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**The State of Muslim Girls in Physical Activities and Sport and Significance of Parenting in Islamic Perspective**  
**(The case of Central and Southern Finland)**

University of Jyväskylä  
Department of Sport Sciences  
Master's Thesis  
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The role of young Muslim girls in sport activities in Western Europe seems a challenging circumstance which required more considerations, particularly in school settings according to previous studies report. The main objective of this study was to explore and investigate the available evidences regarding Muslim girls' participation in sport and physical activities in the central and south Finland schools, as it is still remains with some unanswered questions.

More specifically, the study tried to assess the participation of Muslim girls in physical and sport activities in schools; how parents perceive the school system regarding the P.E. lesson; what parents should do to let their girl's participate in physical activities; and what should P.E. teachers do to facilitate Muslim girls in this regards.

To answer the above research questions, a qualitative method particularly ethnographic study method was employed. The research was conducted in the central and southern Finland. In total six schools were purposely selected based on the attendance of Muslim girls. Both primary and secondary schools are included in this study. A total of 6 girls, 11 parents, and 6 respective P.E. teachers of the students were included.

To gather relevant data for the study, following sources were used namely interview, participation observation, informal discussion, and document analysis were used. Semi-structured interview guide was prepared and used for participating sport teachers, Muslim girls, and parents.

The study revealed that Muslim girls are required to participate in all physical activities as other pupils do. However, most of the Muslim girls did not participate in public swimming pools because of Islamic moral values and obligations.

The study showed that almost all parents expressed the importance of sport and physical education for Muslim girls; however, they emphasized the need to facilitate the religious obligations in schools. Regarding what the P.E. teachers should do to accommodate the needs of Muslim girls, the teachers showed their willingness to give value and respect the religious obligations of their students; however, they may not be able to fulfill all demands that are made by students unless the school system enforces clear rules in this regard.

Key words: activities, girl, Islam, Muslim, parent, parenting, physical, religion, school, sports, teacher,

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## **1. Introduction:**

Now days, Muslim girls are participating in different sport activities in schools and higher institutions, however, there are some Muslim girls who refused to participation when the school system is not in line with their religious obligations. Particularly, Muslim students attending schools in Finland have a lot of sport activities as part of the school curriculum and they are expected to perform accordingly. Regarding these issues different scholars revealed different findings from literature and field based practices. A study conducted by Knop,P.D. et al. (1996) showed that the role of young Muslim girls in Western Europe and sport seems a challenging circumstance which required getting more consideration, particularly in the school. However, the research has explored that a number of girls have positive approach regarding sport. Nevertheless, Muslim girls sport participation level is below average to compare with other adolescents. The researcher assumed that this divergence is mainly due to the religious constraints concerning female sport participation.

On the other hand, a number of Islamic scholars argued that Islam does not impede females' sport participation. Similarly, Knop,P.D. et al.(1996), tried to reveal the characteristic of the relationship between Islam and the sport participation of Muslim girls who live in Western Europe. Accordingly the position of ethnic minority in Western Europe is being more and more problematic, especially towards Muslim communities. In addition, because of economic recession the living conditions of immigrant families are becoming worse as compared to the autochthonous population.

Consequently the generation of immigrant is facing more and more difficulties such as low educational level, high unemployment, and delinquency, so on. According to Knop, P.D. et al. (1996) young Muslim faces vulnerable situation in the society and public institutions do not facilitate them in order to meet their needs. They are deprived of getting education, assistance,

material facilities and social opportunities; moreover they are frequently confronted with intolerance by others. Mostly, this racism and discriminatory behavior act towards the Islamic communities. It is expressed that as an ethnic minority Muslim young generation undergo with challenging position concerning education, housing, leisure, family situation, judicature, health and finance.

Besides the mentioned fact above; Muslim girls are obliged to follow the rules of Islam. This can be obstacle to practice sport and physical activities in Western countries. For instance, Knop (1996) focused on the position of Muslim women in Islam. His research focuses on the circumstances of female in the both Islamic and western culture.

According to Islam, every Muslim is responsible for own deeds and required to make direct relationship with Allah (S.W.T). Due to this, Islam is concerned about the social dimension to establish peaceful environment (Knop, 1996). Primarily Islam concentrates towards five pillars as obligatory duties. First of all *tawuhid/shahdah* (the belief that Allah is only one and Mohammad (S.A.W.) is His messenger); Secondly, *salat* (the daily prayers); thirdly, *sawm* (fasting during the month of Ramadan); fourthly; *zakat* (re-distribution of the wealth to the poor); and fifthly; *hajj* (the visit to Holy place called Mecca).

It seems that limited attention has been paid upon the participation of Muslim girls in P.E. lesson in Finland as well as other western countries. The present appraisal would disclose the participation of the girls in sports and physical activities in schools and the challenges this group of youth may faces. Finnish school system is very strict about the curriculum for P.E. as well as other lessons. On the other hand, Muslim girl's activities rely on religious obligations for sport or any other subjects. It is stated in Knop P.D et al (1996) that beside various problems in the west, Muslim girls are confronted with their religious obligations. However a number of prominent Muslim scholar have argued Islam does not obstruct females' participation in sport and physical

activity, rather impose some specific rules, which is not required only for female but also their counterpart male.

The present research highlighted the principle of Islam and the obligation of the believer. The research is offered on the basis of the argument that if school system adopts some principles and makes new rules to facilitate their students that are having religious obligations, then it would encourage the students at the one hand and would develop understanding between the teachers and students, on the other. The main issues that require immediate attention are swimming, dress code, taking shower, other gender based activities and music.

People in western culture have also confusion about the sport participation of Muslims when they observe discrepancy among each other. This study has made an attempt to provide Islamic scholar's refutation about some common misconceptions in the west about the position of women in Islamic context. It is found that women's position in Islam and the role of parenting in Islamic perspectives are immensely controversial subjects in the west, especially in schools. A number of authors have claimed that Muslim children particularly the girls are constrained with some specific rules by their parents' culture.

The aim of this research is to show what kind of problems Muslim girls face in P.E. lessons. Mainly, the report is focused on "why parenting in Islamic context is most crucial element to bring up children".

Muslim Children's life style is different than others in western society. While, Muslims are oriented their life according to their religious norm from childhood; which their parent obligated

from Allah (SWT). According to Quran and Hadith every parent will be asked about their duty towards children and Allah (SWT) warns that people must be conscious about themselves, their children and their families from hellfire. It means that everyone must obey Allah's (SWT) rules and regulations; otherwise they will get hard punishment. As it is said in Quran that Hellfire is already burning and whose fuel is people and stones (Hamdan, 2009.p.36).According Hamdan (2009), people should realize about the verses of Quran; because Allah (SWT) has cautioned about how people will be treated in the resurrection day. That is why it should be main focus in parenting from an Islamic viewpoint.

Muslim girls are practically different from others in a western society. As their parent train them from early life to practice Islam. Reasonably Muslim girls avoid exposing them beside opposite sex and keeping their beauties in hidden in public place. According *Hadith* parent must teach their children to pray five times a day since 7 years old and should be very strict if children not to do that from years 10 of their age. Actually parents are obliged by Allah (SWT) to follow Islamic rules by themselves and practise their subordinate, especially own children. As a matter of fact Muslim girls keep them in a boundary of Islam. This life style can be the cause differences between Muslim and western girls in the school and or elsewhere in the world.

The general objective of the study was to explore how do Muslim girls participate in physical and sport activities and how parenting style and the school system in Finland affect their participation.

More specifically, it is:

- a) to assess how the Muslim girls participate in sport or physical activities in schools
- b) to focus on parenting style that is recommended from Islamic perspective to let girls participate in schools.

- c) to suggest possible ways to teachers to accommodate Muslim girls in physical or sport activities.

The final output of this ethnographic research would help professionals from the field of sport and health science and sport management in particular to understand the rules of Islamic ethics about the participations of Muslim girls in school activities. Consequently, it would help Muslim parents in central and southern Finland as well as other regions to ensure participation of Muslim girls in sport activities without the violation of Islamic rules.

Researcher felt very comfort to study in this field. This study enhances her knowledge from different aspects in European context. It was great opportunity for her that she had study *Quran*, *Hadith* and Islamic literature a lot, ever before in her life. Moreover, visiting six schools also provide her practical experiences which can be thought for future development for school. She is grateful to Allah (SWT) that she was able to make face to face interviews of school girls, their respectable parents and teachers. Also she believes that it become possible because of the help of Allah (SWT) that she was able to point out and to refute many misconceptions of western people about Islam in the data collection period. The study would also serve as a stepping stone for professionals in the area of sports and health sciences to explore more issues about Muslim girls and their participation in schools. It could also contribute to policy formulations, teacher training, and parents' awareness programs in the context of Finland. The scope of this study is limited to Muslim girls, their parents, and their respective sport teachers in Central and Southern Finland elementary and high schools.

Apart from the time and resource constraint to include some more Muslim girls and sport teachers in this study, the procedure to get consent from school administration was a very difficult task for the researcher because in many cases, school's administration took long time to respond and to give approval for data collection. Regardless of the effort made by the researcher

to approach some schools, the response coming from some sport teachers was discouraging. One teacher totally rejected the request saying “I am not interested about it” But overall response was very positive. They not only approved the data collection from their schools but also they showed flexibility to address the problems of their Muslim students.

The other limitation of this study was the difficulty in meeting some of the parents for making a face-to face interview. In order to overcome this difficulty telephone interviews were conducted, however sense of closeness and all the emotional expressions were missed out.

## **2. Method**

### **2.1. Qualitative Research**

The research relied upon qualitative method, as the interpretation of qualitative research is to explain something in a comprehensive and complete way where people are involved.

The interpretation of qualitative research is to explain something, particularly a literary text, in a comprehensive and formal way which peoples are involve in the world or to notice or discover which existence in the planet. Qualitative research initiates from the supposition or hypothesis which investigator could achieve the great understanding of peoples and their worlds through usual conversations and observations. It does not need any theory; rather accumulate data of experience throughout observation and experiment. Despite the cultural and linguistic differences, to share and understanding, to interact and interpret could make the source of availability of data. (Jaber & Sankar (1994), David Silverman (1997)).

As people have different emotions, attitude, behavior within a culture and these variable outlooks are seen in dress, body language, accent, gesticulate and some other special arrangements. Qualitative research compromises with the understanding and know each others' function of life in the own society, simultaneously to obtain an idea about the other world. Consequently, the researches accept most concentration of experiential grasp of the situation from side to side; all experiences are get importance like as from interview, observation and documentary analysis. [(Jaber & Sankar (1994), David Silverman (1997))].

Moreover, the researches concede of the role of researchers to achieve the fact of experience. Additionally, a researcher is considered to be a part of data-collection and analysis process, as she or he gathered the impression and emotion through communication with the participants provide the source for subject of the research process. The qualitative research is a scientific method, the perspectives of researchers' is to be potential influences in the direction of social, cultural and political sectors. Particularly, it is required to be concentrated towards the actors and to be aware and relevant as researchers are representing the experiences of the participants in their researches. At last not the least, researchers have to creating the feeling for and concentration about ethical issues in the whole time of the research process. [(Jaber & Sankar (1994), David Silverman (1997))].

The study employed qualitative approach specifically ethnographic method was used for data collection. This methodology was chosen because the researcher lived in central Finland, Jyvaskyla since 1995; that the researcher has school age children and familiar with the school system; that the researcher is assimilated into the language and culture of the research areas; that the researcher did her BA honors and MA degree in Islamic studies. Moreover, the researcher obtained an experience as a teacher from a secondary and higher secondary school and college that would help to understand both the practice and the concept of Islam; and that the researcher

has a project on different sport activities for Muslim community since 2001-2008 under the Jyvaskyla city and the University of Jyväskylä.

## **2.2. Ethnography/Participant Observation**

Generally ethnography is known as a cultural description based on the personal experiences of authors. Ethnography appears more or less in the field where researchers could stake out a group and live with them for a short time in order to get information through observation and conversation.

Ethnography described as, “the anthropological tradition, primarily through the influential work of Bronislaw Malinowski, Edward Evans-Pritchard and Margaret Mead, had conferred an abiding legitimacy on field observations integrated into a ‘cultural whole’ (Silverman,1997,p,8)”. However, when ethnographers focus on the value of fieldwork the consequences are more about the demonstration of relationship between appearances of diverse action moderately than trying to recognize a culture as a whole.

A number of ethnographers like Isabelle Baszanger and Nicolas Dodier had characterized the ethnographic research as, a requirement of an empirical approach; the research have to contain the basic principle regarding to avoid codify at the time of the study; a perception of the fieldworker for grounding the experiences which observed in the field (Silverman 1997).

The present world stands on short spaces where multicultural people living side by side, thus heterogeneous identities can be seen in the same boundary. Despite the fact ethnographic study

paying attention to provide complete explanation through observation, interaction or mutual understanding of assorted culture or sub-culture.

As the most significant approach of ethnography is empirical observation which conducted along with the concrete facts of the group or culture. On the other hand introspection which provides the source for empirical approach. The resources of pragmatic research make ethnography studies accomplish over a prolonged period of time since people interact and mobilize to understand the world.

