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Degree Programme in Social Services
Thesis 2022

RELIGIOUS WELL-BEING OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN FINLAND

ABSTRACT

This research aimed to find out how the current services of religious communities affect the religious well-being of Muslim women and how these services need to be developed. The purpose of this thesis was to find out what factors support the religious well-being of Muslim women in Finland.

The thesis was carried out as qualitative research and data were collected through a questionnaire using a Webpropol survey. The questionnaire was answered by 48 respondents, Muslim women who are active members of the religious communities. Work-life partner helped to find respondents through their networks in social media groups for Muslim women. The data were analyzed by thematic analysis.

The result of the research is grouped into three themes, religious well-being of Muslim women, effects of the services on their well-being and need for development.

The research concludes that a source of religious well-being is a combination of physical and mental well-being and services from the religious communities are essential to support it. There are needs other than religious services from the religious communities, like worldly services, which would support the religious well-being of Muslim women better.

Keywords: Muslim community and Muslim women, and religious wellbeing

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

In our thesis, we research how the current services of the religious communities' affect the religious well-being of Muslim women in Finland and how these services need to be developed to better support the religious well-being of Muslim women in Finland. We also want to find out what kind of services Muslim women want and need that support their religious well-being. Our working life partner Amal is a registered social field organization, concentrating on the professional services supporting the religious well-being of Muslim women and girls in Finland.

We conducted a research-based thesis with a qualitative research method, using thematic data analysis. The data collection method was a survey method with a questionnaire. The questionnaire was aimed at Muslim women who actively participate in the Islamic religious communities. Due to our observations in the social media groups, we found dissatisfaction with the religious support aimed at and available to Muslim women.

The number of Muslim women is growing in Finland and understanding how the religious communities support the well-being of Muslim women is important to further develop the services. Some studies are done in other western countries about the participation and well-being of Muslim women in the religious communities and how the services of the Islamic communities are built. According to Wang (2018), women gained a significant role in society through community work, which supported the well-being of the whole community and their well-being. This created more services in the religious communities and empowered women. The importance of the spiritual services in the religious communities are affecting the well-being of the Muslim women and emphasize that this support can be a protective factor in their life. Muslims' religious beliefs and practices have long served to improve mental health and they are protective factors for health and well-being in general (Awaad & Ali, 2016).

In Finland, the religious Islamic communities are not yet studied much, because it is still a new community. Martikainen mentions in the article (Leitzinger et al., 2008, 65); that more Muslims started to come to Finland just in the 1990s. The number of Muslims was a few thousand at the beginning of the 1990s, but already the number was around 40.000 in 2006. Most of the Muslim women in Finland have immigrant backgrounds according to Martikainen (2020). An article by Saba Senses Ozyurt (2013) indicates that religion becomes a key factor to the immigrants in their new country and helps especially women in integration and forms a key role to support Muslim women's social participation.

There are some studies about Muslim women in Finland and the role of the religion and the religious community. These studies are focusing on the meaning of the culture as a supportive factor for their well-being. A good example of this is the life of the Somali community in Finland (Tiilikainen, 2005), where the discussion focuses on the importance of the culture and how the Somali women are empowered through the community. Important aspects of the religious Islamic community life in Finland and its impact on one well-being are discussed in (Tiilikainen et al., 2020) within the services provided by the Muslim community for marriage and marriage consulting. It shows the importance of recognizing the religious aspect in the services which support the well-being of the women.

2 MUSLIM COMMUNITY AND MUSLIM WOMEN IN FINLAND

This chapter describes and explains our key concepts. Keywords used in our thesis are Muslim women, religious well-being, and the Muslim community.

The word Muslim comes from the Arabic language meaning "the one who submits (to God)" and is a follower of Islam. Numerous women were among the prophet's first followers, and their adoption of the new faith is well established in Islamic history. The fact that Prophet Muhammad's first wife, Khadija, was the first person to believe in the Prophet's revealed message says a lot. Although Khadija was a successful merchant with a free and independent spirit, evidence tells that even though she was independent and rich she did not heist to embrace Islam (Haddad & all, 2006). Women were given responsibilities as leaders, thinkers, and even military advisers in Islam. Women owned property on their own and had a voice and vote in politics centuries before women's rights were widely recognised in any Western country (Strasser 2015).

Islamic name "Ummah" is an Arabic word meaning shortly explained community and it is a worldwide community consisting of all the people sharing the same religion with diverse backgrounds, nationalities, and locations in the world. Islamic terms Ummah is one community or nation united under the guidance of the One God (Stacey, A. (2021). Ummah can be used in the local area like Finland, the Finnish Muslim Community equals "Finnish Ummah" and that includes all the Muslims in Finland from all the ethnic backgrounds. Explanation of Ummah from the Quran is explained according to an article by (Stacey, A. 2021): "And verily this Ummah of yours is One Ummah and I am your Lord and Cherisher, therefore fear Me and no other."

When discussing the Muslim community in Finland, Muslims are divided into two categories: Tatar Muslims and today's larger Muslim community. The larger Muslim community is still quite young in Finland, unlike the Tatar community which has been in Finland since the 18th century and has always been a tiny minority, nowadays with less than a thousand people. This community-built the first mosque in Finland during the 2nd World War. For a long time, the

Tatars were Finland's only organized Muslim group, even though Muslims from all over the world came to Finland. Other Muslims were welcome to attend religious meetings at Tatar mosques and congregations, but they were not allowed to become members of the Tatar religious community, because the membership was reserved for the ethnic Tatars. Tatar community provided a wide range of other than religious services to their members, supporting the well-being of the Tatar community, but also religious services supported the integration of the members into the society, creating a sense of belonging (Daher & all, 2012).

Finland has welcomed many Muslim immigrants as international students, spouses, refugees, and asylum seekers since the 1980s, particularly since the 1990s. This has resulted in a dramatic increase in the Muslim population, which peaked at 70,000 in 2015 (Pauha & Martikainen, 2017). The newcomers come from all over the Muslim world and come from a variety of racial and national backgrounds. Finland's new Muslim population is diverse, mostly urban, and young. It has a lower socioeconomic status than most of the population and it is unclear if the second generation can close the gap with the rest of the population. Since 2017 the Muslim population is growing rapidly, and this will increase the need for religious services in the Muslim community. One difference from other European countries is that the Muslim population in Finland do not have one ethnic or national group dominating the Muslim community, due to the lack of colonialist history in Finland (Martikainen, T. 2013).

The number of Muslims in Finland is only estimation because most of the Muslims are not registered to the Religious Communities officially as Muslims. According to Martikainen (2020), the chart shows the Muslim majority countries in Finland from 1990- to 2015. It also focuses on the migrants who came from all over the world and from a variety of national and cultural origins. Shown in Figure 1. is the diversity of geographic origins of immigrants to Finland from Muslim-majority nations.

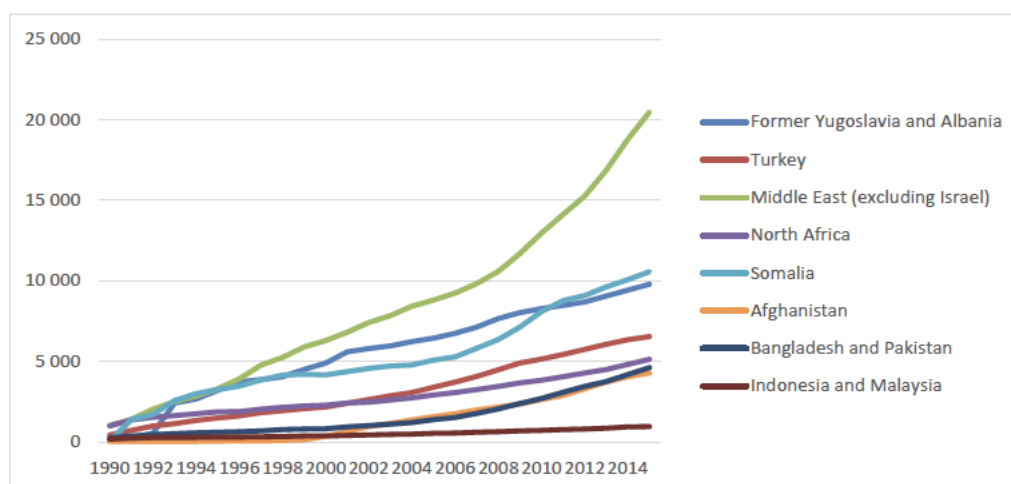Figure 1. Immigrants from selected Muslim countries (Martikainen, T. 2020)

Figure 3: Immigrants from selected Muslim-majority countries and regions in Finland, 1990–2015. Source: Statistics Finland, Population structure, Country of birth according to age and sex by region 1990–2015.

