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## SELECTED ATTITUDES OF MUSLIMS TOWARD LIFE IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC IN THE CONTEXT OF THEIR FAITH

Jiří Čeněk– Aneta Kompérová – Josef Smolík\*

### ABSTRACT

In the past several years, we could witness a massive mass and social media coverage of Muslims and their migration to Europe. This particular group is an object of stereotypical views and intensive emotional reactions. Despite that, Muslims living in Czech Republic are a relatively unknown and so far unexplored cultural group. Therefore, our study focused on selected faith-related attitudes toward Czech society investigated on a sample of Muslim immigrants living in Czech Republic for minimum of one year. We used a shortened and adjusted version of questionnaire previously used in WZB study (WZV, 2008) in three language mutations – Arabic, Czech, and English. The recruitment of participants was conducted via social networks; in total 143 responses were gathered. The data analysis is based primarily on descriptive statistics. The results show that there is a great variability in the strength of both the Muslim identity of the respondents and their religions believes. Their attitudes toward various topics related to Islam such as wearing headscarfs and other gender-related issues, teaching Islam in schools, or building Mosques also highly vary within the sample. Access to housing is perceived as the main source of discrimination. Large-scale or longitudinal assessments of Muslim minority are needed to deepen our understanding of the attitudes of the Muslim minority in Czech Republic. We can assume that this topic will be investigated further in other Central European countries.

**Key words:** attitudes, Muslims, Islam, immigration, acculturation, religion

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## Introduction

Islam is not and never was a mere “religion”. Since Islam incorporates commands about moral, political and economic behaviour of individuals and nations, it is rather a way of life (Heywood, 1994, p. 156). Majority of political and sociological researches on Islam are currently conducted in Western countries with numerous Muslim communities. **P. Norris** and **R. F. Inglehart** (2012) summarize that the largest differences between Muslim and Western societies are found in religiosity, gender roles and sexual norms (cf. Moravčíková – Lojda, 2005). In current Central Europe, social attitudes towards Islam are often formed on the basis of deeper historical reminiscences of interactions with the Muslim (or „Oriental“) world, including historical tradition of conflicts (Mareš, 2014, p. 207).

The post-communist countries in Central Europe have relatively different experience (or more precisely the lack of experience) with Muslims (see Ersalinni – Koopmans, 2011, Moravčíková – Lojda, 2005) compared to Western Europe countries, and the research on this specific topic is limited. In the Czech Republic (CZ) we can currently witness an increased aversion against Islam and Muslims, although most of our citizens have only a limited contact with this religion and relatively small Muslim minority. Between 1,000 - 22,000 Muslims are currently living in the CZ<sup>1</sup> (see Mareš et al. 2015, Danics - Tejchmanová 2017). Many studies in sociology or psychology are primarily concerned with the attitudes of societal majority toward Muslims, or are focused on partial research topics such as: the acts of terrorism, xenophobia,<sup>2</sup> Islamic fundamentalism,<sup>3</sup> jihad,<sup>4</sup> radicalization of Muslim communities, political Islam,<sup>5</sup> honour crimes,

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<sup>1</sup> The cited number is an unofficial estimation. According to the population census conducted in 2011 [Sčítání lidu, domů a bytů 2011] 3,400 persons registered as Muslims (ČSU, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Some authors use the term “religiophobia” for describing xenophobia connected with religion (Dojčár, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> Islamic fundamentalism is based on a conviction that religion is a manifestation of God's order that is contradictory to secular societal systems. Current Islamic fundamentalism can be perceived as a reaction to disorganisation and insecurity connected to the recent changes in globalised world. This insecurity causes fear and instigates a need to belong somewhere and identify with something (Vokálová, 2007, p. 325, Cipár, 2003, p. 70). The term is used since the 1970s, when the society in many Muslim countries started to be politically active. The experts do not agree on one definition of Islamic fundamentalism, and in some cases, there is not an agreement whether a certain organization is fundamentalist or not (Plisková, 2016, p. 26).

