

https://dspace.org/

Muslim women's perceptions of gender dynamics in Islam.

Mansoor, Sumayya

2010-03-08T07:31:20Z
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/7637

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

University of the Witwatersrand
School of Human and Community Development
Discipline of Psychology

MASTERS RESEARCH DISSERTATION

MUSLIM WOMEN'S PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER DYNAMICS IN ISLAM

Sumayya Mansoor
0202996J
Community Based-Counselling Masters

SUPERVISOR: Malose Langa

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Masters in Community Based-Counselling Psychology in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of the Witwatersrand.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby declare that this thesis, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is my own original work, and that it has not been submitted for any degree at another university.

Sumayya Mansoor
Department of Psychology
University of the Witwatersrand
Johannesburg
2009

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my appreciation to my supervisor, Mr. Malose Langa for his guidance in producing this report.

I wish to sincerely thank my family, boyfriend and friends, who have been the best support structure for me over these last three years. Their consistent support and encouragement while walking this challenging path is much appreciated.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge my appreciation to the women who were willing to participate in this study, thank you.

ABSTRACT

This study posits that although the religion of Islam encourages the equality between men and women, it appears that men are still given the level of superiority in the religion. Whether this right is given to men through the *Shariah* (Islamic law), or whether they simply assume the role of superiority is not clear. Therefore this study serves to focus on the Muslim women's perceptions of the gender dynamics with in the religion of Islam. The study is located in the qualitative research tradition which allows for in-depth description and interpretation. Individual interviews with eight Muslim women were conducted. These interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim for thematic content analysis. A main finding or observation is that Islam is not always practiced as it was intended due to the patriarchal society therefore resulting in women being oppressed. It was clear that most of the participants felt that Islamically Muslim women are not oppressed, but culturally and considering patriarchy women in general are not considered on an equal standing to men. From the analysis one can infer that many Muslim women acknowledge that they are given choice and freedom within their religion. Decisions around the wearing of *hijab,* becoming a working woman and allowing one's husband to take on another wife are all rooted in the freedom of choice. This study highlights the gender dynamics in Islam as well as the Muslim women's struggle for gender equality.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

	PAGE:
TITLE PAGE	i
DECLARATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT	iv

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Research Rationale	2
1.3 Research Aims	4
1.4 Research Questions	4

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Gender Dynamics	5
2.2 Taking a Feminist Standpoint	8
2.3 Oppression of Religious Women	11
2.4 The Feeling of Empowerment among Muslim Women	14
2.5 Duties and Rights of a Muslim Woman	15
2.6 Women's Rights	19
2.7 Hijab	21
2.8 Islam versus Culture	25
2.9 The Mosque: A Contested Space	28
2.10 The Patriarchal Society	30
2.11 The Debate around Polygamy	34

2.12 Islam and the Media 36
2.13 The South African Context 38

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction 41
3.2 Participants 42
3.3 Procedure 42
3.4 Data Collection 44
3.5 Researcher Reflexivity 44
3.6 Data Analysis 46
3.7 Ethical Considerations 49

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction 50
4.2 Culture verse Religion 51
4.3 Having Faith 57
4.4 The Patriarchal Society 64
4.5 Polygamy is Not Allowed 69
4.6 Dress 75
4.7 The Mosque: A Contested Space in Islam 80
4.8 Muslim Women are more than just Homemakers 84

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 Central Findings 90
5.2 Limitations of the study and Directions for Future Research 92

CHAPTER 6: REFERENCE LIST **93**

CHAPTER 7: LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: SUBJECT INFORMATION SHEET 102
APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM (INTERVIEW) 104
APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM (RECORDING) 105
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE 106