

Muslim women in Spain: stereotypes and prejudices and the influence in their personal well-being

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Abstract: This research seeks to know the influence of the comments and behaviors of religious and cultural discrimination of the Spanish population in a group of Muslim women. For this, a qualitative research has been carried out based on interviews with Muslim women, Spanish women who do not process the Muslim religion, and professionals and volunteers who work with migrants. Taking into account, the information obtained through the interviews with the data and statistics provided by the SOS Racism 2017 Report and by the Citizen Platform against Islamophobia, we have been able to deduce a series of results in relation to the objectives. Finally, through the results obtained and the analysis of these, it has been possible to deduce that the prejudices and stereotypes that some people present lead to hostile attitudes and rejection, and, these attitudes can affect personal well-being of Muslim women, in general, of all people who suffer some type of discrimination.

Key words: Muslim women, stereotypes, well-being, self-esteem, self-efficacy, discrimination

1. Introduction

This article shows the voices of muslim woman who suffer the consequences in their lives for the behaviors and rejection of Spanish people based in stereotypes and prejudices. Moreover, this research intends to know through the search of bibliographic and experimental information the concept that spanish people has about Islam. Frequently, spanish people presents a stereotyped knowledge about the Muslim religion, based on prejudices created from ignorance and lack of information. This ignorance leads to an anticipated negative perception of the people who profess the Muslim religion. This research pretends to know which stereotypes are those that are most closely related to the people who process religion through interviews conducted directly with Muslim women, and how they influence the well-being of their.

This research is carried out through a gender perspective, since a woman can be discriminated because she is a woman. Therefore, it is necessary to do research about the position of women in society, in order to make proposals that aim to eliminate inequalities between women and men. Additionally, the participants belong to a minority culture and religion within Spanish society, so that it may be another influential factor, together with the fact of being a woman, to establish relationships with the native population of the area.

1.1. Concepts

In Spain and, in the West there are a negative view and a mistaken belief about the Arab culture or the Muslim religion. The cultures are interpreted as static and immovable and all the events or actions that take place in the Arab world are considered as a consequence of Islam. This thought is limited to religion, without taking into account the society, culture or policies that govern the countries. Likewise, the negative and limited view about Islamic countries is inciting the belief that Arab or Muslim culture is inferior or incapable of adapting to the "modernity" of Western culture. (Martín Muñoz, G., 2005)

The relationship between Islam and the West is marked by gender issues, stereotyping and generalizing the role of women throughout the East (Nash, M., 2004)

These are the concepts that are going to be used in this research.

Mental health or personal well-being is defined by the APA Help Center as "the way your thoughts, feelings and behaviors affect your life. Good mental health leads to a positive image of oneself and, in turn, to satisfying relationships with friends and other people. Having good mental health helps you make good decisions and face the challenges of life at home, work or school "

Self-efficacy is defined by Bandura (1989) as a personal feeling of confidence in one's own abilities to adequately handle certain stressors of daily life.

Learned helplessness is defined by the Psychological Dictionary of the American Psychological Association (APA, 2007) as a lack of motivation and failure to act after exposing oneself to an adverse situation in which one can not control the situation.

Self-esteem was defined by Rosenberg (1965) as the assessment that a person makes of herself with an affective component, that is, the appreciation or rejection that a person feels towards herself.

Brown (1998) defined the stereotypes as the perceptions as equal or similar that have on the members of a group, which, besides being able to be erroneous and negatives. The stereotypes present in the population

towards Muslim women are related to submission and ignorance and irrational devotion to their religion (Mohanty, C., Russo, A., 1991).

2. Objectives

The object-problem of this research is to understand the psychological consequences and personal well-being suffered by Muslim women living in Spain, due to discriminatory attitudes and actions by the Spanish population that are based on negative stereotypes. In addition, give visibility and voice to these women.

The specific objectives have been established in relation to the previous references. First, detecting if exist learned helplessness in Muslim women in terms of self-perception of their abilities. Second, knowing his point of view on the experience of discriminative situations by Spanish institutions. On the one hand, knowing if discriminative situations have affected their self-esteem and their sense of self-efficacy. In the same way, knowing the discriminative situations that they have suffered since their arrival in Spain and how they have affected their development. On the other hand, detecting if women have felt more rejection since the terrorist attacks in Paris and Barcelona. In addition, knowing the influence of discrimination on the personal well-being of Muslim women. The last objectives can be considered personal objectives since they consist in reflecting on the prejudices and stereotypes that have been developed about Muslim women. Along with empathize with women who suffer situations of discrimination in Spain. In order to reflect on the necessity to modify the current integration measures in Spain.

