviews the literature that is related to the topic of the study. It reports several studies, highlighting these different themes that focus on the challenges which female Muslim immigrants face in the U.S.A. The studies are presented according to their outcomes and implications. Chapter Two embodies the practical part of the study. It delves into an exhibition and critical analysis of a group of case studies in order to discover the realistic obstacles that different groups of Muslims encountered in the US. Additionally, the chapter presents coping strategies suggested by researchers as a way to navigate life for Muslims in Western contexts, especially in America.

## **10. Literature Review**

Female Muslim immigrants in the U.S. face unique challenges due to their gender, religion and immigrant status. Research shows that they often experience Islamophobia, with stereotypes about their religious practices, such as wearing the hijab (O'Toole, 2020). These

challenges are worsened by cultural misunderstandings and discrimination, making it harder for them to integrate into society (Ahmed, 2012). Muslim women are sometimes seen as oppressed because of their religious practices, even though these practices are often a personal choice (Mahmood, 2012). While they face discrimination, several Muslim women build strong community networks to resist these challenges and maintain their identity (El-Tayeb, 2011). Additionally, studies show that Muslim women often face discrimination in education and work, due to their gender, religion and social status (immigrants) (Korteweg & Yurdakul, 2014).

Basak Kacar and Khamush (2017) conducted a research study in which he argued that Muslim immigrant women face multiple disadvantages on the basis of their various intersecting identities. They continued saying that employment and workplace have emerged as a primary setting for encounters of negative bias, prejudice and discrimination. The result suggests that Muslim immigrant women dynamically craft their selves and construct their experience in contexts defined by instability, pressure and tension. Employment emerges as a primary context of difficult encounters, indicated by barriers of occupational mobility, social exclusion, unfair hiring outcomes and discrimination on the basis of diverse identity markers.

In the research article which is titled How Stereotypes Influence the Hiring of Muslim Women in the United States, Meksem (2012) attempts to describe how religious stereotypes and religious artifacts have the potential to influence hiring and what the origin of this phenomenon are. The findings offer an opportunity to investigate, illustrate and document stereotypes on Muslim women wearing the hijab that could intervene during a hiring process. They provide a glimpse into the stereotypes that recruiters hold about Muslim women wearing the hijab and the Muslim community as well. In particular, this study confirms that there is a need to educate people in charge of hiring on how stereotypes tend to shape their decisions. The most distinctive finding of this study is the aesthetic aspect of the hijab. All the participants

explicitly acknowledged the beauty of the hijab. This finding shows how complex the research participants' perceptions were about the hijab. How the appearance of the hijab could be viewed so positively and how its function was perceived negatively by them. This research provides insights into how female Muslim immigrants navigate cultural and religious traditions while dealing with challenges in American society.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Female Muslim Immigrants in America**

## Chapter One: Female Muslim Immigrants in America

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## **Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the challenges faced by female Muslim immigrants in the United States of America to provide clear understanding about the research topic. The chapter aims to shed light on different themes including discrimination, Islamophobia and other related elements to see how they create or contribute to the challenges of female Muslim immigrants in the United States of America. Additionally, the literature review regarding this topic presented below aims to shed light on the impact of 9/11 events as the main event in this research topic. The studies revealed the daily obstacles experienced by female Muslim immigrants in the US.

### **1.1. Demographics of Female Muslim Immigrants in America**

#### **1.1.1. Countries of Origin**

According to Mohammad-Arif (2000), the second generation of South Asian Muslims in the US displays a long-standing presence and notable internal diversity across economic, social, cultural and sectarian lines. They often navigate the dual pressure of preserving their parents' cultural and religious heritage while adapting to American society. Key areas of focus include their educational achievements, professional aspirations and identity formation. Additionally, Khabeer (2017) says that African American Muslims draw on African traditions to shape their religious and cultural identity, including connections to an Islamic African past. Although they are often perceived as not "Muslim enough" by both non-Black Muslims and mainstream American society, they assert their identity and challenge exclusion through hip-hop and other forms of cultural expression.

#### **1.1.2. Immigration Pathways**

In this context, Ugurel Kamisli (2021) narrates the story of six Syrian Muslim refugee women who arrived in the U.S. after the 2011 Syrian War, and who faced complex challenges related to forced migration and discrimination. Their experiences provide deeper insight into

refugee lives and offer valuable perspectives for adult education practitioners working with refugee populations.

Brown (2013) explains that religion, particularly Islam, plays a significant role in child welfare cases in the U.S., especially during reunification efforts after parental rights have been terminated. Conflicts are able to take place between U.S. state laws, concerns about Sharia law and the Anti-Sharia movement, potentially impacting the constitutional rights of Muslim families. A more inclusive and respectful approach to religion is encouraged in decisions involving children.

### **1.1.3. Socioeconomic Diversity**

The idea that Islam alone shapes the faith and perspectives of Muslims is challenged by the argument that their religious views and attitudes toward others are strongly influenced by socio-economic conditions. Factors such as economic status, social interactions, and adaptation play a key role in how Muslims interpret their faith and relate to others. Social and economic realities are shown to significantly impact religious understanding and social perspectives, pushing back against simplified, essentialist views of Islam (Ali, 2021).

## **1.2. Intersectionality of Gender, Religion and Immigration**

### **1.2.1. Triple Minority Status: Muslim, Female and Immigrant**

D'Urso and Bonilla (2023) state that white Americans perceive immigrants' belonging in the U.S. based on their ethnoreligious identity, particularly the intersection of race and religion. Their study considers whether bias stems from Muslim identity alone or from its combination with Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) ethnicity. Findings show that while White Muslims are viewed as more likely to assimilate culturally than MENA Muslims, race plays a lesser role in judgments about legal belonging. This indicates that cultural fit is shaped by intersecting identities; whereas, legal inclusion is less influenced by race.

Immigrant experiences deeply affect psychological well-being and parent-child relationships. Racial minority immigrant women often face conflicting gender expectations in the U.S., which is able to shape both their and their daughters' ideas of femininity. These experiences are influenced by race and sexism. Cross-generational and cultural tensions impact identity development and therapy, whereas issues of race, gender and immigration often emerge through unconscious dynamics like resistance and protest (Tummala-Narra, 2020).

### **1.2.2. Balancing Cultural Traditions with American Norms**

En-Nabut (2007) tells the story of six immigrant Arab Muslim women in America who faced challenges in education and employment, including discrimination, Islamophobia, language barriers, and gender-based restrictions. They also struggled with cultural assimilation due to conflicts between traditional Arab and Islamic values—such as family roles and faith practices—and Western societal norms, leading to identity conflicts

Khatib (2013) explains that Arab Muslim immigrant women face unique challenges while adapting to life in a new cultural environment. Key themes in their experiences include navigating a dual identity, maintaining balance through invisibility, spiritual growth, strong family relationships and fear of an uncertain future. Their adaptation is shaped by personal experiences, cultural identity and social influences.

## **1.3. Key Challenges Faced by Female Muslim Immigrants**

### **1.3.1. Cultural and Identity Struggles**

#### **1.3.1.1. Acculturation vs. Assimilation**

##### **1.3.1.1.1. Maintaining Islamic Identity while Integrating into American Society**

Muslim students in U.S. public schools often face challenges related to Islamophobia, cultural misunderstandings, school policies and a lack of representation. Navigating their

religious identity requires self-confidence and negotiation with broader school culture, which is able to result in feelings of separation and marginalization. There is a need for educators and decision-makers to better understand and support the identity development of Muslim students (Jilani, 2015).

