in Australia is mainly ‘a matter of time’ so that ‘most migrants are disadvantaged in the early period of settlement but the disadvantage tends to disappear over a period of about ten years’ (Khoo and McDonald 2001:88). A relatively similar result has documented that the length of time spent in Australia is so important that it moderates dissimilarities between Australian-born and foreign-born (Wooden 1994). The same pattern of the influence of duration of residence was found by Read (2004: 71) among Muslim-Arab immigrant women in the United States where those living there ‘for less than fifteen years, are less likely than the natives to participate in the paid labour force’.

However, previous research has found evidence of gender differences in the impact of duration of residence in Australia on employment success amongst migrants, in particular migrants from non-English speaking countries. For instance, Brooks and Volker (1985), Inglis and Stromback (1986), Wooden and Robertson (1989), and Ackland (1992) found that the positive association between duration of residence in Australia and labour market success among males is stronger than it is for females. As an explanation of this situation, VandenHeuvel and Wooden (1996) stated that ‘since for immigrant men but not women, years in Australia is generally equivalent to years in the Australian labour market’. To explain the vital role of duration of residence in female immigrants’ labour market success, Brooks and Volker (1985) recognised that recently-arrived immigrant women are much less likely to participate in the labour market.

In addition, some researchers found a strong link between duration of residence and some other factors influencing migrants’ status in the Australian labour market. VandenHeuvel and Wooden (1999), for instance, stressed a significant interplay
between duration of residence and English language proficiency. From the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia (LSIA), they revealed that English skills among their sample of respondents improved over time. Evans (1984) also demonstrated an interrelation between duration of residence in Australia, educational attainment, and English skills. According to her, ‘length of residence in Australia and educational attainment are the main influences on English proficiency’ (Evans 1984: 1073). A positive association between duration of residence in Australia and English language proficiency has also been documented in Khoo and McDonald’s (2001) research in which all immigrants regardless of sex, age on arrival, or migrant category, experience a general increasing trend of English ability with the period of their residence in Australia.

VandenHeuvel and Wooden (1996) also documented that the impact of duration of residence in Australia on immigrants’ labour market success is linked with a combination of other factors such as unfamiliarity with the new labour market, possible lack of transferability of immigrants’ skills to the Australian labour market, and the lack of contacts within the new country that might affect English proficiency. What they argued is that, a longer period of residence in Australia increases exposure to other Australian experiences, which can help to improve English skills. Miller (1982: 244) also argued that the effect of the length of time spent in Australia on the likelihood of the immigrants’ employment success is attributed to employers having ‘less information about the productivity of the recent immigrant’.
5.5 Family Formation Characteristics

The prior research reveals a strong association between women’s labour market behaviour and their family composition. Massey et al (1993: 443) stated that women’s labour force participation, historically, continues until ‘the time of their first birth, and to a lesser extent after children had grown’. The importance of family features on women’s employment participation is reflected in the ‘double peak pattern’ termed by the United Nations (2000: 111). According to this term, women are very likely to enter the labour market in their early twenties, and they will come back to the labour market when they spent a few years for their childbearing duties\textsuperscript{15}.

Miller and Volker (1983a, 1983b) found fertility (measured as number of children under 15 years of age living at home) as one of the key determinants of labour supply of married women in Australia. The results of Lehrer (1999) and VandenHeuvel and Wooden (1996) supported this negative association between the number of children and female labour force participation. Macunovich (1996), Rindfuss and Brewster (1996), and Rosenfeld (1996) also discussed the association between fertility and women’s work with a focus on the United States\textsuperscript{16}. According to Davis (1984: 408), for a comprehensive understanding of the positive effect of low fertility on women’s employment, we should look at how low fertility was achieved: ‘women did not cut their reproduction by a wider spacing of birth but by stopping reproduction earlier’.

\textsuperscript{15} However, it should be noted that the double peak pattern is no longer as prevalent as it was in the past because ‘women are finding ways to combine family responsibilities with market work’ (United Nations 2000: 111).

\textsuperscript{16} Rosenfeld (1996: 199), for instance, pointed out that ‘a number of studies concluded that while fertility affects employment in the short run, employment affects fertility in the long run’.
According to Young (1990: 6), the family life cycle, in particular, the presence of young children, affects the labour force participation of females more strongly than that of males. This is particularly the case when children are young (Bielby 1992). Brooks and Volker (1985: 74) concluded that the age of the youngest child has ‘possibly the most important single influence on female participation’ in the labour market. Statistically, Evans (1984, 1996) showed a fall in migrant women’s labour force participation by 25-30 percentage points based on having a child under age three years amongst all ethnic origins combined in Australia. VandenHeuvel and Wooden’s (1996) and Lehrer’s (2004) research findings supported the idea of female employment status being affected by the presence of young children at home. Moreover, on the basis of her research among immigrant Muslim-Arab women in the United States, Read (2004) found the presence of young children at home to be a constraint to their labour force activity.

Economic approaches assume a negative association between women’s labour market activity and their husband’s income. According to this assumption, a couple has a motivation to maximise the husband’s income to cope with the household’s costs, ‘with the wife withdrawing from the labour market, either totally or partly, to compensate by taking on the family tasks…’ (Evans 1996: 74). Baker and Benjamin (1997: 705) described a ‘family investment model’ in which immigrants’ wives participate in the labour market by accepting ‘dead-end jobs’ as complementary efforts to promote their husbands’ human capital investments.
Wooden and VandenHeuvel (1997: 132) employed the terminology of the ‘labour-leisure choice model’ in which *ceteris paribus*: the higher the husband’s earning, the lower the wife’s labour force participation. This seems to be a more important issue in those societies where marital homogeneity (or the sociological term so-called ‘* assortative mating*’ in which couples are more likely to share the same social class and human capital) is more common. Massey et al (1993: 443) supported the idea of women’s labour market activity, historically, as complementary earnings for themselves and their families. However, in the model of ‘spouse selection process’ in which ‘high earning men may seek out work-oriented women’, female labour market behaviour would be affected positively by husband’s income (Evans 1996: 75).

There are some empirical findings to connect women’s employment to husband’s income in the Australian labour market. Wooden and VandenHeuvel (1997), for instance, found that labour force participation of immigrant married women with low household income is very low. Brooks and Volker (1985), Franz (1985), Evans (1996), VandenHeuvel and Wooden (1996) all concluded that husband’s income is an important determinant of women’s employment participation.