Consequently, ethnography study do not consent to others research methods like, phenomenology, hermeneutics and so forth. The discipline of the ethnographic research field worker requires being free and frank in order to ascertain the information from the people in general. As, people mobilize in their communication with others, more generally with the world which focus the manifestation or normative expectations of the culture.

But also cultural interaction influenced by linguistic or para-linguistic contact. Beyond a certain guide for the behaviour, to maintain at least a minimum of method in the conduct of the study, flexibility is also required for both fieldworker and the people observe. (Silverman, 1997).

It is very usual that social scientists wish to look at the endogenous development of human activities approach. However, a quantity of them try to find to conform as closely as possible to the prerequisite undergoing experiment necessary for reproduction of the results and building upon the research. Although, they consent to open commotion sequence to take place and homogenize the time space, at the same time record it by tape recorder or VCR.

On the other hand, some others resist accepting any kind of planning. However, it is required to comprise between both method and openness. Which make ethnographer's work moral and

scientific endeavour. So, ethnographic study intends to a hybrid of data gather, any observation and focus study.

The study can be considered as an ethnographic if field worker could understand the fact and to know the background, which is not in favour of that and the relation to historical and cultural contingencies. Different empirical studies can be observed in the social sciences, some attempt to universalized which are formal in nature, while others resolutely grounded in a specific context.

The research was conducted in the central and southern Finland. Totally, 6 schools were purposely selected based on the attendance of Muslim girls. The target schools include both primary and secondary schools.

The sources of the data were sport or physical activity teachers, Muslim girls attending school, and their respective parents. The girls were taken from grade three to nine. Totally, 6 girls, 11 parents, and 6 respective teachers of the students were included.

Target schools and participants were purposely selected as follows:

Six schools where Muslim girls were participate. Participating girls and their respective parents are practice Muslims. Additionally they were members of the Muslim Community in Central and Southern Finland. All P.E. teachers had Muslim girls in the lessons.

To gather relevant data for the study, interview, participant observation, informal discussion, and document analysis were used. Semi-structured interview guide was prepared for teachers, girls, and parents. Participant observation where the researcher participated in P.E. activities was conducted to see how Muslim girls participate in the school sport activities. Documents on Islamic rules, Islamic parenting style, and existing Finnish School Systems were reviewed.

### 3. Status and Role of Women in Islam

The position of Muslim women in Islamic society context is heavily discussed issue, especially in contemporary world. Some people argued that women have inferior rank in relation to men, while others provide their evidence indicating the existence of fair balance between female and male. Consequently, it is necessary to interpret the role of Muslim women within Islamic society.

In Islam, father is the main guardian of girls, afterwards her respectable husband (Sattar, 1987; Sport Education and Society, 1996). Usually the role of Muslim women was thought to be based at home in household work and men were responsible for all kind of issues, but now the situation is changing that both women and men are involved in household and outside activities. Although it is necessary to specify to what extent this is favored by Islamic law (sharia).

As women are biologically vulnerable the concern must be, which job is suitable physically and psychologically in her life. For instance, working in health centers for females, teaching in girls' school and college, and some other work which needs female employee are suitable for women. Particularly working as female sport teacher where girls could freely participate without any hesitation is a suitable job for Muslim women. Eventually there will be no possibility to lose their modesty standing next to man (Qaradawy, 2002). As women are ordered to keep their modesty strongly and Allah (S.W.T.) has advised to the women:

*“O wives of the Prophet! You are not like any other women. If you keep your duty (to Allah), then be not soft in speech, lest he in whose heart is a disease (of hypocrisy, or evil desire for adultery, etc.) should be moved with desire, but speak in an honourable manner” (Al-Quran 33:32).*

Some articles argued that sexual purity is very important according to Islamic living rule and that is why girls have to keep their virginity. In fact, the reality is not to show sexual purity with virginity but to protect women from potential sexual abuse and adultery by men. As it is clearly recommended in The Holy Quran,

*“Nor come nigh to adultery: for it is an indecent (deed) and an evil way “(Al-Quran17:32).*

Therefore, according to Islamic religious obligations the girl is required to cover some sensitive parts of her body including hair and limit her communication with opposite sex. In this regard, Allah (S.W.T.) has ordered,

*“O ye Children of Adam! We have bestowed raiment upon you to cover your shame, as well as to be an adornment to you. But the raiment of righteousness, - that is the best. Such are among the Signs of Allah, that they may receive admonition! O ye Children of Adam! Let not Satan seduces you, in the same manner ..... “(Al-Quran7:26-27).*

However, it is clearly stated in the Quran *sura An –Nur* and in the supporting Hadith that women can freely communicate with some family members and relatives those who are allowed to see her beauty or the person who is not permitted to marry them, such as Allah (S.W.T.) has stated in The Quran,

*“And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband's fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or the slaves whom their right hands possess, or male servants free of physical needs, or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex; and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. And O ye Believers! turn ye all together towards Allah, that ye may attain Bliss” (Holy Quran, 24:31).*

Knop,P.D. et al(1996), showed some distinctions between men and women in gender perspective. For example, he said that men are regarded as masculinity, and women symbolized as degeneration in the context of sexuality. However, Islam does not distinct man as masculinity and women as sexuality, as Qur'an states:

*“It is He Who created you from a single person, and made his mate of like nature, in order that he might dwell with her (in love)” (Al-Quran 7:189).*

Moreover, Prophet Muhammad (S.W.A.) expressed,

*“The best of you is the best to his family and I am the best among you to my family. The most perfect believers are the best in conduct and best of you are those who are best to their wives” (Tirmizi, Meskat Shareef p.n.336-337).*

It is required in Islam to obtain knowledge regardless of gender. For instance, The Holy Quran has descended for the first time along with the declaration of Allah (S.W.T.) as,

*“Read, in the name of your Lord, Who has created the human beings from a congealed clot of blood (a leech like substance).Read, your Lord is most bountiful. Who has taught the use of the pen. Who has taught the human beings that which he knew-not” (Al-Quran96:1-5).*

Therefore, it is very much understandable that Islam do not separate men and women in terms of gender role. Moreover Islam gives vital significance to education for both men and women (Badawi, 2002; Doi, 2002, & Nike, 2008) which have narrated in the Quran in different verses, such as:

*“God will exalt those of you who believe and those who are given knowledge to high degrees” (Al-Quran 58:11).*

*“And say, O my Lord! Increase me in knowledge” (Al-Quran 20:114)*

*“And whoever is given knowledge is given indeed abundant wealth” (Al-Quran 2:269)*

According to Naik (2008), it is also imaginable that Prophet Mohammad (p.b.u.h.) has declared the following among men and women:

*“It is obligatory for every Muslim, male or female, to acquire knowledge”* (Ibn Mazah).

Whereas this period was very difficult time in history; while women were mostly ill treated and consider as a property (Doi, .2002, Naik, .2008).

A large number of Islamic scholars emphasized that if people are obedient to maintain Islamic rules perfectly, there will not be men superiority over women. Islam has given equal right to man and woman. Allah (SWT) has emphasis that men and women, husband and wife have same rights in all phase, apart from leadership in the family. It is clearly stated in the Holy Quran that, *“And they [women] have rights (over their husbands as regards living expenses, etc.) similar (to those of their husbands) over them (as regards obedience and respect, etc.) to what is reasonable, but men have a degree (of responsibility) over them. And Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise”* (Al-Quran, 02:228).

Additionally it is clearly expressed in the Holy Quran that

*“Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has made one of them to excel the other, and because they spend (to support them) from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient (to Allah and to their husbands), and guard in the husband’s absence what Allah orders them to guard (e.g. their chastity, their husband’s property, etc.)”*(4:34).

Moreover, the Islamic rules make a perfect balance between male and female starting from childhood. There is clear evidence that Islam tremendously prohibit female infanticide when in

pre-Islamic time many people were involved with this kind of evil act (Badawi, 2002; Doi, 2002; Naik, 2008).

Allah (S.W.T.) has declared,

*“And when the female (infant) buried alive (as the pagan Arabs used to do) shall be questioned. For what sin she was killed?”* (Al-Quran, 81: 8-9).

Those people were highly criticized by Allah (SWT) for refusing their female children (Naik, 2008) stated as:

*“And when the news of (the birth of) a female (child) is brought to any of them, his face becomes dark, and he is filled with inward grief! He hides himself from the people because of the evil of that whereof he has been informed. Shall he keep her with dishonour or bury her in the earth? Certainly, evil is their decision”* (Al-Quran, 16:58-59).

Islam does not forbid only female infanticide, all sorts of infant murder also prohibited whether male or female (Naik, .2002). It is said in the Holy Quran in *Surah A’nam* verse 6 no. 151 as

*“...kill not your children because of poverty - We provide sustenance for you and for them”;*

Similarly in *Surah Isra*, verse 17, No.31 it is mentioned as:

*“And kill not your children for fear of poverty. We provide for them and for you. Surely, the killing of them is a great sin”.*

After practicing Islam, those *pagan Arabs* societies have stopped such evil practice (Naik, 2008). On the other hand, a report by the British reporter Emily Beckenen indicated the increasing number of statistics of the female infanticide is in India everyday more than 3,000 (Naik,2008).

The fetuses are being aborted whenever they are identified as female. If one multiplies the above mentioned figure by the number of days in a year, the numbers of female fetuses being aborted would be more than one million in India.

It is well known that in India dowry must consider when a girl get married in Hindu context and a girl is considered as burden for the family in the future, especially among bourgeoisie.

Consequently, there is big hoarding and poster in India such as Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan as “*spend 500 and save 500,000 Rupees*”. The interpretation of this saying is for medical checkup, ultrasound to identify the gender of fetus could be 500 Rupees; conversely, if the baby girl becomes an adult and wants to get married, the expenditure is estimated to be 500,000 Rupees (Naik, 2008). However, Islam declared that is quoted in the Holy Quran as:

*“O you who believe! You are forbidden to inherit women against their will, and you should not treat them with harshness, that you may take away part of the Mahr you have given them...”* (Al-Quran, 4:19).

It is very crucial in Islam to look after daughter in a proper manner and there should not be any partiality in upbringing between male and female. Once upon a time a man kissed his son and placed him on his lap; however, he did not do the same with his daughter. In that time prophet Mohammad (p.b.u.h.) was present there and observed the situation and comments the man as an unjust one. At the same time, he required him to kiss the girl and place her on the other lap (Naik, 2008).

Islam prohibit disparity and discrimination whatsoever among male or female; rather required to the parent to be kind enough and act admirable conduct with their daughter (Badawi, 2002).

Accordingly, Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) stated,

*“Whosoever has a daughter and he does not bury her alive, does not insult her, and does not favor his son over her; God will enter him into Paradise” (Ibn Hanbal, No. 1957).*

*“Whosoever supports two daughters till they mature, he and I will come in the Day of Judgment as this (and he pointed with his two fingers held together)”.*

A similar Hadith” *deals in like manner with one who supports two sisters” (Ibn-Hanbal, No. 2104).*

Being obedient husband or father ensures that a Muslim woman is secured from social and financial difficulties. In pre-Islamic time it was very challenging to survive in the society where mostly women were considered as an instrument of devil. On the other hand, Islam has given enormous honor towards women. It is indicated in the Holy Quran that women are considered as *Mohsana* which interpreted as fortress against the devil. Seeing that, a good woman can keep her husband from devil activities (Doi, 2002; Naik, 2008). According to Hadith, monasticism is not allowed in Islam (Naik, 2008). Moreover Shahih Al-Bukhari has expressed, Allah's Apostle said *“O young people! Whoever among you can marry, should marry, because it helps him lower his gaze and guard his modesty”.*

Some authors consider men and women having different position in Islam. They argued that Islamic law concerning body purity and decency of women are set up by men with the object to dominate them and establish their power (Knop,P.D. et al,1996), However, Islam do not tolerate inequality between men and women rather foster to justify and balance towards them, as Allah (SWT) stated, as cited in Sibayee (2004).

*“Enter into Paradise, you and your wives, with delight” (Al-Qur'an, 43:70).*

Furthermore, Rao (1989) expressed that Islam has given the same democratic power to the women which emancipated them from the bondage of man. To highlight women's right in Islam Rao (1989) has mentioned the expression of Sir Charles Edward Archibald Hamilton,

*“Islam teaches the inherent sinlessness of man. It teaches that man and woman have come from the same essence, possess the same soul and have been equipped with equal capabilities of intellectual, spiritual and moral attainments”*(p.8).

Moreover, matrimony is regarded as an act of worship to Allah (SWT) rather than biological or social need (Nadwi, 1983). In this regard, Allah (S.W.T.) has declared that

*“Whoever works righteousness, whether male or female, while he (or she) is a true believer (of Islamic Monotheism) verily, to him We will give a good life (in this world with respect, contentment and lawful provision), and We shall pay them certainly a reward in proportion to the best of what they used to do (i.e. Paradise in the Hereafter)”* (Al-Qur'an, 16:97).

The Prophet of Islam (pbuh) said, *"Women are the twin halves of men"*(Doi, 2002).

