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Silenced Detainees in Repressive Hijab

A Marxist Analysis of the Hijab of Afghan women in
Sweden, the patriarchal coercion to veil, and the
responsibility of the Swedish government

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Abstract:

This empirical research focuses on the subject of Hijab in Sweden. It demonstrates that Afghan (Muslim) women residing in Sweden do not consider the Hijab as an element of their culture/identity. Additionally, the empirical data gathered through interviews with twenty Afghans residing in Sweden reveals that Hijab is socially imposed on women, particularly by male relatives. Afghan women reveal verbal and physical violations exercised against women by male relatives in order to force them to veil. Therefore, if multiculturalism favors the Hijab as a human right and/or an identity/cultural element of these women, it neglects the violations implied by Hijab on women. By adopting a Marxist feminist lens, the research explains that although veiling and controlling women's body existed for centuries before the birth of capitalism, controlling women's body by forcing them to veil serves the capitalist project as well. The veil is one of the diverse ways of controlling women ('s body) and is one of the ways to help the interests of capitalism since women are the source of reproduction of labor. Rejecting the position of both left-wing and right-wing parties (and specifically racists) in the political sphere in Sweden, it is suggested that the former (no matter intentionally or unintentionally) justifies and serves the preservation of the repressive Hijab and does not protect Muslim women and their human rights. And (far) right-wing actors, by pointing to the repressive Hijab, merely aim to cut the budget that is essential for protecting the fundamental human rights of immigrants and target the existence of immigrants per se to enable (further) development of capitalist (economic) policies. This research argues that discourse cannot make a substantial change in behaviors, and not only men should be considered as the responsible actor to diminish the violations. A third alternative/approach is instead suggested for the change in the material condition of such communities so as to diminish the violations. By reminding the responsibility of the Swedish government, it is suggested that the government should take responsibility for material provision regarding awareness, education, employment, and development of oppressed veiled women. This is how the government can protect human rights and actualize women's capacity in order to combat the violations.

Keywords:

Veil, Sweden, Slöja, Afghan women, repressive Hijab, Muslim women, violations, Human Rights, multiculturalism, patriarchal structure, Marxist feminist, Swedish government.

Acknowledgment

This research is dedicated to an Afghan woman residing in Sweden who- according to her- has been a hostage of repressive Hijab even in Sweden. She was one of the informants of this research and is suffering from acute depression due to the pressure placed on her by her male relatives as she divulged her intention to unveil. A woman who lost her job, quit her studies (due to depression), and has not yet been able to get a job. This is to acknowledge this woman's suffering, who stated that she is a “hostage of a patriarchal society in an Afghan family and Afghan community within Sweden”, has the support of no side, and does not know where to flee to break free from this problematic situation.

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Introduction

Muslim women's Hijab generally, and specifically the Hijab that is practiced in western countries by Muslim women, has always been a controversial question, particularly regarding human rights debates. While Sweden has not yet prohibited any type of veiling, including the Hijab (slöjan in Swedish), there is an ongoing debate on the issue of the Hijab. The issue of the Hijab becomes of more importance if it is noticed that Sweden is one of five EU states receiving the most immigrants in proportion to its population, and it is claimed that Islam now has the second largest population of followers in Sweden (Andersson & Sander 2009). That explains why studying such a controversial subject (Hijab) and with regard to human rights of women seems to be substantial.

While many politicians, scholars (e.g., Grace 2004), and social activists consider the Hijab as a means of repressing Muslim women and thus a violation of human rights, others, for instance, under the banner of multiculturalism, explain that Hijab should be respected (Bonnevier, 2016; Janulf, 2017). The latter camp argues that the Hijab is a cultural and identity preserving element among Muslim communities in the host society (e.g., Sweden). It should be respected as human rights and for the sake of multiculturalism (Aftonbladet, 2011). On the contrary, some political forces in Sweden consider Muslim religious norms, including Hijab, as a threat to Swedish values and society. Therefore, they call for restrictions on receiving more immigrants/refugees and a ban on some religious practices. One right-wing party in Sweden (SD party) goes further and suggests the expulsion of certain immigrant groups, among them Muslims, who - according to SD- violate the Swedish social model and values (SD, 2022).

Due to lack of space, language barriers concerns, and the issue of access to informants, this research's scope is to focus on the issue of the Hijab among one particular Muslim community, i.e., the Afghan community in Sweden. The research explores whether Hijab is a cultural and identity-maker element in this particular community and whether Afghan women practice the Hijab due to their personal beliefs or other societal factors play more critical roles in this regard. Importantly, the patriarchal structure shall be explored to see whether Hijab is practiced predominantly due to the coercion exerted by male relatives of Afghan women and also the coercion and pressure of the (male-dominated) Afghan community. Are there any violations exercised on Afghan women in Sweden by their male relatives to force them to veil (or unveil)? The arguments regarding the repressive Hijab are discussed and compared with the empirical data gathered to examine whether there is a suppressive dynamic between men and women manifested by the practice of the Hijab.

Additionally, the research shall examine multiculturalism to see whether this approach serves the human rights of Afghan women concerning the freedom of either practice or distance from the Hijab. Sweden is often portrayed as a good example of a multicultural society (Borevi, 2013). The research shall examine whether human rights, particularly Afghan women's rights in Sweden, are protected under the banner of multiculturalism.

The research adopts a Marxist feminist lens by which it shall be studied that besides the societal factors (e.g., patriarchal structure), any political economy factor impacts the practice of the Hijab. The historical materialism framework shall be adopted to address the subject of material conditions of these women's lives. Thereby it will be discussed what practical measures and material provisions should be taken to protect the rights of Afghan (un) veiled women if they are under any degree of violation regarding the subject of the Hijab.

As one of the practical remedies to violations exercised against Afghan women in Sweden and concerning the Hijab, the legal framework to which Sweden is obliged will be reminded to see what measures should be taken by the Swedish government regarding such violations. Specifically, the UN 1979 “convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women” (UN, 1979), to which Sweden is a party, will be discussed to address some solutions.

Yet, aiming to depart from mere theoretical and conceptual arguments, this empirical research is chiefly constructed on the basis of primary data gathered from interviews with twenty Afghans residing in Sweden, of which fifteen are Afghan women and five men. By doing as such, the very “objects” of the debates will be given a voice to speak out. They become thereby the “subjects” of the debates and shall reveal the facts that are invisible to society. Through this opportunity to hear them, we can see what is going on within Afghan families, between Afghan men and women, and in the Afghan community regarding the issue of the Hijab. Nonetheless, avoiding any generalization across the larger population of the Muslim community in Sweden and elsewhere, this research calls for further studies on such a controversial issue. This seems to be essential if the violations against Muslim women are to be tackled.

This qualitative and empirical research generally falls into a cross-section of sociology, particularly the sociology of religion, Human Rights, and political science. For exploring the violations against (un) veiled Afghan women in Sweden, four different – though interconnected- research questions are designed:

- 1-What are the motivations, reasons, and factors (e.g., culture, identity, own beliefs) that dominantly make Afghan women in Sweden veil (or unveil)?
- 2-What is the role of male relatives of Afghan women in Sweden in the practice of the Hijab?
- 3-Does Hijab represent a repressive practice?
- 4-Does multiculturalism serves to protect Afghan women’s rights regarding the issue of the Hijab?
- 5-What particular legislative measures should be carried out by the Swedish government to protect Afghan women’s fundamental human rights in regard to the subject of the Hijab?

Aiming to answer these research questions and for exploring the issue of the Hijab in Sweden, firstly and in chapter one, the theoretical, conceptual, and legal/legislative framework by which the problem of the research is explored shall be introduced. In chapter two, the method of the research and mainly the method of gathering data is explained. Chapter three provides the gathered materials/data, and chapter four analyses the materials. In chapter five, the discussion will be placed on materials, analysis, and theories, and some conclusions will be provided. Conclusions come at the end, in which a summary of conclusions of discussion and some additional conclusions that stem from the whole research will be provided. It is noteworthy that the literature review is addressed and distributed across different chapters, mainly chapters one and five.

Last but not least, the materials gathered and provided in chapter three are highly suggested to be taken into consideration for any type of audience/reader. Regardless of the interpretation, analysis, and discussion placed on the material in other chapters, the materials per se can be utilized for further studies on the subject of the Hijab, analytical reports, Human Rights reports, social and political debates, and policy-making procedures. If those materials could be circulated, read, and used by others, one of the main objectives of this research would be met: To hear the voice of oppressed women.

Chapter 1, Theoretical, Conceptual, and Legal/legislation framework

One of the examined concepts in this research is Multiculturalism. This approach links the Hijab to the culture and the rights of minorities (here Afghan community) in a host society. It will be examined to see to what extent multiculturalism protects Afghan women's rights as it supports the practice of Hijab. Also, societal concepts like identity are explained and adopted to see how the Hijab is linked to the identity and culture of Afghan women. The Marxist feminist theory and also historical materialism of Marx & Engels is employed to better interpret the dynamics of the act of Hijab and, importantly to provide remedies for diminishing the violations. On another note, it should be mentioned that two approaches of Marxist feminist and multiculturalism that are employed in this research have been used by many accounts and over decades, among them by respectively Sanaz Ahmadi (2018)'s work on Hijab in Iran and Syarta Bonnevier (2016)'s work on Hijab in Sweden. The employment of such approaches in this research is partially inspired by these two works, though in a distinct context/scope; This research does not argue and conclude in the same way as the latter study while sharing some arguments with the former one. Prior to introducing the theories and concepts, one definition of the Hijab to which this research sticks is provided.