However, it seems that the above-mentioned general consensus linking women’s employment to their family composition is not precisely applicable to all immigrant groups. Stier and Tienda (1992) and Yamanaka and McClelland (1994), for instance, found that the employment participation of migrant women is less responsive than that of native-born women to family issues, in particular to the presence of children. Wooden

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and VandenHeuvel (1997) documented that the influence of children on immigrant women’s employment behaviour, especially full-time work, depends on their birthplace so that labour market behaviour of ESB\(^{18}\) migrant women is more affected by the presence of children, especially young children, compared with NESB migrant women. Evans (1984) found that the labour market participation of women from Mediterranean and Eastern European countries was less affected by both having a husband and the number of children, compared with other migrant groups. VandenHeuvel and Wooden’s (1996) findings confirmed that the employment of non-English speaking background immigrant women is significantly affected by age of child only when they have a child aged less than 3 years. Meanwhile, while the effect of young children is negligible for English-speaking background immigrant women, it is fairly strong for Australian-born women.

6. Theories of the Research

What are the main theoretical hypotheses and approaches that have been used to explain the relationships between women’s employment participation, on one hand, and immigration and religion, on the other hand?

Theoretical hypotheses linking women’s employment participation to migration and religion are various. However, in order to have a clearer and more comprehensive view, here, they are classified into two broad groups: individual (micro) and structural (macro)....

\(^{18}\) ESB refers to English Speaking Background immigrants in Australia who were born in Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the Republic of South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America, whereas all other overseas-born persons are classified as NESB: Non English Speaking Background (Wooden and VandenHeuvel 1997:129)
approaches. Achieved and ascribed characteristics\(^{19}\) respectively play key roles in this classification. Achieved characteristics are those characteristics that can be obtained by personal efforts and circumstances. Education, qualification, language skills, experience and training are examples of achieved characteristics.

In contrast, individuals are normally unable to determine their ascribed characteristics including gender, ethnicity, (and, to some extent, religion\(^{20}\)) because these are almost always out of the individual’s control and power. Here, at the individual and micro level, human capital theory and integration (assimilation) theory are included; whereas, the structural (macro) level contains gender theory, discrimination (prejudice and segregation) theory, and Islamic doctrine.

### 6.1 Individual (Micro) Level

As discussed before, this level deals with hypotheses focusing on achieved characteristics (mainly education, experience and training, and language proficiency) in which personal endeavour and conditions have a vital function. At this level, human capital theory and integration (assimilation) theory are reviewed.

\(^{19}\) The idea for the classification of theories, here, on the basis of achieved [and ascribed] characteristics was obtained from Sorensen (1993). In ‘Gender Segregation at Work’, Walby (1988b: 17) employed ‘ascriptive criteria’ such as sex and race to identify segregation. Carr and Chen (2004: 133) also introduced gender and ethnicity as notable examples of ‘ascripted identities’ which ‘are often a source of exclusion or inclusion at work’.

\(^{20}\) For instance, in some Muslim-dominant countries, a person’s religion is registered in his/her identification document immediately after birth and it is usually not easy (mainly, socially) to convert it.
6.1.1 Human Capital Theory

In general, as Preston (1997: 71) identified, human capital theory 'has gained much respect worldwide'. This theory, referring back to Sjaastad (1962) and Becker (1964), is a developed form of neo-classical economic theory. It is regarded as 'the dominant theory of migration at the individual level' (Cerruti and Massey 2001: 187). According to Baunach and Barnes (2003), human capital theory, as a supply-side explanation of female labour activity has received more attention from economists.

The theory has a central dependency on 'utility maximization'; it is assumed that increased investment in 'human capital (through education and training)' leads to an expectation of 'higher wages upon entry into the labour market' (Baunach and Barnes 2003: 416). In this approach, education and occupational skills (e.g. Borjas 1989, Chapman and Withers 2002) as well as experience, training, and language skills (Massey et al 1993) were introduced as the core sources of individual human capital investment.

6.1.1.1 Cost-benefit equation

In Becker's (1962: 48) terms, 'most investments in human capital both raise observed earnings at older ages ... and lower them at younger ages'. Indeed, the equation of 'cost and benefit analysis' in a rationally acceptable atmosphere constitutes the keystone of human capital theory in which even the nature of labour migration was explained as 'the
result of ... differences in the present value of all future net gains from migrating or from staying at home’ (Straubhaar 1986: 844).

Todaro (1976), Straubhaar (1986), Massey et al (1993), and Cerrutti and Massey (2001) also discussed the issue of rationality in labour migration. Here, the costs range from the material costs (including travelling, looking for a job, learning a new language and culture, adapting to a new labour market) to psychological costs caused by cutting old ties and gaining new ones (Todaro 1976, Cerrutti and Massey 2001).

6.1.1.2 Competitive labour market

According to human capital theory, employers have the chance to use a great variety of workers’ skills and experiences presented in the competitive labour market. There is no difference between immigrants and natives in such a market per se; differences arise only through their individual characteristics that determine their chance of obtaining a job (McAllister 1995) or through average productive capabilities causing differences in pay, occupational status, and the probability of unemployment between immigrants and native-born (Wooden 1994). In other words, in a competitive labour market where productivity and not ethnicity is the only criterion for assessing workers, differences between immigrants and native workers ‘reflect only differences in characteristics related to task performance on the job, notably education and training’ (Evans and Kelley 1986: 188). In addition to training, formal recognition of the immigrant’s qualifications is relevant.
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Anker (1998) summarised key assumptions of human capital theory in which not only are both workers and employers rational but also labour markets function efficiently. Moreover, ‘workers seek out the best-paying jobs after taking into consideration their own personal endowments …, constraints …, and preferences … . Employers try to maximize profits by maximizing productivity and minimizing costs as much as possible’ (Anker 1998: 15). Borjas (1989: 482) summarised these principles more briefly into two assumptions: [1] individuals are maximising their well-being, and [2] the exchanges among the various players lead to an equilibrium in the marketplace. He also emphasised that immigrants have relatively higher incentives to invest in human capital than the native population because they receive relatively lower earnings based on individual characteristics such as language, and knowledge of the location of jobs etc. in the host country (Borjas 1989).

It is also assumed according to human capital theory, because of the central focus on the nature of competitiveness of labour market, that economic disadvantage and discrimination is impossible. For instance, according to Evans and Kelly (1991), because rational employers prefer to hire inexpensive immigrant workers instead of expensive native ones, substantial discrimination against migrants cannot be found in a competitive market. Instead, immigrants’ economic disadvantages in the host country are supposed to be mainly related to deficiency of required individual characteristics including quality of skills, knowledge and experience, productivity, and lower educational standard (Kelley and McAllister 1984).
6.1.1.3 Women’s employment participation

It is also argued that women’s inferior status in the labour market can be explained in the light of human capital theory. Anker (1998), for instance, argued that not only are women considered to be higher-cost workers because of a number of supposedly higher indirect labour costs associated with housework and child care responsibilities but also labour laws and regulations directly affect the demand for female workers. For instance, they are sometimes prohibited from working in certain occupations or under certain conditions like night work, working underground in mines, or carrying heavy loads. So, under such circumstances, policy-makers are expected to play a role in improving women’s human capital, in particular education and training as well as to provide facilities to enable women to combine work and family responsibilities.