3. Method

Qualitative research aims to detect the nature of different realities, without forgetting that they are dynamic, and understand the behavior and how it manifests (Martínez, M., 2006). This research has a qualitative nature since it does not intend to generate conclusions extrapolated to the entire population of Muslim women living in Spain. In fact, if so, it would be a profound mistake. In this research, a group of people is studied in their context, as they are in an integrated way, without separating or forgetting all the variables that influence the process.

The qualitative approach is a process of understanding reality, which is based on a representation by the words of the informant. (Rodríguez Gómez et al., 1996). Therefore, the dialectical model is taken as an example, that is, the knowledge that I obtained is fruit of the exchange of the participants, with all their personal characteristics and the objectives of the research (Martínez, M., 2006).

3.1. Process

The development of the investigation consisted of different phases, in which different sections were developed. To start the investigation, I realized a bibliographic search with the objective of developing the theoretical framework and knowing the state of similar investigations. Likewise, the objectives were raised based on the researcher's concerns and the results observed in the different investigations and reports. Next, interviews were carried out for Muslim women and professionals basing the questions on the objectives that were intended to be tested. Subsequently, interviews were conducted, for this, it was necessary to contact different associations. Finally, the categorization and analysis of the interviews were carried out, from which some results were deduced.

3.2. Instruments

The instruments used for data collection were semi-structured interviews with Muslim women, women of Spanish origin who do not process the Muslim religion, and professionals who work with issues related to ethnic and religious discrimination and participatory observation.

The semi-structured interviews consisted of open questions in relation to the objectives of the research. The central axis of the interviews was to know how it affects the psychological well-being of Muslim women who suffer situations of religious and cultural discrimination. The interviews were semi-structured because this gives the participants the possibility to explain and develop their stories and experiences with freedom. If the questions did not gather all the information that was needed, a battery of more closed questions was made that gathered key questions of the investigation. In the testimonies of the participating women and professionals, a series of imaginary names are included to understand which person is giving their testimony at each moment. Another method to follow was the participant observation that was made while the interviews were conducted. Due to the participant observation we can detect in which questions they may feel more uncomfortable or which they consider more relevant.

3.3. Participants

In this research the participants will be producers of knowledge and results, since through their answers it is intended to know the situation of Muslim women in Spain and make proposals for improvements based on the answers to the interviews.

The research involved twelve Muslim women with an age range between 19 years and 77 years. In addition, professionals, women and men, who working with migrants or volunteering in associations that work with migrants. On the other hand, six Spanish women who do not profess the Muslim religion, with an age between 22 and 56 years, with professions related to education, health and social sciences to improve the contrast of information.

Facilitating the understanding of the analysis, fictitious names have been assigned to Muslim women to protect their identity and to show the opinions of all of them.

Table 1: Muslim women

<i>Name</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Birthplace</i>	<i>Actual residence</i>
Aisha	25	Morocco	Spain
Dalia	44	Morocco	Spain
Fátima	19	Spain	Spain
Lina	60	Morocco	Spain
Sonia	77	Morocco	Spain
Amira	46	Spain	Spain
Karima	56	Morocco	Spain
Soraya	33	Spain	Spain
Iris	44	Morocco	Spain
Nadia	28	Morocco	Spain
Melissa	33	Morocco	Spain
Kamila	50	Morocco	Spain

Secondly, to identify the opinions of Spanish women, they have been assigned a series of fictitious names

Table 2: Spanishwomen

<i>Name</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Birthplace</i>	<i>Actual residence</i>	<i>Profession</i>
María	24	Spain	Spain	Teacher
Flor	22	Spain	Spain	Biologist
Helena	51	Spain	Spain	Teacher
Isabel	56	Spain	Spain	Psychologist
Paula	22	Spain	Spain	Psychologist

Third, to recognize the opinions and responses of professionals have been assigned fictitious names.

Table 3: Professionals

<i>Name</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Birthplace</i>	<i>Actual residence</i>	<i>Profession</i>
Jaime	29	Spain	Spain	Social teacher
Sandra	34	Spain	Spain	Pedagog
Rosa	37	Spain	Spain	Turism

4. Categorization

In this section, the categories that have been established after reading and analyzing the interviews are exposed. For the realization of the categories it has been necessary to read the interviews together with the analysis of the theoretical content to make some categories that link the theoretical part with the results of the research.

