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Full Length Research Paper

A historical review on labour force experience of minority groups in Australia: Case study of Muslims, 1981-2001

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This study has focused on the high and persistent unemployment of Muslim immigrants in the Australian labour force compared with other religious ancestries and total Australian population during the period 1981-2001. It has also distinguished the experiences of men and of women by selected age groups. This paper showed that low level of skill, low proficiency in English, negative role of religion and society in the labour force participation and employment of females, the period that immigrants arrive in host society, and the status of the labour market were the important factors influencing Muslims employment.

Keywords: Australia, Migration, Religion, Muslim, Unemployment, Labour force, Employment, Labour force Participation, Language, Skill.

INTRODUCTION

Unemployment is widely regarded as the foremost economic problem currently facing the immigrant groups especially with religious background in Australia. Concerning the fact that unemployment can perform a crucial impediment role in the way of migrants' socio-economic adjustment to the new society, and the extent to which, Muslims are the largest non-Christian migrant group in the Australian community representing 1.5 percent of the Australian population in 2001; this paper, using both primary and secondary data focuses on the performance of Muslim immigrants in the Australian labour force in Australia and comments on the constraints which they experience in entering, and succeeding in, the labour market; it focuses on the high and persistent unemployment of Muslims in the Australian labour force compared with other religious ancestries and total

Australian population during the period 1981-2001. It will distinguish the experiences of men and of women by selected age groups.

A Theoretical Approach to Unemployment Experience of Immigrants

The persistence of high levels of unemployment in Australia and in many European countries has been attributed to 'structural rigidities that reduce employment opportunities for low-skill workers' (OECD 1996: 22). In Australia the unemployed tend to be younger, migrants and less well educated (ABS 1993). According to Jones and McAllister (1991: 4) the role and position of migrants within the labour market can exert an influence on migrant unemployment. Collins (1988) and Lever-Tracy et

al. (1988) argued that immigrants are a 'reserve army of labour' who are drawn into the system during periods of economic boom to fill menial manual jobs; when the boom collapses and the capitalist economy is depressed, they join a large pool of unemployed who must wait until the next boom arrives. According to Jones and McAllister (1991: 4) there are two different factors that influence migrant unemployment in the immediate post arrival period - macro-economic and micro-economic factors. As Stricker and Sheehan (1981) point out, macro-economic factors include the prevailing economic climate at the time of entry into the labour market, so that those arriving in a period of relative prosperity will fare better than those arriving during a period of economic depression; structural factors such as the type of labour market and industry which immigrants enter; relative labour costs, as well as their initial geographical location. Micro-economic factors include the human capital skills that the immigrants carry with them (educational qualifications and work skills) as well as social skills such as English language proficiency and a familiarity with the customs of the host society.

In the vast literature on migrant adjustment in Australia (eg Wooden *et al.* 1994) there is only limited consideration given to religion. Work by Tillich (1959), Van den Berghe (1967), Lewins (1976), Mol (1979), Cox (1982), McKay (1985), Ata (1988), Bouma (1984, 1989, 1992, 1993, 1994), Yusuf (1990) and Behrouzinia (2001) has shown that the religion of immigrants can exert an influence on the nature of adjustment of immigrants.

The labour market performance of immigrants has also been intensively studied in Australia (Casey 1992; Wooden *et al.*, 1994; Richardson *et al.*, 2001, 2002, 2004; Cobb-Clark, 1999; Cobb-Clark *et al.*, 1998; Birrell *et al.*, 2001; Thapa, 2004; Thapa *et al.*, 2006). While, these studies focus on differentiating immigrants by birthplace, length of residence in Australia, English language ability, skill level and visa category, the performance of Muslim immigrants in the labour force in Australia has been neglected.

In this line, the assumption that this paper has chosen is that not only the factors such as language barriers and low skill level of Muslims have been influenced in their fail in labour market; also, their religious background has played an impediment role in their success in labour market. Accordingly, this paper is trying to show that the majority of Muslims who migrated to Australia have a low level of skill and experience in business with a low proficiency in English experiencing not only a higher unemployment rate, also, the duration of their unemployment is longer than that for the total Australian population. Concerning the fact that religion plays an important role in secular institutions (politics, economics and other important areas of society) in Australia (Behrouzinia 2001: 326-329); it will show to some extent

that the religious background of Muslims has been influenced in their fail in labour market and increase of their unemployment compared with other religious ancestries and the total Australian population.

DATA AND METHODS

It is important at the outset to assess the quality and coverage of the data sources used for the study. The major secondary data source used here is the Australian Census of Population and Housing, but with respect to religion there are some difficulties in that it is the only voluntary question in the census and few standard tables are run for the religion variable by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). Moreover, secondary data only provide limited insights into the processes of adjustment and the motives or behaviour of people. Hence it was necessary also to undertake some primary data collection for the study.