1-1 Definition

As in this research, there will be a focus on the question of the Hijab/veil in Sweden, one should first provide a definition for the Hijab. As Fekete (2009) asserts, there is a perception among western countries regarding Muslims as a homogenous group. This perception denied the diversity in culture, beliefs, practices, and culture among different groupings of Muslims in different communities/countries (ibid). Taking into account different Muslim groups' perspective, there is no unique and homogenized perception and practice regarding the Islamic Hijab. Instead, there is a multiplicity of meanings for the Hijab among different Islamic schools of thought, clerics, Muslim countries/communities, and various cultures (El Guindy, 1999). While some consider Hijab to wear the whole body from the hair, neck, shoulder, and upper part of the body to beneath the knees, some only practice wearing the hair and the neck. Others might consider face wear (Niqab, Burqa) as the correct Hijab and so on. However, the definition of the Hijab to which this research sticks, is what the Afghan community perceives (to be addressed in materials gained through interviews). By Hijab, they mean to wear a scarf/shawl to cover the hair and head and also cover the body with an outwear. The term (the) Hijab, in this research, presents the cloth worn by Muslim women generally and specifically wearing shawl/scarf. In this research, the act of doing so is considered the act of veiling (or to veil), and the woman who wears *the Hijab*, which means that particular curtain, is a veiled woman. Accordingly, one who used to wear the Hijab, i.e., a veiled woman, but is no longer practicing it, is considered an unveiled woman. On a different note, it should be clarified that during the interviews for the research, informants used the terms "male supremacy" and "patriarchism" interchangeably but in the same context and meaning. I use only patriarchy in the text to avoid getting confused by various terms and definitions. Moreover, in this research, the term patriarchy is used broadly and includes male supremacy and any other male-dominated social structure.

1-2 Multiculturalism

According to Habermas's (1995) theory of the "democratic state of law," human rights is claimed to be a general framework of a multicultural society in which law should be "neutral." Habermas asserts that people should be legally *enabled* to enjoy *the right* to preserve and reproduce cultural values. However,

the law should not *grant* the preservation and reproduction of cultural values. In such a society, he argues, individuals should enjoy the freedom to refuse or choose values to be carried on (Habermas, 1995). However, the notion of multicultural society to which Habermas refers is defined in distinct ways by various thinkers. According to the philosopher Charles Taylor (1994), if in a society there is more than a community that intend to preserve their culture, and they have the opportunity to accommodate within that particular society, then such a society could be seen as a multicultural society. Different thinkers evaluate the function and the result of multiculturalism in distinct ways. Whereas Habermas values such an approach regarding protecting and preserving human rights, according to Kymlicka (2010), there has been a backlash and retreat from multiculturalism. Kymlicka explains that this retreat emphasizes common values and unitary citizenship and even constitutes a return of assimilation (Kymlicka, 2010). Others (e.g., Cumper, 2014) go further and assert that multiculturalism has become a synonym with the accommodation of religious tenets and specifically Islamic beliefs (Cumper, 2014).

1-3 Identity/Culture

Some accounts describe the notion of identity as something that gives an individual perception and an idea of a whole about himself or herself and provides answers regarding who that person is (Nilsson, 2015). The concept of identity can also be perceived based on how the environment around the individual sees and judges that individual (Janulf, 2017:5). Similarly, from the social psychological perspective, identity is constructed and preserved in a close interplay between the individual and the social environment around that person (Persson, 2012). Also, the perception of the social environment about an individual's identity can differ from the individual's perception of her/his identity (Persson 2012). We create the view of our identity in two ways, by distancing ourselves from other people and identifying ourselves with them. (Hammarén & Johansson 2009). From the perspective of social constructivism, people are seen as both a product of a society and also an actor in recreating that society (Angelöw & Jonsson 2000).

Regarding the practice of the Hijab by Muslim minorities (e.g., Afghan women in Sweden) and how the Hijab pertains to the identity question, one can point to Wagner et al. (2012), who argue that a veil is a practical tool in the Muslim minority community by which they confirm the Muslim identity. Through the practice of the veil and by following such a specific dress code, the self-confidence of some Muslim women is strengthened. Also, the veil makes these women proud of the group affiliation (Wagner et al. 2012). If the veil has such a meaningful bond with the identity, then policies that might demand the unveiling of Muslim minorities (for instance, Sweden or any other western country) might harm the identity of these women. Edwards (2010) similarly argues that such policies are not about making equality; but rather can destroy the culture, identity, and ethnicity of the individual and the group under question. According to the author, such policies can result in humiliation and validate “violence against women” (Edward, 2010). On the contrary, other accounts describe the veil as a tool for oppressing women (Grace, 2004) and a physical manifestation of misogyny that is also tangible (Ahmadi, 2018:54). In the following section, the question of repressive Hijab will be addressed.

1-4 Repressive Hijab

There seems to exist a conceptual and practical tension between the two main camps of thoughts concerning the Hijab. Chapman (2016) identifies a clash between the idea about the veil as a symbol of active Muslim women who act and opt actively on their own from one hand and, on the other hand, Western ideas about the veil as a symbol of submission and women as passive victims.

Edwards (2010) argues that the way the west interprets the veil as simply oppressive stereotypes other cultural measurements, among them dress codes. And this view of the veil is central to western countries'

imperialist and colonialist projects. It additionally serves in the project of constructing non-western (Edwards, 2010). By viewing the veil as such, Edwards asserts that western countries do not simply attack the veil per se, but they attack cultural and social communities/groups who practice that certain dress code. She further suggests that this falls into an indirect racism attitude. An attitude that is now “repackaged, reconfigured, and legitimated, supported by a justificatory rationale in need to protect the community from terrorism” (ibid). Similarly, Afary (2009:373) argues that western imperialists utilize the (Middle Eastern) women’s rights for their own strategic interests. They abandon these rights just opportunistically when these rights no longer fit their interest and purposes.

Nevertheless, the issue of the Hijab could be explored from another angle. To begin with, it should be clarified that the Islamic Hijab is not necessary among women themselves. It is rather necessary in relation to men (Ahmadi, 2018:49). Therefore, the issue of Hijab is a male problem. The hijab could be seen as an extension of male sexual violence and honor culture. Clerics describe the virtue of the Hijab, among other reasons, as protecting women against men in the public sphere (ibid, p.54). In this context, the public sphere resembles men and is dangerous for women. (Ibid, p.46). Here the term male gaze can be utilized to understand the issue. The male gaze, first introduced by the psychoanalysis Laura Mulvey (1975), is defined as the power dynamics between a viewer who is a male subject on the one hand and the other hand the female object of the gaze (Kosut, 2012:195). This heterosexual gaze of man pertains to his pleasure when he looks at the female body. Thereby comes Hijab justified by clerics as a means to protect women from this male gaze. Women, while in public, thus are a danger to men. They are also a danger to society as well (Ahmadi, 2018:46). Women -if unveiled- create ills to society. Accordingly, it is the responsibility of women and girls to remedy the moral health of society by controlling the lust of men. By laying such a responsibility, men –the perpetrators of sexual violence against women – are free from the responsibility. Women are responsible for wearing Hijab to safeguard the moral health of society and prevent men from falling into the sexual trap of the male gaze. It erases sexual tensions between men and women (Gould, 2014:229). In such a context, men are placed between God and women by forcing Islamic belief -and here practicing the hijab -onto the body of women even if it implies, among other hindrances, limitations in the movement for women (Ahmadi, 2018:55). This mediatory role for men which is brought by blood or marriage, is carried out by male control over women. This control ensures the status of the man in the public sphere and among other men. Hijab- forced by men- brings honor to men in public by restricting women’s sexuality (Hassan, 1999), and the concept of honor is linked to women’s chastity (Ahmadi, 2018). As Grace (2004:212) asserts, “it is exactly the male need for mastery (both literal and symbolic) that is at the basis of the veiling of women.” It could be argued that the veil/Hijab is a physical manifestation of misogyny (Ahmadi, 2018:54), and more generally, as Cavanaugh (2009:3) puts it, Islam’s function in this sense is a means of political justification for patriarchal repression of women.

Whereas the discourse analysis approach introduced in the post-structuralist approach of Laclau, and Mouffe (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Machin & Mayr, 2012; Torfing, 1999) asserts that the reality is constructed through discourse, the Marxist perspective of historical materialism underscores that material reality constructs the discourse, culture, and ideology (Marx & Engels, 1846; Marx 1859). Thus, for any change in the culture, discourse, norms, and ideology, changes in the material conditions should happen. According to Althusser (2001), ideology addresses individuals in a way that gives the position/opinion that individuals are autonomous agents rather than a product of society limited by definite class status. As per Althusser, there is a similar illusion posed by both liberalism and religious ideologies, and that is the idea that human rights and freedom are something that individuals naturally possess (Althusser, 2001). If so, then the only measure to take to safeguard human rights is to keep the state responsible. Althusser asserts that the way to protect and preserve freedom and human rights is by real and collective control and the act of social forces (ibid). From a Marxist perspective, our status in society, our class, sex, and ethnicity

affect our choices. And the economic incentives are apparent behind the societal functions (e.g., misogyny, homophobia, and racism). According to the Marxist feminist view, the dependence of women on men, for instance, economically and lack of feasible job opportunities, satisfies the cheap labor in favor of capitalist needs (Ahmadi, 2018:51). Vogel (2013) asserts that only the female body can guarantee labor reproduction. That is why in the capitalist mode of production, women's autonomy and, among other rights, abortion rights disturb the required reproduction of labor (Bryson, 2003:187; Vogel, 2013:123). This seeing women's body as a way of reproducing labor results in the commodification of women, and women are objects of society that are protected to serve as reproducing the labor and providing sexual gratification (Vogel, 2013). Capitalist policies attempt to control women's body. These policies vary from violence, social narratives, restricting clothing, bodily mutilation, and so on (ibid, p.141). Therefore, the gender role of women is a "prescriptive homogenization imposed on their bodies" that sustains the oppression of women. This role also erases the space for "sexual difference within female sexuality" (Gould, 2014:230). In this context, the veil/Hijab serves as a gender marker (Ahmadi, 2018:22). For incorporating the female body into a commodity in political economy, the policy of veiling and unveiling is enforced (Gould, 2014).

