How can the Human Resources function and organisation support their Muslim employees? – An exploration into the experiences of Muslims in the workplace in Ireland

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<u>Abstract</u>

This research project examines the experiences of Muslims working within the Irish Workplace with a view to discovering how the Human Resources Function can best support them. A wide variety of literature is examined on the topics under themes such as Islam in the Workplace, Islam and the Law, Ramadan, and Diversity. From this wide breadth of literature emerges themes of Adaption and Accommodation, by which the Muslim population adapt their practice to the workplace, and that workplace makes "reasonable accommodations" in return. The results of the study illustrate a varied experience which adapts and accommodates to varied extents. While some workplaces provide prayer rooms and Halal meals, others are left to pray in their cars during their lunchbreak. In concluding the study, recommendations are presented toward improving the issues identified in addition to areas of further research.

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

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(Thesis/Author Declaration Form)

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background to Study

According to Scharbrodt, (2014) Ireland's experience of social and cultural developments has always been delayed, in comparison to other societies within Western Europe. Whatever the reasons might be for this, Ireland has become increasingly globalized over the past 30 years. While this is true, the origins of Ireland's Muslim Community can be traced back much further, to the 1950s at least (IFI, 2021). Therefore, while immigration is an ongoing occurrence in Ireland, there is a core group of Muslims practicing in Ireland, who are also members of an Irish workforce. It is for this reason that this project aims to uncover the experiences of Muslims within the Irish workplace and illustrate their accommodation by the Human Resource function.

The reasons for undertaking a project with such aims are manifold. Firstly, there is research to show that Organizations that encourage their staff to express their spiritual or religious identity have a greater level of commercial success (Messara, 2014). While similar ideas are explored within this project, there is also a need to examine the policies and procedures which are deeply engrained into Irish work culture. According the Ward (2008), the dominance of Caucasian people within Western European Organizations influences the Human Resource and greater organizational policies, producing a work culture which is ingrained with values and ideas which are intrinsically Christian and increasingly White. While this is widespread across Europe, the fact itself serves as an opportunity to self-examine Organizational policies as they relate to diversity, inclusion, and identity.

Aim of Study

 While the aims of the study are discussed in greater detail later into the project, in brief, the study aims to ask the question *"How can the Human Resources function & the organisation support their Muslim employees?"* While this is one question, the project seeks to convey a detailed exploration of

the experiences of Muslims within the Irish Workplace. This covers the navigation of Prayer, a Halal diet, Ramadan and the reconciling of a Muslim identity and one's commitment to their occupation. For Taylor and Spencer, (2004) identity is a "work in progress" (2004, p. 9). For this reason, the research shows how this reconciliation isn't a static moment but rather an everyday lived experience, something which is illustrated throughout the study.

The study approaches the topic with a Qualitative approach, aiming to put the voices of the respondents front and center. In addition to the detail of the participant's lived experiences, they also indicate the changes they would like to see within their workplaces, and how the Human Resources function can better accommodate their spiritual needs.

<u>Structure of Thesis</u>

This thesis is split into seven chapters

Chapter One is a broad introduction to the nature of the study, rationale and aims.

Chapter Two is a review of the Literature relevant to this study.

Chapter Three lays out the research questions and sub questions, inspired by the literature examined.

Chapter Four explores Qualitative research methods, from paradigms and philosophies through to a differentiation of interview styles.

Chapter Five examines the results of the research process in relation to the aims of the study

Chapter Six studies the results in relation to the existing literature on the subject

Chapter Seven concludes the project, including recommendations taken directly from the research participants.

Literature Review

This chapter examines a broad range of literature on the topic of Islam within the Workplace. The reviewed material ranges from peer reviewed journal articles, legal case reports, visual media, to a selection of newspaper articles. While the project strives to place greater emphasis on peer reviewed materials, the inclusion of materials outside this category seeks to provide a temperature check on how these issues play out in everyday life in Ireland.

There are five main themes within this review:

- Islam In Ireland

- Diversity Management

- Islam in the Workplace

- Islam in the Workplace, A Legal Perspective

- Diversity and Inclusion

These themes bolster the structural elements of this project and provide a theoretical framework on which to mount the later primary research. The themes are left relatively broad, to align with reductionist theories, moving from a place of broad knowledge to one of increasing detail. In addition, it is the sub themes which deal with the literature on specific aspects of Islam in the Workplace in Ireland, as below:

- Islam in The Workplace, Ramadan

- Islam cases within the Workplace Relations Commission

- Islamic Stereotyping

The above sub themes speak more to the specific experiences of Muslims working within the Irish Workplace in contrast to the broader, structural aspects which are addressed.

Literature Review: Islam in Ireland

Scharbrodt (2014) has carried a lot of thorough research into the history of Islam in Ireland, and therefore it is important to acknowledge his contribution to this area of research. A key finding from his work is the explanation of the delay in academic interrogation of Islam, being ended by "watershed" moments such as The Arab Spring or the controversy surrounding Salman Rushdie's Satanic Verses in 1989 (2014 p. 2). In the same way it seems that increased globalization within the 21st Century has been another catalyst for Islamic Scholarship and Academic attention. What research has been completed according to Scharbrodt, is centered on larger Muslim hubs in Europe whereas countries such as Ireland, Finland and Portugal don't receive the same attention due to their reputation for emigration as opposed to immigration. It could be said, therefore, that Ireland's Experience with Islam remains a moderately untapped resource for Academia.

As per the last census (2016), there are 63,443 Muslims living in Ireland which is an increase of 29% from the 2011 count. The Muslim community showed an average age profile of 26 years old, the majority living in Dublin. 54% of Male Muslims are currently working while only 24% of Female Muslims are working. Medical Practitioners are the most popular job among Muslims in Ireland at 2102 whereas jobs such as Hairdressing, Barbering and Beauticians are the least popular with only 308 claiming this profession (CSO, 2016).

 The Islamic Foundation of Ireland has produced a detailed history of Muslims in Ireland. Without detailing this history word for word, the story of Islam in Ireland began in the 1950s with Muslim Students travelling to Dublin in order to study. In 1959, these students founded the Dublin Islamic Society which would go onto establish the Dublin Mosques in Clonskeagh and the South Circular Road (IFI, 2016). While this clearly concise history (further abridged for this project) will never depict an exact history – it is worth noting the absence of certain

major moments. An example of this would be the prominence of Dr Moosajee Bhamjee, who was known in the media as the "First Muslim TD". However according to Scharbrodt, Dr Bhamjee preferred the moniker of "First Indian MP" (2014, p. 10). This acknowledgment underlines the specificities of one's identity formation as being both Indian, Muslim and a Teachta Dála. This abridged outline of Muslim History within Ireland is in no way a full or thorough account; however it provides a historical structure on which to frame newer research in addition the primary research carried out within this project.

 Carr (2016) presents a diverse overview of Islamophobia in Dublin, including an account of its occurrence within the Irish Workplace. The idea of intersectionality is presented in the form of the experience of Muslim women when compared with Muslim men. Although not all Muslim women will not wear clear symbols of their religion, Muslim women can be much more "readily identifiable" by their religious dress (2016 p. 200), Further to this Carr presents evidence of employers asking Muslim female employees to remove their Hijab for their own safety, an issue which Muslim men are not subjected to. Furthermore, the work presents interesting ideas in the form of being Muslim and Irish as a mutually exclusive concept. This creates a space in which identities can be created and shifted in the workplace, something referenced above with in the case of Dr Moosajee Bhamjee.

Fahey (2019) presents a varied account of the attitudes to Islamic Immigrants within Ireland. The average Islamic Immigrant is depicted as "young, urban, professional & highly educated" and for this reason present themselves at an "advanced" economic level in Ireland (2019, p. 92). Despite this, Fahey depicts a lukewarm welcome to Muslim Immigrants to Ireland, quoting a 2007-2008 survey of Irish attitudes to minority groups. This survey saw Muslims as the second most "socially distant" minority after drug dealers (2019, p. 495). This is compounded by the theory which is presented about the "in group" and "out group" and the

"perceived threat" they present to safety and economic security (2019 p. 494) That is the idea of an "out group" being othered, and remarkably unfamiliar to the "in group".

While this project will examine Islam in the workplace – there has been much written on the experiences of Muslim teenagers in Ireland. While this project seeks to examine the workplace for Muslims in Ireland, there is a temptation to exclude the experiences of Muslim Youth. However, given that the following project was published in 2015, it is quite possible that the participants are members of the workforce in Ireland and therefore their contributions are valuable to this study. Lynch et al (2015) describe how Muslim Youth in Ireland find themselves in an emotionally precarious position between their "foreign parents" and their own experiences of being Muslim in Ireland (2015 p. 2004). This depiction is further bolstered by Taylor and Spencer (2004) who illustrate the creation of an identity as a constant period of flux – "a negotiated space between us and others", or rather ourselves and our parents (2004, p.194).

