



School of Mission & Theology, Stavanger

**Dreams and Plans:
How do Muslim youth in Stavanger Region think of their
future?**

Master thesis in Global Studies

By
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Acknowledgement

It has been one of the biggest challenges in my life, and it also had taught many lessons underway. At the same time converting the experience into academical aspects was very useful in terms of analytical context and career development. When both the Supervisor and the student were busy travelling abroad, the time frame had to be adjusted many times. And it was further delayed due to the shock waves of 22nd July 2011 Utøya incident where my son also was caught in the cross fire and survived miraculously.

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Executive summary

The purpose of this paper is to get an insight of how Muslim students in Stavanger Region think of their future and how they plan to achieve them. They are now at their 3rd year of general education in Upper Secondary Schools. All of them are second-generation immigrants in Norway and well conversant in Norwegian language. They have grown up in two cultures – their parent's and the majority society.

Medicine, engineering and architecture are the main areas of profession these students have chosen as their future careers. Status, income and serving the people were some of the priorities for planning their future careers. Most of them plan to take their final part of their university education abroad.

Globalization has brought about lots of changes all over the world. Countries have become pluralistic with new cultures, languages and religious groups. As Muslims my respondents encounter many challenges in the society in addition to the challenges in their own local environment and the major society. Their success will depend on how they tackle the challenges and complete their professional education in time.

My respondents seem to be religious, have adopted their parents' culture to a certain extent, they feel hurt and disturbed by provoking questions in their environment and among their network of friends, but they accept it positively that it helps them to understand more about their own religion. At the same time they strongly feel that they are part of the Norwegian society and they are fully prepared to make their contribution for the benefit of the society and the nation as a whole.

Although these youths can not represent the entire Muslim youths of Stavanger Region, the outcome of this research shows that these youths seriously think of their future and want to come up in life. They have the determination to achieve their goals in order to have a good life for themselves and also to be useful to the society at large.

Terminology

First-generation students: Students born outside of the country of assessment whose Parents are also foreign-born.

Second-generation students: Students born in the country of assessment with foreign- born parents.

Upper Secondary Education provides three years of general education or vocational training after the 10th year of lower secondary education. The norm for apprenticeship training is two years of vocational training in upper secondary education followed by one or two years of practical training in industry.

Tertiary Education: As part of the implementation of the Bologna Process, the degree system was entirely restructured in 2002-2003. As a result, the main structure follows the 3 + 2 + 3 model, viz. three-year Bachelor's degrees, two-year Master's degrees, and three-year PhD degrees.

Halal meat: The meat of animal slaughtered according to Islamic rituals.

Islamophobia: Irrational hostility, fear and hatred of Islam, Muslims and Islamic Culture, and active discrimination towards this group as individuals or collectively.

Shahada: The profession of faith and testimony through the formulation, with the heart and intelligence of, "I bear witness that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is His messenger." It is the foundation of being a Muslim.

List of Abbreviation

EU	European union
ESS	European Social Survey
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UNHCR	United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees
IMDi	The Directorate of Integration and Diversity
IDP	Internally Displaced Person

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Part I Introduction

1. The Research Project

It is almost a daily phenomenon that we experience in the media, discussions and debates about immigrants and their integration in the Norwegian society. Most of the discussions fall on to pointing the finger on Muslims. One of the latest media discussions was the “taxi rapes” in Stavanger. The Police came out with statistics showing that the majority of those who were involved had Muslim background. Finger was pointed generally on the Muslim community as if it was responsible for this action. One of the responsible Police officers explained the phenomena based on his research that when a lady is drunk and in such a position, she could be raped according to some Muslim cultures. Punishment for rape is very severe in Islam. But generalizations based on some minor groups and traditions create not only a negative impression about Muslims and Islam in the major society, it also pave the way for widening the gap between people and at the same time accelerate the growth of Islamophobia. Unfortunately incidents such as this affect all the Muslims as a group and especially the youngsters.

The purpose of this thesis will be to get an insight of how Muslim students in the general Upper Secondary School plan to go ahead with their higher studies and how they intend to achieve them, in spite of the psychological pressures they continue to encounter such as the above mentioned one. Do they take these as provocation or challenge? How are they managing these situations to go ahead to achieve their dreams in life?

As religion is the main focus in this Global Studies thesis, these students’ background as Muslims and their religion Islam will be given significance while intercultural communication and integration also will be dealt with. It will also reflect to a certain degree on how the religious identity plays a role among these Muslim youths in the Stavanger Region.

1.1 Muslims in Norway

It was in the late 1960s the first Muslim immigrants came to Norway for employment. They were mostly from North Morocco, Turkey and Pakistan. When labour migration was restricted in 1975, the Muslim population gradually increased through family reunification and refugees. According to different sources such as Kari Vogt, Christine Jacobson and Gøran Larsson the Muslim population in Norway is close to 200,000 per January 2011. Among them the Pakistani community (31 884) is the biggest group followed by Iraq (27 827), Somalia (27 523), Turkey (16 430), Bosnia & Herzegovina (16 125), Iranian (16 957), Kosovo (13 303) and Afghanistan (12 043) communities.¹ The majority of Muslims are living in Oslo.

1.2 Muslim youths in Stavanger Region

In the early 1970's one could hardly find Muslims in Norway. I remember very well, when I came to Norway in 1972 there were just a handful of Muslims who lived in Stavanger. They were migrants from Pakistan who had just come here when Norway was in need of manpower to serve its labour market.

As per statistics of January 2011, there are 7650 Muslims living in the whole of Rogaland. Stavanger Region consists of Randaberg, Stavanger, Sandnes and Sola, and all these cities put together the total population of Muslims amounts to 5350. Although quite a few Muslims live in Haugesund and Karmøy, the majority of Muslims are living in Stavanger Region.²

A small group of Sri Lankan Muslims who came to Stavanger for education during the period 1972 - 1978 and got settled is consisting of 9 families. Most of them are well educated and active in the society. Turks followed the Pakistanis in 1980s and thereafter people from the Middle East and Africa came mostly as refugees, due to war and internal conflicts in their countries. The Majority of them are people from Palestine, Iraq, Iran, Indonesia, Afghanistan and Somalia. In addition there are other groups, who are from Bangladesh, India, Eritrea and Ethiopia.

¹ ssb pr. January 2011

² ibid

The total migrant population in Stavanger Region is 15600 as per 1st January 2010, which is 7,5% of the total population in the Region. Out of which 3% are migrant youths who are following the Upper Secondary School education.

The parents of these students are mostly coming from a “Traditional background” from their country of origin. They were born and brought up in a society where the social values and standards of living were relatively stable from one generation to the next.

As Hetland points out, the impact of globalisation had made these parents to end up in Norway, which is a “modern society” with or without their concern³. Here the technology has drastically improved which has brought about new ways of organising the society.⁴

Though the parents came into a modern society due to work migration or as asylum seekers, it is not easy for them to get rid of their traditional values. These values are passed onto the children, which make them to realize who they are and their origin. As they grow up in a modern society it becomes a challenge for them to find out where they stand in regards to their own identity. On the other hand these children have the language skill and better knowledge of the Norwegian society than their parents do. It is also interesting to find out how each one of them as individuals tries to define their identity.

Selection of participants for the interview includes students from more than one city who are going to Upper Secondary Schools in Stavanger Region. This I believe will give the research a wider perspective in regards to the expected results.

1.3 Aim of the thesis

The main objective of this research is to understand and explore the mindset of these students with regards to their plans for the future as they are preparing to enter universities to pursue higher studies. What are the main success criteria in their own

³ Hetland, Øystein. 2008 p. 11

⁴ Eisenstadt. 1999

opinion and the hindrances that may be blocking their way to progress to achieve their dreams?

We hear different stories of migrant students through media on how well they do or the shortcomings such as dropouts from schools and what it leads to. There are many things happening around us and that gives us a certain amount of knowledge concerning the different events. However what we know is usually picked up on the surface and we lack a deeper knowledge of them.

It is often reported in the media that a considerable percentage of students with migrant background fall out from Upper Secondary School before they could complete their chosen field. This research will also try to throw some light on how the Muslim students are faring in regards to this group of students.

As I have pointed out earlier, Muslim youths are faced with significant challenges in the major society in regards to adjusting themselves to fit into their families, Muslim environments, school and friends, and not the least what is coming out in the media from time to time concerning Muslims. One of the latest incidents is Dagbladet's cartoon discussions. All these might put some psychological pressure on them, challenging them to search for their own identity of who they are and where they actually belong. There is no doubt that these phenomena may effect their education and have consequences if they lack the necessary support from their families, friends and schools.

These youths are faced with many challenges in their environments. Generally speaking there are some who lack the necessary support from their families. Some do not have anyone to get support from, as they have come to the country all alone as minors and not aware of the possibilities. Others may be facing problems with language and cultural integration. There are institutions providing support for school lessons and it is up to each student to make use of these facilities. Those who are unable to face the challenges may drop out from school and end up as what might be viewed as losers in the society.

With regards to what is happening today, such as the reactions of Muslim youths towards the cartoon of the prophet and other issues related to Islam and Muslims, especially in the West is a clear indication that this area would become of great interest for more in depth research in the future.

1.4 Background for Writing the Thesis

The Master in Global studies programme offers students the possibility of specialising in one of three different fields: Religious Studies, Christian Studies or Study of Cultures & Intercultural Communication. In most of my work situations I had been involved with migration and integration issues connected to asylum seekers, refugees, IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) or immigrants both in Norway and abroad. That provided me with a unique opportunity to learn more about various cultures and religions, and put me in a situation to adjust myself to acquire the necessary skills in intercultural communication. This academic and professional background equipped me personally in a good way for this project.

It is further significant that no one has studied this topic in Stavanger. Although some research had been done in Oslo by Fangen and many other academics on Muslim youths in general, and based on nationality background in particular that deals with, how these youths fare in the Norwegian society.

I considered different topics for my research and I finally made up my mind to do the research on the topic concerning the Muslim youths living in Stavanger Region. The other reason behind this decision was that when we generally compare Muslim youths with other youths, they are facing bigger challenges in the society than any other groups. In many aspects these youths are somewhat different from others. One of the examples is use of alcohol, which is normal among most of the youths in the West. Whereas, drinking alcohol is prohibited in Islam and most of the Muslim youths may find it difficult to mix with other youths, especially in their leisure time. Another aspect is the Muslim girls who don't usually mix up with boys like other youths do. The challenge here is that some may follow this custom on their free will, whereas some might be forced to do so.

This research is not only interesting but also will be useful to my knowledge in many ways. As such I made up my mind to go for the above theme to conduct research on the condition of Muslim youths in Stavanger Region who are in their 3rd year Upper Secondary School education. I do feel that it is proper to make efforts to see things in this context through academic and research perspectives. Furthermore, the network I have within the local Muslim community gave me easy access to gatekeepers to select the participants to get the necessary information and other data that I required for the thesis.

1.5 The importance and relevance of the project

The impact of globalization has brought about many changes in the contemporary world. Internal conflicts, wars, natural catastrophes and not the least the technological improvements have made people all around the world to move easily to different parts of the world. The majority of them move as asylum seekers or immigrant workers.

Some of the earlier research indicates that the educational level of parents and their employment status along with income level play an important role on the immigrant youths taking higher education, especially the first generation who are from non-European countries. Another interesting factor is that most of these students are taking general higher education rather than professional education or vocational training⁵.

It is important to note that there is a gradually growing opposition against asylum seekers and immigrants in the West by rightist extremists, particularly against Muslims. It creates a mental pressure on immigrant youths, especially when it comes to Muslim youths. There is no doubt that this may definitely have some impact on their taking higher education and also their future. How will they perceive their future when they are viewed with suspicion?

1.6 Research Question

This paper will analyse the situation of the Muslim students in Stavanger region to get an insight view on how these students think of their future in regards to different areas

⁵ Opheim og Støren 2001, and Markussen et.al 2008

of their life. Muslims and Islam face significant challenges in the West, as pointed out earlier. How does it effect the younger generation and do they have constructive plan for their future? I have searched for previous studies done on the variables of my study, but the main research question is not covered by any of them. Most of the existing literatures deal with identity and integration issues that are part of this research.

To reach the goal of what I am looking for, I used the following major questions to get the necessary information from the target group. It touches their views on selection of education, integration in society, religious identity, support at home & society and their own free views. These main questions were clarified through follow up questions to bring out the desired and needed information:

1. *What are your dreams and plans for the future?*
2. *What is the reason for choosing this particular subject area?*
3. *How well are you integrated in the major society?*
4. *As a Muslim, do you face any particular challenges in the Norwegian society?*
5. *What is the role of your parents in choosing your career?*
6. *Do you look at your friends who are older as role models?*
7. *What kind of support and encouragement do you get in your studies by the school?*
8. *Do you have any other free views on this subject matter?*

2. Methodology and theory

2.1 Methodological Approach – questionnaire

My choice also suits well to Silverman's⁶ advice for research students: *“Begin in familiar territory: if you can, work with data that is close to hand and readily accessible. Make it easy on yourself at this stage so that you can concentrate your energies on the indefinitely more important task of data analysis.”*

My interviews with the Muslim youths living in Stavanger Region was to generate qualitative data. At the same time I shall try to analyse some of the aspects like participation in the society in regards to integration, the background of parents, friends and education in the light of available quantitative materials. Some of the available materials may give some new perspectives on this group.

Social research is gathering data to understand various aspects of a society. Use of questionnaire and interview studies has several advantages such as that there is flexibility for the researcher to ask follow up questions to clear misunderstandings. Usually the response rate is more as they talk, you listen and write or record them in tape. At the same time you also can ensure that all the questions are answered and thereby there will be completeness in the process.⁷

I have chosen third year Upper Secondary School Muslim students in Stavanger Region (3. år videregående skole elever – de som tar allmennfag) as my target group. Students who are taking general education, and planning to go for higher studies in areas such as medicine, engineering and management.

These students who are living in Stavanger region have their origin from wide range of Muslim countries such as Pakistan, Turkey, Somalia, Middle East, Bosnia & Herzegovina and some are from non-Muslim countries such as India, Sri Lanka and

⁶ Silverman (2005). Doing Qualitative Research, p 39

⁷ Bailey, Kenneth D (1994). Methods of Social Research, p 174

different parts of African countries. I have tried to find a balance by including students who have background from different countries around the world.

2.2 Research Methodology

As I had already planned, I used direct interview as my research method to extract information from my target group, both male and female students. The interviews were based on a semi-structured interview guide so that they could be encouraged to answer openly by adding follow-up questions depending on the situation. It was on the other hand a form of in-depth interviews with the participants. As planned, concentrating on one person at a time to a great extent helped to contextualize the opinions. The interviews took from 45 – 100 minutes per person. I also was able to bring about an understanding with the participants for follow-up interviews in case of any further need while writing the thesis. This methodology consumes lots of time, but I believe that it can bring forward some interesting and useful out come at the end. In other words it is a qualitative approach based on conversation analysis (CA)⁸.

As mentioned above one could choose either quantitative or qualitative method to be used in the collection of necessary data based on what type of research one is engaged in. I found that qualitative method best suited for my data collection that I needed for my thesis. The benefit of qualitative interview research is that we can see the connection in the life of an individual.

The purpose was to understand the life of these youths and the social processes & interactions based on these premise of action such as values, attitudes, motives and intentions. The major concern in this quest was to study how these youths think of their future in Norway. To be able to come close to best possible answer to the research topic, it was important to understand the participants' perspectives, their own description of how they think of their future. So that it could reflect on what they are facing within their environments, their thoughts and attitudes.

⁸ Silverman, David (2005) p 33-39

2.3 Target group and Data collection

Many years of experience, knowledge and contacts within the society, no doubt was an asset in this research project. Thus this research paper will have a reflexive character in itself. At the same time I was also concerned, to try to pay great attention on ethical issues that I may have to come across during this research assignment, in collaboration with my supervisor.

The network I have within the society made things easy for me to find the target group that I was looking for my data collection and interview.

I made individual appointments with the candidates who were boys, in Sandnes to meet me in my office after work. It was a peaceful and quiet environment, and I was able to interview them without any interruptions.

The other three candidates were from Stavanger and made appointments to meet them at the Mosque location. One was a boy and the other two were girls. I interviewed the boy alone but I had to interview the girls both of them together. According to Islamic traditions and culture it is not permissible for a man to be alone with a girl. The reason being that I was not a *mahram* to these girls. *Mahram* means:

It is permissible for a woman to take off her hijab in front of her mahrams. A woman's mahram is a person whom she is never permitted to marry because of their close blood relationship (such as her father, grandfather, great-grandfather, etc., and her son, grandson, great-grandson, etc., her paternal and maternal uncles, her brother, brother's son and sister's son), or because of radaa'ah or breastfeeding (such as the brother and husband of the woman who breastfed her), or because they are related by marriage (such as the mother's husband, the husband's father, grandfather, etc., and the husband's son, grandson, etc⁹).

As I am well aware of this custom, it was natural that I made arrangements for both girls to meet together for interview. At the same time, as the Mosque people knew me well, the interview arrangements went fine.

