

Gender Equality in Family-Related Attitudes and Behaviours Among Muslim Migrants in Italy

Giuseppe GABRIELLI^{a, 1}, Germana CAROBENE^a and Salvatore STROZZA^a

^a*Università di Napoli Federico II*

ORCID ID: Giuseppe Gabrielli <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2958-0198>, Germana

Carobene <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9740-4156>, Salvatore Strozza

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8065-3666>

Abstract. The chapter aims to observe gender equality in family-related attitudes and behaviours among Muslim first-generation migrants aged 18-64 years old at interview and residing in Italy. We use data coming from the multipurpose “Social Condition and Integration of Foreign citizens survey” conducted in 2011-2012, estimate a synthetic index of gender equality, and perform regression models. Results show that migrants coming from Albania and former Yugoslavia have the highest gender equality attitudes among Muslims in Italy, while those coming from Egypt, Pakistan and Bangladesh have the highest gender disparity attitudes. The years since migration and the acquisition of Italian citizenship depict the acculturation process in the destination country which favor gender equality attitudes. Conversely, the more religious people are the more they are opposed to gender equality in family-related attitudes. However, the gradient of religious communal integration on this issue is more strongly significant than that of subjective religiosity.

Keywords. immigration, gender equality, family, religion, integration, Italy

1. Introduction

The challenges of social integration and the question of diversity imply the need for a full understanding of the cultures that migratory phenomena are entering Italian tissues, which for a long period of time have been culturally homogeneous. It is particularly interesting in this sense to focus specific attention on the Islamic religion which, in an all-encompassing way, also generally involves the lifestyles of the faithful. In the approach to Islam, it is therefore necessary to start from a fundamental methodological assumption: it cannot be reduced to the simple idea of religion, according to the classical approach, but one must contemplate both the religious and the political profile, since it is the rule of life, the law [1]. Furthermore, it must be said that Islam as such does not exist, Islamic states may exist, but there is a different adherence depending not only on the classic Sunni-Shiite partition (with a clear preponderance of the former) but on the legal schools of reference. As it is known, the first characteristic of Islam is that of the absorption of theology into law: the first juridical source is the Koran, which follows the Muhammadis imitation collected in the Sunna; we therefore have *iğmā*

¹ Corresponding Author: Giuseppe Gabrielli, giuseppe.gabrielli@unina.it

(consensus) and *qiyās* (analogical reasoning). Sharia, the positive law, integrally regulates human activity and, in particular, contains the rules that regulate the life of Muslims, in their most personal sphere and regulate marriage, family, inheritance, etc. These rules apply to the *umma* (community of believers) from birth and followed by the faithful, regardless of their residence.

Generally speaking, Islamic cultures show usually a strong gender inequality, legally structured, codified and defined at the social level. Women do not enjoy full citizenship but second class, their subordination is nothing more than the consequence of the application of Muslim family law, which derives from patriarchal and cultural norms. Among Muslims, the man-woman biological complementary has been embraced by traditional cultures [2] and has resulted in a legal complementarity, inspired by the principle of equity/*insāf* (and not the principle of equality/*musāwā*): women do not perceive themselves as heads of families; instead receive protection and in return must obey their husbands). This principle has remained unchanged, despite the processes of colonization and modernization, with evident repercussions on gender identity. Understanding these dynamics can therefore provide us with the terms and tools to provide the new challenges that are imposed on Italian legislator. It is also possible to note that in contemporary Islam, few issues are as highly controversial as gender inequalities [3]. The more traditional interpretation still supports the principle of gender complementarity/*takāmul* and conceives a clear division of social roles by gender that establish the division of employment and domestic work, responsibilities in the private environment and in family decisions and relationships in society [4]. Obviously, it is not possible to establish an archetype of Muslim woman, since an important factor is the social and legal status which depends on the social and cultural policies of the contexts concerned.

However, the process of globalization, which has taken various forms in different parts of the Muslim world, has undermined traditional conceptions of appropriate gender roles. As a result of these factors, progressive Islamic discourses on gender equality and cultural dynamics are evident in the significant changes in the traditional expectations of Muslim families. The most recent movement of the so-called “Islamic feminism”, which emerged in multiple Islamic states, as a cultural, political and social reflection (obviously with different outcomes depending on the context of reference) has promoted “equality and justice in the Muslim family” through a renewed reading of the founding texts of Islam and the use of critical *iğtihād* (reasoning) [5, 6, 7, 8, 9]. In more recent years, the struggle for the so-called gender/*ğihād* has continued, always in the wake of the Koranic law, provoking a heated debate in some Islamic states more sensitive to the processes of “modernization”.

When considering immigration to Europe, Muslims represent the largest (non-indigenous) group perceived as a major challenge of the nature of ethnic, cultural and religious diversity [10, 11]. Despite these multilevel contexts, the difference within the Muslim communities of Europe is often described in media discourse as a single typology that can be managed by the same kind of policies. In Southern European countries, Muslim immigrants have increased especially in the last two decades as these destination countries have become poles of attraction for economic migrants [12, 13]. According to the methodological strategy adopted in the Report yearbook titled “Dossier Statistico Immigrazione” (Statistical Immigration Dossier), the Muslim foreigners living in Italy were estimated about 500 thousand at the beginning of the new Millennium [14], approximately 1,650,000 foreign residents ten years later (2011) and at the most recent data (early 2020), corresponding more or less to one third of

foreign citizens residing in the country [15]. At the most recent date, the figure certainly exceeds 2 million if we also consider the residents who have acquired Italian citizenship. However, Muslim migrants cannot in any way be considered a homogeneous group, as they come from different countries (the majority of them come from Morocco and Albania), speak different languages, adhere to different versions of Islam (the majority of them are Sunni, with a Shi'ite minority). Therefore, Muslim migrants do not fit well into a monolithic conception of Islam that takes on different connotations in time and space.

