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MASTERS RESEARCH
DISSERTATION

MUSLIM WOMEN'S PERCEPTIONS OF
GENDER DYNAMICS IN ISLAM

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Community Based-Counselling Masters

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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.

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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:

	<i><u>PAGE:</u></i>
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