Becker (1985) identified family responsibilities (child care and housework) as the main source of (married) women’s inferior status in the labour market. In theoretical approaches of the allocation of time (energy) and investments in human capital, he argued that such family responsibilities done by women are more demanding than the same number of hours of market work done by men with the same market human capital. Under such a situation, (married) women ‘economize on the effort expended on market work by seeking less demanding jobs’ (Becker 1985: 33).
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6.1.2 Integration (Assimilation/Adaptation) Theory

6.1.2.1 Term definition

Gordon (1968: 61) recognised that such terms as assimilation or acculturation have been used by social scientists to address the process and results of ethnic ‘meeting’. However, there is a variety of terms to describe this process. For instance, besides acculturation and (economic) assimilation, it has been termed adaptation (Berry 1992), integration, incorporation (Morokvasic 1984, Hook and Balisteri 2002), absorption (Duncan and Liberson 1959, Burnley 1975, Castles 1992), and particularly in relation to the labour market as (economic) adjustment (Duncan and Liberson 1959, Desbarats 1986, Kossudji 1989, Chiswick 1993) and economic adaptation (Hugo 1992).

Theodorson and Theodorson (1969: 5) defined adaptation as ‘the process by which a group or an individual adjusts his behaviour to suit his social environment, that is, to other groups or the larger society’. Similar definitions are used to describe different terms; assimilation was defined as ‘relinquishing one’s cultural identity and moving into the large society’ (Berry 1992: 72). Simpson (1968: 438) defined assimilation as a ‘process in which persons of diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds come to interact, in the life of the larger community’. It was also defined as ‘the doctrine that immigrants could be culturally and socially absorbed and rapidly become indistinguishable from the existing’ native-born population. (Wilton and Bosworth 1984 cited in Castles 1992: 554).
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The term, *integration*, which arose as a consequence of criticism of *assimilation*, seems to be more functional in the case of multicultural countries like Australia where the population is very diverse. Integration was used 'to denote co-existence in a residential, educational, or business place with no trend towards a commonality of values or behaviour' (Peterson and Peterson 1986: 440).

6.1.2.2 *Types and determinants*


Desbarats's (1986: 412) classification includes cultural adaptation (measured by English understanding, frequency of English language press reading, type of adult education pursued after resettlement), and economic adaptation (measured by occupational status at initial resettlement place, secondary migration status).
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The degree of immigrants' assimilation (integration) depends on a range of variables and 'conditions', which are facilitators rather than interferers (Berry 1992). Much attention was given to variables affecting adaptation in the receiving country such indicators as duration of residence, intermarriage, and language ability. Baubock (1996: 67), for instance, asserted that 'the integration of immigrants depends primarily on the internal structure of the host society'.

However, Berry (1992: 84) classified factors affecting the process of adaptation into different levels: [1] 'Group level' related to the society of origin that includes political context, economic situation, and demographic factors, and [2] 'Individual level variables' containing age, gender, education, religion, health, language, migration motivation (push/pull), expectations, and cultural distance. He also considered the issues of social support (larger society and ethnic society) and attitudes (multi-cultural ideology, ethnic attitudes) in the society of settlement.

In the present study, by keeping in mind the existence of different interpretations for the terms (integration, assimilation, adaptation) as well as the importance of structural factors like social attitudes and governmental policies in the destination country, immigrants' settlement in and move to the Australian society is assumed to be largely under the influence of such individual characteristics as duration of residence in Australia and English competency to facilitate their integration (assimilation/adaptation) process. For instance, 'proficiency in the language of the adopted country', for 'the successful integration of immigrants' is so substantial that it 'opens the door to a wide
6.1.2.3 Immigrant labour market assimilation

According to the assimilation approach, immigrants’ economic success varies in terms of their progress in assimilation in the host country. Friedberg (2000: 222), for instance, by referring to the ‘issue of immigrant labour market assimilation’, identified that the initial earnings differential between immigrants and native-born workers ‘diminishes with time since migration’. Aside from these issues of time and timing, Gilbertson (1995: 658) identified ‘ethnic employment’ as ‘an important part of the adaptation experience of … women…’.

The positive effect of immigrants’ time spent in the destination country (as facilitator of their labour market assimilation) on their economic status was shown by Chiswick (1978), Hirschman (1994), and Borjas (1995). Economic assimilation, however, in Kossoudji’s view (1989: 520) is more a matter of ‘the timing of migration’ in the life cycle so that economic assimilation is more likely to take place for those ‘immigrants who arrive before schooling is completed’.

21 Further literature linking immigrants success to duration of residence in the destination country has been reviewed in the section ‘Literature Review’ in this chapter.
6.2 Structural (Macro) Level

The structural or macro level, as mentioned earlier, is mainly related to hypotheses dealing with ascribed characteristics (gender, ethnicity, and to some extent, religion22), determination of which is out of the individuals’ power. According to theory, these may be crucial obstacles to the immigrants’ status and success in the host country’s labour market. Discrimination/prejudice theory, gender theory, and Islamic doctrine are reviewed at this level.

6.2.1 Discrimination /Prejudice Theory

The term, discrimination, is defined in different ways by social scientists. Economists in considering economic aspects of discrimination, define it ‘as receiving less pay than others with the same economic productivity’ (Evans and Kelley 1991: 748). For others, largely those taking a sociological perspective, discrimination is seen as a multidimensional phenomenon in which discrimination finds a wider definition as ‘exclusionary discrimination’: ‘to discriminate against a group is also to exclude them’ (Evans and Kelley 1991: 748).

According to the prejudice/discrimination hypothesis, discrimination caused by such ascribed characteristics as ethnicity and race is an initial and crucial consequence of migration so that it is believed that ‘immigrants are particularly vulnerable’ (Evans and Kelley 1991: 722). In this theory, the labour market of the destination country is

22 See footnote No. 20 in this chapter.
structurally organised so that employers avoid hiring immigrants because of ethnic prejudice against them and immigrants’ disadvantage lies in prejudice against them.

Kelley and McAllister (1984: 400) identified that ‘immigrants are generally ... either through individual or structural discrimination, significantly disadvantaged ...’. In the prejudice/discrimination approach, ethnic prejudice, as a source of discrimination, ‘forces ethnic minorities into lower-status jobs with lower pay than majority workers with comparable skills and experience’ (Evans and Kelley 1991: 747).

6.2.1.1 Data and measurement difficulties

The availability of direct data is a key concern in studies dealing with discrimination. Although comparing different levels of such dimensions of the labour market as earnings and job status among immigrants and native-born workers is a common approach, this does not reveal all aspects of discrimination (Evans and Kelley 1991).