Qaradawy (2002) has showed in his report saying “Islam has declared rights of the wife on the husband, and has not made her a mere puppet”. That is why Islam establishes women's position from various aspects which is very crucial to live safely in the society.

Eventually Islam has regarded women as a good wife and the best treasure of a man's life, if maintaining the obligations of Allah (SWT) and His apostle's (Pbuh) guidelines. Generally, women are considered as a key to happiness (Badawi.2002). According to the Hadith,

*“The Prophet (pbuh) told `Umar, shall I tell you the best a man can treasure? It is a good wife. If he looks at her, she gives him pleasure; if he orders her, she obeys; and if he is away from her, she remains faithful to him”.*

And getting married refers to many issues in Islamic context such as mutual peace, love, and compassion, not just the satisfaction of man's needs; rather it is a strong agreement and contract (Badawi, 2002). That is why Allah (SWT) declared the following in the Holy Quran, (4:21).

*“And how could you take it (back) while you have gone in unto each other, and they have taken from you a firm and strong covenant?”*

Additionally, Allah (S.W.T.) put love into the hearts of husband and wife, as declared,

*“And among His Signs is this, that He created for you wives from among yourselves, that you may find repose in them, and He has put between you affection and mercy. Verily, in that are indeed signs for a people who reflect” (Al-Quran, 30:21).*

Although females are sheltered and supported by their father and then husband in Islamic perspective (Sattar, 1987, source: Sport Education and Society, 1996); however nobody can force them to get married against their wishes. There is Hadith in Sahih Al-Bukhari, Volume 7, Book 62, and Number 69:

*“Narrated that Khansa bint Khidam Al-Ansariya: that her father gave her in marriage when she was a matron and she disliked that marriage. So she went to Allah's Apostle and he declared that marriage invalid”.*

Therefore, it is required to get consent for marriage from both man and women; otherwise Islam does not approve it. To uphold women's honour a famous Islamic scientist like Naik (2008) has required to introduce women as a homemaker not a housewife. According to him, women never can marry a house. Obviously men and women have complementary conjugal life in Islam by which one ought to respect to the other (Doi, 2002). Similarly, it is narrated in the Holy Quran as:

*"Your wives are your garments, and you are their garments"* (Al-Quran 2:187).

Here, garment is interpreted very broadly that both husband and wife should have very sympathetic towards each other. People use garments mainly for two reasons, to conceal secret parts of the body and to nice-looking. It is very natural that human being can have mistake, so husband and wife can conceal each other's fault. At the same time, they must beautify each other's which bring them happy marital life, such as hands and gloves (Doi, Naik, 2008). This is one of the most important issues that marriage was regarded by the prophet Muhammad

(p.b.u.h.) as a most righteous act, as it is stated in the Hadith,

*"When a man marries, he has completed one half of his religion."*

Additionally, the prophet said,

*"Marriage is part of my way and whoever keeps away from my way is not from me (i.e. is not my follower)"* (Doi, 2002).

Moreover, to respect women it is advised to treat them kindly as it is mentioned in the Holy Quran (4:19),

*"And live with them honourably. If you dislike them, it may be that you dislike a thing and Allah brings through it a great deal of good"* (Al-Quran, 4:19).

Above and beyond requirements of marriage, Islam has decreed another special right called *Mahar* towards women. It is considered as a compulsory gift which a husband must give to his wife before their meeting each other as a husband and wife. Furthermore, this nuptial gift is considered according to the ability of the husband. The wife has independent ownership of that wealth (gift) and nobody can impede her from her right (Badawi, 2002; Naik, 2008).

It is very usual quest in the west about some specific issues like legal testimony, inheritance, blood money, charge of the family, heading the state and other supporting ministrations. Janssen, (1993a) claimed there are legal divergences among men and women in Islam, like a testimony of a man is considered with two women either in business, marriage in court. Additionally according to Islamic criminal law *blood money* is twice for a man murdered than for a woman, which the murderer has to pay to the victim's family or relatives (Janssens, 1993a, source: Sport Education and Society, 1996).

On the other hand, Qaradawy (2002) has claimed that this distinction between men and women does not mean to get any preference to the Lord Almighty Allah; rather closer to Him is considered with dignity, piety, whether male or female. There is clear statement in the Holy Quran:

*“O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you with Allah is that (believer) who has At-Taqwa (i.e. one of the Muttaqûn whose are pious and righteous persons who fear Allah much, whose abstain from all kinds of sins and evil deeds which He has forbidden, whose perform all kinds of good deeds which He has ordained) Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware (Al-Quran 49:13)”*.

While Saadawi (1980) argued that the mention position described above like testimony or blood money showed that women are playing secondary role in Islamic society (Source: Sport Education and Society 1996). On the contrary, Naik (2008) has picked the following some verses from the holy Quran as follows:

*“I will never suffer the loss of any of you, be it male or female, you are companions unto each other (Al-Quran-3:195)”.*

*“For Muslim men and Muslim women,  
for believing men and women,  
for devout men and women,  
for true men and women,  
for men and women who are patient and constant,  
for men and women who give in charity,  
for men and women who fast and deny themselves,  
for men and women who guard their chastity,  
for men and women who engage much in God's praise,  
God has prepared for them forgiveness and a vast reward (i.e. Paradise) (Al-Quran 33:35)”.*

The first verse from above has clearly indicated that to obtain Allah’s (S.W.T.) reward or punishment is not the criteria of sex; somewhat sanctity or piety. The other mentioned verse in above is that both men and women are alike to perform spiritual and moral duties in Islamic perspectives; both are required to believe, to fast, to give in charity and so on. Additionally women have been given some special consideration. For example, in menstrual or pregnancy period women are not required to do fasting.

Moreover they have option to do it later when they feel healthy. Eventually, Islam has given concession to the women, not to pray (*salat*) in a certain time of their undergoing menstrual and

postnatal period, even it is not essential to do it later. Through the Holy Quran Naik (2008) has explored that men and women have similar rights in Islam, as there are no distinction to perform the moral duties.

Islam has considered Quran as a complete code of life. Consequently, transactions of human being do not get out from the rhyme- the Qur'an's rhyme, such as *the indebtedness verse* wherein Allah (S.W.T.) recommended for writing debt agreements as a precautionary appraiser.

*“And get two witnesses out of your own men. And if there are not two men (available), then a man and two women, such as you agree for witnesses, so that if one of them (two women) errs, the other can remind her. And the witnesses should not refuse when they are called on (for evidence) (Al-Quran, 2:282)”*.

According to above the verses from the Holy Qur'an it is obvious that Islam considers testimony either one man or two women. However, this principle is from the general nature of women not from inequality. Women are supposed to be empathetic than men. In addition, women are not brave to experience dangers and accidents that they do not have the courage to observe morally, (Qaradawy, 2002).

In addition, he claimed that it is very natural that women are nervous to observe carnage or killing from very close distance; that is why it is difficult to get exact description of the crime. Consequently, it is tricky to get a report steadfastly from a woman about the crime. Therefore, it does not represent two women instead of one man to hamper their humankind and reliability. Thus, Azeem (1995) argued that the Holy Quran on the other hand has stated similar right between men and women in other position. Specifically,

*“And for those who accuse their wives, but have no witnesses except themselves, let the testimony of one of them be four testimonies (i.e. testifies four times) by Allah that he is one of those who speak the truth. And the fifth (testimony) (should be) the invoking of the Curse of Allah on him if he be of those who tell a lie (against her).*

*But it shall avert the punishment (of stoning to death) from her, if she bears witness four times by Allah, that he (her husband) is telling a lie. And the fifth (testimony) should be that the Wrath of Allah be upon her if he (her husband) speaks the truth (Al-Qur’an, 24:6-9)”.*

Knop, Theeboom, Wittock, Martelaer (1996) also found out that distinction between men and women within Islamic criminal law regarding *blood money*. It is interpreted that a family whose man is murdered will receive money twice than whose woman is murdered, which a murderer has to pay for the casualty.

However, Qaradawy (2002) stated that there is no single well-authentication from *Hadith* or *Ijm* about the *blood money* mentioned above. Consequently, under the subtitle of *Blood Money* is the same whether men or women. Eventually, Al-Quran has stated about the matter where man does not get any privilege over women, as

*"And whosoever kills a believer by mistake (it is ordained that) he must set free a believing slave and a compensation (blood-money i.e. Diya) be given to the deceased's family (Al-Quran, 4:92)”.*

According to Naik (2008), the Law in Islam has given similar right alike men. Consequently, both men and women are similarly secured from life and properties as well. Eventually, men shall not get release from the punishment; if he murders a woman. Moreover if there are irrespective injury is on the eye, nose, ear and the body; both receive equal punishment.

Furthermore, Sattar (1987, source: Sport Education and Society, 1996) has pointed out, “According to Islam, a woman has a ‘birth right’. The ‘men women balance’ is regarded as perfect within a global social context.”

Now question arise, how Muslim female is considered living in non Islamic country? If their living style is according to Islamic etiquette and fundamental believes. While numerous authors argued that Muslim women are confronting in non-Islamic country with various troubles.

### **3.1 Central Role of Parents and Family Unit in Islam**

Parenting is a crucial element in child development. For Bari (2002a.p.xi), parenting is not merely parenthood but it is “a dynamic and challenging enterprise.....It is pro-active and responsive rather than reactive”. He illustrated that the life is holistic in Islamic context; therefore parents are obliged to perform their responsibilities according to Allah’s (SWT) recommendation. Islamic approach provides excellent guide line for future life of young generation, such as parenting, as it is referred in the Tirmizi Hadith,

*“No parent can give the child a better gift than good manners, good characters and, a good education”* (Rahim, 2005).

According to Islam, a parent is required to be a role model for his children’s better life which can be reflected from different approach like as educators, mentors, guides, and role models.

To look after children with all necessities of life is rather small extent than understanding the context. The approach to parenting is more positive and confident. It is a kind of life process which every parent has to learn (Bari, 2002a).

Evidently, many parents are not conscious about their adolescents’ activities whether it is allowed in Islam or not. Consequently it can be seen in the school or other place that Muslim

girls beside each other have different attitude regarding dressing, eating, sports and leisure activities etc.. Some parents consider it their children's business; conversely other believes that they have to teach their children according to Islam. Conscious parent is afraid of the Day of Judgment, as Allah (S.W.T.) has expressed in the holy Qur'an:

*“O you who believe! Protect yourselves and your families from a Fire (Hell) whose fuel is people and stones, over which are (appointed) angels harsh (and) severe..... (Al Quran 66:6)”*.

Parenting is a kind of responsibility and accountability. Every human being will be liable for their subordinate people to Allah (S.W.T.). Similarly, Bukhari and Muslim have narrated that Prophet Mohammad (S.A.W.) said:

*“Each of you is a guardian and is responsible for your area. Each one will asked about dependents persons. A ruler will ask about his subjects and the man is a guardian of the members of his household. The women is a protector, she is responsible for her husband's house and offspring. She will be asking about her subordinate people” (Faroque, 2003, An-Nababi, 2008).*

According to the above mentioned Hadith, Islam understands parenting as a vital duty which must be approached sincerely and earnestly. The duty of parent is to protect their offspring in present and spotlight on preparing them for future life. That is why parenting in Islamic perspective is considered as a person's door to either paradise or hell. (Hamdan, 2009).

Rising up a child according to Islam will be rewarded and bring praiseworthy status towards parent in the hereafter life. It is said in Ahmed and Ibn Majah that Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) stated:

*“A slave will ask to Allah (S.W.T.) when he fined his ranking increased that which reason occurred behind his promotion? Then He will reply, as your son pray and ask forgiveness on the behalf of you”* (source: Bari, 2002a).

In another saying of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) which expressed by Muslim,

*“When people die their actions are cut off except for three: a continuing charity (sadaqah) or some knowledge from which benefit is derived or right-acting children whose supplicate to Allah (S.W.T.) for their parent, Rahim, (2005)”*.

One who has complete faith in Islam, he or she always seeks guidance at every step in his or her life from the relevant injunction of Allah and His messenger. Consequently, parent must be attentive towards their rearing children; Nasim (2007) indicated the following.

*“Parent will be charged by Allah (S.W.T.), how they were responsible towards children to train them religiousness and build character faithfully in Islamic context”*.

According to Ali (2002), for well taking care of children, parent has to understand about children’s right towards them. For instance, first of all, father have to be honest and must prefer to get marry gentle girl that his children’s mother should not be a kind of woman which may cause to destroy his/her social status or cause for embarrassment. Secondly, Parent should give excellent meaningful name of their new born babies. Finally, educate them to study the Holy Qur’an and instruct Islamic etiquette.

Many people argued in western societies why many Muslim parents do not allow their girls to participate in sport or physical activities in public places. Why they do not like their girls’ participation in sport where men and women are mixed or such kind of place that they cannot

maintain Islamic custom? To address these questions Nasim (2007) has stated from the Islamic point of view,

*“Children will be complaining against their parent on the judgments day if they are incompetent to enter paradise for their parent’s inattention”.*

According to Bari (2002a), the shape of family in Islamic context is much broader than modern assumption. Consequently, the Muslim responsibility for the family is exceptionally great in extent and a single affair refers in a comprehensive range for their life-mission.