This study has employed a number of census products in analysing the performance of Muslim population in the labour market, its characteristics and how it compares with the remainder of the population. These products are as follows:

- Special matrix tapes of tabulations of the religion variable against a number of relevant characteristics - birthplace, occupation, labour force status, education, English proficiency, etc.
- The one percent sample tapes from the 1981 to 1996 censuses used here allow tabulation of religion against all housing, family and population variables collected in the census. Since standard cross tabulations of religion by birthplace were not available for the 1981, 1986 and 1991 censuses, the one percent sample tapes were used here to undertake such analyses. These data were in regard to religion by birthplace by sex, religion by birthplace by proficiency in English, religion by labour force status, religion by occupation, and religion by type of educational institution attending.
- The Movement Data Base (MDB) provides information on the age, sex, marital status, birthplace, citizenship, intended occupation, intended place of residence etc. of people entering or leaving Australia.
- National and State sample surveys are undertaken by the ABS. Both of these surveys cover a wide range of topics. The monthly labour-force survey, supplementary surveys and special supplementary surveys are the elements of the ABS program of sample household surveys.

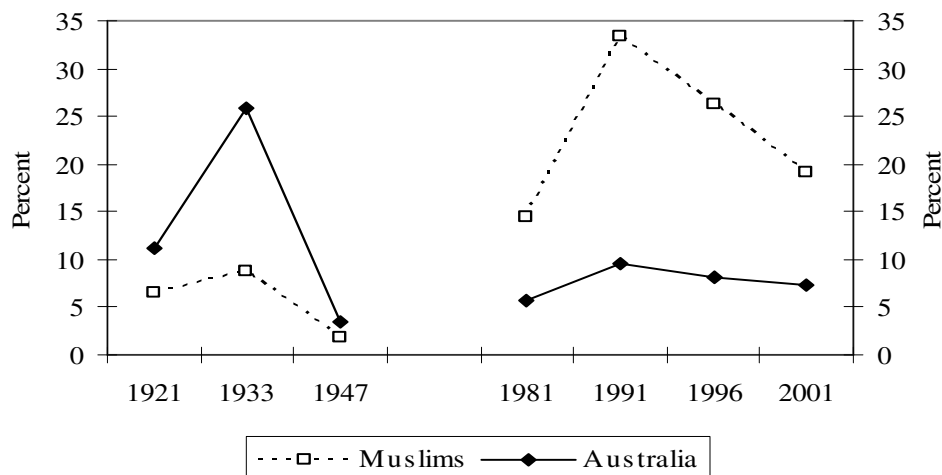


Figure 1. Unemployment Rate: Muslim Population In Australia Compared With Total Australian Population, 1921-2001.

* 1 % sample file used for Muslim population in 1981-91.

Source: ABS, censuses (various)

- The Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia (LSIA) is the most comprehensive survey of immigrants in Australia and was developed by the Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research (BIMPR). LSIA was developed to collect data on how well immigrants settle in their newly adopted country.

At an early stage of this study, it was decided that because so little information is available on immigrants classified by religion the study would identify a number of birthplace groups among immigrants to Australia who have large numbers of Muslims and these are chosen for primary units of the study and analysis. It was not feasible in this study to undertake strict random sampling because of the absence of a comprehensive and accurate sampling frame of either religious groups or birthplace groups in the Australian context. Accordingly, it was decided to adopt a snowball sampling technique.

The survey mechanism which was selected for this study was personal interviews in which face to face interviews with respondents were conducted by the researcher. In the present case the strategy adopted was to identify some initial respondents from some of the major meeting places of Muslims in Adelaide and then to ask them about other fellow Muslim/birthplace compatriots located in Adelaide to expand the sample. The initial contacts were made in Mosques, religious institutions such as the Islamic Women Association, workplaces and cafes or through the telephone. This procedure continued until 170 interviews were obtained. However, nine birthplace groups (Afghanistan, Bosnia, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Lebanon, Malaysia, South Africa and Turkey) were selected for study. The informants were chosen from the head of the households.

Unemployment

During the period 1921-47, Muslims experienced lower unemployment compared with the total Australian population while between 1981 and 2001, the unemployment of Muslims was substantially higher than that for the total Australian population. See Figure 1. The reason for this change is that the levels, patterns and composition of Muslim movement to Australia have changed significantly. During the period 1921-47, not only was their level of migration very low (Behrouzinia, 2001: 140-148) but also, the majority of immigrants coming to Australia were working age adults and families were a minority. However, in the later period it was predominantly young families who arrived in Australia especially under the refugee/humanitarian visa category.

A glance on the period 1976-85 will show that the unemployment rates for the Middle East and North Africa where the majority of Muslims have come from (Behrouzinia, 2001: 96-137 and 141-148) were the highest of all regions of origin of immigrants. See Table 1. Between 1986 and 1990 they had the second highest levels and again between 1991 and March 2000 the highest. This not only is related to the Humanitarian category under which they arrived Australia, it also to the fact that the majority of Muslims who migrated from these areas have a low level of skill and experience in business. See Table 2.