Muslims have established many religious societies and organizations since the 1990s. According to Martikainen (2013), the number of the Religious Islamic communities has increased from 3 in 1989 to over 60 registered Islamic Communities in 2022 using the search words Islam* and Muslim* (Patentti- ja Rekisterihallitus, 2022).

In Bäckström's perception, "Immigrants and religious communities are increasing in Finland and other Nordic nations as well. Religious communities, particularly Islamic congregations, have been rising in size (Bäckström 2014, 60–69). Muslims who migrate to Finland because of globalization and migration, as well as Finns who convert to Islam, have increased the number of Muslim communities. Muslims make up a massive portion of the country's total population. At the same time, they create and sustain their own culture for their community.

According to Sorsa (2018), belonging to a religious community creates safety and hope and gives a channel to influence the community and society, the mode of operation and values. To others the increased visibility of religion creates fear. Cultural and religious diversity brings new customs and traditions to

the society and part of the public space, which facilitates the exercise of individual rights and helps the dialogue between society and religious communities.

In Islam, women have a remarkably high status in the Muslim world, however, often in Muslim countries, cultural norms, and practices, as well as gendered practices, affect the Islamic rules, which weaken the position of women in particular. One of the problematic areas of misinterpretation and misunderstanding about Islam is the topic of Islam and women, according to Lynn Kunkle, director of the Washington-based Al-Hibri Charitable Foundation: "It is important first to separate Islam from Muslims. Islam is a set of values, beliefs, goals, and ideals. Muslims struggle, as all religions do, to implement those ideas."

From the hadiths, the traditions based on the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammed (peace and blessings be upon him), we learned that a mother is three times more deserving of the best treatment and love than the father (Sahih Muslim, Book 32, nr 6180. Hadith Collection 2022). The distinction is based upon God-conscious piety, not on gender. Based on the Quran and hadiths, an individual can gain higher status by doing charitable deeds. According to the article by Ozyurt (2013), the religious community is a crucial factor in the well-being of Muslim women and especially immigrants. Finnish Muslim demography from 2006, shows that the majority of Muslims in Finland are immigrants (Leitzinger et al., 2008, 73).

3 RELIGIOUS WELL-BEING

Since the focus of the Thesis is the religious well-being of Muslim women it is important to define the concept of well-being. Well-being can be defined as a balance between different indicators of happiness. There is no agreed definition of well-being, but there are distinct aspects that influence the well-being of a person, for example physical, social, economic, spiritual, mental, psychological, and environmental well-being (Diener, E.1984). Feeling and functioning well, along with positive emotions like happiness and fulfilment, the development of one's ability, maintaining some influence over one's own life, and a sense of purpose, are all part of well-being (Ruggeri & al., 2020). The meaning of well-being and the means towards its improvement have been at the heart of intellectual enquiry from ancient philosophical and religious traditions to modern natural and social sciences While improving human well-being is an old personal and societal goal, the specific meaning, and methods for achieving it have changed over time. "The state of being comfortable, healthy, or cheerful" is a simple definition of well-being. (Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2018).

Spirituality, according to Tiliouine, Cummins, and Davem (2009), is linked to the desire for meaning and purpose and refers to a person's subjective relationship with a higher force. Religiousness relates to psychological well-being, according to Smith, McCullough, and Poll (2003). The concept of Spiritual well-being is often misunderstood. It is diverse, individualized and gives meaning and context to our life experiences. The human need for purpose and connection to something larger or higher than ourselves is the most important aspect of well-being, not any religion or spiritual practice or ideology.

The measurement of using a single subjective item approach to assess well-being supplies little insight into how people experience the components of their lives that are crucial to critical outcomes. An informative measure of well-being must include all the primary components of well-being, including both hedonic and eudemonic characteristics and cannot be reduced to a single metric such as income, life satisfaction, or happiness (Ruggeri & al., 2020). According to

Levin and Chatters (1998), religion and spirituality are related to higher psychological and physical well-being.

When discussing the Islamic views of well-being it is beneficial to define the primary well-being concepts in human well-being literature. Theorists of well-being differentiate between objective list theories (OLTs) and utilitarian well-being theories (Parfit, 1984; Brey, 2012; Fletcher, 2016). According to OLTs of well-being, there are "basic goods" that enable a person to meet their basic requirements, which are non-instrumentally beneficial for individuals, and add to their well-being whether they are desired or not. They recognize people's objective circumstances rather than subjective pleasure or fulfilment of subjective goals (Brey, 2012). Knowledge, health, companionship, and other items on the list are all necessary for a person's well-being. The only thing that is inherently good for us is our pleasure according to Hedonism, and the only thing that is fundamentally harmful to us is our grief" (Heathwood, 2010 Fletcher, 2016, p. 248). Aristotle's notion of "good", which claims that the happiness is a virtuous life accomplished through the perfection of our being as intellectual and social creatures, is one of the most well-known perfectionist theories (Brey, 2012). The Christian and Islamic views of well-being are both perfectionist ideas

3.1 Islamic concept of human well-being

The Islamic perspective of well-being is informed by the Islamic worldview that is conveyed by the concept of tawḥīd- Unity, or Oneness of God. As a worldview tawḥīd is a general view of reality, of truth, of the world, of space and time, of human history" (Al-Faruqi, 1992, p. 10). God-centred teleological worldview holds that God–the only true Deity and Lord of creation–created everything with a natural purpose and function. It shows the unification and harmony of life's dimensions–the soul and the body, worship, and work, spiritual and material, state and society, freedoms, and responsibilities–and therefore relates to the natural tendency of humans.

The tawḥīdic worldview is inspired by three major concepts known as the "purposes of creation" (maqid al-khalq), according to Al-Rghib Al-Iṣfahāni (d. 1108 CE): worship (ʿibādah), stewardship (khilfah), and moral and material progress (ʿumrān) (Al-Ifsahāni, 1980, p. 31). While ʿibādah can be viewed as "a comprehensive phrase for all that God loves and that pleases Him", it also includes ritual acts of worship like prayer and fasting (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1999, p. 29). The innumerable literary references that emphasize the relevance of worship prove beyond any doubt that it is man's raison d'être and the ultimate test of his redemption (Al-Fasi, 2014, p. 14). As a result, ibādah is central to the believer's existence and well-being in this world and the next. While worshipping God is the fundamental purpose of human existence, the meaning of that goal can only be realized through fulfilling the function of stewardship (khilāfah). It means upholding fairness on the planet (Q. 38:26). The natural environment is entrusted to man because all riches belong to God (Q. 24:33). As a result, stewardship implies accountability to God and His creation by upholding justice. The third higher goal–ʿUmrān–includes a basic moral part connected to ideals like justice, peace, and freedom, without which material development is impossible.

As the Qur'ān explains in various verses, the increase of material possessions in the absence of moral principles leads to the antithesis of ʿumrān, namely corruption (fasād), destruction (tadmr), and war (qitl). The term ʿumrān was introduced by Ibn Khaldūn to refer to different sides of human settlement, such as sciences, occupations, and trades with positive moral meanings. While ʿumrān has related to current ideas like as human and material progress, as well as civilisation-building, it has a moral core and is grounded in the Islamic worldview (Malkawi, 2013, p. 127). As a result, the tawḥīdic worldview and the three higher purposes of creation can be considered essential truths that govern Muslim behaviour to achieve holistic well-being.