⁹ More information on the subject of mahram is available at <http://www.islamicwell.com/mahrams.htm>

Dictaphone was used to record the interviews to ensure that the answers of the candidates will be as exact as possible while preparing the transcript. I also noted down the main points for my own reference. The notes were very helpful when I was writing down the transcript of all the interviews.

As the questions were semi-structured, there was room for broader answers from the candidates. Some of the candidates didn't get the point what I was looking for, and I had to explain or ask follow-up questions to get to the point. The boys generally came out with broader answers, but the answers from the girls were most of the time very short, but precise. The data collected from each candidate were from 3 to 4 pages each when transcribed. I also agreed with the candidates that I might contact them again in case if I am in need of more information while I am writing my thesis.

2.4 Research situation and theoretical considerations

To my knowledge, no research has been done by anyone earlier on this particular subject area on this target group in Stavanger Region. There are scholars who have done research on different groups of Muslim youths living in some parts of Norway, Scandinavia and some European countries. The research done by Katrine Fangen "*Identitet og praksis – Etnisitet, klasse og kjønn blant somaliere i Norge*" is a good example, which tries to bring out the situation of Somali youths and how they encounter their day today life in the new society they have come in. Chapter 7 in her book deals with especially identity, belonging and practice where each of her respondents explains their own situation in different ways.

Here I shall try to discuss various theoretical aspects that are connected to this research paper. Though there are several theories relevant here, I have chosen three specific areas of theories: Socialization, Integration and Globalization. Identity will be an important factor when these are related to my respondents as individuals.

Muslims are a minority group in Norway and how these Muslim youths socialize themselves in the environments, both among their own groups and within the major society as a whole will be one aspect. It is the globalization that is playing an

important role in the movement of people with various backgrounds such as religion, culture and tradition between different parts of the world.

The main aspect of this research is based on religious science and as such the background of my respondents as Muslims will be closely dealt with. Though many Muslims are born and grown up in Norway, they are still looked upon as somewhat different because of their belonging to Islam. The media is partly responsible for this dilemma¹⁰.

The flow of immigrants to the West made the scholars to investigate the social and economical problems faced by them. One of the discourses is that the research focuses on the integration of Muslim minority in the Western society. Efforts are being made on identifying key characteristics of their ability or disability to integrate.

A well-known Muslim scholar Tariq Ramadan in his book *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* suggests some remedies to Muslims living in the West. He poses two central questions:

Can Muslims become fully integrated citizens in the Western countries and still maintain their religion? While he gives an affirmative answer, he puts the next question – if so, how it could be realized while remaining loyal to the authentic sources and the Islamic Tradition? A theoretical and an empirical part give the answer to this question.

All Muslims are to adhere to the fundamental principles of Islam and at the same time there is “ an important margin allowed for evolution, transformation, and adaptation to various social and cultural environments”, Ramadan argues in the theoretical part of this book¹¹.

Among other things this research will also associate the out comes with globalization, socialization and integration theories. I shall try to draw in theories and views expressed by well-known scholars in the field, where it fits.

¹⁰ Syversen 2007, p 7

¹¹ Ramadan, Tariq 2004, p 96-101

2.4.1 Academic Research Literature

There are studies available dealing with immigrant minorities and Muslim youth in particular, such as *Islamic Traditions and Muslim Youth in Norway*. (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming 2009), *Staying on the Straight Path. Religious Identities and Practices among Young Muslims in Norway*. (Doctoral Dissertation, 2006, University of Bergen. 400 p.) and *Tilhørighetens mange former. Unge muslimer i Norge*. (Oslo: Unipax. 2002. 260 s.) by Christine M. Jacobsen. She is a social anthropologist working in the field of International Migration and Ethnic Relations, addressing a diversity of aspects related to minority-majority relations, with a focus on issues related to Muslim minorities in Europe. Her main focus is on religious traditions, identities and practices in a context of international migration, transnational flows, and secular modernity. Interestingly her research focuses on young people and women in particular, and she has done extensive fieldwork in Norway, France and Morocco.

Another latest research report which has just come out is the *Foreldreskap og ungdoms livsvalg i en migrasjonskontekst* by Miriam Latif Sandbæk, M.L. (Rapport 2009:7. Institutt for samfunnsforskning Oslo).

There are several other research works by Sissel Østberg and Katrine Fangen whose works are specifically dealing with youth who have background from Pakistan and Somalia. In addition Oddbjørn Leirvik has authored many books on Islam and Muslims in Norway. He also has a website on this topic where he has collected lot of valuable information, which could be of great help in finding the necessary information that may be relevant to my research paper.

I have tried to choose the relevant literatures based on methodology, integration of minority groups, especially Muslims in Norway and in the West and other related literatures to my subject area.

2.5 Fieldwork

2.5.1 Methodological problems

The original plan was to interview 8 to 12 candidates. As I was in the process of getting ready to leave for an UN assignment abroad it became somewhat hectic to

meet some of those candidates for the interview. In Sandnes I also made an appointment to meet two female students in their school through one of the male candidates whom I had already interviewed. But unfortunately I was informed that the school was closed that particular day and the following day I had to travel and couldn't make it. Shortness of time made it difficult for me to meet any more candidates.

The matter was taken up with my supervisor, and he gave me the green light to go ahead to write the thesis as the data collected so far was regarded as sufficient for the thesis.

2.5.2 Methods in the Fieldwork

The candidates were interviewed individually and I spent minimum of around 45 minutes with each one of them. Through my networks in the Muslim community in Stavanger Region I came in touch with the candidates I was looking for this research.

Some of the candidates understood the questions easily whereas I had to give further explanations to others. The boys were very good in giving their answers in more detail, but the answers given by the girls were just in few words, which had to be followed by further questions to get more out of them.

One of the impressions I have got from this fieldwork is, that talking to youngsters is not only useful and interesting, but it also gives a better understanding of how the younger generation think of their future. I could clearly notice the differences and the developments, which are taking place in regards to this generation.

Some of the candidates needed bit of explanation to understand the point of questions I had formulated. But with a little bit explanation I was able to get the information I needed. Probably some of the questions could have been formulated in a different way.

One of the purposes of this interview was to try to bring out the identity of this new generation of Norwegian Muslims and their thoughts about the society. Where they

feel that they belong is an aspect, which helps them in the formation and determination of their identity. It is an area that will be discussed in this thesis.

In connection with the thesis I had been reading relevant literature and research materials including media reports on this target group. The answers I have got from my respondents are a sort of confirmation in regards to some of the issues these materials are referring to.

Part II Education and the future

This part has five chapters and will be dealing with the plans my respondents have for their future in connection with their education and work, and how they are influenced and supported by school environment, parents and friends.

“Immigrant youths had higher ambitions than the rest of the students but they were facing more problems in elementary mathematics”. This information was based on the OECD 2007 report. According to this report that Norway was one of the four West European countries (Sweden, Belgium and France) where 40 percent of immigrant students had problems in mathematics and reading¹².

This also applies to 1/3 of the minority students who were born in Norway. Among ethnical Norwegian students only 1/5 was in the same category. This research enlightens the fact that those who were weak in Norwegian language faced more problems in mathematics and other subjects¹³. Department of Education took the out

¹² OECD 2007, p 74

¹³ *ibid*, p 113 - 115

come seriously and arrangements were made for minority students to teach the language systematically in primary schools to improve the situation.¹⁴

The OECD report also highlights the fact that the Second-generation students perform better in their studies, which might be due to the reason that they need not to go through transitions in regards to cultural and linguistic borders as the first generation had to undergo¹⁵. At the same time a reason for this could be that they were born here and naturally would have had the opportunity to get to know the Norwegian environment better and learn the language much quicker when they were small children.

The main purpose of this research paper is to look into the future plans and goals of Muslim youths in regards to their career, education and establishing their family. Therefore I will be touching the above points also in my later discussions.

3. Plans for the future

Under this chapter I shall present and analyze the response I have got from my respondents to the questions that, “what made them to chose the particular professional area, whether they were influenced by anyone and their plans for settling down as a family”. It will be followed with a discussion based on the out come, before the conclusion of this chapter.

When it comes to the future one should have a goal and plans to achieve them in life. A person’s life without a proper plan may end up in something miserable and may loose control over what is happening in life. My respondents tried to express their views to their best of knowledge and understanding, of what they have in their minds.

3.1 Choice of profession

People take education to get knowledge and skills, which could eventually lead them to a profession. There was a time that one could not choose an education which can

¹⁴ Aftenposten 2007

¹⁵ OECD 2007, p 82

lead a person to a desired profession but just have to accept what was available. It is still applicable even today in Third World countries. There the competition is very high to get into universities in areas such as medicine, engineering and business administration. This situation has changed in Norway to a certain extent, as the possibilities are much better for one to get into different areas of education.

Studies done on how the youths make their choice of higher education shows that they are influenced by various factors such as class difference, gender and minority's ethnical background. It has been documented that parents educational level also play an important role¹⁶.

My respondents came out with interesting answers to the question of what was the reason behind for them to choose this particular area of education. The next chapter will more specifically deal with education and work.

Ali started his response to the question "*what are your dreams and plans for the future?*" by saying that his dream for the future is to establish his own family. And went on to explain that "*to achieve that I should have the basis to manage myself in the society which I can do by having a good job. My dream is to take education in Petroleum Engineering and in addition Industrial Economics. Or that could be only Industrial Economics. So that I can get a job at management level, which I believe we the second generation must be able to achieve*".

When it comes to long-term plan, say in 10 – 15 years he would like to see himself having a good education and a good job and have established a family. He also would like to be active and contribute positively towards the society.

He is planning to continue his education without any break until he completes his Master degree. But he doesn't know what his thoughts will be after 3 years. He points to the fact that many students become tired of many years of studies and take a break in between before completing the final stage of the higher education like the Master degree.

¹⁶ Kristinn Hegna 2010, p 90

His reflection was that if he comes into such a situation, depending on how things are at that time he might consider taking one year free just after completing his Bachelor degree. But he is also concerned about continuing the education without any break so that he will be able to complete his education in time. By taking a break and working a little, he also could get some practice and experience that would be definitely positive. But at the same time he may be late to complete his entire education. After thinking a bit, he says that he will most probably continue his education without any interruption, and he will try to get some experience by taking summer jobs.

Muneer's biggest dream had always been to study medicine and become a Medical Doctor, as he has a special interest in anatomy and helping people. He also has had another dream, which was to become a Policeman, which he thinks it is also another way of helping other people who are in need. These were the two dreams he always has had. Now he has decided to go for medicine as he is taking the general science subjects, which are suitable for that.

In regards to how long he might have come in 10 – 15 years, he presumes that he might have finished his education and probably married. He might have one child and is most probably living in Norway and working as a doctor, if God wills.

When it comes where he would prefer to live, he says that it is the same for him wherever he may live. His priority is to find work in Stavanger close to his family. What he meant as family was his parents and other close relatives. That is something he regards as very important. If he doesn't get a job in Stavanger, he is prepared to move to any part of Norway or even abroad. He says, "*When you are a qualified doctor you can work anywhere*".

He likes very much the subjects he is taking now, such as Chemistry, Physics and Biology that are necessary to go for a university education in Medicine. When he has these basic subjects he will be able to get into the Medical Faculty of a university. These are important subjects to come into Medicine. He says that he has a natural interest in those subjects.

Ayan would like to work in the medical field and specialize in surgery as she has a special interest in health and medical areas that are her favourite subject areas. When it comes to how she sees her life would be in 10 – 15 years, she said that it is very far, and she could imagine that she might have married, have children and have settled down. In regards to her job, she has not yet thought of anything special. She will try to take what comes on the way. Her decisions for life will depend on how things will progress under way.

Kadra has chosen general science subjects, which she thinks could provide her with many possibilities. But she hasn't made up her mind 100% yet that what she really wants for her future. One of the alternatives is to study engineering subject but she has not thought of any particular area of specialisation for the time being. She thinks that it can be decided after one or two years of education. She would like to keep it open so that in case she also can move over to other areas, if she finds what she is studying is not suitable for her. After thinking a bit she says that she may most probably continue the same line. She has not thought of it so far about the future. She will try to take what comes and make up her mind under way.

Muallim has made up his mind already and his plan is to study engineering subject. That is something he enjoys very much, especially when things that are related to buildings he has a great interest. In 10 – 15 years he presumes that he might have completed his studies, married and settled down. For the time being he would like to concentrate only in his studies.

According to what he has in mind as it is now, his plan is to take his education in Stavanger University in Urban Design and Development. Here he says that one could learn about how to build a small town. It suits well to learn to combine a village with a landscape. In a way it is a dream for him. What he would like to learn is to build and develop a village. He tried to explain by saying that *it looks that in Stavanger you don't see a system when it comes to architectures in different town areas. When you see the buildings you can easily tell that it is Storhaug or Hillevåg. The buildings and the monuments usually represent that particular town area. It is an area, which demands a lot. One has to fully concentrate to understand to go ahead.*

3.2 Influence

Are immigrant students capable of deciding for themselves what is good for their future? Or are they forced to study something they don't want?

I know from my own experiences that I have heard from many immigrant communities that the parents almost brainwash or force their children to study certain areas, which is regarded as giving them a status in their societies. Usually it is medicine and engineering that are very famous and well-known areas that the parents especially from Asian countries want their children to study. India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are some of the countries known for such phenomenon. Sekina Helen Finne (2010) in her research "En kvalitativ studie av utdanningsvalg blant indiske etterkommere i eliteutdanninger"(qualitative studies educational choice of Indian descendents in elite education) points out some of the important facts about this¹⁷. Recently a student who is studying at the University of Oslo told me, that he met some youngsters who had completed their Medical studies based on their parent's advice and pressure, but now they are doing something else.

It is apparent from the answers of my respondents that their parents and also in some cases some of their close relatives have had some influence that has led them to make up their minds. The difference here is that their parents have given advice based on their own understanding, but at the same time they have indicated that it is only an advice and they themselves have to make the final decision. In a way I wonder whether one could regard this as a support in their decision making process. I have come across stories that parents have forced their children to study certain professional areas although the children were not really interested in that.

In some third world countries such as mentioned above, mostly it is the parents who have to support their children while they take higher education. That makes their children to have an obligation towards their parents. But in countries like Norway students have many facilities provided by the government and they need not fully depend on their parents for support. But still most probably the culture and tradition play a role among many immigrant groups and it is one of the examples that are being carried forward by some.

¹⁷ Finne 2010, p 67

My conclusion is that my informants seem to have a personal and genuine motivation for their educational plans, but these plans are also a result of discussions with their parents.

3.3 Settling as family

It is usual in the Western world that youths enjoy their life when they are young. You don't need to bind yourselves, but can have a partner and live together before you make up your mind to get married. Is it applicable to these youths? Let us now listen to what they have to say about settling as a family.

Ali was very clear that he is looking forward to establish his own family as soon as he completes his education and have got a job. He wants to start a new era in his life as an amateur both in regards to his job and also in other areas such as his own family.

Muneer would like concentrate and complete his education and once he has got into a job he could think of getting settled.

Ayan could think of getting married once she had completed her education.

Kadra also could think of the same as Ayan.

Muallim wants to keep close contact with his family as he does now. As soon as he has completed his education and has got a job, he shall try to establish his family, when he has found the right person for him.

Living together before marriage is strictly prohibited in Islam. We are living in a tempting world where the gap between men and women has almost disappeared. Sexual related issues are given prominence and discussions flare up very often openly in the media. It may be difficult for many of these youngsters to cope up with. Most of the Muslim communities in the West encourage their youngsters to get married when they have completed their studies and have got a job. These thoughts are clearly

reflecting among my respondents answers that how they think of their future and settling down as families.

Almost all of the respondents expressed that as soon as they finish their studies and once they have got a job, they would like to establish their own family and get settled. It applies for both the girls and the boys. One of the male respondents emphasised clearly an extra point that he would in addition to the above, would settle down after his studies when he has found the right partner.

3.4 The Significance of Plans

Some years ago the media has been focusing on the problems faced by the immigrant youths when it comes to taking higher education. The number of dropouts in Upper Secondary Schools was alarmingly very high. This issue led to a huge debate on how to encounter the situation and motivate immigrant youth for higher education.

As we see that each one of my respondents is thinking of a future based on a career that they have great interest. It is not an easy task to make up ones mind to chose an area, especially at this age. Only one of them is not 100% sure of her future plans, although she has decided to start with engineering but is open for changes in the future depending on how things may develop when time passes by. What is obvious here is that the boys seem to be more self confident of their choices for their future. They also seem to be have obtained more information about their areas of education by discussing them with their parents, close relatives and student councillors in their schools. We don't have a statistical basis for a conclusion concerning a potential gendered difference here. Further research will have to look into this question.

It is an interesting phenomenon that when these youths complete their studies, they would be around 25 years old. It may be too early to get settled according to Norwegian life standards.

There was also another wish that some of them expressed that they would like to keep close contact with their parents, sisters and brothers. They prefer to live close to them if possible, but it will depend on whether they find a job accordingly. Especially the

boys are ready to move to other parts of Norway or even to other countries depending on the job opportunities.

Based on what I have discussed above I shall try to make a conclusion here. Most of these youth have thought of their future and have made up their minds of what profession will be suitable for them. At the same time they also would like to settle down once they complete their education and have got into a job. They have expressed gratitude and respect to their parents and want to keep close contact with them when they settle down with their own families.