Furthermore, while initially deemed irrelevant to the project Lynch et al (2015) depict the mistakes one can make in terms of the weight the researcher assumes on certain topics. The 7/7 London bombings were unknown to some of the Muslim Participants of the study, whereas the use of Shannon Airport by US Soldiers was brought up by the participants themselves.

While the literature addressed within this theme is indeed varied in topic and content, all share a mutual thread. This, being the first theme within the project's literature review serves as a historical and cultural backdrop which holds great relevance to the primary research carried out.

Literature Review: Diversity Management

This section of the literature review focusses primarily on the issue of Diversity Management, a theme which revealed itself through the researching of Islam in the workplace. The initiation of Islam into the Irish workforce has made it an increasingly more diverse body. Bolborici (2015) notes that it is the "political instability" in the middle east which has increased the amount of Islamic immigration (2015, p. 3). While this political instability might have been catalyzed by the Gulf War or Arab Spring, the movement of Muslim People is still a topical issue, especially when ex-USA President Donald Trump's Muslim Ban of 2016 received global condemnation (Fitzsimons, 2016).

While the name Diversity Management conjures a broad ideal of 'how to manage diversity in the workplace', Diversity Management differs significantly from schemes such as affirmative action and anti-discrimination (Wrench, 2005). This difference hinges on utilizing a company's diversity towards the end of "organizational efficiency and market performance" (Wrench, 2005, p. 73).

That is indeed to say, that while Diversity Management deals with minorities, it does not deal in detail with the minutiae of the suffering often associated with that identity. Many writers (Ivancevich, 2000. Urbancova et al, 2016, Wrench, 2005) have emphasized the centrality of business sense within Diversity Management. A willing incoming workforce is also depicted as a benefit of Diversity Management as it is suggested by Urbancova et al (2016) that employees will be drawn to a company which highly values the inclusion of those of a minority origin.

As previously mentioned, Diversity management has been critiqued ever since its development that while it "manages diversity" this does not mean it focusses on or prioritizes any diverse identity. Wrench (2005) has spoken about the inclusion of the "white male" as a

cog within diversity management, valued to the same extent as any minority. A further criticism is made by Wrench is the fact that Diversity Management engages with Racism as something that can be "bad for business" while avoiding the suggestion that it is morally wrong (2005, p. 76).

For Golman et al (2006), an organization's efforts in attaining a diverse workforce are to be seen by just how diverse their workers are. Similarly, Reeves et al (2006) allude to a "Diversity Climate", one hallmarked by the organization's perception of the levels of inclusiveness in their organization (2006, p. 51).

Immigration, emigration, and globalization at large present themselves as reasons behind the emergence of an increasingly diverse workforce. For this reason and others, Diversity Management is an essential theme within this research project. Ireland is not a country that has been traditionally diverse (racially or religiously) however this has been changing for the past 30-50 years. Therefore, while Diversity Management is one approach to workplace inclusion, it should not be disqualified, but rather depicted as an option through which to view the question of Islam in the Irish Workplace, and what Human Resources can learn from its rollout in other nations.

Literature Review: Diversity and Inclusion

Speaking of Diversity and Inclusion there are at least two stages within which Diversity and Inclusion can be broached. That is, the stage of hiring and recruitment, and then within the period of employment. On the former, the European Network Against Racism identifies how exclusion can happen "subtly" (2014, p.6). Employment opportunities may only be advertised in certain networks and the recruitment policies which inform the job advertisement protocols do not seek to advertise to "a diverse range of applicants" (2014, p 6). To apply this project's subject matter, it might take the form of holding interviews exclusively on a Friday with little

flexibility, when Friday is a Muslim prayer day. This, when compared to the idea of holding a job interview on a Sunday (Christian feast day) seems bizarre, as Ireland is traditionally a largely Christian Country, with a calendar largely influenced by Catholic Feast days.

In the same tone, Messara (2014) depicts workplace Discrimination as a scale from comments on appearance, such as suggesting one removes their headscarf or trims down a prominent beard, to termination of employment in the company. To link this to the recruitment aspect of Diversity and Inclusion, a job opportunity may hinge only on the agreement to remove a headscarf or to be available days which may be in conflict with one's religious calendar. Awn (2007) provides the example of Lebanon. Certain sectors are required to meet religious quotas and therefore the religion of the job applicant is taken into consideration during the recruitment process.

Workforce diversity and inclusion is a concept widely encouraged across the literature examined for this project. According to Urmila (2014), a diverse workforce has become a "potent tool" for the achievement of both individuals and their organizations in achieving business goals and targets (2014, p. 1). The same report encourages an understanding of diversity which isn't centric on race and gender but also considers topics like ancestry, education, income, and parental status. Also mentioned is religion, a topic which Messara (2014) highlights as critical to members of a workforce who themselves are spiritual – Organizations that openly encourage their employees to express their spiritual life are more likely to become more successful. This idea is echoed by Rachdi et al who claim that keeping a central part of one's identity "in the closet" can negatively impact productivity (2020, p. 7). This stance however is balanced with the opinion that diverse companies could risk "increased interpersonal conflicts" – an idea which begs the question (Not to be discussed in this project) as to whether the workplace should remain a secular environment (Messarra. 2014, p. 3).

While there is evidence to show that workforce diversity can be beneficial to the organization's goals but also there is evidence to show that a lack of diversity can hinder their progression. According to the European Network Against Racism when there are low levels of representation of a diverse workforce it "perpetuates a lack of understanding of difference cultures…and broader society". Here the insularity of a homogenous workforce is underlined. The same report however outlines the challenges faces by organizations in filling in "Cultural Gaps" in that a working ethos should show respect for all cultures while not "inhibiting on the business environment" (2014, p. 6).

In summation, while accommodating diversity in the workplace is a positive thing – accommodation merely "scratches the surface" of the deeper issues at play regarding attitudes and behaviour of members of an organization. Regardless – a diverse attitude to inclusion is presented, ranging from diversity quotas to an avoidance of hiring diversely entirely.

Literature Review: Islam in the Workplace

This section of the literature review will deal with the topic of Islam within the workplace. Initially the research gathers evidence on the reasons why it is necessary to examine Islam in the Workplace. From here, a challenge will be offered, outlining the reasons why Islam in the Workplace is a well-worn topic – rendering the conversation as antiquated. Finally, the commentary examines Islamic texts broadly, homing in on extracts which almost speak directly to Islam in the workplace today.

According to Etherington (2019), there are many benefits to paying attention to the area of Islam in the workplace. For example, the globalized workforce is often the product of migration, perhaps fleeing conflict, the result of which being a strengthened "spiritual vitality" (Etherington, 2019, p. 2). Similarly, Ghumman et al report on a myriad of processes which have led to an increased awareness of the sometimes-problematic area of religion in

the workplace, particularly the "legal ambiguities" surrounding an employer's religious accommodation (Ghumman et al 2013 in Corcoran et al, 2017, p.283)

Similarly, Lyons et al (2014) argue that the disclosure of one's religious identity or rather the safety associated with it can seriously increase workplace wellbeing. This viewpoint is corroborated by Sulaman et al (2013) who concur that it is workplaces that "encourage spiritual work environments" tend to enjoy a dual prize of both employee happiness and increased productivity (2013, p. 237). Sulaman here depicts a mutually beneficial ideal of workplace spirituality. Rachdi et al bolster this idea in that expression of faith for Muslim works can increase "job satisfaction, organizational commitment and thus job performance" (2020, p. 9).

While there are benefits to religious disclosure, there is plenty of evidence to argue a negative result. For example – from the stage of recruitment, Corcoran at al (2017) report that Muslim employees are often the least likely to be contacted for work based on their CV. However, in the spirit of balance, anyone (non-Muslim) who indicated a religious persuasion of any faith on their CV was generally less likely to be contacted.

While the above examples are just a taste of the reasons why Islam in the Workplace is a worthwhile field of study, the following literature suggests that perhaps all is very well. While one might question the relevance – it worth noting the similarities between both the contemporary Irish workplace and that of the teachings of Islam. In broad summation, Dannhauser (2007) believes that the Islamic code of Ethics encourages "Creativity, Honesty and Trust" within the workplace. (Dannhauser, 2007, p. 851). This is an idea corroborated by this project's research participants when asked to explain the intersection between their faith and their occupation. This broad examination of the core values of Islam would question why there would be any issues arising from Islam in the workplace.

Ali (1992) outlines broadly that there are many similarities between what he calls "Weberian Protestantism" and the "Islamic Ideology for the Workplace". (Ali, 1992 in Ahmad, 2011, pp 851). Similarly, the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) encourages followers that workplace duties and the corresponding duties toward society are an "essential element" of life. While these examples provide merely a broad outline of parallels, there is evidence of links between the Islamic Ideals and work strategy in 2021.

