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Labour Market Activity amongst Pakistani and Bangladeshi Women in the UK and Muslim Women in Israel

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Previous research, based on large nationally representative surveys such as the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and census data from Britain and Israel, has consistently demonstrated that Pakistani and Bangladeshi women in Britain and Muslim women in Israel have experienced low participation rates in the labour market (Brown 2000; Dale, et al. 2002; Holdsworth and Dale 1997; Khattab 2002; Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov 1992; Semyonov, et al. 1999). Dale et al. (2002:6) found that 30 per cent of Pakistani women and 20 per cent of Bangladeshi women aged 18-59 were economically active. Likewise, Khattab (2002:100) found that the rate of economic activity among Muslim women in Israel as a whole accounted for 16 per cent. The literature

from Britain suggests that Pakistani and Bangladeshi women have exceptionally high rates of unemployment with more than quarter of them being unemployed (Brown 2000; Dale, et al. 2002; West and Pilgrim 1995). Unfortunately, most studies and national statistics do not provide any satisfactory information about the unemployment among Muslim women whether in Britain or in Israel. Thus, this comparative study will contribute to the growing literature on the labour market profile of women from ethnic minorities, firstly by increasing knowledge about the employment patterns of Muslim women in Israel, and secondly, and more generally, by gaining a better understanding of the factors that determine the labour market prospects for Muslim women within industrialised societies such as Britain.

Context

The Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities in Britain are relatively recent migrants with settlement in very specific geographical areas, often reflecting the demands for cheap migrant labour in the 1950s and 1960s. Most of the older women followed their husbands as dependants once the latter found work. However, their lack of qualifications and lack of fluency in English, combined with the traditional domestic division of labour and cultural norms, posed considerable barriers to finding employment in the formal labour market (Modood *et al* 1997). According to the 2001 UK Census, the Pakistani and Bangladeshi population constitutes approximately 1.2 per cent of the total population and slightly more than one fifth (21 per cent) of the total ethnic minorities in Britain (Official National Statistics Census 2001). In female labour market, the share of Pakistani and Bangladeshi women is much smaller than their share of the total female population (0.4 per cent only). Culturally, more than 95 per cent of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis

in Britain are Muslims (Brown 2000). Islam, as a religion, is considered as a key factor in determining their identity, but it also features as a new basis for discrimination against them, which may influence their employment choices to some extent (Bahramitesh 2003).

Muslims in Israel are the major non-Jewish (Palestinian-Arab) minority constituting approximately 13 per cent of the total population in Israel and 78 per cent of the total Palestinian-Arab population (Central Bureau of Statistics 2002). Muslims, as other Palestinians in Israel (Christians and Druze) have become an involuntary minority following large-scale expulsions and escape during the 1948 war. They experience widespread discrimination in the economic, social and educational spheres (Adalah 2011). Arabs have extremely limited employment opportunities, higher unemployment rates and face job discrimination. Muslim women enjoy a much higher occupational status than Muslim men because of cultural reasons and the presence of a local enclave economy that provides jobs for Muslim women within the labour force (Khattab 2002). The majority of them work in non-manual jobs as professionals, semi-professionals and clerical staff, especially in education, health services, welfare and social work. In contrast, Pakistani and Bangladeshi women who are in the labour force in Britain have a disproportionate share of low grade manual work (West and Pilgrim 1995).

In general, women in both communities are still considered to be traditionally oriented and, as in other Muslim countries, are highly influenced by Muslim culture, especially in regard to sexuality and gender roles (Brown 2000; Dale, et al. 2002; Kraus 2002). Thus, women are seen mainly as wives and mothers who should be active only in their homes and private life (Al-Nabhani 1999). I identified three major differences between Muslims in Britain and Israel. Firstly, Muslim women in Israel belong to involuntary national minority group in their

homeland, whereas the Pakistani and Bangladeshi have opted to stay in Britain. Secondly, both groups have different residential patterns (within and between racial and ethnic groups). Muslim women in Israel mainly reside in rural areas (villages and small towns) and are segregated from the Jewish majority areas (Khattab 2002, Kraus 2002). Pakistani and Bangladeshi people tend to reside in inner cities and metropolitan areas, often in areas of high concentration of ethnic minorities such as the case of Tower Hamlet in London. Thirdly, due to two different processes, the Palestinian community in Israel has established an independent enclave economy in which most economically active Muslim women are employed. In the case of Pakistani and Bangladeshi women in Britain, although many economically active women depend on local community-based jobs, yet the majority of them rely on the general labour market in searching for jobs.