According to Muslim scholars such as Al-Fārābi (d. 950 A.D.), Ibn Miskawayh (d. 1030 A.D.), and al-Ghazali (d. 1111), sa'ādah is a broad notion that encompasses happiness, wealth, success, perfection, blessedness, and beatitude (Ansari, 1963, p. 319). As a result, it has been compared to a good life (hayāt tayyiba) or holistic well-being. They believed that saʿādah can be realized by

obtaining a variety of necessary and adequate items for a full existence. These are the "goods of the body" and "external goods," such as health, fame, riches, power, and friendship, which are examples of necessary goods (Ansari, 1963, p. 327). These qualities must be accompanied by virtues, which relate to the goods of the soul through which beautiful actions (af'l jamla) lead to the realization of saʿādah. Ansari (1963, p 327) also writes that Ibn Miskawayh fully supports Aristotle's concept of perfect saʿādah, which includes intellectual wisdom and moral excellence, sound health and senses, prosperity, friendship, good name, and social success.

An Islamic conceptual model of human well-being according to Kader (2021) has been developed by integrating the tawḥīdic-worldview, the philosophical insights of saʿadah (happiness or blessings) with an objective list from the maqasid (goals or purposes) tradition based on the five essential goods: religion (Dīn), self (Nafs), intellect ('Aql), progeny (Nasl) and wealth (Māl). These correspond to spiritual, physical, psychological, intellectual, familial, social, and material well-being, respectively and they capture the inter-temporal dimension of human well-being in a holistic way (Figure 2). They apply to all people and are indispensable, inter-dependent, and final in the sense that each holds a range of instrumental goods.

Figure 2. The Islamic Concept of Human well-being. (Kader, H. 2021, 109)
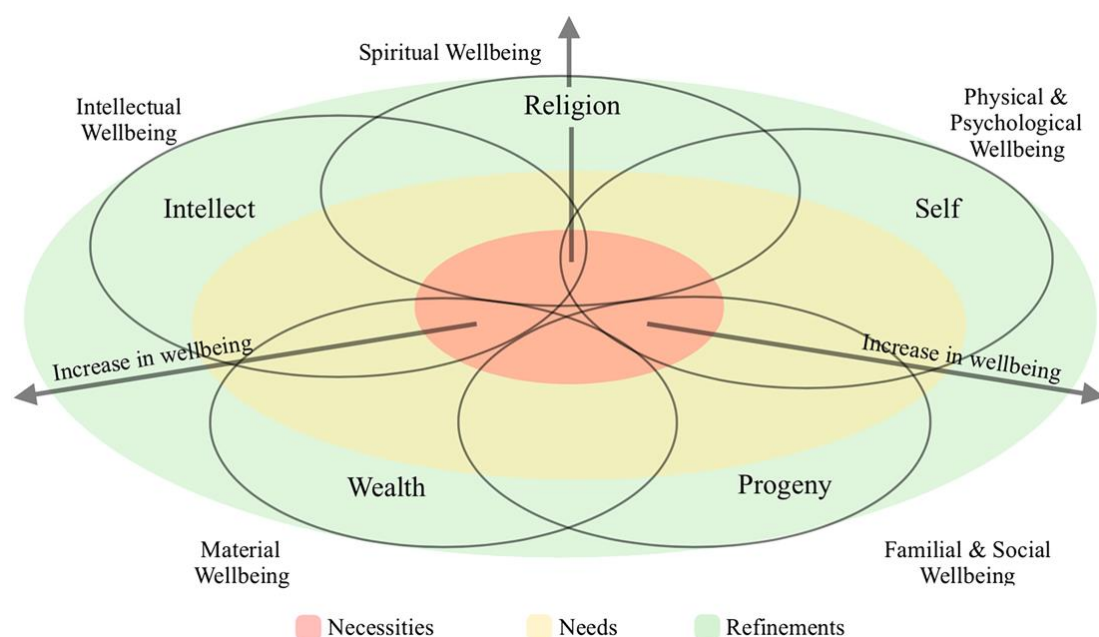
These items are referred to as "essentials" because their absence will result in serious deterioration of well-being, both in this life and in the hereafter (Al-Raysuni, 2010). These goods capture the inter-temporal dimension of human well-being holistically. They apply to all people, and are indispensable, inter-dependent, and are final in the sense that each contains a range of instrumental goods.

These five goods are broad categories that include a variety of instrumental "particular" goods, which in turn include a variety of "partial" goods. They are "complete" when taken together because they capture the holistic aspect of inter-temporal human well-being, i.e., spiritual, physical, psychological, intellectual, social, and material well-being. They are fundamental, universal (that is, they apply to everyone), necessary (that is, their loss causes significant harm), interdependent, and final in the view that they each form a set of instrumental goods, an approach for prioritizing things on three levels, based on human necessities, needs, and refinements (Kader 2021).

While this philosophy of well-being differs from the currently accepted utilitarian philosophy, it is coherent with neo-Aristotelian and religious views based on a perfectionist aim list theory of well-being, which considers living virtuously to be at the centre of living well. Necessities are universal, regardless of context because their absence causes extreme pain for individuals everywhere, always. Needs are items that would cause trouble and hardship in life if they were not available, although to a lower extent than necessities. Needs are context-dependent, varying according to time and location. The products that improve and add significance to life are known as refinements. The "bad" or "luxuries" that disrupt the harmony in the human and natural world (al-mizn) and impair well-being contrast with these categories of goods. As a result, the concept of balance between goods, their interconnectedness, and priority levels lies at the heart of the Islamic idea of well-being. This stems from the understanding that man has a dual nature–physical and spiritual–that requires nourishment without generating a shortage or surplus in any of the essential components (Kader 2021).

3.1.1 The five essential goods

For as long as man has existed, religion has provided a vital component of individual and collective human well-being. Both the inner dimensions (*bātin*) and outer dimensions (*thāhir*) make up religion (*dīn*). The inner aspects are concerned with religion and spirituality, which are found in the spiritual heart (qalb) and reflected in moral and ethical characteristics such as truthfulness, patience, dependence, and God-consciousness. The exterior aspects are concerned with religious practices such as worship and charitable deeds. To enable spiritual well-being to flourish, both the inner and exterior dimensions must be safeguarded and promoted (Kader 2021).

The second higher aim–*Nafs*–can be translated to mean "the self". The word covers all areas of life, including spiritual, psychological, and physical. Adequate food, shelter, and clothes are essential needs for self-sustenance at the most basic level. Physical health is a valuable ultimate good that also contributes to other aspects of well-being through positive ripple effects associated with good health. Universal access to basic healthcare is therefore a necessity (Kader 2021).

The intellect (ʿaql), in Islam, does not just relate to the mind; it also refers to the heart and the soul. All knowledge comes from God (the All-Knowing, al-ʿAlīm), according to the tawḥīdic worldview. Given the critical relevance of the information for human well-being, gaining and teaching knowledge is seen as a compulsory type of devotion that lasts a lifetime (Al-Attas, 1978, p. 146).

A fourth essential aim is to protect and promote progeny. To protect and promote the well-being of one's progeny–or future generations–individuals must be concerned about ensuring sustainability, which may be viewed as how successfully today's generation cares for the well-being of future generations. Given that birth is a human necessity, and that marriage is the only legitimate way to conduct it from an Islamic perspective, marriage becomes a general necessity (Kader 2021).

Wealth (*māl*) is the fifth essential good. Earning from permissible (*ḥalāl*) sources, to support oneself and one's family is an individual obligation (*fard al-ʿayn*) for the able-bodied. It is a collective obligation (*fard al-kifayāh*) for members of a Muslim society to take care of the needs of the poor, disabled and other unable, such as orphans and the elderly. Obligatory (*zakāt*) of 2.5% of the wealth (not income), is collected and given to the poor, as mentioned in the Qur'ān as "community property" (*māl al-muslimīn*) (Kader, 2021).