4. Education and work

According to some of the latest available statistics, in autumn 2007, 11 700 immigrants and 5 400 Norwegian-born to immigrants were studying in Upper Secondary Schools. Among them the biggest groups of students had their origin from Iraq, Somalia, Russia and Afghanistan. At the same time the Pakistanis, Vietnamese and Turkish were the largest Norwegian-born group among them. It is important to note that regarding those students who had their background from Iraq, Somalia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Turkey, most of them must be Muslims in terms of their religious background, since these countries are known to have Islam as the dominant religion¹⁸.

These statistics also points out other important facts such as that the accomplishment rate for immigrant students were low and the percentage of students dropping out was higher than for all students in Upper Secondary Schools. On the other hand the percentage of dropping out rate was much lower among Norwegian-born children to immigrant parents. What is also interesting in these statistics is that the accomplishment rate was higher among girls than boys¹⁹. When I searched through various research material I found some interesting answers to this tendency.

¹⁸ Daugstad 2008, p 55

¹⁹ *ibid*, p 55

The findings of Borg imply that female students with Pakistani background do work harder than others. It may be a result of the stronger social control parents from Pakistan has over their daughters' leisure time. This may to a certain extent explain why girls from non-western countries work harder than boys²⁰. An interesting study carried out among female Muslim girls in Britain found that less freedom meant more time for schoolwork. This may be in accordance with the hypothesis that gender roles are stronger in these cultures and girls are more controlled by their parents than their male counterparts²¹. On the other hand education may be seen by these females as a way to become more in control of their own life in regards to their own future²².

Now let us look into the situation of the Muslim students in the Stavanger Region who are aiming for higher education in various professional fields.

4.1 Educational goal

Everyone has some interesting explanation to why they have chosen their respective area for future career. It was interesting to listen to what my respondents have in their minds in this regard.

“I have chosen Petroleum Technology said” Ali. And he continued, “to be exact I made up my mind when I was small. One of the main reasons was the influence of my parents and family members. And on the other hand my uncles who had already taken such education. What is positive in such profession are that you can earn well, it gives status and it provides you better job opportunities one you have completed the education. These are some of the reasons to choose Petroleum Technology”.

He sees that this area of profession has very good job opportunities as far as he knows. But if there going to be little oil, it may lead to problems. But he thinks that at least the oil will last for another generation. May be it may become a problem for newly educated people like him as there may be more well experienced people in the market if such a situation arises. No one knows and it may become difficult to find oil

²⁰ Borg 2011. p 10-11

²¹ Basit, 1997.p 425-440

²² Heggen 2002. p 3-20

in the long run. But in any case there should be a need for qualified people in this area in the future, he tries to keep up a positive attitude towards the future.

Muneer mentioned earlier that he would like to help people and I asked him to explain a little more on what he really meant by that, as it is closely connected to the profession he has decided to go for.

He started to explain that when he sees the world, there are many who are in need of help, such as medical, physical and mental. Here a doctor is very important for the society to help encounter these situations. He doesn't just think of money as important to help other poor people. As a doctor there are also other possibilities as working for humanitarian organisations such as "Doctors without border" which are helping poor people in other countries. Many countries don't have the resources like Norway. He is interested in such things so that the people could have a good life to be a healthy community, and a doctor is part of it to make sure that it happens. There are lots of sickness, conflicts and misery in the world. It is one of the reasons that he wanted to become a doctor. Doctors are needed all the time, and in addition there is a shortage for doctors and it is an area that is always in demand. Doctors are almost guaranteed to get a job anywhere in the world. The salary is also very good which means you may have a good life.

Ayan says that she herself has chosen the medical field specializing in surgery on her own wish. This is something she has liked always and she thinks that it is very interesting and useful in many ways. This also has good future prospects and is a very fascinating area according to her. These are some of the reason why she has chosen this area. She could not think of any special obstacles during the process of her education.

Kadra has chosen her area on her own wish, but the family also motivated her that the general educational area could provide several possibilities. She says that she looking forward to choose from these different possibilities. Kadra too doesn't see any hindrances during this process.

Muallim could think of travelling abroad to study architecture in other countries. He pointed out the example of Somalia that the situation is miserable just now. If it

becomes peaceful a lot of areas could be turn into nice villages. Now people are building without any plans and no law or regulations limit them. People press themselves into a same area and it becomes very crowded. Why don't they come out of the town to a new area? He could for example plan a town in octangular shape (having eight angles) and a centre that contains everything people who live in that part of the city need.

He could think of taking his entire education in Stavanger, both the bachelor degree and the master degree. It is also could be interesting for him to travel abroad and see the world. Probably he could think of studying abroad. For example, China has beautiful masterworks and Saudi Arabia is quite different. It is possible that he could think of taking his master degree in one of such countries.

When he was small he started to draw. When he was six or seven he asked his father and he explained about the subject area of architecture and buildings. He was fascinated by that and started to follow Discovery TV Channel and learned a lot about this.

4.2 Achieving the goal

One thing is to have plans and goals in life, and see for themselves lots of possibilities but it is also important to have thought of how to achieve them.

A survey was conducted among Harvard MBA graduates between 1979 and 1989. First they were asked, "Have you set, clear written goals for your future and made plans to accomplish them?" Only 3% of the graduated had written goals and plans. 13% had goals but not in writing. Rest of the 84% didn't have any specific goals in their life. After ten years in 1989 when they were interviewed again, the result was that those 13% who had goals but not in writing were earning on average, twice as much of those 84% who didn't have any goals at all. What was most interesting in this research was that the 3% who had clear written goals were earning, on average ten times as much as the rest of the 97% of graduates all together. The difference was

that this small group of graduates had clarity of goals to come up in life when they graduated²³.

Ali confidently elaborated that he can achieve them by working hard. Be strong and work hard, keep up the motivation. He also stress the point that the support from the family is important for him, such as his parents and brothers/sisters those who are close to him.

As it is now Muneer has thought of applying for a university in Copenhagen, Denmark. The reason is that one can come in there with average marks little less than in Norway. If not he will try his best to get higher marks and study in Norway. So it may be Denmark or here in Norway. If he comes into Copenhagen, Denmark he has thought of taking the entire 6 years there till he completes the whole education. When the education is completed he would like to come back to Norway. It all depends on where the demand for doctors will be at that time in Norway.

Ayan says she would prefer to travel abroad to continue her education. She thinks of Egypt for her higher education because she is also interested to learn more about her religion. Her plan is to try to complete her Bachelor studies in Norway and thereafter she is planning to apply for one of the universities in Egypt to continue her Masters. When asked about why she wants to combine her education with religion and her answer was that *“when you know your religion well that can help you to do a good job in your own work situation as I think. It is an important knowledge I believe will help me a lot”*.

Kadra has thought of taking both her, Bachelor and Master studies in Norway and she doesn't have any plan to go abroad for the time being.

According to Maslow's Theory of Human Motivation, motivation is a process of stimulating people to action to accomplish desired goals. When a person has a strong desire, the chances of attaining the goal are much higher²⁴. If the Harvard findings are

²³ Tracy 2010, p 13

²⁴ Maslow(1943) p. 370-396

relevant for my respondents, the motivation they express could help them achieving their goals.

4.3 Obstacles

There is no guarantee that a plan one has would go smoothly until one has achieved it. If one has thought of the hindrances, it may be easy to encounter them if something comes across under way. This question made my respondents to think a little before they came out with their answers.

Ali said that you never know what comes under way. An example could be that you may lose the motivation once you have taken the Bachelors. Lose the motivation to go ahead to take Masters. He hopes that it will not happen. Other hindrances can be according to him, heavy responsibilities in other things you may get involved. Here he was trying to cite an example that he is also trying to be active in the society. He is active in MNA (Multi-cultural Youth Organization) which organizes activities for youths such as discussions on relevant subjects connected to youths and table tennis etc. He added that there may be other things also can be hindrances to fully concentrate and complete the studies.

When we started to talk about hindrances, Muneer points to the following. He thinks that it is natural that there may be psychological hindrances. He has already gone to school for several years now, and when he thinks of another 6 years at a stretch, he wonder whether he has the energy to do that? In addition the medical studies are very tough. One of the reasons why he didn't choose Eastern Europe for education was, the studies there is extra hard. Whatever average marks you may have, you can come in there, but it is difficult to finish the studies, as you have to get top marks in your exams all the time. And the question is whether he has the motivation to that. That's the reason he thinks of Denmark or Norway, not Eastern Europe, as it is much better here according to him. The major hindrance could be the motivation, will he have the motivation for another 6 long years? He is also thinking of other hindrances such as whether it could become difficult for him and will he be in a position to complete? What about the environment where he is going to study, what will happen if there is very much racism? Will the teachers treat the students differently? These are some of the things he presumes can be hindrances and challenging.

Ayan and Kadra don't foresee anything specific that could be any obstacle to achieve their educational goals.

Muallim says that this area demands a lot and one has to spend enough time to fully understand before one could proceed further.

4.4 Planning

Why do most of the immigrant parents want their children to go for certain professional areas rather than others? Some of the reasons could be that educations such as Medicine and Engineering are internationally known and well recognized, and can be used outside Norway. Other reasons could be that the parents' limited knowledge about the Norwegian educational system or the higher education²⁵.

Each has expressed the specific reason for choosing a particular subject area. When we carefully analyse the priorities, it varies from person to person. For Ali, he is placing income first followed by status and better job opportunities. On the other hand for Muneer, helping people is on top followed by the need for the profession and then comes the income. Ayan chose the profession because it is interesting and has future prospects, whereas Kadra thinks that her profession could provide her several possibilities. Muallim thinks of contributing something positively in his war torn native country of his father through his profession.

Most of them except one are planning to take their further education abroad. They also have already thought of some particular countries for this purpose and they have given specific reasons for why they prefer those countries.

The boys try to look far ahead than the girls regarding what obstacles they could face while pursuing university education to reach their goals. That will in a way help them mentally prepare to face them. Whereas the girls would like to take it easy and believe that everything will work out fine.

²⁵ Sekina 2010, p 7

It appears that the boys are more confident of their choice and carefully planning the process and mentally preparing to face any obstacles that they may face while pursuing their university education. Girls seem to be more relaxed and thinking of facing the hindrances when they come up, if they do.

The youth do not emphasize status or honour of family directly but it seems to be hidden in their answers. It was only Ali who mentioned this as the second of his three motivational factors.

5. Roles of school environment

According to Government instructions the school has the task as a supporter of a shared identity by conveying the common traditions, values and knowledge that are important for the forming of a harmonious society. The school is vital in shaping the common values and function as one of the most important integration arena for youngsters with various backgrounds. As migration has increased, it also has created new challenges in schools. There are many students with different backgrounds with regards to nationalities, languages and ethnicities who struggle hard in Norwegian schools. The schools are compelled to adjust themselves to take care of these students in regards to language, religion and tackling of various other issues of differences. Many researchers point out the fact that there is a high drop out among minority students in upper secondary schools. At the same time studies done in Danish schools show that most of the teachers consider minority students as troublemakers in school²⁶.

Parents have the role of raising the children and when the children start schooling, part of this role is automatically being taken over by the school. Thereby the school also carries the responsibility of involving the parents in the development of school affairs as the learning and growing up environment for these children. Here the schools could continuously face new challenges as the number of students with various national, cultural, language and religious backgrounds is increasing. This

²⁶ IMDi rapport 10-2008, pp 44 -51

situation has challenged the Norwegian school to adjust to encounter this phenomenon as it also has the responsibility and function of general social integration of these students into the major society²⁷.

It was in the 1980s that many European countries experienced the fact that the immigrant students didn't do well in schools and there was a fear that it might lead to the formation of an economic underclass of losers without job opportunities in the society. It became more obvious in Norway when the Department of Local Government & Labour compiled a report on the situation in 1985. Most of the students who were attending Upper Secondary Schools were newly migrated immigrants and they were encountered with sociological and psychological changes in addition to cultural adjustments. They were also lacking command of the Norwegian language. To avoid a future underclass in Norway the authorities initiated immediate actions to curb the situation. Immigrant students were provided with extra Norwegian language classes to improve their language skills. The students who were weak also provided additional teaching hours and introductory classes in some of the important subject areas in general education classes.²⁸

What is apparent from the above is that the immigrant students in Upper Secondary Schools have had enormous challenges in their school environments. How is the situation now after 25 years? What changes have taken place? To what extent the schools have adjusted themselves? Now listen to my respondents. They will give some interesting and amazing answers to these questions.

5.1 School environments

School environments are playing important roles in the lives of students generally and especially among those with immigrant background. It is one of the first arenas to come in touch with the major society to learn and understand more about their way of life, culture, tradition and various other aspects of the society that will later pave the way for better integration. How the schools treat the students will no doubt be a deciding factor for further progress of each and every student. Encouragement by teachers and fellow students is a sign of motivation for students in their school life.

²⁷ *ibid*

²⁸ NOU 1985:29

As for my respondents, they too were facing the school environments in different ways and they explained their experiences in their own words as follows:

Ali was attending an Upper Secondary School, which was an old school that had existed very long. He said: “When it comes to motivation, it depends on who are your teachers. For example in mathematics we have a young and very good teacher. In physics and chemistry, they are old. They too are good teachers. But the young teacher understands better and he helps and motivates us much better. Generally speaking most of the teachers motivate us to learn. In that way it is very positive”. Ali used to work well together with his fellow classmates, they helped each other and took the challenges together and it went very well. He tried to further elaborate by saying that it was a positive development for him as he had been together with these students in the same class for three years. In a way it created a close bond between him and his fellow students.

Muneer was satisfied with the school environment, as his teachers were motivating the students to do the homework and they used to tell the students that if they study well they can progress further in life. In case any mistakes were done, the teachers didn't get irritated but advised the students to try to improve next time. This was how the teachers were motivating the students in Muneer's school. His teachers also encouraged the students by saying that they must think of the future and work hard. Both the teachers and the students, also the student counsellor were the motivational factor for him and other students in his school. He tried to do the homework at school together with other fellow students. In that way the students were able to help each other. He was further explaining that when he got home it was difficult to attend to his homework as usually something came up and it was not easy to concentrate and understand lessons. Especially when an exam was close by, he used to stay in school or library to study and come home only for meals.

Ayan was getting support from both the teachers and the fellow students. Her fellow students used to work together in groups and support each other. Teachers also played an important role by encouraging them to study hard. If they happened to get weaker

marks in examinations, their teachers explained what was not right and how they could do it better next time. It was a great help to all the students.

According to Kadra, both the teachers and the fellow students were helpful to each other. The students got support and encouragement from teachers and also useful instructions on what they had to do in order to get better marks. They didn't experience any cases of mobbing and they got good support from the school.

Muallim elaborated in a different way by saying that the teachers did 10% of the job and he himself had to do 90% of the job to get what he wanted. Encouragements from teachers were varying significantly from teacher to teacher. Some encouraged the students in addition to what they were teaching. But others just did their job and went home. Muallim was saying that if he had been a teacher he would have supported and encouraged the students to work hard and reach their goals. In his opinion it was important to realize that students need such support from teachers. He further said: "Some teachers do that and if you make any mistakes they correct you and help you to go ahead. When it comes to students, it also varies. Some don't mind anything about you, but some say you must become smart and get things done. We work together with our lessons and help each other".

5.2 Challenges

What kinds of challenges are found in upper secondary schools and how do these students encounter them? Do they affect them in any way and what are the consequences they lead to?

When we talk of multicultural society it also carries both the positive and the negative side of several things. People who are belonging to different cultures, religions and traditions must be able to understand and adjust themselves to live amicably, by respecting each other as they are. Youngsters learn these things in school, as they have to work together in connection with their studies and other school activities. My respondents were no exception to this. Let us see how they encounter the situation in their school environments. Usually the schools have mixed classes with both boys and girls. It may some times be a challenge in certain situations for some. In addition students are facing various other challenges too.

Ali was of the opinion that it was ok to have girls in the same class and it was going well. But at the same time he points out the fact that he thinks that it is also a theme for discussion. For him it was going very well. As fellow students they were helping each other and they had respect for each other. And he was adding further that there were other challenges for example, various discussions about Islam in school. Many have negative opinions about Islam. Even in exams sometimes questions are formulated in a negative way concerning how Islam looks at women. He usually tries to explain such things as best as possible to tackle the problem in a nice way.

Muneer tried to elaborate some of his experiences in the following manner: “I remember very well 11th September. Many questions were asked about whether I supported what happened. It made me to smile and I was asked why I was smiling. I said that I just smiled and they threw back another question, “have you not heard about what has happened?” My smile was taken as if I supported what had happened. It was the first time that I felt I am a Muslim among my friends in school”. He also added that there used to be debates about issues like girls wearing hijab. For him, if girls and the women want to wear it, it is their choice and they must be allowed to wear it. He further explained by saying that, “according to Islam it has been enjoined upon women but not forced upon them to wear it. The women themselves can choose whether to wear it or not. According to Islam no one can force you to do anything. It is up to each and everyone to understand and make up their mind to follow what has been ordained. Such debates also affect the boys”. There were other questions related to that of men having several wives. This question was asked several times: Why can men have many wives, whereas the women can have only one man? He was facing such questions very often. He was telling that one could get provoked by many of these questions. The latest example was the taxi rape issue. According to him these discussions and debates can affect not only a few but all the Muslims.