Many studies (Hugo, 1990 and 1994; Jones and McAllister, 1991; Wooden, 1994; Carliner, 2000; Behrouzinia, 2001; Cobb-Clark, 2001; Junankar *et al.*, 2004; Richardson *et al.*, 2001 and 2004; Richardson A and B 2006) have shown that the difficulties faced by migrants in the labour market from non-English-speaking

Table 1. Overseas-born Unemployment Rates By Year Of Arrival And Birthplace (%), Before 1976 to March 2000.

Year of Arrival	Oceania		Europe and the Former USSR		The Middle East and North Africa	South East Asia	North East Asia	The Americas	Other	Total
	New Zealand	Other	UK and Ireland	Other						
< 1976	2.7*	12.6*	5.8	4.7	4.1*	7.8*	2.7*	7.1*	4.9*	5.3
1976-80	7.6*	11*	4.8*	7.1*	13.2*	9.1	6.6*	6.1*	5.2*	7.3
1981-85	5.1*	10*	3.6*	8.3*	13.6*	11.4	3.6*	13.4*	7.8*	7.7
1986-90	6.6*	22*	6.6*	10.9*	12.9*	11.4	6.4*	9.7*	7.2*	9
1991-95	7.1*	11.5*	4.9*	9.2*	26.7	16.9	9.8*	14*	14.2	11.9
1996-00	10.9	10.9*	6.1*	11.5*	32.8*	17.8	13.4*	9.8*	15.2	12.5

* Subject to high sampling variability.

Source: DIMA, Statistics Section (2000: Table 5.4).

Table 2. Settler Arrivals By Immigration Component By Religion, 1994-95.

	SP	Fa	Co	Sk	In	Bs	Hu	Ma	Total
Buddhism	42.2	10.5	4.5	1.1	9.5	2.3	17.2	12.7	100
Christian	33.7	13.5	9.3	2.6	15.3	0.6	13.0	12.0	100
Hinduism	35.9	11.7	10.3	0.7	36.3	0.8	0.8	3.5	100
Islam	37.0	3.7	3.5	0.5	10.1	0.5	32.4	12.3	100
Judaism	13.8	9.3	9.5	9.8	20.4	4.5	28.0	4.6	100
Other religions	37.1	4.1	8.9	1.1	24.1	1.0	21.2	2.4	100
No religion	31.2	10.6	7.9	4.0	25.2	0.9	6.9	13.2	100

Sp (Spouse) Fa (Family) Co (Concessional family) Sk (Skill business) In (Independent) Bs (Business-Senior Executive)
Hu (Humanitarian) Ma (Marriage)

Source: LSIA, Wave 1: March 1994 - December 1995.

countries have been far more acute than those faced by the Australian-born and migrants from English-speaking countries.

During the period 1921-1947 the necessity for migrants to be fluent in the English language in their jobs which were predominantly in the blue-collar area was lower than for the period after 1981. As a result in the early period levels of unemployment were lower because immigrants with little ability to speak English could readily enter the growing manufacturing sectors. However, with restructuring after the 1970s the manufacturing sectors contracted substantially and reduced these opportunities. Moreover, the early post war years were an era of full employment while unemployment levels began to increase in the 1970s.

The patterns of unemployment in 2001 confirm that rates are higher among mainly non-English-speaking regions and refugee/humanitarian origin countries, especially the Middle East and North Africa. See Tables 3 and 1. Accordingly, Muslims with 19.1 percent have the highest rate of unemployment. After that come the Buddhists with 14.5 percent, no religions with 8.5 percent, Christians with 6.5 percent and Jews with 4.7 percent.

The 2001 Census shows that the proportion of Australian-born population among Christians (74.2 Percent), Jews (46.4 Percent) and people with no religion (77.2 Percent) is higher than that of Muslims (36.4 Percent) and Buddhists (26 Percent) (DIMIA 2003: Table 10). The literature on unemployment among immigrants (Hugo, 1990; Casey, 1992; Jones and McAllister, 1991; Hugo, 1994; Wooden, 1994; Behrouzinia, 2001; Cobb-Clark, 2001; Junankar *et al.*, 2004; Richardson *et al.*, 2001 and 2004; Thapa *et al.*, 2006), also suggests that the incidence of higher unemployment of Muslims and Buddhists is due to high incidence of poor English-language skills, recentness of arrival, low skill levels, and low educational qualifications.

In a survey of Muslim immigrants in Adelaide which was conducted by this study, it was also found that the proportion of those who were employed and could speak English well was higher than that of unemployed reflecting the importance of English language proficiency in employment. See Table 4.

Differentiate between male and female levels of unemployment of the selected religions in 2001 shows that among Muslims, Buddhists and Jews, the proportion of females who were unemployed is higher than for

Table 3. Australia: Labour Force Participation Rates Compared With Unemployment Rate By Religion (%), 2001.