It is noteworthy that the control of women's body and, for instance, forcing certain dress codes on them (e.g., Hijab) is not an invention of the capitalist paradigm. It had existed in the predecessor modes of production, but capitalism preserves and utilizes it for its interests. Also, controlling women's body is not manifested merely through imposing a dress code (e.g., Hijab) and can vary in a diverse range of forms, norms, narratives, and shapes depending on the particular conditions of the community in question.

Yet, adopting the Marxist lens and the framework of historical materialism in this research is not merely for interpreting the causes of regeneration of violations against women. It is instead to suggest a way out of this situation. As it is only by a change in material conditions, the discourse and culture can alter and change (Marx & Engels 1846); for diminishing the violations derived from repressive Hijab, the material condition of the lives of the community in question should be changed. Therefore, actions, legislation, and definite measures should be carried out.

1-5 Legal framework and legislation

Hyden (1982) asserts that people should be protected from abuse of power in all forms. This protection should be provided through the function of the legal system. Banakar (1994) underscores that the legal system should function as a tool to create a fairer and more humane social order. These values are expressed in Sweden's constitution in which "people are equals" (ibid). Also, in Sweden, a particular agency is responsible for fulfilling legal capacities to combat discrimination against women (Government, 2009). However, many assert that although there exist anti-discrimination regulations in western European countries (Franco & Maass, 1999), most often, legal actions and necessary measures fall short in bringing real changes in prejudices or social behaviors for various incitements of hatred, racism, and islamophobia (Franco & Maass, 1999; Banakar, 1994).

Apart from domestic Swedish legal standards in favor of preventing any form of discrimination against women, Sweden is a party to a certain international human rights convention whose aim is to protect women's rights and combat discrimination and therefore obliged to follow the convention fully. This UN 1979 "convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women" (CEDAW) put forth both negative and positive obligations before all state parties, including the Swedish government. State parties should carry out all measures to fulfill women's rights and protect them from discrimination based on sex, race, ethnicity, religion, and so on (UN, 1979). In chapter five (discussion), more elaboration will be provided regarding CEDAW and the responsibility of the Swedish government in protecting the rights of Afghan women concerning the issue of the Hijab.

Chapter 2, Method

Habermas (1995) asserts that in a democratic society, public debate should take place at a macro-level. Ethnic minorities do not have the same opportunity to participate in the public political and social discourse since they do not have representatives in such discourses. He explains that even if they do so, their representatives do not have enough political influence and access to political institutions and the media, which dominate the public debate sphere. Habermas adds that this situation is meaningfully a question of power (Habermas, 1995). To translate and employ this argument into a practical approach concerning studying the subject of the Hijab among (Afghan) Muslim women in Sweden, one should attempt, more than anything else, to provide the chance to these women so as they participate in the debate conducted around the subject. This study has neither the power nor the immediate objective to change the power relations that media and political discourse construct. But it might have the capacity to give a voice to a particular (sample population among a) minority group so as they speak out regarding the issue of the Hijab. Kvale & Brinkmann (2014) describe how phenomenology means that first and foremost, to try to understand people's own perspectives on the subject of study (Janulf, 2017:5). This qualitative study, through conducting in-depth interviews, as Seidman (2006:9) explains, is not to "evaluate" the informants' answers but rather to try to understand their lived experience and the meaning that they make of that experience. There are, however, conditions to be able to achieve this objective. As underscored by some scholars, understanding in such a context requires that those who are to understand (e.g., the researcher) should have their experience in regard to the subject (Angelöw & Jonsson, 2000). I have experience of working with Afghan communities both in Iran and Afghanistan with regard to educational and vocational training for more than a decade. Given this, I am familiar with their language (which is the same as my mother tongue) though they speak a different dialect(s). However, I am familiar with the dialect due to my experience of working with various Afghan communities with distinct ethnicities. Therefore, no language barriers occurred during interviews, transcribing, and interpretation of the results. Nonetheless, one should bear in mind that the researcher should distinguish between his/her own normative discussions of the stories/conditions and participants' norm and practices.

In this qualitative and empirical research, for gathering primary data, twenty semi-structured in-depth (voice call) interviews were conducted with fifteen Afghan women and five Afghan men, all residing in Sweden, some of whom obtained Swedish citizenship, and a few still in the process of asylum-seeking (of which some received a rejection on their case). All of the informants have been residing in Sweden for more than three years, and most of them for more than seven years. The informants are from a diverse range of age, ranging from 25 to 45 years old, living in different cities/provinces in Sweden, from Malmö/Skåne/Helsingborg, Göteborg (Gothenburg), Stockholm, Örebro, Kalmar, Linköping, Gävleborg, Uppsala and Jonköping. The participants are diverse in education; most of them are literate, some still attend Swedish language schools (SFI), some graduated from university, some participate in vocational training, and a few (among female participants) are housewives. Most of them are employed, and a few are unemployed.

The interviewees were recruited mostly through a random method based on their own consent to participate in the study. The consent to participate in the interview was shown as a reflection to a social media post by me in a public Facebook group that consists of more than fourteen thousand Farsi/Dari-speaking people (Afghans and Iranians) who reside in Sweden. The interviews were mostly carried out via Facebook messenger voice call, by which the participant called me. Five of the participants were

recruited through the snowball method via two different branches of contact, and the interviews carried out via telephone. So, all interviews/conversations carried out via voice call.

Regarding research ethics (Codex, 2022), participants were informed about the general objective of the research and what it means to participate. Participants were told to feel free if they felt they needed to stop the conversation/interview. They were told that only the researcher would have access to the data, and the data would be terminated after being transcribed and they would be anonymized. Additionally, they were informed that no specific information about them would be provided if their story was going to be used/quoted in the text. In this research, while addressing each participant's narrative/insight, no information about their age, occupation, number of children, location and so on will be provided to prevent the identification of that certain informant. While reporting the gathered data in the next chapter, the informants all have been given fictitious names and thus anonymized.

The semi-structured and open-ended interview questionnaires covered a diverse range of themes, including the relationship between the practice of the Hijab and various factors including identity/culture, personal beliefs, male relatives' role, patriarchal structure, community's role, and also one question regarding the awareness and knowledge of informants regarding the existing legislation in Sweden concerning the protection of women if they intend to enjoy their rights. The questionnaires are elaborated on in the Appendix.

The interviews were carried out via voice call and between February and April 2022 and were conducted in Farsi/Dari, lasted between five minutes to forty-five minutes, and were finally transcribed in Farsi. Thus, all translations into English are mine.

Chapter 3, Materials

This chapter provides the materials (data) gathered through (voice call) interviews. It should be clarified that the data which is provided is either (and mostly) a paraphrasing of what the informants said or a direct quote. No interpretation or analysis by me is added to the data in this chapter.

3-1 Method challenges as data

One of the biggest challenges in the process of recruiting interviewees was to find the desired number of female Afghan informants who volunteered to participate in the interviews, mainly due to the *sensitivity* of the issue of Hijab among the Muslim community and the fact that the interviewer is a non-relative man (related to them neither by blood nor marriage). Later and during the conversation with informants, they explained that this is “normal” for Afghan women not to talk about the Hijab and not with strangers since it can cause risk for them. For instance, one of the informants elaborated on this issue, saying:

“It is obvious. Generally, women get harassed if they reveal the truth, if they get identified, they will be in trouble with their husbands, brothers, and fathers; I don’t know, the whole Afghans [i.e., the Afghan community]. Why should one put herself in such a danger?”

Although the recruitment of the interviewees mostly conducted through a Facebook post, and viewers of the post could just send a private message to me and participate anonymously via messenger voice call - as this was explicitly clarified in the post, most of those who contacted and showed a willingness to participate were Afghan men. Therefore, I had to re-post the recruitment announcement several times to succeed in recruiting enough number of female interviewees. I had clarified that I do not need any personal information of the participants or their phone numbers, and the interview could be carried out via Facebook messenger voice call so that they could ensure that I won’t have their telephone numbers and other personal information. Nonetheless, most of those few women who were contacted by sending a private message on Facebook, when they learned that the subject of the interview was Hijab rejected to participate. One of the female participants asked me to call her only at a time when her husband was not at home since, according to her, her husband would get mad if she talked to a non-relative man regarding the subject of the Hijab. Of fifteen women, fourteen emphasized that there must be no information about them and their identity in the research because, as they explained, they will get in trouble -by either their male relatives or the Afghan community-if, they would be identified because they have shared and revealed their actual insight regarding the hijab. One informant firstly consented to participate but later informed that she could not do so since when she later asked for “permission” from her husband to see if she was permitted to participate, her husband had not allowed her to do so. One female informant who consented to be interviewed while being at home among her family members at the beginning of the interview said that she had been unveiled for a while now, and when she started to contribute more information, she just stopped and said that she couldn’t continue. A male voice could be heard angrily shouting at her, saying, “who the hell are you talking to?!”. The interviewee just hung up the phone while saying, “I can’t, I can’t [continue the conversation anymore].”