Ayan and Kadra were also explaining that they were being asked several questions about hijab and many other things and what was going on in the media time to time. They try to answer the questions to best of their knowledge and ability.

Muallim was trying to put it in a different way, saying that there were challenges when it comes to getting along with Norwegian friends and most of them are usually classmates. His fellow students were too asking lots of unwanted questions about Muslims and Islam.

5.3 A practical example

I think it is worthwhile to add a story of a Muslim student from an Upper Secondary School in Rogaland whom I closely followed for several years. He was originally from a Non-Muslim Asian country and came to Norway with his parents when he was 2 years old. His parents were well educated and also were active in the society.

When he was in Primary School he did very well, but when he came into Secondary School his progress was very slow and his parents very often got complaints from school concerning his behaviour. He had a group of friends who were involved in tagging (graffiti) and who were in conflict with teachers. He didn't concentrate in his studies and was getting poor marks in exams. His mother was reluctant to attend parents meetings in school because of the complaints and negative feedbacks from the school. His parents tried to talk to him and did their best to advise him and encourage him to study hard.

He managed to get admitted into Upper Secondary School. There too he didn't get along very well and was in conflict with some of his teachers. He also was avoiding some of the classes and the progress was very poor. The school principal warned him that he could be thrown out of the school, if he didn't adhere to the school rules and regulations. He was a smart and intelligent boy and his parents were highly worried about him and his future. He had to use an extra year to take some of the exams once again to get better marks.

Eventually he managed to get into a university away from home. After a few months he told his parents that he was happy to be away from his old environment that prevented his progress. Now he was happy to be in an academic environment and was inspired and encouraged by other students to concentrate and study hard. The changes were apparent that he had completely changed and got motivated to study hard and determined to go for further studies. He turned into one of the best students and also

got involved in student cultural activities. He became one of the well-known students in his university.

His university picked a few talented students and sent them around the country to promote the university among Upper Secondary Schools. He was chosen as one of them and was sent to Rogaland. Interestingly enough he was instructed by the university to cover his own old Upper Secondary School where he studied earlier. When he went to the school one of his old teachers had seen him and told him, “have you come here to get your certificate, you have to wait as we are now going to attend a promotional lecture about a university”. The teacher might probably have thought that this student had become one of the school dropouts. But the teacher was astonished and embarrassed, and also became happy when he heard that it was his same old playful student who had been sent by the university to give the promotional lecture about the university.

After completing his bachelors successfully, this student went abroad to take his Masters in International Business administration in one of the famous universities, and he graduated with the best marks in his master thesis. Now he has set up his own consultant company and working hard to promote Norwegian companies in the Middle East. This boy was regarded by his teachers as one of the would be school dropouts and they didn't expect him to have a bright future.

This story is a good example of how a school environment can destroy a person and at the same time another can develop a person's full potential.

The significance of support in school environment is vital to achieve the goal in one's life. My respondents are in a unique situation that they all enjoy the support of both the teachers and their fellow students in their school works that can pave the way for their academic achievement and a better future.

6. Roles of parents

Parents play an important role when it comes to bringing up their children, setting good examples and show them a way ahead to continue their life successfully. Research done in this area points out that the educational level of parents is an important factor, in addition to how far they are integrated in the society and the professions they are involved in²⁹.

A survey confirms that the socio-economic status of students in higher education is connected to their father's educational background. It has impact on the students according to statistics taken from many countries. In most of the European countries the ratio was higher³⁰.

6.1 Parents background

Most of the first generation of immigrants came here for employment or as refugees and many of them didn't have higher qualifications. Those who came during the 70s were lucky to get into jobs immediately as there was a great need for industrial labourers. The situation has changed since and one has to satisfy many criteria such as language proficiency etc. before getting into a job these days.

40 % of the parents of my respondents came to Norway in the 70s and had taken some vocational education to get jobs and the other 40 % came during the 80s and the rest in the 90s. 80 % of the parents are over 50 years and their educational level is up to Upper Secondary School. The rest of them are in their 40s and are taking further education to improve their life. It is interesting to note that one of the parents continues to take university education while his daughter also preparing to enter the university.

Ali's parents migrated from Pakistan. His father came very early in the 70s when he was a youth and his wife joined him later. Ali's father had taken Secondary school and then Machine technology at vocational training school in Norway. He had been

²⁹ IMDi rapport 10-2008, p 46

³⁰ OECD Report 2007, p 117

working for several years until he got injured and had to retire early. Ali's mother has been working in different minor jobs.

His parents influenced him to a certain extent when he was making his decision on the educational area he wanted to choose for his future. They wanted him to take a good education. At the same time his parents had little knowledge about his school subjects such as Norwegian, maths etc. He had to work on his own, without any help from his parents. But his sisters who were elder to him were taking higher education and he was able to get some help from them.

Muneer's father finished his 10th grade in Pakistan before he migrated to Norway during the later part of the 70s. But Muneer's mother had already completed her secondary school education when she came to Norway. His father has had different jobs and now he owns a taxi and drives on his own. His mother works at home.

Muneer explained about his parent's role as follows: "When it comes to education I always get support from them whatever choice I make. They had always been clear that education is very important and if I have a good education, it will increase my opportunities of getting into a good job, and they support me always".

He further elaborated by saying that his parents were born and grew up in Pakistan and when it comes to Norwegian culture, he has to discuss things like those with others who could explain better. He was telling that he can't blame his parents, because they don't know much about these things. He usually discusses things related to Norwegian society and integration with his friends.

When I asked Muneer whether his parents really wanted him to become a doctor, he said, "To be honest, they had a strong say. I was little unsure whether to become a policeman or a doctor, and my parents told me that they don't want me to force anything and that I could choose whatever I wanted, but they wished that I should become a doctor". He added that there were many reasons behind this that it gives a status, better income and his parents wanted that he should do well after finishing his education. Not only his parents had a say on this but also his cousins. One of his cousins was a Petroleum Engineer and he advised him that medicine could be the best choice. After listening to

everybody and talking to his student counsellor he came to the conclusion that medical studies would be the best for him. According to himself, his family had a say of 50% on this. They backed him up and motivated him to choose his future career.

Ayans parents were from Somalia and they have had their education from there. They didn't have the opportunity of taking higher education but were educated to a level that enabled them to manage their life very well in Norway. Her father had worked as a welder and the mother has had some petty jobs. As for her future career, it was her own decision and was supported by her mother.

Kadras parents also have had their basic education from Somalia. After coming to Norway her mother started taking Upper Secondary School education as part time and has not yet completed. She was also working in a kinder garden and has earlier worked in a shop. Her father was taking university education in business administration. As he was studying fulltime, he was only working part time and during summer holidays. When it came to choosing her career it was her father who inspired her to take higher education in the field of engineering.

Muallims parents came to Norway during the 80s from Somalia. His father did not have the opportunity to take higher education during his time. But now he as his son has got that opportunity, he pointed out. As far as he knew, his father has an Upper Secondary School education and he started to travel to other countries when he was young. His mother has a Secondary School education. His father has worked as a welder in Norway and now he has retired. Mother has had petty casual jobs. Muallim was explaining that those days it was like that, that they had to take those jobs that were available for them. He was glad that now the younger generation has more opportunities. His parents have gone through a tough and difficult time. But they have supported him always to their best of ability.

It was Muallims father who motivated him to choose the profession he has now chosen. His mother had always supported and encouraged him to take higher education. As Muallim has pointed out above that his father didn't get the opportunity for higher education when he was younger, but that he as his son has got that

opportunity now. What he was emphasizing was that this opportunity must be made use of, for the benefit of his whole family.

Working with the immigrant community, I personally know through my experience that many parents regard investment in their children as an investment for the entire family. Most of the first generation immigrant parents were mostly working hard in labour jobs for years due to lack of educational qualifications and language proficiency. It is also a known phenomenon that most of the families supported their close relatives like their parents, brothers or sisters in their home countries. It is an obligation according to their tradition and culture. When their children take higher education and eventually get into a good job it will elevate their status in their communities.

The picture we get from my respondent's answers is, that except one father taking university education, the rest of the other parents have 8 to 10 years of education. At the same time, what is common among all the parents is that they all fully back up their children to take higher education.

6.2 Sociological aspects

Parents have undergone several sociological challenges during the course of their life in Norway and have learned to adjust themselves to the environments. Naturally they had to change their life style to establish their own families and have a peaceful life in the new country. Let us now look into the socialization affects of their children.

There are several actors in the socialization process in the life of a child: Parents at home, teachers and students in school environments and friends who form the social networks among others. A person's behaviour, some of them are natural whereas others are learnt in different environments. While growing a child is gradually moulded in the society into a social being and learns social ways of acting and feeling. This process of shaping the personality of a person is called 'socialization'. This process also referred to as the 'transmission of culture' where an individual learns to be part of a social group³¹.

³¹ Bradshaw, Healey & Smith (2001) p 134 -136

The first world of an individual is created during the primary socialization. The direct socialization begins in the family, as they are not only closely related to the child but physically also they are nearer to the child than others. The environment of a family influences the growth of a child. Of the parents it is the mother who first begins the process of socialization. The life of a child that is being internalized during the primary socialization goes very deep into the world of that child compared to the secondary socialization that takes place outside home when the child grows up³².

The primary socialization of my respondents has made them to inherit their parents culture, tradition, language and religion to a great extent. We could clearly see that from the answers they have given to some of the questions. When they get out of their first world and interact with the outside world, they sometimes encountered with challenges their parents might have not faced such as in schools and with Norwegian friends. Gender is one of the aspects that according to parents' culture, mixing of boys and girls are not allowed. One of the respondents expressed a sort of frustration that if someone sees, that a boy talked to a girl in the town and that reaches the parents or others in their community that could become an issue.

Another important aspect that we were able to notice among these respondents was that every one of them has great respect for their parents. I know very well that it is not only the tradition but very strongly based on the religion too. It is important in Islam that youngsters show respect to parents and elders. Fangen also points out the same aspect based on her studies that she has done in the case of Somali youths in Oslo, while pointing out how the Norwegian youths behave towards their parents³³.

We were able to see the strong influence in the case of Muallim too. Though he was born in Norway, he has a strong wish to render his services to help people in his parents' motherland. He emphasized that he wants to make use of the profession he is now aiming to achieve to help that country when the war is over and the time is ready for development works.

³² Berger & Luckman (2006) p 135 - 141

³³ Fangen (2008) p 51 - 53

It is also important to bring forth the other side of the stories too in this discussion. I have seen and experienced cases where immigrant parents losing their authorities over their own children. When the father lacks education and unable to find his place in the new society, he becomes dependent on his children in regards to all communications with the outer world. Children gain more knowledge through secondary socialization with the major society out side home and come into a better position to manage their life. That gives them somewhat authority over their parents when it comes to their freedom, which otherwise could have been controlled by their parents. There are parents who are unable to manage their life and become dependent on social help for a long time. Some spend most of their time sitting in café chatting and drinking tea for hours with their friends from same countries³⁴. I have seen families that it has affected their children and some of them have become school dropouts and even part of criminal groups.

Status also has been mentioned as one of the important factors for choosing the career. I couldn't find any research materials on this, but based on my interaction and experience with different migrant communities I am well aware of this phenomenon. It is an honour for the family to have their sons and daughters in careers like especially Physicians and Engineers, or other good positions. Some of the Diasporas continue to maintain their home country traditions though they have moved to the West. It gives them great respect among their families, friends and villagers when these people visit their home countries.

The school environment functions as the best arena for integration during the secondary socialization of immigrant youths. Through communication, interaction, and formal instruction they learn not only about cultural elements but also about the meaning of those elements. It may also cause some tension over parents' culture. For example, the parents may regard *status* as important, but for the children who grow in Norway that wont give any special meaning³⁵.

Unlike the majority of Norwegian parents, Ali points out that he couldn't get any support from his parents when it came to school home works. Except one of the

³⁴ *ibid*, p 52

³⁵ Bradshaw et al 2001, p 134

parents who were taking university education, others were faced with the same problem. Naturally the language was the biggest barrier that was preventing them from helping their children with school homework. In Ali's case he was lucky to have sisters who were taking higher education and could help him.

It is one of the main reasons that research done on this problematic area draws attention to the fact that immigrant children must be provided with the necessary facilities to learn their mother tongue. It is argued that it will function as an additional tool to help the children to manage well in school and at the same time they will grow with twin language competency. It will also strengthen the child to identify her-self with her minority group in the society, which is closely connected to multiculturalism as political theory. When the children can understand and speak the mother tongue, it will be easy for the parents to help them in their school home works³⁶.

Some of the studies done on immigrant students show that when it comes to choosing the future career, they usually choose the areas as the researcher Støren (2009) calls "elite education" (elitestudie) such as Medicine, Dentist, Engineer, Lawyer or Business Education. Most of the migrant parents feel that these professions will give their families status in the society as mentioned earlier³⁷.

Fangen has studied the Somali environment in Oslo and has revealed many interesting aspects. Many of the youngsters have a feeling of responsibility towards their parents. At the same time the parents have clear wish and goal for their children in regards to their future that may sometimes come into conflict with their children. She is also pointing out that these youths have great respect for their parents, and some of them take their parents as role models. This is something in contrary to how the Norwegian children behave towards their parents³⁸.

It is also important to point out that socialization with the parents and their support are vital for the progress of the children. Such social capital can increase the productivity of the children to succeed in their life.

³⁶ IMDi-rapport 10-2008

³⁷ Lauglo (2010), p 6.

³⁸ Fangen (2008) p 51 – 53

7. Roles of Friends

The word friendship can be defined in many ways depending on how we look at it based on different aspects such the culture, tradition and countries. The Roman philosopher Marcus Tullius Cicero has defined friendship as follows³⁹:

“Life is nothing without friendship, a friend is a second self. Friendship improves happiness, and abates misery, by doubling our joys, and dividing our grief”

In this section I will be dealing with issues such as the backgrounds of friends, how they socialize and influence each other, whether they have role models among them and whom they regard as their best friends.

As my respondents have origin from different countries, they too look at their friends based on their background. What makes people to regard the other as friend and what definition they give to call a person “*best friend*”?

7.1 Friends

Here the main question was “What is the role your friends are playing and what are their backgrounds?” In addition I also asked some follow up questions to clarify some of the answers. This section is closely connected to the next part, which is dealing with integration and some of the out come from this section will be further discussed there. My respondents came out with following answers:

It was natural for Ali that his friends had similar background as himself. That he believed could help to create better understanding between him and his friends. His friends were originally from Pakistan, Somalia and Afghanistan. His closest friends were from Pakistan and Afghanistan. But he also had other friends in school and they were mostly Norwegians. According to him they were all playing a role as friends. On his own words he was explaining, “*When I am with my Pakistani friends I feel more Pakistani and when I am with my Norwegian friends I feel more Norwegian. It*

³⁹ <http://www.goodreads.com/>

is something to do with your personality. Those who are close to you respect you as you are”.

He continued further saying, “If we look at my Norwegian friends, they are same age as me. That is because we are in the same class in school. When it comes to my close friends, they are same age as me and some are one year elder. The explanation can be that not many are coming from where I am originally from. It makes you to establish friendship whatever age they are. Here it is natural that they are not like others, we understand each other better.

During his leisure time he was mostly with his close friends, who were Pakistanis and Afghanis. In his Upper Secondary School there were only two from Pakistan. There weren’t any others from Pakistan or any Muslims in his class. There he was mostly with his Norwegian friends, and he get influenced by them to a certain extend.

When I asked “*How do you meet the challenges among your Norwegian friends? You must be definitely getting a lot of questions about different things*”. He responded thus, “Very often there are long discussions on different things. It is normal in a way. In addition there is a dividing line (skillelinje) between my Norwegian friends and me. E.g. when it comes to party and drinks, I keep myself distance from alcohol. These are not allowed in Islam. It may be difficult for them to understand, but I try to explain in a nice way, so that they could understand and respect me as I am. At times you will find yourself in sideline and the dividing line becomes bigger and bigger. It is a challenge. Based on my experience I try to keep myself in balance and try to create better understanding by explaining things”.

You mean you try to explain your friends in a nice way about all these things?

“I try to explain to them in a nice way that I have no permission to do such things.

Another interesting thing can be, that it makes you learn about your own self and your religion. Of course that it gives you motivation to learn more about Islam. First and foremost it makes me to think of my parents and that I am born as a Muslim. It is typical for youths to think why we are here and such questions. At the same time I try to understand more about Islam”.

When I asked whether he look at his older friends as role models, his reply was “ When it comes to role models, I would say no. It all depends. If they follow Islam and is a good example one can say they are role models. If they are not, they are not role models. Those who are one year elder and others, we are almost same. It is difficult to say that they could be role models. But those who are older, perhaps around 30 years could be considered as role models. Such people I could think of. It is important that young Muslims must have good knowledge about Islam and be good Muslim in practice”.

He further added to the question what was the role his friends were playing when it came to his education, “The class I am in, we are mainly taking maths. Most of them are very good in maths. As such it is positive for all of us to work together. I cooperate very well with everyone. Most of them get very good marks. It is a great motivation that we help each other. It helps a lot in many ways”.