Very often, people in the present world are very much concerned. The family structure is breaking down day by day along with divorce, separation, single parenthood and fatherless home. Globalization and modern technology are affected to a greater degree to destroyed basic moral values from family life than its economic forces and accomplishment. Therefore, it is very usual in contemporary world that children are absorbed into television programs and computer games than in meaningful conversation with their parents, (Hamdan, 2009).

At the same time mothers are entering the workforce more to look after or satisfy their children’s demand. As a result young children’s involving with cheating, gambling, consumption of alcohol, drugs, premarital and extramarital relations becoming norm rather basic moral and value of life. The relation of children and family become worse, disobedience, deceit and disrespect are becoming normal. In this situation, a number of social scientist in the world is concerned about how to release the societies from insidious and ominous involvement of youngster, (Hamdan, 2009).

That is why conscious people look for better method to take care of children and adolescent. So far various researches have been done from different point of view in this field; however there

are very few literatures about parenting in Islamic perspectives. That is why frequently people particularly in western country have less knowledge about parenting in Islamic context.

It is mentioned previously that a Muslim have to deal his or her whole life in accordance with the rule given by Allah (S.W.T.). For that reason it is crucial to understand the importance and responsibility of the parenting role. Parent must know the basic concept that children are the test in their life and accordingly they will be accountable in judgment day to entrance paradise. That is why a Muslim has to save him or herself from hellfire, at the same time to draw a great role upon their children that keep them to be righteous (Hamdan, 2009). As Allah (S.W.T.) has recommended:

*“And know that your possessions and your children are but a trial and that surely with Allah is a mighty reward (Al-Quran8:28)”*.

Muslims who are afraid of The Day of Judgment must sacrifice everything in order to please Allah (SWT). Unquestionably she or he believes that “God is the Almighty, the Creator, the Sovereign and the Sustainer of everything in the whole universe” (Ibrahim, 1997, p.46).

Therefore, it is necessary to understand how a parent relates to and deal with children (Hamdan, 2009). It is narrated in Holy Qur’an:

*“Your wealth and your children are only a trial, whereas Allah! With Him is a great reward (Paradise)” (64:15).*

Obviously, parenting in Islamic perspectives is dynamic and longtime process in order to build up adolescents with superior character and morality. It is the process of promoting and supporting the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development of a child from infancy to adulthood. Thus, parenting refers to the activity of raising a child rather than the biological relationship (Bari, 2002a).

It appears that the present world is spotlighting the necessity for family research, a huge numerous social scientists strive and endeavor to explore the core account, why disadvantageous is growing up rapidly among adolescent. So far a vast number of researches have done in this field in order to develop the civil society.

Some of them has proved that the adolescent's behavior build up mostly according to the parenting style. Such as Baumrind (1991) has found that parenting style makes the differences among children; when she has collected data from 139 adolescents and their parents from a primarily affluent, well educated Caucasian inhabitant. She had explored that the style differs from parents' commitment and balance of demandingness and responsiveness.

For example, authoritative parenting identified that parents are highly demanding to adolescents, at the same time they are very conscious about their responsibilities towards children. She has discovered authoritative parenting is extraordinarily successful to protect adolescents from problem drug use, and to create capability (Baumrind, 1991).

Apparently, it's proving that conscious parent can grip their offspring in straightforward manner and have great success in life. Similarly children in Islam have to pay their attentions to their parents. If parent give them order or instructions they must obey and respect that, whether they like it or not. Even though they should not question about the authority of parent neither to prefer own desire in defiance of their parent. However, children can refuse parent's recommendation or requests if they associate partners with Allah (S.W.T.), (Al-Qaradawi, 2007; Hamdan, 2009). As it is stated in Holy Quran:

*“But if they (both) strive with you to make you join in worship with Me others that of which you have no knowledge, then obey them not, but behave with them in the world kindly....(31:15)”*.

Parents in Islam are required to protect their children from harmful activities. If children are disobedient to avoid harmful way; parent are obliged to prevent their children's temptation. For more balance they may resort to advising, rebuking or reprimanding to their offspring. In this situation children should not argue or replied roughly to their parent; rather should listen to them gently and perform that which they obliged to act, even if it is against their wishes. (Hamdan, 2009). As it stated in the Holy Quran:

*“And We have enjoined on man to be dutiful and kind to his parents. His mother bears him with hardship and she brings him forth with hardship, and the bearing of him, and the weaning of him is thirty (30) months... (46:15)”*.

According to Hamdan (2009), children have to approach their parents with good manner in their conversation, like soft-spoken, show them respect and kindness. Children should realize how parents were struggling in their early age. Since Quran has recommended towards children:

*“And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him. And that you be dutiful to your parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of disrespect, nor shout at them but address them in terms of honor (17:23)”*.

In spite of all, Islam is leading constantly for better cultural and family life. According to Bari (2002a), the family consider microcosm of the community in the world, where people required performing their own obligation and responsibilities which Allah (S.W.T.) has given them. The members of the family can make deep relationship among each other and achieve the goal with mutual interaction like love, passion, compromise, sacrifice and other human features. Seeing that, the family is regarding as a small unit of a society as well as a nation or any other

civilization. Additionally he expressed that in Islam every single person has noticed clearly about their own duties and responsibilities. As the messenger of Allah (p.b.u.h.) has mentioned, *“Every one of you is a shepherd and everyone is responsible for what he is shepherd of, (Sahih al-Bukhari and Muslim)”*.

Regarding Islamic value, parent is required to protect their children from harmful behavior since early life. It is significant to prevent children if they tempt to act in detrimental way. Parent could take attempt from wrong doing of their children (Hamdan, 2009). Moreover, in one hand Islam indicate the way in which people can carry out excellent for their spiritual, physical, social, political and economic performance. On the other hand Islam specifies the way in which people get failure and devastation for both individual and collective life. Consequently the way of Islam give people stability, its ethical and legal code precisely explain what is lawful or prohibited (Hamid, 1989). It is apparently stated in the Holy Quran:

*“And when We took a covenant from the Children of Israel, Worship none but Allah (Alone) and be dutiful and good to parents, and to kindred, and to orphans and Al-Masakin (the poor) and speak good to people [i.e. enjoin righteousness and forbid evil, and say the truth about Muhammad Peace be upon him], and perform As-Salat and give Zakat. Then you slid back, except a few of you, while you are backsliders” (2:83).*

Parenting in Islamic perspectives is totally different than western society. In west children have more freedom in life and their expectation is most important. However, Muslim parent have very strong control to rearing offspring, additionally they are more aware about their children’s religious activities. As children do not understand much what is detrimental for their life until they reach in a certain age. Therefore, they need proper guidance by their parent. Many family

Research has shown that children's characteristic mostly influence by the family, especially parents.

It was hypothesized and discovered derived from a wide-range of parents and their off spring. At age four, nine and fifteen years older among North American mostly rich, highly educated, Caucasian inhabitants that the different styles of parenting bases of commitment and balance of demandingness and responsiveness. The study found that authoritative parents are both highly demanding and responsive (Baumrind, 1991).

According to this study, demandingness interpreted as parents influencing children being strongly involved with family, by their parenthood supervision, their disciplinary efforts and motivation tackle their offspring from violating act. Similarly Responsiveness clarified that parents deliberately encourage their children in separate, deals with their own disciplinary and legal problems, tending to be aggressively confident in making to comprehend them in order that adolescents adjust with them by supportive and acquiesces in of their outstanding needs and demands (Baumrind, 1991).

It seems that parenthood is a one-way journey with full of bends, curves and ups and down until the world will end. However conscious parent can make parenting a lively, challenging and enjoyable enterprise. Along with positive parenting necessitate being determined and planed effort. There for parent should not worried if they cannot meet the requirement for their shortcoming, rather try to learn through the process and endeavor to spread it towards children (Bari, 2002). Allah (S.W.T.) has described about the affection of parent to their children which can make effort to be safe from fabrication (Zubaer, 2003). Such a clear example in the Holy Quran:

*“And (remember) when Luqman said to his son when he was advising him: O my son! Join not in worship others with Allah. Verily! Joining others in worship with Allah is a great Zulm (wrong) indeed” (31:13).*

Beyond the family research, Islam emphasizes humanity towards all mankind in the universe, Abusulaiman (1989). In addition, it has expressed clearly which prophet Luqman (A) has advised his son:

*“O my son! Establish prayer, enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, and be patient over what befalls you....”(31:17).*

All in all, it is very comprehensible that parenting in Islamic perspective is mainly a concern to build up children’s characteristic according to Islamic rules, regulations and establish family tie. Bari, (2002b) has consider, “family is the **bedrock** of the human civilization and children are the flowers of its garden (p.31&41)”. That is why the approach of parenting is primarily concern about children’s behavior and characteristic, like kindness, gentleness, honesty. At the same time parents must be careful about their duties towards children in order to accomplish the objective of life as a perfect follower of the prophet(s).

For a successful parenting, Hamdan, (2009, p.57) has found some of the following basic right to children: provisions like food, clothing and other necessary items for being a wholesome life. To give them protection until adulthood, from the danger that is harmful for offspring’s physical, emotional, intellectual, moral aspect. This criterion of parenting is essential since the time of conception and the period of pregnancy, childhood to adulthood. To meet children’s psychological needs love and affection is very crucial.

For effective parenting it is indispensable to be close with offspring, also to make companionship, mercy, and kindness is vital to keep in discipline. Hamdan (2009, p.57) has

emphasis that children have right to paternity and inheritance. In one hand, Islam give right towards children to know their parent and ancestry; on the other hand, adoption is prohibited. According Islam every child have right to hold their father's lineage. At the same time Islamic law gives the guarantees towards children over their father's inheritance. Additionally children have the right to get proper education which is dynamic to achieve in both temporary and eternal life. (Hamdan, 2009, p.57).

### **3.2 Significance of Sports and Physical Activities in Islam**

Islamic Shariah (law) considers sport and leisure activities as a significant element of human life. Obviously every single genuine requirement is recommended in Islam (Shah, 2002).

Consequently, health is viewed as one of the greatest blessing in Islamic context. Seeing that after embraced in Islam the greatest blessing is health, as the Apostle of Allah (p.b.u.h.) recommended,

*"Ask Allah for forgiveness and good health for, verily, after certainty of faith, no one has been given anything better than good health (Hadith Tirmidhi)."*

Moreover, health is most essential component in Islamic perspective which required utilizing precisely as it stated in Hadith,

*"No one will be allowed to move from his position on the Day of Judgment until he has been asked how he spent his life, how he used his knowledge, how he earn and spent his money and in what pursuits he used his health" Tirmidhi(Source:sport&health).*

Even though the Apostle of Allah (pbuh) liked pleasure and detested melancholy, as it is reported from the Prophet (pbuh),

*"O Allah! I seek refuge in you from distress and grief"* (Source: Shah, .2002).

In another Hadith add the following saying of Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) as,

*"And I seek refuge in you from disability and laziness"*.

Islam foster to be healthy as it is narrated by Abu Huraira [one of the best accompany of the prophet (pbuh)] that a man came to the Prophet and asked,

*"O Allah's Apostle! Which charity is the most superior in reward?" He replied, "The charity which you practice while you are healthy"* (Bukhari book 2 v.24 H.500).

To give evidence of the importance of sport there is a Hadith narrated Abu Huraira (r.a), a best accompany of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.),

*For the devil makes sport with the posteriors of the children of Adam.* If he does so, he has done well; but if not, there is no harm (Dawd, H35, and purification).

According to the Quran and Sunnah, it is clearly stated that sport is allowed in Islam. Since the period of Prophet Mohammad (p.b.u.h.) or any other times, sport stands with its exact interpretation till today's world. Where there is no single categorization of the meaning of sport as it is in the contemporary world. Moreover a Muslim has to keep the same principles, goals and spirit of the definition of sport in Islam (Hendricks, 1998; Medjadji, 2007).

According to Islam, four kinds of sports are mostly encouraged like archery, horse-riding, fencing, and swimming. Islam has emphasized a number of incredibly unambiguous purposes to perform sports and physical activities. First of all, it has a military function whereby the discipline of sports could support and tie together to set up individually, to follow the rules and

regulation in the battle field. Secondly, it has social function which integrates people together regardless of the differences among each other. It fosters to make co-operation, mutual understanding, respect each other and make friendship in the society. Thirdly, it has suggested endeavor to increase the power of self control, for example, winner is not only praiseworthy; but also lower self is commendable. Finally, it has essence to create the relationship between soul and body. A proper balance of physical activities and relaxation make the soul strength and vigorous for work. (Hendricks, 1998; Medjadji, 2007). As Ali bin Abi Talib (r.a.a) expressed,

*"Refresh your minds from time to time, for a tired mind becomes blind."*

*Abu Darda` (r.a.a) also commented: "I entertain my heart with something trivial in order to make it stronger in the service of the Truth" (Source: Beiruty, 1997).*

It is well known that the Prophet in Islam practiced wrestling and he was an excellent wrestler. There is evidence that once he had defeated a famous wrestler, named Rukana in that period. Soon after this competition, Rukana embraced Islam. It is remarkable that sport has a potential effect in peoples mind by player's excellent performance. (Hendricks,1998)

Prophet Mohammad (p.b.u.h.) himself also enjoys with His family in a leisure time, at the same time he approved to do sport as an entertainment.