One female informant, unveiled, divorced, and acquired a university degree from Sweden, explained that:

“If you look at the [social media] profile picture of the Afghan women residing in Sweden, you see, only a few of us have a real picture and a real profile name. If you look at the others, you see that they have

other images as profile pictures, mostly a flower, a scene, or a page in which a poem or a like. They are not allowed to have their real picture [published on social media] since their husbands will harass them. I would say many Afghan women have social media accounts secretly without their husbands' knowledge. How do you expect such women to contact you based on a social media post and volunteer to participate in the interview?"

3-2 A few general materials

All twenty informants are Afghans residing in (different cities and regions of) Sweden, of which fifteen are Afghan women and five men. Of twenty Afghan women who are either female interviewees themselves or the wives of male interviewees, nine are unveiled and do not wear Hijab anymore, while eleven still wear Hijab. A common insight that was shared by most of the interviewees was that the way Afghan (Muslim) women practice Hijab meaningfully differs from that of other Muslim women and specifically Arab Muslim women. Some interviewees stated that when they (used to) wear Hijab in Sweden, other Muslim women, particularly Arab Muslim women, challenged and even made fun of how Afghan women used to wear Hijab. Informants informed that other Muslim women claim (ed) that Afghan women's Hijab is not a true Islamic code since Afghan women (dominantly) put loose and not tight shawl/scarf, and the whole head/hair is not covered. On a different note, five out of fifteen female informants stated that having Hijab makes it harder to get integrated into the job market and that they believe that Swedes embrace them in job places more warmly if they are not veiled. The following sections provide specific data sorted based on specific themes.

3-3 Hijab's roots: Own beliefs/ Family/Tradition/Law

3-3-1 Women's insight on Hijab's roots

Hasiba, an Afghan unveiled woman, asserts that Hijab is not practiced due to personal and strong beliefs and that it is something being taught during school (before moving to Sweden), and that is what the [home] society desires. She adds that wearing Hijab is not a consciously opted practice and is rather a socially imposed element. Parwanah, an Afghan woman who still wears Hijab, states that wearing Hijab is something taught from childhood and has become a habit, and it is not a true personal belief. Vasima (a female informant who wears Hijab but, as she explains, a looser type of Hijab), asserts that she feels safer and more secure when wearing Hijab because then other non-relative men would not look at her. However, she adds that she feels so because Hijab is something she practiced from childhood onward and has become a habit. She adds that she is veiled since she used to live in a religious society and was forced to veil. Additionally, she underscores that the Hijab, back then, was demanded by men, and that is why she had to wear it; now, in Sweden, it is hard for her to unveil because she feels that if she unveils, she will miss something. Naqmah, an unveiled Afghan woman, states that having a clean heart is important and not putting a curtain on your head. Karima, an unveiled Afghan woman, explained that she used to wear Hijab only when she lived in Iran (as a refugee) since wearing Hijab is compulsory in Iran. Tahmina, a female informant, similarly explains that she was forced to wear Hijab in Iran, and although she does not believe in wearing Hijab, she does so in Sweden due to the force of her family. Leila, another female informant, states that she is a devout Muslim and is proud of being so; therefore, she wears Hijab. However, she adds that in the future, she might unveil because she is not sure if she currently veils due to a personal belief. When she is asked if she will still wear Hijab if she lives in a city with no relatives there, she says that she might not wear Hijab. She immediately adds that she thinks that wearing Hijab might not be a true belief inside her. Sima, an unveiled Afghan woman who has acquired a university degree in Sweden, asserts that

she can't explain Hijab as a personal belief. She asserts that Hijab is practiced partially due to a psychological reason though which a female is used to wearing the Hijab from childhood by the force of society, and gradually this Hijab become a part of one's body. She vehemently denies that Hijab is practiced due to freedom of choice. Rudabah, an unveiled Afghan woman in Sweden, similarly asserts that Hijab is forced on females from childhood. Masumah also asserts that Hijab was forced on her from childhood by her male relatives, and that has nothing to do with her own choice.

3-3-2 Men on Hijab's roots

Majid and Nabil, two Afghan married men, state that they are true believers in Islam and that their wives must wear Hijab because, as they explain, their wives wear the Hijab due to their religious beliefs. Naseeb, a male Afghan informant, states that he comes from a non-believer and a communist family in Afghanistan, and none of the female members of their family wear Hijab. However, his wife does wear the Hijab, as he explains, due to her personal beliefs

3-4 The role of male relatives concerning Hijab

Whatever the roots of (believing or not in) practicing the Hijab (was or still) is, here, under this theme, the data will be provided about the role of Afghan men in Sweden in their female relative's practice (or not) the Hijab.

3-4-1 Female informants' insight

Hasiba describes the difficulties she had during her marriage time in Sweden with her husband and that her husband controlled her concerning many aspects of her life, among them forcing her to wear Hijab. She explains that although no law in Sweden favors compulsory Hijab, her husband made it a must to do for her. Nasiba asserts that the men in their families do not let them freely choose and act and that it takes a long time for their husbands to learn that they should not force Hijab on their wives. Elaborating on the process of forced Hijab by their male relatives, she says:

“They first tell us that you will lose your decency if you unveil, and unveiling is a big and ugly sin. They say, all these years and before moving to Sweden, you have had Hijab; why you can't just continue it? They make all possible efforts to make us wear Hijab. If we do not obey them, they start with offensive language; they could continue beating us up. They try to dishonor us before other relatives. They try to isolate us from our social and family networks to make a pattern out of us for others so that no other woman dares to unveil. They even label their own wife a whore, a bitch, one who unveiled is now sleeping (have a sexual relationship) with all other possible men.”

Nasiba explains that she finally, after so many challenging endeavors, “succeeded in getting divorced,” Now, she feels that she is free, unveiled, feels no sin, and is in a better psychological state. She believes she used to be in a deep depression when she used to wear Hijab and obey her husband. Nasiba adds that when she got divorced and unveiled, now her sixteen-year-old son said to her:

“Mamma! Don't you ever think that now that my father is gone, you can do whatsoever you like! No! I am now the man of this household, and you have to wear Hijab. If you don't wear Hijab, then what should I do with the stigma from my friends who have veiled mothers?!”

Parwanah, who wears Hijab, similarly explains that according to her experience, many Afghan women in Sweden wear Hijab due to coercion from their husbands. She says:

“Men have too much power over their wives; I have seen many Afghan women in Sweden who were beaten up when opposed to wearing Hijab or any other demand desired by their husbands.”

However, she narrates that her husband asked her to take off the Hijab because he did not like it. Parwanah reveals that there is another reason why she wears Hijab:

“During the first period of Taliban in power in Afghanistan, some twenty years ago, or more, I was a ten-year-old girl. Once walking in the Bazaar (market), a Taliban soldier who was an agent of the moral police of the Taliban approached me and flogged me on my feet because I had not worn socks. It hurt me a lot, I cried and ran to our house. Now even in Sweden, I still fear and always have had that trauma with me. That fear is still with me. That is why I wear Hijab”.

Vasima, on the contrary, states that her husband does not force her to wear Hijab and has said to her that everybody should be responsible for his/her own acts. However, she adds that she continues to wear Hijab in Sweden since she got used to it because she had always been forced by her father and the community to do so. Karima, who is unveiled, explains that mothers play a role too, and they preserve this patriarchal structure. She asserts that mothers ask their daughters to wear Hijab; if not, the issue will be reported to the head of the family, which is the father. She explains that mothers do so because if their daughter unveils, then the father will blame the mother (his wife) because this happened due to the lack of proper control by the mother. Karima also explains that she knows many Afghan women in Sweden that had to bear offensive words and physical violence from their husbands but had to keep silent. Tahmina states that she is forced to wear Hijab due to coercion from her family. She says:

“We have lived and raised in a patriarchal society, and when we moved here, men tried to keep that system in Sweden. We now live in an Afghan patriarchal society within the Swedish society.”

She says that she cannot leave her parents because they are old and should be cared for. Tahmina adds that in the Afghan community in Sweden, this is the dominant idea that “God is first, and then are men. Men have imposed this idea on women so that even women have faith in this idea. Their men’s power and control surround women”. Tahmina explains that she has a deep depression and needs to flee from her family. She says she can’t continue with Hijab and other imposed practices, behavior, and norms. She finishes up, saying:

“I need to flee from this patriarchal society inside Sweden. I want to go far, far away, where no Afghan knows me, and I can finally be free. Where should I head to?”

Leila asserts that she had the freedom and “permission” from her husband to choose to wear or not the Hijab, and she chose to wear it. She adds that her daughters do not wear Hijab because, as she narrates, their father “permitted them to unveil.” Farzanah, who wears Hijab, volunteered to do the interview but later informed that she could not do so because after she asked for “permission” from her husband, he had not permitted her to do an interview with a man (interviewer). Sima, who is unveiled, only after she could get divorced, believes that Afghan women in Sweden wear Hijab dominantly because their male relatives desire so. She says she knows women who want to wear Hijab, but their husbands do not allow them to unveil, and by contrast, women who have the willingness to unveil but are not permitted by their husbands to do so. She asserts that, in her opinion, “more than 70% to 80% of Afghan women are veiled due to their husband’s coercion.” Sima adds:

“Afghan men, I don’t talk about all of them, but most of them think that women are their properties. And when women are their property, they think they can do whatsoever they like with us. This is the very man who orders women to wear or not the Hijab, here, in Sweden”.