According to Halim (2006), American Muslims rooted in diverse racial, ethnic and national backgrounds, reflecting the broader pluralism of American society. This diversity is similar to the historical integration of Protestants, Catholics and Jews. However, internal disagreements and the rise of Islamophobia after 9/11 have hindered full participation and acceptance. A major challenge remains balancing assimilation with the preservation of religious and cultural identity while integrating into wider society.

#### **1.3.1.1.2. Family and Community Expectations vs. Personal Aspirations**

In a study conducted by Al-Huraibi and Konradi (2012), twenty second-generation Yemeni American women navigated life between two cultures in unique ways. Religious women who wore the hijab challenged biased gender norms within their communities by promoting more progressive understandings of Islam. With strong family support, several moved beyond traditional roles to pursue higher education, careers and civic engagement. Their identities were shaped by their interpretation of Islam, the insular nature of their migration history, life in Detroit's Southend enclave and exposure to multicultural opportunities in American institutions.

#### **1.3.1.2. Challenges in Raising Children**

##### **1.3.1.2.1. Navigating American Education and Values**

In this regard, Sabry and Bruna (2007) state that Muslim students in American schools face challenges related to curriculum, teaching practices and weak home-school connections. There is a noticeable gap between the values of Muslim households and those of public schools.

Therefore, a collaborative model based on multicultural education is proposed to bridge this divide and create a more inclusive learning environment. Also, there should be a greater academic attention to the educational experiences of Muslim students and encourages Muslim families to share their personal stories.

As an example, Sheikh (2009) says that Muslim teenagers in central New Jersey face challenges in public school life, including peer pressure and academic expectations, along with additional stress related to their ethnic and religious identity. Insights from focus groups and a local imam highlight the importance of culturally informed support from families, educators, community leaders and mental health professionals.

#### **1.3.1.2.2. Passing down Cultural and Religious Identity**

First-generation Muslim women in the U.S. face dual challenges: maintaining their religious practices in a secular environment and confronting social prejudice and cultural rejection. Rather than assimilating into mainstream American gender norms they draw on traditional cultural and religious values to reshape their identities and roles (Hu, Pazaki, Al-Qubbaj, & Cutler, 2009).

Isik-Ercan (2014) observed the case of fifteen Turkish children in U.S. primary and secondary schools who used flexible strategies, such as displaying their religion openly or adapting their practices, to navigate their Muslim identity without feeling a conflict between being Muslim and American. Both the children and their parents played key roles in shaping these experiences. Understanding this dynamic help teachers support identity development, foster inclusion and address prejudice that have the potential to impact students' academic and social success.

## **1.3.2. Discrimination and Islamophobia**

### **1.3.2.1. Stereotyping of Muslim Women**

#### **1.3.2.1.1. Oppressed vs. Liberated Narratives in Western Media**

Muslim women in the U.S. often feel misrepresented in mainstream media, where they are portrayed as oppressed, lacking agency, or rendered invisible. Issaka (2021) states that these portrayals do not reflect their lived experiences and create identity threats, prompting comparisons with other religious and cultural groups. This highlights the real-world impact of media on social identity and the importance of promoting accurate representation and inclusion.

Terman (2017) examined how Muslim women are represented in US media. By using 35 years of data from the New York Times and Washington Post, the study has appointed structural professional modelling and statistical analysis to test two hypotheses based on gender orientalism. First, Turman found that US news sites report differently about women in Muslim majority countries when their rights are violated, while reporting on women in non-Muslim contexts are more often focused on authority and success. Second, even when there are relatively strong items on women's rights in Muslim majority countries, coverage still emphasizes harassment and inequality in gender. On the other hand, stories of non-Muslim women highlight a wide range of subjects. The results reveal prejudice that eliminates the stereotypes of Muslim communities as a specific sexist. These biased illustrations affect public beliefs and politics -relief related to Muslims at national and international levels.

#### **1.3.2.1.2. Exoticization, Veiling Debates, and Misrepresentation**

The hijab is often misrepresented and politicized in Western discourse as a symbol of Muslim women's oppression, rooted in colonial history where it was used to justify Western dominance. This portrayal reflects broader orientalist and neocolonial motives rather than genuine concern for women's rights. However, several Muslim women actively reclaim the

hijab as a symbol of agency, resistance and self-expression against these misinterpretations (Alexander, 2016).

In a related study, Tariq-Munir (2014) examined complex social and family effects that shape the decisions of Muslim women to use hijab in the context of the US. The study suggests that the decision to use hijab has yet been individually formed by versatile factors, including cultural expectations, personal faith and family mobility. He emphasizes that Muslim women, such as visible representatives of their faith, should be actively involved in both Muslim and mainstream American societies to challenge the prevailing stereotypes of Muslim women.

### **1.3.3. Workplace and Public Sphere Challenges**

#### **1.3.3.1. Hiring Discrimination, Wage Gaps, and Career Mobility Issues**

According to Ghumman and Ryan (2013), Muslim women who wear the hijab face discrimination in the workplace, including lower chances of being hired and multiple forms of bias compared to those not wearing the hijab. Muslim women healthcare professionals who choose to wear the hijab face discrimination that negatively affects their job opportunities and work experiences (Bartkoski et al., 2018).

#### **1.3.3.2. Hijab Bans, Workplace Dress Codes and Religious Accommodations**

Muslim and Arab individuals face discrimination in the workplace, especially during hiring, which negatively affects their employment opportunities. This discrimination also contributes to distinctions between Arabs and Muslims in the work context (Bartkoski et al., 2018). As a matter of fact, Muslim women in the U.S. tend to earn lower salaries and have fewer employment opportunities compared to non-Muslims. A subset of reasons for these disparities are identified, though not all are fully explained (Abdelhadi, 2019).

### **1.3.4. Hate Crimes and Harassment**

#### **1.3.4.1. Increase in Islamophobic Attacks Post-9/11**

The 9/11 terrorist attacks led to major changes in U.S. security policies, a war on terror and a rise in anti-Muslim sentiments. Muslim American women, although initially unaffected, eventually experienced negative impacts, including oppression and challenges in defining their identities (Zahedi, 2011).

Islamophobia, says Ahmed et al. (2021), negatively portrays Muslims, leading to their oppression and challenges. Several Muslim Americans experience various forms of assault and discrimination, highlighting the need for supportive strategies to protect them.

#### **1.3.4.2. Verbal and Physical Harassment in Public Spaces**

Following 9/11 and during the Trump presidency, veiled Muslim women experienced various forms of harassment, violence and gender bias. These challenges have affected their sense of identity and belonging (Baboolal, 2023).

Budhwani and Hearld (2017) state that Muslim women in the US commonly face physical, psychological and sexual abuse. In their study, among 373 participants, those who were less vigilant reported lower depression levels, while those who experienced physical and sexual abuse showed the highest depression. It is important to mention that this, in fact, was observed in a group of wealthy, well-educated women.

### **1.3.5. Economic and Employment Barriers**

#### **1.3.5.1. Limited Job Opportunities**

##### **1.3.5.1.1. Language Barriers and Credential Recognition Issues**

A significant number of highly skilled immigrants in the U.S. remain unemployed despite having bachelor's degrees, due to difficulties in transferring credentials and work experience. Cokadar (2022) studied the personal and structural barriers Turkish immigrant women face in the labor market, using in-depth interviews. The findings revealed most participants struggled

to find employment. The study highlights the challenges Muslim women encounter and amplifies their voices to help overcome these obstacles.

Alrasheed (2018) explored how identity investment relates to English learning among Arab immigrant women in the U.S. Through narrative inquiry and in-depth interviews with three adult ESL learners, the study found that participants' socioeconomic backgrounds hindered their motivation and investment in learning English. Additionally, cultural and social isolation significantly impacted their identities. The study concludes that these learners need to explore and understand their own cultures to better cope and advance in their language learning journey.