<sup>4</sup> Jihad is an Arabic term that at a most general level refers to one of the religious responsibilities of Muslims. Jihad is often falsely interpreted as a mere holy war. Furthermore, various schools of Islamic thought interpret jihad in various ways (see Mendel, 2000, p. 25-26, Plisková, 2016, p. 30).

veiling in public institutions, civil rights, role of women in Muslim society, usage of corporal punishment, etc. (see Heywood, 1994, p. 156, Norris – Inglehart, 2012, pp. 228-229, Vokálová, 2007, p. 323-331, Čeněk - Smolík – Vykoukalová, 2016, pp. 262-270, Danics – Tejchmanová, 2017, p. 11, Kosárová – Ušiak, 2017, pp. 113-118).

In political science, Islam is often mentioned in the sense of a tool, which is used by various nationalist and populist parties for boosting their electoral outcomes, or political violence (see Černocho, Husák, Schütz, Vít, 2011, Havlík et al 2012, Smolík, 2013, Mareš et al., 2015, Kosárová – Ušiak, 2017).

The issues connected to majority-minority relations recently turned attention of both general and academic public to terms such as islamophobia<sup>6</sup>, or anti-Islamic politics<sup>7</sup>. A substantial boost of the number of public discussions on Islam and Islamic migration occurred after 2014 and was caused by so-called “migration crisis”. Both tabloid and serious media referred to the necessity to accept hundreds of immigrants, many media concluded that the Czech society is not ready for acceptance of non-European immigrants (Rovenský, 2014, p. 2).

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Islam can be promoted by both nonviolent and violent measures that can be classified into four basic types of jihad. 1) jihad of the heart - is related to the continual deepening of personal religiousness, and overcoming of the sin and temptations; 2) jihad by the tongue - refers to the propagation of Islam and missionary activities; c) jihad by the hand - includes socially beneficial activities and charity; and finally d) jihad by the sword - that includes various types of violence, such as repressions of non-believers living with countries with Muslim majority, religious wars, or violent defence against the outer enemy (Mendel, 1997, p. 26, also see Cipár, 2003, p. 72, Mareš, 2005, p. 248, Plisková, 2016, p. 31). The classical jihad had only moral and spiritual dimensions, was understood as a passive defence of Muslims against the attacks of nonbelievers in the era of the birth of Islam as a religious and philosophical system. Subsequently, it also became an active “fight” for the acquisition of resources and the existence of Muslim communities (Vokálová, 2007, p. 327).

<sup>5</sup> Again, there is no universally accepted definition of political Islam. Political Islam is usually connected with a specific political movement or ideology that uses religion (Islam) for political purposes (Plisková, 2016, p. 28).

<sup>6</sup> Islamophobia can be defined as “an unjustified hostility to Islam, and the practical consequences of such hostility, such as discrimination of Muslim individuals and communities and their exclusion from the main political and societal matters”. Islamophobia in the CZ is discussed primarily in the context of activities of extreme right and anti-Islamic protests (Mareš et al., 2015, p. 7, Laqueur, 2006, p. 66, Mendel – Ostřanský - Rataj, 2007, p. 134, Smolík, 2013, p. 39).

<sup>7</sup> Anti-Islamic politics can be defined as “a sum of various critical attitudes toward Islam or its fundamental parts consistently introduced into the public space” (Mareš et al., 2015, p. 11).

Contradictory to the relative hysteria of the Czech media and the Czech society, the number of Muslims coming and currently living in the Czech Republic is relatively low compared to the other countries (cf. Danics – Tejchmanová, 2017). However, the Czech media, NGOs and governmental agencies view the growing Muslim community in the Czech Republic as a clandestine change towards national and ethnic diversity. This gradual growth likely has implications for the extent to which internal integrity of the Czech society can be maintained (Rákoczyová – Trbola - Hofírek, 2009). We can expect the numbers of Muslims living in the Czech Republic to further increase as a response to the socio-political situation in mainly Islamic countries of Maghreb and Middle East (Mareš, 2005, p. 254-262).

The current situation has brought concern about mutual cohabitation and integration of Muslims into the Czech society. European societies, that have more experience with their Muslim minorities and their integration, show, that in some cases the integration of Muslims can be a relatively difficult process.<sup>8</sup> There might be various causes of difficulties with the integration of this specific minority, such as relatively large cultural differences between the Czech culture and the culture of their country of origin (Průcha, 2010) or negative attitudes of the Czech society towards Muslims and immigration in general.