4 PURPOSE AND THE AIM OF THE THESIS

The purpose of this thesis is to find out what factors support the religious well-being of Muslim women in Finland. Our aim of the thesis is to find out how the current services of the religious communities affect the religious well-being of Muslim women and how these services need to be developed. Development ideas or recommendations to our work-life partner will be given based on the results. The thesis topic is relevant because there is a growing number of Muslim women in Finland. The support from the religious community can be important when a person is part of a marginal and vulnerable group and when religion is a key factor in life as the Mulki Al-Sharmani sheds in her study about the Finnish Muslim community (Tiilikainen et al., 2020, 75).

We searched the topic of religious well-being through the previous studies about religious well-being, well-being in general and what affects the general well-being of Muslim Women. We chose our key concepts based on the need of our work-life partner to develop the services and our interest to find out how the religious community support the well-being of Muslim women.

Our research question is:
How do the services of religious communities' affect the religious well-being of Muslim women in Finland?

5 RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT AND PARTNERS

We conducted our research inside the Muslim community in partnership with the registered social sector organization Amal. Our survey was targeted at Muslim women who identify themselves as active members of religious communities. By religious communities here we mean Islamic communities and religious organizations. We shared our survey in social media groups targeted at Muslim women. Our work-life partner Amal supported spreading the questionnaire on their social media sites. Amal is interested in developing social services that support the well-being of Muslim women as a whole. Religion conscious approach is the focus for Amal in the provided services like peer support groups, training, and service guidance. Amal is a registered social sector organization established in 2017. The idea to establish Amal started from the peer support groups on social media supporting Muslim women. (Amal ry, n.d.)

The need for an organization that supports the religious well-being of Muslim women was obvious from the group's general discussion. The role of the work-life partner was to advise on matters that needed consulting. Ideas about the topic of the thesis, what form of results would benefit them, their experiences as service providers in the Muslim community and the religion conscious approach were discussed amongst other things. Amal's goal is to support the well-being of Muslim women and girls according to Islamic values and it was founded on the need for special support Muslim women are seeking in the religious environment. The bases of Amal's values are faith, sisterhood, communality, trust, and courage. These values are supporting the religious well-being of the members and service users by enabling the empowerment of the religion and spirituality together with peer support and sisterhood. This shared identity strengthens the belongingness and the sisterhood amongst the Muslim women. The principal is to work with professionalism, which creates trust and enables discussions also about difficult and taboo topics with respect. (Amal ry, n.d.)

In Finland, there are over 60 Islamic registered communities and over 100 religious associations according to Finnish Patent and Registration (PRH, 2021). Most religious communities and organizations are divided according to ethnicity (Martikainen, T., 2013). In addition to the organized communities and associations, many social media groups are aiming to support, advise and help Muslim women, but these groups do not provide any services apart from advice. We chose social media groups to spread our survey, not to research the groups meaning for women's well-being. We found these groups from our networks on social media.

6 IMPLEMENTATION OF RESEARCH

This chapter is dedicated to explaining and justifying the implementation of our research. Descriptions of used methods in the research, data collection and analysis methods are explained further below. We surveyed with a questionnaire instead of face-to-face interviews due to our position in the Muslim community. We discussed the possibility that we may not have honest answers through face-to-face interviews because authors are well recognized in the Muslim community, and this may affect the quality of the answers.

We decided to use the qualitative research method because most of the questions were open-ended questions to gain more detailed answers. In the questionnaire, there were some questions to gain quantitative answers, but those were not analysed, because they did not have any extra value to answer our research question.

Some key aspects for supporting Muslim women in Finland are the religious social media groups and different Islamic organizations. Therefore, the questionnaire was shared through social media groups and Islamic organizations. The questionnaire was completely voluntary which was also mentioned in the cover letter. Questions were attached to the survey (APPENDIX 1) and the research plan to the application for a research permit.

6.1 Qualitative research method

Qualitative research is a method focusing on gaining data through open-ended questions as we used in our research. Since the base of qualitative research is on the disciplines of social sciences like sociology and psychology, understanding how your target group makes decisions can help derive conclusions (Crossman, A. 2020). It is not only to get answers to "what" but also to "why." The qualitative research methods allow deep questioning of respondents based on their answers, where also the motivation and feelings of the respondents are attempted to be understood. In qualitative research, the data is usually

collected on sight, where the issues or problems are experienced. Typically, information is gathered from multiple forms of data and aims to solve complex issues, like experience and meanings (Questionpro 2022). According to Merriam (2013, p.13), qualitative research is a technique for characterizing the meaning that people have created for themselves or how they make sense of their world and experiences.

Using a face-to-face interview as a method to gain qualitative results was discussed among the researchers, but because we are well known in the Muslim community, we did not want to interview anybody in person. This way we wanted to ensure the anonymity of the respondents. The choice between qualitative and quantitative methods was discussed amongst us, and because the quantitative method would not have given us enough detailed information about the needs of developing the services, we chose the survey method with a qualitative approach. Quantitative research shows more numerical data whereas qualitative research gives more detailed and individual data (Streefkerk R. 2022).

Because surveys can generate such detailed and varied comments from respondents, they are ideal for qualitative research. They can even prompt researchers to discoveries they had not even contemplated before. Qualitative research surveys are also used to lay the groundwork for larger research projects by determining which quantitative questions to include in a future survey (Alchemer, n.d.).

6.2 Data collection method and data collection

The total responses to the survey were 48. Two-thirds of the responses came from 15 to 45-year old's who were living in the capital area of Finland. Other places of living covered all of Finland, from Helsinki to Lapland and the oldest responder was 64 years old.

Data was collected through an online survey questionnaire using Webropol. It was chosen because it was easy and simple for respondents, guaranteed their

anonymity and did not require any extra work, like responding to e-mails. We wanted to make the answering as simple and quick as possible. (Webropol, 2022). "A questionnaire is a data collection tool or instrument, while a survey is an overarching research method that involves collecting and analysing data from people using questionnaires" (McCombes, S. 2022). Online surveys have several advantages, including low costs and anonymity of participants, as well as quick data collection. On the other hand, online surveys can have several drawbacks, including a low willingness to participate, conservatism, and the risk of misinterpretation of questions (Kananen 2015, 202, 207–208).

Before submitting the questionnaire, questions were designed and tested with the working life partner and based on that we modified the questions to be more specific, clear, and easier to understand. Next was the implementation phase, where the drawn-up plan during the design phase was implemented (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2009, 23). The implementation phase involved sending a questionnaire to respondents and collecting and analyzing responses. We sent the questionnaire to religious communities and organizations by e-mail. The initial deadline for replying was six weeks and according to Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti (2009, 118), the two-weeks response time is sufficient. Since most of the responses were gained within the first two weeks, the survey was closed before the planned time. In research, the material is needed exactly as much as is necessary for the topic and the research task set. One way of solving the question of the adequacy of the material is its saturation. It makes perfect sense to think that there is enough material when new cases no longer bring added information, i.e., the material begins to repeat itself, so to speak (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 62-63).

The languages used in the questionnaire were Finnish and English. We chose the languages for the questionnaire due to our capacity to understand both languages, so no translation would be needed. The questionnaire was anonymous, so there was no knowledge of whether translations were used to fill the questionnaire. To get feedback on our questionnaire before the final questionnaire was sent, we tested the questionnaire with different question options with a few Muslim women who are active in their religious communities. We shared our link to the questionnaire in the social media groups for Muslim women and

some religious societies and organizations share the questionnaire with their female members. Initially, we decided to keep the questionnaire open for six weeks to gain enough answers. Most answers came in the first two weeks, and because the answers started to be similar, we consulted our work-life partner. A two-week response time is also enough according to Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti (2009, 118). They advise using a longer response time only for a particular reason. According to the work-life partner, we had a considerable number of answers, and we closed the questionnaire after three weeks.

After the data has been acquired, it needs to be processed before analysing. Descriptive statistics will give an overview of the data, including averages and variability measurements. Predictions or generalizations can be made based on the data using inferential statistics. It can either test the hypothesis or estimate the population parameter using the sample data (Bhandari, P. 2021).

6.3 Thematic data analysis

In this thesis, a thematic analysis method was used. Due to its theoretical freedom, the thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data (Caulfield, J. 2019).