Rudabah and Naqma, both unveiled women, share the same insights and assert that girls/women have Hijab under pressure from their brothers, fathers, and husbands. They also explain stories about Afghan women who were harassed, beaten up, and violated by their male relatives when they did not follow the Hijab code, and that male relatives did not tolerate/accept this. Masumah, who is now unveiled, describes that she used to wear Hijab before getting married due to her brothers’ force. However, she narrates that her husband did not oppose her, and she could unveil. But her husband later started to force their daughter to wear Hijab and disputes began around so many other things, and she finally got divorced. Masumah explains that now her daughter got psychological issues and is under treatment due to the pressure and psychological violence her ex-husband and the father of the daughter produced. She explains:

“In our tradition, when you are not married, your family, particularly your father, decides over your life. When you get married, then it is the husband who decides over your choices and your life. They are practicing exactly the same tradition here in Sweden”.

Masumah asserts that the marriage and the family she used to have in Sweden imposed various “chains” into her body and her soul. She asserts that her husband was her “prisoner”, and now that she is divorced, unveiled and does whatsoever she decides, she feels that she is free. Zohra, who wears Hijab, got to know about this research in a Swedish language school for immigrants (SFI) and accepted to participate when she was told that the subject of the interview would be the Hijab of Afghan women in Sweden. But later, she refused to participate. She explained that talking about Hijab and telling her actual insights will put her in trouble if her husband learned about this. Safia, similarly, later responded that she couldn’t participate since the male relatives in the Afghan community in Sweden might get to know about her participation, and since they always “have their eyes on their relatives,” they would come to her and harass her.

3-4-2 Men’s role from men’s perspective

Borhan, a married male Afghan, states that women in his family do not exercise the Hijab. Nonetheless, he adds that “if I say to my wife to wear Hijab, she should wear.” When I asked him if I was permitted to talk to her wife, he opposed it. He said he would think about this and would let me know if “he” accepted this. He never contacted me later. Naseeb explained that his wife wears Hijab merely due to her own choice. Tamim, whose wife wears Hijab and his daughters do not, says that he “permitted” them to choose. Habib, whose wife does not wear Hijab, explains that when they moved to Sweden, his wife asked him what she should do concerning the Hijab and that he told his wife that according to *his opinion*, she is “allowed” to choose. Nabil, whose wife wears Hijab, asserts:

“It is obvious that Afghan women should wear Hijab. Why do some people think that our women should get naked as soon as they get to Sweden? We have honor tradition; we do not let such decency-killing things happen to our women”.

3-5 Identity/Culture

This section provides the interviewees’ insight regarding the relationship between the Hijab and identity/culture.

3-5-1 Women's insight on Hijab and identity/culture

Vasima describes that she sometimes wears a shawl and sometimes a hat so to protect herself from “bad weather”. She asserts that unveiling will not result in losing one's identity; “our identity is our language, nationality, and traditions”. Karima asserts that Hijab is not her identity. She says:

“Hijab is the way you wear and not your identity. If I am in Iran, I wear a certain dress code; in Afghanistan, another one, and here in Sweden, another one. How can this be my identity that changes over time and upon the change in my location?”

Karima adds that her identity is her father, mother, family, and culture. She adds that she moved to Sweden and currently does not wear Hijab, while she has not abandoned her identity since Hijab is not her identity. Tahmina believes that Hijab might be the identity for some Muslim women but not “the identity of me as an Afghan woman.” She continues, “they imposed Hijab on me, and I do not feel good at all.” Sima elaborates on the issue of identity and explains that the issue of Hijab and identity depends on the social background of that particular community. She asserts that usually, women who come from rural areas might see the Hijab as a part of their identity, but it is not the case for many women who come from big cities. Sima, states that Hijab is not her identity since it was something forced on her to cover her hair, and “what is the problem with women's hair? Why not men should cover their hair?! Who says this is my identity?!” She explains that the photo that is printed on her Swedish passport does represent her identity, and she is unveiled in that photo. Rudabah similarly asserts that Hijab is not her identity. She explains:

“If you look at the photos from forty years ago taken in Kabul, you will see that many women do not wear Hijab. This Hijab is imposed on us by the Taliban and the Mujahedin governments. How come such an identity changed dramatically and only under four decades? No way, this is not my identity, nor my culture.”

Masumah similarly asserts that Hijab was not practiced in many cities in Afghanistan fifty years ago. She asserts that the Hijab is “a product of force, unawareness, and honor tradition, and male supremacy”. She adds that “being honest, true, loyal to the family, and also being strong is the identity of Afghan women”.

3-5-2 Men's insights on Hijab and identity/culture

Borhan states that their women are devout Afghan Muslims but do not wear Hijab and that Islam and culture are not bound to Hijab. Borhan and Habib both believe that being a “true human” is the identity and not Hijab. Tamim also asserts that Hijab is not his family's identity and that society and upbringing have imposed hijab. Habib adds: “Those Afghans in Sweden who might say that Hijab is their identity should be then asked why you try to be Swedish citizen? Why do you try to get a Swedish passport? Does not that harm your identity? But a piece of the curtain does?”

Nabil asserts that Hijab is a divine (Elahi) order, and therefore it is their culture, identity, and everything, no matter in Afghanistan or Sweden. Majid asserts that women must wear Hijab since it is an Afghan identity and people should not lose their identity.

3-6 The impact of the Afghan community on the Hijab

In this section is provided: Interviewees' experience/insight/narration concerning the impact of the Afghan community in Sweden on forcing the Hijab on Afghan women/girls, the stigma (around unveiling)

generated and regenerated by such community, and how some Afghan females deal with this community's coercion.

3-6-1 Women's insight regarding the community

Hasiba explains that she knows Afghan women who unveil in ceremonies and parties in which Afghan people are absent but wear Hijab where they are present. Parwanah states that the Afghan community in Sweden disrespect unveiled Afghan women. Especially Afghan men always claim that unveiled Afghan women are "misusing the freedom" of Swedish society. Naqma explains that her husband forced her to veil due to the pressure he felt from the Afghan community and that if she had unveiled, then her husband should have dealt with the stigma exerted by the community. Naqma explains that "if you travel to Malmö, you might think that you have traveled to an Islamic country," and Afghan men are "super happy" that there are more veiled women there. She narrates:

"Once, we had a male guest from Germany. When he saw people in public places, he said that he wished he could move to Sweden since [, according to him,] there is too much freedom in Germany and not so many women wear Hijab, but in Sweden, there are many more veiled women."

Naqma adds, "Some Afghan men say that those who unveiled are whore, and morally corrupted. That is how they pressure us to continue to wear Hijab." Vasima describes her experience with Afghan women who lived in camps in Sweden and that these women unveiled as soon as they got out of the camp, and no Afghan men could see them unveiled. Tahmina, dealing with deep depression, wishes that she could be able to flee from the Afghan community to be free from the pressure from the people that know her. Leila, who asserts that she believes in Hijab, explains that she mainly practices Hijab since she does not like other men to see her body. She clarifies, however, that she does not like to be seen by Afghan and Muslim men, and if she could distance herself from such a community, she might take off her Hijab. Masumah states that married women wear Hijab due to coercion from their husbands. Unmarried girls do so either due to the force of their fathers or other Afghan men in the community because "in the eye of these men, an unveiled girl has become a prostitute". Masumah explains that after getting divorced from her husband, she had to distance herself from the Afghan and Muslim communities since such a community looked at an unveiled divorced woman as "a whore who is likely ready to have sex with everybody". She describes that even those men who have less problem with unveiling, do not let their female relatives to unveil due to the pressure these men feel from the community and that the community will challenge them whether these men still possess "honor".

3-6-2 Men's insight on the role of community

Habib describes that he knows many Afghan women/girls that when they distance themselves from their home/neighborhood, unveil since they are now far from the pressure of the community. He adds that when he posted family photos, including his unveiled wife in the photo, he got a lot of offensive comments claiming that he had lost his honor. He adds that he even got life threats from family members in both Afghanistan and Sweden, claiming he should be killed since he challenged the family honor. Nabil, and Majid asserted that one who chooses to unveil is "corrupted" and has no place in the community. Nabil states that unveil women should be treated as badly as possible.

3-7 Knowledge about the legal framework and legislation

Regarding the existing legislation in Sweden in favor of protecting women's rights if they encounter any violence due to their choice to distance from any religious practice, most of the informants (e.g., twelve out of fifteen female informants) were not aware of the existence of such legislation. Some of them explained that even if they could oppose their husbands' coercion regarding the Hijab and try to count on the protection/support from social legislation in Sweden, they cannot escape from the eyes, threat, and stigma that arises from the community. Others, however, asserted that they think that no law and authority could help them since they might get harassed or killed if they turn to authorities and place any claim against their husbands. Masumah, unveiled and divorced, states that she lives now under the protection of the authorities and lives anonymously because she might get hurt by her ex-husband. She states that many women do not know of such legislation. Many others are unsure if they turn to authorities, they get enough support, especially those who have children and do not know how to get support and keep their children. Masumah believes that if an Afghan woman is going to unveil, she should most probably get protected by the government. Sima, who had a difficult time struggling with her husband and "finally divorced", and according to her, "gained control over her own destiny", explains:

"Suppose that a woman has decided to get her rights. She should fight not only with her husband but with the community. She might most likely be physically violated by her husband, and she is not sure if she can be protected if she reports this. How is she going to pay her living costs? Who is going to support her concerning her job? Who helps her with her kids? Women should be protected in these fields."

Chapter 4, Analyzing the materials

The sample population with which the interviews were carried out consists of twenty Afghans residing in Sweden, of which fifteen are Afghan women and five Afghan men. Of twenty women (out of which five are the wives of the five male informants), eleven wear Hijab, and nine are unveiled. Of fifteen Afghan women interviewees, seven are unveiled, and eight still practice the Hijab.