In this paper, I will examine how and to what extent these differences generate different employment patterns amongst the two groups. How and to what extent the different socio-economic and political contexts faced by women in both societies produce different or similar employment patterns? What are the social forces that encourage Muslim women to become economically active? How age and family responsibilities shape their odds to join the labour market?

Theoretical Background

Some studies, based on the cultural model, argue that the Islamic culture plays a key role in restricting women's economic activity outside the household (Brah 1993; West and Pilgrim 1995; Evans and Bowlby 2000; Inglehart et al 2009). Yet, none of the studies have provided

empirical evidence of the effect for cultural background. Nor shown why the cultural background[1] has differential influences on different ethnic groups who share identical religious backgrounds such as Indian Muslim women and Pakistani-Bangladeshi Muslim women (Brown 2000). Moreover, the cultural explanation has been criticised by other studies suggesting that other factors might be more important than the religious background such as the opportunities offered in the local labour market, timing of immigration and language ability (Holdsworth and Dale 1997; Khattab 2002).

These studies suggest to look at the employment opportunities available for women at the local labour market, the change in human capital such as education among women and the racist practices by employers (Ahmad 2001; Dale, et al. 2002). In addition, these studies highlighted the role of age in shaping the labour force participation of minority women. Age has been seen as a proxy of the social and economic transformation experienced by both Palestinians in Israel and Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in Britain over the last four to five decades (Al-Haj 1995; Kraus 2002; Dale, et al. 2002).

Methods and Data

4.1 Data and Variables

The analysis of the labour market prospects for Muslim women in Israel is based on data obtained from the 2001 Israeli census, and for Pakistani-Bangladeshi women in the UK on the 2 per cent Individual Sample of Anonymised Records (SARs) from the 2001 Census for GB. In the

[1] It should be made clear here that the only similar cultural background between these groups is Islam. However, apart of this, there may be number of traditional and local cultural practices that are specific to each group.

case of Muslim women in Israel, a total of 6,402 economically active women aged 18-59 were included in the analysis. In the Pakistani-Bangladeshi case, a total of 762 economically active women aged 18-59 were included in the analysis. Although these data provide extremely rich information about all variables of interest, some variables were defined differently in each census. In what follows the variables included in the analysis are briefly described.

Dependent variables:

Economic activity: a variable indicating whether the woman is economically inactive, employed or unemployed. The variable was coded 1 if the woman works, 2 if she does not work with the economically inactive women as the reference group.

Independent variables:

Occupational positions: this variable indicates the occupational distribution of women. It has 6 categories. 1) professional and semi-professional occupations; 2) managerial and clerical occupations; 3) sales and services; 4) skilled manual occupations; 5) semi-skilled and unskilled occupations and; 6) not stated occupations.

Educational qualification has 3 categories: no qualification, low tertiary education (less than academic) and high tertiary education (academic). It is worth noting that the 'no qualifications' category includes also those women with less than 8 years of formal education.

Age: 5 age categories (intervals) were defined; 18-24, 25-29, 30-39, 40-49, and 50-59. The category 18-24 was the reference group.

Place of birth is a dummy variable indicating whether the woman born in the UK or overseas. The variable coded 1 for women born in the UK and 0 for those born overseas. This variable was exclusively defined for the UK models.

Ethnic enclave was coded 1 if the women live in the ethnic enclave, and was coded 0 if otherwise. This variable was exclusively defined for the Israeli models.