	Australia: Unemployment rate			Australia: Labour force participation rate*		
	M	F	P	M	F	P
Christian	7.1	5.8	6.5	69.5	53.7	61.2
Muslim	19.3	18.5	19.1	64.0	35.6	50.7
Buddhism	13.7	15.4	14.5	67.2	50.1	58.2
Jewish	4.7	4.6	4.7	71.5	56.4	63.6
No religion	9.0	7.9	8.5	77.5	65.4	72.0
Total Australian population	8.0	6.6	7.4	70.9	55.4	63.0

* Excludes not stated, not adequate and overseas visitors.

Source: ABS, census 2001.

Table 4. Survey of Muslim Immigrants in Adelaide: Labour Force Status of Those Who Were Interviewed, Cross tabulated By English Language Proficiency, 1998.

English Skill	Unemployed		Employed		Work force	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Well	24	66.7	82	87.2	106	81.5
Fairly well	9	25	11	11.7	20	15.4
A bit	3	8.3	1	1.1	4	3.1
Total	36	100	94	100	130	100

Source: Behrouzinia 2001: Table 7.9

Table 5. Australia: Unemployment Age-Specific Rates Among Muslim Population (%), 2001.

	Muslim population in Australia			Total Australian population		
	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons
15-19	32.2	27.1	30.0	18.1	15.4	16.7
20-24	24.4	22.0	23.4	13.4	10.1	11.9
25-29	19.8	18.4	19.4	9.0	6.8	8.0
30-34	19.1	17.4	18.6	7.0	6.2	6.7
35-39	17.2	16.4	16.9	6.3	6.0	6.2
40-44	15.5	14.3	15.1	5.8	5.2	5.5
45-49	14.3	13.9	14.1	5.5	4.5	5.0
50-54	14.5	12.4	13.9	5.6	4.0	4.9
55-59	16.5	15.5	16.3	6.8	4.3	5.8
60-64	15.4	18.9	15.9	7.1	2.6	5.6
65+	19.6	29.7	22.0	2.7	2.7	2.7

Source: ABS, Census 2001.

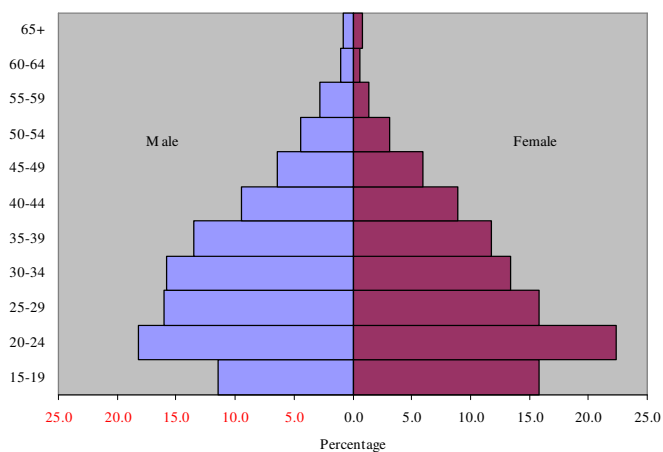
males. The difference between the rates of unemployment of the sexes among the Buddhists is higher than that of the Muslims and Jews. See Table 3. While, a comparison between the participation rates of Muslims and Buddhism in the labour force reveals that not only the participation rate of Muslim women was lower than Buddhists, also, the differential between the sexes among the Muslims is higher than among the Buddhists. This shows that Muslim women have had less

chance in finding job than Buddhist women.

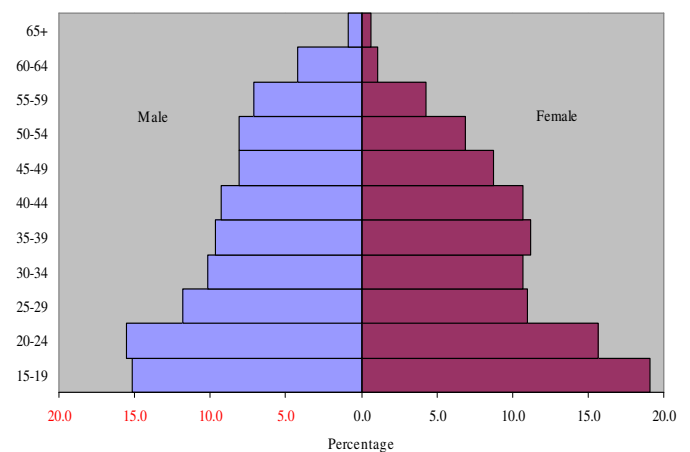
The age-specific unemployment rate of Muslims in age brackets 15 to 24 indicates that the major concentrations of unemployed are in the younger working age groups. See Table 5. This can be related to the young ones of the age structure of the Muslim population which increases the demand for jobs in the younger age groups.