*"Aisha reported that Abu Bakr came to her and there were with her two girls on Adha days who were singing and beating the tambourine and the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) had wrapped himself with his mantle. Abu Bakr scolded them. The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) uncovered (his face) and said: Abu Bakr, leave them alone for these are the days of 'Id. And 'A'isha said: I recapitulate to my mind the fact that once the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) screened me with his mantle and I saw the sports of the Abyssinians, and I was only a girl, and so you can well imagine how a girl of tender age is fond of watching the sport (Muslim 4:1940)".*

There is another evidence of leisure activities and entertainment from the family life of Prophet Mohammad's (pbuh), as His wife said,

*"While Aisha (r.a.a) was on a journey along with the Apostle of Allah (pbuh), she had a race with him and outpaced him. As time passed, the Prophet (pbuh) wished to avenge for his loss, so he raced her again, in which case he outpaced her, and remarked: "This is for that outpacing."(Sources: Beiruty, 1997).*

A number of scholars acknowledged that Islam does not discourage to enjoy in leisure activities, such as Both Bukhari and Muslim have expressed the fact that,

*"When the prophet Mohammad (p.b.u.h.) entered Madinah after the Hijrah from Makkah, the Ethiopians (Habasha) celebrated his arrival with a display of their prowess at spear-throwing".*

In another explanation of Bukhari, as Aisha (r.a.a.) narrated that,

*"Both she and the Prophet Mohammad (p.b.u.h.) watched the Ethiopians playing with their spears in the Mosque. Umar (r.a.a.) tried to stop them whereupon the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) intervened and ordered them to continue. The Prophet also said: "Everything not linked to the remembrance (dhikr) of Allah is mere frivolity and play except four things: for a man to play with his family, to train one's horse, to practice archery, and to learn how to swim." [(Suti) Hendricks, 1998].*

To describe the necessity of sport in Islam, one of the best accompany of the apostle (p.b.u.h.) of Allah (S.W.T.) Jabir b. 'Abdullah (R) has reported: once the Holy Prophet asked me,

*“Have you married? I said: Yes. He asked me again is it with a virgin or one previously married. I said. With one previously married, whereupon he (again) said: Why not with a young girl with whom you could sport and she could have sported with you?”(Muslim: 8:3463).*

Also Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) has advised:

*“There are two blessings which many people lose: (They are) health and free time for doing well. (Bukhari 8/421”).*

Subsequently, there is no doubt that sport is significant for both men and women in Islamic context. Eventually Islam emphasis physical fitness and encourages people for balanced diet and approved to oppose the harmful substances. Exercise is favorable, to effort harmful free radicals and excess hormones.

However, peoples are confused about different ways of sport among practitioners, especially women and the rest world. Certainly this difference makes questions in peoples mind, particularly in the western society. There is no doubt, it might be religion. It is true that a Muslim is required to oath, to believe, to practice what Allah (S.W.T.) said in Quran and to follow His Prophet Mohammad’s (S) teaching, deeds and approval to his companions. Furthermore, Islam is a Religion where nothing can be changed if people accept it or not.

Nevertheless, it can be controversial in contemporary society for many issues; a good example would be Muslims cannot participate in public swimming pool or gymnasium. In fact, Islam is monotheistic religion based on Quran and Hadith. The obligations of religious duty for Muslims’ are not limited to perform some particular functions. Despite, it enclose social, economical, political and others which are related human life. Consequently, there are no divergences

between religious and practical life. That is why Islam called *deen*, as in conjunction with, obligations of religious activities; other roles of life are oriented by religion. Therefore Islam (*deen*) means a complete code of life; not only a religion (Badawi, 2006). Accordingly, Allah (S.W.T.) expressed,

*“This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My Favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion”* (Al-Quran, 5:3).

A number of Authors have argued about different attitude of Muslim girl’s physical activities participation in western school. Some of them blamed their parent, as they are very strict in order to orient them islamically. However, Muslim parent is required to look after their children according to the direction of Allah (S.W.T.) and His Messenger.

Eventually, people are not allowed to adopt a single issue for cultural changes or other purposes which consider as unlawful activities in Islam. As the Arabic word *Islam* literally defines ‘surrender’ or ‘submission’. Islam as a faith delineates absolute and sincere submission to the only One Almighty Allah (God). Consequently, a Muslim therefore conscious to give up the priority first to Allah’s (S.W.T.) will.

Moreover, a Muslim never becomes a perfect one unless Prophet Mohammad (P.b.u.h.) is beloved person than his/her father, son and all mankind (Al-Bokhari, Hadith No.14). So, the compulsion of Islam plays a great role for Muslims’ every single affairs’ of life (Syed, 2002).

In addition, he has claimed to surrender ones freedom and to do everything only for Allah’s sake is Islam; to relinquish oneself to the authority and sovereignty of Allah (S.W.T.) means Islam. One who hands over every single affairs of him or her towards Allah (S.W.T.) called Muslim; conversely a person who wants to keep all affairs in his or her own hands or delegate to others than Allah (S.W.T.) is not considered as a Muslim.

Again, to brethren-in-Islam the following holy statement of Allah (S.W.T.) is a good example; *“Say [O Muhammad]:”Verily, my Salat (prayer), my sacrifice, my living, and my dying are for Allah, the Lord of the ’Alamîn (mankind, jinns and all that exists). He has no partner. And of this I have been commanded, and I am the first of the Muslims”* (Al-Quran, 6: 162-163).

Shedding more light on this issue, it is necessary to focus what Islamic etiquette recommended for people to practice sport and physical activities. It goes without saying that according to Islam every single *shariah* (Islamic law) is required for both men and women to maintain faithfully either it is sport or other compulsions (Beiruty, 1997).

Although men and women are regarded as same and both have equal rights in Islam; but the restrictions on women’s participation in sport and physical activities are more than men (Beiruty, 1997; Medjadji, 2007). For example a female participator required to cover their head with scarf and body with loose garments (which conceal their exact figure and beautifulness from opposite sex) (Medjadji, 2007); on the other hand for a male it is requisite only to cover from navel to knee.

It has mentioned previously, in Islam all observances are obligatory to follow, whether it is accepted by the people or not. A true Muslim always gives privileged first towards Almighty Allah (SWT) than others (Beiruty, 1997; Medjadji, 2007). Consequently it is necessary to be more apparent that behind the declaration of something permissible religiously, Islam places some conditions, in order to maintain morality which deals with the general knowledge of legislation. Therefore, the stipulations for practice sport and physical exercise are as follow: to avoid any undesired harms, any act that involves transgress limits whether in eating, drinking, clothing or anything else, is prohibited (Saqr, 2002). As it is declared in the Holy Quran:

“O you who believe! Make not unlawful the *Taiyibât* (all that is good as regards foods, things, deeds, beliefs, persons, etc.) which Allah has made lawful to you, and transgress not. Verily, Allah does not like the transgressors” (Al-Quran 5:87).

Evidently in sport participation clothing must be islamically acceptable; consequently shorts, T-shirts, leotards, swimming costumes etc. are not permissible in Islam. It is necessary to verify that there are no male spectators. No mixing of sexes is allowed in normal situations apart from special circumstances under certain stipulations. (Beiruty, 1997; Medjadji, 2007).

In Islamic culture Muslim are not allowed to be naked; not to display their body too much, whether in same or opposite sex. Even though they maintain privacy in shower, swimming pools and large hospital wards too. Additionally, to expose the body during physical education classes might make them troubles. As wearing, bathing, and gym suits strictly prohibited for women or girl's in front opposite sex. (Itkonen, 1999, p.14; Nurmi, 1994, 137; 182-185).

Many scholars necessitate that sport has comprehensive benefits, not merely physical and social ones; but also indispensable to psychological benefit. Besides, physical fitness sports can keep proper balance of emotional state. Thus, Muslim women are permitted to do sport activities, besides they must be conscious to secure their dignity and admiration, (Mawlawi, 2005).

That is the issue in Islam place to assure restriction in women's sport, they would defend alongside their immoralities and offensiveness, at the same time safeguard their chastity. In this regard there is *fatwa* issued by the deputy chairman of the European Council for Fatwa and Research, as follows: While practicing sport women need to keep *awrah* (to conceal some required parts of the body). Moreover, any photographing or televising should not be there which can broadcast their activities, (Mawlawi, 2005).

In addition, another prominent Islamic scholar and head of the Department of Principles Jurisprudence (*Usul Al-Fiqh*) at the Faculty of Shari`ah, Qatar University, stated that women's practicing sport is incontrovertible in Islamic context; However some stipulations are required to meet in these following respect.

First of all women should not decorate themselves in order to be seen by men.

Secondly, they must not expose any of their private parts which Islam obliges them to wrap.

Finally, they must not mix together with men as this fosters to interact among each other physically (Daghi, 2005).

What is more, a former president of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), states:

From a certain age, Muslim girls do not get any exemption to wear *hijab* from religious obligation whether they practice sport in school or elsewhere, if there is male presence. Muslim girls required practicing sport with girls, at the same time they must avoid mixing with opposite sex that can cause of temptation and immorality. However, they do not require putting *hijab*, if they play among girls and no non-*Maharams* (a man who is allowed to marry her) watch them (Siddiqi, 2003).

According to the above discussion, there is a clear idea that like other functions of life, sport is very important in Islam. Undeniably it is worthwhile to do sport that create good health; as a wholesome body can makes a sound mind. That is why Islam emphasized that sport and physical exercise is significant for both men and women. Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) has suggested the following to the fellow Muslims.

*"Take benefit of five before five:  
your youth before your old age,  
your health before your sickness,*

your wealth before your *poverty*,  
your free-time before your *preoccupation*,  
and your life before your *death*" [Hadith- al-Haakim, al-Bayhaqee, Saheeh (source: E Islam 2010)].

### **3.3 The Finish School System and Physical Activity**

The basic principle of Finnish educational policy is to provide equal opportunities among all population groups regions and maintain its general standard. In Finland, it is mandatory for every citizen to complete comprehensive school which is organized for nine-year or it can extend for tenth as a voluntary. Finnish School age starts with a seven years old pupil, though it has been and being consider from six-years-old (Heikinaro-Johansson&Telama, 2005).

Since 1843, P.E. has regard in school curriculum In Finland and in 1882 training of teachers has established in university level. Then Helsinki University had provided uniquely P.E. institution for a century. At the beginning they offered course for one year and then it was extended for three years. When The Jyväskylä University has opened P.E. section in 1963 and founded it as a faculty in 1968, then Helsinki University has closed their institution in 1974. In present time the faculty of Sport and health Sciences in Jyväskylä has giving training of P.E. teacher exclusively (Heikinaro-Johansson&Telama, 2005).

P.E. in Finnish school has more or less influence on all pupils. Pupils in comprehensive school have P.E. in every year. However several upper secondary students have option to complete all P.E. courses among one year in their three years curriculums. Vocation schools have less P.E. courses than upper secondary students. Nevertheless, the time can be considered like upper secondary school if the objective is to help student to be active physically. The present time students' participation in P.E. lesson is more than before. Generally P.E. teachers are very skillful for the higher comprehensive and upper secondary school in Finland. On the other hand, in lower comprehensive school P.E. class organized by classroom teacher. (Heikinaro-Johansson&Telama, 2005).

The time for P.E. lesson has allocated for both mandatory and optional courses. It is compulsory for pupils age 7-16 participate two times a week in P.E. 45-minutues lesson. Also in higher stage in comprehensive school and upper secondary level student students have option to choose P.E. as optional. Although the amount of mandatory P.E. lesson is less to compare with other countries; but elective P.E courses are very popular in Finland. That is why a number of students choose more than two lessons in a week. (Heikinaro-Johansson&Telama,2005).

The ministry of education has transferred the national curriculum accountability towards the grass-roots level of communities in 1990's. Which actively promote in 1994, that curriculum must regard as according each schools' mission, tasks and individual characteristics of local communities. Therefore, all members of the school communities, parents and others active members of the school were encouraged to team up in writing curriculum. The objective of this process is that school consider as a learning centre with the acceptance of local communities. As a result it was required to developed co-operation between schools, the surrounding

communities, commerce and industry, also to develop one's own work. (Heikinaro-Johansson&Telama, 2005).

In Finnish school, the objective of P.E. is to develop pupils' motor skills and to teach important skills such as swimming and to help pupils understand the importance of exercise for health (Opetushallitus, 2004). According to the teaching system, the primary objective in physical activities class is that the pupil will understand the importance of physical activity and health in their own life. Sports are taught by different games and activities, which build up the pupil's motor skills. At the same time, it helps in developing his or her interaction skills, so that they learn to be more tolerant towards each other. Particularly, responsibility, fair play and safety are emphasized. The evaluation of teaching takes into account external conditions as well as health and special needs of individual pupils (Opetushallitus, 2004).