Marital status was coded 1 if married and 0 if otherwise.

Number of children was defined for Muslim women in Israel and *the presence of dependent children* was defined for Pakistani-Bangladeshi women due to differences between the Israeli and the UK data. For *number of children* 4 categories were defined: no children (reference group), 1-2 children, 3-4 children and 5 or more children. As for the *presence of dependent children* it was coded 1 if one or more dependent children and 0 if otherwise.

Household size is a continuous variable indicating the number of people living in the household.

Number of cars in household indicates the number of cars owned by different people in the household. In the UK data the variable was measured using a 4-point scale: 0 car, 1 car, 2 cars, and 3 or more cars, while in the Israeli data the variable was measured using a 3-point scale: 0 car, 1 car, and 2 or more cars.

Economic status of partner has 2 categories: partner in work (1) and partner are not in work or no partner (0).

Occupational position indicates the type of occupation. Three categories were defined: 1) non-manual occupation, 2) manual occupation and 3) no or unknown occupation.

Findings

The findings section begins by reporting the proportion of women being economically active and the proportion of those being unemployed. From Table 1, as expected, both Pakistani-Bangladeshi women in Britain, and Muslim women in Israel, have very low levels of labour force participation relative to the participation rate among white women in Britain, and Jewish women in Israel. For example, while 28 per cent of Pakistani-Bangladeshi women are economically active, the comparable figure among white women is 58 per cent (Owen 1994:51, Table 5.1). The participation rate among Muslim women in Israel was even much lower than Pakistani-Bangladeshi women with 19 per cent of them only being economically active. Comparable figures for Jewish women show 77 per cent economically active. In terms of unemployment, the figures in Table 2 show that Pakistani-Bangladeshi women are much more likely to be unemployed than Muslim women in Israel (31 per cent vs. 12 per cent respectively). Their unemployment rate is extremely high, not only relative to Muslim women in Israel, but also and especially, to white women in Britain whose unemployment rate is very low with 6.3 per cent being unemployed (Owen 1994:136, Table 8.1). Although Muslim women in Israel experience lower levels of unemployment than Pakistani-Bangladeshi women in Britain, their unemployment rate remains relatively high by Israeli standards. While 12 per cent of Muslim women are unemployed, Jewish women recorded lower levels of unemployment with 8 per cent only being unemployed (Kraus 2002:42, Figure 3.6).

Table 1: Labour market participation by country, women aged 18-59 (per cent)

Labour market participation	UK, 2001		Israel, 2001	
	P&B women	White women*	Muslim women	Jewish women
Economically active	28	58	19	77
Economically inactive	72	42	81	23
N	2710	Xxx	34131	xxx

* source: Owen 1994:51, Table 5.1

Table 2: Employment status by country, women aged 18-59 (per cent)

Employment rate	UK, 1991		Israel, 1995	
	P&B women	White women*	Muslim women	Jewish women**
Employed	69	93.7	88	92
Unemployed	31	6.3	12	8
N	762	Xxx	6402	xxx

* source: Owen 1994:51, Table 8.1
** source: Kraus 2002:42, Figure 3.6

These findings suggest that to some extent, both ethnic minorities share similar patterns of labour market outcomes in which they experience lower levels of economic activity and higher levels of unemployment than the dominant group in each society. Nevertheless, the data also suggest that despite these similar patterns, significant differences exist between them regarding their economic activity and unemployment levels. Both aspects of similarity and divergence are important and will be discussed in more depth in the discussion section.

