A comparative perspective on integration of Muslim immigrants in the Australian society and labour market

1) Detailed description

The key characteristic of multiculturalism in countries like Australia brings people with diverse economic, social, religious, and cultural backgrounds all together from all corners of the world. Australia has one of the most culturally diverse populations around the world so that, for instance, adherents of religions of Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, and Judaism contain 15 per cent of its entire non- Christian population. In particular, Muslims having five per cent of non- Christians account for as the second biggest religious minority group of the country where immigrants embrace more than twenty per cent of its total population.

This paper focuses mainly on females aged 15-54 who comprise around two-third and one-third of female and whole Muslim population, respectively, in Australia. The vast majority of these women are overseas born whose countries of birth contain a vast variety. It also focuses on employment, which is really a vital issue in everybody's personal and familial life, especially for migrants in a new host country. Therefore, this paper, indeed, concentrates simultaneously on four substantial issues: immigration (and integration process), labour force (as a measure of integration), religious affiliation, and gender considerations. Moreover, these issues are considered in a comparative view with non-Muslim women.

As success in labour market plays a key role in migrants' life in the host country, it can be account for as a benchmark to examine the process of their integration in the receiving country because not only they are expected to present or obtain a set of requirements in

terms of the new society's framework for this success, but also it is more likely that involvement in the new workplace develops and accelerates the integration process.

2. Theoretical focus

Theoretically, this paper is mainly based on two approaches. One of them is adaptation or integration theory in which it is believed that those immigrants who are more integrated with the conditions and circumstances of life and work in the receiving country are more likely to experience labour market success. Meanwhile, for those immigrants who have less human capital, duration of residence increases the probability of their integration with the new society and consequently, the probability of achieving more human capital increases, which ultimately enables them for labour market success. Moreover, according to human capital theory, as second theoretical framework for this paper, which is a developed form of neo-classical economy theory, it is assumed that individually achieved characteristics play the exclusive substantial role for both locals and immigrants in the competitive labour market.

3. Data and method

Empirical analysis of this paper is based on unpublished data of Australia's latest census (that is, the 2001 census) obtained from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The data are analysed by SPSS program, including Cramer's V to examine the strength of associations based on chi-square between the relevant factors and employment status. In particular, Logistic Regression Analysis is used to explore the role of each of the factors affecting employment status by controlling others.

4. Expected findings

This paper, firstly, demonstrates demographic and socio-economic characteristics of immigrant Muslim women in terms of their country or region of birth in comparison with their first generation as well as those of majority population. These characteristics are mostly centralised on the components of human capital and integration (that is, education, English language, and duration of residence in the host society). Secondly, the participation rate of these women in labour force compared with that of majority is considered.

Thirdly, the setting of the components of integration and human capital compared with other relevant influent factors on employment status among these women in terms of their country or region of birth are analysed. Given that, higher participation in labour market represents the condition of more integrated persons, the results of this section also reveal women from which country or region of birth are relatively more integrated with majority by referring to their contribution of the components of human capital and duration of residence in the host society.

Fourthly, the paper also may focuses on gender considerations in order to demonstrate the possible disparities or similarities between males and females from the viewpoint of employment as a sign of their integration process in the new society. This issue is also considered in a comparative view of first generation and majority population. Finally, since the majority, here, contains both locals and immigrants in the whole country, there is also this opportunity to explore and compare the issues under investigation with major group of immigrant women in Australia who do not belong to this particular religion; in other words, this paper is really a study on integration process of women aged 15-54 in terms of migration status (immigrant & local) as well as religion (Muslim and non-Muslim) in the Australia's entire population.

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SHORT ABSTRACT

Existing a considerably diverse population by economic, social, religious, and cultural aspects is a substantial characteristic of multicultural countries like Australia. It is also an appropriate situation to focus on such issues as integration process, its measures and relevant factors. The focus group of this paper is Muslim women in Australia who are largely immigrant. Demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the focus group in comparison with their first generation and women in the Australia's whole population are considered.

It is also assumed that success in the receiving country's labour market can be partly accounted for a benchmark of integration. So based on theoretical considerations of the paper on integration and human capital and using SPSS and logistic regression analysis, the contributions of factors such as education, English language, and duration of residence in the host society compared with other relevant factors found in literature review, on employment status are examined.