#### **1.3.5.1.2. Lack of Networking Opportunities**

Muslim women who wear the hijab are about 40% less likely to be employed than non-Muslims. This discrimination is deeply rooted in religious bias and extends across various domains. Employment discrimination is connected both to the nature of the jobs and broader societal attitudes. Perceptions of South Asian Muslim women in the US and UAE show that wearing the hijab impacts employment opportunities within different Islamic and mainstream contexts (Ahmed & Gorey, 2021)

Pasha-Zaidi et al., 2013 confirm that hijabi and non-hijabi Muslim women both experience lower employment rates and chances in the US and UAE. However, hijabis face more negative perceptions, which negatively impact their employment opportunities.

#### **1.3.5.2. Financial Dependence and Empowerment Struggles**

##### **1.3.5.2.1. Traditional Gender Roles Affecting Employment Decisions**

According to Blau, assimilation influences Muslim women's culture and behavior, particularly in areas like education and fertility. While assimilation assist close gaps between immigrant and native-born women over time, cultural norms from their countries of origin often

continue to impact them. Women from countries with traditional gender roles have the possibility to face lasting barriers to fully participating in the labor market (2015).

He and Gerber (2020) further say that the impact of origin country culture on immigrant women's employment in the US varies depending on the type of migrant. While cultural backgrounds negatively influence employment rates, the effect is not uniform. Lead and unmarried migrants are less influenced by their home culture, whereas follower migrants are more likely to be affected. Overall, the cultural influence from the home country plays a stronger role for few immigrants than others, shaping how they adapt to life in a new country.

#### **1.3.5.2.2. Access to Entrepreneurship and Financial Independence**

Muslim women entrepreneurs face heightened stigma, often fueled by media portrayals and their easy identification through visible markers like the hijab. Abdelzaher et al., (2021) state that they also encounter limited support from their own diaspora communities. Despite these challenges, a considerable number of these women demonstrate resilience by developing their skills and striving to succeed in their ventures. Azmat (2013) adds that migrant women entrepreneurs (MWEs) face several barriers in developing countries which are influenced by the interplay of immigration, ethnicity, gender and entrepreneurship. Key obstacles include family expectations, cultural norms, limited social capital and gender roles. Cultural factors, in particular, have a strong influence on their entrepreneurial journeys. A proposed framework offers ways for MWEs to navigate and overcome these challenges.

#### **1.3.6. Legal and Immigration Challenges**

### **1.3.6.1. Visa and Residency Issues**

#### **1.3.6.1.1. Family-based Visas vs. Work Permits vs. Refugee Status**

Immigrant visas are granted to individuals intending to live and work permanently in the United States, usually sponsored by a relative or employer. In contrast, non-immigrant visas are for temporary stays for purposes such as tourism, business, or study.

Feeney et al. (2023) state that visa and immigration policy challenges have intensified, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, which introduced complications such as travel restrictions and health-related concerns. These issues have significantly impacted immigrants, especially in academic and scientific communities. Recent visa and immigration policies have disrupted academic work and negatively affected higher education. As a result, a selection of foreign-born scientists in STEM fields have considered leaving the U.S., reflecting broader consequences for the country's academic and research landscape.

Workplace precarity and refugee resettlement in the U.S. present distinct challenges for men and women. Refugees face stress and vulnerability related to work, family expectations, and their workplace experiences. Gender plays a significant role in shaping these challenges, contributing to issues such as discrimination and limited job opportunities during the resettlement process (Mumtaz et al., 2024).

#### **1.3.6.1.2. Legal Restrictions on Employment and Travel**

Discrimination following the September 11th attacks has significantly affected the leisure behavior of American Muslims. Large number have experienced restrictions in their willingness to participate in leisure activities, alongside limitations on their freedom and movement. This discrimination has also led to verbal abuse and social isolation. Coping strategies have been proposed to help Muslim Americans manage these challenges (Livengood & Stodolska, 2004). In addition to that, Muslim American employees often face discrimination, stereotypes and biases in the workplace based on their religious identity. several encounter challenges that

undermine their rights and opportunities. Organizational leaders are called upon to uphold legal responsibilities by protecting religious rights and fostering inclusive environments. This highlights the ongoing need for workplaces to actively support employees of all religious backgrounds and ensure their rights are respected (Mujtaba & Cavico, 2011).

#### **1.3.6.2. Access to Social Services**

Muslim immigrant communities in the US face both physical and psychological challenges, which are compounded by cultural mistrust and stigmatization. Several individuals worry that counselors would not understand their beliefs, values, or experiences, leading a number of to avoid seeking treatment and potentially exacerbating mental health issues. This mistrust and stigma adversely affect the well-being of the entire community (Amri & Bemak, 2013).

According to Mundy (2020), Muslim and Arab immigrants in North America face significant mental health concerns both before and after migration. Before migrating, several experience violence and trauma due to war. After migration, religious and ethnic discrimination—including physical and verbal attacks—further impacts their mental well-being. Instead of seeking professional mental health care, a large number turn to their religious and social networks for support. Barriers such as stigma, language difficulties, lack of insurance, financial challenges and limited transportation further complicate access to care. Collaborative efforts between mosques and mental health services are recommended to improve support and accessibility.

Moreover, Arab American Muslims living in the US, specifically in Chicago, Allions, Deabor and Michigan, experience their home environment as more than just a physical space. The home significantly shapes immigrant life, serving as a place where individuals negotiate their identity, tradition and adaptation to the new culture. Traditional roots and the surrounding culture both influences how immigrants live and find meaning in their homes. Preserving

cultural identity within the home is important to prevent feelings of marginalization, forced assimilation, or cultural pressure (Amor, 2008).

### **1.3.6.3. Mental Health and Social Well-being**

Discrimination has negatively impacted the social identification and well-being of Arab Americans. Following the 9/11 attacks and ongoing Middle East conflicts, Arab Americans have often faced suspicion and hostility, leading to both personal and institutional xenophobia. This discrimination affects whether Arab Americans maintain their traditional roots and cultural identity or experience a loss of heritage. Additionally, discrimination contributes to emotional and mental health issues such as stress, anxiety and depression. Analysis of two large datasets with representative samples showed that discrimination harms social identification, which in turn worsens psychological outcomes. Strengthening ethnic identity is suggested as a strategy to foster a sense of belonging and resilience (Hakim et al., 2018).

Murtaza (2020) further explains that racial and religious discrimination have negatively impacted the mental health and well-being of Muslim young adults in the USA. Since September 11th, Muslim Americans have become a diverse ethnic group experiencing various challenges related to discrimination. Discrimination arises from both racial and religious identities, each independently affecting mental health by causing stress, depression, and lower life satisfaction, especially among Arab Americans. Spirituality plays a significant role in helping individuals cope with discrimination, promoting resilience and improving life satisfaction.

#### **1.3.6.3.1. Psychological Toll of Discrimination**

##### **1.3.6.3.1.1. Anxiety, Depression and PTSD from Racial Profiling**

It has been reported that Arab and Muslim Americans have experienced increased rates of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression following the post-9/11 attacks. Factors contributing to these mental health challenges include education level, material status, access to support and having children. Supportive, culturally respectful and inclusive systems are needed to help Arab and Muslim Americans navigate these difficulties and improve their well-being (Abu-Ras & Abu-Bader, 2009).