The six steps of Braun and Clark's (2006) thematic analysis were utilized to analyse the data. From a set of qualitative data, such as thematic data, analysis is used to discover people's perspectives, opinions, experiences, or values. The six steps are 1. familiarizing yourself with your data, 2. generating initial codes, 3. searching for themes, 4. reviewing themes, 5. defining and naming the themes and 6. producing the report.

Thematic analysis was chosen method together with an inductive approach. The inductive approach is a method to analyse the information from the bottom-up by searching first the specific information and moving to the general conclusion (Bhandari, R, 2021). The inductive approach helps to analyse the

material from the specific information and find similarities and patterns to decode the information into themes and then to compare it to previous studies made on the subject.

The data was familiarized first by coding the respondents individually. Then the similarities and patterns were formed from the answers according to the questions by using Webropol analysis. This is where the choice of using a survey for qualitative was not the best option because the clear answers came to the quantitative questions and not to the qualitative, which were our focus to find out people's experiences and own meaning to the question. Therefore, the data of the open-ended questions were analysed more thoroughly and to focus on what words were being used according to our research question sub-categories were formed.

For the physical well-being words like a healthy diet, exercise and sleeping were focused on, and for the mental well-being words like spirituality, religion and mindfulness and own time were focused on. After that, the themes were formed. The effects of the services on the well-being world like religious organizations and friends and family were mentioned as service providers. As to forms of support words like religious services, peer support and mental support were mentioned. For the needs of the development words like education, trustfulness and professionalism, peer, and mental support. We spend a considerable amount of time reflecting on our thoughts because there is a risk in interpretations and making sure we do not add things based on our knowledge that is not there.

When attempting to figure out something about people's ideas, opinions, knowledge, experiences, or beliefs from a set of qualitative data, such as survey responses, thematic analysis is a useful technique to take (Bhandari, 2022).

We used thematic analysis to process, interpret, and evaluate the data, together with inductive reasoning. Survey responses were transcribed after familiarizing with the data thoroughly. First into initial codes as single answers from 1 to 48, then as groups through the questions looking for similar themes,

topics, patterns, or concepts in the answers mirroring to theories and our knowledge about the topic like pictured in Table 1. The answers were then adjusted to the final themes to answer our research question. After decoding we divided items into five subcategories and three themes to be analysed: 1. religious well-being of Muslim women, 2. effects of the services on well-being and 3. needs for development as described in Table 1.

During analysing process, we searched for words that were used to describe the well-being and categorized the responses under subcategories and themes. From our themes of the meaning of well-being, we divided the items into subcategories of physical well-being and mental well-being. In the second theme for the effects of the services we divided the items into subcategories of service providers and provided support for the religious well-being of the Muslim women. We chose to look for the positive and negative effects of the services and service providers.

The theme is about locating the topics relevant to the research problem, i.e., themes (Eskola & Suoranta 2008, 174–180). The theme is one of the methods of analysis of qualitative research and can be considered one form of content analysis (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018). Like coding, it can also be an initial structuring method of the material before moving to discourse analysis or narrative analysis, for example. In the thematic, the material highlights the key issues and typical features that often occur in the research task.

Table 1. Analysed themes

THEMES:	SUBCATEGORIES:	ITEMS:	VERBATIM:
Religious well-being of Muslim Women	Physical well-being	Ecxersice	"Exercising, relaxation, self - development and mental and physical balance. Being content and satisfied with ones lives."
		Healthy eating	"On tukiverkko ja ystäviä, joilta voi pyytää tarpeen vaatiessa apua. Mahdollisuus itselle sopivaan liikuntamuotoon ja omaan aikaan. Riittävä uni ja terveellinen ruoka." Meaning of translation: There is a support network and friends who can be asked for help if needed. Opportunity for a form of exercise suitable for oneself and one's own time. Adequate sleep and healthy food.
		Sleeping	"Mielentila: kiitollisuus olosuhteista, terveys, sopiva ruoka, puhtaus, turvallinen ihmissuhde, riittävä uni, tunne fyysisestä voimasta" Meaning of translation: State of mind: gratitude for circumstances, health, appropriate food, cleanliness, safe relationship, adequate sleep, feeling of physical strength
	Mental well-being	Religion/spirituality	"Sunnah'n mukaisilla hengellisyyden rutiineilla, lukemalla motivoivia juttuja mielenterveydestä, positiivisella ympäristöllä (seura) ja ruoka ja liikkuminen..." Meaning of translation: Spiritual routines of Sunnah's, reading motivational stories about mental health, a positive environment (companionship), and food and exercise
		Mindfullness	"Sisäistä rauhaa, omaa rauhaa, sosiaalista-, henkistä- ja fyysistä hyvinvoinnin tilaa. Aikaa ja tilaa hengittää" Meaning of translatio: Inner peace, one's own peace, a state of social, mental and physical well-being. Time and space to breathe
		Own time	"Järjestämällä itselleni omaa rauhaa" Meaning of translation: Arranging my own peacefull time.
Affect of the services to the well-being	Service providers	Religious organisations	"Tuki ollut ensiarvoisen tärkeää. Elämäni rakentuu moskeijan ympärille" Meaning of translation: Support has been important, my life is built around the mosque.
		Friends and family	"Meeting people from similar background"
	Provided support	Religious services	"Se että sai toisen ihmisen näkemyksen tilanteeseen jossa ei itse aina läheltä katsoen näe selvästi. Luottamuksellisuus. Järkevät ja loogiset näkemykset..." Meaning of translation: The fact that you can get another person's view of a situation where you don't always see clearly. Confidence. Reasonable and logical views...
		Peer support	"Vertaistuki, kuunteleminen" Meaning of translation: Peer support, listening.
		Mental support	"Muistutus, että elämä on lyhyt ja että tämäkin menee ohi" Meaning of translation: Remembering you that life is short and this will pass.
Needs for development	Religous support	Education	"Tärkeä olisi saada tukea erityisesti lasten kasvatukseen koska asumme ei muslimi maassa" Meaning of translation: It would be important to get support especially to raising children, because we are living in non-Islamic country.
		Trustful services	"Minulle on tärkeää, että saisin vaikeassa elämäntilanteessa keskustella sellaisen ihmisen kanssa, joka pystyy katsomaan tilannettani ilman ennakkoluuloja ja voin luottaa siihen että keskustelu on luottamuksellinen." Meaning of translation: It's important to me to be able to talk to someone in a difficult life situation who can look at my situation without prejudice and I can trust the conversation to be confidential."
		Mental support	"Support in coping in general"
		Community support	"Tällä hetkellä uskonnollista tukea ei ole saatavissa tarpeeksi. Monet uskonnolliset tahot ovat hyvin mieskeskeisiä ja tietyn kulttuurin alaisia" Meaning of transation: Currently, there is not enough religious support available. Many religious entities are very man-centered and subject to a certain culture.

These themes are the religious well-being of Muslim women, effects of the services on well-being and needs for development, which came from five sub-categories after decoding and familiarizing with the material.

7 RESULTS

This research aimed to find out how the current services of the religious communities support the religious well-being of Muslim women in Finland and how these services need to be developed. The result of our work has been grouped into three themes: 1. meaning of religious well-being, 2. services of the religious communities and 3. Development needs. The initial coding that was generated was broader, but after searching and defining, we decided on the before mentioned themes.

7.1 The meaning of well-being

Well-being can have an extremely broad meaning to different people as mentioned before. We found that similarly, religious well-being has broad meaning to different people. Some answers pointed straight to religion as a source of well-being, like prayers, reading Quran or Islamic gatherings. According to Ruthven (2012), the Islamic meaning of well-being is to follow Sunnah, the Prophet Muhammeds' way of life. According to hadeeth scholars, the Sunnah is everything conveyed from the Prophet, (Peace and blessings be upon him) in terms of his speeches or statements, code of conduct, unspoken or verbal approvals, character, detailed description, or history. (Al-Muala, 2007).

Physical well-being: Most of the results pointed to the importance of physical and mental well-being to support religious well-being, it was one category mentioned in all sections of our questionnaire. In this category, we analysed the answers with words like exercise, healthy eating and sleeping, which shows the importance of general healthy living habits to support religious well-being. Some lack of possibilities came up and this can be one of the development areas for the religious organizations in the future.