It was also found that the age structure of the total Australian population who were unemployed is younger

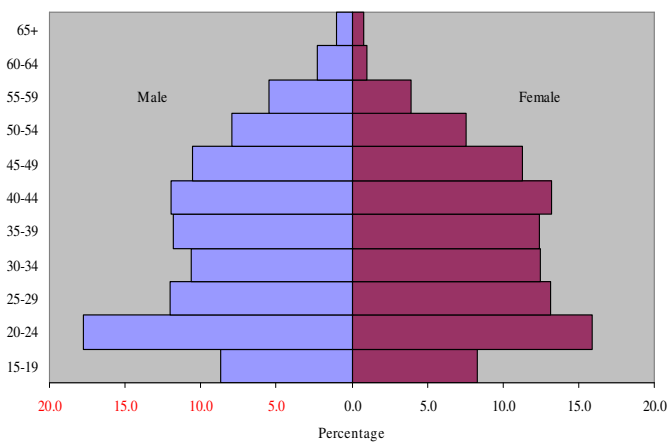
Muslim:



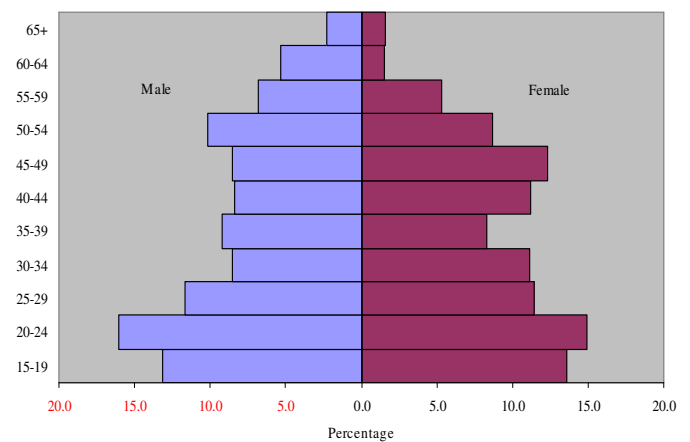
Christian:



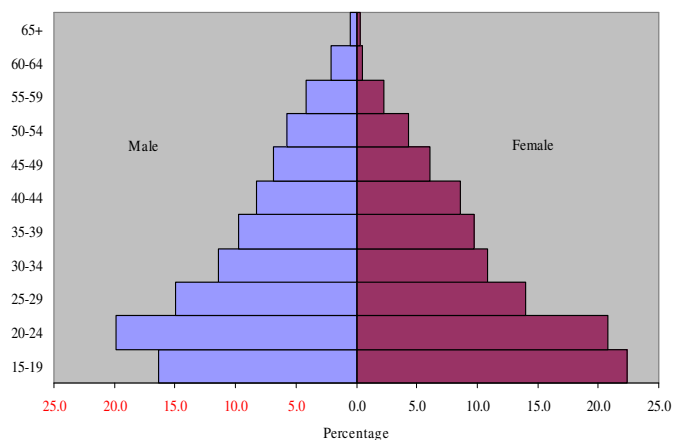
Buddhist:



Jewish:



No religion:



Total Australia:

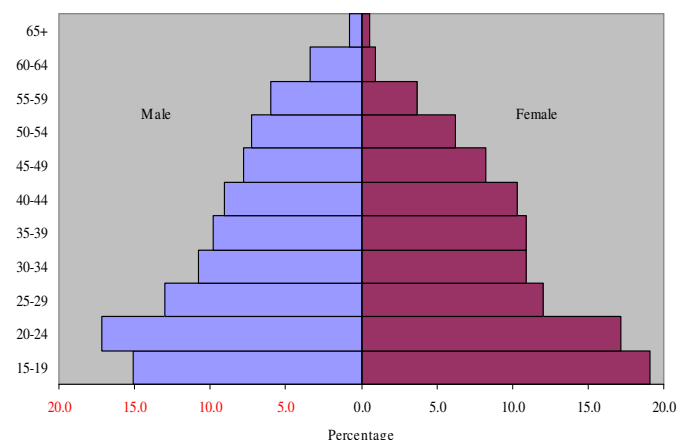


Figure 2. Australia: Age Structure of Unemployed Population by Religion, 2001.
Source: ABS, census 2001.

than Muslims. See Figure 2. This suggests that the duration of unemployment among Muslims is longer than that for the total Australian population. The greatest concentration of Muslims unemployment is in 15-24 age

groups, while, the great concentration of unemployed Muslims in 20-34 age groups reflects a greater length of their unemployment duration. See Table 5. The outcome of the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia

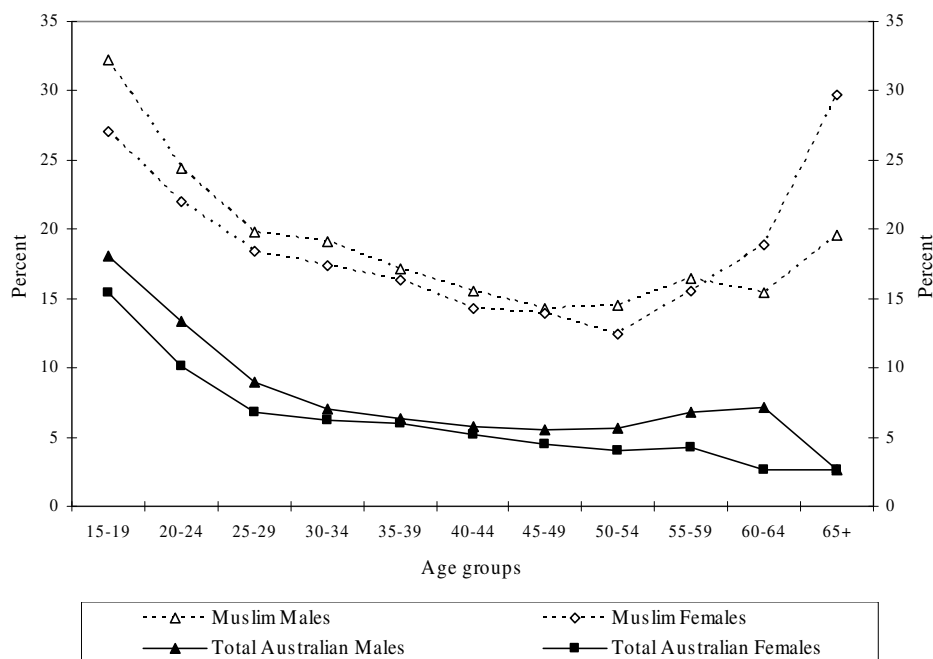


Figure 3. Australia: Muslim Unemployment Age-Specific Rates (%), 2001.
Source: ABS, Census 2001

(LSIA) indicates that during the period 1994-99, the proportion of those who were looking for work had a decreasing trend compared with the proportion employed which had an increasing trend. See Table 6. In other words, there is a strong relationship between the length of residence in Australia and employment (Thapa *et al.*, 2006).

This pattern implies that for the majority of Muslims who have arrived since 1981 with a low proficiency in English, and low skills and education compared with the total Australian population, the duration of unemployment is longer than that for the total Australian population.

While, the more recent studies (Casey, 1992; Wooden *et al.*, 1994; Richardson *et al.*, 2001, 2002, 2004; Cobb-Clark, 1999; Cobb-Clark *et al.*, 1998; Birrell *et al.*, 2001; Thapa, 2004; Thapa *et al.*, 2006) found that length of residence in Australia and English language ability have played a crucial role in the way of their employment; the role of religion has been neglected in this. This study showed that these factors are not only true for immigrants with religious background, also, unemployment rate and the duration of unemployment for women are higher than for men. This can be related to the encourageable role of religion in females working at home and the religious discriminatory role of society (Behrouzinia, 2001: 326-329).

The study also found that the trend of unemployment by changing with age is similar to that of the total Australian population. See Figure 3. The age specific rates for both sexes of Muslims are higher than for the total Australian population. Unemployment rates of

Muslims in all ages and sexes in the labour force have been higher than those of the total Australian population.

A comparison between the sexes reveals that the unemployment age specific rates of all age brackets, with the exception of the 60 and over, for Muslim males have been higher than for females while, the unemployment age specific rates of all age groups, with the exception of ages 65 and over, for total Australian female population are lower than for males. As described earlier, this is due to factors such as the Islamic culture that encourages women to work at home, discriminatory behaviour because of the Hijab, English language skills and length of residence in Australia. It is worth mentioning that 13.4 percent of the survey that was conducted by the study reported the existence of prejudice in society. Similarly Bouma (1994: 101) found that informants reported some women because of wearing the Hijab, have been the target of abuse in streets. Some of them reported that because of their Hijab they could not get a job when a non-Muslim applicant was also applying for that job.

The impact of prejudice and discrimination on the level of unemployment of immigrants is also shown by Pedersen in Denmark's labour market. He (1999: 156-157) underlines the point that prejudice and discrimination figure as significant barriers to immigrants integration within the labour market. This indicates the fact that unemployment rate among the Muslim population should be high as well. The existence of prejudice from the Australian-born at work among the Muslims has also been found by Bouma (1994) and Behrouzinia (2001). Bouma (1994: 47) found that "recent

Table 6. Australia: The Proportion Of Those Who Were Looking For Work And Employed By Religion In LSIA, 1994-99.