- Stereotypes: in this category, it intends to know which are the most present stereotypes in the Spanish population towards Muslim women. For this, information has been collected from Spanish women and Muslim women and has been contrasted with the reports of SOS Racism Spain and the statistics of the Citizen Platform against Islamophobia. Likewise, this category is related to one of the objectives of the research, which consists of reflecting on the prejudices and stereotypes that have been developed about Muslim women. The interviews together with the 2016 report of SOS Racismo Spain have led to the creation of two subcategories; religious and labor.

- Self-esteem, self-efficacy and learned helplessness: this category aims to work with another of the objectives, which is to know how the experiences of discriminative situations affect the sense of self-efficacy and self-esteem of Muslim women. Both concepts have been included in the same category due to the intimate relationship that exists between them and, therefore, to the impossibility of working with these concepts individually. This category presents a series of subcategories; sense of autonomy, access to education and job placement. Furthermore, the concept "learned helplessness" is divided into two subcategories; absence of response and action, the latter can be aggressive, passive or assertive.
- Personal well-being and support received: This category is considered the most important category of the research. In addition, it is directly influenced by the other categories. The general objective of the research is to understand the psychological and welfare consequences of Muslim women due to the discrimination suffered by Spanish population. Therefore, in this category the answers obtained in a large part of the interviews. In addition, the support we receive from family and friends is essential for personal well-being, which is another issue to analyze in this category.
- Significant events in the increase of rejection and institutional discrimination: This category aims to analyze the objective related to detect if Muslim women have felt more rejection since the terrorist attacks in Paris and Barcelona. The analysis of this category was carried out through all the interviews with news from the media and the SOS Racismo Spain Reports. In addition, it was analyzed if the participants had suffered discrimination from public institutions.
- Gender equality: This category is intended to analyze the gender component and if this presents a relationship with cultural and religious discrimination. As much for the Muslim women as for any woman of the planet, to be a woman can be an impediment for their integration, labor ascent or for a disparity of diverse questions. From this category, it is intended to analyze if women feel that discrimination is stronger for woman than for men.
- Proposals: The last category includes the proposals made by the interviewees to improve the situation and the integration of Muslim women in Spain. In my opinion, to carry out effective integration programs it is necessary to ask for their needs the group that is intended to integrate into society.

5. Analysis and Interpretation

The analysis is qualitative since the research is fully qualitative. The triangulation of the collected information was used in order to have greater reliability in the results and conclusions of the investigation. In addition, documents such as the Annual Report of SOS Racism and the Citizen Platform against Islamophobia were analyzed in order to know the development of this and to detect if there is any relationship with different events.

Category 1. Stereotypes, got interesting answers by both groups of women. On the one hand, the Muslim women interviewed showed in their interviews how the insults they had received were related to their cultural origin and religion. Fatima was distressed and looked down while mentioning insults such as "moorish", "stupid moorish" "she knows how to run". Also, both young and adult women show their discontent when they receive comments related to their religion. They claim that in the month of Ramadan they receive numerous comments from their neighbors and friends. The comments are several regarding their religion "they are not to harm us, but they are in bad taste", "they tell us not to do Ramadan, that nobody sees us, that we are not in our country", "they offer us pork although they know we do not eat but they still insist", "you have to eat pork, you have to change" Dalia commented. Kamila says "I know a girl who wears a hijab at school and they call her a terrorist" and Melissa admits "I have suffered rejection for not eating pork or drinking alcohol", even Amira, who eats pork and does not practice Ramadan, receives contradictory comments "Why do you eat pork if you are a moorish?" "You should not do Ramadan?" It also includes an angry tone, "They tell me that I am very good people to be a moorish, that I already have to be more Spanish than I am " In the same way, the youngest, Aisha and Fatima, expose that friends ask them why they do certain things if their religion does not allow it, commenting Fatima "when they do not know anything about Islam" showing something angry about it.

On the other hand, Muslim women (30-60 years) point out comments related to employment, such as, say Karima and Soraya, respectively, "they fear that we will take away their work". "They obviously think we are coming to take them to work." Apparently, the most derogatory comments that adult women have suffered are related to employment, since Amira has been suggested on some occasion "that what immigrants have to do is return to their country."

Otherwise, interviews with Spanish women show a series of stereotypes which they present in their mental schemes. In the first place, when they referred to Muslim women, they exposed the prototype of a woman with a hijab that can be dominated by her partner. Also, they were able to affirm that the prejudices and stereotypes of the population are due to ignorance.

Jaime, one of the professionals, suggests that stereotypes tend to be more related to Islam than any other aspect due to "the polarization of Catholicism. It seems that the entrance of another religion can limit their situation of power so they prefer to reject other religions and maintain their position of power, everything is for power."