> Uskonnon mukainen hyvä arki. Hyvään arkeen kuuluu itsestä huolehtiminen, fyysinen ja psyykkinen sekä sosiaalinen hyvinvointi. Meaning of the translation: Everyday life according to religion. A

good everyday life includes taking care of yourself, physical and mental and social well-being. (Respondent 26).

Mielentila: kiitollisuus olosuhteista, terveys, sopiva ruoka, puhtaus, turvallinen ihmissuhde, riittävä uni, tunne fyysisestä voimasta. Meaning of the translation: State of mind: gratefulness for your circumstances, health, decent food, cleanliness, safe relationship, adequate sleep and feeling of physical strength. (Respondent 16).

On tukiverkko ja ystäviä, joilta voi pyytää tarpeen vaatiessa apua. Mahdollisuus itselle sopivaan liikuntamuotoon ja omaan aikaan. Riittävä uni ja terveellinen ruoka." Meaning of the translation: To have support network and friends to count on if needed. Possibility to exercise when it suits you. Adequate sleep and healthy food. (Respondent 28).

Mental well-being: To the question of how to take care of their well-being answers were very similar to the previous question about the meaning of well-being. The most used words were physical, eating and sleeping healthy, mindfully, religiously, and spiritually. From this point, it was expected visibility of the religion or spirituality to be part of the well-being of the Muslim women. Instead, it was most time connected to physical well-being as well. Many answers were connected to the meaning of religion and being religious as being the source of well-being, but a clear difference was between Finnish and English answers. In Finnish answers, it was more appointed to the religion as the source of well-being while in English answers it was pointed to more secular means to support the religious well-being. We did not know the ethnical origin of our participants, but we found more similarities in Finnish answers to our presumptions, while English ones were somehow surprising. This is interesting to further study, the differences in expectations what are the supportive factors of the religious well-being of Muslim women. Social support from family seemed more important factor in English answers than in Finnish.

Sunnan mukaisilla hengellisyyden rutiineilla, lukemalla motivoivia juttuja mielenterveydestä, positiivisella ympäristöllä (seura) ja ruoka ja liikkuminen... Meaning of the translation: "Leading life according to Sunnah, the spiritual routines, reading motivational stuff about mental health, a positive environment (companionship) and food and movement... (Respondent 12).

Interestingly, religion and spirituality were only mentioned once in the English answers, whereas it was mentioned multiple times in the Finnish answers. As the background or ethnicity of the respondents was not known, this could not be analysed through our research, otherwise, it would be an assumption why there was such a significant difference between the languages.

> Liikunta, itsestä huolta pitäminen, hyvä monipuolinen ruoka, us-konto/hengellisyys, perheenjäsenien ja ystävien yhteydenpito, huolta pitäminen, vapaaehtoistyö/toisten auttaminen ei pelkäs-tään tuttuja vaan myös tuntemattomia, sadaqan maksaminen, te-keminen asioista mikä tuo hyvää mieltä." Meaning of the transla-tion: Exercise, self-care. good varieties of food, religion/spirituality, keeping family members and friends in touch with care, volunteer-ing/helping others not only acquaintances but also strangers, pay-ing for sadaqa (charity), doing things that brings good spirits. (Re-spondent 41).

7.2 Effects of the services on the religious well-being

Another main theme in our results was the services. For what issue did Muslim women try to get support from religious organizations, from where did they acquire that support, what kind of effects (positive and negative) did they have from the services and what kind of services are needed.

The issues that Muslim women acquired support for were religious issues con-cerning matters about marriage and divorce and coping in general. When asked where the support was sought from, nearly three quarters answered a mosque and more than one third answered religious organization. When look-ing at the different languages, this was a surprise to us. Of the English an-swers, none mentioned a mosque as a place of support.

Peer support, clarification of matters and communality were given as answers when asked what had affected their well-being positively. On the negative side, responders felt that they were not taken seriously, or that the man was fa-voured over the woman in matters like divorce for example. The lack of reli-gious knowledge, incompetence and ignorance were also felt as negative im-pacts. Some also felt that they were being judged for not being a good believer

or not being religious enough and that those were the reasons they were having problems and having too many responsibilities as a woman.

> I felt like I am not a good believer, and I need to have a stronger connection with my religion for my problems to go away." (Respondent 1).

> Tietämättömyys tai uskonnollinen yksipuolisuus tulkita asioita (tietyn koulukunnan mukaan)." Meaning of the translation: Ignorance or narrow way of interpreting religious things (following specific school of thought) (Respondent 19).

7.3 Needs for development

The need that rose from the answers was providing low threshold services in the Finnish language and religious peer support groups. Services for different age groups, from children to the elderly, were needed and it shows that the well-being of the family members supports the well-being of Muslim women. One important finding was that the background and culture play a bigger part when interpreting religion. This also affects the provided services.

> Uskonnollisia palveluita tarvittaisiin paljon enemmän. Kaikki tapahtuu pk-seudulla ja muilla paikkakunnilla ei oikeastaan ole mitään toimintaa siskoille mikä harmittaa." The meaning of translation: "Much more religious services are needed. Everything happens in the capital region and other localities do not really have any activity for the sisters, which annoys me." (Respondent 35).

> Mielestäni muslimiyhteisössä tulisi olla tiukemmin kiinni uskonnossa. Kotimaan kulttuuri (myös Suomen) ja Islamin uskonto on kaksi eri asiaa ja ne tulisi osata erottaa, jos tekee työtä uskonnollisen yhteisön parissa. Olen useamman kerran neuvonut muita muslimeita menemään mieluummin epäuskovan vastaanotolle kuin johonkin muslimi järjestön tms. luo, kun en ole voinut olla varma, että sieltä saa oikeaa neuvoa ja tiedot ei vuoda kahvipöydässä. Epäuskovan vastaanotolla tietää jo etukäteen varoa, että neuvot eivät välttämättä ole islamin mukaisia, muslimilta taas olettaisi olevan, vaikka ei aina ole. Yhteisössämme on myös ongelmana ihmiset, jotka palkataan työtehtäviin, joihin he eivät ole päteviä. Joillain uupuu kielitaito, ymmärrys asiasta minkä parissa työskentelee ja kolmannella ei ole mitään hajua siitä mitä tarkoittaa vaitiolovelvollisuus. Olisi hyvä, jos lapsille ja nuorille järjestettäisiin enemmän jatkuvaa toimintaa." Meaning of the translation: I

believe that the Muslim community should be more attached to religion. Domestic culture (including Finnish) and Islam's religion are two different things and should be able to distinguish between them if you work with a religious community. On several occasions, I have advised other Muslims to go to the non-Muslim reception rather than to a Muslim organization, etc., when I have not been sure that the right advice is available there and that the information does not leak at the coffee table. At the non-Muslim reception, you know in advance that you must be careful as the advice may not be in line with Islam, while a Muslim would be expected to be, even if it is not always. There is also a problem in our community with people who are hired for jobs for which they are not qualified. Some people lack language skills, understanding what they are working on and the third has no idea what it is the meaning of secrecy. It would be good if more continuous activities were organized for children and young people. (Respondent 22).

Positive effects were religious support and a reminder that life is short. The communality, sisterhood and having someone that listens. Also having clarity and perspective on their situation was said to be positive.

Tuki ollut ensiarvoisen tärkeää. Elämäni rakentuu moskeijan ympärille. Meaning of the translation: Support has an immense importance. My life has built around a mosque. (Respondent 24).

Muistutus, että elämä on lyhyt ja että tämäkin menee ohi. Meaning of the translation: A reminder that life is short and that this too will pass. (Respondent 33).

Se että sai toisen ihmisen näkemyksen tilanteeseen, jossa ei itse aina läheltä katsoen näe selvästi. Luottamuksellisuus. Järkevät ja loogiset näkemykset... Meaning of the translation: Getting another person's perspective in a situation, where you are too close to see clearly. Confidentiality. Reasonable and logical views... (Respondent 34).