Anxiety and depression significantly impact Arab Americans in the USA. Amer and Hovey (2012) report that about 25% of Arab American participants experience moderate to severe anxiety levels and 50% have clinically significant depression scores. Compared to other ethnic minorities, Arab Americans show notably higher levels of both anxiety and depression. These findings highlight the need for targeted clinical interventions, as Arab Americans may be particularly vulnerable to mental health challenges

#### **1.3.6.3.1.2. Internalized Islamophobia and Self-esteem Struggles**

The Trump era influenced perceived religious discrimination among Muslim Americans, highlighting the complex relationships between religious discrimination, acculturation, religious commitment and collective self-esteem. Among English-speaking Muslim Americans living in the U.S. for at least five years, religious commitment, acculturation and collective self-esteem were all significantly linked to perceived religious discrimination. Older individuals reported higher levels of discrimination related to their religious commitment, which was associated with lower self-esteem, suggesting that acculturation or integration does not necessarily protect against discrimination. Additionally, American citizens perceived more discrimination than non-citizens. These findings provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by Muslim Americans during this time (Kaya, 2020).

Furthermore, gendered Islamophobia impacts Muslim women's activities in the United States, affecting their experiences based on both religion and gender. Muslim women from

Arab, South Asian and Black backgrounds, aged 18 to 30, demonstrate resilience despite facing this discrimination. The concept of gendered Islamophobia builds on Jasmine Zine's work and Patricia Hill Collins' theory of the matrix of domination, which explains how power and oppression intersect in multiple ways. Islamophobia's effects vary depending on several factors and are not uniform for all Muslim women. There is a strong connection between Islamophobia and the oppression of Muslim women, making it a significant challenge for them in the U.S. (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020).

#### **1.3.6.3.2. Social Isolation**

According to Crawford et al. (2023), immigrant and refugee women in the United States experience both social inclusion and exclusion. Migration rates have increased over the last 15 years, with immigrants and refugees contributing to their new countries based on their socio-economic backgrounds. Certain groups of immigrant and refugee women face social exclusion, being denied opportunities to participate in various areas of life. Social inclusion can be understood on three levels:

- **Micro-level:** include language skills, social support and identity struggles.
- **Meso-level:** involve access to education, employment and social services.
- **Macro-level:** reach influence of government policies and broader systemic factors.

They also state that social exclusion negatively impacts immigrant and refugee women's lives. Supportive strategies are needed to improve their well-being and inclusion in Western contexts.

#### **1.3.6.3.2.1. Difficulty Forming Cross-cultural Friendships**

Saudi women international students in the USA face complexities and obstacles during cultural adjustment and integration. Their experience often involves a contrast between their expectations of life in the US and the reality they encounter. Factors influencing their

adjustment include their ability to speak English fluently, social support and cultural differences between Saudi Arabia and the US. A group of students experience prejudice and discrimination, while others find acceptance. Several faces psychological and emotional stress adapting to the new culture. Social support is essential to help ease this adjustment. Overall, living in the US remains challenging for Saudi women students, with certain factors aiding their adaptation and others leading to personal changes (Lefdahl-Davis & Perrone-McGovern, 2015).

In this regard, Constantine et al. (2005) report the experience of fifteen Asian international college women from Indian, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese backgrounds who experienced cultural adjustment challenges while living in the USA. They reported feeling differences between life in the US and their home countries, along with experiences of discrimination and prejudice based on race or gender. Support from family and friends was identified as crucial, alongside the need for effective coping strategies to manage stress and cultural challenges. These insights highlight ways mental health professionals are able to better support international students during their adjustment process.

#### **1.3.6.3.2.2. Lack of Community Support for Single and Divorced Muslim Women**

Muslim women in the USA face negative social media portrayals that misrepresent and oppress them, often depicting them as invisible and lacking autonomy. These stereotypes contrast with their actual lives, beliefs and values, leading to psychological fears and identity challenges. In response, Muslim women cope in three main ways: dissociation (distancing themselves from visible Islamic practices to avoid discrimination), association (showing resilience against misrepresentations) and media avoidance (avoiding media streams altogether). These experiences highlight the challenges Muslim women face navigating hostile environments and the need for protective strategies to support them in the United States (Issaka, 2021). Moreover, Older immigrant Muslim women in the USA often experience a negative

sense of social belonging, which leads to psychological challenges such as loneliness and loss. Their sense of belonging is complex and impacted by various factors, highlighting the need for improved support systems to help these women cope with their experiences (Au, 2023).

## **Conclusion**

The chapter above presents comprehensive analysis for the challenges faced by female Muslim immigrants in the USA. These individuals were and still are highly discriminated at different contexts including work, education, public places and other related contexts. These issues complicate the lives of female Muslim immigrants, leading them to experience different kinds of problems including isolation and mental health problems. The presented literature touches on a wide range of Arab individuals, Muslim females and immigrants. Intersectionality seemed to be one of the main obstacles to female Muslim immigrants in that they are suffering in terms of their religious freedom, cultural adjustment and social engagement. This calls for the urgent need to create supporting strategies to help female Muslim immigrants navigate life easier and better in the USA, meaning that a multifaceted approach is highly required.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Analysis of Case Studies and Coping Strategies**

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## **Introduction**

The following chapter represents the practical part of the study as it provides analysis of actual reported case studies and experiences of female Muslim immigrants and the coping strategies, they use to overcome their everyday struggles and adapt to the lifestyle there. The case studies below are grouped into several themes for better understanding as well as getting in depth knowledge. Among the coping strategies are the role of mosques, cultural centres and mentoring programmes which are highly recommended as a solution for female Muslim immigrants in the US to live better lives there.

### **2.1. Part One: Case Studies**

The section presents actual reported experiences of female Muslim immigrants in the USA that show different challenges and forms of everyday life struggles.

#### **2.1.1. Immigration Pathways**

Ugurel Kamisli (2021) examines the resettlement struggles of six Syrian Muslim refugee women in the U.S. following their displacement from the Syrian War. The study highlights the women's dual challenges of overcoming war-related trauma while facing discrimination and cultural isolation in America. Key issues included language barriers, difficulties accessing education and employment and lack of tailored support systems. The research underscores the need for more compassionate, culturally-aware refugee assistance programs that address both practical needs and psychological well-being. By centring the women's own narratives, the study provides valuable insights into how forced migration uniquely impacts Muslim women and calls for systemic changes to improve their integration into American society.

#### **2.1.2. Balancing Cultural Traditions with American Norms**

En-Nabut (2007) explores the struggles of six Arab Muslim immigrant women navigating life in America. The study reveals their challenges with discrimination, Islamophobia, language barriers and gender-based restrictions in education and employment. A key finding highlights their cultural assimilation conflicts, torn between traditional Arab/Islamic values (family roles, religious practices) and Western societal norms, leading to profound identity tensions. The research underscores the need for inclusive policies that address the intersectional barriers faced by Muslim immigrant women in the U.S.

Moreover, Khatib (2013) examines the adaptation experiences of 15 Arab Muslim immigrant women in the U.S. The study identifies their core challenges in balancing dual cultural identities, using strategies like "invisibility" (downplaying cultural markers) and spiritual resilience to navigate their new environment. Key findings reveal how family bonds and religious faith help mitigate their fears about an uncertain future in America. The research highlights the complex negotiation between preserving cultural identity and assimilating into Western society, offering insights into the psychosocial needs of Muslim immigrant women.

### **2.1.3. Cultural and Identity Struggles**

Al-Huraibi and Konradi (2012) explores the identity formation of 20 second-generation Yemeni American women, focusing on their navigation of dual cultural expectations. The study reveals how hijab-wearing women actively challenged gender biases within their communities by reinterpreting Islamic teachings through a progressive lens. With strong family support, these women pursued higher education, careers and civic engagement—expanding beyond traditional gender roles. Their hybrid identities emerged from three key influences:

- (1) personal interpretations of Islam,
- (2) their immigrant community's history in Detroit's Southend enclave and
- (3) opportunities in multicultural American institutions.