"The Wages of the Labourers must have paid him before the sweat dries on his body". (Quran in Farooq, 2010, p.21). While this extract from the Quran succinctly encourages swift payment of what is owed to one's workers for their labour – it indeed nods to issues which are both capitalist and telling for 2021. Anecdotal evidence from many colleagues and acquaintances would suggest that the issue of long waiting times for invoices to be paid is an ongoing issue even today. Forbes (2016) argue that this issue is extremely common for small businesses awaiting a payment from their clients. Ironically, when a business delays payment to keep their cash flow high, they inevitably risk the financial health of their partners. This is something that was an issue when the Quran was being written, if even before the advent of the digital invoice. While this indeed an extremely meta-analysis and close reading, it has extreme relevance to topical issues of the workplace today.

Furthermore, while it might seem tenuous to cite scripture towards the end of Human Resource Management, there have been certain strides made in the arena of a Human Resource Management scheme molded by specifically Islamic values. Khan (2010) outlines the varying efforts which have been made to implement this around the world. An example of this is Kasule (1998) who developed a training scheme for Leadership which centered on an "Islamic Perspective" (1998 p.19). Similarly, Metwally (1997) describes the desire of many countries that are Muslim majority to have their lives be influenced by Islamic laws. This is taken into practice in Malaysia where the government has developed an "Islamization" policy

which seeks to ensure companies organize their business behaviour and goals in line with "qur'anic law" (1997, p 3). While this is an extreme example, which isn't Ireland centric" it illustrates a reality in which Islam is front and center in the workplace, both as an everyday lived experience and a strategic business plan.

The preceding commentary outlines a binary in approaches to Islam; why it is an area which requires further study but also why there is reason to believe all is well. Finally, the research glances at aspects of Islamic texts which speak directly to the concept of work.

Sub Theme: Islam in the workplace – Ramadan.

One of the key areas of Islam in the workplace is the period of Ramadan. Ramadan is the 9th month of the Islamic Calendar, a time that is hallmarked by Prayer and Fasting, which are two of the five pillars of Islam. Why this aspect has relevance to Islam in the workplace is that the fasting is centered during daylight hours, those commonly spent in work. According to Stone (2012) work is a central facet of Islam given that work is "emphasized by the numerous instructions of God in the Qur'an to earn a living through lawful means" (2012 p. 2). For this reason, this project would aim to emphasize the importance of reconciling the period of Ramadan with that of the Modern Muslim in Work.

An important aspect of this study is that while Islam is growing as a religion in Ireland, it is still minority faith. For example, certain countries in Asia offer Friday as a weekend day to accommodate Friday Prayer for Muslims. However, as this is not the case within Ireland, certain provisions often need to be made. While this may not always be feasible, according to Bertoli et al (2019), often employers are asked to make a special effort during Ramadan to accommodate break times and space for prayer in addition to flexible working policies

Literature Review: Islam in the workplace – a Legal Perspective.

"Some prayers go unanswered; others go to the Equal Employment and Opportunity Commission". (Malone, 2017) While the situation may not be quite so cut and dry, Malone facetiously refers to the contentious topic of Prayer within the workplace, or more specifically Islamic Prayer. This paired with the increasingly litigious nature of the Irish workplace (Irish Times, 2020), it explicitly illustrates the need for a frank discussion of the rights of Muslims to pray in their workplace. Salah (Prayer) is one of the Five Pillars of Islam, and therefore an essential part of many Muslim's daily ritual. Therefore, it is important for employers to be cognizant of the needs of their Muslim staff members, or "as the workplace becomes more diverse", be aware of the rights of their workers around religious expression (Malone 2017).

Muslim people are protected from discrimination under Irish Law (Constitution: article 44.3), however, there have been cases brought against employers for a range of discriminatory reasons. For the sake of clarity, Allport (1954) describes discrimination as the "denial of equal treatment to certain groups based on their group membership".

While there have been a limited number of cases relating to religious accommodation in Irish Law (that are known of), it is not before time to look elsewhere for inspiration on how to handle such cases. America's handling of the issue hinges on the seemingly ambiguous term of "reasonable accommodation" (Sampura, 2017 p. 40). The term immediately begets the question of what is reasonable? Sampura states that the lack of reasonable accommodation is hallmarked by a "reluctance to make any meaningful adjustment to the work environment that allows employees to comply with their religious beliefs". Sampura calls on Dessler (2014) who acknowledges that what is seemingly a broad accommodation could take the

form of allowing one to wear their "religious garb", take time off work, or simply have a designated place to pray.

A lot of the discourse around the legal aspect of Islam in the Workplace has been seen in America. It centers on an amendment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which sees employers "reasonably accommodate their employee's religious practices and beliefs unless such accommodation would impose an undue hardship on employers" (1964: 701J).

Additionally, there is evidence that these issues play out in a broader European context. Often the donning of religious costumes and more specifically Islam, they might be accused of "not wanting to integrate" (EHRQC 2006, p.32) A similar case has also played out in Switzerland in the case of Dahlab V Switzerland. Dahlab, also a schoolteacher was asked to remove her veil, which was seen to be a "powerful external symbol" to children. This was weighed against the "right to manifest her religion" and the former won (European Commission 2016, p.34).

While this instance illustrates the accoutrement of Islam appearing as problematic, there is an argument for the irrelevance of the religious specific symbols in these discussions. In 2006, a schoolteacher named Aishah Azmi was asked to remove her veil during teaching hours, following a teaching inspection. As she was specializing as a bilingual educator, her facial expressions and clear communication were of paramount importance to her role (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2016). The practicality of the accessory can also be seen to be relevant in the case of Shirley Chaplin. Chaplin, a Christian Nurse was asked to remove her crucifix necklace during workplace hours. Again, the focus was not on the crucifix's specific relevance as a symbol but rather on its practicality. (A similar case is presented within the Irish Context in later chapters) Arguments were made for the possibility of the accessory getting in the way or causing an injury to both Chaplin and a patient. A tribunal found that

Chaplin wasn't discriminated against as she was given alternatives such as a brooch or wearing a necklace inside her top. Therefore, while the accoutrement of one's faith might be deemed problematic in one instance, it is possible this is not for religious reasons (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2016).

Lastly, it should be mentioned that there has been a selection of other cases within Irish Law surrounding claims of discrimination based on Islamic membership or dress. However, these have ended up either being settled or the religious aspect deemed irrelevant. The following section outlines a case which was an outlier in this respect.

Sub Theme: Islam in the Workplace Relations Commission.

The following case deals with the issue of Islam in the Workplace. A British national, now living in Ireland found themselves dismissed from work under what seems to be suspicious circumstances.

An employee was hired to work in an Opticians – two weeks after the London Bridge attack in 2017. She had had work experience in a similar role in the same organization in the UK. She was dismissed from her role on 23 May 2017, the day after the Manchester bombing. The claimant felt that her dismissal was a result of her employer being "concerned about public sentiment" in remove of the Manchester bombing the day before (WRC, 2018).

However, this claim was countered by her employer who claimed her dismissal was as a result of her alleged poor performance in the role. The employer said that the dismissal was the last step in a series of reviews of the employee's supposed sub-par performance. Contrary to this, the claimant maintains that she never was informed of any "shortcomings" in her performance (WRC, 2018).

This case illustrates the importance of good record keeping within the field of HR. It is quite possible that had record been kept surrounding the supposed reviews the case might have

went differently, with religion being deemed irrelevant to the proceedings. The respondent made the point that a "coincidence of dates isn't sufficient to shift the burden of proof", referring to her dismissal following the Manchester Bombing (WRC, 2018). This viewpoint is strengthened by their provision of a prayer room for their employee, diminishing any claim of religious bias.

This case is hallmarked by "a distinct lack of record keeping" (WRC, 2018). No records exist of any reviews with the claimant, even that which is said to have taken place on the last day of her employment with the company. Even more to the contrary is a record of a name badge and work uniform being ordered on the 22 May 2017 – the penultimate day of her employment. This speaks to the claimant's view that her employment was ended because of the surmised "public sentiment" following the Manchester attack (WRC, 2018).

In the conclusion of this case – the claimant was awarded €12000 in damages, because she had been dismissed before her 3-month review -the first staff member to receive such treatment. This move was bolstered by the dearth of documentation regarding the reviews prior to her dismissal. Finally – the employees claim was believed given her statement regarding the Manchester bombing.

Sub Theme: Muslim Stereotypes

Alsharif (2020) identifies stereotypes as being one of the root causes of discrimination. Lesser or unequal treatment is defended by an assumed ideal about the group in question. One of the examples illustrated is an assumed "adverse gender view" which depicts Muslim women as oppressed and their male counterparts as "oppressors" (2020, p. 8). For Alsharif, these stereotypes are propagated by a certain circuit of media. This source also becomes problematic as Muslim people may feel it is their responsibility to defend their faith against these stereotypes.