In short, the three groups agree that the stereotypes that are most present among the Spanish population towards Muslim women is with respect to religion and work.

Category 2. Self-esteem, self-efficacy and learned helplessness are affected by the stereotypes that the Spanish population presents about Muslim women. The negative comments they have received have affected them throughout their development in Spain. Soraya believes that "I have learned to take my comments with philosophy, I am very proud of my origins". Also Aisha decided to inform himself to act accordingly, "at first I was silent but I learned about my religion, I saw documentaries, and I learned to answer the insults well, however, sometimes it seems that they do not want to come to their senses and it is for nothing". However, Lina decided to act differently "because if they insult me, I also insult". Moreover, others women after receiving different comments of rejection began to change their way of acting, Dalia points out "when it is Ramadan I prefer not to leave, to avoid comments", and her daughter, Fatima "this year I will spend Ramadan with my family in Tangier, so I will not have to listen to comments, I want to spend quiet time with my family" while looking at the ground. In addition, Dalia has limited their ability to autonomy for the negotiations due to the difficulty that presents with the language "I do not go to the bank, or to fix papers because I have difficulty speaking and I am embarrassed, and they do not understand me".

On the one hand, learned helplessness is present in six of our participants, who have opted to avoid adverse situations. The avoidance of these situations does not generate well-being in the participants but it negatively affects their well-being.

To sum up, negative comments about their religious beliefs are restricting their freedom of expression and decision, in addition to making them feel insecure, because they have changed their way of acting after receiving various negative comments.

Category 3. Personal well-being and the support received. In the testimonies of the Muslim women it is observed how the comments and the discriminative situations make them feel insecure and uncomfortable and, in some cases, they prefer to modify their behaviors to fit in the Spanish society. The attitudes of avoidance and changes in the behavior of the participants mentioned in category 2. "Self-esteem, self-efficacy and learned helplessness" are examples of how situations and discriminative comments affect personal well-being. In addition, all the participants responded affirming the question about whether the experience of discriminative situations affected their personal wellbeing, academic or work performance. This decrease in personal well-being was due to the fact that, as Fátima commented, "I could not concentrate on class" and Dalia "you feel judged at work", "you stop doing things that you liked by avoiding comments"

Regarding the support received, ten of the twelve women have felt supported by Spanish people while two of them affirm that they have never felt supported by Spanish people. However, all of them have family and friends in Spain and consider them their great source of support. All the women agreed that presenting solid sources of support has helped them to feel better about themselves and to let off steam in difficult times.

Moreover, Spanish women and the professionals affirm that the well-being and the labor and academic performance of the Muslim women must be affected by the negative comments.

Category 4. "Significant events in the increase of institutional rejection and discrimination". In this case, ten of the twelve participants say they feel that the rejection towards the Muslim population has increased after the terrorist attacks due to ignorance or "fear of fanaticism" as Amira comments. Also, Melissa adds "the rejection is due to ignorance, when they know better your culture and your religion there is greater acceptance to the other".

On the other hand, Kamila and Nadia affirm that they have felt more rejection, and Melissa says "I have not felt rejection from friends, but they have told me the fears of their parents and grandparents."

In short, all participants agree and understand that fear or rejection is caused by ignorance of the population. In their speeches, the participants show examples and reasons that they believe are related to rejection.

Category 5. "Gender equality", the twelve Muslim women affirmed that women who come from other countries suffer more discrimination than a man when arriving in Spain. Fatima comments "women are seen faster than a man if they wear a hijab. Moreover, women usually work cleaning or caring for older people and

men get better jobs." Dalia, her mother, adds to her daughter's comment "I have not felt it so much because I do not wear a hijab but I do believe that it is bigger for women than for men".

Also, Aisha shows an elaborate discourse on gender issues in Spain "it is clear that gender differences in Spain exist. I think so, that a woman who arrives has it more difficult to integrate than a man."

On the other hand, Spanish women added their point of view on the matter and agreed that women are immersed in a process of struggle, since we can be discriminated only for being women. Helena, teacher and volunteer in an association that fights for the empowerment of women comments "I do not know ... of course. But what difference is there between the diadem that you wear and the hijab if that woman puts it on because she wants? Do you wear both because it makes you feel good and you like it?" Helena makes an important reflection.

Finally, the responses of the participants were inspiring and, in turn, alarming because all women agree that they can be discriminated easier than men.