In this exploratory study, (see Hendl, 2005, p. 38) we try to inquire into the mostly unexplored topic of life of Muslims in the Czech society. Contrary to most of the empirical studies conducted in the CZ, the presented study is not focused on the attitudes of major society toward its minorities (in this case Muslims). It focuses rather on the exploration of attitudes of Muslims toward their religion and faith, and in several aspects toward the life in the CZ and their relation to the Czech culture and society as well. In order to achieve this goal, an attitudes mapping questionnaire was administered at a relatively large research sample. The issues related to Muslims in the Czech society will without a doubt require further systematic research that will involve other aspects of attitudes formation and integration.

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<sup>8</sup> The political or policy aspect of integration strategies would have to meet these psychological requirements. Policies would have to address the particular needs, demands, and alternatives regarding conflicting groups' capability, power, and rewards accrued within the political system (Cottam - Dietz-Uhler - Mastors – Preston, 2010, p. 325).

## 1 Muslims in the Czech Republic

Islam is currently frequently connected with migration. It is worthy to mention that this text does not primarily deal with migration<sup>9</sup>, or with detailed analysis of Islam in Central Europe or in the CZ (for more information see Mareš, 2014, Mareš et al., 2015, Štefančík – Lenč, 2012, Dojčár 2017).

Islam is present in the CZ for more than 1000 years. The first reference of Islam on our territory can be found in the Old Slavonic text "Life of St. Cyril". Cyril (or Constantine) was the first, who mentioned Prophet **Muhammad** or the Qur'an. Findings of Islamic Coins (Iranian Dirhams) in Kelc in Moravia can be another example of the ancient presence of Muslims in Bohemia (for more examples see Bečka – Mendel, 1998). Despite the previous examples, the contact of Czechs with Muslims and Islam was rather marginal, mainly due to the geographical and historical factors. The amount of contact with Islam increased during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the first Muslims, mainly from Bosnia and from Kosovo, settled in the territory of Austro-Hungarian Empire.

In 1912, the Austro-Hungarian Empire passed a law that recognised Islam as a "state religion" and thus allowed its official presence in the region. Islam was institutionalised in 1934 with the foundation of the first official Muslim community. In 1949, the previous registration of the organisation from the time of the Protectorate Bohemia and Moravia was abolished and the leading personality of Czech Muslims **Abdallah Brikcius** was accused of collaboration

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<sup>9</sup> The Czech Republic faced a larger wave of immigration in 1990s, when it accepted large numbers of refugees from former Yugoslavia. For various reasons, the Visegrad countries have evaded the current migration wave, but the situation in other EU countries such as Italy, Germany, France, Belgium, Spain, or Greece instigates questions about the social cohesion and capacity of particular nations to integrate their minorities. Naturally, the "migration crisis" does not necessarily only mean a threat, but also an opportunity (Norris – Inglehart, 2012, Štefančík – Lenč, 2012). Currently, people migrating to the CZ are mainly from European countries, partly from European Union countries (33%) and from non-EU countries (44%). Only less than a quarter of foreigners from non-EU countries are coming to stay in the CZ, most of them from Asia (20%; Rákoczyová – Trbola - Hofírek, 2009). Migration from Africa (1%) and America (2%) is therefore relatively negligible. Citizens of the three most important source countries of migration to the CZ – Ukraine, Slovakia and Vietnam – represent about two-thirds of all immigrants on a long-term basis. In terms of growth dynamics, however, there are significant differences between these countries, while the number of Slovak citizens grew only slightly in the period between 2001 – 2008, the number of citizens of Vietnam and Ukraine more than doubled. At present, every third foreigner residing in the Czech Republic comes from Ukraine, while the number of immigrants from Slovakia has decreased to 13%. The dramatic increase in immigration also occurred from so far relatively less represented countries: Mongolia, Moldova, and Germany (Rákoczyová – Trbola – Hofírek, 2009).

with fascists. In 1991, the Center of Muslim Religious Communities [*Ústředí muslimských náboženských obcí*] was founded as an umbrella organisation for all Muslim communities (for more details see Ostránský, 2010).

The substantial increase in the numbers of Muslims living in the CZ occurred in the past few decades. The rough estimation of the size of the entire Muslim community is between 1,000 - 22,000. It should be stressed that it is not a homogeneous group. The Muslim community is made up of many groups of believers based on different cultural environments and traditions that affect their religious practice (Melichárek, 2011). The Muslim community in the CZ is composed of: a) Muslims (and their progenies) who came before 1989 because of friendly relations with Muslim states and organisations; b) Muslims (and their progenies) who came after 1989; c) Muslims who came for short-term stays (exchange students, tourists, etc.); d) converted ethnic Czechs<sup>10</sup> (Mareš, 2005, p. 252). It can be noted that in our research we are interested primarily in the groups a) and b).