However, there are several other indirect ways to measure discrimination against immigrants in the host society’s labour market. One of the best ways is related to the second generation of immigrants or those immigrants who grew up in the destination country since childhood so their schooling, language skills, and job training and experience are closely comparable to longer established native-born workers. Then, under such circumstances, compared with native-born workers ‘if they do worse ..., other things equal, there is a prima facie case for ethnic discrimination’ (Evans and Kelley 1991: 725).
6.2.1.2 Factors causing discrimination

McAllister (1995) argued that there is no consensus on how discrimination against immigrants in the destination country takes place. However, he identified [1] competition for scarce economic resources and [2] significant social groups that show racial and ethnic prejudice against immigrants as the main sources of discrimination. According to Wooden (1994), in the structural discrimination approach, differences between immigrants, in particular from non-English speaking background, vis-a-vis the native-born, arise from ethnicity and class structure. Moreover, immigrant workers are more likely to experience much greater discrimination in destination countries where ‘there are legal restrictions on employment opportunities or job mobility for immigrants’ (Evans 1984: 1087).

It seems that the main sources of discrimination amongst both female and male immigrant groups are ‘ascribed characteristics’ including race, ethnicity etc. In this sense, Carr and Chen (2004: 133) documented that ‘ascribed identities – notably ethnicity and gender – are often a source of exclusion or inclusion at work’. It also seems when there is a combination of such characteristics, existing discrimination will be more severe. Sorensen (1993: 19), for instance, concluded that ‘women immigrants tend to be negatively affected by the combination of their statuses as female and foreign-born’.

35
Furthermore, under circumstances of the existence of discrimination in the host country, immigrants with a combination of achieved characteristics and low human capital components are more likely to suffer greater difficulties. In such circumstances, non-English speaking migrant women, for instance, ‘are the most oppressed workers in Australia’ (Collins 1988: 86) or ‘could be doubly disadvantaged’ (VandenHeuvel and Wooden 1996: 8). Foster, Marshall, and Williams (1991) also pointed out that non-English speaking background immigrant workers are more disadvantaged and discriminated against than English-speaking background immigrant workers in the labour market.

Moreover, under such circumstances, prejudice resulting in discrimination is more likely to be experienced by ‘those ethnic groups which remain culturally distinct’ (Evans and Kelley 1986: 189). In this sense, religious minorities that maintain their beliefs and rituals might be a target for discrimination in the destination country. According to Anker (1998: 18), ‘usually, but not always, this prejudice [in the labour market] is against persons who are visibly different’. This is the case for those Muslim women with certain codes of dress such as wearing a headscarf (that is, hijab). Warner and Srole (1945, cited in Zhou and Bankston 1994: 823) also identified ‘distinctive ethnic traits, such as language, religion, and skin color’ as ‘sources of disadvantages’ for immigrants.

McAllister (1995), however, emphasised the importance of a distinction between immigrants’ economic disadvantage in the receiving country, on one hand, and economic disruption or dislocation caused by ‘the act of migration per se’, on the other hand. Difference in the quality of qualification and education (as one of the most
important factors affecting labour market success) in the sending and receiving societies might be a good example of this since the receiving country’s qualifications and education standards are usually more highly valued than those gained overseas as reviewed earlier. VandenHeuvel and Wooden (1996) also claimed that immigrant women’s disadvantage in the Australian labour market reflected in their unemployment is more related to such factors as older ages, lower education, and short duration of residence rather than structural discrimination.

6.2.2 Gender Theory

Blumberg (1984: 23) in ‘A General Theory of Gender Stratification’, summarised gender stratification in a popular sentence as: ‘Remember the Golden Rule: he [referring to a male] who has the gold makes the rules’. Nussbaum (1999: 227) in explaining the capabilities approach and human dignity mentioned that ‘many women all over the world find themselves treated unequally with respect to employment, … . In many cases, these hardships are caused by their being women’.

6.2.2.1 Gender disparity: wherever and whenever

Gender, as noted earlier, is one of the ascribed characteristics that can be a core basis for different forms of disadvantage and discrimination, in particular in the labour market. In addition, it is believed that paying attention to the gender issue plays a substantial role in
best understanding success in the labour market\textsuperscript{23} (VandenHeuvel and Wooden 1996). This attention seems essential because gender-based segregation was observed as ‘a longstanding and enduring characteristic of the labour market’ (United Nations 2000: 128)\textsuperscript{24}. Gender difference is also usually identified as a ubiquitous phenomenon so that it can be traced everywhere. Ware (1993: 273), for instance, addressed the presence of sex differences ‘in labour-force participation, in the occupational distribution within the labour force, and in the performance of child-rearing and domestic chores’.

There is no question that women’s participation in the labour market has increased over time and according to the United Nations (2000: 110), gender differences in economic activity have decreased over the past two decades, ‘but equality in the work force is still a long way from reality’ (Ashford 2001: 27)\textsuperscript{25}. For instance, as Oppong (1993: 351) documented, the combination of ‘unpaid domestic labour with underpaid wage labour ... of women’s lives makes them markedly more vulnerable to poverty than their male counterparts’.

Hakim (1996) ended her ‘\textit{Key Issues in Women’s Work}’ with ‘the key conclusion’ based on the final words of the report on the 1980 Women and Employment Survey. According to the report:

\textsuperscript{23} Also, in more general terms and in relation to the importance of gender in demographic context, it was documented that ‘it would be hard to proceed with research on fertility, marriage and the family unless we shared some understandings of gender’ (Watkins 1993: 570).

\textsuperscript{24} Also, in Hakim’s (1996: 209) terms, ‘even if sex discrimination were completely eliminated, sex differentials in employment would continue...’.

\textsuperscript{25} However, it is still believed that ‘gender segregation at work underlies the wage gap between men and women... Yet gender segregation tenaciously persists’ (Walby 1988a: 12).
‘...despite important changes in women’s attitudes to employment since Hunt’s 1965 survey, work was still less central to women’s lives than to men’s; that most women were still primary domestic workers and secondary wage earners while husbands were primary wage earners; that a majority of women regarded a home and children as women’s prime aim and main job, ...and that there was little evidence that women saw themselves becoming equal or joint wage earners on the same terms as their husbands’ (Martin and Roberts 1984: 191-2 cited in Hakim 1996: 215).

And, then, she concluded ‘all these conclusions remain valid today in the mid-1990s...’ (Hakim 1996: 215). Meanwhile, in a recent study on job satisfaction differences between men and women among fourteen European countries, Kaiser (2005: 16) also found that women are more likely to experience ‘a gender-job satisfaction paradox’ in those countries where there are more limitations in the labour market for women.