Ali wound up the response with the question, whether he had any other viewpoints about his friends, by saying, “Friends are like diamonds. Your brother and sisters are like gold. Diamonds cannot be melted together as the 4th Caliph Ali has said. They influence to a certain extend. Friends play an important role when it comes to how you function in the society”.

Muneer came out with the following response about his friends: “My best friends are from other countries. They are from Russia, Pakistan and also two from Afghanistan and one from Ghana in school. These friends I used to be with most. I also used to go out with my Norwegian friends to have a cup of coffee and things like that. I have tried with many Norwegian friends. It is like that you don’t manage to come very close. I have some good Norwegian friends and it goes fine. When you have sister and taking your friends home can be problematic. When you see the culture, the Norwegians go out on Fridays and Saturdays to drink and to do other things. It makes very difficult to be more close to Norwegian friends. The culture is very different, as Norwegian when you become 18 years you can do whatever you like without the consent of your parents. It is something quite opposite in my case. This makes that we can not get along in many aspects”.

Most of his friends were same age as him. The eldest one was 17 or 18 years old. He didn’t look at his older friends as role models. For him to regard someone as role

model, they should have achieved something remarkable in their life. Friends are there to support and help each other according to him.

He also tried to pin point an important issue in the environment as thus: “It is so in the immigrant environment that boys and girls don’t go together. If anybody sees you in town together with girls, it can lead to problems at home. We live in Norway and such things should not create problems. I feel that it is not accepted that boys talk with girls. I don’t know why, you don’t need to have any girl friends (love affairs) or something like that. But you must be able to have friends. It is important to be able to talk to all, to understand each other.

Most of Ayan’s friends were same age and some were little elder. They support and motivate each other. When Ayan explained about her friends, she said, “I have many friends from many countries; naturally most of them are from Somalia, which means a lot for me. They motivate and support me. Those who are from the same country understand you much better when you compare with others”. As for role models she has a friend who is 3 – 4 years elder to her and she manages very well. That inspires Ayan that she too can manage like her.

Kadra responded saying, “My friends are from many different countries. But most of them are Norwegians. Of course, many of my friends are from Somalia and they understand you better. It is natural that we from same countries hold together and have better understanding about each other”. Most of her friends were same age as her and some were little elder to her. Kadra has some friends who are elder to her, but she don’t look at them as role models.

Muallim elaborated about his friends in the following manner, “I have been moving and I have been to 3 different primary schools. Here I have grown up and got to know many, and now at the Upper secondary school. Not all are best friends. I have friends from China, Korea, and Iraq and from Somalia. I have Norwegian friends, they are all right and it is something that they are different from others. In school most of my friends are Norwegians. We used to be together both in school and free time”.

7.2 Viewpoints on friendship

Urban dictionary defines best friends as that they are very special people in your life. They are the first people you think about when you make plans. They are the first people you go to when you need someone to talk to.⁴⁰

Mutual understanding and respect are some of the values that these youths place when it comes to whom you can call as your best friends. All of them have clearly said that although they have Norwegian and other friends from many different countries, it is those who are from the same countries manage to come much closer to each other than with others. Same culture, language and religion play an important role as same country youths come closer to each other as best friends. Another factor is that they face similar problems in the outside world and they feel safer to tackle them together. In short these youths put it, as “*we understand each other much better*”.

It is interesting to note that there is a dividing line between these youths their Norwegian friends in comparison to friends from other countries. Parties and alcohol were mentioned as main reasons in addition to that Norwegian youths become more independent once they reach the age of 18 and they are free to engage in any activities without their parents consent. These factors are something that the Muslim youths find it difficult to adjust themselves because of their religion, culture and tradition.

There is another issue that has been put forward by some of these youths. Their Norwegian friends ask them many questions, and sometime the same questions again and again. Friends will usually try to understand each other to build better understanding. But what the indication we get from here is that their Norwegian friends don't want to understand them – the difference of religion, culture and tradition. Probably this issue may need further research.

A research report prepared by IMDi confirms the above and points out some of the studies done by Østberg (2003), Prieur (2004), Jacobsen (2002, 2006) and Aarseth (2006) in this regard⁴¹.

⁴⁰ <http://www.urbandictionary.com/>

⁴¹ IMDi-rapport 10-2008

Part III Being a Muslim in Society

As religion is an important aspect of this thesis, in this part I will be dealing with the challenges my respondents are facing in this regard and how well are they integrated in the society. This will be seen in the context of the situation of Muslim youths in Europe and some of the impacts of globalization with regards to migration.

8. The importance of Religion

In the social perspective religion is playing an important role in a society and influence the life of individuals in many ways. To confirm this expression I would like to quote from “Religion The Social Context” by McGuire (2002)⁴²:

Religion is one of the most powerful, deeply felt, and influential force in human society. It has shaped people’s relationships with each other, influencing family, community, economic, and political life. ... Religion is a significant aspect of social dimension is an important part of religion.

Europe is more secularized in comparison to other parts of the world and religion is regarded as something personal. How is the situation when it comes to immigrants who have also brought their religion, culture and the way of life to Europe? This is the main issue of Chapter 8.

8.1 Challenges of being a Muslim

I asked my respondents about their stand concerning the religion and the challenges they face in the society to get an insight of the situation. They emphasized that they were encountering numerous challenges in regards to their faith. Below can we listen to them describing in their own words the kind of challenges they face and how they tackle them.

⁴² McGuire 2002. P 1

Let us start with Ali.

As a Muslim do you face any special problems in the society?

“Yes, a lot of questions almost all the time. Otherwise I feel as a normal person. Islam is part of myself. I know and understand what Islam is about. But the major society looks at Islam negatively. Here I struggle to convince that Islam is not what they think. For example there are discussions about Islam in school. Many have negative viewpoints about Islam. E.g. in exam, questions are formulated in a negative way that how Islam looks at women. Such thing you must try to explain. I try my best to tackle the problem in a nice way”.

“Of course I am affected by what is happening in Europe, things like The Satanic Verses⁴³, cartoon, hijab debate etc. Most probably it is because I am a Muslim. For me, firstly it is about to reject such things and not to accept. Secondly it is important to be patient. This I think is very important. Otherwise it is important to fight against Islamophobia – the negative side. Because here in Europe Islam is focused negatively. I feel that everything is being generalised by the society”.

You mean that you are seen as different and asked all these questions?

“This society is very individualistic. People look at individuals and based on that they try to generalise things. They don’t look at things with holistic approach to see where the problem lies. When you look at individuals, it may be dangerous. Therefore we Muslims must think of being positive”.

For Muneer the incident of September 11th became a negative turning point in many ways.

“I remember very well 11 September. Many questions were asked whether I supported that. It made me to smile and I was asked why I was smiling. I said that I just smile. Have you not heard what has happened? My smile was taken as if I supported what had happened. That was the first time that I felt that I am a Muslim among my friends in school. There are debates about hijab. If it is the choice of the women let them wear it. In Islam it is enjoined and not forced. You yourself can choose whether to wear it or not.

⁴³ *The Satanic Verses* is Salman Rushdie’s fourth novel, first published in 1988. It sparked a major controversy when Muslims accused it of blasphemy and mocking their faith. The outrage among some Muslims resulted in a fatwa issued against Salman Rushdie by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Supreme Leader of Iran on February 14, 1989.

According to Islam no one can force you to do anything. It is up to each and everyone to make up the mind and act upon it. Such debates also affect the boys. Men can have many wives. It is also one of the questions asked several times. Why men can have many wives, but the woman can have only one man. Such questions I have come across many times. Many of these questions can be provocative. The latest was the rape cases in Stavanger. These discussions and debates affect you. What comes in the media such as these affect often all the Muslims”.

Ayan explained as follows:

“Perhaps, hijab is a good example. Many ask strange questions about hijab and other things. They ask whether it is worth wearing hijab and things like that. What is happening around Europe such as cartoon of Prophet, ban on minaret in Switzerland affect me too. I get many questions and it is important to explain and give them a good answer to those who ask questions”.

Kadra too was facing similar situation.

“I am also asked about many things, especially about hijab. Many are engaged in asking such questions. The cartoon for example, which came in the newspaper, of course it affected me very much. They are doing this for provocation. If we go against, they will do it more and more”.

It is an interesting phenomenon that my respondents are facing during their secondary socialization outside their home and family. Will this have any affect in their further interaction with the Norwegian society or will they try to explain and make them understand in a positive manner? On the other hand it may also compel them to gain more knowledge about their own religion to answer such questions in the future, will it? The following questions will give us the answer.

How do you meet the challenges among your Norwegian friends? When such things happen there can be many strange questions and how do you tackle them?

Ayan:

“I don’t get irritated. Think clearly and try to explain as good as possible”.

Kadra:

“If anyone asks me, I will say this is what it is and explain to him or her to the best of my knowledge. It is our duty to explain things properly”.

Muallim came out with the following explanation:

“For example 9-11 created a great deal of challenges. Some thought I as a Muslim was behind that. Met with lots of questions. In my class, one of them was for cartoon. That made me to vomit in a way. It has been clearly said that it is not permitted to draw the Prophet. But still they do it for provocation. It is unbelievable.

It happened some where in Asia. The Muslims got hold of a non-Muslim and they assaulted him to dead. It is against Islam. A Muslim will not do such things. It is very clearly stated in the Quran that Muslims must show kindness to each other. Muslims must be good example to others”.

What is happening in Europe such as The Satanic Verses, cartoon, hijab debate, and minaret debate, do they affect the Muslims?

“Of course when such things happen, people look at us as if we are behind and ask unwanted questions. Unfortunately there are bad Muslims who are creating problems for all. It doesn't mean that all are like that”.

How do you encounter the challenges among your Norwegian friends?

“I tried to explain as good as possible to my knowledge. Sometimes it can be difficult that some stick to what they say and don't want to understand. When questions are asked again and again, it is not easy to explain many times. Some can be so evil and say that the Muslims exploded a bus and you are one of them. It is provoking and very much irritating at times. It is not that I who did it. Neither I know who has done it. There are other questions like “that Islam is the last religion and why it can be the right one?” I try to explain to the best my knowledge”.

It is obvious that these youths are bombarded with lots of questions when something happens where Muslims are involved or that are related to the religion of Islam. Every one of them was experiencing similar situation as Muslim. It also has been indicated that some of the questions were provocative. They have to maintain patience to give them proper answers. Is it something to do with ethnocentrism?

The answers reflect that my respondents are looked upon as different and their frustration of facing unwanted questions again and again. Ethnocentric⁴⁴ thinking could lead one to make wrong assumptions about other people as it prompts us to make premature judgements. Believing that ones own culture is superior to others culture can bring negative consequences such as intolerance and discrimination, which is not healthy in a society if one wants to live peacefully with everyone. Probably the lack of knowledge about other cultures and religion, and the generalization could be the cause for this dilemma.

8.2 Importance of religion

The answers we have seen above clearly indicate that the Muslim youths are faced with many challenges with regards to their religion. One of the studies done by IMDi in 2008 also confirms this theory⁴⁵. How far they are affecting their life? Does it make them weak in their faith or make them to become stronger? What is their real identity and how does it affect them?

Ali has strongly emphasized that ‘Islam was part of himself and that he knows and understand what Islam is about’, while Muneer ‘felt as a Muslim’ for the first time among his friends when he was bombarded with questions when September 11th took place. Ayan and Kadra point out that what is happening around Europe in regards to Islam affect them very much. Muallim was feeling that he was blamed whenever something happens where Muslims are involved.

All of them feel that they are affected by provocative incidents against Muslims. At the same time they are all unanimous in one thing that all of them take responsibility as Muslims and say that it is important to be patient and give proper answers to questions asked about Islam. It also makes them to feel more strongly that they are Muslims. Thereby it seems to strengthen their faith and identity as Muslims.

⁴⁴ Bradshaw e.l. 2001, p 18

⁴⁵ IMDi-rapport 9-2008, p 73

8.2.1 Muslim identity

I would like to look into what the scholars say about identity and what does it really mean to an individual. There are many interesting theories dealing with identity with regards to minorities and immigrants. I have chosen the following theories that I feel could be related to my respondents.

Jacques Waardenburg in one of the articles “Muslim and Christian: changing identities” notes that in post-modern societies, religious identities have become increasingly personalized and plural in nature. The complexities of modern societies are forcing people to take part in several identities⁴⁶.

Scholars like Sissel Østberg has focused on the problems many young Muslims are facing in Norway. She points out that they are torn between seemingly irreconcilable expectations in the society. It leads these young Muslims to gradually develop competence to handle what she terms “an integrated plural identity”⁴⁷. Here she deals with the situation of Norwegian born Pakistani youths in regards to Islam, ethnic belonging and the identity. In addition she also emphasises the fact that the role of Islam for this young Muslims social belonging, identity development, and the relation between religion, culture and ethnicity.

I agree with Jaques Waardenburg and Sissel Østberg that the Muslim youths are faced with many challenges and they have to switch between several identities or plural identity based on the nature of the situation. These expressions very well suite my respondents who are also facing the same dilemma.

Here I feel proper to bring in what Tariq Ramadan, the Muslim scholar says about the identities of Muslims who are living in the West. The early Muslims were not sure whether they wanted to be “Muslims” in the West or rather to be Pakistani, Turkish and Arab Muslims. It was their national culture they used to identify themselves, but when time passed and the younger generation started to face new challenges their faith became an important common factor in bringing them as “Muslims” in the West.

⁴⁶ Jacques Waardenburg 2000. p. 159

⁴⁷ Østberg 2003. The book is partly based on her doctoral dissertation “Pakistani Children in Oslo: Islamic Nurture in a Secular Context (1994-1998)”. Institute of Education, University of Warwick, UK 1998.

Ramadan⁴⁸ argues that

it is possible to define the meaning of “Muslim identity” by exposing four foundational pillars with specific dimensions.

They are “Faith (Sahada⁴⁹), abide by the Quran and Sunna⁵⁰, education and transmission⁵¹ and action & participation”.

According to Ramadan, one of the most central questions for Muslims in today’s western society is identity. In order to remain faithful to their religion, and feel that the West is a place where they are themselves and feel at home, it is important for Muslims in the West to define their identity. Different cultural adoptions of the religion might have occurred, and thus it is important for Muslims in the West to return and study the core principles of their religion in order to understand their religion with an open quality that will allow them to live in any environment.

He further explains, “When we embark on these first stages of stripping down the religion to the core principles, we find that it is possible to define the import and the meaning of “Muslim identity” by exposing our four foundational pillars with specific dimensions. The first and most important element of Muslim identity is faith, which believes in the Creator without associating anything with Him. This is interconnected with spirituality – the remembrance of God – and excellence, as defined as the ideal behavior for a Muslim, would be to attain a state where there is no forgetfulness”.

However, there is no true faith without understanding; both the sources (includes the Quran and the Sunna) and the context in which they live. Seeking understanding and developing intellectual capabilities is therefore a second pivotal point of the Muslim identity. This encompasses into the third pivot of the Muslim identity that is being open, engaging and educating others. The last pivot, thus the fourth that is an essential part of Muslim identity is to actively engage and participate in society.

⁴⁸ Ramadan, Tariq 2004, p 77-85

⁴⁹ The sahada is the intimate sign that one believes in the oneness of God without associating anything with Him.

⁵⁰ Sunna is the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad.

⁵¹ Educate and pass the knowledge to the children.

The great responsibility of Muslims in the West is to address these four pivots of their identity in a Western culture while staying faithful to the Islamic sources that consists of the Quran and the Sunna.

Ramadan's characterization of Muslim identity is thus, that one has to submit him/herself completely to God Almighty and it should reflect in words and deeds in their interaction with others in the society. My respondents seem to be strong in their faith and they have clearly indicated that Islam is part of their life, and at the same time the negative incidents against Islam in the West have strengthen their faith and it is my impression that they have become more aware of their identity as Muslims.

8.3 Religion as a part of life

We already see the results of misunderstanding concerning Islam as a religion. What is happening around Europe is a clear indication of this misconception. Recently the population of Swiss voted for a ban on minarets, even though the vote in practice would not have that big implications on the daily lives of Muslims, it could be used as tool, which extreme elements on the political right wing can use to influence the populations of Europe. The latest example is the results of the recent Swedish Parliamentary Elections where the Far-Right group came out with more seats than everyone expected. Unfortunately there is a similar political situation becoming gradually apparent in many parts of Europe as criticism of Islam and Muslims are being used as their political weapon.

There are many stories related to how Muslim youths are viewed by others in the environments they are living in. For instance the idea of seeing Muslims as a homogenous group is wrong. However due to misconceptions, many are asked about different national cultures than theirs that have a Muslim majority, solely because they are Muslim. Turkish Muslims may be asked of why Muslims in Somalia practice circumcision on women, or a Sri Lankan Muslim may be asked why forced marriage is practiced in Pakistan. There seems to be a lack of understanding among the general masses of other cultures and religions.

When it comes to religion it is apparent that the Muslim youths are facing various problems in the society as they are trying to live according to the ethics of Islam. Boys and girls have to refrain from mixing with each other. Keep away from alcohol and parties. They have to carefully balance themselves between the Norwegian society and their own environment. There had been incidents and debates in the media that there are Muslim youths living a double life to please both the sides⁵².