The most numerous group is the group of Muslims without Czech citizenship, who came to the CZ after the Velvet revolution for business or study purposes (Mendel - Ostránský – Rataj, 2007). Most Muslims living in the Czech Republic come from Iraq, Syria, Libya, Egypt, Yemen and Tunisia (Křížová, 2007). Although the Czech Republic was for a long time only a transit country for immigrants on their way to the Western Europe, many Muslims that settle here want to stay in the CZ. Only a small proportion would like to return to their home countries (Hošková, 2002). They seem to be satisfied with life and democratic conditions in the Czech Republic (Šlechta - Vonšovská - Šimáčková – Trtíková, 2009). This group of Muslims can be generally considered well adapted and integrated. Most of them lived in the CZ for substantial period of time, have a good to perfect knowledge of Czech. This group consists predominantly of Arabs; Muslims from Africa are rarely found here (Topinka, 2007).

After the recapitulation of the history of Muslim presence in Central Europe, and the current state of the Muslim community, we will focus on the public discourse that shapes the attitudes toward this minority in the CZ, resp. EU. We can notice a substantial increase of interest about Islam and related topics after

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<sup>10</sup> The number of young convertites is slowly rising. The estimation is around 400 Czech convertites. One distinctive group of the Czech convertites are women, who married men from groups a) and b) (Mareš, 2005, p. 252).

the events of September 11, 2001. The security aspects of Muslim immigration and the threat of terrorism are at the heart of the Czech discussion of the presence of Muslims in the Czech Republic<sup>11</sup> and Europe. Islamic terrorism is widely considered to be one of the biggest security threats for all democracies in the Euro-Atlantic region, including the CZ (Mareš 2005: 247). This relatively common opinion might be partly caused by the confusion of term Islam and Islamism<sup>12</sup>, eventually terrorism, commonly seen in the media coverage, including anti-Islam and anti-migration webs, books and organisations, or some politicians. (see Abdel-Samad, 2016, Bonansinga, 2015, Mareš et al., 2015).

As **D. Červenková** and **A. P. Rethmann** (2009) mention, one of the other reasons for this negative image of Muslims in the Czech society might be the fact that the Czech Republic is among strongly atheistic countries. Some authors note that the religious values are in contradiction to the secular values and that this contradiction can in some cases lead to conflicts (Banfi - Gianni-Giugni, 2016, p. 294-295). A good example from the Czech settings might be the recent heated discussion about veiling in public schools.

## 1.1 Acculturation

In the previous sections, we tried to summarize the facts about the presence of Muslims in the Czech society and factors that might influence the mutual relationships. In this section, we will focus on the theory of acculturation, which is the process that influences to a large extent the quality of mutual relationship among the country's majority and its minorities.

Acculturation is a process that occurs when members of two or more cultures enter into a mutual contact. The process involves a variety of psychological and cultural changes at both individual and societal level and it should lead to long-term psychological and sociocultural mutual adjustment among all groups involved. The process can continue for many years after the initial contact in culturally diverse societies (Berry, 2005). **C. Ward** and **A. Rana-Deuba** (1999) have identified two fundamental dimensions of acculturation: maintenance of original cultural identity and maintenance of relations with other

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<sup>11</sup> The Muslim community is under observation by the Security Information Service (BIS), which in its latest Annual Report (in 2015) stated only a few persons within the community are supporting the so-called Islamic State. In general, the Muslim community is considered to be well integrated in the Czech society (BIS, 2015).

<sup>12</sup> The term Islamism is used for adherents of political Islam who call „for implementation of Islamic law (sharia'a) in all aspects of life, including the public domain“. (Mareš, 2014, p. 205-206)



cultural groups. Based on these two main dimensions, four possible minority acculturation strategies can take place: integration, separation, assimilation, and marginalisation. Every acculturation strategy has different psychological and social consequences for both members of majority and minority culture (Berry et al., 2012).