In the empirical analyzes on migrants and gender roles, little space has so far been dedicated, also due to a lack of data, to the gender attitudes of Muslims in Italy [4, 16, 17]. The comparison of migrants according to their religion demonstrates that Muslims, with high degrees of religiosity, hold more conservative gender role orientations than religious Christians [18]. However, this comparison between religions reduces the heterogeneity within the Muslim group.

Providing an empirical contribute to the scarce existing literature on this topic, we aim to observe gender equality in family-related attitudes and behaviours among Muslim first-generation migrants aged 18-64 years old at interview and residing in Italy. Our main assumption is that Islamic community in Italy is significantly diversified, and gender roles in the Muslim couple are heterogeneous according to the origin and selected characteristics. We figure out a descriptive picture of the variegated Islamic universe existing in Italy by contextualizing the analysis on the socio-normative schemes of the origin countries.

Using data coming from the multipurpose "Social Condition and Integration of Foreign citizens survey" (SCIF), conducted by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istat) in 2011-2012, we consider a number of family-related attitudes and behaviours (e.g., division of household tasks and hierarchies of power within the couple, couples' money arrangements, or extra-familial socialization) to estimate a synthetic index of gender equality in family related attitudes and behaviours. Among the other factors, origin context, different dimensions of religiosity, and acculturation process have been considered for the first time, best to our knowledge, in analyzing their association to gender roles.

2. Theoretical Background

According to Islamic law, marriage (*nikâh*) is, in the first place, a legal institution aimed at regulating the social order. It has as its main objectives the care of legitimate offspring and the legalization of sexual relations. The marriage contract has different purposes for the two spouses. For the husband, it concerns the rights conferred on the person of the wife: sexual enjoyment and marital authority, with particular attention to the protection of the integrity of the nucleus. Let us not forget that the penal codes provide for absolution or reduction of the sentence for men who commit "crimes of honour". For women, however, the subject of the contract is the right to the obligatory nuptial gift and to the satisfaction of other material and emotional needs. Let us not forget that even in the case of inheritance rights, women are entitled to lower quotas than those reserved for male relatives. The violation of rights is also highlighted by depriving women of the opportunity to express their will, reducing marriage to an agreement between families rather than between individuals with equal rights and obligations.

Relationships between spouses within marriage are certainly marked by the supremacy of the husband over the wife. The roles of the spouses are also clearly defined within the education of children. The mother is entitled to custody (*hadanâh*). She has the task of raising, caring for and supervising the child. Instead, the father has the *wilâyah*, that is the power to decide on the education of children, on his education, the start of work, marriage, and the administration of his goods. Children acquire citizenship and religious status only through their fathers. Polygamy is an important institution of Islamic family law. Within the Qur'an there is a single verse that authorizes polygamy, very complex and difficult to interpret. Polygamy has long been the subject of profound criticism from the Muslim world. The juridical inequality between spouses within marriage is still manifested at dissolution event: Muslim law grants the husband the exclusive right to divorce, that is, the right to terminate the marriage by means of a simple verbal statement.

2.1. The origin context

If this is, in general, the Koranic context of configuration of social relations, it is however important to emphasize the plurality of Islam present in the different socio-political contexts, linked to cultural factors, adherence to certain legal schools but also to the historical evolution of many countries, to the phenomena of colonization, revolutions, economic backwardness etc.

The common colonial destiny of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia with the submission to “western” laws, has favoured the construction of a more modern Islam although, in the post-colonial period, Islam has acquired an important identity factor [19]. The comparison between the principle of equality and that of gender complementarity has encouraged a rewriting of the rules, especially in the areas of personal status and family law. On the other hand, the geopolitical situation of Egypt is different as, although geographically in Africa, it has always been Asian from a cultural standpoint. The Asian dimension has provided it with civilization – culture and religion. If the control by the State of the clergy is very strong in other North African countries, this has not yet happened in Egypt and this tends to leave room for the most conservative and traditionalist currents [20].

In Western Africa, religious expansion has been linked not only to the activity of merchants, but also to that of the confraternities, which here have played a decisive role in the process of Islamization, mediating, and seeking a dialogue between local pre-Islamic cultures, with ancient traditions, including the worship of ancestors and forces of nature, and helping to generate syncretic forms [21]. This has also led to particularly violent forms of female submission (just think of female genital mutilation). The context of reference, especially on our example centred on Senegal and Burkina Faso, highlights a rural area, characterized by a low literacy rate that certainly does not favour the empowerment of women.