Fotkens et al (2018) carried out a study regarding the portrayal of Muslims in the news and media and the language used. The method used was the emerging one of "Microportraits". According to Fotkens et al, Microportraits "combines the label used to refer to them (the person), the characteristics assigned to them & the roles they play in various events" (2018, p. 3739). The study took place in the Netherlands and found that newspapers will primarily make mention of one's religious background when it pertains to a negative event, the examples given being ISIS or the Cologne New Year's Eve Sexual Assaults allegedly carried out by immigrants. On the other hand, when the word "Dutch" was used it regularly related to a sporting achievement or a good news story. While this article does underline that Microportraits are a relatively new field of study, it is worth noting the ways in which Muslims are reported on (by certain media) as being a prominent factor in the creation of stereotypes.

<u>Conclusion</u>

 This chapter illustrates a broad picture of the present literature existing on the issue (and issues surrounding) Islam in Workplace. The themes examined such as the Legal Perspective and the history of Islam in Ireland provide a broad summary on which to mount the primary research of this project. The sub themes however, while increasingly niche, impart colour and detail to the discussion

Research Question

How can the Human Resources function & the organisation support their Muslim employees?

Sub Questions

How is the workplace navigated while participating in the fasting of Ramadan?

In what ways do Muslims adapt their daily practice to the workplace and how does their workplace accommodate them?

Research Aim

The aim of this study is to gain a greater insight into how the Human Resource function can best support their Muslim Employees. Placing the Muslim Employees at the centre of the research, specific insight is also sought into the experience of practising prayer within the workplace and participating in Ramadan while still at work. It is hoped that gaining insight into these areas can reveal the key areas which require the attention of the Human Resource function and the workplace in general.

The use of Qualitative Methods, specifically interviews, is utilised within the study to get detailed descriptions of how the issues of Islamic practice take place within the workplace. The project will finally produce several recommendations, those which come to the fore multiple times within the interviews.

While this study is relatively small, there will also be recommendations provided for future areas of study, taking what limits of what is possible within this study and pinning them as ideas for further research.

Methodology

Introduction:

This section of the project focusses on the time spent carrying out primary research and the work which led to the qualitative method of interviews. Initially the chapter will begin by examining the research philosophy of interpretivism. From here, the chapter moves towards actualizing how this philosophy will play out in practice through the qualitative method of interviews. For Whisker (2008) "Methodology is the rationale and the philosophical assumptions underlying a particular study rather than a collection of methods", and this is certainly true of the contents of this chapter (2008, p. 67).

Research Philosophy

Given the exploratory nature of this project, the methodology was dictated likewise, insofar as the decision to conduct qualitative interviews. Given the project seeks to discover the experiences of Muslims within the Irish Workplace it is essential to approach the project from an inductive approach – making theory and contributing to meaning (Whisker, 2008, p. 66). As the findings of the research are all based on the accounts of the project respondents, the project does not seek to test an existing narrative or theory. The project instead seeks to add to the research on the area and perhaps provide a grounding for future study within the area.

Interpretivist Approach

According to Goldkuhl (2012), Interpretivist Research workings with meaning the social world – "acknowledging, reconstructing, understanding and avoiding distorting" (2012, p. 5). The definition is somewhat simplified when shown in comparison to the study of the natural world by a scientist, where is meaning is constructed upon it. Goldkuhl contrasts this with the study of the social world which is already "full of meaning" (2012, p.5). For Creswell the interpretivist approach "cannot be separated" from whoever is doing the interpreting (2009, p.

20). Given that the research moves from a place of white, catholic, and Irish socialization with minimal knowledge of the Muslim faith, this could be seen as the ideal standpoint from which to approach the research. This is given that there are little to no preconceived ideas or viewpoints which would influence the interpretation.

While this is true on paper, Creswell's words speak volumes as the interpretivist approach is just that, Interpretation. The research project submits questions and areas which are interpreted to be important, and these questions are interpreted by the respondents (in this case, Muslim Employees in Ireland). Finally, the answers to the questions are interpreted by the researcher, who by their chose mode of analysis may exclude what they interpret as being of lesser importance.

Inductive Research

As alluded to above, this research project moves from a point of little personal knowledge or theoretical basis. For this reason it is Inductive Research. Trochim (2006) defines the inductive method of research as beginning with a specific idea (aka Islam in the Workplace) and moving towards a generalizable depiction of the research is realized in daily life. Conversely, Deductive research begins form an initial theoretical standpoint from which an idea is 'deduced'. This would not be a suitable approach for this project as the knowledge base is not a static fact, but rather the lived experience of the sample. Therefore it is no surprise that qualitative research and more specifically interviews are the primary method of research in this project. Kvale (1996 p.11) notes that using interviews within a research project is indicative of seeing humans not as "simply manipulable and data as somehow external to individuals". In this project at least, the data is the human subjects.

Qualitative Research

Given the research aims of this project center the experiences of Muslims within the Irish workplace, Qualitative research methods were chosen. According to Dey (1993), Qualitative Data is concerned with "meaning through words" (1993, p.28). As the project was concerned with gaining the most detailed information possible from the respondents, the researcher chose Qualitative Methods, specifically interviews. For Robson (2002), Qualitative Data defers from its Quantitative counterpart in that there is a "richness" with allows one to "explore a subject in as real a manner as possible" (2002, p. 472). This idea is precisely the reasoning behind this project's gravitation towards Qualitative methods.

Sampling

For this project, the ideal sample would be a percentage of every Muslim in Ireland who is currently working. However this would be an almost impossible achievement in reality, not only in terms of access but also the ability to manage such a large amount of data. For Henry (1990), the beauty of sampling a smaller number of the universal population lies within the additional time given to other parts of the research due to time saved handling a smaller amount of data. Furthermore, while smaller data it may be, it has the potential to be exponentially more detailed than that of a larger sample.

For this project, there was an intention to strictly adhere to Self-Selection Sampling Techniques. However, given the reality of the response rate other techniques of sampling were explored. In the following section there is a breakdown of the three sampling methods both approached and finally used.

Self-Selection Sampling

Initially, the project sought to adopt a method of self-selection sampling. This involved the researcher sending an email to three of the biggest Islamic bodies within Ireland (see

appendices). The idea would be that any respondents would "identify their desire to take part in the research" (Saunders et al 2000, p. 2) Following a null response rate from the initial email the researcher contacted the three bodies by telephone in order to reiterate the study. It was agreed that two of the three bodies would contact their members to try and gain respondents for the study. Body #1 printed an information sheet which was distributed after Friday prayer whilst Body #2 sent a mass email to their followers. Self-Selection sampling ended up being the least useful method, but this was more so due to a time constraint and a need to begin conducting the primary research. More nuanced reasoning will be given in the following chapter.

<u>Convenience Sampling</u>

Due to the slow uptake on the self-selection sampling method and a desire to begin interviews, Convenience Sampling was employed. Saunders et al 2000, p. 23) defines this method – Also known as "Haphazard" as "Selection those cases that are easiest to obtain". The researcher contacted three colleagues known to be Muslim and asked whether they would be interested. They were contacted using an amended version of the Self-Selection Sampling email.

While this wasn't the desired method of sampling – it did a have a response rate of 100%. However this should be backlit by Bryman et al who claim the "Impossibility" of generalization when handling a convenience sample (2007, p. 346). This is because if the selected respondents are selected by the one person, they generally will not be representative of a wide and true sample. However given the interpretive and inductive aims of the project, their experiences were still valuable.

<u>Snowball Sampling</u>

Finally, while convenience sampling was employed it was rather the jump off into an additional method of sampling in Snowball Sampling. At the end of each interview the interviewer thanked the respondent for taking time out to be interviewed and asked whether they would share contact details with any friends/colleagues who would be interested. Similarly, when their interview was transcribed, they were sent an infographic with the information about the study, along with their transcript. This sought to remind them of the need for additional respondents while also keeping the contact and transcript that was promised to the respondent as both a right and courtesy.

<u>Interviews</u>

As the nature of this research project is inductive in nature, interviews were an obvious choice of qualitative method. For Kahn and Connell (1957) – "An interview is a purposeful discussion between two or people", that is to highlight the human nature of the method (1957 in Saunders et al, 2000, p. 310). This however isn't to cast aspersions on reliability of the method but rather to highlight its "multisensory" nature, always taking note of both verbal and non-verbal cues (Cohen et al, 2007). As discussed above, with any form of interpretive research, interpretation is key in using interviews as a research method. For example – an interviewee will interpret a question and answer in a way which frames their priorities, values and that which is held as important to them (Bryman and Bell, 2007)). Having reflected on the themes within the literature review, it was decided to let these themes directly inspire the questions, which were kept open ended while the interview was kept semi structured.