6.2.2.2 Household duties & gender differentiation in workforce

McDonald (2000) in ‘Gender Equity, Social Institutions and the Future of Fertility’, introduced (women’s) market employment (together with education) as an example of institutions dealing with people as individuals. He argued that the levels of gender equity are higher in institutions that deal with people as individuals compared with institutions
in which people are dealt with as members of families. Institutions such as education and market employment provide opportunities for women ‘to pursue roles other than that of being a mother’ resulting in a substantial reduction in the current levels of discrimination against women as compared with the 1950s. However, ‘work arrangements make it difficult to combine work and child-rearing’ and the workplace still has a male breadwinner approach to its practices and procedures’ (McDonald 2000: 13).

Working women, particularly during the reproductive period, have duties both within and outside of the home – the dual burden. Arrangements like child care and maternity leave have been observed to be important to make the labour market more compatible for women who wish to work for wage.

6.2.2.3 Occupational segregation and wage differentiation

Under the terms ‘feminisation of labour’ or ‘feminisation of employment’, it is claimed that despite an increasing share of women’s participation in the labour market, the new market is not sufficiently compatible with women’s family and household duties, and

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26 ‘Such as industrial relations (the terms and conditions of employment), services, government transfers, and the family itself’ (McDonald 2000: 1)

27 For instance, he, later added that ‘the employee is expected to put the workplace first, to be available out-of-hours and not to have sick children or children who are on school holidays’ (McDonald 2000: 13).

28 Sogner (1993: 25) who believed that women’s roles have been existed ‘over the centuries along two lines of development: professional housewife, …market-connected wage-worker’, also reminded that ‘women’s double roles as productive workers and as homemakers’ will be completed when the third role, that is, ‘their reproductive functions are included’.

29 According to DeLancy (1981) ‘wage employment is compatible with child care, when sufficient alternative solutions are available which allows most of the women to combine to work’ (cited in United Nations 1995b: 79).
more importantly, ‘women are still disadvantaged in the new labour market, in terms of wages, training, and occupational segregation’ (Moghadam 1999: 371).

As Figure 1.1 illustrates, many women earn less than men even working in the same jobs. By remembering the principle of ‘equal pay for work of equal value’ included in the labour legislation of many countries, the United Nations (2000: 131) documented that ‘in no country for which data are available do women earn as much as men’. According to UNDP (1995: 36 cited in Moghadam 1999: 375), ‘on average, women earn 75 percent of men’s wages, with Sweden, Sri Lanka, and Viet Nam at the upper and more egalitarian end (90 percent), and Bangladesh, Chile, China, Cyprus, South Korea, the Philippines, and Syria at the lower and more unequal end (42-61 percent)’. It is notable that Australia ranks relatively highly at 85 per cent.

**Figure 1.1** Women’s wages as a percentage of men’s wages in manufacturing in selected countries, 1992-1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>54%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>58%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>68%</td>
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<td>Mexico</td>
<td>71%</td>
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<td>Egypt</td>
<td>74%</td>
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<td>France</td>
<td>79%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>85%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>90%</td>
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</table>

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It is also claimed that compared with men, women not only experience higher unemployment rates and are normally more likely to be employed in low-paid and low-status occupations but also a greater proportion of women work in so-called ‘informal employment’\textsuperscript{30} in which they earn very low incomes without any working standards like health insurance and social security (Riley 1998, Hugo 2000, Population Reference Bureau: 2002 Women of Our World). Although women are aware of detriments of working in informal occupations (such as lower wages, the lack of insurance and security), many of them still work in such occupations because they can combine outside jobs with household responsibilities (Moghadam 1999). While the informal sector in Australia is small, women may still choose to work at a level below their capability because of household responsibilities.

In Semyonov, Lewin-Epstein, and Brahm’s (1999: 127-128) terms, the labour market remains ‘sex-segmented’ as occupations stay ‘sex-typed’; therefore, ‘the rise in women’s labour force participation is expected to take place mostly in female-type occupations’. For instance, women not only have a limited range of jobs but also they work in those occupations in which men have more powerful control and ‘where the nature of work is often derivative of housework, for instance, work associated with food, clothing and cleaning…’ (Collins 1988: 79-80).

\textsuperscript{30} The term, informal employment, ‘proposed by the ILO [International Labour Organisation] … in 2002 defines informal employment as employment without secure contracts, worker benefits, or social protection’ (Carr and Chen 2004: 132).
6.2.2.4 Gender theory versus human capital approach

Because according to gender theory women’s inferior status in the labour market lies substantially in social and structural obstacles, it challenges the human capital approach. As discussed earlier, according to the human capital approach, personal endowments are the key criteria of success in the competitive labour market and women’s inferior status in the labour market is explained by their lower personal endowments. But, in gender theory, it is argued that women’s relatively poor outcomes taking human capital components into account (as compared with men’s situation) mirror social and structural barriers and negative stereotypes about women. Also, women’s lower human capital investments may arise from experience prior to entering the labour market. For example, compared with boys, girls usually have less education and are less likely to follow those certain disciplines like science and crafts that have a higher demand in the labour market (Anker 1998). Walby (1988a: 2) claimed that gender segregation at work\(^{31}\) leading to pay differentiation and the wage gap between men and women is not associated with human capital (like education and skills), ‘instead this inequality is largely due to women being more often in low-paid occupations than men\(^{32}\).

According to gender theory, women’s subordinate position in both society and family is the major reason for their disadvantaged circumstances in the labour market. This is

\(^{31}\) According to Hakim (1996: 145), ‘occupational segregation on the basis of sex exists when men and women do different kinds of work, so that one can speak of two separate labour forces, one male and one female’.

\(^{32}\) Blau and Jusenius (1976: 199) also assessed the contribution of the neoclassical approach to gender segregation in the labour market and wage differentiation between men and women. They, then, recommended a better explanation - an institutional approach – as they found the neoclassical approach ‘to be less satisfactory’ to explain gender segregation.
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reflected in the breadwinner model of the family where being a breadwinner is the chief responsibility for men while women’s main responsibility is household work and childcare. Massey et al (1993: 443) documented women’s principal role and social identity throughout history as sisters, wives, or mothers and not as primary breadwinners.

In gender theory, it is also assumed that cultural restrictions have a strong effect on women’s freedom and job status. Cultural obstacles orient the acceptable types of work and they may even prohibit women from occupying certain jobs. On the basis of these barriers and limitations against women, it is argued that there are unequal preconditions for participating in the labour market between men and women. Therefore, in this theory, it is strongly suggested that breaking down the gender segregation of occupations is crucial to improve women’s labour market situation and this goal cannot be accomplished without breaking down the sex stereotyping of men, women, and occupations (Anker 1998).

However, it is proposed that if there is any discrimination and disadvantage against women, immigrant women will be in a worse situation in the labour market of the host country. Meanwhile, if there is a combination of two or more ascribed characteristics (like gender and ethnicity), the level of disadvantage or discrimination will be higher. The labour market activity of immigrant women, as documented before, is more likely ‘to be negatively affected by the combination of their statuses as female and foreign-born’ (Sorenson 1993: 19).
6.2.3 Islamic Doctrine

As the present research has a specific focus on Islamic affiliation and its influence on women’s status, in particular their employment participation, we have already reviewed the literature highlighting this association. Here, we discuss more specifically theoretical approaches explaining the effect of Islamic affiliation on women’s status and employment participation.