Completely different is, instead, the “European” Islam, that endogenous nature characteristic of areas of Eastern Europe that had to live with the decades of “severe” State atheism and communist repression, becoming a religion more open to secularity and Western values linked to gender equality. After the collapse of the communist regime, religious sentiment flourished again, but this has never eradicated the much deeper sense of belonging to the nation. Religious belonging is now considered secondary to belonging to the nation [22].

There are very different situations in Asian Islam. The Middle Eastern area is particularly heterogeneous within it and does not allow its reading as a single cultural block [23]. Still different is the Islamic accession in the countries of the Persian Gulf area that have levels of female subordination difficult to explain (from a Western point of view) with the high economic level reached. Strongly traditionalist is the area of Pakistan and Bangladesh that we can describe as deeply backward cultures also from the economic point of view, more linked to patriarchal codes. Unique in the Asian landscape is the legal condition of Turkey, one of the few countries constitutionally secular, in which the construction of the State, at the beginning of the twentieth century was outlined as rejection of religious codes from public life (although Islam is currently forcefully reclaiming such spaces).

In migratory paths, the contact with Western cultures therefore highlights a legal paradox in the dualism between equality, established at the constitutional level in the host country, and female subordination, that follows the subject as belonging to the Umma/Muslim community, regardless of its geographical location [24].

Scholars also observed significant differences in their attitudes and behaviours between urban and rural populations in many countries [18, 25]: migrants who lived in rural areas generally expressed more conservative values, traditional religious beliefs, and assume less gender-egalitarian behavioural patterns than those living in urban areas. Economic and cultural globalizations affected gender roles attitudes more in urban than in rural areas: the increasing of dual-earner family type and of women education has weakened traditional gender roles and stereotypes in urban families, even though women are still facing inequalities also in these contexts [26]. However, the migration flows from rural to urban areas and vice versa may reduce the distinction of gender role in family-related attitudes and behaviours between the two populations. Nevertheless, differential cultural heritage may persist and affect familial gender-roles even after migration in the destination country.

Bearing in mind the theoretical framework cited above, we formulate two research hypotheses for our analyses:

H1 - We expect different levels of gender equality in family-related attitudes and behaviours according to the origin country, even after accounting for compositional differences;

H2 - We expect higher gender-egalitarian behavioural levels among migrants coming from urban areas.

2.2. The acculturation process

The destination context is expected to influence first-generation immigrants' attitudes and behaviours (as well as second-generation's ones) as the length of residence at the destination increases [27]. According to the theory of assimilation [28], migrants who end up in a secular host society tend to assume more gender-egalitarian attitudes and behaviours over time (and generations) by re-evaluating and changing their positions. The length of stay proxies the distance of migrants to the values and beliefs of the origin country and the impact on how much exposed a migrant is to the destination country values and beliefs. The acquisition of the citizenship, as the resultant of integration in the destination context, may also predict an acculturation process.

Existing findings on immigrants' gender attitudes and behaviour suggest that the influence of the country of origin weakens the more the acculturation process occurs. Norris and Inglehart [29] found that Muslims who move to Western countries gradually

absorb much of the host culture, including support for gender equality. Thus, once considering the time since migration, the factor on origin country tests how far origin context matters for gender-equality attitudes. We expect that the length of stay at destination countries will moderate the influence of cultural attitudes from the origin on immigrants' gender attitudes.

It is debatable in the literature if acculturation process to the host society is the resultant of an increased secularization of migrants and means dissimilation about religious beliefs [30]: Muslim migrants become less religious to develop gender-equalitarian attitudes. Standard theories of secularization assert that modernization contributes among migrants to both a decline in religiosity and a decrease in the practical relevance of religion and, in both ways, facilitates more egalitarian gender relations [31, 32]. Hence, it may be that considering religiosity in the analyses weaken the proxies of acculturation process (e.g., length of stay or citizenship), because part of the acculturation process is due to the falling levels of religiosity amongst migrants. Röder [33] finds religiosity is no longer, or less strongly negatively, connected to gender equality attitudes among migrants who have resided in Western-European countries longer.

Bearing in mind the above cited literature, we formulate the following research hypotheses:

H3 - Longer residence overall should be associated with more gender egalitarian attitudes;

H4 - Having the Italian citizenship should have a positive effect on support for gender equality.

2.3. Religiosity

The association between religiosity and gender related attitudes has attracted attention among scholars. Within the specific context of migration, researchers have focused on the role of gender in religious identity construction among migrants [33, 34] and on the influence of religious socialization process on the transmission of gender-role values in migrant families [35].

Scholars consider two core dimensions of religiosity [36, 37]: individual religiosity and religious communal integration. The secularization process in the modern European society brought to a "privatization" of religion [38, 39] and consequently to a decline of religion in political and private life [40, 41].

Individual or subjective religiosity in the literature concerns how individual defines oneself as religious and acts accordingly in private life style (e.g., observing fasts or the private practice of prayer). Individual religiosity proxies the cultural heritage, which allows for more diverse, personal, and deviating interpretations of Islam [36]. While religious communal integration or public religiosity refers to the connection of individual to their religious community and considers the religious commitments, the participation at religious groups or associations and the attendance of places of worship (e.g., mosque). It proxies the socialization process in a religious community and the exposure to religious norms and values [36, 42, 43].