The research demonstrates how second-generation Muslim women creatively reconcile cultural preservation with societal integration, transforming both their community's norms and mainstream perceptions. Additionally, Hu, Pazaki, Al-Qubbaj and Cutler (2009) investigate the dual challenges faced by 33 first-generation Muslim immigrant women in the U.S. from Muslim-majority countries. The study highlights their struggle to maintain religious practices in a secular society while confronting prejudice and cultural marginalization. Rather than assimilating to mainstream American gender norms, these women actively reinterpreted traditional Islamic and cultural frameworks to assert their identity and redefine their social roles. The research reveals how these women strategically used their religious and cultural heritage as both a shield against discrimination and a foundation for self-definition in their new environment. This work provides important insights into the complex negotiation of identity, faith and belonging among Muslim immigrant women in Western contexts.

#### **2.1.4. Discrimination and Islamophobia**

Issaka (2021) examines Muslim women's perceptions of their representation in U.S. mainstream media through the lens of social identity theory. The study reveals a pervasive pattern of misrepresentation, with Muslim women frequently portrayed as oppressed, lacking agency, or invisible - depictions that starkly contrast with their lived experiences. These distorted media narratives create identity threats, prompting Muslim women to engage in social comparisons with other religious and cultural groups as they navigate their self-concept in American society. The research underscores the real-world consequences of these portrayals, highlighting how media stereotyping impacts Muslim women's sense of inclusion and social belonging while contributing to broader societal misunderstandings about Islam and gender.

The research exposes the damaging disconnect between media narratives and Muslim women's actual diverse experiences, calling for more authentic representations that acknowledge their agency and multidimensional identities.

Furthermore, Tariq-Munir (2014) explores the multifaceted factors influencing Muslim women's decisions to wear the hijab in the U.S. context. The study reveals that this personal choice is shaped by a complex interplay of cultural expectations, individual faith convictions, and family dynamics. Importantly, it positions hijab-wearing women as visible ambassadors of Islam who actively challenge stereotypes through their participation in both Muslim communities and mainstream American society. The research highlights how these women navigate their dual roles - maintaining religious identity while countering prevalent misconceptions about Muslim women in the broader culture. As a conclusion, this study reframes the hijab debate by emphasizing women's agency, showing how their choices serve as both personal religious expressions and public challenges to Islamophobic stereotypes.

#### **2.1.5. Workplace and Public Sphere Challenges**

Ghumman and Ryan (2013) conducted groundbreaking research on workplace discrimination against hijab-wearing Muslim women in the U.S. Through an innovative field experiment where participants were evaluated both with and without hijabs, the study provided concrete evidence of hiring bias. The results demonstrated significantly lower hiring rates for women wearing hijabs, along with documented cases of multiple workplace discrimination forms. This research provided empirical validation of what a considerable number of Muslim women experience anecdotally - that visible religious identity directly impacts employment opportunities in the American job market. The study offered irrefutable proof of systemic hiring discrimination, making it a landmark work that has informed both corporate diversity policies and subsequent research on religious-based workplace inequities. Its findings continue to be cited in discussions about creating more inclusive hiring practices and combating implicit biases against visibly Muslim women professionals.

Besides, Bartkoski et al. (2018) conducted in-depth research with 79 Muslim women healthcare professionals (physicians and other providers) about their experiences wearing

religious head coverings in U.S. medical workplaces. The qualitative study revealed that choosing to wear the hijab often led to overt discrimination and career limitations, despite working in a field theoretically dedicated to inclusivity and care. Participants reported facing prejudicial treatment from colleagues, supervisors and even patients, which created substantial barriers to professional advancement and workplace satisfaction. The research highlighted the troubling paradox of Muslim women experiencing discrimination while working in healthcare - an industry that ostensibly values diversity and serves populations of all backgrounds. The study exposed how even in progressive fields like medicine, visible religious identity is able to trigger workplace bias, forcing a great deal of qualified Muslim women professionals to choose between religious expression and career success. These findings have particular significance for healthcare institutions examining their diversity, equity and inclusion practices regarding religious accommodation.

#### **2.1.6. Hate Crimes and Harassment**

Zahedi (2011) examines the evolving impact of 9/11 on Muslim American women's lives and identities. While initial consequences appeared limited, the study reveals how subsequent ideological shifts led to systemic oppression and identity crises for this population. Muslim women found themselves forced to constantly redefine and justify their presence in American society amid growing Islamophobia. The research documents their struggle against dual pressures: external societal suspicion and internal community expectations, creating what the author terms a "post-9/11 identity crucible." These challenges manifested in both public discrimination and private psychological tolls as women navigated their suddenly politicized religious identity. The study captures the delayed but profound cultural fallout of 9/11 for Muslim women, showing how security policies and media narratives gradually reshaped their everyday experiences and self-conception as Americans. This work remains particularly

relevant for understanding the long-term societal impacts of terrorism on minority communities.

Baboolal (2023) also investigated the intensified vulnerabilities faced by Muslim women in the U.S. during the Trump administration, building upon the post-9/11 climate of Islamophobia. Through in-depth interviews with 27 participants, the study documents how veiled Muslim women confronted escalating harassment, violence and gendered Islamophobia in this political era. The research reveals how these experiences fundamentally disrupted women's sense of identity and belonging, as they navigated both public hostility and institutional marginalization. The Trump presidency's rhetoric and policies appear to have legitimized and amplified anti-Muslim sentiment, with visible Muslim women serving as frequent targets. This work highlights the intersection of political climate, religious identity, and gender in shaping minority experiences in America. The study provides timely evidence of how political leadership tends to exacerbate systemic discrimination, particularly for visibly identifiable groups like hijab-wearing Muslim women. It underscores the need for protective policies during periods of heightened nationalism.

In addition to that, Budhwani and Hearld (2017) conducted a large-scale study with 373 Muslim women in the U.S. across various age groups, focusing on their experiences with abuse and mental health impacts. The research revealed alarmingly high rates of physical, psychological and sexual abuse within this demographic, with particularly severe depression found among abuse survivors. Counterintuitively, the study found that women exhibiting less vigilance about potential threats reported lower depression levels than their more vigilant counterparts. These patterns emerged even among the study's affluent, highly educated participants, challenging assumptions that socioeconomic status protects against such challenges. The findings underscore the pervasive nature of gender-based violence and mental health struggles in Muslim women's lives, regardless of their educational or economic privilege.

The study exposes how structural and cultural factors create mental health vulnerabilities for Muslim women in America, with vigilance against discrimination itself emerging as a depression risk factor. This work highlights the need for culturally-sensitive mental health interventions that address both the trauma of abuse and the psychological toll of constant threat anticipation.

### **2.1.7. Economic and Employment Barriers**

Cokadar (2022) examines the underemployment crisis among highly skilled Turkish immigrant women in the U.S. labor market. The study documents how these educated professionals face systemic barriers in credential recognition and job acquisition, despite their qualifications. Through qualitative interviews, the research reveals how participants encountered both structural obstacles (licensing requirements, biased hiring practices) and personal challenges (language barriers, cultural gaps in workplace norms). Most significantly, the study amplifies these women's firsthand accounts of being professionally marginalized, highlighting the waste of human capital when immigrant skills remain underutilized. The work serves as an urgent call for reforms in occupational licensing, employer bias training, and mentorship programs to help skilled immigrant women fully contribute to the workforce.

The research exposes the paradox of educated immigrant women being "invisibly excluded" from professional opportunities, with their international credentials and experience often discounted in ways that disproportionately affect Muslim women from non-Western backgrounds. These barriers persist despite America's purported need for skilled workers.