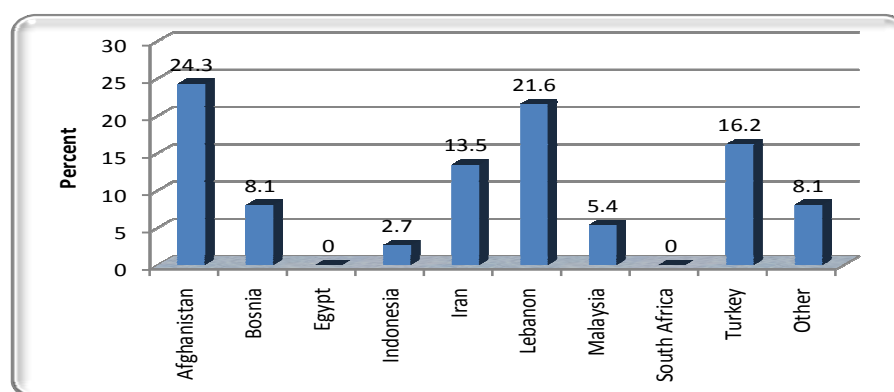
	Looking for work			Employed		
	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3
Buddhism	26.0	18.5	17.4	22.0	35.3	40.0
Christian	21.8	12.2	8.3	36.9	51.6	59.2
Hinduism	31.7	12.9	5.7	39.4	52.7	60.7
Islam	35.7	22.9	17.3	15.2	31.4	43.2
Judaism	16.0	6.6	6.9	40.6	54.7	58.8
Other religions	31.7	22.2	8.2	31.0	29.5	42.6
No religion	14.4	9.3	7.7	50.1	60.3	59.2

Wave 1: March 1994 - December 1995

Wave 2: March 1995 - February 1997

Wave 3: March 1997 - February 1999

Source: LSIA

**Figure 4.** Survey of Muslim Immigrants in Adelaide: The Proportion of Unemployed Who Were Interviewed, Cross tabulated by Birthplace, 1998.

immigrants and younger people were more likely to report that they experienced difficulty and discrimination on account of being Muslims". In this regard, he (1994: 47) quoted the Muslim Women's Association (1994) that "those women who do wear the Hijab are more readily identifiable as Muslim and may be more likely to bear the brunt of harassment and stereotyped responses than men or other Muslim women who are not so readily identifiable". Behrouzinia (2001: 327) also found that 81.8 percent of those who have experienced prejudice in society because of religion were women. It is worth noting that direct discrimination against NESB (Non-English-Speaking-Background) women has also been reported by many studies (Foster *et al.*, 1991; Alcorso 1991 and 1995; Alcorso and Harrison, 1993; Alcorso and Schofield, 1993; Richardson *et al.*, 2001; Florence, 2003; Thapa, 2004; Richardson, 2006; Liebig, 2007). This indicates that the prejudice against Muslims for their religion and having NESB background could be higher compared with other NESB immigrants.

The contrast between the age structures of the adherents of the selected religions who were unemployed

shows that Muslims again have the youngest age structure compared with Christians, Buddhists, Jews, no religions and total Australian population in 2001. See Figure 2. It is interesting to note that Jews with lowest proportion of population have the highest median age, 37 years, compared with other selected communities. Accordingly, the median age of Buddhists, Christians, no religions and Muslims is 35.4, 34.2, 30.9 and 30.8 years respectively. In contrast to the median age of Australia, 33.4 years, the median ages of no religions and Muslims are lower than that for Australia. A number of factors such as age structure of the total population, period of residence in Australia, language barriers, educational qualifications, marriage and dependent children (especially for women) can affect the age structure of their unemployed population (Behrouzinia, 2001: 140-212 and 279-369).

A comparison between the birthplace groups who were interviewed reveals that the proportion of unemployed among Afghanistan-born immigrants is higher than other birthplace groups. See Figure 4. Concerning the fact that the majority of Afghan migrants were refugees with a low

Table 7. Australia: Muslims Labour Force Status By Level Of Educational Attainment By Sex (%), 2001.

	Muslim population					
	Employed			Unemployed		
	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female	Persons
Postgraduate Degree Level	15.3	10.3	13.8	13.4	9.3	12.1
Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate Level	2.2	3.1	2.5	1.9	1.9	1.9
Bachelor degree	32.4	38.5	34.4	32.1	34.1	32.7
Advanced Diploma and Diploma Level	16.1	22.0	18.0	19.6	23.7	20.9
Skilled vocational qualification	29.5	14.2	24.7	27.2	17.5	24.1
Basic vocational qualification	4.4	11.8	6.7	5.8	13.6	8.3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

	Total Australian population					
	Employed			Unemployed		
	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female	Persons
Postgraduate Degree Level	6.0	5.4	5.7	4.1	4.2	4.1
Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate Level	2.9	6.6	4.4	1.7	3.1	2.2
Bachelor degree	24.3	38.3	29.9	18.8	26.7	21.8
Advanced Diploma and Diploma Level	13.0	21.8	16.6	13.4	21.0	16.3
Skilled vocational qualification	49.6	16.6	36.3	53.4	25.0	42.6
Basic vocational qualification	4.3	11.4	7.1	8.7	19.9	12.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: ABS, census 2001.

Table 8. Australia: Muslims Labour Force Status By Level Of Educational Attainment, 2001.