Individual religiosity and religious communal integration may encounter a differential association to gender equality roles in family related attitudes and behaviours. On this issue scholars do not provide a unique result. Generally speaking, it is observed that religious migrants are less likely than secular individuals to hold egalitarian gender role attitudes and that religious communal integration has a stronger

effect on opposition to gender equality than individual religiosity [31]. However, Röder [44] asserted also that migration causes a weakening of the influence of religion on gender equality attitudes among Muslim migrants (decoupling process). Moreover, the association of religiosity with family related attitudes and behaviours may become more weaker among Muslim migrants in Italy, where Islam is a minority religion, and the number of mosques is minute in comparison to other European countries.

We formulate two adding research hypotheses bearing in mind the discussion above:

H5 - More religious migrants have less gender-egalitarian attitudes and behaviours;

H6 - Religious communal integration has a stronger gradient to gender equality than individual religiosity.

3. Data and methods

Data was taken from the “Social Condition and Integration of Foreign citizens survey” (SCIF), conducted by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istat) in 2011-2012. Further information on used data is reported by Perez [45] and in the Istat web-link: <https://www.istat.it/en/archivio/191097>. It is the unique and the most recent survey in the Italian system of multipurpose household surveys designed to collect data on families with at least one foreign citizen and to provide original information on foreign nationals living in Italy. The cross-sectional survey covers a random sample of about 9,500 households and provides information on the living conditions, behaviours, characteristics, attitudes, and opinions of the foreign citizens in Italy including information on gender roles. Although dated, the research retains its interest at least from original collected information and from a methodological point of view.

We considered the net sub-sample of men and women who arrived at adult ages in Italy (first generation migrants), who were aged 18-64 years old at interview, and who declared to be Muslim at interview. Among these, we selected 3,974 migrants coming from those countries of origin that had a sufficient sample size (more than 100 cases). The country of origin has been defined by the country of citizenship at birth.

All the analyses used weighted data to provide results which are representative for the migrant population residing in Italy.

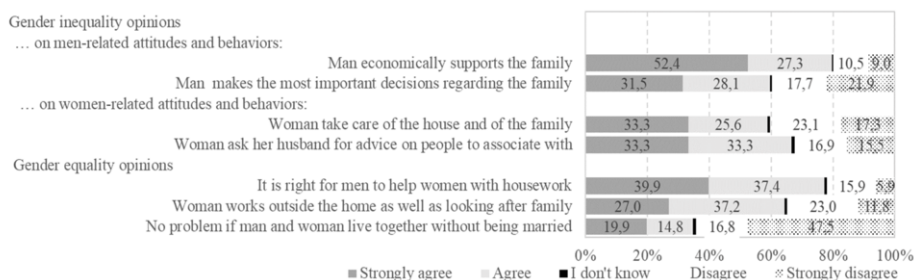
Gender role attitudes can be defined as “ideas about the goals, expectations, and actions associated with a particular gender” [46]. They can be presented on a spectrum from egalitarian to traditional gender role attitudes. The data include seven 5-point Likert scale items on the support for gender equality/inequality in family-related attitudes and behaviours:

1. “it must be the man who economically supports the family”;
2. “it must be the man who makes the most important decisions regarding the family”;
3. “the woman has to take care only of the house and the care of the family”;
4. “the woman should ask her husband for advice on people to associate with”;
5. “it is right for men to help women with housework”;
6. “family life can work if the woman works outside the home as well as looking after the house and children”;
7. “there is nothing wrong with a man and a woman living together without being married”.

The distributions according to the degree of agreement (from strongly agree to strongly disagree) of respondents with each of the seven statements are shown in Figure 1. Nearly 80% of Muslim migrants agree that “it must be the man who economically supports the family”. Less large but still the majority (about 60%) is the proportion of migrants who believes that “must be the man to make important decisions for the family”. Regarding women attitudes and behaviours, almost 60% of migrants agree with the statement that “women should only take care of the house and families” and exactly two thirds approve that “the woman should ask her husband for advice on people to associate with”. The openness towards de facto unions appears to be contained (just over a third of respondents agree) while the availability of the hypothesis that “women can carry out extra-domestic work activities” appears wider (almost two thirds). Only with regard to domestic activities, however, a more modern position prevails: over three quarters of migrants agree that “it is right for men to help women with housework”.

These seven items are similar to those commonly contained in the literature concerning gender equality issues, tapping the gender roles in the decision-making, the domestic economy, the workforce, the childcare, and the family [18, 47, 48, 49, 50]. They help to define the gender equality in family related attitudes and behaviours in contrast with traditional heritage and patriarchal norms and values. Two of them concern the roles of man within the family, two the roles of woman, and three opinions on family and couple life.

Figure 1. Items on gender equality/inequality in family-related attitudes and behaviours. First generation Muslim adult migrants in Italy. Weighted percentage values (%).



Source: our elaboration on SCIF data, 2011-2012.

A synthetic index of gender equality attitudes was adopted to measure the gender disparities in the attitudes that we described so far. According to the literature [51], it assumes continuous scores that range from -1 (max gender disparity) to +1 (max gender equality) and total mean value equals to 0. These scores are determined starting from the relative frequency distributions of the seven items, appropriately ordering the categories from the worst to the best situation of gender equality.