Teaching of grades 1 to 4 is carried out in the form of games and atmosphere is encouraging, which facilitates participation of all pupils. In the class, the pupil first needs to obtain motor basic skills, and then proceed to learn more specific skills. The core contents of teaching include for instance running, swimming, gymnastics, winter sports, sport in the nature, sports games and dancing (Opetushallitus, 2004).

In the teaching of grades 5 to 9, the pupil's physical and mental development is taken into account. Versatile exercise helps support the pupil's welfare. Key things are that the pupil should continue to develop motor skills, to understand the importance of physical activity for well-being and in maintaining health, to learn to act independently and in a group, and also to learn to accept them and tolerate diversity. Earlier skills are improved and as new contents, swimming and water rescue, functionality development and monitoring, muscle maintenance, and getting to know new forms of physical activity and sports awareness, are taught (Opetushallitus, 2004).

According to the Finish school system swimming is obligatory for all pupils. In Helsinki some Muslim parents who do not allow their children to participate in public swimming pool are required to teach them privately. In such circumstances, parents are obliged to practice their children in private swimming pool and provide certificate of participation to the P.E: teacher (Opetushallitus, 2004).

Finnish baseball is very familiar and popular among all levels in schools. In lower comprehensive level soccer and floor ball team games are most common. On the other hand Basketball, floor-ball , ice hockey are regarded as a regular activities and fitness training, track and field consider as a most common individual practice in upper comprehensive and senior secondary school. Also social dance is very popular among the student in upper secondary level. Skating and orienteering in basic level education, orienteering and jogging at upper secondary level, jogging and bowling in vocational level education are familiar as most common recreational activities in Finland.

According the P.E. curriculum boys and girls has same activities. School can provide P.E lesson among boys and girls or separately. Usually P.E. offered coeducationally in grade 1 and 2 however 3 to 9 and in upper secondary level has single sex classes. It has studied that P.E. teacher seems dissimilarities between boys and girls. Frequently, boys overwhelm the system and drawback for the girls. (Heikinaro-Johansson&Telama, 2005).

The influence of Electronic media and the effect of globalization pupils are more involved in sedentary. It has seen in the brake time of school that pupils take sit in the corridor instead of physical activities. That is why teachers are concerned about health behaviour of pupils and taking a great role to develop physical fitness.

Table1.

No.	School	Participant	Age of the Girl	Grade Level	Ethnic Background	Parent Occupation		Teacher Origin
						Father	Mother	
1	School-1	Muslim Girl	15	9 <sup>th</sup> Class	Somalia	Somali Language Teacher	House Mother	Estonia
2	School-2	>>	12	6 <sup>th</sup> Class	Bangladesh	Businessman	Working in a kindergarten	Finland
3	School-3	>>	12	6 <sup>th</sup> Class	Bangladesh	Businessman	House Mother	Finland
4	School-4	>>	12	6 <sup>th</sup> Class	Bangladesh	Businessman	Graduate student	Finland
5	School-5	>>	9	3 <sup>rd</sup> Class	Finland	Unknown	House Mother	Finland
6	School-6	>>	10	3 <sup>rd</sup> Class	Morocco	Bus driver	Managing family kindergarten	Finland

Participations of the Master Thesis

#### **4. Data of the Master's Thesis**

The researcher has learned Finnish language and grammar for excellence. This helped to facilitate the conversation with participants in Finnish. As the research areas were Southern and Central part of Finland. That is why it was a bit difficult to match the school time in both reasons to collect the data, because researcher's children belong in school and kindergarten in central Finland. As the schools holidays among southern and central parts are almost same except winter and autumn vacation. Consequently, researcher has chosen to visit southern part at the beginning of March in 2010 and stayed there for five days.

Participating schools in central part were visited between April and May 2010, as this region was the home town of the researcher. In order to approach target schools where participating Muslim girls attend, the researcher visited school's web page and got the contact address of the headmasters and P.E. teachers. An email message was sent to the headmasters and the P.E. teachers of Helsinki and Espoo schools. However, none of them responded until decision was made to make telephone call and formal communication has started.

The first school visited on the first of March 2010, 9:00 to 11:00 AM in the morning. At the beginning, whole class activities were observed followed by the interview of P.E. teacher. The

P.E. lesson was held on an ice hockey field which was about half kilometers far from the school. All including the researcher reached to the place by walking.

The same day, in the evening, the researcher visited the family of school girl and interviewed both for the girl and her mother. At that time the father of the girl was not present at home and consequently, discussion was held with the mother which took about an hour. Finally, afterwards, the researcher had got the chance to re-visit the girl's house in order to meet the father, as physical presence is focal point of ethnographic research. The researcher re-visited the girl's house by 25<sup>th</sup> of June and spent an hour with the father, with the presence of other members of the family.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> of March researcher visited the second School, from 8:00 to 10:00 AM in the morning, however, the main teacher was sick and the supplementary teacher took over the P.E. lesson. This P.E. lesson was conducted with several groups, for example girls with disability were with their own teacher. First, the researcher observed the class from beginning to end, then discussed with the girl as she had free time in that period. After communicating with the main P.E. through email, the researcher sent out the questionnaire through email and got the response the same way.

Appointment was made to visit the girl's house but unfortunately, the mother of the girl had gone overseas for an emergency case. Consequently, the visit was postponed and telephone interview was arranged to get relevant information from the parent. As this parent is very close to the researcher and they belong to the same community, it was possible to make frequent phone calls and make a discussion about the issue during community gatherings.

The researcher has got the opportunity to meet again with this parent in mid-summer day in 2010 and spent the whole day together. Private discussion about the main issue of the study was held

in this special social gathering. Final questions were asked by telephone and continued for several days as it could not be completed in one day conversation. In addition, mother of the girl allowed the researcher to contact whenever additional and up dated information is needed until the completion of the study.

Similarly, discussion was held with the father of the girl on a different day about one and half hours. During telephone conversation, sometimes, the discussion turned to some other religious issues than the main subject matter (sport). This is also very common in ethnographic research; because in many case one matter is linked with the other. Moreover when minor people are optimistic about the discussion, they would like to spotlight several social problems which occur in their surroundings.

Visiting School-3 was the last visit of the researcher in southern part of Finland. Like visiting other schools, the researcher observed the class from beginning to the end. It was on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March from 13:00 to 14.30 pm. It was informed by the P.E. teacher that the lesson would be held in other place than at school. The lesson was given in a gymnasium about half kilometer far away where the researcher accompanied the students. The teacher organized friendly tennis tournament among boys and girls. After end of the lesson, there was conversation between the researcher and the P.E. teacher that took about half an hour. As it was the last lesson of the day for participating girl, it was an opportunity for the researcher to walk with the girl and discuss about the sport and physical activity lessons in the school. As the researcher and the girl know each other and being from the same ethnic identity, the discussion was so friendly that the girl opened up to the researcher wholeheartedly.

Appointment was made to meet the girl's parent, however, due to bad weather and darkness in winter, the researcher could not meet the parents at home. Consequently, telephone interview was conducted to get information from both parents. After the telephone interview, the

researcher and these parents had the chance to meet together in a community picnic held on 26<sup>th</sup> of June in 2010 where they spend about ten hours and had informal discussion about the sport and physical activities for Muslim girls in Finland schools.

On April 23<sup>rd</sup>, School 4 was visited, in central part of Finland. Which is about a hundred meters far from the researchers dwelling. The same procedure was followed to get consent from the school, which is communication through email. After the school's consent, the whole period was observed and the researcher had conversation with the P.E. teacher. Before completing the discussion with the teacher, the time had come for another lesson with other group. Reasonably, the researcher had to wait for the P.E. teacher to finish her lesson and complete the interview.

The school girl was living in a close neighborhood of the researcher and is represent same nationality. As they frequently meet each other, they discussed about the topic several times. Similarly, the researcher interviewed the mother and the girl sitting in a park. Moreover, the researcher had the chance to travel to *Särkänniemi* together for leisure time activities and discuss broad ideas about the research topic. Discussion was held with the father of the girl at different times in their house.

The fifth school was visited on 6<sup>th</sup> of May in Central Finland from 14:00 to 15:00 PM. First, the researcher sent out email direct to the P.E. teacher, however, no response was obtained. Then, another email communication was sent out to the headmaster. To get the approval for school visit, bringing permission from the parent and the recommendation letter from university supervisor was required.

Finally, approval was obtained to visit the school. Subsequently, the researcher visited the school and observed P.E. lesson that was carried out an outdoor. The P.E. teacher organized baseball sports for the group, which took an hour. After then, the researcher interviewed the

teacher for about 90 minutes. The discussion involved sport, culture, religion and Finnish educational systems.

As the participating girl's father was not living in Finland, her mother responded to all the questions. This mother was also a member of the Muslim community and the researcher had the chance to meet her frequently and discuss about the subject very often.

The last visit was School-6, in the Central Finland. The same procedure was followed to get consent from the participating P.E. teacher. Similarly, the headmaster of this school required the researcher to bring recommendation paper from both University supervisor and the parent. The researcher submitted all the important documents by 5<sup>th</sup> of May and got the approval from the headmaster to visit the school. By the time the researcher visited the school, the P.E. teacher had organized bicycle tour and was about to leave. For this reason, the visit was made by 12<sup>th</sup> of May from 12:30 to 13:15.

The lesson was conducted outdoor. To be able to conduct the interview, the P.E. teacher hired one assistant instructor to supervise the lesson that day. After the researcher completed the school visit, interview of the teacher was conducted based on the questionnaire. Again, the discussion was beyond sport and physical exercise but involved issue of Islamic religion and culture.

The researcher has also got the chance to discuss about the teachers personal life and experiences. For instance, the researcher was practicing Islam and had Islamic dress code; however, the teacher was proud of that as she is a feminist. The teacher also asked some important questions such as the difference between men and women in Islam; Islamic dress code; and men having more than one wife in Islam.

Accordingly, the researcher replied to the teacher in a logical way coating verses from Quran and Hadith. Finally, the P.E. teacher expressed her opinion if Muslims can change Quran and Hadith through time. The researcher replied the question saying “no one can add or less anything in the Holy Quran. If people try, they would not succeed, because, Allah (S.W.T.) has declared in the Holy Quran the following”,

*“Allah burdens not a person beyond his scope. He gets reward for that (good) which he has earned, and he is punished for that (evil) which he has earned (Al-Quran, 2:286).*

*And that man can have nothing but what he strive for”, (Al-Quran, 53:39).*

The parents of participating girl in school-6 were also one of the Muslim community members in central Finland. Again, the researcher was well-known with this family and it was easy to get consent from the parent to visit the girl at school. Interview was conducted for both the mother and the girl at home in a relaxed manner having tea and some snack. As usual, issues about Islam and Finish school system were the center of the discussion.

The researcher visited this family again in order to interview the father as he was not present the previous day. The discussion was much longer than the earlier. The discussion focused on parenting and looking after children in Islamic context. At some point, the discussion went beyond the research topic as the father was the President of the local Mosque for the Muslim community. During this discussion, the school girl and her mother were present and contributed their opinion and expressed different ways of thinking.

#### **4.1. Data Collection**

The interview and discussion was based on the major research questions. The data were collected from 1<sup>st</sup> of March to end of September in 2010. Data was collected through observation, interview, and informal discussion. Six schools and parents of participating girls were visited in

southern and central part of Finland. The languages of data collection were Finnish, Bengali (Language of Bangladesh people), and English.

Interviews were conducted in Central and southern part of Finland. There were three schools in Southern part which are labeled as school-1, 2, and 3. On the other hand Central part schools are labeled as school 4, 5, and 6. To make it easy to clarify the girls are given names as,

Amina (School 1), Khadija (School 2), Fatima (School 3), Sumaia (School 4), Mariam (School 5), and Asia (School 6).

## **4.2. Data from Southern Finland**

The following interviews are conducted from school -1, 2 and 3. The girls are Amina, Khadija and Fatima.

Amina and her parent are originally from Somalia. The parents had migrated to Finland eighteen years ago like in 1992. They have six children three of them are daughters. The girl is fifteen years old studying in class nine. The mother of the girl is house wife on the other hand father is school teacher. He is Somali language teacher in Helsinki. Both parent are practicing Islam and also careful about their children's everyday life in Islamic context. They are very free and frank

towards their children as well as others. The teacher of the school is from Estonia; however she looks like Finnish and speak the local language very well.

Khadija is twelve years older, studying in class six. She was born in Bangladesh, but living in Finland since 1999. Her parents are also from Bangladesh. They were living in Sweden before they came to Finland. Since 1999 they begun to live in Finland and this moment they have Finnish nationality. They have two daughters; both girls are studying in the same school. These parents are very open- minded with their children. Also they have very good dealing with other community members and people in general. They are very much conscious and careful about their children's future life. Both parent practice Islam and try their best to look after their children in Islamic way. They are very proud of their obedient children.

Khadija's P.E. teacher is from Finland. She is the only one subject whose interview was conducted through email. She was sick at that time when researcher has visited in Southern part of Finland. When researcher was not able to meet her then she received questionnaires through email and she replied it.