High School graduation (Russefeiring) is one of the toughest times that Muslim students might undergo during their high school period. Question of loneliness and how to fit in with other students may put them into a great trial. Schultz⁵³ who has done research on this subject thinks *that Norwegian youth allow themselves to drink a lot of alcohol, smoke hash and swallow so many ecstasy pills as they want, as long as they stop once russ is over. The russ suit gives them an amnesty. But for Muslim youth this is not the case. When they first drink and are discovered, they're in the process of burning all bridges to their family and environment. It's difficult to come back again.*

On the other hand when it comes to the majority of Muslim youths, gradual changes are taking place. As we have seen earlier, the majority of Muslim youths have emphasized religion as most important in their life. If I am to refer to an example based on my own knowledge of the Muslim community in Stavanger, that it is a fact that many well educated girls and women are strictly observing hijab and religious duties such as prayers and fasting, probably better than the average of those who are in the Arab Muslim world. What could be the explanation behind this?

People who are living in an Arab Muslim country observe things based on their culture and tradition. Most of them follow the way of life that had been always and, very rarely anybody would ask questions to challenge them or to find out more. At the same time it is easy for them to identify themselves as the member of the society they are living in. But for the young generation of Muslims who are living in the West, they are almost pressurized by the environment to have or search for knowledge of their religion to cope up with the questions from the outside society. Not the least to determine their own identity and try to live by that.

⁵² <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/utskriftsvennlig/?artId=598381>

⁵³ <http://nrk.no/nyheter/1.5616970>

There are many evidences from various studies that could confirm the changes taking place, but I would like to elaborate this development from my many years experience in the Norwegian society. Many things have changed during the course of the last three decades. More girls and women have become visible in towns and schools wearing headgear, more people attend prayers in the Mosques and parents are concerned about teaching their children Islam. I have seen people who didn't care about their religious duties earlier, now they are attending prayers regularly.

Many immigrants who came to Norway in the 70s didn't think much about religion. When these first Muslims got children, changes started to take place in regards to practicing of religion. But it was in a very slow phase. 'The Satanic verses' by Salman Rushdie was published in 1988, a novel which Muslims opposed as blasphemous but he was supported by the West. There were protest in many parts of the world and some people even got killed because of this. It was one of the first turning points that made many Muslims in Norway realize their identity as Muslims. The next major turning point was in 1997 when the Norwegian Government introduced and made the subject KRL (Christianity, Religion and Life Stances) compulsory for Primary and Secondary School students. Muslims and Humanists felt that their children were forced to learn about other religions. There were huge demonstrations all over Norway. There were other incidents and debates on Islam were ongoing, but the above two major incidents made most of the Muslims to realize their identity and join hands to oppose them. The third major incident was the September 11th in 2001 that placed the Muslims in a very difficult situation all over the world.

The constant pressure from the outside world has given the Muslims a feeling of belonging and search for meaning in life, as the material world doesn't provide proper answers to the problems they are facing especially in the West. On the other hand the pressure has become a catalyst in increasing the knowledge of religion, particularly among the young Muslims.

It was a sign that Norway was emerging as a pluralistic society where several different meaning systems begin to compete. In such a situation each religious group had to organize its own plausibility base because the society as a whole does not

support its meaning system. United States and Canada are good examples of pluralistic societies where different religious groups migrated long before Europe. They have created their own cultural enclaves, characterized by close interaction with fellow believers where they can keep away from the competing beliefs and values⁵⁴.

Most of the immigrants are members of a religious association than the population as a whole, and the proportion is probably high in the case of Muslims being members of religious associations. A survey done by European Social Survey (ESS) shows, that Norwegians in general are not very religious. Whereas the Survey of Living Conditions among Immigrants, indicates that religion has an important place in the life of non-Western immigrants. The young people of this group also emphasized a strong religious commitment. Seven out of ten young people of immigrant origin are Muslims.⁵⁵

Young Muslims, both female and male, regard religion as most important in life. However, the material also indicates demographical variations. It is also interesting to note that young men of Pakistani origin are more religiously active than their parental generation. But when it comes to Turkish it is the adults who are more active⁵⁶.

9. Integration in the society

How can one get integrated in a new society that is different from the society one has grown in? Is it true that some people manage to adjust themselves easily in a new society whereas others come into conflict? Why is it so? What will be the consequences?

To find out how each one of my respondents were integrated in the society, they were asked to explain their participations in different organisations, clubs and other activities in the society. In addition they were also asked, whether anyone of them have had any problems finding summer jobs because of their background, and

⁵⁴ McGuire 2002. Page 38

⁵⁵ Løwe 2008 p 63, 69

⁵⁶ *ibid*, p 72

whether they feel uncomfortable moving around in public. Finally they were asked to give their comments on the importance of mastering the Norwegian language.

The definition of integration has been explained in New Oxford American Dictionary in the following manner:

“Bring into equal participation in or membership of society or an institution or body”.

Norwegian immigration policy emphasizes that the ethnical minorities should be integrated in the society by learning the language, getting into employment and probably taking education. According to Fangen not many countries have such immigration policy. The purpose of this policy is to reduce the differences in living standards, and to provide equal opportunity to all in a multicultural society⁵⁷.

Integration into Norwegian society, as reflected by the respondents’ perception of belonging and challenges, will be mainly covered in this chapter with my analysis and conclusion at the end.

9.1 Integration in the major society

To the question, “How well are you integrated in the major society?” the respondents came out with interesting answers of how they themselves feel that they are part of the major society in their own opinion.

Ali responded to the question as follows: “In my own opinion I can place myself in the middle to put it that way. Either not integrated or too integrated. Feel neither I am accepted here nor in Pakistan”. He has read a book called “Izzat” written by Nasim Karim, where the main person feels that she was hardly accepted as a full Norwegian or Pakistani. She was pulled to both sides. In Ali’s case it is not so extreme. But he too sometimes feels the same like “*you are neither Norwegian nor Pakistani*”. According to him that it has many sides, in some families it is the culture which is important and whereas in other families it is the religion. When it comes to the major society, he feels that he has two identities. In one place he has to have one personality and in another place he has to have another personality. As an example he pointed out

⁵⁷ Fangen 2008, p 38

that it happens when he is at home and when out side. He says that one must try to adjust himself, and it is a challenge.

Muneer elaborated his position thus, “I think I am well integrated. When I look at myself as Norwegian-Pakistani, I am well integrated. I can speak the language very well, born in Norway”. But he feels concerned when he sees others who are born in this country but they are not integrated well. Muneer has Norwegian friends and he communicates in Norwegian language very well, participates actively in debates in school and in addition he is also member of some organizations. Based on all these he feels that he is well integrated in the society.

Muneer explained further, “But I don’t forget my Pakistani root, and I call myself Norwegian-Pakistani. But my Norwegian friends say that I am not Pakistani, you are a Norwegian. This makes me to feel that I am very well integrated in the society. When I have discussions with my Norwegian friends I feel absolutely that I am part of the society”.

Ayan and Kadra responded in short when asked:

How well are you integrated in the major society? Do you think you are part of the society? The reason to ask this question is that there are people who have problems to manage in the society, and there can be many different reasons behind that.

Ayan answered, “not at all, I don’t feel myself being outside of the society. I am born and bred here, manage very well, and I feel I am part of the major society”.

Kadra also responded in the same direction, “I am too in the same situation. Born and bred here and I manage very well”.

Muallim also responded almost in a similar manner: “I feel I am well integrated in the society. I don’t have nay problems in the major society in a way. I am born and grown up in this country. The language is not a problem for me”.

The above answers reflect that these youths carefully manage themselves both at home and outside by taking different identities. Ali was clearer in his explanation by

placing himself in the middle as having integrated transversal identity. This phenomenon was clearly explained in the theories of Østberg and Waardenburg. It is an important challenge that the immigrant youths are facing during their integration process in the society.

9.2 Participation in society

Why is participation in the society important when we talk of integration? Before we find the answer it may be useful to look into what the respondents have to say.

Ali responded thus when asked to explain about his participation in different arena in the society, “I play football in a football club. I am also in the Student Council in school. Otherwise I try to follow the news to see what is happening in the world and try to engage myself in discussions in school together with other students”.

As mentioned earlier, he and some of his friends have formed an organisation for Muslim youths. It is a youth international activities group, where they try to organise different activities for the youth. Mainly for the Muslim youths but it is also open for other youths to participate. They already have some youths and trying to engage more youths.

The response of Muneer was as follows when asked to explain the kind of organizations he is a member of, and about the activities he is involved in: “I am at the football club to play football, and a member of a Karate club to learn Karate. I am an active member of a Muslim youth organization. I am busy organizing this for the time being. In addition I am also member of a land hockey club. When I started at Upper Secondary School last year I had little time for other activities. I was more concerned about my studies”.

In addition to his interest in sports such as football, karate and land hockey, he is also interested in debates concerning a wide range of topics from immigrants to football, everything that can engage him. He says it is ok to participate in discussions on different topics with people.

Ayan and Kadra came out with their explanation when asked the same questions:

Ayan: “I am not a member of any organisation but I take part in activities together with other Norwegian students. Russetog in connection with 17th May National day celebration is one of the examples I can mention here. Otherwise I am a member of The Muslim Women Organisation in Rogaland and participate in many activities. I am not in the board but I am assisting to organise different activities”.

Kadra: “I have been a member of the Student Council in and have contributed in school. In the student council you are with many Norwegian students. I also have been with The Muslim Women Organisation and have helped to organise activities for Muslim girls”.

Muallim came out with interesting answers to the question in regards to his participation in the society and the activities he is involved with organisations: “I am not interested in politics or organisational works. When you come to a certain extend one group goes against the other. It could be student council too. I am not a person who would like to involve in things”.

When asked whether he is with organisations like Norwegian Peoples Aid, Red Cross or Student Council where you can contribute something he answered, “ “No, I try to keep away from such things.

You mean you are only trying to concentrate in your studies?

“No, I am very social and help others. But I don’t want to involve in something against each other”.

In his free time he had earlier been to Elixia for physical training. In addition to physical training he also had been practicing boxing to keep his form. He had been with Dingså for training. That’s where he practiced boxing. He also has played football when he was small.

To the question whether anyone of them have had any problems getting summer jobs because of their background, all of them unanimously answered that none of them have had any such problems. Ali had a problem once because he was below 18 years old, not because of his background.

Moving around comfortably in the town also could be regarded as part of integration as it could be a problem for some immigrant youths. To clarify this, respondents were asked whether they feel comfortable while they are in town.

Ali responded saying; “I have some prejudice against going to town. When I go, I usually go with my close friends. So, that I feel very safe. Otherwise I hear what is happening in the town. The side of Islam within me says that it is uncomfortable. It is about the nighttimes in town. But during the day it goes fine and I usually go with my friends. If we see the town as a place for shopping, it is ok to go there. But just to go around doesn’t give me any sense”. Ali is not a person who goes to town for nothing or to waste his time.

Muneer said, “I am born and grown up in Norway. When Friday and Saturday come people go to town to drink. That time, you don’t feel comfortable to be in town. Nothing has happened ever. Here we are talking of weekends. But other days are ok. It is usual that my Norwegian friends drink, but my other friends don’t”. Muneer finds more common ground with his other friends than his Norwegian friends because he feels they are exactly like him.

Ayan explained thus, “Not at all, no one stirs at me. It goes as usual. But we don’t go to town during the night. Perhaps I go out to see my friends sometimes, but not go there just to go around the town”.

Kadra said, “Same here too. It is natural that we Muslim girls don’t go out in the night”. Muallim answered, “Usually it goes well when I say that I am born in Stavanger, and they say that you are one of us. But it is possible that those who don’t talk can think that here is a black person and perhaps a terrorist. They don’t know me at all, but dream about me already. It can happen that some do bad things like stealing and the like, but it should not affect others. That is, others can look at me in many ways. But I manage myself well”.

9.3 The Importance of Language

When it comes to integration, one of the most important issues is the language. Why is it so important? My respondents have come out with interesting answers to this question, “ “What role is the language playing when it comes to be active in the society?”

Ali answered, “The language is playing a very, very important role. In my priority list I will put this in the highest place, because the communication is important. In my case I mastered the Norwegian language easily. I don’t face any big problems”. But he sees other immigrants, when they have recently arrived in the country; this is one of the major problems they face. He appreciated what the government has so far done in regards to teaching of the Norwegian language and social knowledge to new immigrants as very positive.

Muneer explained, “I think the language is very important. We are living in Norway, and most probably most of us are going to remain here. You must be able to understand others and at the same time others must be able to understand yourself. If you know the language very well you can discuss with others and you also can explain the differences between us. Therefore it is important to know the language. The language is important for communication between people”.

Ayan’s reply was, “In my case, it is not difficult for me. I manage very well. The language is very important for communication. If not, no one can understand you”.

Kadra commented, “The language is very important; otherwise people can easily misunderstand you. If people from other countries who live here can’t speak the language, it can become a big challenge”.

Muallim said, “Language is very important. For example if I need anything it is easier to communicate with others. I experienced once, one person in a shop had problems in communicating and, the shopkeeper misunderstood him. That put him into lots of problems. At last he got help from someone and it went fine”.

He further elaborated by saying, “when you are given the opportunity to come into this country, one should respect the country and learn the language. It is our country in one way and it is not our country since we have come to this country from another country. This is something many youths have problems to understand. For example in Somalia you have electricity only for a limited time for you to see TV programmes. When they see programmes from the West, they think, is it so in the West. As soon as they have come here, they think, they are cool and try to get everything they want. Sometimes it may lead to unnecessary problems. One has to have long term plans to achieve what you want. What I mean is, one has to respect the country one has migrated to in order to start a new life”.

All my respondents clearly pointed out that language is instrumental when it comes to better communication with people we come across, and to be a part of the society. In short language is the key for a better life that can open the door for further education and to get into good job. Here Muallim is touching something very important, ‘symbol of respect’ to the country one has come to stay.

9.4 Being part of the society

The society is in a gradual process of change as the multicultural phenomenon is on the increase. Adapting to a new culture is one thing and at the same time adjusting oneself with his own way of life in the new society is another.

There are many challenges especially the Muslim youths have to face in the contemporary society, for example regarding alcohol. To support this phenomenon I would like to quote the following from “Inclusion and Exclusion of Young Adult Migrants in Europe: barriers and Bridges”⁵⁸:

Research on alcohol and drug consumption has shown that young urban immigrants are the ‘new abstainers’ of Norway, mostly due to religious conviction and a culture of zero tolerance (Moshuus 2005:148). This is in sharply in contrast with the increased consumption of alcohol among youth and young adults of the majority population: the annual alcohol consumption rate of young adults averaged 5.3 liters in 2006, and Oslo (where the majority of non-Western immigrants live) residents aged 21 – 30 drank at least 1 liter more on average than the national average (Lund et.al.2007). The culture of ‘binge drinking’ that has developed among youths with Norwegian

⁵⁸ Fangen et.al .2010, p 158

background is experienced as excluding by young Muslims, and also among young people of immigrants backgrounds with other religions afflictions (Schultz 2007, Fangen 2009).

Many researchers have pointed out the above fact that alcohol is one of the hindrances for interaction between youths with Norwegian background and Muslim youths. My respondents also clearly confirm this fact that although they have Norwegian friends, they feel that there is a separating line between them because of the usage of alcohol. At the same time friends from other countries are more similar to themselves.

All my respondents are second-generation immigrants who were born and grew up in Norway. Language is not a problem for these youths as they all grew up with it in their kindergarten and environment outside home and at the same time they were learning their own mother tongue. All of them have clearly expressed their view that the language is very important to be a part of the major society. Every one of them participates in different activities or member of some sports club to keep contact with the major society in their leisure time. None of them have faced any problems getting into summer jobs because of their backgrounds.

While everyone told me that they feel part of the major society, they also emphasized the point that they define themselves as Norwegians. This tendency is on the increase according to available research results. The number of young immigrants who define themselves as Norwegian has been increased during the period 1996 to 2006, The proportion of those who were born increased from 46,3 per cent in 1996 to 70,5 per cent in 2006⁵⁹.

Going to town is not a problem or uncomfortable in any way. They avoid going out unnecessarily and usually go out together with their friends. All of them avoid going to town during the weekend nights as they feel it is waste of time, because people go there mostly to drink alcohol. It is almost a part of Norwegian culture that most of the people go to town to have a drink, participate in discotheque to enjoy the weekend with friends and relax. Here the gender is also an issue that Muslim girls usually don't go out in the night.

⁵⁹ Øia and Vestel 2007, p 44

9.5 Analytical perspective

Scholars and politicians are interpreting integration of immigrants in the major society in different ways. IMDi is the government authority dealing with integrations of immigrants in Norway outlines integration as follows:

“Integration is a two-way process that involves immigrants being included in society, participating in the labour market and having equal opportunities. This requires immigrants to learn the language, become qualified for work and respect Norwegian laws and regulations. It also requires the general population to adapt to the new multicultural environment at work and in the community. Thus, integration is different from the concept of assimilation, where immigrants are required to adopt the dominant culture. Integration takes place wherever people live, work and generally go about their lives”⁶⁰.