The score, assigned to each category of each variable, is obtained through the difference between the sum of the relative frequencies that belong to the previous modalities minus the sum of the relative frequencies that belong to the following modalities. All scores (as well as their arithmetic mean) are assigned to migrants according to their given answers. The answers of the last three items were reversed to achieve the same direction of the others.

This creates a metric that presents a characteristic of undoubted interest: it reflects the criterion according to which the top (or tail) positions among the modalities of an ordinal variable are as rewarding (or penalizing), the more such positions are “exclusive” [52].

Table 1 illustrates the process of determining the scores relative to the modalities of answer to the first of the seven variables considered, that relating to the statement “it must be the man who economically supports the family”. In this case, being in “strong agreement” means not having gender equality attitudes. The score is negative and equal to minus the sum of the relative frequencies of the subsequent modalities (-0.472).

Table 1. Calculation of the scores corresponding to the answer modalities on the agreement with the affirmation “it must be the man who economically supports the family”

Level of agreement	i	Absolute values	Relative frequencies (f_i)	Scores (s_i)	Calculation formulas of scores
Strongly agree	1	2,082	0.528	-0,472	$s_1 = -f_2 - f_3 - f_4$
Agree	2	1,086	0.276	0,332	$s_2 = +f_1 - f_3 - f_4$
Disagree	3	415	0.105	0,713	$s_3 = +f_1 + f_2 - f_4$
Strongly disagree	4	357	0.091	0,909	$s_4 = +f_1 + f_2 + f_3$
I don't know		33		0,000	
Total		3,974	1.000		

Source: our elaboration on SCIF data, 2011-2012

Those who answer “I don't know” are excluded from the calculations and get a score of zero which is equal to the average. Respondents who declare agreement obtain a score equal to the relative frequency of the previous modality (0.528) minus the sum of the relative frequencies of the two subsequent modalities (-0.196). The score is therefore equal to +0.332. Those who replied that they strongly disagree with the statement obtained a score resulting from the sum of the relative frequencies of the three previous modalities. This is a very high score (0.909), close to the maximum value (+1), because it refers to an extremely small group of interviewees.

Once the scores that correspond to the modalities of each of the seven statements belonging to him/her have been introduced, each individual will be associated (in accordance with the modalities that distinguish him/her) a series of scores on gender equality attitudes whose average will to be taken as a synthetic measure of individual gender equality attitudes. It should also be noted that, since for each variable date the sum of the scores assigned to the entire population is always zero (by construction), the overall average of the synthetic scores will also be zero, both at the level of single statement and of the synthetic index [52].

To avoid compositional effects, we used the index of gender equality attitudes as dependent variable of three nested linear regression models in order to consider those individual characteristics and behaviours associated to gender attitudes. Table 2 presents the descriptive characteristics and behaviours of the sample considered in our analyses.

Among the target variables we consider two variables that concern the origin context (country of citizenship at birth and Municipality dimension in the country of origin), two variables related to the acculturation process (years since migration and having Italian citizenship), and three variables related to religiosity (importance of religion, observing fasts, and religious attendance). We also control for a number of

standard factors associated gender-related attitudes and behaviours in the literature: gender, age at interview, educational level, employment, marital status, number of children.

According to citizenship at birth, Moroccans are the largest group (38.4%), followed by that of Albanians (16.7%) and therefore by all the Muslim migrants originating from the former Yugoslavia (9.3%). Egyptians are 6% of the total and for this reason they are considered individually. The other nationalities of origin, as done for the former Yugoslavia, were aggregated using the criterion of geographical proximity. Persons with passports at birth from Pakistan and Bangladesh together represent 11.8% of the collective considered. Slightly lower is the weight of Tunisians and Algerians considered jointly (11%), while the importance of Senegalese and Burkinabe is less relevant (6.8%).

The 39.7% of Muslim migrants is women who on average are significantly younger (34.9 years old) and arrived in more recent years than the men counterpart. All Muslim migrants have on average an heterogeneous educational level (23.3% up to primary, 37.4 lower secondary, 32.7 upper secondary and 6.5 tertiary education) and come from different places of origin according to the municipality dimension (more than 40% lived in middle and small cities, almost 33% in towns and the remaining 27% in villages and countryside). Only 7.8% acquired the Italian citizenship, with a higher percentage among men (9.5%) than among women (5.3%). The employed are 72% with significant gender differences: almost all men have paid work at interview (93.5%), while less than half of women have the same condition (39.2%).

Almost two thirds of the Muslim migrants are married (64.2%), with non-negligible differences in marital status by gender: in particular, only 13.4% of women is single at interview, while this percentage is more than double among men (29.1%). Interestingly, a quarter of Muslim migrants has three or more children (27.0%) and another quarter of them has two children (25.4%).

When considering individual religiosity, we analyse both the subjective religiosity and the religious communal integration [49]. The former is measured through the self-evaluation score of the importance of religion (in a range from 0 to 10) and the habit of fasting, as individual religious act. On average, both men and women give significant importance to religion (the mean scores are equal to 8.1 and 8.4 respectively) and almost three quarters of them observe fasts (72.7%). The religious communal integration is measured by looking at religious attendance. Interestingly, in this case migrants are divided among those who attend a place of worship (e.g., mosque) frequently (at least once a week, 31.9%), those who sometimes do it (monthly or yearly, 28.4%), and those who never do it (39.7%). In the latter group the percentage of women is significantly higher (46.0%) than the one of men (35.6%).