Alrasheed (2018), too, presented to experiences of three Arab immigrant women learning English in the U.S., finding that socioeconomic barriers and cultural isolation hindered their progress. The women struggled to balance their Arab identity with American integration, showing that language learning involves deep identity negotiation. The study calls for ESL programs to address cultural and emotional needs alongside language skills because true

language fluency requires supporting immigrant women's cultural identity, not just teaching vocabulary.

Additionally, Abdelzaher et al. (2021) examined 11 Muslim women entrepreneurs in the U.S., revealing their dual struggle against external stigma (fueled by media stereotypes) and lack of diaspora support. Despite these hurdles, the women demonstrated resilience by skill-building and perseverance. The study highlights how visible religious identity compounds business challenges while showcasing Muslim women's agency in overcoming barriers. Here, Muslim women entrepreneurs face layered discrimination yet employ active strategies to succeed, calling for better institutional and community support systems.

#### **2.1.8. Legal and Immigration Challenges**

Mumtaz et al. (2024) explores the gendered challenges of refugee resettlement through eight months of fieldwork and interviews. The study reveals how refugee women face compounded workplace precarity—navigating discrimination, family pressures and unstable employment—while adapting to U.S. labor markets. Key findings highlight the intersection of gender and refugee status in creating systemic barriers to economic stability.

In summary, refugee women endure layered vulnerabilities during resettlement, demanding gender-responsive employment support programs.

#### **2.1.9. Mental Health and Social Well-being**

Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern (2015) studied 25 Saudi women international students in the U.S., uncovering a stark "expectations vs. reality" divide in their cultural adjustment. Key challenges included language barriers, cultural misunderstandings and experiences of prejudice—though a group of them found acceptance. The study highlights their emotional stress and adaptive strategies, emphasizing the need for tailored university support

systems to ease this transition. Also, Saudi women students navigate profound cultural dissonance, requiring institutional support to bridge their academic and personal adaptation.

Also, Au (2023) investigates the overlooked struggles of 14 aging Muslim immigrant women in North America, revealing their profound isolation and "unbelonging" in later life. The photo-elicitation study exposes how cultural displacement, language barriers and fragmented community ties exacerbate loneliness—a crisis compounded by the absence of culturally-sensitive elder care. These vulnerable demographic faces invisible mental health risks, demanding aging policies that honor Islamic values and immigrant life experiences.

## **2.2. Part Two: Coping Strategies**

### **2.2.1. Community and Grassroots Support**

#### **2.2.1.1. Role of Mosques, Cultural Centers and Non-profit Organizations**

Mosques serve as vital centers for Muslim communities, especially in foreign environments. Beyond being places of worship, they foster a sense of belonging by uniting Muslims from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Mosques help preserve Islamic faith and cultural heritage through Quran lessons and cultural events and they also promote political and civic engagement among Muslim communities in the United States.

Ozyurt (2010) states that religious institutions, particularly mosques, play a significant role in the cultural adaptation of Muslim immigrant women in the United States. Mosques contribute to the acculturation process by offering spiritual support, fostering a sense of community and helping establish a shared religious identity. Religious leaders also play a key role by interpreting Islamic teachings in a way that supports integration and empowerment. As a result, Muslim immigrant women often feel more supported, emotionally resilient and better able to navigate life in the U.S.

According to Mohammed (2024), the physical design of mosques significantly impacts Muslim women's sense of belonging in the United States. Several women expressed

dissatisfaction with how mosque spaces are organized, which affect their participation in religious life. Three key elements of mosque design were identified: accessibility, meaning open and welcoming entry points, access to prayer areas; functional fit, which refers to the practical needs of women such as sufficient prayer space and clean, private areas for ablution; and aesthetics, emphasizing the importance of a spiritually uplifting environment. These factors play a critical role in helping Muslim women engage fully in religious practices and maintain their identity. The findings highlight the importance of mosque design in the cultural adjustment of Muslim women and urge religious leaders to consider these needs for better community support

Shier and Graham (2013) add that service provider organizations in New York City responded to the social and political changes following the 9/11 attacks by adapting their services to meet the evolving needs of Muslim communities, particularly women. These organizations developed new programs to support Muslim women facing increased discrimination and social pressure. The programs focused on culturally sensitive services that aid in cultural adjustment and help Muslim minorities navigate societal challenges in the U.S. Additionally, there was a strong emphasis on the importance of social work education. This included promoting collaboration between organizations, creating culturally relevant programs and addressing common struggles faced by Muslim communities. Service organizations became an essential coping mechanism for Muslim women, offering support and resources to help them adapt socially and emotionally in a post-9/11 environment.

#### **2.2.1.2. Muslim Women's Advocacy Groups and Mentorship Programs**

Mentorship programs play a vital role in supporting Muslim communities resettling in the United States. They provide both practical guidance and emotional support, helping individuals navigate cultural differences by bridging the gap between American society and Muslim cultural values and practices. These programs strengthen confidence by affirming identity and

cultural heritage and they encourage active participation in community life. This, in turn, fosters integration and helps reduce discrimination, especially for Muslim women adjusting to life in a new country.

Peer mentoring programs have proven effective in supporting refugee and migrant women in the United States. These programs often work in collaboration with community-based services to ensure cultural accessibility and help women adjust to their new environment. They offer support through workshops, one-on-one mentoring and phone communication—demonstrating flexibility in meeting diverse needs. Mentoring programs connect women with one another, improve access to education and assist them in securing employment. However, there exist differences in expectations between mentors and mentees, highlighting the need for ongoing evaluation and improvement to ensure meaningful support (Gower et al., 2022).

Reeves (2017) explains that mentoring programs that support immigrant newcomers in Western contexts must prioritize understanding the cultural backgrounds of the people they assist. Building strong, trust-based relationships between mentors and mentees is essential to fully grasp the challenges newcomers face. Mentors play a key role in identifying job opportunities and helping immigrants build networks to support their integration. There is also a need for a clearer understanding of what intercultural mentoring involves, to ensure more effective support for migrants adapting to new environments.

## **2.2.2. Policy Changes and Legal Protections**

### **2.2.2.1. Need for Stronger Anti-discrimination Laws**

Anti-discrimination laws play a very important role in supporting female Muslim immigrants in the United States of America. They guarantee them a set of rights in addition to protecting them from bias and unequal treatment. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited employment discrimination based on religious, race, sex, or national origins. This helped Muslim women navigating discrimination and harassment in the workplace. Through anti-

discrimination laws, these women tend to have civic engagement. Therefore, they maintain their cultural and religious identity. Several research studies have highlighted the need for anti-discrimination laws after examining the different types of discrimination that female Muslim immigrants face in the United States of America.

According to Hodge et al. (2024), wearing the hijab in the United States is closely linked to increased experiences of religious discrimination for Muslim women. Challenges are further compounded by limited English language proficiency and adherence to Islamic traditions, which tends to act as barriers to integration. There is a need for greater awareness within social networks about these obstacles. Addressing these issues requires thoughtful examination of various contexts and the implementation of strong anti-discrimination laws. Such protections help ensure that Muslim women are able freely wear the hijab and practice their values in a safe and inclusive society.

Additionally, wearing the hijab plays a significant role in shaping the experiences of Muslim women in the American context. Women who wear the veil often face distinct forms of discrimination that affect their social lives and integration. While Muslim women are prominently impacted, men also experience discrimination based on their visible religious identity. These findings highlight the ongoing challenges faced by Muslim communities and point to the importance of strong anti-discrimination laws to help ensure fair treatment and support for both women and men (Dana et al., 2019).

#### **2.2.2.2. Workplace Inclusivity Policies**

Inclusivity is considered one of the essential policies that Muslim communities need, especially Muslim women who wear the hijab. It helps them to combat discrimination, promote equal opportunities and ensure religious freedom. These policies foster a safe environment for Muslim women to accomplish their works and fully engage in the work process. This would prevent any form of discrimination that Muslim women are likely to face. Several research

studies have highlighted the importance of such policies with regards to their benefits in protecting Muslim women in the American context.