6.2.3.1 Women’s status in Muslim setting

Generally speaking, issues involving women and women’s place in Islam have been described as ‘fascinating’ and ‘attractive’ as well as ‘complex’ (Omar and Allen 1996, Esposito 1998). There is a substantial agreement among scholars that a set of exceptional situations in relation to women is the foundation of the unique model of women’s labour market participation and socio-demographic characteristics in Muslim societies. Table 1.1 illustrates some demographic and socio-economic characteristics mainly dealing with women’s status in a selected group of Muslim-majority countries. As Rashad (2000: 83) documented, ‘statements linking Islam’ to demographic figures such as ‘exceptionally high fertility and in some cases mortality’ and in a general scope, ‘to resistance to change are abundant’.

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It is documented that the status of women in terms of education, fertility, maternal mortality, family planning and reproductive health, and early average age at first marriage in Islamic societies is generally inferior compared with the world standard. In broader terms, women in these societies usually occupy a subordinate position\(^34\) in both family and society where it is supposed that patriarchy\(^35\) is the key foundation.

It is also believed that there are some crucial restrictions and obstacles that disorder (and even in some cases, prohibit) desired normal activities for women. For example, ‘the system of excluding women and enforcing high standards of female modesty ... [purdah, as] an important part of the life experience’ of women in Muslim societies play a crucial role in providing ‘limitation on interaction between women and males outside ... of the immediate kin unit’ (Papanek 1973: 289).

For these scholars, therefore, the unique demographic model of a woman, particularly in terms of fertility behaviour, in the Muslim world is more understandable in the light of women’s inferior status as it is argued that ‘in the world at large, where women’s status is low, fertility is high’ (Chesnais 1996: 738). Thus, in relation to women’s status in Islamic nations, it can be concluded that the greater the number of their children

\(^{34}\) Although it was also pointed out that ‘If there is one thing that science tells us, ...., it is that there is no justification for the subordination of women’ (Keylitz 1995: 89).

\(^{35}\) Patriarchy is often described as a predominant part of cultural identity in the Middle East - as the heartland of the Islam world along with North Africa - where, on one side, the man plays greater roles as the head of household and the breadwinner of family. On the other side, the woman is identified with reproductive and domestic duties such as childbearing, washing, cleaning, cooking etc. In such circumstances, the male superiority pattern within the household and family is also generalised to outside of the household: ‘such clear identification of roles creates the possibility and reality of men acquiring the right or the ability to determine the nature of interaction between members of the family and society at large’ (Yasmeen 2004: 163-164).
(especially, sons\textsuperscript{36}) the more secure women’s future and position in family and society. In Chesnais’s (1996: 734) terms, these sorts of societies with higher fertility are characterised as \textit{‘nations of families’} in contrast with \textit{‘nations of individuals’} as a characteristic of countries with very low fertility. The \textit{male breadwinner} or the \textit{family wage model} versus the \textit{gender equity model} (McDonald 2000) is part of women’s status in Muslim societies.

More specifically, it is believed that the inferior status of women in Islamic countries also encompasses their work positions so that they are more likely to encounter difficulties and obstacles in relation to their participation in paid work outside of the home, as compared with their counterparts in many other countries. It is, for instance, documented that ‘women’s participation in the formal labour force in the Middle East [which along with North Africa is known as the heartland of the Islamic world] is extremely low by world standards’ (Omran and Roudi 1993:21).

\textsuperscript{36} As Kirk (1965: 568) pointed out, the preference for sons and their higher value in Islamic nations lies in many purposes: ‘for continuity of family line and landownership, for contribution to agricultural labor, to strengthen family numbers in village rivalry and strife, for support in old age, for religious intervention at and after death’.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>% Muslim</th>
<th>% GNP per capita 1998</th>
<th>% Living in urban areas</th>
<th>Total Fertility Rate (TFR) 1980-85</th>
<th>CPR (t) per 1000 live birth 2000</th>
<th>Infant mortality (years) 2000</th>
<th>Life expectancy for ages 15+ (years) 1998</th>
<th>Adult illiteracy (Males &amp; Females)</th>
<th>FLFP (%) ages 25-54 Latest years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>760 or less</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>6.90</td>
<td>6.90</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>810</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>69.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>88.3</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>6.44</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>58.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1290</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>5.06</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>58.4</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>65.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>87.2</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>1650</td>
<td>61.6</td>
<td>6.80</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>72.2</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>67.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>55.3</td>
<td>3560</td>
<td>89.7</td>
<td>3.79</td>
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<td>66.3</td>
<td>40</td>
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<td>71.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>63</td>
<td>3670</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>64.1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>69.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>99.8</td>
<td>1240</td>
<td>55.3</td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>3.00</td>
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<td>64.8</td>
</tr>
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<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>6.50</td>
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<td>25.1</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>59.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>936 or less</td>
<td>92.5</td>
<td>5.45</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>69.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>96.6</td>
<td>6190</td>
<td>85.7</td>
<td>7.28</td>
<td>5.09</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>69.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td>760 or less</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>7.25</td>
<td>7.25</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>43.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>1020</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>7.38</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>69.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>2060</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>67.9</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>69.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>99.8</td>
<td>3160</td>
<td>75.3</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>66.8</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>66.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>4890</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>62.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Abbasi-Shavazi and Jones (2005), Hull (2005), International Labour Organisation (2001)

Notes: (1) Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (total) among married women in reproductive ages (projected)
(2) Female Labour Force Participation aged 25-54 (%).
6.2.3.2 Occupational status

It was pointed out that ‘occupational segregation by sex’ is ‘one of the most important and enduring aspects of labour markets around the world’ (Anker 1997: 1). The longstanding and enduring nature of gender-based segregation in the labour market was also documented by the United Nations (United Nations 2000: 128). In gender theory, we have already discussed that women face hardships in the labour market due considerably to being women so that it was concluded that despite a substantial increase in their labour market participation, ‘equality in the work force is still a long way from reality’ (Ashford 2001: 27). Even further, it is claimed that the ‘labour market remains sex-segmented’ and ‘occupations remain sex-typed’ and as a result, ‘the rise in women’s labour force participation is expected to take place mostly in female-type occupations’ (Semyonov, Lewin-Epstein, and Brahm 1999: 127-128).