<u>Semi Structured Interviews</u>

The semi structured interview was selected as a research method because it was inspired by self-reflection. As a non-Muslim the researcher was conscious of a level of ignorance of

important issues or facets of the Muslim experience. Because of this, the interview questions and topics could only be relevant so far as preliminary research would allow. Therefore, it was decided that semi structured interviews would allow the identified areas to be broached while also leaving ample room for the respondents to share content which they felt to be important. See appendix 2 (interview guide).

As the interview guide will show, the questions were kept quite broad and formulated more so as discussion topics on issues. For Bryman and Bell (2007) the topics are specific, but the questions are broad, and this approach was certainly adopted within this study. Similarly Creswell (2008) suggests fewer questions – allowing for expansion on the part of the respondent on what they feel is most relevant – or rather interpret to be relevant.

With regard to the interview itself, Cohen et al advise cognizance of the interview as a live activity and "not merely a data collection exercise" (2007, p. 409). Perhaps it is this viewpoint which allows one to keep focus during the interview, encouraging trust between the researcher and respondent. The interviews for this study took place via Zoom, a decision which had both negatives and positives. Primarily positive, the Zoom interviews allowed the researcher to interview people quickly and if necessary, at short notice. Zoom also has a recording feature which allowed cloud recordings to be made of the audio interview.

Conversely, conducting interviews remotely can be a challenging method of research. While the respondents of the study had the option to have their camera on, many did not choose to show their face on screen. Similarly for those who did – they looked directly at the camera for the most part, with both scenarios eliminating the "visible cues" which one is used to decoding through regular human contact (Saunders et al, 2000 p.207).

Interview Participants

As can be seen below – the majority of the research respondents were those working within the Health Service. This is due to the fact of convenience sampling when Self-Selection sampling methods failed to produce any willing respondents. In the limitations of the research section towards the end of the thesis, this is addressed in terms of generalizability.

Participant 1	Trainee Physician
Participant 2	General Practioner
Participant 3	Secretary
Participant 4	Consultant Doctor
Participant 5	Consultant Doctor

Conclusion

In summation, this chapter covers the research process from philosophies, through to the interview participants who came through as a result of varied sampling techniques. Following are the two appendices mentioned above, the letter to bodies for self-selective sampling and the interview guide. In the next chapter, the fruits of these methods will be presented and later analyzed.

Appendix 1 – Letter to Bodies for Self-Selective Sampling

Hi There

I hope you are well. My name is Niamh Marie Goucher, and I am a second-year student in the National College of Ireland. For my dissertation I am examining the experiences of Muslim People in the workplace in Ireland and how human resource management can better accommodate Islam in the workplace.

For this reason I am reaching out to several Muslim groups in Ireland in the hopes of gaining some insight. Ideally, I would be grateful of the chance to interview some of your group members either together or individually via Zoom on the topic of the experience of Islam in workplace in Ireland.

The interviews would be carried out between 21 June-2 July at a time that would suit you best.

If you would like any further information please do not hesitate to ask me here, or call me on 0851521799.

Best wishes and I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Niamh Marie Goucher

<u>Appendix 2 – Interview Guide</u>

- Career Trajectory

- The intersection of faith and the workplace

- Navigation of Prayer in the workplace

- Navigation of Food in the workplace

- Specific desires for changes by the human resource function

Results and Findings

Introduction

In this chapter the focus is kept on the findings uncovered through the interview process. The aim of the research was to uncover the experiences of Muslims within the Irish workplace and ask how the Human Resource function can better accommodate their faith in the workplace. Five respondents took part in the study, conducting interviews between 15 and 30 minutes in length each. All respondents were asked the same questions and depending on their answers, were followed up with additional questions and clarifications.

Analysis

In terms of analysis, the interviews were examined through the viewpoint of four distinct themes which were developed from the interviews themselves in addition to the theoretical framework of the study (Saunders 2003). Day (1993) makes the point that the categories or themes that are chosen to organize data must reflect one's research question. A different study, or rather different research question might warrant categorizing the same data differently in order to best reflect the research question.

As mentioned above, the themes were also chosen based on the data which was collected in order to include material which the researcher hadn't expected to collect yet was still relevant to the study. If themes are solely "preordinate", the research risks becoming a stale and the interviews no more than information retrieval. (Cohen 1998)

- **Adaption and Accommodation**: Ways in which Muslims have adapted their practice to their workplace and how their practice has been accommodated
- **Daily Practice:** The ways that Prayer and Food are navigated for Muslims within the Irish Workplace.
- **Ramadan:** How is Ramadan experienced within the Irish Workplace?

- **Room for Improvement:** All participants were asked for the ways in which they felt the Human Resource Function could better support them and these desires are presented within this theme.

It is important to acknowledge that four of the five interviews conducted were with people working in the Health Service, something that will become clear throughout the answers given. While the sample is therefore limited, it gives an opportunity to focus on a job area that many Muslims in Ireland are working in.

<u>Adaption and Accommodation</u>

The theme of adaption and accommodation broadly covers the efforts made by the workplace to accommodate the practice of Islam but also to the way in which Islamic practice has adapted to the workplace. One respondent compared their need for a prayer break to a secular concept to underline how prayer in the workplace doesn't need to be made into such a specific issue; *"I guess it's like a smoking break!"*

"If I can pray, I do. Most hospitals I've worked in there is a prayer room. But we can pray anywhere so long as it is a little bit private. If I'm on call, the priority is the bleep. Like there have been instances where my bleep went off during my prayer, so I had to answer."

-Participant 4

The above respondent describes the accommodation of prayer in the workplace through the provision of a prayer room while simultaneously prioritising the call of duty during working hours. This illustrates the dual nature of Adaption and Accommodation. Similarly, the below extract underlines efforts made on behalf of the doctors to carry out their duties of prayer in an increasingly efficient way, praying as a group instead of sporadic 15-minute breaks throughout the day.

"The way people deal with it and even if I have to attend prayer there is a prayer room there is mandatory or rather more acceptable and encouraged to have group prayer rather than individual. You see people compromising with that because individually you will ask some people to cover you for 15 minutes" -Participant 1

As discussed previously, most of the respondents to this study are Health Service workers based in Hospitals and for this reason the issue of shift work presented itself as at times problematic, specifically during Ramadan. The below extract describes how amongst staff the decision was made to end the shift at a time that would accommodate a food break for those practising Ramadan.

*"There are always ways – always things that can't be implemented without reducing the work. Or changing the shift time. Every handover time would be the time when you would have to break the fast at like 21:00. That wouldn't be feasible. The guy who wants to leave or who wants to come. In * it was nice – because they changed the time of the changeover, that was an internal thing – not at hospital level." – Participant 1*

A gendered aspect of adaption presents itself in the below extract, through the issue of Muslim wearing the Hijab. A senior doctor below describes witnessing junior doctors adapt their desire to wear Hijab within surgery and instead opting for a surgical cap:

"I noticed that the females who were originally from Pakistan who were on the X scheme they were a little more hesitant to take it off especially during theatre. There was some discrepancy there. Like what can we use instead and then they had two types of surgical caps. One that just covers the head and another where you can lock it. The good thing is that that was available. And I could see my colleagues making use of it. It wasn't completely ignored. They were asking themselves what I can do instead or how can I adapt?" – Participant 2

One participant spoke at length regarding the accommodation of herself as being an indication of the professionalism of colleagues:

"I feel colleagues are quite professional…so are the patients. Everyone sees you beyond your culture or faith. Your colleagues see you as a person. Because I have lived here for 15 years now so It has probably amalgamated. I've had no problems." – Participant 5

While insightful, the above extract gives an almost reductive quality to the accommodation of Islam, as while not mentioning prayer, food, or appearance (which are covered later), the respondent proclaims a feeling of acceptance and accommodation by both colleagues and patients.

Daily Practice

In the context of this project, Daily Practice refers to the experience and navigation of both Prayer and a Halal diet within the workplace. As with the previous section, there is evidence of accommodation and adaption here, with the final account describing a potential culture clash and how it played out in the workplace.

Daily Practice: Halal Food

The topic of Halal Food was something that all respondents engaged with in a variety of experiences, with some even choosing the topic as something they wanted their HR department to change.

"I usually rely on vegetarian options or fish because there is not non halal fish. Everything from the sea is halal. Usually, our food in the hospitals where there is no halal is either vegetarian or fish. So, halal food, I haven't found many hospitals that serve it. I bring my own or have a vegetarian or fish option" – Participant 5

"I'd always have to make my own food or order specifically Halal, it's not really catered for across the board. An example would be in X, they had this whole block. And once a week they would have a food court and so there was some halal options. But it wouldn't be across the board." - Participant 3

"When I was doing my hospital rotations, I was based in xx area. Both hospitals had an option of Halal foods. I didn't have to just eat vegetables which was nice. It was well signposted on the menu that day that the lasagne was halal or the shepherd's pie or the chicken breast. It was well signposted so you could go for lunch. A good variety – not just a chicken curry." – Participant 5

In contrast to the above extracts, the following response turned the question on the researcher of What is Halal? This served as an opportunity to refocus the interview and layer an increased meaning on the question.