As mentioned in the method challenges, it can be explicitly seen that Afghan women have a concern/fear of speaking out about the issue of the Hijab chiefly due to the concern of getting violated by either their male relatives or the Afghan community in Sweden since there is a risk of getting identified. As pointed out by most of the informants, the latter also is because of the power/control of male members of the community over women. Even some women who volunteered to be interviewed later rejected to do so, saying either that their husbands did not “permit” them to talk about the issue of Hijab, or they did not want to put themselves in danger by speaking about Hijab since they would most probably get harassed by their male relatives if they get identified. One of the female informants who is unveiled and started to talk about the issue stopped the interview since one of her male relatives intervened in the conversation.

With regard to the relationship between practicing Hijab in Sweden by Afghan women, and personal beliefs, family coercion, upbringing issues, and alike, most of the informants point out that other factors influence practicing Hijab more than personal beliefs. Even most of those female informants who practice Hijab state that if they happen to be in a community in Sweden where there is no Afghan or Muslim man, they might unveil since when they deeply think about the reason for this act, they come to the conclusion that practicing Hijab might not be actually due to their personal beliefs; it is instead, they explain, more of a habit, or upbringing issue taught by families, schools and the community and that they have a hesitancy if Hijab is their own choice. Only two male informants (out of twenty) believe that the Hijab is a fundamental element of being Muslim and that women “must” practice it. Even in this category of response, this is the male who relates the Hijab to women's personal beliefs.

Regarding the role of Afghan men in Sweden in practicing Hijab by their female relatives, as clearly demonstrated by the gathered data, most of the informants’ responses indicate that the impact of males in the family is the most decisive factor that “forces” women to veil (or unveil). All of the female informants mentioned various forms of men’s control over their female relatives’ decisions in veiling (or not). There is only one exception in the group of male informants; one of them asserts that veiling or not is not his business and that his wife should decide on this personally. Two other male informants whose wives are unveiled indicate that their wives are free to choose to wear (or not) the Hijab since they (the husbands) “permitted” their female relatives (wives and daughters) to do so. Female informants also assert that there has been a conversation between them and their husbands in which their husbands “allowed” them (or not) to veil or unveil. The other two male informants also clearly state that their wives “must” wear Hijab because they wish that their wives do so. One of them even states that if his wife does not veil, he shall take any possible measure to “force” her to do so.

Most of the informants reveal stories about the verbal and physical violations by men in many Afghan families in Sweden where if Afghan women/girls intend to unveil, in many cases, their husbands/fathers utilize some sorts of possible measures to stop them from doing so. Calling unveiled women as “whore”, “prostitutes,” and “morally corrupted,” and also arguing that women are unveiled because they aim to

“sleep with anybody,” and attempt to isolate unveiled women by men, physical violence upon unveiled women/girls, and so many other forms of violations clearly mentioned in informants’ responses. Some of the informants clearly assert that Afghan and Muslim men have “power” and “control” over Afghan women. One informant asserts that “God comes in the first place, and then comes the men” within the Afghan community. Other female informants assert that (most of the) Afghan men (in Sweden or elsewhere) think that women are their “property”, and that is why they think that they are allowed to decide over all aspects of the lives of their wives, among them “ordering” them to veil (or not).

The role of males in the family in forcing women to wear Hijab, controlling women by men in many aspects of private and public life, among them, forcing women (by various forms of power and violations) to veil (or unveil) explicitly mentioned as the chief factor in the veiling of Afghan women in Sweden.

With regard to the subject of identity and/or culture of (immigrant) Afghans (in Sweden) and its relationship with Hijab, fourteen female informants (out of fifteen) rejected the existence of such a relationship. They identified other societal factors as being an element of culture/identity (e.g., language, traditions, family, being loyal to the family, being a true human) but not the Hijab. Three of five male informants denied Hijab as an identity/culture, and two pointed to it as an identity/culture. In the latter, it can be seen that although Hijab is a measure to be practiced by women, still this is the men who consider themselves the actor to decide over the subject.

The impact of the Afghan community in Sweden, as pointed out by most of the informants (both male and female ones), is considerable on the coercion exercised by male relatives in the family on their wives/daughters in forcing them to continue to veil. Though still, the main source of this community pressure is male community members. Informants narrate their experience of seeing many Afghan women/girls who take off their Hijab in the remote areas where they feel there are no Afghan men, Afghan relatives, and/or Afghan neighbors. Most of the female and male informants clarify how unveiled women are usually disrespected by the community and are forced to either get back to the practice of the Hijab or be isolated. One of the informants, who is now unveiled and divorced, describes her ex-husband as her “prisoner” who imposed various “chains” into her body and soul. One informant asserts that she now lives in a patriarchal society inside the Swedish society, and she does not know where to flee from these destructive circumstances. On a different note, five out of fifteen female informants stated that having Hijab constrains their movement and makes it harder to get integrated into the job market and that they believe that Swedes more warmly embrace them in job places if they are not veiled.

Concerning the existence and/or knowledge about the existing laws and legislation in Swedish society for protecting women who intend to escape the control/violation of their male relatives and enjoy their freedom to distance themselves or continue the practice of religious measures, most of the informants are unaware of any existing law/legislation. Some of them assert that suppose that there are some legal and governmental/executive capacities in Sweden and that women can use them to make themselves free from the control and violations of their male relatives, but who should protect them from the male relatives and the community after they applied for such measures? Is there enough support for them? Does any authority support them in finding a job and becoming independent of their male relatives? One of the informants asserts that a Muslim woman who decides to take off her Hijab in public and starts to decide over her own body and her life must be protected by the authorities. She should be supported to get integrated into society; she should be helped to get more education, training, employment, and alike and should be protected in finding “secure” accommodation. She believes that “women do not dare to flee” from the “chains” with which they are “confined” without such “protection” and support.

Chapter 5, Discussion

Fekete (2009) suggested that considering Muslims as a homogenous group is the wrong way of conceiving Muslim communities. It is generally presumed that Hijab is practiced in all Muslim communities and that it is an element of culture and identity for them. However, as demonstrated the insight of most of the Afghan participants in this research clearly demonstrates a different attitude regarding Hijab. Within this community, Hijab is necessarily neither considered a culture/identity element nor is practiced primarily based on personal beliefs/choices. Also, most of the informants distinguish the Hijab code that they wear and that of other Muslim communities, notably among Arab Muslims. Thus, it could be concluded that there is a diverse range of insights, practices, and dress codes among different Muslim communities.

In Habermas (1995)'s conceptualization of the "democratic state of law", human rights claimed to be the general framework of a multicultural society. Taylor (1994) defines a multicultural society as a society in which various communities with distinct cultures can preserve their identity and culture. Also, Sweden is often portrayed as a good example of a multicultural society (Borevi, 2013). Taking into accounts these arguments, it could be concluded that, among other communities, the Afghan community in Sweden should be able to practice and preserve their culture and religious beliefs if Sweden is claimed to be a multicultural society and to respect and protect human rights. Under multicultural society discourse, it is predominantly assumed that, for instance, practicing Hijab should be considered and respected as a culture. Other studies claim that certain Muslim women (other than Afghans) believe that Sweden is a multicultural society since, according to them, Muslim women enjoy the freedom of practicing the Hijab (Bonnevier, 2016, Janulf, 2017). However, as demonstrated, it seems that Afghan women themselves considered the Hijab as neither culture nor the identity of Afghan women. Informants point to patriarchal structure, men's control, and verbal and physical violations by which women are forced to veil. Therefore, if the Sweden's multiculturalism is to be utilized to confirm the Hijab as a culture/identity element among Afghan Muslim women in Sweden, it fails to be a framework for protecting the human rights of Afghan women. Instead, it serves the violations exercised on Afghan women through the repressive Hijab. The data gathered in this research affirms the argument raised by Cumper (2014), in which the author asserts that multiculturalism has become a synonym with the accommodation of religious tenets, especially Islamic beliefs. This seems to be the case, at least regarding Afghan women in Sweden who participated in this research, of which the majority oppose the practice of Hijab but socially are forced to do so. The result of this research disaffirms the claim raised by other accounts (e.g., Wagner et al. 2012) that the veil is a practical tool to confirm Muslim identity. While Edwards (2010) correctly considers any policy that favors the ban on Hijab as "violence against women," this research suggests that neglecting both immediate and ultimate underlying roots of the practice of the Hijab could also lead to regenerating the violence against Muslim women. The solution is neither banning the veiling nor neglecting the repressive Hijab, and it will be discussed later in the following sections.

Yet, the issue is not only that the Hijab should not necessarily be considered an element of Afghan women's culture/identity. But instead, the point is that, as mentioned shortly in previous sections and as Grace (2004) asserts, Hijab is a tool for oppressing women. According to the gathered data, as Ahmadi (2018) claimed, it is also a physical manifestation of misogyny. The psychosocial and social roots of the repressive Hijab will be elaborated on in the following sections.

The heterosexual gaze of men pertains to the man's pleasure when he looks at the female's body (Mulvey, 1975, Koust, 2012), and this puts women as the sexual objects of male subjects. Instead of diminishing this dynamic, clerics put forth Hijab as a means to protect women from this male gaze (Ahmadi, 2018:46), and thereby, women in public are a danger to men and society. This is the responsibility of females to remedy social ills that stem from the unveiled women, and that is why women's body become the subject of securing the moral health of society. Men, therefore, are placed between God and women by forcing Islamic Hijab (ibid). This resembles one informant's insight who stated that in the Afghan Muslim community, "first comes God and then men".