It is claimed that the hardships imposed on women are more severe in Islamic societies where women face more obstacles and restrictions in relation to jobs and occupations in which they may desire to work. This lies in the gender division of work\textsuperscript{37} (Toth 1991), women’s subordinate position in family and society, and in the predominance of the male-breadwinner model of the family in Islamic nations. One of these barriers limiting women’s freedom and opportunity to work in their desired occupations in some Islamic nations is related to their lower education and, more importantly to their particular

\textsuperscript{37} In his research ‘On the Modesty of Women in Arab Muslim Villages’, Antoun (1968: 682) defined the term, gender division of labour, very simply and clearly: ‘certain tasks are preformed exclusively by men and others exclusively by women’.
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Disciplines. For instance, it is not easy for them to study in fields such as crafts enabling them for certain occupations in their future labour market participation.

The seclusion and the veiling of women in public, purdah, in some Islamic nations also provide some limitations for them to take up their desired occupations in the labour market. This is a major reason in many Muslim countries that women predominantly work as teachers in primary schools or girls' high schools, and as nurses mainly serving female patients. In many Muslim countries, such acceptable occupations for women are strongly portrayed in school textbooks and other educational programs.

Boserup (1970: 127) in ‘Women’s Role in Economic Development’ pointed out that ‘the veil has fallen in many Moslem countries, but young women teachers in Morocco still think of teaching jobs as particularly suitable because there women are only in contact with other women or with children’. Such occupational patterns still exist and in some Muslim-majority countries like Iran, Turkey, and Egypt, women are experiencing an increasing share in particular occupations such as teachers and nurses included in the public service category of employment (Moghadam 1999).

The seclusion system (that is, purdah) provides more restriction for women’s factory work so that in some cases, it does not seem ‘quite suitable for Muslim women’ (Siraj

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38 For instance ‘in Saudi Arabia, and more recently Afghanistan, total segregation is observed and women are required to cover their entire bodies - including their face - so that they cannot be recognized’ (Saeed 2003: 168).

39 For instance, Zurayk and Saadeh (1995: 42) documented that in the context of the Arab world, ‘in textbooks and mass communication programmes, we generally see women as mother and housewife, and sometimes she appears in the traditionally accepted jobs of teacher and nurse’. The same evidence of traditional views towards women’s expected domestic roles in school’s textbooks in Arab countries was also documented by Azzam, Nasr and Lorling (1984: 10).
1984: 169), and in some other cases when it appears suitable, women usually work in fully or predominantly female workplaces and settings.

According to Anker (1997: 8), female occupations in many Islamic nations are strongly affected by *purdah* as it forbids their interactions with unknown men in public so that many Muslim women lose the opportunity of taking such occupations as sales jobs and factory jobs ‘except in shops where the customers are all women … [or] where the entire factory workforce is female’. The severe restrictions (and even in some cases, the prohibition) of Muslim women to work in night shift occupations can partly be explained by seclusion and women’s modesty highlighted in Islamic ideology, and partly because of their household duties as wife, mother, or daughter.

Furthermore, women in many Islamic countries are employed as family workers in unpaid agricultural occupations and homemaker activities (versus breadwinner occupations for men). As a result, many working women in these countries are disregarded in censuses or other data sources (e.g. Omran and Roudi 1993, Fargues 2005). Women in many Muslim countries are involved in those activities, predominantly in agriculture, which are ‘of the nature’ of the United Nations standard definition of economic activity\(^{40}\) ‘but are not easily recognizable as such because they are not organized on a full-time basis’ (Zurayk and Saadeh 1995: 36) resulting in ‘the chronic

\(^{40}\) According to the United Nations (1974: 100), the standard definition of economic activity is ‘that activity which is directed to the production of goods or services which is measurable in economic terms and in which, generally speaking, people are gainfully employed’.
underestimation of female labour force participation in developing countries and the Arab World and Egypt in particular’ (Anker and Anker 1995: 174).

Mernissi (1987) provided a more general explanation for gender segregation and other forms of gender institutions (such as polygamy and reproduction) in the Islamic settings. She claimed that in contrary to Western culture in which women’s biological inferiority is the basic assumption of gender inequality, in the Islamic settings it is assumed that ‘women are powerful and dangerous beings’ so these gender institutions ‘can be perceived as a strategy for containing their power’ (Mernissi 1987: 19).

More specifically, since this research is able to examine occupational status among Muslim and non-Muslim women when other relevant characteristics (i.e. human capital, migration characteristics, family formation, and age) are equal, it can also be used to work on disadvantage and discrimination hypotheses. As already highlighted in the literature, those migrant groups and religious minorities who maintain their beliefs and cultural traits and are obviously different and visible in the host society are more likely to experience prejudice resulting in disadvantage and discrimination in the society and its labour market. As this includes Muslims in Australia, in particular those Muslim

\[41\] Nevertheless, as Hakim (1996) documented, such statistical exclusion of female workers exists in some developed countries such as Sweden, the USA, and Britain. For instance, she indicated that in Britain ‘it is said that women’s work is invisible in industrial society because women are family helpers, do home-based work, work in the informal economy, do voluntary work. All of this is true’ (Hakim 1996: 203).

\[42\] Riley (1998: 524) also pointed out that ‘women’s work is not always, or even often, well-documented. ... much of women’s work goes unreported’.

\[43\] Because of this, she claimed that women’s liberation movements in Western culture ‘are almost always led by women, that they have not yet succeeded in significantly changing the male-female dynamics in that culture’ (Mernissi 1987: 19).


women who wear certain codes of dress (that is, *hijab*), the results of this research can partly assess whether the idea of Australia as a country without structural discrimination ‘is based more on myth than reality’ (Collins 1988: 153), or ‘the Australian labour market appears to be nearly blind to ethnicity’ (Evans 1984: 1087) and religious identity.

### 6.2.3.3 The dilemma: Two theoretical approaches

Despite the existence of a substantial consensus among scholars in relation to poor demographic and gender outcomes in Muslim societies, there are different approaches to explain it. In other words, ‘Islam and gender’ was seen as ‘a controversial problem for scholars...’ (Kazemi 2000: 453). Here, we will discuss two major challenging approaches.

#### 6.2.3.3.1 Islam per se, as a cause

On one hand, it is assumed that religion plays the key and direct role in poor demographic and gender outcomes in the Muslim world. In this approach, it is believed that in the Muslim setting not only is there a ‘crucial casual link between religious doctrine and the observed levels of fertility and mortality’ (Obermeyer 1992:44) but also women’s low status lies in the religion (that is, Islam) as its central feature. In a comparative study, Lutz (1987) also documented the crucial influence of religion in demographic behaviour of Arab countries, contrasting with the United States. According

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46 As reviewed in the literature, some studies documented that the religious identity affect negatively both participation of Muslims in the labour market and their occupational promotion so that even those of them ‘who are already in the job market are generally denied upward mobility’ (Kabir and Evans 2002: 76).
to him, the highest observed fertility in Arabic countries and Northern Africa ‘lies in the traditional Islamic culture’ (Lutz 1987: 31).