I fully agree with this explanation of integration as it places the responsibility on both the immigrants and the society.

Migrating to Europe and becoming an equal citizen there will not happen over night. It is a long process and one has to overcome many obstacles under way. While explaining the integration process, Henriksen and Østby point out the fact that in many ways it takes long time to get used to the language, system, and cultural codes and the life style in the Norwegian society for those who have migrated from far away countries. One has to assume that their way of life style is strongly connected to their background and may remain so throughout their life. The next generations may also to a certain extent be influenced by their parents' life pattern and may have affect on their social and cultural inheritance in their way of lives in Norway.⁶¹ Though Ali can be identified as a Norwegian, he seems to feel that he is caught up in between the Norwegian and his parents' culture.

One of the interdependent aspects of the (intergenerational) integration theory refer to the social integration of immigrants into a social system as individual actors for instance inclusion in the labor market of the host society, as a member of an ethnic

⁶⁰ IMDi 2008, p 9

⁶¹ Henriksen & Østby 2007, p 36

community, or as part of a transnational network⁶². As it looks to me that my respondents will not have any problems in this regard.

According to IMDi, the integration of Norway's immigrant population is improving. In general the longer a person lives in Norway, the better integrated they will be⁶³. My respondents who were born in Norway have a very good command of the Norwegian language, well known to the system, active both in school and outside and are highly motivated to go for higher education with the aim of getting into a good job. Based on the definitions we have seen above, and in my view they can be regarded as well-integrated citizens of the country. In my opinion they are managing very well without coming into any conflicts with the society and at the same time they are also active in their own communities to help other youths who may need guidance to be a good citizens in the country.

10. Muslim youths in the West

In this chapter I will consider my findings in the perspective of the general situation of the Muslims in Europe. I will look into the areas where they are mostly concentrated and the challenges they are facing in their environments and how it affects the youths, the younger generation. It is important to look into both the positive and the negative sides of the situation. It is a vast area of discussion but I shall try to confine myself briefly to the general situation in Europe, Islamophobia and gradually bring in the comparison with the situation in Norway and with my target group.

10.1 The General Situation in Europe

The labour shortage after World War II precipitated the need for manpower and Muslim immigrants were welcomed in Europe as vital contributors to the workforce. They were encouraged to immigrate to countries such as Austria, Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland. Others emigrated to Belgium,

⁶² Esser 2003, p 6

⁶³ IMDi Annual Report 2008, p 9

France, the Netherlands and the UK in the 1960s and 1970s from former colonies. The flow of immigrants including Muslims increased to countries such as Ireland, Italy, Greece, Portugal and Spain in the 1970s. The Muslims living in Europe are not homogenous. They come from different national origins and religious backgrounds⁶⁴.

There is no accurate statistics are available on the Muslim population in Europe as the data is sensitive and at the same time many of the European countries do not collect population statistics based on religion. A study by Leon Perkowski in 2006 put the figure at 15 to 20 million Muslims in the EU⁶⁵. According another estimate by Open Society Institute there are 15 to 20 million Muslims living in the EU countries. By 2025 this number is expected to double. Most of the Muslims who are living in Europe are newly arrived immigrants and have background from different parts of the world such as Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Many of them experience discrimination and various challenges in the new society. They respect religion as most important national value than others. According to some research a critical barrier for their equal participation in society is the religious discrimination⁶⁶.

Various available reports on migration and Muslims suggest that the EU is facing an era of vast social changes. The 27 countries of the EU attracted at least a million immigrants a year during the latter years of the 20th century. Whereas the new EU reports reveal that net migration into the EU has gone up to 2 million people per year. If the prevailing situation of birth rate continues as it is now in Europe, the number of immigrant population might have increased by many folds in countries like Britain, Spain and France by 2060, according to some forecasts. In a paper for the European Parliament a Hungarian economist Karoley Lorant calculates: “Muslims already make up 25 per cent of the population in Marseilles and Rotterdam, 20 per cent in Malmo, 15 per cent in Brussels and Birmingham and 10 per cent in London, Paris and Copenhagen”⁶⁷.

During the industrialization of Germany, thousands of Turks migrated there for employment. Many of them have remained and now their population is around 3

⁶⁴ Greif . 2007

⁶⁵ The Telegraph 08.08.2009

⁶⁶ OSI (2008) p 22

⁶⁷ The Telegraph 08.08.2009

million. France has a big population of Muslims who are mostly from French speaking Middle Eastern countries such as Morocco and Tunisia.

It is also an interesting finding of a research done in Britain by the study group Policy Exchange that more than 70% of Muslims over 55 years old felt that they had as much in common with non-Muslims. But among the younger generation of 16 – 24 years old it fell to 62 per cent⁶⁸. I personally felt that it is very strange because the younger generation who were born and bred in the West should have more attachment towards the environment here, according to my own understanding. Probably they may be facing problems in their secondary socialization with the outside world, and feel that they are not fully accepted by the major society.

EU has shown great interest to know the situation of Muslims living in the EU countries and that has initiated in preparing a series of monitoring reports titled “Muslims in EU Cities”. Eleven cities that have significant Muslim population have been chosen for more in-depth study. The project is called “At Home in Europe” and focuses on the participation of minorities in a changing Europe. This project examines city and municipal policies that have actively sought to understand Muslim communities and their special needs. It also explores issues involving the political, social, and economic participation of Muslims and other marginalized groups at the local, national and European levels. Each report includes detailed recommendations for improving the participation and inclusion of Muslims in wider society while enabling them to preserve their community characteristics important to their identity⁶⁹.

10. 2 Islamophobia

After the shocking events of 11 September 2001 the situation of Muslims in the United States and Europe have become unacceptable. It is an established fact that the relations are sometimes disrespectful of and even clearly discriminatory against Muslims who are citizens and residents of their countries. By applying certain security policy including constant surveillance distrust is maintained. The Western population in general has conceived a negative picture of Islam that is often described

⁶⁸ *ibid*

⁶⁹ At Home in Europe. 2010 “Muslims in Hamburg”

by the term Islamophobia, and this is a fact that many Muslims are undergoing numerous difficulties in their environments⁷⁰.

The Muslim community in different parts of Europe is faced with problems becoming a part of the major society. A Muslim hijab-wearing girl of Turkish descent who studied Law couldn't find a job she had qualified for, and had to work in a call-centre. She is one of Germany's 3.3 million Muslims - about 4% of the population. She says that it is very difficult and don't feel part of the society, but alienated. What we see here, is that "Trust, or lack of it, lies at the heart of the problem". In one of the German states, the Muslims have to undergo a "Muslim Test" when they apply for citizenship⁷¹.

Is it possible to connect ethnocentrism to Islamophobia which is to use your own culture as the basis for interpreting and judging others cultures and to believe that yours is better than all other cultures? Bradshaw and others argue that multicultural societies must respect all other cultures. Failing which may lead to intolerance, discrimination and other serious consequences⁷².

The well-known anthropologist Paul Hiebert argues that before knowing the other culture we sometimes try to make comparisons as to whether it is civilized or primitive and backward. This kind of response could be associated with attitudes, not with understandings⁷³. Ethnocentrism is that our human tendency responds to other people's ways by using our affective assumptions. By giving due respect to the other cultures, we can open the way for further communication and come closer to each other. The opposite of which may cause the door of communication to be closed and the worst scenario can result in racism⁷⁴.

10. 3 Muslim Youth and Radicalism

There had been a growing media focus on the Muslim youths living in the West and radicalism for sometimes now. Why some of the youths lack attachment to the West

⁷⁰ Ramadan 2004, p 6

⁷¹ BBC News

⁷² Bradshaw & others 2001, p 18

⁷³ Hiebert 1985 p. 97

⁷⁴ Eriksen 1994 p. 52, 53, 69

though they were born and bred in Europe? Logically speaking they should know more about the West rather than their parent's culture and religion in their ancestors' countries.

Extreme-Right political parties are gradually emerging in many of the European countries and they are trying to create a fear among people by pointing out the number of Muslim immigrants coming into Europe, their fertility rate and religious extremism. Other issues that are being pointed out are such as that EU was concentrating mostly on asylum seekers and migration rather than the integration of those already in the bloc. On the other hand the employment rates for non-EU nationals are lower than the nationals that holds back advancement and integration. One of the important reasons for this is the lack of language skills among these immigrants⁷⁵.

On the other hand EU and organisations like Open Society Foundation are making efforts to create a dialogue and bring about an understanding among different groups of people so that they could live amicably. Research on this field has increased lately and more and more in-depth studies are conducted to get a better understanding of the prevailing situation and projections are being made on the future outcome.

10. 4 Muslim Identity and the search for true Islam

What is being practiced among some of the groups of people with Muslim background such as forced marriage, female circumcision and defending of family honour leads to lots of confusion among youngsters. These practices are not prescribed or sanctioned by normative Islamic sources, but unfortunately some try to justify them pointing out the religion rather than their tradition from their home country.

The first generation of Muslims have brought with them the religion together with their old tradition and culture. The way they practice the religion is closely connected to these tradition and culture. These early Muslim migrants were not very clear whether they wanted to be Western Muslims, or considered themselves as Pakistani,

⁷⁵ Adrian Michaels 2009

Turkish or Arab Muslims living in a diaspora in the West. Some of these groups strictly adhered to their culture, tradition and dress code of their country of origin from the outset.

When time goes by the new generation of Muslims in Europe may lose grip of their parental tradition and culture and may become more and more inclined towards the environment of Europe and develop a mixture of both their parental traditions and European ones. Tariq Ramadan, a well-known Islamic scholar in the West says that the most important element of Muslim identity is faith that the Muslims call the *shahada* (the profession of faith and its testimony – see terminology), which is the purest expression of the essence of Muslim identity beyond time and space. It is the religious practice of prayer, alms giving and fasting that are fundamental dimension of spirituality⁷⁶.

The younger generation, which has been born and raised in the West, find it difficult to follow the way their parents are practicing their religion. They are not satisfied with the answers they get from their parents in regards to some of the conflicting issues they are faced with in the society. Mixing of boys and girls, intermarriage, rights of women etc. could be cited as some of the examples.

Adi Greif of Center for Conflict Analysis and Prevention points out that a British Muslim expert at the Wilton Park conference reported that 70 percent of Muslims in Britain identify themselves as “British”. Though the youths want to retain religious traditions, the majority of Muslim youths want to ‘fit in’ and ‘identify as European’ as most youths want. They are comfortable with multiple identities and carefully manage between the more conservative world of their parents and the secular world outside the home, but unfortunately they sometimes feel forced to choose only one identity. He adds further that lack of acceptance for their particular identity can lead Muslim youth in Europe to feel alienated from both non-Muslim and Muslim communities.⁷⁷

Because of the pressure from the environment and the confusion of answers some of the parents are giving, the younger generation is searching for suitable answers that

⁷⁶ Ramadan 2004, p 77 - 79

⁷⁷ Greif 2007

could satisfy their needs. They have access to all modern communication systems and can easily reach out to any part of the world. In this process of seeking knowledge there is also a possibility of danger that some of them could fall into the hands of extreme elements.

10. 5 Discussion and conclusion

Jacobsen points out that Muslims are seen as problematic by some, because they distance themselves more strongly than other groups from Norwegian values. She is referring to the debate-book “Towards a New Norwegian Underclass” by Wikan (1995). It was in the 1980s immigration was established as one of the most controversial issues in Norwegian public debate, that was intensified in the 1990s and was crystallized as the “Muslim other”. Jacobsen argues further the research on Muslims has become more explicitly politicized.⁷⁸

According to Fangen that there are immigrants who feel that their freedom is limited in Norway. The authorities argue that there is a need for integration and participation in meaningful activities and stress the importance of the language, education and equality between men and women. But on the other hand there are Somali families who feel that they are not given the freedom to choose what is best for themselves as they experience an undesirable control over their life, which they regard as humiliating⁷⁹.

Some people who were not religiously active in their home countries became more active after coming to Norway. Those who feel humiliated and didn't get full access into the society, feel safer in their own religious groups through their participation. Their negative picture of Norwegian culture becomes stronger when they see drunkard Norwegians in the town in weekends. A similar reaction was also found in Canada where the Somalis high value themselves morally compare to the norms of the Canadians the way they are treating the girls.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Jacobsen 2008. p 23-43

⁷⁹ Fangen 2008, p 85

⁸⁰ *ibid*, p 97-98

The growing population of Muslims in Europe, whether they are newly arrived, citizens or native born, they present Europe with the major public policy challenge of ensuring equal rights and opportunities for all in a climate of rapidly expanding diversity⁸¹. This phenomenon is part of the ongoing globalization process and it deems fit to analyse further in the next chapter dealing with the impact of globalization.

The research indicating that the immigrants felt their freedom was limited was done in Oslo. I don't think that it could be generalized towards all immigrants who are living in Norway. It is my experience that most of the immigrants feel thankful for the freedom that countries like Norway have given them, as their situation could have been much worse if they had still been living in their country of origin.

The biggest challenge is that Norway and other Western countries talk highly of democracy, human rights and the freedom they carry. But when it comes to Muslims, one country after the other in Europe, start imposing new laws to limit the freedom of practicing of religion. At the same time media is freely allowed to disrespect religious values in the same name of freedom. Various researches indicate the fact that there is a growing feeling of discrimination among Muslims living in many parts of Europe, which is not healthy. The danger here is that the youths can become an easy prey in the hands of extreme elements. What is positive among all these is that EU is carefully monitoring the situation of Muslims and Islamophobia, and making efforts to bring about necessary changes for the inclusion and increased participation of Muslims in local, national and European level⁸². There is no doubt that the Muslims have become one of the biggest challenges for the European policy makers in the contemporary world.

To my knowledge the situation of Muslims in Stavanger Region is much better with regards to their participation in the society, and they live spread among the major society. It is also worth pointing out in this regard that the International House in Stavanger in collaboration with the Muslim community in Stavanger organised a Ramadan Festival in 2008 and 2009 to increase mutual understanding and inter-action

⁸¹ At Home in Europe. 2010, "Muslims in Hamburg" p 1

⁸² At Home in Europe. 2010. "Muslims in Europe". p 22 - 29

between the Muslim community and the major society. Many Muslim families opened their homes to received Norwegian families to join them in breaking the fast that was highly appreciated by many. The opening ceremony of Ramadan Festival took place at the time of breaking fast of the Muslims at sunset and the whole Stavanger Region was invited to join them at the centre of Stavanger, and free food was distributed to hundreds of people. The Muslim youths of Stavanger played a crucial role in organising this event.

All I have discussed in this chapter is closely connected to my research paper as the impact could be felt on my respondents. They seem to be religious, have adopted their parents' culture to a certain extent, they feel hurt and disturbed by unwanted questions in their environment and among their network of friends, but they accept it positively that it help them to understand more about their own religion. At the same time they strongly feel that they are part of the Norwegian society and they are fully prepared to make their contribution for the benefit of the society and the nation as a whole.

11. Globalization

The purpose of the chapter is to discuss the relation of my respondents to the globalization process. The result of globalization – the growth of national transplanetary and supraterritorial connectivity has increased cultural diversity and interdependency. On one hand the physical movements of people from various countries belong to different cultural backgrounds are moving around the world because of different reasons such as tourism, wars and conflicts, and business. On the other hand individuals and groups that are belong to different nations and cultures now have got easy access to World Wide Web to promote their culture, language and ideology across the globe. We clearly experience that the territorial distances are being reduced and cultures are increasingly being integrated with each other. It shows that globality can also foster innovative blends of cultures and traditions.⁸³

⁸³ Scholte 2005, p 80

While the globalization has brought the people and the nations closer to each other, it also contributes to inequality between nations as the profits are flowing back to the high-income nations from low- and middle-income nations through international corporations that are controlling economic behemoths⁸⁴.

If we consider the changes that have taken place in the West, the societies that were fairly homogeneous some decades ago have now become diverse societies as the result of globalization.

11.1 Migration and Diasporas

Migration from one country to another has been going on for centuries in many parts of the world. It is an old phenomenon that now has become an integral part of the phenomenon of globalization. In the early twentieth century transnational labour migration reached a peak of three million migrants per year and gradually fell down. The two World Wars and other small wars caused millions to flee from the battlefields and seek refuge in different places. The third major type of migration was both labour and refugee migration that contributed towards the urbanization of the twentieth century⁸⁵.

Diasporas begun to emerge as the migration continued in the twentieth century and at the same time opening a new era of popular culture in many parts of the world. Taking with them their own culture and tradition, migrants spread across national boundaries and have now conditioned the contemporary modern world. Canada is a good example, which started with the British and French and gradually expanded to a wider variety of cultures⁸⁶.

The European domination of Africa created the relationship between the blacks and the whites in the US in the form of the slave trade. The blacks were used in the development of the world system of societies and a global economy from the 1600s. They were as slaves under the control of whites until the Civil War (1860 – 1865) ended slavery two centuries after it's creation. When it happened, the blacks were

⁸⁴ Bradshaw et al 2001, p 184

⁸⁵ Manning 2005, p 157

⁸⁶ *ibid*, p 158-159

largely powerless and uneducated without any proper skills to manage themselves⁸⁷.