Table 2. Sample characteristics. First generation Muslim adult migrants in Italy. Weighted absolute (abs. val.) and percentage values (%).

Variables	Modalities	abs val.	%	
<i>Target variables:</i>				
Citizenship at birth	Albania	663	16.7	
	Former Yugoslavia ^(a)	371	9.3	
	Morocco	1,527	38.4	
	Tunisia and Algeria	436	11.0	
	Egypt	239	6.0	
	Senegal and Burkina Faso	271	6.8	
	Pakistan and Bangladesh	468	11.8	
	Municipality dimension in the country of origin	Town	1,309	32.9
		Middle or small city	1,592	40.1
	Village or countryside	1,074	27.0	
Years since migration in Italy	<i>(mean value)</i>	3,974	11.3	
Italian citizenship	Yes	309	7.8	
	No	3,665	92.2	
Importance of religion ^(b)	<i>(mean value)</i>	3,974	8.2	
Observing fasts	No	1,086	27.3	
	Yes	2,888	72.7	
Religious attendance	At least once a week	1,267	31.9	
	At least once in a month	486	12.2	
	At least once in a year	643	16.2	
	Never	1,578	39.7	
<i>Control variables:</i>				
Gender	Men	2,398	60.4	
	Women	1,576	39.7	
Age at interview	<i>(mean value)</i>	3,974	36.6	
Educational level	No Educ. or primary	927	23.3	
	Lower secondary	1,486	37.4	
	Upper secondary	1,301	32.7	
	Tertiary	259	6.5	
	Italian citizenship	Yes	309	7.8
	No	3,665	92.2	
Employed (paid job)	Yes	2,859	71.9	
	No	1,115	28.1	
Marital status	Single	908	22.9	
	Married	2,549	64.2	
	Divorced or separated	473	11.9	
	Widow	43	1.1	
Number of children	None	1,223	30.8	
	One child	670	16.9	
	Two children	1,009	25.4	
	Three children	658	16.6	
	Four and more children	415	10.4	
<i>N</i>		3,974	100.0	

Notes: (a) Former Yugoslavia: Bosnia, Croazia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, Kosovo; (b) Self-evaluation score of the importance of religion in a range from 0 to 10.

Source: our elaboration on SCIF data, 2011-2012.

4. Results

Moving the attention on gender equality attitudes and the context of origin (Table 3), the estimated synthetic index show, as we can expect, that migrants coming from Albania and from former Yugoslavia have the highest values (i.e. the highest gender equality among Muslims, 0.216 and 0.045 respectively), while Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria occupy a somehow middle ground position (-0.027 and -0.036 respectively), and Egypt, Pakistan and Bangladesh have the lowest values (i.e. the highest gender disparity, -0.105 and -0.137 respectively). Interestingly, Senegal and Burkina Faso

assume a value (-0.049) closer to the ones observed for Northern African countries than to the ones observed for the two South-Asian countries. Looking at municipality dimension, migrants coming from urban areas have an average positive synthetic index value (0.058) against a negative mean value of those coming from village or countryside (-0.074).

As signal of acculturation process, the average value of the synthetic indicator increases as the years since immigration increase (from -0.048 among those who arrived for less than 5 years before interview to 0.034 among those who arrived 10-14 years, respectively). Moreover, the average value of the index is also higher among migrants who have Italian citizenship (0.075) than among those who have not (-0.006).

The link between individual religiosity and gender equality attitudes also appears confirmed in this first analysis. The more important religion is evaluated, the lower the average value of the index that measures gender equality attitudes (from 0.170 in the case of vote below 6 to -0.065 in the case of maximum vote, respectively). Moreover, the more traditional and conservative attitudes are among the migrants who declared observing fasts (-0.045 against 0.120).

Concerning the religious communal integration, the average value of the synthetic index decreases as the frequency of religious attendance increases (from -0.111 among migrants who went to mosque at least once a week to 0.103 among migrants who never went there), signalling decreasing attitudes towards gender equality.

Among control variables, women hold more gender-egalitarian attitudes than men do (0.068 and -0.045 respectively). According to a sociological approach [53], gender roles for women have been altered and are much more flexible than the ones for men counterpart. Thus, women re-interpret their religious identity and family roles more strongly than men do, because of their strong motivation provided by the limitations of religious norms.

Not surprisingly, gender egalitarian attitudes and behaviours decrease with increasing age and increases with increasing level of education. Gender equality is observed more frequently among migrants who are employed than among those who are unemployed, among singles than among divorced and widowers. While it significantly decreases among migrants with three and more children.

The use of linear regression models allows us to verify the importance of the target variables avoiding compositional effects (Table 4). After controlling for gender and age at interview, the heterogeneities of gender egalitarian attitudes by country of citizenship at birth and by municipality dimension in the country of origin (M1) are statistically significant (see p-values). The same emerges when considering the statistical significance of years since migration and the acquisition of Italian citizenship (M2), as well as the importance of religion, observing fasts, and religious attendance (M3).

Also including the other control variables in the model (M4), target variables remain significant, although the magnitude of their coefficients partially reduces. One important exception is represented by the variable on “observing fasts” that results no more significant after controlling for the other characteristics and behaviours.