As for the negative effects, responses tell that they were not good enough Muslims (believers) and they felt blamed. In the answers, they said that men were favoured over women and the culture of men was above religious rules. Ignorance, judgement and not being professional or practising Muslims were mentioned. A typical answer would be to have sabr and Allah will reward you.

Miestä suosittiin koska minua ei otettu vakavasti.
Meaning of the translation: The man was favoured because I was not taken seriously. (Respondent 11).

> Tällä hetkellä uskonnollista tukea ei ole saatavissa tarpeeksi. Monet uskonnolliset tahot ovat hyvin mieskeskeisiä ja tietyn kulttuurin alaisia. The meaning of the translation: At present, there is not enough religious support available. Many religious entities are very male-centred and subject to a particular culture. (Respondent 40).

The feeling that there are not enough services to support the religious well-being of women. Need for Professional religious services to support the well-being of Muslim women was mentioned and wanted more, especially since it was felt that sometimes other services cannot see or consider the needs of the Muslim women, because of the victimizing the Muslim women, which can even lead to not seeing the real problems women are facing. The need to talk to somebody who can understand that religion is a source of power, not limitation.

> Arvostaisin sitä, että henkilö olisi korkeakoulutettu, koulutettu nimenomaan hyvinvoinnin tukemiseen. Olen kokenut, että musliminainen saatetaan valitettavasti joskus, nähdään julkisessa terveydenhuollossa uhrina jota, mies kohtelee väärin, koska nainen voi pahoin. Silloin todelliset ongelmat, joiden juurisyy voi olla vaikkapa lapsuuden kokemuksissa, voivat jäädä huomiotta, jos keskitytään vain hyvää tarkoittaen 'pelastamaan' naista. Haluan keskusteluapua sellaiselta ihmiseltä, joka ymmärtää uskontoni voimavarana eikä rajoitteena. Myös erilaiset vertaisryhmät olisivat hyödyllisiä. Meaning of the translation: I would appreciate that the person would be educated, trained especially to support well-being. I have experienced that, unfortunately, a Muslim woman may sometimes be seen, for example, in public health care as a victim who is mistreated by a man because she feels sick. Then the real problems, the root cause of which said, in childhood experiences, can be overlooked if the focus is only on the well-intentioned 'saving' woman. I want conversational help from someone who understands my religion as an asset and not as a constraint. Different peer groups would also be useful. (Respondent 34)

8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

In qualitative research, ethical considerations are significant. In general, re-search ethics in qualitative research are divided into two categories: ethical guidelines were established to protect participants, and professional ethics standards were established to assure "sound scientific practice and publicly responsible research." (Pietilä, A. & al, 2020, 49). The following sections will discuss research ethics in qualitative research and how they relate to our find-ings. Ethical considerations have special importance in our thesis because we are researching the service behaviour of Muslim women and all the writers of this thesis belong to the same reference group.

Before the preparation of our questionnaire and during the preparation of our survey questions, we ensured that we are following the guidelines of ethical research and privacy guidelines by applying the General Data Protection Reg-ulations (EU GDPR). We discussed the privacy and anonymity of our research participants and through that discussion, we decided to make an anonymous survey to be distributed in social media groups for Muslim women and religious communities s, so that nobody can be identified during our research process. We intended to make open-ended questions and tried to avoid our assump-tions, which we may have as a member of the community. For example, the quality of the services provided by the religious communities does not support the religious well-being of the women due to a lack of professional knowledge. We should not think that if we do not find support, this applies to others too.

According to our research results, many women benefited from the services provided by the religious communities to support their religious well-being. Some assumptions may have something to do with being a revert to Islam compared to being a born Muslim. As a revert, you must study, question, and learn about the new things that you are about to accept as part of your life. When you are born and raised in a Muslim family, you may not question what you are taught, how things are done and whether they are cultural or religious. Religiosity is integrated into one's life differently when one grows up with a religious family as is mentioned in the PEW-research centre study (2016)

about the links between childhood upbringing to a religious identity. To reverts, it might be something extra, more external than internal, at least at the beginning of the process.

We decided to conduct qualitative research, but not to make individual interviews, because of our Islamic conviction to avoid bias in conducting the interview and to minimize the affection to the answers (Seale et al., 2004, 20), while interviewees may know us. This gives participants more freedom to answer honestly and thus provides more objective information to our research.

While researching the use of the services in the religious community our subjects must understand why we are collecting this information, as it is the cornerstone of the research ethics to understand where and how the research results are used. (European Commission, 2018, 10). During our research permit process, we discussed our research proposal with our work-life partner. Our work-life partner supported the idea of the anonymous questionnaire and requested the possibility to use the research results for developing their services further, which was added to the introduction of the questionnaire for answerers to understand before answering.

We conducted our questionnaire in English and Finnish languages, due to our capacity to analyse the answers. In our questionnaire, we did not ask the ethnicity or belonging to registered religious communities to avoid any illegal profiling according to the European Commission regulations (European Commission, 2018). Religious conviction is considered sensitive information according to the Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and has specific protection. While our questionnaire is intended for Muslim women, we assume that all the answers are from Muslims. The fact is that the Muslim community in Finland is still small, while answerers are not recognizable, hence their privacy is not violated. From the responses in Finnish and English language, we could not tell the ethnicity of the participants.

The research was conducted with the ethical standards of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity and by the guidelines of the Diaconia University of applied sciences. All the participants were informed about anonymity and

answering was voluntary. The use of the research result by the work-life part-
ner was informed and the use of Data collection as well according to the Finn-
ish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (TENK, 2019).

9 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

We recommend that more research is needed to understand the needs of the Muslim community in Finland and the factors that support religious well-being. Developing the services of the Muslim community is essential for supporting the well-being of the Muslim community and especially women. Women's religious well-being significantly supports the well-being of the next generations. The need for religion conscious services supports the well-being and the religious well-being of Muslim women.

More education is needed for non-Muslim professionals to understand the meaning of religious well-being when it is a huge part of a person's life. More religious and professional education is needed for the service providers in the religious community to support the trustfulness of the services. Provided services should be more religion conscious, yet not following only one or too strict school of thought. Services should be provided by educated Muslim professionals and targeted to different age groups.

> Minulle on tärkeää, että saisin vaikeassa elämäntilanteessa keskustella sellaisen ihmisen kanssa, joka pystyy katsomaan tilannettani ilman ennakkoluuloja ja voin luottaa siihen, että keskustelu on luottamuksellinen." The meaning of translation: "It is important to me that in a difficult life situation, I can talk to someone who is able to look at my situation without prejudice, and I can trust on the conversation that it will be confidential." (Respondent 34).

> Enemmän uskonnollisia tieteellisiä tilaisuuksia ja asiantuntija luentoja." Meaning of the translation: "More religious scientific occasions and expert lectures. Respondent 37)

It is particularly challenging to find the services that can fit all Muslim women. The background can play a big part in the needs for services and what issues support the well-being. From our research, we found that answers between Finnish and English ones differentiated greatly. We did not know from the answers the ethnicity of the respondents. It would be interesting to make comparative research among Muslim women representing different ethnicities. This way could be offered more targeted services, which support the well-being of Muslim women.

Because our question was about how the services from religious communities affect religious well-being, it includes their definitions or meanings of well-being, which needs to be understood before making any suggestions. Because different services are needed and benefitted different ways by different individuals. All services do not fit all. To make recommendations, we needed to ask what Muslim women feel they need and what is lacking in the services.

From previous studies about religious well-being, it was found that religion and religious services are important factors in a Muslim woman's life. Analysed results show that religiousness plays a significant role in a Muslim woman's life, and it makes them feel empowered. Interesting in the results, was that in the English answers faith or the need for religious services did not occur. While the Finnish answers were about the need for religious services offered by the Muslim community. The findings of our analyses show that the services of religious communities play a significant role in supporting the religious well-being of Muslim women in Finland. According to the results, the religious well-being of Muslim women is a combination of physical and mental -being, as it is mentioned in the article by Rezaei, S. (2015) about the psychological well-being of Muslim Middle eastern women living in the United State. While we asked in the questionnaire about religious well-being, it was not expected to point that much about physical well-being.