Nonetheless, there are other layers of reasons behind forcing women to veil (or unveil). First, controlling women by their (by blood or marriage) relatives brings honor to men in the public, as clearly stated by most of the informants who assert that Afghan men in Sweden claim that for the preservation of their honor, their female relatives should veil. Second, there are; however other reasons involved. The repeatedly stated insight of many informants of this research makes it clear to which extent the Hijab issue is connected to verbal and physical violations and suppression by Afghan men residing in Sweden on women if women intend to unveil. As demonstrated, Afghan women in Sweden wear Hijab predominantly due to the coercion exercised by their male relatives. In other words, this is the patriarchal structure through which male relatives of Afghan women force the practice of the Hijab. And Afghan women have become the silenced detainees in the repressive Hijab. The data gathered in this research affirms the claim raised by other accounts. Such accounts underscore those veiled women are victims and subjugated by a patriarchal culture or religious system (Bano, 2003; Gal -Or, 2011; Piatti-Crocker & Tasch, 2015). Ahmadi (2018) asserts that Hijab serves as a gender marker and is a physical manifestation of misogyny. Cavanaugh (2009:3) asserts that Islam's function in this sense is a means of political justification for the patriarchal repression of women. Nonetheless, the issue should be explored from a deeper level. Not the whole blame should be placed on Afghan men, nor the ultimate root is patriarchy. This patriarchal structure is a channel of manifestation of repression against veiled women by men, but this structure has its own underlying roots. The question is, why is the patriarchal structure practiced and preserved?

As explained in chapter one, whereas the discourse analysis approach asserts that reality is constructed through discourse (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Machin & Mayr, 2012; Torfing, 1999), the historical materialism approach asserts that the material reality constructs the discourse, culture and our perspective (Marx & Engels; 1846, Marx, 1859). Our status in society, our class, sex, and ethnicity affect the degree of our choice (Ahmadi, 2018). Althusser (2001) asserts that both liberalism and religious ideologies pose a similar illusion, and that is the idea that human rights and freedom are something that individuals naturally possess. According to the Marxist view, the dependence of women on men, for instance, economically and lack of feasible job opportunities is to satisfy the cheap labor in favor of capitalist needs. Vogel (2013) asserts that only the female body can guarantee labor reproduction. That is why capitalist policies, like the predecessor mode of production (e.g., Feudalism), attempt to control women's bodies. Capitalism is not, however, the inventor of control of women's body and, for instance, by veiling and unveiling, but does not have the intention to revoke it since it needs it. The policies of controlling women's bodies vary from violence, social narratives, restricting clothing, etc. (Vogel, 2013:141). Adopting the Marxist perspective in this context can illustrate why within the capitalist mode of production -just like the predecessor ones- men control women's bodies, and, for instance, why women are forced to wear Hijab. For the sake of capitalist interests and for incorporating the female body into a commodity in political economy, the policy of veiling (and unveiling) is enforced (Gould, 2014). As mentioned, these

policies are inherited from centuries before the birth of capitalism but emphasized, continued, and preserved by capitalism too. Grace (2004:212) points to Nawal El Saadawi, who “links the practices of veiling to international politics, connecting the revival of fundamentalism,” which “demands that women be excluded from public life, secluded and kept at home.” Summarized by Grace (2004), Saadawi argues that “neo-colonialism/religious fundamentalism are two sides of the same coin” and “describes capitalist neo-colonialism as a system that corrupts both men and women into being oppressors” (ibid).

To sum up the discussion conducted so far, it could be underscored that the coercion that Muslim men (including Afghan men) exercise in forcing their female relatives to veil is manifested through religious and cultural factors (e.g., honor culture) and exercised within the patriarchal structure. But this coercion serves the commodification of women’s body. This control over women’s body is inherited by the capitalist paradigm from predecessors but preserved and regenerated by capitalism to control the source of reproduction of labor. As a way of illustration and metaphorically speaking, the patriarchal structure resembles a vehicle in which the woman is held captive and handicapped. The vehicle driver is the man who is ideologically, socially, and politically instructed to drive the vehicle toward a certain goal. The irony in this metaphor is that the vehicle incarcerates both the driver and the passenger; both the first-degree and the second-degree hostages in the vehicle, respectively, the woman and the man, are doomed to head toward a destination predetermined by the capitalist agenda. Capitalism generates and regenerates various means of control, among them the patriarchal structure that is inherited from predecessors. And patriarchal structure functions to strengthen and preserve the capitalist order. In this context, Hijab is to cover and detain women in a curtain cage aiming to control women’s body and choices and is inherited and regenerated by the capitalist project. Hijab serves- as one of many diverse ways- to help the preservation of the capitalist mode of production. One of the implications of such an argument is that multiculturalism when addressing the Hijab as the right, identity, and culture of oppressed women, no matter intentionally or unintentionally, serves the violations against these women and the interests of the capitalist project. Moreover, believing and practicing the position of possessing and controlling women’s body by the male (society) might manifest itself in different forms and not only by veiling. While within Muslim communities, the commodification of women’s body is manifested, among other measures, through forcing the Hijab onto women, in other (non-Muslim) communities, it might be manifested in other forms of commodification of women’s body. Among such diverse forms are generating false desire for the fashion of all sorts, cosmetics, diets, cosmetic surgery, sexy clothing, skinny bodies, designer clothes, and so on.

Nonetheless, there are important questions unsolved. So far, two roots have been identified for the Hijab. First, it is predominantly and socially forced on women as a violation against them by the patriarchal structure brought from the homeland and preserved by multiculturalism in Sweden. Second, controlling women’s body by the particular form of imposing the Hijab on them (among other shapes and forms) is inherited, regenerated, continued, and preserved by capitalism. It is a product of material conditions and serves the interests of the global capitalist project, as it served its predecessors as well. Nevertheless, the question is, how should this repressive Hijab be practically diminished? Should only men be considered as the actor to diminish the violations? Should only our behavior, discourse, and our perspectives be changed as to diminish this category of violations? Should one wait for the elimination of social structure generally and particularly the end of the capitalist project to have the violation exercised on women by socially forced Hijab resolved?

Applying the discourse analysis, one could argue that this is the discourse that formed the behavior of the Afghan men who exercise suppression upon their female relatives as to these females obey them and wear Hijab. And if so, then the discourse should be modified/corrected to diminish this violation, or men should be blamed and considered as the responsible actor to diminish the violations. However, by applying the Marxist approach, and particularly the historical materialism of Marx & Engels (1846), it can be concluded that this is the material condition that resulted in such a repressive discourse and behavior among (male-dominated) Muslim communities. It is noteworthy that material conditions discussion and the Marxist view (and particularly the historical materialism approach) do not merely apply to the capitalist paradigm. Instead, this view covers other sorts of mode of production, be it capitalism, Feudalism, or not (Marx & Engels, 1846). The point of this view, among other objectives, is to use it as a lens to analyze material conditions, whether within capitalism, Feudalism, or not. Finally, it should be emphasized that the employment of a Marxist lens in this research is not merely for interpreting the situation of violation but to provide actual remedies.

As discussed, the change in the repressive behavior through forcing Hijab cannot be made only by the change in or emphasis on the discourse/perspective. Additionally, not male Afghans should be pointed out as the main responsible actor for diminishing the violations. But rather, the material conditions should be changed as well, and other actors should intervene to assist oppressed women. This is one of the main implications of employing the Marxist perspective. Althusser (2001) asserts that the way to protect and preserve freedom and human rights is by real and collective control and the act of social forces. Accordingly, legislation and certain practical measures should be taken to socially and collectively tackle this form of violation of human rights against women (that is exercised through the repressive Hijab by means of patriarchal structure). By applying the Marxist view, it is concluded that there should be a real act to change the material conditions for making the real change. Accordingly, abandoning such real actions and solutions and not implementing tangible measures to diminish such violations of women's rights is due to the intention to save the budget in favor of the upper class's interests. Finally, the question is, how should social actors intervene to change the material conditions and diminish such violations? Which social actor is the immediate responsible party to intervene?

Measure to be taken to diminish the violations

Sweden's constitution emphasizes that "people" are "equal" (Banakar, 1994). Particularly in Sweden, there exists a special equality agency established by the government to combat discrimination against women (Government, 2009). Nonetheless, as demonstrated by this research, there is an ongoing violation against Afghan women regarding the oppressive and forced Hijab, and the measurements fall short in bringing real changes in this sense.

Moreover, since Sweden is a party to the UN (1979) "convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women" (CEDAW), the Swedish government should take responsibility for combating the socially forced violation against Afghan women exercised by their male relatives. CEDAW targets "cultural patterns which define the public realm as a man's world and the domestic sphere as women's domain" (UN, 1979). According to the gathered data, this pattern exists within the Afghan community in Sweden. Hence, the patriarchal pattern that defines the public sphere as a male world and forces Afghan women to wear Hijab in front of non-relative men should be targeted by the relevant Swedish governmental entities. CEDAW emphasizes the obligation of state parties "to ensure the equal rights of men and women to enjoy all economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights" (ibid). Here in

this context, the cultural rights of Afghan women who are imposed to accept the Hijab as their culture/identity and their civil right to freedom of distancing from practicing forced Hijab have been violated, and therefore the Swedish government should act in protecting these women's rights (ibid). Article 2, clause (e) of CEDAW clarifies that states parties are obliged to take necessary measures to eliminate discrimination against women by "any person," organization, and enterprise (ibid). Here in this context, the oppressive person is the male relative of Afghan women, and therefore it is the responsibility of the Swedish government to protect women from this violation exerted by the socially forced Hijab. Furthermore, as many of the informants of this research stated, Afghan women are considered the property of men, men are superior to women, and this is the male relatives who decide over the rights of female relatives and, among them, the right to distance from religious practices (e.g., Hijab). This social pattern explicitly accords with the repressive pattern of men's superiority and women's inferiority within the Afghan community in Sweden. Here again, the Swedish government should take its responsibility since Article 5, clause (a) of CEDAW calls for all necessary measurements by state parties to combat "the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women." (ibid).