Table 3. Index of gender equality attitudes by sample characteristics.
 First generation Muslim adult migrants in Italy. Mean values and standard errors (std. er.)

Variables	Modalities	Mean	Std. err.
<i>Target variables:</i>			
Citizenship at birth	Albania	0.216	0.315
	Former Yugoslavia ^(a)	0.045	0.326
	Morocco	-0.027	0.341
	Tunisia and Algeria	-0.036	0.329
	Egypt	-0.105	0.256
	Senegal and Burkina Faso	-0.049	0.307
	Pakistan and Bangladesh	-0.137	0.284
Municipality dimension in the country of origin	Town	0.058	0.339
	Middle or small city	0.002	0.337
	Village or countryside	-0.074	0.344
Years since migration in Italy	Less than 5	-0.048	0.332
	5-9	0.001	0.336
	10-14	0.034	0.352
	15 and more	0.004	0.345
Italian citizenship	Yes	0.075	0.324
	No	-0.006	0.344
Importance of religion ^(b)	Vote less than 6	0.170	0.343
	Vote 6 or 7	0.049	0.343
	Vote 8 or 9	0.006	0.339
	Vote 10	-0.065	0.327
Observing fasts	Yes	-0.045	0.330
	No	0.120	0.350
Religious attendance	At least once a week	-0.111	0.305
	At least once in a month	-0.086	0.319
	At least once in a year	0.031	0.350
	Never	0.103	0.343
<i>Control variables:</i>			
Gender	Men	-0.045	0.335
	Women	0.068	0.344
Age at interview	Less than 30 yrs. old	0.047	0.342
	Between 30 and 36 yrs. old	-0.001	0.341
	Between 37 and 44 yrs. old	-0.020	0.349
	45 and more yrs. old	-0.033	0.334
Educational level	No Educ. or primary	-0.123	0.303
	Lower secondary	-0.001	0.331
	Upper secondary	0.074	0.352
	Tertiary	0.079	0.377
Employed (paid job)	Yes	0.006	0.349
	No	-0.016	0.328
Marital status	Single	0.030	0.346
	Married	0.010	0.340
	Divorced or separated	-0.104	0.340
	Widow	-0.079	0.270
Number of children	None	0.015	0.355
	One child	0.049	0.315
	Two children	0.027	0.357
	Three children	-0.032	0.323
	Four and more children	-0.137	0.308
Total		0.000	0.343

Notes: (a) Former Yugoslavia: Bosnia, Croazia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, Kosovo; (b) Self-evaluation score of the importance of religion in a range from 0 to 10.

Source: our elaboration on SCIF data, 2011-2012.

Table 4. Determinants of index of gender equality attitudes.
First generation Muslim adult migrants in Italy. Linear regression models^{(a) (b)}. Coefficients and p-values.

Variables	Modalities	M1		M4	
		Coef.	p-value	Coef.	p-value
Citizenship at birth (ref. Morocco)	Albania	0,239	***	0,153	***
	Former Yugoslavia ^(c)	0,101	***	0,057	***
	Tunisia and Algeria	-0,004		-0,021	
	Egypt	-0,070	***	-0,067	***
	Senegal and Burkina Faso	0,001		0,037	*
Municipality dimension in the country of origin (ref. Town)	Pakistan and Bangladesh	-0,103	***	-0,084	***
	Middle or small city	-0,057	***	-0,043	***
	Village or countryside	-0,137	***	-0,108	***
		M2			
Years since migration	(discrete values)	0,025	***	0,016	***
Years since migration squared	(discrete values)	-0,001	***	-	***
Italian citizenship (ref. No)	Yes	0,093	***	0,078	***
		M3			
Importance of religion ^(d)	(discrete values)	-0,020	***	-0,010	***
Observing fasts (ref. No)	Yes	-0,051	***	0,012	
Religious attendance	At least once in a month	0,019		-0,001	
(ref. At least once a week)	At least once in a year	0,114	***	0,079	***
	Never	0,148	***	0,105	***

Notes: (a) control variables in M1 – M3 - gender and age; control variables in M4 – gender, age, education, employment, marital status, number of children; (b) Adj R-squared: M1 = 0.146; M2 = 0.082; M3 = 0.127; M4 = 0.240; (c) Former Yugoslavia: Bosnia, Croazia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, Kosovo; (d) Self-evaluation score of the importance of religion in a range from 0 to 10.

Legend: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Source: our elaboration on SCIF data, 2011-2012.

More in details, Muslim migrants coming from Albania ($b = 0.153$) and former Yugoslavia ($b = 0.057$) have more egalitarian attitudes than Moroccans (reference category), while those coming from Egypt, Pakistan, and Bangladesh have more conservative ones ($b = -0.067$ and -0.084 respectively). The gradient on municipality dimension on gender egalitarian attitudes is less important than the one on country of origin, although equally significant: the coefficients of Muslim migrants who lived in medium and small-size cities ($b = -0.043$), and of those who lived in village or countryside ($b = -0.108$) are negative compared to those migrants who lived in urban areas. The longer is the time since migration in Italy ($b = 0.016$), the more attitudes (even if at a decreasing rate) are pro gender equality. Having Italian citizenship ($b = 0.078$) is positively associated with pro gender equality attitudes. All other characteristics being considered, the coefficient decreases as the importance of religion increases ($b = -0.010$), while it is significantly higher among those who have little or no religious attendance ($b = 0.079$ and 0.105 respectively).