The support was sought from mosques, religious organizations, family and friends and non-religious service providers. One of the biggest differences between the Finnish and English answers was in the place where the help or support was acquired if help was sought. None of the English answers included Mosque as the place of support, while most of the Finnish responses were a Mosque. Religious issues, for example marriage and divorce, were the main reasons for seeking support.

According to our findings, the effects of the services of the religious communities were positive and negative. Positive effects supported the psychological and mental well-being of Muslim women. In our conclusion the sense of belonging, peer support and sisterhood was the most important forms of support. On the negative side, there was no indication that the religious communities

organize any activities supporting physical well-being, although non-religious services offered by religious communities are wanted. In our conclusion we found some reasons why the effects were negative: the services were unjust, sexist, pious, not religious nor professional enough, or not following the same school of thought (Islamic). These made women choose non-religious service providers even in cases where they felt that religious support would have been needed and wanted.

These findings are in line with the idea that religious community can be a crucial factor in the well-being of Muslim women and especially immigrants according to our familiarizing with the previous studies. Our findings show that religious well-being is supported by many diverse sources, like spiritual, physical, psychological, intellectual, social, and material. The combination of these sources forms a "complete well-being" as it came out in our findings and previous studies. We were able to utilize and reflect on our preconceived themes, that we expected to find in the answers, based on our existing knowledge.

10 DISCUSSION

From the beginning of our process, we had difficulties setting up our research topic clearly, because it was changing and we had a different understanding of what we are researching, even after multiple discussions in our team. We had a mutual understanding that we want to research something to do with Muslim women's social issues in Finland. First, the position of Muslim women in Finland was discussed but found that the topic is sensitive and does not relate strictly to our intended work-life partner Amal. More challenging was to coordinate our schedules due to our duties, like family, health issues and work. Compared to other studies, we did not realize how time-consuming and demanding the thesis process was, and this delayed our process.

We wanted to find a topic to learn about the well-being of Muslim women and finally decided to research the services supporting the religious well-being of Muslim women in Finland. It was clear that we needed to focus on ethical reliability and make sure that we as authors need to put our assumptions aside when we are researching inside our reference group. It can be more difficult to be objective about issues that you think you already know. The topic is relevant due to the growing number of Muslims in Finland to find out what factors support Muslim women to feel better. We found that the meaning of the religion as part of the well-being factor is important in Muslim women's life, similarly to religion and spirituality are related to higher psychological and physical well-being according to Levin and Chatters (1998),

Throughout our thesis process, we have had interesting conversations about what we thought we would find out from our analysis. We noticed that we hold some assumptions for example that the current services do not provide enough support for well-being. Although some of us did have personal experience using the services of religious communities, we still had the idea that they did not support the Muslim women well enough. Since we are all Muslim women, we are naturally interested in the well-being of Muslim women. This we wanted to incorporate into our future profession, which meant that choosing the title "Religious well-being of Muslim women" was meaningful to all of us.

This also created some difficulties for us because the topic itself is very wide and we had some challenges narrowing it down. It gave us some new perspective on our assumptions and understanding of how important it is to research and not to think that "luulo ei ole tiedon väärti," which loosely translated means that belief is not worth knowing.

The services of the religious communities are important for Muslim women to support their well-being. Although services are not available to all, they are not easy to find, and people are not aware of the services that religious communities provide. For this reason, it is important to have low threshold services available. Active Muslim women of religious communities know of the services of the religious communities, while it is not clear how easily women who are not active in the community find the services, although they might need these services.

11 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The entire process of studies, from the beginning to the thesis process has given Pia more knowledge about the research skills which combined with her previous knowledge about practical issues in the social sector field has improved her understanding more deeply of factors that impact people's life. She has learned new skills on how to work with people and use more critical thinking in all parts of her life. The process has shown her the importance of understanding the issues from different perspectives and putting her assumptions beside them. Improving her research skills has opened new windows to understand how to use her skills for the development of new initiatives. Understanding the theory behind practice better has opened new windows in Pia's life and given her more tools and confidence to work in the field of social work.

Studies have taught Pia about her weaknesses and strengths, which can help her to concentrate on developing her weaknesses to be more professional in her work as a social service worker.

Nadia has been studying social services for the last four years. And she was interested in this subject because, before this study, she had experience as a frontline worker in social services. Which gives her a deeper understanding and motivation that she really loves to work that involve in helping people. In these years of studies, she grew a lot with working in different social service fields such as elderlies, child, and autism.

This thesis was a powerful addition in her learnings and opens the new door for her. In the beginning it was really challenging to dive deep in the thesis, as the process progressed, her groupmates helped her a lot to understand the fact of the process. She also learned the importance and the Impact of the theories in research process. In this thesis process she has not only developed her theoretical knowledge but also practical use of them which widens her understanding. As the research progress, she has a vast idea about the Muslim community and their religious wellbeing here in Finland. Also, from this thesis

she had learn the difference between by born Muslim and converted Muslim. That was really eye opening and will help her in her future career.

Yanika has been studying for the past six semesters in the Degree Program of Social Sciences at the Diaconia University of Applied Sciences. Yanika has used a variety of social services as a service user, and those many perspectives have benefited her in developing a deeper professional understanding of the social service sector while studying and conducting research. Developing is never-ending and some areas that need developing are setting boundaries and standing up for yourself before others. Yanika feels that her best or strongest asset is her own experience, and she will try to use that as she is training to be an official expert by experience. Having said that, Yanika knows that for example researching, producing academic writing, and many other professional skills still need more development. These studies have been a dream of Yanika since 2008 because she wants to give back to others the support she received when she was in need herself.

Really understanding that people have quite different ways of thinking, that their priorities differ greatly and that it is a blessing and a curse at the same time. Having to work with people you do not necessarily have a good relationship with, especially at the beginning of the studies, was very necessary for professionalism. The thesis process has been one of the most challenging to deal with. Having so different standards and ideas about what and how things need to be done, made the task extremely hard and unfortunately will not be the best memory to hold on to.

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APPENDIX 1. Questionnaire

Are you a Muslim woman living in Finland and using the services of the religious communities?

We are three students from DIAK, BA social services. This questionnaire is part of our thesis which focuses on the well-being of Muslim women. We want to research how the religious communities support the well-being of Muslim women and to give recommendations to our work-life partner Amal to develop their services further, we want to find out what services are needed by Muslim women. The questionnaire will be available until the end of November 2021.

In this questionnaire, we focus on the following services: marriage, divorce, and custody counselling (issues), domestic violence and mental health. Religious communities in our questionnaire mean mosques and religious organizations (or organizations which have or use religion in their activities or services).

The questionnaire is anonymous, we will not have access to the identity of the survey responders, so none of the answers will be recognizable. The answer will also be destroyed after the thesis is accepted. We would highly appreciate your time spent on this questionnaire; your answers would be very important to us. Answering the questionnaire would only take a few minutes.

DATA Protection
Information is collected by Webropol, and the answers will be destroyed after the thesis is accepted. Amal has the right to use the results of the research for their development work.
If you wish to know more about our questionnaire, please do not hesitate to contact us:

Pia Jardi pia.jardi@student.diak.fi
Nadia Nowshin nadia.nowshin@student.diak.fi
Yanika Wilen yanika.wilen@student.diak.fi

Questions:

1. Age

2. City

3. Type of community where the services were provided

• Religious community (mosque)

• Religious organizations

• Other

4. How the services of the religious communities or organizations support your well-being?

• What does wellbeing mean to you?

• How do you take care of your own wellbeing?

• What kind of services have you used in the religious communities?

• Marriage counselling

• Divorce counselling (For example contracts, custody issues)

• Domestic Violence

• Mental Health

• Other, pls specify

The effect you have on your well-being from the services.

• What supported it?

• What affected negatively?

5. Needs for development

What kind of services do you wish to have from the religious communities or organizations?

6. If you wish to elaborate your answers further and participate in an interview, please leave your contact information. In this case, interviewers will know your identity, but no personal information will be used or recognizable from the answers in the Thesis.