"What is the definition of Halal food here? According to people who come from Pakistan – everything is not halal. Whatever it is there is no compromise on that. But where I come from, if I'm eating from anywhere or any country which belongs to the three books of god (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) which is believed in Islam as a continuation of one religion, I have no problem eating anything I like from the buffet if I am avoiding the pork and ham. This is something you'll find common in all. They will avoid, you will find that people from Sudan agree to the same idea, but they will say yeah, the beef is ok but not the chicken" – Participant 1

In addition to the more abstract responses above, one respondent did not feel there was an onus on a workplace to provide Halal food:

"Anything will do. I find alternatives – there are so many things. It's not a big deal if you don't have a halal lunch or dinner. I eat to live, not live to eat so for me food is not a

priority I don't care about Halal food, like there not being halal food whatever in the canteen. Those are small things. No one is going to die if they don't have one halal meal a day in the hospital. I don't agree with that, that there should be halal food in every hospital canteen." – Participant 5

For the sake of clarity, the above respondent put a large emphasis on the need for a prayer room in all hospitals, so her perceived disinterest in the provision of Halal food should perhaps be consumed with that in mind.

While this thesis doesn't seek to explicitly define a universal ideal of Halal food, the responses above illustrate a varied experience of Halal cuisine, with some feeling well catered to and others left missing something. However, the final response shifts the question toward the researcher in outlining the broad definition of Halal, depending on who you ask.

Daily Practice: Prayer

As Muslims are required to pray five times a day, the practice of prayer in the workplace is obviously filed under the topic of daily practice. Much like the concept of Halal food, the responses of Prayer show evidence of Adaption.

"I tend to be straight forward and just mentioned from the start that I do pray. It's always a bit of an awkward experience when I do mention it. But for the most part I just do it in the breaktime, and it only takes like 5 minutes. I think the most awkward thing is just finding a suitable place to pray. Because I think most places don't have a prayer room or a meditation space, I wouldn't be in work during those hours either" – Participant 3

The issue of finding a suitable place to pray was echoed in the female respondents:

" When I was in X – it was only male designated areas – the issue is when we're praying there should be a separated area for girls and guys. In X it was male dominated. So, if a girl wanted to go and pray there was no space for her. Or cut off space for her. Because usually in a prayer room there is a male and female prayer area that is cordoned off without being looked at or stared at. I didn't see that there during the training. So, what would happen is most of the guys would pray together at Friday prayer. Because there's limited space. Girls would just hold onto their prayers until they got home" – Participant 2

The fact of the sample being majority health service workers becomes increasingly evident as shift work within hospitals in a barrier which needs to be negotiated. However, informal statistics provided below illustrate the situation in which Muslim doctors may find themselves within the hospital – a majority minority

"*I could say 90% of the doctors are Muslims. Especially during holy months. Prayer becomes an essential hallmark. In Islam there are 5 essential prayers during the day. 1 of them, at least 3 come on clash when you're on call."- Participant 1*

The above respondent was the same one who discussed the concept of group prayer within the hospital as a method of efficiency. The reasons for this become increasingly evident when one frames it as Muslims making up 90% of a worker body.

The below respondent relayed varied experiences of prayer in the workplace. This variation depicts explicitly the nuances of navigating prayer in the workplace. Her current workplace depicts an idyllic accommodation of religious expression:

"I share an office too with another colleague of mine and I asked her if it was ok if I brough my prayer mat and pray. I'll keep the prayer matt in the office. And she said, 'of course that's fine, do you want me to leave the room?' And I said, 'no no you can stay -so long as you are comfortable.' And she said oh that's fine I'll just zone out anyway'… I

think I'm blessed to have her in my office. Or maybe I'm blessed to be in her office – either way! Its working out smoothly" – Participant 5

However, the respondent also details a less than satisfactory experience with another hospital, which saw her at the mercy of office architecture and layout, not to mention a dearth of designated prayer space.

"In xxx hospital, there were days when I prayed in my car. Because I shared a room with two people. And it was a busy place. The room dynamics or architecture were so awkward that if you could only pray you could pray in the centre of the room. It was a bit awkward for me although I know had I had spoken to either of the other two doctors they would have had no problem in me sharing. But the architecture was in such a way that I would have had to pray in the centre of the room. And I didn't find it comfortable. When you pray those 5 or 6 minutes you detach yourself and it's just time to bond between you and god. So, I didn't find that happening there. So, I used to get into my car, sit in the driving seat, pray, and come back." – Participant 5

Daily Practice: A Clash of Culture

While most of the respondents didn't report any major conflicts within the work environment, one which was divulged is recounted below.

"It was me and two colleagues who were being shown around by a lady, one of the directors. She came and she went to shake my hand. And I said to her respectfully "I don't touch the opposite sex. It's just a religious thing from my end." And she has a look of shock on her face. And then afterwards my teacher/supervisor in college received an email from them saying I had offended the culture and that they didn't want me to work there anymore" – Participant 3

Given the nature of the work that the respondent was applying for – that of a care home – the researcher pressed more on this experience, whether all forms of physical contact were deemed inappropriate.

"Where it's necessary and care is being provided then obviously that is acceptable, undoubtedly. I feel that a male should assist a male and a female assist a female. That's the general Idea. And even when I was working as a care worker that was the general perspective as well." – Participant 3

The above extract holds much relevance to this project as it identifies the customary greeting of Ireland and many other western countries as potentially exclusive or problematic. This is yet again layered with meaning given occurrence of COVID 19 and how this has affected the way in which we greet one another; excluding high risk physical touch.

Ramadan

Ramadan was identified as a topic which would be potentially quite important for respondents to discuss. As Ramadan calls for long periods of fasting (food and water) along with additional prayer requirements, the researcher was confident that exploring it as a topic with respondents would yield some interesting responses.

"Ramadan is difficult. We are supported by our colleagues who are aware of Ramadan. It's not an official thing in Ireland and my colleagues are conscious of that. We don't get time off. We try to manage it on a personal level. We don't do unnecessary work and cut down where needed. That's it really. The only other thing I see is annual leave. Like other Muslim colleagues may take some annual leave during Ramadan so that they don't have to work during it. In Muslim countries like Pakistan where I am from, they government reduces the working day by 3 days. We'd get usual pay. This is across all jobs" - Participant 1

"Sometimes I would fast during Ramadan and sometimes I wouldn't fast because of the shifts. It depended on the shifts and how long the duration was. So, the days that I would fast that were ok because within my shift I could take my break at that time so I could go and eat and drink water. They were very open about that. My colleagues said yes sure you can take a break at that stage – they were very open and encouraging about that. So that was important to me especially during Ramadan" – Participant 2

The first respondent above compares the functionality of Ramadan in Pakistan and in Ireland. While in Pakistan time is given by the government, in Ireland the workers use their own annual leave to adapt their participation in Ramadan to their work commitments. Similarly, the second respondent discusses the micro processes of navigating a day working through Ramadan.

"The only time it was difficult was when I was working in the factory because we'd be lifting boxes all day. And if you're hungry and thirsty it can be a bit tough. But it's still manageable." – Participant 3

"As a doctor I wouldn't be able to function at my full capacity and I am a little lenient, so I do allow myself to compromise with that aspect. So, I would only fast on the days that I am not working. Like a weekend for example. Or am post call. Now that could be me, but others wouldn't do that. Not everyone else would. It depends on how religious you are and how you believe and follow the teachers. I find it good and justified because of my background and my culture there are others who take it that there are no exceptions. You will find a lot of them. They wouldn't be able to compromise their fasting, but they would be able to compromise their work." - Participant 1

The above respondent is possibly one of the best insights into the idea of adaption of daily practice. They themselves acknowledge their duty to work and to allow themselves to work

to their best ability by choosing their moments to fast. This idea is contrasted with that of colleagues who choose not to compromise their faith – but conversely compromise their work.

Room for Improvement

The final theme of analysis is "Room for Improvement". This theme refers to the question in which the respondents were asked for specific ways in which they felt that the Human Resources Function could better accommodate Islam within the workplace. One of the biggest areas of response was that of the provision of Halal Foods.