	Muslim population			Total Australian population		
	Empl.	Unempl.	Total	Empl.	Unempl.	Total
Postgraduate Degree Level	87.7	12.3	100	96.6	3.4	100
Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate Level	89.1	10.9	100	97.6	2.4	100
Bachelor degree	86.8	13.2	100	96.6	3.4	100
Advanced Diploma and Diploma Level	84.3	15.7	100	95.5	4.5	100
Skilled vocational qualification	86.5	13.5	100	94.6	5.4	100
Basic vocational qualification	83.5	16.5	100	95.4	4.6	100

Source: ABS, census 2001.

proficiency in English, and low skills and education, this confirms that unemployment rates are higher among mainly non-English-speaking regions and refugee/humanitarian origin countries. The high rates for Lebanon and Turkey-born immigrants are not only related to the refugee/humanitarian origin of their countries, also associated with their low proficiency in English, and low skills and education.

Labour Force Status and Educational Attainment

Again, the proportion of unemployment among Muslims who have degrees is also higher than that of their counterparts in the total Australian population. See Tables 7 and 8. It was found that less educated Muslim

immigrants have experienced high levels of unemployment. The survey of Muslims in Adelaide showed that only 15 percent of those who were interviewed (It is worth noting that those who were interviewed holding qualifications obtained overseas, particularly, from non-English speaking countries) expressed that they could find the job that they had in origin country; the rest, 85 percent were employed in a different job and mostly a lower skill job. See Table 9. This can be related to a higher number of job opportunities in the lower skill jobs compared with the jobs which require relatively high levels of skills. The extent to which, the transferability of their attainment can be considered here. In the survey, about 73 percent of those who were employed in a different job and mostly a

Table 9. Muslim Population Who Were Interviewed: Labour Force Status Cross tabulated By Level Of Educational Attainment, 1998.

	Unemployed		Employed		Work force	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Still at school	0	0	1	1.1	1	0.8
No qualification since leaving school	29	78.4	47	50	76	58
Trade certificate, advanced trade certificate	0	0	12	12.8	12	9.2
Technicians certificate	2	5.4	7	7.4	9	6.9
Australian certificate or diploma	0	0	2	2.1	2	1.5
University certificate or diploma below bachelor level	1	2.7	1	1.1	2	1.5
Bachelor degree	5	13.5	12	12.8	17	13.0
Postgraduate degree certificate or diploma	0	0	10	10.6	10	7.6
Other qualification	0	0	2	2.1	2	1.5
Total	37	100	94	100	131	100

Source: Behrouzinia 2001: Table 7.14

lower skill job indicated that their educational qualifications gained in their origin countries need to be transferred to the Australian equivalent. It is worth mentioning that 87 percent of these were postgraduate and the rest were undergraduate; indicating the fact that as their educational qualifications were higher the need for transferring their attainment to the Australian equivalent was higher.

Although, the proportion of some degree holders such as advanced diploma and diploma level and bachelor degree who suffered unemployment is higher, two factors which affect their unemployment experience can be identified. See Tables 7 and 8. First, the transferability of their attainment and the process of adjustment to the labour market will determine whether they will be able to work in their usual occupation (Borjas1992: 17-46; Stromback *et al.*, 1992; Baker *et al.*, 1994: 41). Second, the demand factors of labour markets for immigrants have also a crucial influence on the success of immigrants within the labour market. For example, Borjas (1992: 28-30) found that more recent immigrant waves to the United States are less likely to be employed in the types of jobs that require relatively high levels of skills and more likely to be employed in jobs that require fewer skills. This has also been found by many studies (AIMA, 1985:48-52; Jones and McAllister, 1991:23-25; Social Statistics Branch of ABS, 1992: 79; Wooden, 1994: 223-234; Lester *et al.*, 2004: 12-18) in Australia.

CONCLUSION

The rise in the unemployment rate in Muslim community over the last two decades has been remarkable compared with other religious ancestries and total Australian population. The skyrocketing increase of

unemployment among Muslim population is also significant during the period 1981-2001 compared with the 1921-47 period. This paper showed that the majority of Muslims who migrated to Australia have had a low level of skill and experience in business with a low proficiency in English which this not only increased their unemployment, also increased the duration of their unemployment. The high proportion of unemployed among Afghanistan, Lebanon and Turkey-born immigrants confirmed that unemployment rates are higher among mainly non-English-speaking regions and refugee/humanitarian origin countries. The findings here are essentially the same as those reported by others who have studied the performance of level of skill and proficiency in English in labour market in Australia. It was also found that to some extent religion and society played an impediment role in the labour force participation and employment of females, referring to the encourageable role of religion in females working at home and the religious discriminatory role of society (Bouma, 1994: 47; Behrouzinia, 2001: 326-329). Blending the factors such as low level of skill and low proficiency in English and the impediment role of society and religion has triggered high rate of unemployment among Muslims. It was also found that the period that immigrants arrive in Australia and the status of the labour market is one of the important factors influencing their employment. The extent to which, consideration was given to the transferability of migrants' attainment. It was found that the proportion of unemployment among Muslims who have degrees is higher than that of their counterparts in the total Australian population. It was also found that as the educational qualifications of migrants were higher the need for transferring their attainment to the Australian equivalent was higher.

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