In the case of integration, the minority maintains the contact with the dominant culture and maintains its cultural heritage at the same time. It is often perceived as the ideal strategy of acculturation. Integration is only possible under certain conditions (Berry, 1997, Ersanilli - Koopmans 2011). The members of minority should know the language of the host society and have or be able to acquire skills needed to prosper in the dominant culture. Additionally, the values of the home culture should not be in direct contradiction with the values of the dominant society. The host society should be open to the immigrants, and should try to avoid discrimination in daily life. Second acculturation strategy is called separation and can be defined as a situation in which members of minority have a strong orientation toward their culture, they retain their culture, and they avoid interaction with the dominant culture (Cabassa, 2003). **M. Bowskill, E. Lyons and A. Coyle** (see Bowskill - Lyons - Coyle 2007) state that separation is contrastingly defined by the negative response to the possibility of cultural contact and by positive response to the maintenance of culture.

While the two above-mentioned strategies had in common the maintenance of the cultural identity of the minority, in the following two strategies the original cultural identity is not maintained. The ultimate outcome of assimilation is to merge with the dominant culture and to resemble it to the point of internalizing the dominant culture and denying one's own cultural identity (Berry, 1997). **R. Alba and V. Nee** (1997) define assimilation as a process of fusion in which individuals and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other individuals and groups by sharing their common experience and history. The last possible acculturation strategy, marginalisation, is adopted by individuals and groups that do not have an opportunity or intention to both preserve their own culture and to be in a close contact with the dominant culture. This strategy is probably the least desirable one, and often results in cultural conflict and mutual misunderstanding (Berry, 2005, Ryder - Alden – Paulhus, 2000).

The process of social integration of immigrants takes place at a micro-, meso- and macro-social level. At the micro level, it is based on the interaction between individuals, their attitudes and values, and attitudes they hold toward

the individuals from the other cultural group. At the meso level, it is the development of relations between groups and institutions as a result of the emerging interdependence between immigrants or groups of immigrants and the domestic population. Processes at the macro level are outcomes of the effects of non-personal mechanisms that are not directly related to the actions of individuals or groups in the locality (Asselin et al., 2006).

Obviously, at all social levels there are many emotional, behavioral, cognitive, or institutional factors that influence the outcome of acculturation process such as the individual adaptation and the mutual attitudes between majority and minority (Berry et al., 2012). Researchers of acculturation and cultural adaptation should consider factors such as cultural distance, language differences, or variations in other elements of culture (non-verbal communication, rituals, clothing- or eating-related habits, etc.; Průcha, 2010, p. 103).

## **2 Methods**

### **2.1 Materials and procedure**

The data were collected via an online questionnaire between April 26 and May 8, 2017. The link to the questionnaire was advertised on Facebook groups "*Expats in the Czech Republic*", "*Arabs in the Czech Republic*", "*Muslims in Brno*", and others. It should be mentioned that we also contacted the Islamic Foundation in Brno (Brno Mosque) for their support and help with the questionnaire distribution, but were declined because of their negative experience with the past researches on the topic and their media coverage.

The potential respondents could choose from three language mutations of the questionnaire - English, Arabic and Czech. The survey website was displayed 1966 times and 143 responses were obtained (105 in English, 31 in Arabic, 7 in Czech) in total.

The questionnaire was constructed on the basis of WZB (2008) research and adapted for the purposes of the current research. The questionnaire consisted of 48 questions that can be divided into three broad categories: 1) socio-demographic questions, 2) personal values and faith, 3) attitudes about life in the Czech Republic, Czech culture and relationships with the Czech people. Only a subset of the questions that offer the most interesting results is used in the presented paper.

## 2.2 Research Sample

The data were gathered only from Muslim immigrants who have been living in the Czech Republic for at least one year and were 18 years or older. All respondents that did not fulfill this condition (were born in the Czech Republic or have lived here less than one year) were discarded from the research sample.

As mentioned before, the research sample consisted of 143 respondents in total. The frequencies of socio-demographic variables are summarised in table 1. As we can see, the majority of the respondents is male (75.5%), falls into 19-29 (53.1%) or 30-39 (30.8%) age group, studies or finished university education (90.9%), and is single (55.9%) or married (36.4%). Additionally, majority of the respondents currently lives either in Prague (32.2%) or in Brno (56.6%).