The last category is related to the proposals of the participants to improve the integration of Muslim women in Spain. Thanks to this section, women have been able to develop their opinions and propose according to their own needs. Proposals can be divided into subcategories. In the first place, all the participants agree on the necessity to improve education by integrating contents related to the Arab culture and the Muslim religion. Creating a subject which the three monotheist religions will be studied without any prejudice [...] moreover, the Muslim women who live here have to learn the language, then, they understand the culture of the Spanish population and respect them. And in this way we receive the same treatment from them". On the other hand, Maria, using her knowledge as a teacher, recognizes "In education there is the key"

In short, education should be aimed both, the Spanish population and Muslim women. The improvement of the language and the increase of the knowledge on the Spanish culture can be beneficial to relate and to communicate with other people, as well as, to go to institutions. On the other hand, the increase of knowledge about the Arab culture and the Muslim religion in the Spanish population will help to increase the knowledge since the majority of the cases of discrimination are due to prejudices based on the lack of knowledge or in wrong information.

On the other hand, another of the proposals is related to the influence of the media. The women interviewed agree that the media manipulate information and generalize.

6. Results

The research entitled "Self-concordance and self-efficacy in personal goals: What is your contribution to well-being?" By Eneko Sansinenea, Lorena Gil de Montes et al. (2008) shows the relationship between self-efficacy, that is, feeling empowered to achieve objectives, with a greater sense of well-being and positive affect. In another study, "Influence of self-esteem and perceived social support on the psychological well-being of Chilean university students" by Enrique Barra Almagia in 2011, his results show that there is a relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being. In addition, it shows that the relationship between well-being and self-esteem is greater in women than in men and that there is also a relationship between these variables and social support. The results of these researches are the same as the results obtained in this research.

On the one hand, in the interviews the majority response that the rejection was increased after the attacks in Paris and Barcelona and that they have not suffered discrimination by the staff of public institutions. However, the SOS Racism Report 2017 shows contradictory data. The report defines three classes of discriminating groups, the public entities, which are 41% of the complaints that have been registered, the private entities, which are 29.8% of the cases, the individuals, which they account for 26.8% of cases and, finally, 2.1% corresponding to another discriminating group. Also, the investigation "Terrorists and victims. The infrahumanization of Moroccans after 11-M "by Verónica Betancor Rodríguez, Armando Rodríguez Pérez et al. (2012), show that the Moroccans suffered an infrahumanization after the attacks, but this did not hold up over time. Although no data have been found on the increase of cultural and religious discrimination after the attacks in Paris and Barcelona, following the premises of the previous investigation, it is expected that the discrimination will increase after the events but that it will not hold up over time.

SOS Racismo 2017, adds a series of events that occurred after the attacks in Brussels. After the attacks, different aggressions were collected in mosques in Alicante, Granada, Catalonia, Salamanca, Madrid, Zamora and Soria.

The results of the interviews show that all claim that women are more likely to be discriminated because of their origin and religion than a man. In addition, the Citizen Platform against Islamophobia shows that Muslim women are the main target of Islamophobic discrimination, and points out that only 18% of cases are reported, making it a very small representation compared to reality. (Aragón, A., 2017). However, the SOS Racismo Report 2017 presents results that are opposite to those. The discrimination complaints that were made were 202 men and 101 women. In most types of discrimination there is no variation between the sexes.

However, it must be pointed out that the SOS Racism Report includes all cases of racism, not only those directed towards the Muslim population. However, the Citizen Platform against Islamophobia only includes cases of discrimination against people who profess the Muslim religion.

Stereotypes are closely related to prejudice and discrimination (González, B., 1999). Following Mohanty, C. & Russo, A. (1991), the stereotypes that relate to Muslim women are based on negative prejudices such as ignorance. Likewise, the media show us Muslim women with a negative image and surrounded by stereotypes related to their culture and religion (Nash, M., 2003). This research shows the same stereotypes related with their culture and religion.

Finally, the general objective is to analyze and understand the psychological processes and consequences and the personal welfare of Muslim women in relation to the discrimination they suffer from the Spanish population. The analysis and theorization show that the experience of discriminative situations and negative comments or rejection affect the personal well-being and development of Muslim women. Likewise, these negative comments and these discriminatory behaviors by the Spanish population are based on the stereotypes and prejudices they present about the people who profess the Muslim religion. In turn, these stereotypes are influenced by the media and the propagation of false information about Islam.

7. Conclusion

To reflect, it is necessary to be aware of how our comments and behaviors can affect other people, and act in accordance with the values of respect that should be included in the education of the population to avoid the development of stereotypes and negative prejudices.

"When they met, the Christians said to each other: "Peace be with you ". And "shalom", the Jews. And "salam", the Muslims ... In all beliefs and cultures, peace has been the common desire. "(Mayor, F. 2010)

8. References

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