After presenting the distribution of these women in terms of their economic activity and unemployment, it is important to look at the distribution of their occupational positions obtaining broader picture regarding the employment patterns of these groups. In Table 3 the distribution of women's occupational positions is presented. The table suggests that while Muslim women in Israel are much more likely to hold professional and semi-professional positions than Pakistani-Bangladeshi women in Britain (29 per cent and 14 per cent for these groups respectively), the

latter are more likely than the former to hold managerial and clerical positions with 29 per cent of them holding these jobs. The comparable proportion amongst Muslim women in Israel is only 12 per cent. Pakistani-Bangladeshi women are also more likely to hold sales and services jobs (23 per cent versus 10 per cent respectively) and skilled manual jobs (25 per cent versus 15 per cent respectively) but less likely to hold unskilled manual jobs (5 per cent versus 10 per cent respectively). Another interesting difference in their occupational positions' distribution is the proportion of women who have not stated their occupations with quarter of Muslim women being in this category versus 5 per cent only of Pakistani-Bangladeshi women. We can only speculate regarding the reasons of this high proportion of Muslim women in Israel who have not stated their occupational position. It can be that women who work as unskilled manual workers or in undesirable jobs were less motivated to report the exact occupation avoiding embarrassment. If this speculation were true, then we would have higher concentration of Muslim women on lower end of the scale making the occupational profile of Muslim women in Israel much more different from the comparable patterns amongst Pakistani-Bangladeshi women in Britain. Even if this speculation turns out to be untrue, we still can see how the occupational profiles of these groups are different. These profiles are likely to reflect and to be generated by the employment opportunity structure available for each one of these groups. Although individual attributes of women such as their human capital may partially account for these occupational profiles, but one should also look at structural factors such as the belonging of these women to minority groups and their residential patterns. Equally important are their position (as a group) within the social structure and class system and the employment opportunities available at both the local and the general levels. For example, if we go back to Table 3 for a while and

look at the category 'sales and cervices' we can see that the proportion amongst Pakistani-Bangladeshi women is double the proportion amongst Muslim women in Israel. This difference is no doubt interesting and can be due structural differences between the labour markets in Israel and in Britain. No doubt that the issue of occupational position of women and the macro-structural factors that determine it are extremely important and should be explored, in particular as far as minority women are concerned. However, as the main purpose of this study is looking at the economic activity and unemployment of these women, the issue of women occupational profile cannot be fully addressed here, thus should be addressed in a separate paper. This issue will be revisited in the discussion. In the meanwhile, I turn to report the results from the multinomial analysis, which is presented in Tables 4 and 5.

Two models will be presented; the first model in Table 4 displaying the results of modelling economic status (economically inactive versus employed and unemployed) for Muslim women in Israel, whereas in the second model displaying the results for Pakistani-Bangladeshi women in Britain. In these tables the beta coefficient (B), the standard error (SE) and the exponential of the coefficient – exp(B) are reported, but the focus in reporting the results will be mostly based on the exp(B) which indicates the odds ratio. It can be seen from tables 4 and 5 that the effect of education on being employed and unemployed (economically active) is positive and highly significant. Women (from both groups) with lower and higher tertiary education are more likely to be economically active than women with no educational qualification. However, the effect of education, especially higher tertiary education, is clearly stronger for Muslim women in Israel than for Pakistani-Bangladeshi women in Britain (odds ratio of 14.41 and 6.82 for Muslim women in Israel and Pakistani-Bangladeshi women in Britain

respectively). In addition, the coefficient of higher tertiary on Pakistani-Bangladeshi women being unemployed versus economically inactive is statistically insignificant. It is also clear that while the odds ratio of both educational levels among Muslim women in Israel is very similar, among Pakistani-Bangladeshi women the odds ratio of lower tertiary education is almost double the odds of higher tertiary education (10.50 vs. 6.82 in the case of employment and 7.58 vs. 2.62 in the case of unemployment). This result is interesting and challenges the initial expectations that women with academic education should have more employment opportunities and thus higher odds in being employed (economically active). This result may suggest that Pakistani-Bangladeshi women with academic education would substantially depend on the general labour market, which means that they would also face more discrimination than women with lower tertiary education who may find suitable jobs within the local or community-based labour market. The latter would also be more willing to accept jobs that do not exactly match their qualification. However is the reason for that we should be careful not to misinterpret this finding, as it means that there is no significant difference between women with academic education and women with no qualification in their odds of being unemployed contrasted with the odds of being economically inactive.