**Table 1: Socio-demographic variables (N = 143)**

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Sex	Male	108	75.5
	Female	35	24.5
Age group	19-29	76	53.1
	30-39	44	30.8
	40-49	19	13.3
	50 and more	4	2.8
Education (finished or in progress)	Primary	4	2.8
	Secondary	9	6.3
	Tertiary	130	90.9
Marital status	Single	80	55.9
	Married	52	36.4
	Divorced/widowed	11	7.7

Source: Processed by authors

We also asked respondents to state their home countries, the reasons for leaving their home countries, the current length of stay in the Czech Republic, and the type of residency. In table 2 we summarised the regions of origins of the respondents. The most common regions of origin were the North Africa (29.6%), Middle East (28.2%), and Central and South Asia (19.0%). The most common reasons for coming to the Czech Republic reported by the respondents were education (46.2%), work and other economic reasons (28.7%), and family related reasons (16.1%). Conflict in their home country or danger of persecution was the main reason for coming for nine respondents (6.3%). Five out of the nine were from Syria; the remaining four were from Afghanistan, Algeria, Iraq and Sudan.

**Table 2: Regions of origin (N = 142)**

Region	Frequency	Percent
Europe	10	7.0
Turkey	13	9.2
North Africa	42	29.6
West Africa	10	7.0
Middle East	40	28.2
Central and South Asia	27	19.0

Source: Processed by authors

The reported length of stay in the Czech Republic varied between one and 30 years (mean = 6 years, median = 3 years). The most common type of residency was student visa (25.2%) and temporary residence (23.8%), followed by permanent residence (16.8%), CZ/EU citizenship (16.1%), and employment visa (14.7%). Three (2.1 %) respondents received asylum and two (1.4%) reported that they were in the Czech Republic illegally. Vast majority of the respondents (79.7%) were learning Czech language.

### 3 Results

In this section, we will report the absolute and relative frequencies of answers to questions about the attitudes of Muslims living in the Czech Republic. The questions are dealing with two main areas of topics: a) faith related attitudes and behavior, b) attitudes toward Czech culture and society. Naturally, some of the questions lie topically on a spectrum in between.

The first group of questions is focus on the attitudes of the respondents toward their faith and the related behaviour.

*Q1: To what extent do you feel Muslim?*

More than two thirds of the respondents feel being completely (37.8%) or largely (33.6%) a Muslim, 13.3% feel being a Muslim "a bit", 15.3% feel being a Muslim barely or not at all.

*Q2: How often do you go to the mosque?*

Less than one tenth of the respondents (8.4%) visit the mosque daily, 23.1% visit the mosque once a week, 9.1% once a month, one third (33.6%) of the sample visit mosque only on special occasions, and roughly one fourth (25.9%) never visit mosques.

*Q3: Do you celebrate Ramadan?*

Majority of the respondents (54.5%) always celebrates Ramadan, 14.7% celebrate Ramadan most of the times, 16.1% celebrate Ramadan sometimes, and 14.7% of the respondents never celebrate it.

Four other questions (Q4-Q7) were related primarily to the faith and religion of the respondents. The relative frequencies (percentage) of answers indicate the relative degree of agreement with each question (table 3). The levels of agreement are: strongly agree (SA) - agree (A) - neutral (N) - disagree (D) - strongly disagree (SD).

Vast majority (86%) of the respondents disagrees or strongly disagrees with the statement that education is more important for men than for women, only 7.7% agree or strongly agree with the statement. Almost one half (44.1%) of the respondents agree and strongly agree that it is best to marry someone with the same faith, one third (32.2%) neither agree or disagree, and roughly one fourth of the respondents (23.7%) do not think that it is best to marry someone with the same faith.

**Table 3: Degree of agreement with Q4-Q7 (N = 143)**

Question	SA	A	N	D	SD
Education is more important for men than for women	6.3	1.4	6.3	12.6	73.4
It is best to marry someone of your own faith	23.1	21.0	32.2	17.5	6.3
It is better if the Muslims wear headscarf outside of the house	14.0	19.6	36.4	11.2	18.9
Students should be allowed to wear a headscarf in schools in the CZ	21.0	34.3	22.4	12.6	9.8

Source: Processed by authors

In questions 6 and 7, we asked the respondents to indicate their opinions about wearing a headscarf. In question six we asked whether the women should wear a headscarf outside of the house and in question seven whether wearing headscarf should be allowed in the Czech schools. Around one third (30.1%) of the respondents do not think that Muslim women should wear a headscarf outside of the house, one third (33.5%) think that they should and roughly one third (36.4%) neither agree, nor disagree. The numbers are different in the question regarding whether it should be allowed to wear a headscarf in schools. More than one half (55.2%) agree, less than one fourth (22.4%) disagree and neither agree nor disagree (22.4%) with the statement. The next set of questions can be related to both main areas of topics as mentioned above.