Muslims, especially women who wear the hijab, face discrimination in the workplace due to their religious attire and backgrounds. Robinson says that the hijab is often seen as a source of threat, reflecting a negative cultural shift. To address this, inclusive workplace policies are needed to create a more supportive environment where Muslim women are able to fully participate. This includes encouraging local and national institutions to protect Muslim minorities' rights, raising awareness through social media and enforcing anti-discrimination laws (2016).

White (2018) confirms that Muslims in the United States often face religious discrimination in the workplace, with limited support from colleagues for religious accommodations. Discrimination is strongly present in work settings, making it difficult for Muslim employees to practice their faith comfortably. There is a clear need for social change to create more inclusive and supportive work environments. Leaders and policymakers are urged to implement inclusive policies that promote full workplace engagement for Muslim employees.

#### **2.2.2.3. Improving Immigrant Legal Support Systems**

Legal systems are of a great importance for immigrants all over the world. They guarantee a set of rights for better life experience in the new environment. Accessing citizenship, seeking lawful entry and achieving cultural adjustment are among the main functions that legal systems and strategies provide for immigrants in the United States of America. Moreover, legal systems ensure equal representation for all immigrants this by extent help them to maintain their identity and religious practices. Several research studies have highlighted the role of legal systems in supporting immigrants in western contexts, especially in the United States of America.

This is why there is a critical need to establish new administrative systems to create an effective legal framework for immigrants. Legal representation plays a vital role: immigrants without it face greater challenges, including higher risks of deportation, while those with legal assistance experience lower deportation rates. Expanding legal orientation programs to all detention centers and non-detained individuals is essential. These programs help immigrants understand their rights and better cope with their situations in foreign countries. Overall, supportive legal systems are necessary to achieve more effective outcomes for immigrants abroad (Kerwin, 2020).

Yasenov et al. (2020), too, mentions that immigrant legal service providers (ISPs) play a crucial role in supporting immigrants in foreign countries, including the United States. Most ISPs and low-income immigrants are concentrated in large cities, which facilitates access to legal support for several immigrants. However, immigrants in southern cities often lack access to these legal services. There is a need to establish new ISP offices in underserved areas to improve access to legal help. Overall, creating more effective legal systems and expanding service locations contribute to enhance the experiences of immigrants in the United States.

### **2.2.3. Empowerment through Education and Career Advancement**

Immigrant Muslim women in America face unique challenges with cultural expectations and social misconceptions. Nevertheless, the progress of education and careers has proven to be a powerful tool for their authority, which provides the route for freedom, leadership and social contribution. By reaching higher education and commercial opportunities through scholarships and educational resources and encouragement of entrepreneurship and financial literacy programs, these women not only define their personal future but also challenge stereotypes and enrich a broad American society. This movement towards empowerment

highlights the inclusive policy, social support and the important role of mentorship in creating a more just society.

#### **2.2.3.1. Scholarships and Educational Resources for Muslim Immigrant Women**

Muslim students in North America face hidden pressures influenced by systemic racism and Islamophobia, especially following global events like the rise of ISIS. These challenges contribute to mental health struggles, identity conflicts and weakened feelings of belonging. Addressing this requires developing culturally sensitive education policies, mental health services and inclusive practices that acknowledge diverse identities, reduce discrimination, and promote empowerment in academic and professional settings—especially to better support Muslim women in the United States (Al-Fartousi, 2023).

Education and training for Muslim men and women leaders to navigate America’s multiethnic and multireligious landscape—especially post-9/11—are crucial and emerging priorities. This new form of American Muslim education needs to draw from traditional Islamic educational models while rejecting harmful binaries like “Muslim versus West.” It also incorporate critical frameworks that challenge systems of power, privilege and marginalization affecting women and minorities of color, ultimately fostering more inclusive and stronger leadership within Muslim communities (Al-Islam, 2006).

#### **2.2.3.2. Encouraging Entrepreneurship and Financial Literacy Programs**

Gender, race and ethnicity intersect in shaping women’s entrepreneurship experiences. Female entrepreneurs strategically navigate family and work roles to achieve freedom, purpose and social impact. Local community plays a significant role, providing meaning and strategic support for their businesses. It’s important to consider multiple social identities beyond just “motherhood,” including work-life balance, social connections and entrepreneurship’s role in their lives (Wang, 2019).

Bynum (2019) says that entrepreneurship has deep roots in Islamic culture, as well as in ancient Africa and Arabia. American-born Muslim women from diverse ethnic backgrounds have navigated challenges such as discrimination, stereotypes and gender bias, especially in the post-9/11 context. Despite these obstacles, Muslim female entrepreneurs contribute significantly to business and respond to the global movement for women's empowerment. Their experiences highlight both the conflicts they face and their important roles in entrepreneurship.

#### **2.2.4. Mental Health and Well-being Initiatives**

Mental health and well-being enterprises for indigenous Muslim women in America must prioritize both access and cultural sensitivity. Culturally sensitive comforting services are essential to ensure that mental health support and understands the religious, cultural and social values of Muslim women, fostering trust and effective care. At the same time, while addressing the importance of stigmatization of mental health in Muslim communities, individuals often help in the form of misunderstandings and fear. These actions play a transformative role in promoting healing and flexibility. This can be done by normalizing the conversation about mental health and providing such services to respect cultural identity.

##### **2.2.4.1. Culturally Sensitive Counseling Services**

Providing culturally appropriate social services to Muslim Americans involves addressing key issues such as harassment and discrimination, understanding how these issues impact social work practice, recognizing patterns of help-seeking and implementing strategies for culturally sensitive service delivery. Service providers with experience in Muslim communities emphasize the importance of promoting social justice and using internal, community-centered approaches to effectively meet the needs of Muslim American clients (Weng et al., 2019).

Mourad and Abdella Carolan (2010) adopt an ecological perspective for intervention with Arab American women, identifying the importance of a large number relevant effects. It addresses both macrosystem factors, such as historical events, cultural dynamics, social faith and stigma, family dynamics and societal partnerships as a microsystem factor. The study also explains how these systemic questions at the intersection affect the psychotherapy approach of this population.

#### **2.2.4.2. Addressing Stigma around Mental Health in Muslim Communities**

Muse (2024) examines the mental health care needs of the Muslim community in America. The study emphasized the importance of cultural ability and socializing and examines obstacles such as Islamophobia, stigma and cultural criteria that discourage professional help. The thesis highlights strategies to improve access, including the training of Muslim doctors, involving religious leaders in mental health and offers services through community centers and mosques. It encourages to the integration of Islamic teachings in medicine, which aims to present mental health care through research, education and socially based initiatives.

Saherwala, Bashir and Gainer (2021) provide insights about challenges that are faced by health providers in offering culturally competent care to Muslim women. It underlines the need to understand factors such as postpartum depression, mental illness and stigma, cultural beliefs, experiences of discrimination and modesty. The article shows that strategies can be used to build trust for Muslim women and to provide effective, culturally sensitive mental health care.

#### **2.2.5. Discussion**

In this part, there are two main questions to ask/answer.

- ❖ What strategies can be implemented to help female Muslim immigrants within local communities?

Female Muslim immigrants form an important part from the total number of immigrants in the world. They immigrate to different countries in order to serve different purposes including

study, job, or related elements. This category came from Islamic societies and beliefs and this is one of the challenges for them that is to say female Muslim immigrants face several obstacles to maintain their religious and Islamic identity in societies where Islam is not the dominant religion.