Fatima is also from Bangladesh. She is 12 years old studying in class six. Her parents are from Bangladesh. They were living in Sweden. They have three children two daughters and a son. Fatima is the eldest daughter in the family. Their second daughter is in class two at the same school. The son of them is the youngest one belongs to a kindergarten. Fatima's Mother is a house wife and her father is a businessman. They are very co-operative with each other and incredibly honest to children. They are living a happy life and are optimistic that their children will be zeal to acquire knowledge in discipline. Fatima's P.E. teacher is from Finland. He had very good experiences about Islam religion and culture. He is introduced with several Muslim children and parents from many years.

Amina, Khadija and Fatima participate in P.E. lesson: however they do not take part in all activities. According to Amina, some sports are more inflexible for her, like Ice hockey, music, dance and couple dance. She told, it is quite difficult for her as a Muslim girl; especially if the activities arrange among boys and girls. If she participates among boys or beside male instructor, then it is most possible that her body expose to them which consider unlawful act in Islamic context. Evidently Islam does not allow mixing among men and female, when both of them become mature. As Islam emphasizes to the female which is said in Quran:

*“O Prophet! Tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks (veils) all over their bodies. That will be better, that they should be known so as not to be annoyed. And Allah is Ever oft Forgiving, Most Merciful” (33:59).*

There are many examples from the literature that Islam prohibited mutual mixing among male and female apart from those persons whose are forbidden for getting married. Also those people who are under age or innocent and ignore about the secret parts of opposite sex. Similarly Nizamy (2008, p.82) has mentioned, the prophet (PBUH) said,

*“If a person touches woman’s hand who is not legal according Islamic law (shariah); he will receive fire on his hand in eternal life.”*

Moreover it is mentioned in Bukhari: Book 6: Volume 60: Hadith 414, Narrated by Urwa:

Aisha the wife of the Prophet reported that when women migrated into Islam then the prophet took oath only; not to touch their hand which he do with men. For the reason that Allah (SWT) has forbidden men and women mutual mixing accept legal relationship. As it is clearly declared in the Quran that

*'O Prophet! When believing women come to you to take the oath of allegiance to you... Verily! Allah is Oft-Forgiving Most Merciful" (60.12).*

According to the mentioned verse above if any of the women do oath then the Prophet would say to the woman, *"I have accepted your pledge of allegiance"*. He would say that; only for Allah's (S.W.T.) shake his hand never touch any female during that pledge of allegiance. For men he never accept pledge by saying, moreover they have to put their hand on the Prophet's hand.

Naturally, Amina is used to change her clothes for physical activities lesson either in toilet or dressing room, in out of sight from others. However, due to lack of proper facilities she does not take shower in the school at all. Eventually she does not participate in swimming which school organizes. While Islam emphasizes not to be naked beside others either similar or opposite sex. Accordingly, The Prophet (PBUH) said:

*"A man should not look at the private parts of another man, and a woman should not look at the private parts of another woman.....(Muslim,n.678)"*.

Instead of taking shower she is required to wash her face and arms. Amina has mentioned the reason why she does not participate in Music class, dance and couple dance activities. As it is not permissible in Islam, it is narrated by Abu Amir or Abu Malik Al-Ashari, that Prophet Mohammad(S) said,

*"From among my followers there will be some people who will consider illegal sexual intercourse, the wearing of silk(for men), the drinking of alcoholic drinks and the use of musical instruments, as lawful. And there will be some people who will stay near the side of a mountain and in the evening their shepherd will come to them with their sheep and ask them for something, but they will say to him, 'Return to us tomorrow.' Allah will destroy them during the night and*

*will let the mountain fall on them, and He will transform the rest of them into monkeys and pigs and they will remain so till the Day of Resurrection"*(Bukhari: book 7,vol.69,n.494) .

Moreover she expressed that she will not agree with her teacher if she forces her to do such kind of physical activities, wearing short dress or taking shower beside others, which Islam strongly prohibited for the believers. As once the Apostle of Allah (PBUH) saw a man washing in a public place without a lower garment. So he mounted the pulpit, praised and extolled Allah and said: *"Allah is characterised by modesty and concealment. So when any of you washes, he should conceal himself"* (Dawud : Book 31 : Hadith 4001).

Amina is still expressing unwillingness to participate in Ice hockey practice; because very often she has to play in mixed group, where possible risk is boys and girls can get to touch each other. However, it is totally forbidden in Islam. While a Muslim must concern until death about each single issue; is it acceptable to Allah or not! It is mentioned in Quran that on the Judgment day it will be announced regarding all which occurred over life of good or evil. So people will proceed in scattered, how they will see their deeds. As each person will be asked on the Judgment Day by Allah (SWT) for the act in the earth and will evaluate according to their deeds in life. It is clearly stated in the Quran:

*"Whosoever does good equal to the weight of an atom (or a small ant), shall see it. And whosoever does evil equal to the weight of an atom (or a small ant), shall see it"* (99:7-8).

That is why to fear Allah is primary duty for every Muslim if they want to secure entrance in paradise forever. As Allah (SWT) stated many times in the Quran, such as:

*“O you who believe! Fear Allah (by doing all that He has ordered and by abstaining from all that He has forbidden) as He should be feared. [Obey Him, be thankful to Him, and remember Him always], and die not except in a state of Islam [as Muslims (with complete submission to Allah)]” (3:102).*

In the month of Ramadan, Amina faced with difficulties to participate in all sport and physical activities. However, if the instructors give less difficult activities and do not force to participate in all activities, then it will be helpful. She also asked how she participates in swimming pool; she told that she cannot participate in public swimming pool; because it is not possible to keep her modesty which she obliged as a Muslim girl. While modesty is very important in Islam, like;

Imran ibn Husayn said,

*"The Prophet (PBUH), said, "Modesty brings nothing but good." (Bukhari1312, Source: Sunnipath).*

Ibn 'Umar said,

*"Modesty and belief are together. If one of them is removed, the other is removed"*

(Bukhari 1313, Source: Sunnipath).

Abu Bakar reported that the Prophet(S) said,

*"Modesty is part of belief. Belief is in the Garden. Foul language is part of coarseness and coarseness is in the Fire" (Bukhari1314, Source: Sunnipath).*

Abu Huraira has narrated:

The Prophet said, *"Faith (Belief) consists of more than sixty branches and Haya (self respect, modesty, bashfulness, and scruple, etc.) is a part of faith"*(Bukhari, H.N.8).

While practicing in swimming is obligatory according to Finnish school curriculum. That is why she participates in a private swimming pool with her own responsibility. She participates in swimming organized for female and she brings report from the organizer in that pool to her P.E. teacher. Through that report she was given grade by the P.E. teacher for swimming.

Amina is from such a religious family where they maintain religious obligation absolutely, that is why she holds her believes and does not compromise with anything which is not favored in Islamic context. However; she is still left behind with some difficulties like to participating in Ice hockey, among boys and girls. Which she seems as very uncomfortable for her as a Muslim girl. Consequently, her recommendation is to avoid mixing participation in sport between boys and girls.

For the same reason, Khadija felt difficulties when she does the activities along with boys, because it is very oft to get touch from them. Particularly in stretching and dance activities. She mentioned that during stretching and dance activities it is very tough to maintain clothes to covering the body according Islamic way and it is harmful if her body exposed into male view, which is totally forbidden. As Allah (SWT) said in the Quran:

*"O you who believe, if you fear Allah, He will provide you with a criterion (to distinguish between right and wrong) and will write off your evil deeds and will forgive you. Allah is the Lord of great bounty."*(8:29).

For being a good Muslim Fatima also care much about Islamic etiquette. She told that she wears full trouser, long shirt with full sleeves and head scarf in her P.E. lesson; however she does not participate actively in dance and running. Even though, if they have couple dance and there are combinations among boys and girls then she avoids doing that. Moreover, she told that she feels quite uncomfortable to do some sport like marathon. She thinks that it is not suitable for her at all. At the beginning she was forced to do marathon; later on she was able to avoid that, when her father applied to the school for releasing her from that obligation.

According to Fatima, she does not change her dress in sport participation. While there is no appropriate place for her to change clothes in school; that is why she wear such kind of dress from home which is suitable for sports activities. Also due to lack of proper facilities she does not take shower in school rather she prefers that at home. While Islam has emphasized not to be naked beside others either similar or opposite sex. As it is quoted in the Quran,

*“O Children of Adam! We have bestowed raiment upon you to cover yourselves (screen your private parts) and as an adornment, and the raiment of righteousness, that is better. Such are among the Ayah (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) of Allah, that they may remember (i.e. leave falsehood and follow truth)” (7:26).*

Fatima likes swimming; however for lack of privacy she cannot participate in public pool. That is why her expectation is to get swimming facilities which is suitable for Muslim girls.

Nearly all parents are very active Muslims and by to follow Islamic *shariah* in every way of their life, but Amina’s parents are even strong believers. They do not compromise anything; if something is against Islam. When they were asked by the researcher that, “what would be your decision if the school fails to accommodate your girl’s interest based on the Islamic rules?” Then

they told, once the headmaster of their daughter said to them, (in order to remove Amina's head scarf) "if you are in Finland you have to become (like) Finns". In that situation Amina's mother has replied that," we think we are not in Finland neither in Somalia; we are living on the planet of Allah (SWT). That is why our first priority is to obey Allah (SWT) over everything."

Obviously Allah (SWT) declared in the Quran:

*"Blessed is He in Whose Hand is the dominion, and He is Able to do all things. Who has created death and life, that He may test you which of you is best in deed. And He is the All-Mighty, the Oft-Forgiving;" (67:1-2).*

Additionally Amina's parent told that they had visited so many times in the school since her daughter got admission there, mostly to inform about Muslim food and drinks, culture and custom. They informed that when their daughter was in class five, she was not allowed to take *hijab* (covering head and chest) in school. Beside her, there were a number of other Somali pupils in the class. Obviously, all parents together visited the school concerning the issues. However, they could not reach their goal, as the headmistress disagreed with them. Nevertheless, when the headmistress observed that the parents did not move away from their condition; then she agreed that girl can wear Islamic dress in P.E. lesson, however Amina must participate in music class.

Later on, all Somali pupils left from the music class without saying anything. In this kind of situation the headmistress organized a meeting with Somali parents and expressed her opinion that she could not change anything in school. Conversely, all Somali family refused the headmistress's opinion. Moreover they declared that their children will not participate in the music class unless the headmistress will accept their appeal.

It is realized that when there is multicultural issues arise as a problem in school or some other institutions then it takes time to make new decision. Naturally people get difficulties when dissimilarities arise. Here in one hand the Headmaster may not understand the importance of the value of Islamic etiquette; on the other hand she is also a responsible person to follow the rules of the organization. Whenever people are from two or more different cultures deals with each other then it takes time to compromise if there is distinction. For instance, in Western culture generally people are not serious about religious matter; on the other hand Muslims give first priority to religion over everything. Of course, there can be difference among people either in west or east. However it is seen that Western people in general gives more value to their life and asset. People are here more materialist and do not concern much about religion. Moreover, religious activities have become as cultural norms, conversely, Muslim people still hold their religious believe in practise and give less priority for luxurious materialistic life. A good example, the Olympic Games, in London 2012 most of the Muslim participants were fasting (London 2012). Especially fasting in summer is much longer than winter. Fasting interpret differently for Muslim than other religious context. For instance a Muslim stops himself or herself from eating, drinking, smoking and other unIslamic activities throughout the day, starting from sunrise till the sunset. Immediately after sunset he/she should breaking fast.

Beside fasting Muslim women were also conscious about their dress. This is the first time that Olympic Committee allowed to Saudi women to wear Hijab in Judo (Olympic Judo).As well as in athletics (Sarah Attar).Additionally FIFA allowed women can play football with hijab (FIFA Rules in favor Hijab).

Correspondingly, Amina's father expressed his opinion that people can be different from their own perception; however, they do like to maintain Islamic rules and regulations that is why they are very conscious about Islamic etiquette. In present time people are living in multi-cultural environment, naturally there are vast differences among each other. It can be seen in the school,

work place, on streets and so on. He supposes, in these circumstances if people respect each other; outcome will be constructive otherwise problems may arise from different angles.

Especially, children feel relatively sorrow when they break from their own choice either school or other place. On the other hand as a father's responsibility in Islamic viewpoint, he has to recommend his daughter to wear dress in an Islamic way. However, her daughter was not permitted to do that, especially in P.E. lesson. To resolve this mentioned issue they had discussed many times with the headmistress.

After two months, the headmistress has discussion with the Imam (chief of the Mosque, to whom people follow for prayers) and got more information about the reason of parents' disagreement with school system. Since that period Amina and also other Somali pupils just only attend the music class. However, they did not play any music; only participate in the class.

Again Amina's parents asked by the researcher, what they think about the participation of their daughter's in P.E. lesson at school, if the activities are not suitable for her? They respond, religion is more important over everything in their life. Unquestionably, if Amina face anything else that are not allowed in Islamic shariah or resistance from Islamic custom then it is good to avoid participation in such kinds of activities, whether it is more or less important according to school curriculum. Of course, both parents prefer that their daughter participate in sport and stay in healthy life, but do not like to compromise with any single issue which is forbidden in Islam.