"The only thing I would suggest is more halal options. It would help us as I haven't seen it in Ireland. There are prayer options but not halal food. I know in x hospital there was a halal option. But I know there are alternatives like fish. Once a week there should be a halal option. It would attract a lot of Muslim colleagues to work. And create a more harmonious work environment. But it is by no means a necessity." – Participant 1

"I'd say, if there were more halal options in the canteen – that would be one"

"In general, everybody would be happy to see a variety of halal food – and it's not compromising anyone else. People won't say oh its halal food I'm not going to eat it. So, the provision of halal food in a hospital I see in a way will not affect anyone. If everything there is going to be converted into halal. And obviously the pork would be labelled, and people would simply avoid it. Just like any vegetarian would avoid any meal with any kind of meat." – Participant 4

Another respondent asked for more sensitivity around the celebration of Muslim festivals such as Eid

"I guess so maybe awareness when its Eid – celebrations – ok maybe you could come in half hour later so you could attend Eid prayers. So, it's not too late in the morning it's just a very short prayer. So, to have awareness that ok that person might be 15 minutes late they may come in at 9.30 if it's possible. If it's not well that's understandable but just really that there would be an awareness. Just on the two Eid days. Sometimes it falls on the weekend. It depends on the day it falls!" – Participant 2

When it is reflected how Christian Feast Days such as Easter, Christmas and St Patricks Day dictate a national holiday – it seems obvious the similar provisions should be made for Muslim colleagues – even if it is only 15 minutes grace.

"In addition, there should be an initiative of keeping harmony within the staff. You'll find majority of the doctors are Muslim, but you'll find very few Muslim staff like nurses. This something very strange to find that most of the doctors are Muslim but hardly anyone in the hospital setup let's say administration forget about because that's something we all know that you won't find any foreigner let alone a Muslim. But let's say there is a harmony and a balance at every level – that can make things much easier because within HR if you have someone who is at least aware of the religion or Muslim himself. He himself will see things in a different way Obviously – because he'll be able to link to or relate to. So that is one thing that is lacking here in Ireland. Involving more Muslim Staff – I'm talking nurses and porters and the whole lot." – Participant 2

The extract above outlines some issues relating to inclusion at all levels of an organization. The respondent feels that having Muslims included in all parts of an organization, in this case a hospital, allows various viewpoints to be brought to bear.

The final extract follows on from the discussion around culture clashes. While not all Muslims would be strict around the issue of touch – sensitivity and understanding are advised.

"I'd say around the issue of touch because I know some Muslims are stricter on the area of touch. I know it's quite customary to shake hands. So just some awareness on that. And maybe not take offence to it. And I know there are some Muslims who are ok with it and others are a bit stricter on that. So, it really depends. It's not something that is across the board for every Muslim. That's something anyway to bear in mind. Boundaries around touch. I think those would be the three main ones."

Discussion

This chapter will focus on situating the previously discussed findings within the existing literature. As illustrated within the literature review, there are several themes linked to this project. This chapter will see the results analyzed within the most relevant themes. Furthermore, the chapter will outline the limitations of this study, in turn contextualizing the generalizability of the study.

Accommodation and Adaption

Respondent #1 spoke about changes made to their work roster as**" an internal thing, not at hospital level"**. He recounted that this change was made in the Emergency department of his hospital. For Sampura (2019), it is essential that employers make a "reasonable accommodation" for the religious beliefs of their employees, taking the shape of a "Meaningful Adjustment" to a work process which hinders their expression of faith. For Dessler (2014), this accommodation might take the shape of an alteration in the work roster, to allow for employees to take rest periods or to pray. Similarly, realizing the Sabbath day isn't a universal concept, with this day being different for Christians, Jews, and Muslims.

Daily Practice: Prayer

Malone (2017) takes a legalistic approach to his examination of Muslim Prayer within the workplace. This approach emerges from the statistic of 25% of religious discrimination cases in the US emerging from members of the Muslim faith. Malone places the onus on organizations to do their due diligence and be aware of the "legal obligations" they face to accommodate faith and expression within the workplace. There was no evidence presented in the interviews to suggest taking time for Prayer was perceived negatively by one's employers or colleagues, one respondent (#4) denying this possibility explicitly –

"I should add that if you're asking if I have faced any difficulty in my obligation to pray within my profession, I didn't. I was never made uncomfortable or difficult about praying, In Ireland, IN my experience. Obviously, the professional responsibility is something else and it's on me. That's part of the job we do. I was never made to feel any uncomfortableness as a result of my prayer."

While their may be obligations in place external to the workplace it is also important to look at the "internal policy" of an organization – to ensure there are no clashes with external policies. This is a viewpoint echoed also by Etherington (2019) who lists dietary needs, time for prayer or meditation and or allowing religious decorations as needs to be expected when trying to make the workplace an increasingly religious inclusive place.

Diversity and Inclusion

Reeves et al (2012) refer to work by Roberson (2006) discussing the concept of a "Diversity Climate". This refers to the "perceptions of the inclusiveness of his or her organizational context, which are affected by varying group memberships in the workplace…". Not only this but how "employees value difference and support organizational efforts to maximize and manage diverse members" (2006, p.51). In the context of this study this idea might take the shape of the willingness of non-Muslim staff members to adjust to a slightly altered roster, or to champion the provision of Halal foods within the workplace. However – specific to the primary research carried out within this project – there was a call from a respondent to diversify the "nonclinical" hospital jobs –

"This something very strange to find that most of the doctors are Muslim but hardly anyone in the hospital setup let's say administration forget about because that's something we all know that you won't find any foreigner let alone a Muslim"

Daily Practice: Culture Clash

Khan (2010) provides a historical context to Human Resource's development as a largely "Western" phenomena which emerged from personnel management. As discussed within the results and findings chapter, one respondent encountered problems when refusing to shake hands with a member of staff –

"I know it's quite customary to shake hands. So just some awareness on that. And maybe not take offence to it."

This links neatly into Khan's discussion regarding the western origin of the Human Resource function and therefore a potential blindness to the possibility to what is customary in the Western world being potentially problematic for others.

Identity

Something which came to the fore during the interviews that wasn't already addressed was the Muslim as an identity, and its relevance (or lack of) to the workplace. Alsharif et al (2018) discuss the large presence of Muslims within the fields of science and invention and this isn't surprising given the claim of 90% of doctors in particular Irish hospitals being Muslim themselves.

While evidence was only presented once during the study, Fitzsimons (200x) pays some attention to the negative perspectives and experiences of Muslims. This takes the form daily of - "negotiating negative attitudes, discrimination, hate speech and physical assaults". The only evidence of this experience through the project's primary research is detailed below –

"Previously I used to wear the head cover which is the hijab. I started wearing that at 17 for personal reasons and family and all this thing and I thought it was the best thing for me. Culturally, religiously. Family wise. But actually, two years ago I decided to take it off

because I felt it actually, wasn't … as I went through the years, I felt I was trying to portray someone who I may not be – I am into getting my hair done and this and that and fashion and I suddenly felt I'm not who I am. I then decided to take the hijab off. It wasn't really – it was a very difficult experience… So I was outside x hospital and there was a young lad with his girlfriend – I think they were in their early 20s and I think they started talking about the hijab and he said, "ugh I want to rip that scarf off her head" and the girl said, "No leave her alone". That moment – even though they didn't do that – even just hearing that made me become more self-conscious and aware of it."

As previously stated, this wasn't an experience shared by the other respondents, however it is relevant amongst the literature which describes the difficulties of expressing and navigating an outward Islamic experience.

Ghumra (2005) discusses the evolution of Hospital prayer rooms and how it became a moment in which people of differing faiths co-opted the same space for there practice. In the midst of this the discovery was made of similarities of faith. This experience was echoed through a respondent –

"Now it comes in a little tricky here because when you're dealing with non-Muslim but of faith say Catholics, there is a lot of similarity between the two religions. There will be a lot of communication between staff, there will be some kind of looking at common points. And there is mutual respect. As something really, something to make someone happy at work."

Etherington (2019) presents the idea that one's religious persuasion can is ultimately intwined with their work identity. How they approach certain tasks etc. is ultimately inspired by their faith. It is a "sense of duty honor and loyalty" which comes from having a religious faith or identity which can also inspire and influence one's work attitude.

"I find, and this is personal, that the faith helps us understand chronic disease, certainly the disease and death because as Muslims, and other religions we believe it is inevitable. So as a consultant I use that feeling to tell patients look we did this and still it didn't work out and we can't unfortunately prevent death at a certain stage. We do obviously help people but sometimes disease is untreatable, and death is inevitable."

The above extract illustrates how one consultant's faith assists them in breaking bad news to patients, but also making sense of their role as this messenger.

The benefit of Islam within one's professional role is something explored in detail by Rachdi et al (200x). This idea is bolstered with reference to Weber's (1905) Protestant Work Ethic. Rachdi et al counter this with Dr Abbas Ali's "Islamic Work Ethic" which is defined as "viewing work as a means to further self interest economically, socially and psychologically, to sustain social prestige m to advance societal welfare and reaffirm faith". Rachdi' s study echoes the previously explored (in Literature Review) extracts from the Koran which explore work from a religious standpoint, while still holding relevance today.

However this viewpoint is challenged by the below respondent who illustrates an almost label-less working environment, with character and credentials at the forefront and one's religious persuasion irrelevant:

"They see me beyond a Muslim because they know me as a person. I think that's important. I don't need to know about the other person and what their faith is as long as I know that he/she is a kind person or a good professional or a good clinician. We don't bring our faith to work. We bring our skills and professionalism to work. I feel a lot of collegiality. I feel parents as well are very mature. So I've had no bitter experiences at all."