Living in the ethnic enclave for Muslim women in Israel increases the odds of being employed by 1.67 with a significance of less than 0.01, but has no significant influence in the case of unemployment. In the case of Pakistani-Bangladeshi women, being born in the UK does not have a significant effect neither on employment nor on unemployment. Married women (in both cases) are significantly less likely than unmarried women to be employed with an odds ratio of 0.37 and 0.12 for Muslim women in Israel and Pakistani-Bangladeshi women in Britain

respectively. While Pakistani-Bangladeshi married women are significantly less likely to be unemployed than unmarried women, the comparable result for Muslim women in Israel is not significant. Likewise, women with children (dependent children in the case of Pakistani-Bangladeshi women) are significantly less likely to join the labour market. The higher the number of children born to a woman, the lower the odds that she becomes economically active. For example, the odds of a woman with 1-2 children to become economically active are lower by 44 per cent relative to a woman with no children, falling down to 63 per cent for a woman with 3-4 children and to 79 per cent for a woman with 5 or more children. In the case of Pakistani-Bangladeshi women, the presence of dependent children decreases the odds of economic activity by 54 per cent in the case of being employed and 57 per cent in the case of being unemployed relative to women with no dependent children. Tables 4 and 5 show that the effect of partner being working is positive in the case of being employed, but only significant for Pakistani-Bangladeshi women, whereas it is negative in the case of being unemployed with significance level below 0.01 amongst both groups. This suggests that women whose partner is in paid work may prefer to dropout of the labour market once they lose their job shifting from employment to economically inactive status without necessarily being unemployed for a long time, if at all.

Table 4: Multinomial logit models of women employment pattern contrasted with being economically inactive, Muslim women in Israel aged 18-59, 2001

Independent variables	Employed			Unemployed		
	B	S.E.	Exp(B)	B	S.E.	Exp(B)
Educational qualification						
Base: no qualification						
Low tertiary	2.70**	0.07	14.94	2.16**	0.13	8.71
High tertiary (academic)	2.67**	0.09	14.41	2.11**	0.17	8.23
Ethnic enclave	0.51**	0.05	1.67	-0.02	0.10	0.98
Married	-0.92**	0.16	0.40	-0.01	0.23	0.99
Number of children						
Base: no children						
1-2 children	-0.58**	0.08	0.56	-0.43*	0.16	0.65
3-4 children	-0.99**	0.08	0.37	-0.49*	0.17	0.61
5+ children	-1.56**	0.10	0.21	-1.05**	0.23	0.35
Partner working	0.08	0.15	1.08	-1.00**	0.21	0.37
Age						
Base: 18-24						
25-29	0.50**	0.07	1.64	0.01	0.12	1.01
30-39	0.97**	0.07	2.63	-0.19	0.14	0.83
40-49	0.90**	0.09	2.47	-0.70**	0.23	0.50
50-59	0.20	0.14	1.22	-0.65*	0.28	0.52
Household size	-0.02*	0.01	0.98	-0.03	0.02	0.97
Number of cars	0.49**	0.04	1.63	-0.06	0.08	0.94
Constant	-2.45	0.10		-2.32	0.18	

* P < .05 ** P < .01

Table 5: Multinomial logit models of women employment pattern contrasted with being economically inactive, Pakistani and Bangladeshi women in Britain aged 18-59, 2001.

	Employed			Unemployed		
Independent variables	B	S.E.	Exp(B)	B	S.E.	Exp(B)
Educational qualification						
Base: no qualification						
Low tertiary	2.35**	0.52	10.50	2.02*	0.74	7.58
High tertiary (academic)	1.92**	0.30	6.82	0.96	0.50	2.62
Born in UK	0.09	0.17	1.10	-0.06	0.22	0.94
Married	-2.15**	0.22	0.12	-1.04**	0.21	0.35
Presence of dependent children	-0.78**	0.16	0.46	-0.85**	0.22	0.43
Partner working	1.10**	0.20	3.00	-1.56**	0.28	0.21
Age						
Base: 18-24						
25-29	-0.39	0.21	0.67	-0.04	0.27	0.96
30-39	0.01	0.18	1.01	-0.40	0.26	0.67
40-49	-0.17	0.20	0.84	-0.35	0.27	0.71
50-59	-1.06**	0.26	0.35	-1.50**	0.35	0.22
Household size	-0.13**	0.03	0.87	-0.04	0.05	0.96
Number of cars in household	0.54**	0.08	1.72	-0.14	0.12	0.87
Constant	0.14	0.21		-0.04	0.27	