*Q8: Do you firstly feel as your country national or as a Muslim?*

Slightly more than one half (53.8%) identified themselves more with their home country; the rest (46.2%) stated that they felt more as Muslims than their country nationals.

In the next question we asked, whether the respondents considered the rules of Quran as more important than the laws of the Czech Republic or not (see table 4; strongly agree - strongly disagree). As we can see around one fourth (26.5%) of the respondents considered (agreed or strongly agreed) the rules of Quran as more important than the laws of the Czech Republic, more than one third (35.5%) gave a neutral response and 38.5% considered the laws

of the Czech Republic to be more important than the rules of Quran. These are interesting results. We checked the nationality and length of stay of respondents, who strongly agreed or agreed to this item. Out of 38 respondents, who strongly agreed or agreed to this question there was 10 from Egypt, 5 from Syria, 4 from India, 3 from Algeria, 3 from Ghana, and 3 from Gambia. Additionally, 24 respondents out of these 38 were staying in the CZ between 1-3 years.

**Table 4: Degree of agreement with Q9 (N = 143)**

Question	SA	A	N	D	SD
The rules of Quran are more important to me than the laws of the Czech Republic	12.5	14.0	35.0	21.0	17.5

Source: Processed by authors

Additionally, we asked two questions about the Czech policies toward Muslims and their faith, more specifically, whether Islam should be taught in the Czech schools and whether the Muslims should be allowed to build mosques in the Czech Republic (table 5; strongly agree - strongly disagree). More than one third of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed (35.6%) with the statement that Islam should be taught in the Czech schools, 45.5% gave a neutral response and 18.9% disagreed with the statement. Vast majority of the respondents (78.3%) agreed with the statement that Muslims should be allowed to build mosques in the Czech Republic; only a minority gave neutral responses (16.8%) or disagreed with it (4.9).

**Table 5: Degree of agreement with Q10-Q11 (N = 143)**

Question	SA	A	N	D	SD
Islam should be taught in the Czech schools	12.5	23.1	45.5	9.8	9.1
Muslims should be allowed to build mosques in the Czech Republic	31.5	46.8	16.8	2.8	2.1

Source: Processed by authors

In the last two questions, we were interested about the experience with discrimination of the respondents in the Czech society. The first question

consisted of several typical situations, in which a discrimination can occur, and the respondents could mark all of the situations in which they have been discriminated in the past (see table 6). Some respondents (N = 42, 29.5%) stated that they never felt discriminated in the Czech society.

**Table 6: Discrimination Q12 (N = 100)**

Discriminatory situation	Frequency
Looking for job	32
Looking for housing	55
In clubs, bars, cafes	49
At school	22
By the police	35
Public service institutions	46

Source: Processed by authors

In the second question, we asked them to describe the specific discriminatory or offensive situations they encountered and talk about specific behaviour. Relatively high number of respondents (22 occurrences) reported verbal aggression and aggressive staring at them in public places. Only several individuals (1-5 in each case) more closely described other specific situations. Among these we can count physical aggression, bullying by police and foreign police (e.g. unsubstantiated checks of IDs, luggage checks), restricted access into restaurants and shops. Their limited knowledge of Czech language and xenophobia of the Czech majority were perceived as a common explanation of above-mentioned behaviour. The respondents ascribed some of the discriminatory and offensive behavior to their religiosity, but also mentioned their distinctive physical appearance and clothing, and sometimes just their foreign-sounding name as a cause of discrimination.

## **4 Conclusions and Discussion**

The main objective of this research was to assess attitudes of immigrant Muslims living in the Czech Republic toward their religion and faith and toward



the life in the CZ and their relation to the Czech culture and society. The empirical investigation among 143 respondents - long-term residents in the CZ - revealed several interesting findings.