<u>Limitations</u>

The main limitation of this study is that the findings are in no way generalizable across the greater group of Muslims living and working in Ireland. This is due to the small sample size used in the study. As discussed in the methodology chapter, Self-Selected Sampling, Snowball Sampling and Convenience Sampling were the methods used. While convenience sampling transpired as the source of most respondents, had there been more time available the researcher believes that Self-Selected Sampling strengthened by Snowball Sampling could have widened the reach of respondents.

The study itself is also limited by the nature of the interviews. The researcher's lack of experience as a researcher proved to be a challenge, in that when analyzing the material, further follow up questions would have been useful. Cohen et al discuss (as per the Methodology Chapter) how an interview isn't simply a "Data Collection Exercise" whereas at times the researcher failed to gain the context essential for interview analysis. This is certainly a limitation of the study however, what is presented details the experiences of Muslims within the Irish workplace – even if lacking in a deeper, detailed analysis.

Another limitation of the study was failing to include the wearing of the Hijab or Burka within the questions put to the interview respondents. While only two of the five respondents were themselves female, the discussion topic would have still been relevant to discuss with the male respondents. One of the females brought up a discussion of her own experience with the Hijab which proved to be very insightful to the lived experience of 'visible' Islam in the workplace. Therefore, during analysis it was unfortunate that the topic wasn't put to the other female respondent during her interview.

While there will be practical recommendations presented within the final chapter of this thesis, there are also areas of study within this topic which could be examined in the future.

As previously outlined, the researcher failed to explicitly include a discussion of Hijab in the workplace with all respondents. This could be a very potent research topic within the broader theme of Islam in the Workplace in Ireland. Given the explicit discussion surrounding the adaption of surgical caps in the place of a Hijab, there is a case for further research into the navigation of the Hijab for Muslim Women within the Irish workplace. This is compounded by the account of verbal abuse from one of the respondents due to her hijab.

Additionally, a study dedicated to the provision of prayer rooms within the workplace could be an area of further research within the topic of not only Islam in the Workplace but also Religion in the Workplace. This also begs the question described earlier of "Should the workplace be completely secular?". While this question is indeed broad, it is purposely so, to account for the many faiths, or lack of within the Irish Workplace. As discussed by one respondent, there are issues of architecture and space involved in providing a prayer room, further made complex by the desire of some to have gender specific prayer spaces. While discussed within this project, there is absolutely scope to expand this topic in the future, perhaps beginning with quantitative research on the number of Irish Workplaces that have prayer rooms.

Finally, while the topic was discussed in detail here the provision of Halal food within the workplace is another issue which could be worthy of further research. A multitude of responses and attitudes are described within this project on the topic of Halal Food, some seeing it as essential to be provided while others feeling it is of little importance. As with the potential future research on Prayer Rooms, perhaps the jump off to a discussion on halal Food provision might stem from a survey of Work Canteens and their provision of a Halal Option.

<u>Conclusion</u>

<u>Introduction</u>

As has been described in the preceding chapters, the process of conducting a research project began from an immersion in the literature on and surrounding the topic of accommodating Islam within the workplace. From this exploration of existing literature came the formulating of research questions and consequently a formulation of the most suitable research methods. Finally, the process of collecting and analyzing data is presented in chapters five and six. This analysis is the basis by which the research questions can attempt to be answered, and in turn recommendations for improvement can be made. In this final chapter, the research questions are presented alongside their corresponding answers moving from the specifics of everyday lived experience towards a generalizable explanation of how the Human Resources function can best support their Muslim Employees.

The topic of Ramadan presented diverse findings among the participants. The vast majority of the research respondents adapted their practice of fasting to their roles, be this through saving annual leave for Ramadan or only fasting during time off work. Similarly there was evidence presented to suggest that accommodations were made at organizational level to allow Muslim staff members to take breaks or change shifts at a time which would accommodate their Ramadan prayer and mealtimes. This aura of both accommodation and adaption was contrasted by one participant who gave a secondhand account of colleagues who would compromise their work commitments in favour of their spiritual ones. While the project's own primary research didn't present such findings from its respondents, the secondhand account provides a contrasting comparison to seemingly widespread adaption of processes.

The ideas of adaption and accommodation were also to be seen in the experiences of Muslims in their daily practice of faith. There was mixed provision of Halal food in staff canteens, three of five respondents always had at least one meal on offer in their workplace. This was contrasted with certain participants who were forced to bring their own lunch or dinner to work, or alternatively who didn't hold a daily Halal meal with much importance.

The navigation of daily prayer within the workplace presented varied experiences. Prayer rooms were found to not be universal within organizations. This was seen to be a particular issue for one of the participants, who recounted having to use her car to pray in. Conversely evidence was shown of excellent prayer spaces in other organizations however their unisex nature did not suit all participants who then chose to save their prayers for home. Succinctly, one research participant likened their five-minute prayer break to someone else taking a smoking break, something which again underlines the spirit of adaption and accommodation which is central to the research findings.

<u>Recommendations</u>

There are two main 'practical' recommendations from this study. The first of these if the importance of introducing a Prayer Room. Based on the primary research carried out within this project, the room itself does not need to be Islam specific. However, the room needs to be of a good size to allow prayer to take place on the floor as is standard within Islam. Furthermore, a moveable partition or screen is advisable for those who wish to pray privately, but also for people who would rather be divided for prayer based on sex.

In terms of practical considerations of implementing a prayer room, ideally an existing room could be converted into a prayer room. This would keep any costs to a minimum and would also ensure the establishment of a prayer room happens promptly. If an existing room is not available for conversion, the idea of building or acquiring a space could be explored. Where

costs are involved in the provision of the prayer space, it is an excellent opportunity to reach out to staff and discover what their needs are. If money is to be spent on a project, it should be done so in line with the needs of the population of the workforce in need of the prayer space. This might take the form of a survey, followed by a forum for discussion or more specific ideas. Based on some informal research, the division of a room with a wall approximately 8 meters long would be in region of €1000. It would be worth carrying out a cost-benefit analysis on the workplace in question, to discover what the expected take up of the space would be and if it might be used secularly, for meditation or yoga.

One of the reasonings highlighting the importance of introducing Prayer rooms was outlined by one of the research participants. Ireland currently sees many doctors travel on one-year fellowships from countries such as Oman, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait. These fellowships are extremely financially beneficial for hospitals and so in order to keep these visits happening it is essential to show that the hospital is able to accommodate the faith needs of visitors.

With reference to Halal Foods, there was a variation in the levels of importance placed on their provision. For this reason, the provision of one Halal option every day in the staff canteen is deemed by this project to be a relatively easy addition. In the same way as with the prayer room, a more detailed analysis would need to be carried out in the workplace. Some of the participants would have liked to see a Halal Buffet with multiple options whereas others didn't view an organization's provision of Halal meals as important. For this reason it is best to reach out to staff through surveys and perhaps focus groups to illustrate a generalized idea which is true to the desires of the staff. A comparison of Beef Shin in standard and Halal offerings sees Halal coming in at a cheaper rate of €5.50 whereas the standard is €6.12. This conveys in broad outline that the introduction of a Halal meal doesn't hold an extortionate price tag, underlining another reason to introduce it.

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Personal Learning Statement

Completing a Master's Dissertation has been an excellent exercise in patience, hard work and commitment. While I found the project challenging at times, I took excellent advice in choosing a topic on which I could sustain my interest for ten months. I hope it will be of some use to the Muslim Community in Ireland, if even as a jump off point to further research.

Without a doubt, the continuing saga of COVID-19 has played a part in the completion of this research project. Traditionally I have always based myself in the college library (both NCI and Maynooth during Undergraduate Degree) for all academic work and study but unfortunately this was not feasible due to restrictions. I had to navigate my home space for living, working at a full-time job and studying. This was a difficult adjustment however I have now completed the project.

Having completed a thesis at Undergraduate Level, the concept of independent primary research was not something new to me. However, the detail at which the results were analyzed for the project was definitely a new experience for me. I only conducted five interviews for this thesis despite my best efforts at gaining more participants. This definitely effected the analysis and discussion as I found I was rereading material in an effort to derive further meaning. In hindsight I feel using survey research in addition to Qualitative interviews might have given the project a different edge and allowed respondents to be more forthcoming in their participation.

In summation, completing the thesis has been an extremely worthwhile experience for me. In addition to the lessons learned regarding research participants, I've gained excellent experience at working on one project for a long period of time. Both time management skills and writing in an academic style were skills honed during this process and I look forward to carrying these skills forward. Finally, as I stand on the edge of a potential career within

Human Resources, I hope to take the lessons learned regarding both processes and people

into whatever role is next for me.