Changes have taken place in the life of blacks in the US. After several centuries they still face discrimination and prejudice. But their prospects in the larger society have improved compared to those of their earlier generations. There exist social class differences between black and white Americans and they remain sharply segregated in large metropolitan areas in the US. Though many centuries have passed, the racial inequality continues after having been built throughout history. Some of the key factors such as residential segregation and urban poverty are still limiting the progress towards racial equality and consolidation⁸⁸.

Parents of my respondents who are originally from Asian and African countries, moved to Norway several years ago and their life have undergone many changes to adjust themselves to live in the West. It seems that they are living a peaceful and happy life in the Norwegian society.

11.2 Search for better future

When the USA was created and begun to emerge as a promising land for a better life for people, many from Europe migrated there to start a new life. It is a well-known fact that many from Norway too migrated to the US a century ago when Norway was one of the countries in Europe that was experiencing poverty at that time. According to “Norway the official site in the United States”, there are more than 4.5 million people of Norwegian ancestry are living in the US, most of them in the Upper Midwest. All together there are 11-12 million Americans of Scandinavian ancestry that represent about 6% of the white population in the USA as a whole, and more than 25% of the white population of the Upper Midwest⁸⁹.

Today the situation has completely changed and Norway has become one of the richest countries in the world. Now the flow of people has changed and people from many less fortunate third world countries are coming to Norway and other European countries in search of peace and prosperity mainly because of the hopeless situation in

⁸⁷ Bradshaw et al 2001, p 220

⁸⁸ *ibid*, p 224 - 227

⁸⁹ Norwegian Embassy in the US

their own countries.

Most Arab countries have some kind of dictatorship. Minorities and other groups that are opposed to them have to flee to other countries because of oppression. There are other examples like the problem of Palestine that caused thousands of refugees to flee their homes. They are now spread almost all over the world. At the same time there are many countries in Asia and Africa too are affected by internal conflicts, war and poverty. Somalia and Sri Lanka are examples that produced many refugees who are now immigrants in many of the European countries.

Some of the causes mentioned above are the very reasons that the parents of my respondents came to Norway in search of peace and prosperity.

11.3 Religious Diversity

Norway has changed during the past three decades. There were only a few immigrants in places like Stavanger around 1980. Muslims didn't have any places for prayers. Around 35 Muslims gathered for the first time in 1976 gathered at the old Stavanger library building for Ramadan Eid prayers. With their family members and others, the total number of Muslims who were living in Stavanger could have been around 150 people. Most of them were migrant workers from Pakistan and also the number of Turks was gradually on the increase.

Some of the Muslims felt that there were special needs for the Muslim community and it was important to work together to find solutions. Pakistanis were in majority and they had already established their Pakistan Welfare Association in collaboration with their counterparts in Oslo. The following year the first Muslim organisation "Stavanger Islamic Society" was established. Initiative was taken in regards to teaching of Quran to children and providing halal meat. Most of the Muslims were eating only fish for a long time, as they could not get halal meat. They established contacts with farmers and were able to buy and slaughter chicken according to Islamic rituals and that gradually opened the way for them to get halal chicken.

Today halal food is freely available in most of the European cities. Immigrants have also opened grocery shops and supermarkets that has made easy for many people to

buy different kinds of food items from many parts of the world. Earlier one could find Chinese and Indian restaurants in some of the European cities, but today immigrants from Somalia, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Russia and many other countries have also opened restaurants where one can find a wide variety of food menus that was unthinkable only a few decades ago.

As per January 2010 the percentage of Muslims in Norway was 22 per cent next to the State religion Christianity that was 54 per cent⁹⁰. Today Muslims have six places of worship in Stavanger and more than 20 in Oslo. Some groups are dominating some of the places of worship as these groups are in majority such as Pakistanis, Turks and Somalis. Usually the religious sermons are mainly conducted in their own languages in addition to Arabic. Almost all of these places of worships have Quran classes for children and of course daily prayers and Friday prayers are conducted regularly.

Muslims conduct their festival prayers in connection with Ramadan fasting and Hajj pilgrimage by gathering together in one place. As their places of worships in Stavanger have limited space, they used to hire a Sports hall twice a year for this purpose. Usually at least 500 people, both women and men with many different national backgrounds, gather during these ceremonies for special Eid prayers. Sermons are conducted at least in three different languages.

Not only the Muslims, and also the number of Catholics have increased drastically because of the migration. Stavanger Catholic Church is conducting several sessions of Sunday mass in different languages. In addition to Europeans and South Americans, Tamils from Sri Lanka and Vietnamese form the biggest groups and they have their own Priests to conduct their religious affairs.

There are about 150 Hindus living in Stavanger area, but the majority of Hindus live in Oslo and Bergen where they have their own places for worship. In Oslo they organise Hindu festivals every year. Stavanger Hindus were using International House for their monthly gatherings and now they continue this practice in Sandnes, as it is a central place for both those who are living in Stavanger and Jæren areas.

⁹⁰ ssb 2010

Buddhists too have gradually established their place of worship in Oslo. As the number of Buddhists in Stavanger is insignificant their activities are limited within some small groups who are mostly from Vietnam, Sri Lanka and Burma.

Another interesting change that is taking place in the contemporary globalized world is the marriages between people from different groups. Conservative immigrant groups think that the people in the West are very liberal and secular. Some parents are particularly trying to control their children, influencing them with fear of inter-religious marriage and leaving their culture and traditions. Whatever the restrictions parents try to impose on their children, the opposite take place sometimes. I personally know some such cases. Hindu Brahmins are very strict when it comes to marriage and as a rule it should take place within the caste. There are cases of Hindu inter-marriages with Norwegians. Similar cases are found among people belong to different religions too after moving to Europe.

11.4 Impact of globalization

Some argue that the globalization has brought about lots of negative effects in the world by pointing out the inequalities among nations and peoples, poverty, conflicts and environmental destructions. At the same time others look at the positive trends in the world such as the advancement of new technologies, fast growing wireless communication systems that bring people together in real time wherever they live, travelling around any where in the world has become easier than ever before and many more.

Due to war, genocide and conflicts more than 100 million people have been killed during the twentieth century, according to estimates (Sivard, 1999)⁹¹. Many were displaced in their own countries and others have moved to different countries. Today not only hundreds but millions of people have moved to countries around the world from their own countries due to various reasons during the last centuries.

According to UNHCR, there were 43.3 million forcibly displaced people worldwide at the end of 2009. Out of which 15.2 million were refugees, 27.1 million were

⁹¹ Bradshaw et al. 2001. P 404

internally displaced persons and the rest were asylum seekers who were scattered around the world. While some of these people ended up in Europe and the USA, four-fifths of the world's refugees were hosted by developing countries. The largest number of refugees worldwide (1.7 million) was hosted by Pakistan followed by Islamic Republic of Iran (1.1 million) and Syrian Arab Republic (1.05 million). Almost half of them have lived their life for more than 30 years in those countries. Many of the children and youth were born and grown up and have never seen their own country⁹².

11.5 My respondents and globalization

When it comes to my respondents and I try to put together all the pieces, it seems logical that it was the affect of globalization that has impacted the migration of their parents to Norway. Some of them came in the 70s during the industrialization of Norway in search of job opportunities and better income to improve their life. Others were forced to leave their countries because of the conflicts and ended up in Norway as asylum seekers and refugees.

The changes that have been impacted in the society by these parents and many others in the similar situation are now continuing through this younger generation like my respondents. Their secondary socialization mostly takes place outside their home in the Norwegian society. They grow in an environment that may gradually influence them to bring about changes that they have adopted from their parents. Though there are cultural and religious differences, my respondents clearly pointed out that they feel belong to Norway and it is what their country.

12. Final Conclusion

The main purpose of this thesis is to find out how the Muslim youths think about their future especially in regards to their education and their careers in addition to their life in general. Before coming to the final conclusion I have made efforts to see their life in the perspectives of their parents immigration to Europe, primary & secondary socialization and up to the effect of globalization.

⁹² UNHCR 2010

Today's general trend in the world is that due to internal conflicts, wars, famine and various similar issues, migration from many parts of the globe to safer areas are on the increase. Integration is taking place, although assimilation and isolation are also playing their roles while cultures are influencing each other, and inter-cultural marriages too gradually are bringing people closer to each other. The second and the younger generation immigrants are facing new challenges than the first generation when they migrated to Europe. Latest media focus is on the interest of immigrant youths who could play a vital role in bridging the gap in the society.

My findings in this research covers the areas that are related to my respondent's choice of profession, integration and challenges in the society as Muslims, the role of their parents, friends and school, and how they plan to achieve their dreams.

12.1 Findings and remarks

It was surprising for me that the parents and their family play a crucial role in the selection of their children's profession. It is generally perceived that immigrant children fall out of school and they lack support from their parents. Apart from this the parents of my respondents are fully backing their children to take higher education. The youth are determined to achieve their goal to come into a good job in the future. One of the girls wants to combine her professional education with religious studies. She believes that it will help her to be a better person to carry out her future work duties very well.

When it comes to friendship, their friends have both Norwegian and immigrant backgrounds and they are mostly their classmates or schoolmates. It is surprising that they feel more at ease with immigrant friends, even from other national background, as they understand each other better. Although they feel that they have good friendship with their Norwegian classmates, provoking questions about religion, alcohol and mixing freely with opposite gender create a gap in their friendship. Their best friends are either those who have background from their parents countries or with another immigrant background.

It is also interesting to note that all my respondents enjoy positive school environments where the teachers and their fellow students motivate and support them. They also have plans to continue part of their professional education abroad. They would like to get married and settle down with their own families immediately after they complete their education and have got a job to manage their life economically. One of their wishes is to keep contact with their parents and live closer to them when they are married, if possible.

In integration debates we very often hear that immigrant youths having problems in big cities like Oslo. My respondents seem to be well integrated in the society. It may be that the immigrant communities are smaller in number in the Stavanger Region than in Oslo, and that this makes integration easier to achieve.

Each one of them has goals in their life with regards to the profession that could open the door for a better life in the future. The professions they prefer are directly connected to medicine, other health professions, engineering and architecture. The majority of them want to be of service to people through these professions. Parents and families too have played crucial roles in influencing them to choose the field of profession. The chosen fields seem to be having very good future prospects as the oil industry and the health sector will be in need of qualified people according to future forecasts. The boys seem to be somewhat more prepared to encounter any hindrances in achieving their goals than the girls, who want to take things one at a time during this process. They would like to take at least some parts of their professional higher education abroad, probably to a higher degree than their average ethnic Norwegian friends. This implicit contribution to internationalization of the Norwegian society could be an area of further research.

The professions they have chosen are not only in high demand but it is also an important way of contributing towards the betterment of the society they live in. These students are all born and grown up in Norway. They speak the language fluently and get along very well in the Norwegian culture and feel that they are part of the major society.

I see them as well integrated citizens of this country when looking at their answers. Although they face problems in regards to their religion and there are things they don't like in the society, they don't blame the society for that. Instead they are making their own adjustments to live amicably in the society without coming into conflict with anybody. These youths are better integrated in the society compared to many of those we hear are having problems in places like Oslo. While identifying themselves as Norwegians and Norway as their country they also highly respect their parents' motherland, religion and culture.

The younger generation encounters enormous challenges. The environment and how they adjust themselves determine their identity. They have to intermingle with the major society than their parents did as they have to go through an educational system that bring them closer to the Norwegian society. They are in between two ways of life, on one side their parents and on the other side the majority society. Though it may seem difficult at times, they gradually learn to live with it.

Because they are Muslims, they are bombarded with several questions that strengthen their Muslim identity and at the same time create a distance with their Norwegian friends. They also point out that some of their friends don't seem to understand the explanation on Islam, as some of the questions are repeated again and again. They also feel that some of the questions are asked just to provoke them. But they would like to be patient and try to encounter them peacefully by providing answers to questions to the best of their knowledge and understanding. In a way it encourages them to search for more knowledge about their own religion. One of them would like to combine her education with religious subjects abroad.

They are trying to adjust their cultural and traditional behaviours that they have learned from their parents towards the major society. Although they feel that they have some sort of attachment to their parents' native countries, when they are with their Norwegian friends, especially in school, they feel that they are Norwegians. At the same time they are eager to help their parents' motherland that need help to rebuild and develop.

They have goals and they are determined to achieve them. Parents' support is vital to achieve their goals in addition to positive school environment. These youths feel closeness to their parents and are fully supported by them in their efforts to reach their goals in life.

It is probably a coincidence that all my respondents seem to have some of the following common features among themselves: Closeness to their parents, respect their religion, ambition to come up in life, strongly feel part of the society and they very carefully adjust themselves to maintain a peaceful life between their parents and the major society without coming into conflict with any of them.

These youths are individual members of the Muslim community in Stavanger region. Although they can not represent the entire Muslim youths of the area, the out come of this research is somewhat surprising to me as these youths seriously think of their future and want to come up in life. They have the determination to achieve them in order to have a good life for themselves and also to be useful to the society they live in. It is very positive and could be an answer to those who talk of "failure of integration in Norway".

I emphasize that my study is not a quantitative study, but at qualitative one. My findings can therefore not be taken as general findings relevant for all young Muslims in Norway or in the Stavanger Region. But they document that stereotypes of poorly integrated young Muslims are misleading, as my respondents demonstrate a high degree of integration in and identification with the Norwegian society. My findings also document that it is possible for young Muslim to have wide social networks in ethnic Norwegian contexts as well as in wider immigrant contexts, and to make use of these networks in shaping their lives and plans. Such perspectives are in my opinion under-researched in Norwegian scholarship today. Problems and crises related to Muslim youths seem to attract more scholars than the fact that some Muslim youths, like my respondents, are able to manage their lives and shape their plans and dreams without being paralyzed by problems.

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Annex

1. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

What are your dreams and plans for the future?

- *How would you like to see yourself in 10 – 15 years?*

What is the reason for choosing the particular subject area?

- *What opportunities do you see in this line of education?*
- *How are you planning to achieve them?*
- *What obstacles you may face in this process?*

How well are you integrated in the major society?

- *What can you tell about your participation in different activities in the society?*

As a Muslim, do you face any particular challenges in the Norwegian society?

- *Do the incidents that have happened in recent years in Europe affect you in any way?*

Parents

- *What is their background?(education/work)*
- *What was their role in choosing your career?*

Friends

- *Do your friends at your age plan to get higher education?*
- *What are their favourite choices?*
- *Have you discussed your choice with these friends and received advice from them?*
- *Do you look at your friends who are older as role models?*
- *Have they chosen higher education? Which subjects?*
- *Other free views*

School

- *Are you encouraged in your studies and future plans by the school? Is it by your teachers or fellow students?*

2. Informasjonsskriv

Forespørsel om å delta i intervju i forbindelse med masteroppgave

Jeg holder på med en mastergrad i globale studier ved Misjonshøgskolen i Stavanger og arbeider nå med den avsluttende masteroppgaven. Temaet for oppgaven er ”drømmer og planer for fremtiden”, og jeg skal undersøke hvilke tanker muslimske ungdommer i 3. år på videregående skole har om sin fremtid. Jeg er interessert i å finne ut om det er forskjeller og likheter mellom disse ungdommene, og hvor godt de er motivert til å ta høyere utdanning.

For å finne ut av dette, ønsker jeg å intervju 10-16 personer i alderen 18-20 år. Spørsmålene vil dreie seg om deres meninger om fremtid, støtte de får fra foreldre, venner og skole, og hvor godt de føler seg integrert i samfunnet. Som en del av oppgaven vil jeg også forsøke å finne ut noe om årsaken til de forskjellene eller likhetene som kommer fram - for eksempel om bestemte holdninger kan knyttes til familiebakgrunn eller bosted. Jeg vil bruke lydopptaker og ta notater mens vi snakker sammen. Intervjuet vil ta omtrent en time, og vi blir sammen enige om tid og sted.

Det er frivillig å være med og du har mulighet til å trekke deg når som helst underveis, uten å måtte begrunne dette nærmere. Dersom du trekker deg vil alle innsamlede data om deg bli slettet. Dersom jeg får bruke intervjuet med deg, vil alle opplysninger bli anonymisert. Opplysningene vil bli behandlet konfidensielt, og ingen enkeltpersoner vil kunne kjenne seg igjen i den ferdige oppgaven. Opplysningene anonymiseres og opptakene slettes når oppgaven er ferdig, innen utgangen av 2010.

Dersom du har lyst å være med på intervjuet, er det fint om du skriver under på den vedlagte samtykkeerklæringen og sender den til meg.

Hvis det er noe du lurer på kan du ringe meg på 93209577, eller sende en e-post til mubarak_ali7@yahoo.com . Du kan også kontakte min veileder, dosent Jan Opsal ved Misjonshøgskolen på telefonnummer 5151 62 34 eller 9887 7799.

Studien er meldt til Personvernombudet for forskning, Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste A/S.

Med vennlig hilsen
Mohamed Mubarak Ali
Gangarstien 20
4021 Stavanger

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt informasjon om studien av muslimsk ungdomskultur og ønsker å stille på intervju. Jeg gir med dette mitt samtykke til at intervjuet kan benyttes i ovennevnte mastergradsoppgave. Jeg er oppmerksom på at jeg kan trekke meg fra studien når som helst.

Signatur Telefonnummer