* P < .05 ** P < .01

One of the interesting results in Tables 4 and 5 is the effect of age. First, with respect to Muslim women in Israel, the effect of age on the odds of women being employed contrasted with being economically inactive is positive and statistically significant among all age groups except for women aged 50-59. For the latter the result is not statistically significant, though it is positive and in line with the other results. As far as being unemployed is concerned, Muslim women in Israel aged 40-49 and 50-59 are less likely to be unemployed rather than economically inactive in comparison with women aged 18-24. Moving to look at the comparable results for Pakistani-Bangladeshi women shows that unlike the case of Muslim women in Israel, the effect of age on the odds of being employed is negative, though it is significant for women aged 50-59. The effect of age is also negative on the odds women being unemployed contrasted with the odds of

women being economically inactive, but once again it is statistically significant for the oldest group 50-59. This suggests that Pakistani-Bangladeshi women aged 50-59 are less likely to be economically active (employed or unemployed) in comparison with women aged 18-28. For the Pakistani-Bangladeshi women in Britain, there are number of processes that relate to age and labour market participation and can explain the effect of age on economic activity. Firstly, these women tend to leave the labour market after getting married, which occurs at relatively young age, explaining to some extent, why relative to the youngest cohort, the effect of age is negative. Secondly, the oldest groups, who have not been educated in the UK, are not fluent in English, which reduces their economic activity. And finally, a large and significant number of young Pakistani-Bangladeshi women who have joined the labour market after being educated in the UK during the late 80s and 90s of the past century are not represented in these data. For Muslim women In Israel, the positive effect of age groups by comparison with the youngest group is expected. For example, a significant proportion of women in the cohort of 18-24, who would become economically active in the near future are still in full-time education, and therefore less likely to be economically active. Women aged 25-29 are more likely than those aged 18-24 to be economically active, yet their odds ratio is lower than those aged 30-39 or 40-49. The reason for which may be that at this stage of the life priority is given to crystallising a family and rearing dependent children (maternity leave). Compounding this problem is the sharp lack of reasonable child-care facilities in Palestinian communities were these Muslim women belong (Kraus 2002). While women aged 30-39 and 40-49 have the highest odds of being economically active by comparison with the youngest cohort (18-24), women aged 50-59 are relatively scarce in the labour market. This particular cohort (women aged 50-59) represents a generation who reached

the age of school in the early years after the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, where educational resources and economic opportunities were very few or unavailable, and where furthermore, the whole Palestinian population was still living under military government. These conditions, combined with cultural norms, have created a situation in which paid employment outside the home was not an option for the vast majority of women.

Tables 4 and 5 also show that the household size and number of cars in the household are significantly related to women's labour force participation. While the former appears to decrease the odds of women (in both groups) being employed, the latter seems to increase the odds of women being in employment. In large households, the women may face more responsibilities and more people who need special care such as the elderly and dependent children, all of which combine to restrict any other economic activities outside the household. By contrast, the availability of a car or more than one car in the household increases the odds of economic activity for women. The number of cars can also be a result of the number of people who are economically active at the household and therefore a proxy of wealth or the household income. Yet, the availability of such transport may increase a woman's mobility and promoting her safety by avoiding walking alone after dark or using public services. In other words, by using a car, women would gain access to various labour markets including those placed outside the local area of residence, and thus increasing employment opportunities. With respect to the effect of these two variables on the odds of unemployment contrasted with economically inactive, the results show that this effect is statistically insignificant.