5. Discussion

The major contribution of this paper is to describe the main factors at the origin and destination that influence Muslim migrants' gender roles in family related attitudes and behaviours. To do so, we consider three main specific aspects (the origin context, the acculturation process, and the religiosity) and six main research hypotheses to guide our analyses.

According to our hypothesis, results showed different levels of gender equality by origin country, even after accounting for compositional effects (H1). The "European" Islam, represented in the analyses through the Albanian and former Yugoslavia migrant groups, seems to be a religion more open to secularity and Western values linked to modernization and gender equality [19]. On the other hand, the Egyptian migrants are different and there is still room among them for conservative and traditionalist gender roles [20]. The attitudes and behaviours of Muslim migrants coming from Pakistan and Bangladesh are confirmed: they are more linked than the other ethnic groups to patriarchal codes [23].

Our results also observed significant differences in their attitudes and behaviours among migrants coming from different municipality dimensions: there are higher gender-egalitarian behavioural levels among migrants coming from urban areas (H2). According to the literature [18, 25], this is the result of the different levels of cultural globalization. Thus, the differential cultural heritage seems to persist and to affect familial gender-roles even after migration in the destination country.

Also, the acculturation process has a positive role among first generation migrants in reaching more gender egalitarian attitudes and behaviours [27, 29]. The years since migration and the acquisition of Italian citizenship proxy the distance of migrants to the values and beliefs of the origin country that weaken the more the acculturation process occurs: results showed that longer residence and acquiring Italian citizenship have a positive effect on support for gender equality (H3-H4). In our analyses, factors of acculturation process remained significant, although their magnitude reduced after controlling for the migrants' level of religiosity. Thus, our results provide support both for acculturation and for secularization processes [44].

Last three variables consider the effects of individual religiosity and of religious communal integration on attitudes about gender equality. The direction of both effects indicates that on average the more religious migrants are, the more they oppose gender equality (H5). Both individual religiosity and religious communal integration exert a significant role even if at different levels. According to the literature [30], the coefficient of religious communal integration is substantially larger and more strongly significant than that of individual religiosity (H6).

6. Conclusion

In this article, we have originally described to what extent migration and secularization undermined the traditional views of Islamic complementary gender roles and determined various forms of gender-related attitudes among migrants coming in Italy from diverse parts of the Islam context. This issue supports the necessity to consider both religion and origin country in the analyses and not to assume that belonging to specific religion, such as Islam, is associated with unique behaviours or attitudes. As

Röder [44] highlights, gender traditionalism is not synonymous with Muslim affiliation.

Even if relevant individual characteristics and behaviours are taken into account in the analyses, immigrants from a gender-egalitarian country hold attitudes that are more egalitarian. Origin country globalization and modernization have increased women's educational and social opportunities and eased their entry into paid employment, a role traditionally reserved for men. Empirical results suggest that the influence of the country of origin weakens the more the acculturation process occurs: Muslim migrants who live since longer time in Italy or acquired Italian citizenship tend to assume more egalitarian attitudes than the others. Our findings also suggest that religious Muslims hold less gender egalitarian attitudes than more secular individuals. However, according to the literature, the factual explanatory power of migrants' religiosity lags far behind its prominence in public debates: religious commitment is just one among several factors and not even a particularly important one.

However, our analyses suffer various limits. It has to be emphasized that our findings cannot be generalized to the whole Muslim population living in Italy. Data allowed us to consider only specific ethnic groups of firstgeneration migrants. The empirical evidence on the heterogeneities within Muslim residents in Italy may be even larger when considering also other minorities (such as migrants coming from the Middle East or the Persian Gulf). As well, it has not been possible for the characteristics of the sample size to analyse second generation migrants and the differences across migratory generation. This is mostly due to the relatively young age of descendants of immigrants who have arrived massively in Italy only during the past three decades, with a still consequent lack of exhaustive data at adult ages.

Second the sample size does not allow us to perform separate analyses by gender, but only to control the compositional effect of this important characteristic of Muslim migrants. According to the literature, our results show that women hold more gender-egalitarian roles in family related attitudes and behaviours [47]. However, further analyses are needed to find empirical evidence on acculturation process and on religiosity's effects by gender. In the literature, adult migrant women, in particular those migrated for economic reasons, find more opportunities in the destination society with reduced familiar constraints and limitations [30, 36, 54]. Moreover, Muslim migrant women should acculturate more rapidly than men acquiring more gender-egalitarian behavioural patterns according to the length of stay in the destination society. Also, the association between (individual and communal) religiosity and gender equality in family related attitudes and behaviours differs between men and women [36]. Van Klingeren and Spierings [49] found that religious communal integration has the clearest negative association with gender equality attitudes among women, whereas individual religiosity has such an association among men. The religious attendance is linked to follow religious norms and traditions more for women than for men: the mosque attendance represents more a matter of religiosity for women and more a social event for men [55].

Third, we empirically analyzed gender related attitudes and behaviours by concentrating on family issues and by computing a specific synthetic indicator. Different results may emerge when using different methodological strategies (e.g., principal component analysis) or different research fields (women education, emancipation, employment, active participation).

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