We can conclude that there is a high variability in faith-related attitudes in the research sample. While responding to the question about the identity of the Muslims, more than two thirds of the respondents identified completely or primarily as Muslim, substantial differences could be found in their answers on questions about specific faith-related attitudes and behaviours. Only 8.4% of respondents visit mosque daily, and 23.1% weekly. The remaining approximately 70% of the respondents goes to mosque monthly or only on special occasions; one-fourth (25.9%) never visits mosques. Majority of the respondents always (54.5%), or usually (14.7%) celebrates Ramadan. Majority (53.8%) of the respondents identifies themselves first as their country nationals, then as Muslims.

We can say, that the respondents are quite liberal in some of their attitudes and relatively conservative in others. Vast majority (86%) of the respondents either strongly disagreed or disagreed with "Q4: *Education is important more for men than women*", which indicates relative absence of this stereotype common in many traditionally Muslim countries. Quite interesting is the discrepancy between frequencies of answers to "Q6: *It is better if the Muslims wear headscarf outside of the house*" and "Q7: *Students should be allowed to wear a headscarf in schools in the CZ*". While 55.3% strongly agreed or agreed with Q6, only 33.4% strongly agreed or agreed with Q7. The 20% difference in agreements to these questions can be interpreted as a difference between "should" (Q6) and "to have the chance" (Q7). In other words, the respondents, who agreed with Q6, agreed with the compliance with the habit common in many Muslim societies. The respondents, who agreed with Q7, agreed with the opportunity to do so, with the absence of regulation.

One item was focused on the relative importance of rules of Quran vs. the laws of the Czech Republic. More than one third of the respondents (38.5%) considered the laws of the Czech Republic as more important, and roughly one third (35.5%) gave neutral answer. A little bit more than one fourth (26.5%) considered the rules of Quran to be more important. The subsequent analysis showed that most of those, who agreed with the item (24 out of 38), stayed in the CZ between 1-3 years.

We also asked about the situations, in which the respondents feel discriminated or threatened. Most frequent answers were related to the

discrimination in the access to housing, conflicts in clubs, bars, and institutions of public service. It should be mentioned, that the respondents reported, that the threatening and discriminatory situations are sometimes triggered by their religion (e.g. verbal aggression to women wearing headscarf), and sometimes by their exotic appearance.

Our study has several limitations, mostly related to the research sample selection and composition. Due to the relatively low accessibility of this kind of population, we used non-probability sampling (convenience sampling). Another problem and source of distortion in answers might be the self-selection bias (Hudson - Seah - Hite - Haab 2004) and data gathering via the internet. The sample consisted of only 143 respondents, which is a small subset of Muslim population living in the CZ, especially if we consider the large diversity of both the population and the respondents in the research sample (country of origin, length of stay in the CZ, age). On the other hand, the research sample is highly homogenous in education (prevalence of university-educated individuals). In that respect, the study can be understood and interpreted as a mere probe into the topic of attitudes of Muslims living in the CZ and its results should not be taken as representative of the entire Muslim population living in the CZ. Future researches in this field should focus on the large-scale assessments of the attitudes of Muslim community. A crucial aspect of success to do so is, as we perceive it, to get the trust of official Muslim organisations and their representatives in order to be able to gather data from more subsets of the target population.

Several researches, that were focused on the processes of acculturation, observed common refusal of social norms by majority of immigrants. According to Laqueur, (2006: 60) 26% of British Muslims do not feel any loyalty to Great Britain, 40% would implement sharia in parts of Britain, 13% justify terrorist attacks ala Al-Kaida, and 47% supports suicidal attacks similar to attacks often conducted in Israel. Other researches focused on faith-related values and attitudes of Muslims in contrast with secular societies and tried to identify potential differences (see Al-Fatlawi 2016, Banfi - Gianni - Giugni 2016). Another popular topic that is connected with an unsuccessful acculturation of first and second generation of immigrants is radicalisation of Muslim communities in some European countries (Leistedt 2016, Koomen - Pligt 2016). Radicalisation of (most frequently young) Muslims that can, in some cases, lead to terrorist attacks, is from a big part the result of differences in attitudes, values, and social norms. Other studies relate attitudes of immigrant Muslims to their ability to find

employment in host countries. They focus on factors such as language barriers, quality of education, and other objective causes, that might lead to failures in finding a job, leading to unemployment, lack of purpose and related problems described above (see Koopmans 2016).

The goal of this study was to learn about the faith-related attitudes of Muslims living in the Czech Republic. Although we found some interesting facts about this community and its attitudes and behaviour, more empirical research is needed in order to truly understand this relatively reclusive minority and their attitudes.

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