The comparison undertaken in this section between Muslim women in Israel and Pakistani-Bangladeshi women in Britain has revealed that labour market prospects for both

groups are not identical, suggesting that some significant differences exist between them. Although both groups have a low level of economic activity and a high level of unemployment (based on the local standards for each group), the Pakistani-Bangladeshi women in Britain were more likely to be economically active, and more likely to be unemployed. Moreover, Pakistani-Bangladeshi women have different occupational structure owing that to different labour market structures and economic opportunities available for minorities in both societies, the Israeli and the British. It has also has been shown that whilst some of the factors that influence their labour market prospects had similar effects, some other factors such as age operated differently. In the next section some of these findings will be discussed in more depth and some conclusions will be drawn regarding Muslim minority women in the labour market.

Discussion and Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to examine the labour force participation and unemployment among Pakistani-Bangladeshi women in Britain and Muslim women in Israel and to explore the extent to which similar patterns exist across the two groups. On the one hand, the local social, political and economic context in each society combined with the fact that unlike Pakistani-Bangladeshi women in Britain, Muslim women in Israel are the involuntary minority, would very much lead us to an expectation of different patterns of economic activity between both groups. However, their similar cultural background as Muslim traditional minorities living in western industrial societies (Ahmad 2001; Dale, et al. 2002; Kraus 2002; Modood, et al. 1997) on the other hand, may shape similar patterns of labour force participation among them.

The evidence in this study supports both expectations. In both groups the level of economic activity is very low by comparison with the standard level in each society (the level among the dominant groups), reinforcing the conclusion of previous studies that Muslim women in general tend to have low levels of economic activity (Brown 2000; Evans and Bowlby 2000; Khattab 2002; Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov 1992; Rafiq 1992; Semyonov, et al. 1999; Taraki 1995). The existence of this pattern across several Muslim minority women groups such as in Israel, Britain and other European countries and of course in Muslim countries, as a more general trend, raises the important question of how do we explain these low levels of labour force participation? Obviously we cannot ignore the cultural background shared by all of these groups, while they live in different societies, experience different social and economic structures, they do have one cultural background and religion in common: Islam. Indeed, Islam perceives women as mothers and wives rather than an as economically active member of society (Al-Nabhani 1999). However, this said, Islam does not impose any restrictions on women employment as long as this can be done without breaking two main rules: the rule of *khulwa* which is "the private meeting of a man and a woman in a place where no one is able to enter expect by their permission - the meeting of a man and a woman in isolation" (Al-Nabhani 1999: 107) which applies for men as well, and the rule of the woman's dress *hijab* or *jilbab* that should be modest. So from the Islamic point of view, women can be economically active and have a paid job exactly as can men, but priority is given to the woman's role as a mother and wife. Additionally, the oldest generation of Pakistani-Bangladeshi women (the first generation) in Britain, and of Muslim women in Israel, have no formal education (Kraus 2002; Terhorst 1995), which is essential to secure paid work in modern society, and recalling that the clear social expectation prevails that a

Muslim woman should work only in jobs that are "respectful" and suitable for women such as in education, health services, social work and so on (Semyonov, et al. 1999), the choices are further restricted. Obviously, these jobs require higher educational qualifications, the absence of such makes it less likely for Muslim women to participate in the labour force. Indeed, the results of this study support this expectation, suggesting that education plays a very important role in increasing the labour force participation of Muslim minority women in western societies.

In this connection, it is expected that the educational achievement of young Muslim women in Britain and in Israel will increase, and therefore more women will be expected to join the labour market. Such participation, in consequence, will increase the pressure on employment opportunities, particularly if these do not increase proportionally to meet the new supply of labour. However, the higher educational achievements of these women would decrease their risk of unemployment, as was demonstrated in this study. The increase in the level of education would also contribute to the women becoming economically active indirectly by decreasing their fertility rate as suggested by previous studies (Friedlander, et al. 1979). Education is also a very important factor in facilitating and assisting rapid social change which can result in smaller households, lower fertility, higher age of marriage and nuclear families (Al-Haj 1987). As this study demonstrated, number of children, household size and marital status are important factors in understanding the low level of economic activity among the groups in question. There is evidence that if these communities continue to move in the direction of lower fertility, smaller households combined with higher levels of educational qualification, higher proportions of women participating in the labour force will be witnessed.