Finally, with regard to changes in material conditions in minority communities, CEDAW obliges state parties to take material provisions. Articles 10, 11, and 12 of CEDAW address the obligation of state parties to secure women's rights concerning respectively, education, employment, and healthcare (UN, 1979). The fulfillment of three items can lead to meaningful change in the material condition of the lives of Afghan women and therefore enable them to change the social and power relation between them and their male relatives. As indicated by one of the informants, women should be aware of their right -which needs proper education. This informant underscores that oppressed women should be assisted in finding a job so as to be economically independent of their husbands. Both Afghan men and women should also be educated about equal rights of men and women and that women have the right to decide over their bodies and practice (or not) any given religious act.

Various state entities should carry out all mentioned measures in Sweden to protect and fulfill the right of (Afghan) Muslim women and decrease the violations and discrimination imposed on them through the socially and patriarchally forced Hijab. A proper budget should be allocated to make it possible to carry out this governmental responsibility. As mentioned previously, abandoning such essential measurements could be interpreted as saving the budget in favor of the interests of the upper-class people and leaving alone oppressed minorities, women, and lower-class people in a difficult situation.

Conclusions

As demonstrated by this empirical research and as answers to the research questions, the primary data gathered through interviews with twenty (regular) Afghans (and not politicians or activists) residing in Sweden proves that the Hijab is practiced among most of the Afghan women in the population sample, not due to their personal beliefs. Nor do they consider Hijab an element of their culture/identity. Additionally, and more importantly, Hijab is predominantly forced through a patriarchal structure and by the male relatives of Afghan women. Afghan men tend to exert power and control over their female relatives in various aspects of life, including the right of distancing from wearing Hijab. Generally, and with some exceptions, men seem to use either verbal and/or physical violation if their female relatives show a willingness to unveil. These women have become silenced detainees in the repressive Hijab. According to the gathered data, Afghan men tend to adjudge that they have the right to permit their female relatives to unveil or not. The pressure from the (male-dominated) Afghan community on both men and women is an additional factor by which men force women to keep veiling in order to protect men's honor. By such coercion, men extend their private sphere to the public sphere in which they force their female relatives to obey their rules. The responsibility of remedying the alleged social ill and moral ill in society that is claimed to be the result of the unveiling of women falls on women who should cover their bodies to prevent the male gaze, control men's lust, and safeguard the morals of non-relative males in society.

Sweden's multiculturalism falls short if only it is perceived and utilized as a framework to justify the Hijab among minority groups in Sweden and a lens to recognize the Hijab as a choice/culture/identity of Muslim women. As demonstrated in this research, Hijab is not considered by Afghan women in Sweden as an element of culture/identity. It is instead a socially forced measure and a means of repressing women. Thus, in this context, multiculturalism has practically justified and served the violations exercised by the repressive Hijab on (Afghan) women in Sweden.

By employing Marxist feminist analysis, it was discussed how controlling the body of women through imposing Hijab on them accords with the needs of the capitalist project in which women and their bodies should be controlled since women are the source of reproduction of labor, and reproduction of labor is essential for keeping the capitalist project alive. Though capitalism inherited the control over women's body from predecessors. However, it regenerates, continues, and preserves it for the sake of its' own interests. And veiling is only one of the various ways of the control women's body. Therefore, regarding the subject of Hijab in Sweden, Hijab and multiculturalism (whether intentionally or unintentionally) serve both the violations against veiled women and the interests of the capitalist project.

To answer the question of what measures to be taken to diminish violations by repressive Hijab, only discourse cannot resolve the issue, and not only men should be responsible for diminishing the violations. Instead, the material condition of women's lives should be changed, and they should be practically protected. Therefore, the legal/social responsibilities of the Swedish government should be reminded to be implemented. Especially since Sweden is a party to the UN (1979) convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW), the obligation posed by this convention to all the state parties (UN, 1979), including the Swedish government, was pointed out. Educating both Afghan men and women regarding the equal rights of men and women and the civil and political rights of women are among the necessary measures to be taken by the government. Importantly, necessary measures in material

provisions, including training and employment for women to empower them to become economically independent of men, are of great importance that is emphasized as one of the obligations embodied within the convention to which the Swedish government is responsible for realizing.

In Sweden's political sphere, there is a false dichotomy regarding the subject of the Hijab and parties that are in power/parliament chiefly opt for either of the following two wrong positions: The position of various forces and particularly in the camp of those who consider themselves “left,” in which usually multiculturalism is promoted/emphasized, has so far neglected the violations of human rights of repressive Hijab on Muslim women. On the other hand, other political forces, particularly (far) right-wing parties, and specifically racist forces (e.g., the SD party) utilize the oppressive Hijab to target those upon which the Hijab has been imposed: they target the existence of the immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers; these forces depart from the Hijab being a danger to the Swedish society’s values and conclude in attacking these minorities’ fundamental rights to asylum/migration, live, work and study in the host society. It seems that targeting these minorities' rights is merely a shortcut to promote and implement right-wing economic policies (and mainly neoliberal ones). This affects the host society as well and results in the deprivation of the whole population (and not only minorities) from their rights, including economic rights. In short, under the banner of multiculturalism and/or cultural relativism, the women per se and their rights is not protected, but the repressive Hijab is promoted, and the (far) right camp is not attacking the repressive Hijab or fundamentalism but the fundamental rights and women per se. One camp promotes the repressive Hijab, and the other neglects the fundamental rights of minorities. Neither of these positions protects the dignity, rights, and development of the communities in question and also the *host* society (Sweden).

Given that, this research suggests a third approach/solution to the issue: While combating the discrimination and violations (placed on veiled women who are forced to veil) and not targeting the women per se, the Swedish government should take its responsibility seriously to practically take measures to protect the minority groups. One immediate task to be carried out is to provide legal and practical protection for women who intend to unveil and confront the risk of harassment and violence and are suffering from repression but in silence. Campaigns should be conducted to spread information among these communities, so women’s awareness increases and they dare to decide over their body/life. The government should assure these oppressed women that governmental organizations are practically ready to secure and protect them. Importantly, the government is legally obliged to allocate a proper budget for awareness, education, training, employment, and development of both men and women of these minority communities. One should clarify that this third approach accords with the legal responsibility of the Swedish government according to Sweden's constitution and to CEDAW, to which Sweden is a party.

Avoiding drawing any generalization across a larger population of Muslim women in Sweden, I would argue that based on the data gathered from Afghan women (and men) who reside in Sweden, the discrimination against these women (among other factors) by the repressive Hijab is a severe issue. The only reason that these discriminations are invisible is that discrimination within such minority groups is usually a silent one. These oppressed women are silenced detainees in the repressive Hijab. Therefore, it is suggested that both academicians and governmental research bodies allocate the necessary budget and time to explore such issues, address the root cause of such violation of human rights (here, repressive Hijab), and provide proper, both short term and long term and practical policies to remedy the violations.

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Appendix

Interview questionnaires and elaborating on the method

The interview questionnaire covered a diverse range of topics/themes. After providing general information about the research and its aim, starting questions were focused on the participant's general information. Interviewees were asked about their age, education, marital status, occupation, place of residence, residence status (either citizen of Sweden or asylum seeker, and so on), place of origin in Afghanistan and/or if they have lived in another country than Afghanistan (e.g., Iran and Pakistan) before moving to Sweden. The specific questionnaires focused on the subject of the Hijab. Female interviewees were asked whether they wore Hijab or unveiled: and what code/type of Hijab the informant meant by the term Hijab. Is (or was) she wearing Hijab primarily due to her own belief? Do other factors affect(ed) the act of wearing a Hijab? How are other people, particularly male relatives, involved in this action? What is the role of their parents in making/guiding her to wear the Hijab? And does she see the Hijab as identity/cultural element for Afghan women? What factors constitute her identity? Has she experienced any form of violence concerning the freedom of distancing from the practice of the Hijab? If yes, by whom, if no, has she noticed/heard about/witnessed such an experience from others? What sort of violence? Participants wearing Hijab were asked to reflect on a fictitious situation where they reside in an area/city/place where there is no Afghan/Iranian or Muslim man around them, and it is all Swedes. Would she continue wearing Hijab in such a situation?

The male participant was questioned about their insight regarding the issue of Hijab, identity, culture, and what role they see for themselves with regard to their female relatives (e.g., wife, daughter, mother, and sister). Both groups were asked about their knowledge regarding the existing legislation in regard to protecting women who are suppressed due to opting for their ideals and practices.

As the issue of the Hijab has some degree of sensitivity, here it is explained how the atmosphere of the interviews was. It was important to desire and try to hold a healthy and respectful dialogic space in which the participants feel comfortable, and also, both sides could conduct an exchange of ideas, opinions, and contributions could occur (Keyl, 2017). At the beginning of the (voice call) interviews, the majority of female informants were hesitant to answer the questions, and most of them stated that there were things that could not be said due to the sensitivity of the issues and that if others learn that this certain person has informed about such points, this could make risk/harm/trouble for them. Nonetheless, at the end of the interviews, most of them said that they felt happy that they chose to take part in the conversation and that they would be glad if there were more questions for them in the future, I am welcome to contact them later. In order to avoid any harm to the participants through identification, all of the interviewees have been anonymized and are mentioned in this research only by pseudonyms.