Caldwell (1986) in a comparative analysis concluded that in contrast to Buddhism and Hinduism, ‘the poor health performance of Islamic countries is the result of the influence of their religion on the societal values related to women and children’ (cited in Obermereyer 1992:34). Gallagher and Searle (1983:86) attributed women’s poor health status in Saudi Arabia to the religious factors so that ‘Islam is the most basic, giving legitimacy and direction to the others’. In their studies, both Casterline el al (2001) and Caldwell and Barkat-e-Khuda (2000) found that ‘men and women frequently give religious reasons for not practicing contraception’ (cited in McQuillan 2004: 28). A similar casual association between Islamic doctrine and demographic indicators mainly dealing with women has also been documented by Farid (1984) and Nagi (1984).

It has also been pointed out that Muslim women have an inferior status in comparison with other religious groups even in intra-country comparisons. This claim is predominantly focused on reproductive health and fertility47. For instance, in a recent research in India, Dharmalingam and Morgan (2004: 541) found that ‘Muslims are more likely than Hindus to intend to have another child’. The same result was found among Muslims and Buddhists in Thailand (Knodel et al 1999). Morgan et al (2002: 533) in a comparative study between Muslim and non-Muslim women in four Asian countries

47 As in terms of development criteria, Islamic nations are predominantly placed in the category of the Third World or developing countries, the explanation raised by Germain (1975) seems applicable here for women’s status in Muslim societies. She pointed out that ‘women’s status and role in developing countries tend to be defined largely in terms of their fertility, but most women in most countries also have economic roles that are ignored in development progress’ (Germain 1975: 198).
(India, Malaysia, Thailand, and Philippines) concluded that compared with non-Muslim wives, Muslim wives ‘usually have more children, are more likely to desire additional children, and are less likely to be using contraception when they desire no more children’. Another recent study found that in contrast to non-Muslim women, higher fertility and lower contraceptive use of Muslim women in India is related to the strong influence of religion and not to their socio-economic characteristics (Mishra 2004).

In a study among women in Pakistan and India, Jejeebhoy and Sathar (2001: 708) found evidence confirming a greater autonomy for Hindu women than for Muslim women in South India. Kirk’s various studies in the 1960s showed that Muslims have higher fertility than non-Muslims in Europe (Albanian Muslims and Muslim districts of Yugoslavia had the highest fertility in the continent), the Soviet Union, Turkey (relative to neighbouring Greece), India (Muslims compared with Hindus), Israel (Muslims relative to Jews), Lebanon and Egypt (Muslims compared with Christians), and in Malaysia (Malays relative to Chinese and Indians) (cited in Jones 2005: 9-10).

In this approach, while it is argued that there was a major improvement in women’s status after the seventh century48 (that is, the time of Islam’s birth), there is still a long way to go in terms of the standards of the modern period49. This may in part be understood in the claim that when we are analysing women’s status in the Muslim settings ‘it must never be forgotten that ideologically the year 622 still lives in the

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48 It is also believed that these achievements were women’s rights such as their right to education, voting and election, and outside job [and even in some cases, mostly Arab countries, women’s right to drive car], which had already been ignored for women and they have achieved many of them (Mernissi 1987: 168).
formulation of future strategies' (Menissi 1987: 84). As reviewed in the literature, Kabir and Evans’s study (2002) explained different employment pattern of Australian Muslims as being partly due to the role of the Islamic culture which is not as accepting of change as the Western culture is\textsuperscript{50}.

More specifically and in relation to women’s labour market behaviour, in his ‘Gender And Job: Sex Segregation of Occupations in the World’, Anker (1998:145) attributed female low labour force participation in the Middle East and North Africa region (that is, the heartland of the Islamic world) to ‘the predominance of Islam’. Clark, Ramsbey, and Adler (1991: 59-60) also addressed the ‘Islamic tradition … and Islamic fundamentalism in some Islamic nations’, especially ‘its traditional exclusion of women from paid agricultural labor and ideological support for male dominance’ as the source of lower employment participation of women in these countries.

The underlying notion here is an observed imbalance and inconsistency between a set of encouraged practices mainly dealing with women in the Islamic context, on one hand, and the vital requirements of participating in outside work, on the other hand. This refers to conditions such as high illiteracy and low education of women and more importantly, an exceptionally high level of fertility in Islamic nations\textsuperscript{51}, which in turn, are crucial obstacles to women’s employment participation.

\textsuperscript{50} Footnote No. 33 in this chapter refers to a large number of studies documenting the poor gender outcomes in many Muslim societies and the fact that ‘statements linking Islam … to resistance to change are abundant’ (Rashad 2000: 83).

\textsuperscript{51} Meanwhile, these are very likely to be the characteristics of Muslim minorities in other settings. Khoo and Shu (1996), for instance, found that Lebanese and Turkish immigrants, the two largest ethnic groups of Muslim population in Australia, had different family formation patterns in terms of higher fertility rates, a younger age at marriage and an earlier start to childbearing as compared with other non-English
6.2.3.3.2 *Something other than Islam*

On the other hand, some scholars explain poor demographic and gender outcomes in Islamic societies using determinants other than religion itself. It seems worthwhile to note that a large number of these scholars are Muslim themselves. In this approach, there are a variety of explanations to protect Islamic ideology against the accusation of being the source of the poor status of women.

According to this approach, historical understanding and environmental circumstances are observed to be essential when Islamic teachings are interpreted and judged. For instance, according to Quranic authorisation, men are allowed to have up to four wives simultaneously\textsuperscript{52} (that is, polygamy or polygyny). However, this permission is expected to be understood in the light of the conditions in the tribal societies of pre-Islamic Arabia (the birthplace of Islam) where female newborns were regarded ‘as a cause for shame and disgrace, and at times were even buried alive. Women were sold as slaves, there was an unlimited number of wives available for men to marry’ (Ferdows 1983:284)\textsuperscript{53}. Moreover, the Quranic authorisation provided an acceptable means to protect widows and orphans in that time when not only was there continuous warfare but also women’s survival depended mainly on men so that, for instance, ‘the majority of [Prophet] speaking background immigrants. Khoo (1984) also documented social and religious identities as a major reason of different family formation patterns amongst non-English speaking background immigrants compared with immigrants from English speaking countries or Western Europe and native-born Australians.

\textsuperscript{52} *… Marry other women as may be agreeable to you, two or three or four…* (Sura 4 Al Nesa, Verse 3).

\textsuperscript{53} Esposito (1998: xii-xiii) pointed out the similar explanation. He also attributed a woman’s less inheritance and the value of her testimony as half that of a man in Islamic law (that is, *shari‘ah*) to time differences and the circumstances of the tribal Arab societies in which ‘males were seen as more experienced in public life and were primarily responsible for the livelihood and conduct of family’. 

57