The results of this study also suggested some major differences between the groups investigated. For example, the existence of the ethnic enclave economy is unique for Muslim women in Israel, and this phenomenon was seen to assume a significant role in increasing the level of employment. This result accords with previous studies (Khattab 2002; Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov 1992; Semyonov, et al. 1999), suggesting that the enclave economy provides the Muslim women with suitable employment opportunities and helps them to convert their educational attainment to economic rewards, protecting them from outside job competition and discrimination. For Pakistani-Bangladeshi women in Britain such an enclave does not exist, or at least not established and independent as the Palestinian enclave. This may increase their dependence on the general labour market where they may face more job discrimination from employers, and where simultaneously they face competition with other groups, especially the dominant white group. This major difference between Muslim women in Israel and Pakistani-Bangladeshi women in Britain may partially explain the variation in the levels of unemployment found between them, but cannot illustrate why the level of economic activity amongst Muslim women in Israel is lower than that of Pakistani-Bangladeshi women in Britain.

In order to determine the reasons for this difference, it is necessary to explore the structure of employment opportunities available for each group. Previous studies have suggested that the employment opportunities available for minority women from traditional backgrounds may have a very important role in facilitating or restricting their labour force participation, regardless of their cultural background (Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov 1992; Brah 1993; Holdsworth and Dale 1997; Khattab 2002). Furthermore, the historical conditions leading to an ethnic group's minority position within a different society should be known. For example,

Pakistanis and Bangladeshis have migrated to the UK by their own will, whereas the Palestinians in Israel are an involuntary minority. For the former, the migration experience can be positive and reinforce self-esteem, while for the latter the experience may be depressing. Although these factors may be possible explanations for the differences between the groups, in this study such potential have not been empirically examined. Future studies will increase our understanding regarding the issue of the labour force participation of ethnic minority women by directly addressing the influence of employment opportunities and historical factors.

One of the major differences between both groups was the effect of age. It was found that while for Muslim women in Israel all ages (25-49) are more likely to be employed (economic active) by comparison with women aged 18-24, for Pakistani-Bangladeshi women in Britain it is the way round. For the latter, the result, except for women aged 50-59, was not statistically significant. For these women the effect of age is very similar to its effect amongst Muslim women in Israel some 20 years ago, where the younger cohorts tend to participate in the labour market more than the oldest cohorts (Kraus 2002:217, Table 9.4). The relatively low level of economic activity among Muslim women in Israel aged 18-24 is due to a higher proportion of women turning to post-secondary and higher education, especially since the early 90s when the college education sector was dramatically expanded. The recent decade has witnessed a dramatic change in the educational achievement of Muslim women in Israel postponing the stage of entering the labour market by 3-4 years or perhaps more depending on the type of course taken by them. The process for Pakistani-Bangladeshi women in Britain appears to be just starting (as far as the data from 1991 can discern). At the moment, it seems that the younger women (aged 18-24) are more likely to be economically active than the older cohorts, but this may gradually

change, as more women turn to higher education. The change may already be evident in the 2001 census data so further studies using these new data are required. The implication of more women turning to education is that a higher proportion of economically active Pakistani-Bangladeshi women will ensue in Britain. However, in the absence of proper employment opportunities, their levels of unemployment are expected to rise (this applies for Muslim women in Israel as well), unless changes occur to increase employment opportunities for these women, either within their ethnic communities and/or within the general labour market. As they may face discrimination from potential employers in the general labour market resulting from negative attitudes and stereotypes of Muslim women in both societies, a number of actions should be taken in order to minimise these phenomena.

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