Supporting female Muslim immigrants in local communities requires a multifaceted approach that includes the most important elements for them to be fully engaged in the new environment. First, mosques and religious institutions play a crucial role in supporting female and Muslim immigrants. They have to provide them with a wider understanding of their religious beliefs and teachings. Additionally, mosques buildings are to be designed accordingly in the sense that they need to have enough spaces in which all women can be connected as well as offering suitable entry and ablution places for better engagement. Religious leaders are recommended to work to create a religious identification for Muslims in foreign countries. This is done through building enough mosques in foreign contexts along with creating programs to show the Islamic traditions and practices.

Second, cultural centers have a big impact in facilitating the life of female Muslim immigrants in foreign contexts. Their role is to facilitate the integration of Muslim women in the new environment. This is done through offering programs that teaches local norms, laws, and rights while affirming immigrants' own values. Moreover, cultural centers are responsible for the civic engagement of Muslim women through supporting leadership development and creating platforms to raise the needs of Muslim women regarding different issues. Cultural centers are required to offer classes and events that celebrate and preserve cultural traditions, languages and religious practices. Serving places for cultural expression and teachings is also another role of cultural centers in local communities.

Third, providing effective mental health services is another required mission for the communities. This is done through guarantee free healthcare services, especially in general hospitals with ensuring insurance for Muslim women.

Fourth, mentoring programs play an essential role in supporting female Muslim immigrants navigating life in foreign countries. Providing personal guidance that is to say guaranteeing essential elements for Muslim women including transportation and Healthcare is one of the responsibilities of mentoring programs. Also, decreasing the sense of isolation by building trusted one-to-one relationships. Moreover, their Role lies in demonstrating for female Muslim immigrants the norms and cultural traditions along with the local traditions. This is done through cultural gatherings and scheduled programs.

By applying these strategies, female Muslim immigrants can be supported and encouraged enough to pursue their lives. Therefore, their self-esteem is increased.

❖ What can institutions and policymakers do to create a more inclusive society?

Muslim Women immigrants require a comprehensive and intersectional approach of decision makers and institutions in all fields to create a more inclusive society. First, governments need to strengthen and enforce anti-discrimination laws which protect the religious, racial and gender-based bias, in housing, employment, education and public services, while ensuring that immigration policy supports family reunification, permanent residences and make access to citizenship equitable.

Second, Public institutions and workplaces must integrate religious practices, including modest dress and prayer needs and promote inclusion through hiring practices, leadership development and workplace culture.

Third, in education, schools are encouraged to use a culturally responsible curriculum that reflect Muslim history and contributions, provides language help to students and families and implement strong anti-bullying initiatives that dealt with Islamophobia.

Fourth, the health care system needs to prioritize culturally competent care through training providers to respect religious sensitivity - such as gender preferences for medical staff and ensure access to mental health services that accept the faces of immigrant women with unique stresses.

Finally, Language access, interpretation services and outreach programs are important for efficient distribution of health and social services. In addition, supporting the leadership of Muslim women are able to promote civilian relations from funding for political participation and funding community led initiatives, increasing the votes of politics.

## **Conclusion**

The chapter highlights the main obstacles that female Muslim immigrant encountered in the US. Female Muslim immigrants were and still are negatively impacted by issues such as discrimination, violence, harassment and negative representation. This has greatly contributed by answering the research questions as well as addressing the aims that are set at the beginning of the study. Additionally, the set of coping strategies which are critically analysed has resulted in suggesting a subset of policies to participate female Muslim immigrants in USA. These policies reflect the role of local communities' institutions as well as policymakers in supporting female Muslim immigrants in USA.

## **General Conclusion**

Immigration is defined as the process of entering a new country or region to one that is not native. People immigrate for various purposes including finding a job, pursuing study and experiencing new cultures and traditions. The study is centred on the topic of the challenges

that female Muslim immigrants faced in the USA. It focused on their journeys and obstacles in relation to their gender, religion and culture.

The problem of the study was to discover the main challenges that female Muslim immigrants encountered in the US, believing that there is not much research that have focused on the topic. This led to the research gap that this work would outline.

The work aimed to shed light on the challenges that female Muslim immigrants encountered in relation to different aspects of their lives. Also, it examined the impact of negative issues including discrimination on the daily lives of female Muslim immigrants in the US. Additionally, the work tried to understand how female Muslim immigrants balanced their lives in the US context.

Four main questions were outlined in this investigation. The questions were centred around the obstacles that female Muslim immigrants faced in USA and how this impacted their lives, aiming to know how these categories balance their lives there. The questions were approached via the reviewing previous literature that has relation to the research topic along with the analysis of case studies and coping strategies.

The thesis used qualitative research approach along with analysing case studies and coping strategies to meet the research aims and questions that were set at the beginning of the study. Thematic analysis along with descriptive analysis were used to outline the main findings around the topic.

The work set two hypotheses. The hypothesis stated that the intersection of a gender, religion and immigrant status significantly impact the lives of female Muslim immigrants. Additionally, female Muslim immigrants faced difficulties in balancing their lives in the Us context. Through an in-depth analysis of coping strategies and case studies, the two hypotheses were confirmed and validated.

The research project was divided into two chapters. Chapter one was about reviewing the literature in relation to the topic. Chapter two was about analysing case studies and coping strategies. The scope of this study included the challenges that were faced by 3 categories which are females, Muslims and immigrants.

The findings of this study revealed that female Muslim immigrants faced multiple challenges in the US context that is to say they suffered from social isolation, cultural integration and communication. This is due to The US violent context as well as due to their religious backgrounds. Hijab seemed to be one of the main obstacles to them in that it prevents them from several privileges such as job opportunities, and it brought to them negative representation. Intersectionality is highly addressed with its effect. The role of religion institutions, leaders in our communities were discussed, resulting in proposing some supportive strategies for female Muslim immigrant in the USA.

Future researchers are recommended to deepen the understanding of the situations of female Muslim immigrants in the US. Additionally, they are required to focus on various group age as far as the validity of the results are concerned. Furthermore, they are called to critically consult the negative impact of issues including discrimination, harassment and Islamophobia on female Muslim immigrants lives in the US.

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## ملخص

تُلقى الدراسة الحالية الضوء على التحديات التي تواجهها المهاجرات المسلمات في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية. ركزت الدراسة على وضع هؤلاء النساء في السياق الأمريكي لتحديد أهم العقبات التي يواجهنها في بيئة جديدة. هدفت الدراسة إلى اكتشاف كيفية تعامل المهاجرات المسلمات مع حياتهن وكيفية تحقيق التوازن بين معاييرهن الثقافية والدينية. علاوة على ذلك، وسّعت الدراسة نطاق هدفها لمعرفة كيف تتأثر المهاجرات المسلمات بالقضايا السلبية، بما في ذلك التمييز والصور النمطية والتحرش. وُضعت أربعة أسئلة رئيسية في بداية الدراسة لتحديد موضوع البحث. أما بالنسبة للمنهجية، فقد طبقت الدراسة نهجًا نوعيًا إلى جانب تحليل دراسات الحالة واستراتيجيات التكيف. أشارت النتائج إلى أن المهاجرات المسلمات واجهن تحديات متعددة على أساس تكيفهن الديني والجنساني والثقافي. كما واجهت المهاجرات المسلمات التمييز في سياقات مختلفة، وخاصة في مكان العمل. علاوة على ذلك، تُسلط الدراسة الضوء على قضية التداخل وآثاره على الحياة الاجتماعية للمهاجرات المسلمات في أمريكا. تدعو نتائج الدراسة إلى وضع استراتيجيات داعمة لتحسين المشاركة الاجتماعية والثقافية للمهاجرات المسلمات في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** أمريكا، التحديات، التمييز، المهاجرات المسلمات، التقاطع.