Moreover, Amina's father expressed his opinion that people should respect other's beliefs. It is very important to accommodate others' religious and cultural etiquette when people live side by side with different identities and backgrounds. If school fails to accommodate our girl's interest based on the Islamic rules then it would be necessary to discuss more with the teachers and explain more about religion and culture.

He is optimistic that there will not be any difficulties in future for Muslim girls' participation in sports. Seeing that, nowadays the situation is much better than previous time and school's response is improving on matters which concerns more from Islamic point of view. For instance in earlier time they had many problems in interpretation of Islamic believes, when something was not allowed in Islamic perspectives. However, in present time school provides very well counseling which helps to develop a positive attitude to accommodate Muslim girl's concern. Additionally, it is praiseworthy that these days Muslim pupils are asked by teachers if something is not allowed from Islamic point of view. However still more needs to be adopted in school system, for example lack of privacy for changing clothes, taking shower, mixing activities between boys and girls, instructor from opposite sex and improper swimming system.

Whilst Amina's mother was asked her recommendation for better P:E. lesson in school for Muslim girls, in the beginning she told that it is worthwhile for pupils if school system provides facilities where boys and girls can participate in P.E. separately. Additionally, it is crucial to give privacy for taking shower and change sports dress. Furthermore, it is necessary for allowing Muslim girls loose trousers and shirts with full sleeves or other kind of Islamic dresses. Not to pressure for any kind of dance, nor music. No force for participating in public swimming pool; rather provide opportunities where Muslim girls can swim privately.

For increasing appropriate facilities Amina's father advocate to school authority for changing school policy to allow no mixing between boys and girls. Additionally, he recommends for no music class and dance activities.

Similarly, Khadija's parent like, their daughter to do sport and physical activities in school; however, not to do beside boys. Even though Khadija should avoid any kinds of short dresses; rather her wearing dress must be according to Islamic custom. Additionally her mother advised

her, not to play or do activities which look like awful in Islamic context, like Judo. Once she started to practice Judo in school; but her mother realized that it is not suitable for her as a Muslim girl. Her mother thought that if she does not stop Khadija's Judo practicing, she will consider as a sinner in the view of Allah (SWT). Ultimately she is afraid of the situation of Judgment day as it mentioned in the Quran,

*“O mankind, fear your Lord. Indeed the quake of the (destined) Hour is something terrible. The day you will see it, every suckling female will forget that which she suckles, and every female having pregnancy shall abort her fetus, and you will see people as if they are drunk, while they are not drunk, but Allah's torment is (so) severe” (22:1-2).*

At the same time if people concern about the reward from their Lord in the Day of Judgment, they must be fearful, alert and sincere to Allah's (SWT) orders for any single purpose in the whole life. That is why the parents are very conscious to rearing children in Islamic context, because they will be asked about their duty in the Day of Judgment. Definitely it is mentioned in the Quran,

*“And they will advance to one another, asking (about each other's welfare). They will say, “Indeed we were afraid (of Allah's punishment) when we were amidst our family. But Allah did favour to us and saved us from the torment of Fire's scorching breath. We used to pray to Him before. He is surely the Most-Kind, the Very-Merciful” (52:25-28).*

What are teachers' persuasions if pupils have different religious faith? What happen if Muslim girls hold their strong belief; on the other hand teacher has to follow school curriculum, rules and regulations! Accordingly, Amina's teacher states that she has no issue towards Muslim girls if they maintain Islamic etiquette. However, if something is not suitable according to the rules of the school, then she cannot keep Muslim girls' request; for instance if girls' want to do physical

exercise in wearing *hijab* it would be not allowed unless school authorizes it. Otherwise she will be responsible if something wrong happens. Amina's teacher told that there are many Finnish and other Muslim girls who wear *hijab* in sport activities, in this case she recommends them to use small scarf that makes it easy to do activities.

It happens very often in every year that Amina's teacher encountered with Muslim girls complaining about sports and physical activities. Frequently problems arise regarding Islamic dress code. At the same time to confront with pupils outdoor sport activities, especially girls. Although it can be dangerous for girls, if they wear Islamic dress in physical activities instead of sport clothing. Consequently, she is afraid to give them consent to wear their own dress, for example long skirt because, if something happens in that certain time, then she will be responsible for them.

When Khadija's teacher was asked, whether she considers the interest of Muslim girls' participation in sport activities based on the Islamic rules and obligations? She replied that as a P.E. teacher she only follows the school rules. She expressed her opinion, if pupils or guardian have any appeal or demands to modify something related to sport participation. In this case she cannot accommodate them unless school system adjusts it. She just tries to co-operate with pupils to obtain physical fitness.

On the other hand Fatima's teacher let know his opinion that girls have to participate in sport as it is required in the curriculum. He does not like to change any system whether parent like it or not. However, he does not object it if girls have *hijab* or dress up in Islamic way. Additionally, he does not like to see that Muslim girls' are not in attendance in some sport like football. Although, most common requests from the parents are for their girls not to participate in outdoor as well as mixing activities.

Eventually, Fatima's teacher thinks it is not necessary to provide special facilities for Muslim girls' sport participation respecting the Islamic rules. Moreover he told that basically there is no way to accommodate them if it makes differences among all pupils' sport activities.

Consequently, in his view there is no need for any change in the sport class. However, Muslim girls can feel free to wear Islamic dress.

### **4.3. Data from Central Finland**

The interviews were carried out in central Finland from three schools. The schools are labeled as School- 4, 5, & 6. Going in sequence these girls are:

Sumaia (School 4), Mariam (School 5), Asia (School 6).

Sumaia immigrated to Finland in October 2009 and she started school from November in the same year. She is twelve years old, studying in class six. She is from Bangladesh. Her parents are also from Bangladesh. The mother of Sumaia is a Master degree student of the Jyväskylä University in the Faculty of Sports and Health Sciences in the department of Biomechanics, exercise physiology, science of coaching and fitness testing. Before they came to Finland Sumaia's parent had been in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for several years. As her mother was a lecturer of King Khalid University, in Abha. In addition Sumaia's mother was a lecturer at Bangladesh Health professions Institute BHPI, Academic institute of CRP. They have two daughters, Sumaia is eldest and youngest one belongs in kindergarten. Sumaia's father has a big business in Bangladesh. Obviously, he cannot live in Finland for whole year with family. However he tries his best to live in Finland most of the time in a year. These parents highly expect that their daughters will join higher education despite of all difficulties.

Naturally Sumaia's P.E. teacher is from Finland. She approaches others with warm and welcoming behavior. She is much loved by the pupils, parents, and others as well. It is well known that she always tries to understand from the other side; if something is not matching with others perception. Additionally, she honours people apart from religious and cultural boundary; also by herself she practices her own religion. Her principle is to co-operate with others and keep tolerance.

Like Sumaia, Mariam also migrated to Finland; she was born in Germany. Her mother is from Finland and father from Bosnia. Since 2009 she started to live in Finland. She is nine years old and studying in class three. The mother of Mariam had been living in Germany for 20 years. She was born in Christian family and living in Germany with her mother. However, she had reverted to Islam in 2005. After being a Muslim, she married a Bosnian man and given birth to this girl. Unfortunately, her conjugal life was not lasting more than one year. Later, she married another Muslim man from Morocco and given birth to a son and daughter. They are of age 2 and half year and 1 and half year respectably. Presently, she is only looking after her children at home and her husband is studying Finnish language. She is a gentle woman and practicing Muslim. Her anticipation is that Mariam and her siblings should become proper Muslims and obedient in Islamic etiquette in life.

Mariam's teacher is also Finnish and has much knowledge about multicultural and religious role. That is why it was very comfortable to discuss with him about various issues concerning Muslim girls sport participation in school. He was very co-operative and friendly. He had very strong control in the play ground among boys and girls. He also does not like to refuse the request from Muslim girl's parent. Nevertheless Mariam's teacher likes parents to visit school and explain the

reason, why it is difficult for their girls to participate in sport and physical activities. He has realized the difference between Muslims and others; consequently, it is very clear for him that all believers are not same. The differences mostly come according to the different family background. He is very liberal to accommodate others views and beliefs.

On the other hand, Asia is born in Finland in 2000; although her parents are from Morocco. She is in class four. She is very active and obedient girl in school. Asia's father has immigrated to Finland since 1985 and the mother in 1998. They both are practicing Islam actively. They wish that Asia will be an obedient girl in Islam and highly qualified in education. The youngest daughter of them is in Kindergarten and she will get admission in the same school in this autumn. Asia's father is a former president of the local Mosque. His profession is a bus driver. On the other hand mother is looking after children in her home kindergarten; where almost all children are from Finland and from different religious background families. At the same time both parent belong to active members of Muslim community.

Asia's teacher is from Finland. This is the first time that she has got experience about Muslim culture through Asia. She did not meet with Muslim pupils ever until she met Asia. However, in present times there are Muslim boys and girls in her other classes. She introduced herself as a feminist. Therefore many questions arise in her mind. Also she is getting new experiences with Muslim pupils' culture and religion. For instance, she found discrimination when Muslim girls are obligated to put *hijab* where their counterparts are not forced. Similarly the teacher was inquisitive about why Muslim men can have more than one wives. After obtaining all answers from the researcher she again recommended that it is better, if Muslims adopt something aside from the religious point of view. She failed to understand that Islam is a complete code of life and the perfect way to live happy and successful life. Islam is a religion which prefers first priority of Allah (SWT) then His messenger Prophet Mohammad(S). As a result there is not a single profitability to adopt anything else in Islamic framework.

Amazingly, Sumaia has new experience in Finland as a new comer and sport activities are not out of it. Sumaia is born in a country, where nearly 90 percent of the people follow Islam. She never faced such challenges in her country and that is the big issue in Finland that Sumaia does not participate in all activities. She only practices those sports which is suitable for her as a Muslim girl. Even she does not change her dress neither take shower in school. Usually she prefers to wear full pant and shirt with long sleeves which is not tight; rather loose. According to her, it is impossible to take part in couple dance and also participate in swimming pool.

However Mariam and Asia are different from Sumaia. As both of them practices all sports activities in school. Nevertheless Asia has to take shower in general bath room and change clothes in common dressing room which she dislikes. Also her parents deeply worried that there is no individual dressing and bath room for their daughter. Many times they informed teacher about the issues; however in reality it was not considered. Asia's parents think that they must visit school in order to get better facilities for their daughter.

Moreover they told that their daughter is growing up which makes them to be more careful and they must have to perform their responsibility. Sumaia's mother is more careful than her father, for instance, once Sumaia asked that how often she can play computer game. She replied it depends; if mother is at home or awake than no possibility to play computer game; but father gives permission whenever she wants. Also about dress code and privacy either in school or in public place Sumaia's mother always influence her daughter more than father. At the same time her mother does not like that she stays outside with friends in late hours of the day. Sumaia has a sister, so she can play with her; also sometimes they have nostalgic travel mostly in Morocco. In home country they can choose suitable place for physical activities, especially swimming.

On the other hand Mariam maintains some strategy, for instance she changes her dress only when all girls already left the room. Similarly she takes shower at the end when all other girls finished their shower so that, nobody can see her in that time. Mariam's mother is stricter than Sumaia's in keeping religious obligation. Eventually, Mariam has no permission concerning the following issues: (1) in school, pupils sing Christian songs before they start eating; however she do not like that her daughter do the same; (2) Not to participate in different religious festivals, when school organizes different activities towards pupils, in that time Mariam cannot join with others. For example, to decorate Christmas tree, in Easter time to draw or make something; (3) not to make any card on Valentine's Day.

Beside other issues which are related with religion, Mariam's mother has concern regarding sport participation. She realizes that it is crucial to communicate with the school about the need of separate room for changing dress and individual bathroom to take shower, swimming opportunity among female and wearing dress islamically.

She thinks if there is not very big problem to obtain credit, then it is best that her daughter does not participate in such kind of sport activities which Islam has prohibited. She is enthusiastic about her request that school will agree to accept her proposal; otherwise it might be difficult for Mariam.

Mariam is very obedient girl to her mother. That is why she try her best to maintain clothing according Islam, for instance she wears full pant, long sleeve and loose dress. Like other Muslim girls, Mariam does not like to participate in couple dance. Nor she felt comfortable in normal dance. However, sometimes she participates in couple dance if there are no boys. She does not understand much about religion; but her mother is very strict and guides her children to practice Islam from their early life. As it is declared in the Quran,

*“O you who believe! Betray not Allah and His Messenger, nor betray knowingly your Amanat (things entrusted to you and all the duties which Allah has ordained for you). And know that your*

*possessions and your children are but a trial and that surely with Allah is a mighty reward” (8:27-28).*

According to the verses from the Quran above, it is mentioned that children are a kind of test, temptation and trial from Allah (SWT). Too much freedom and lack of restriction can push children to the danger. Also it can be a primary reason for the ruination of their life. Unsuccessful in parental duty seems disobedience in the sight of Allah (SWT), Bari (2002, p.16). Additionally Bari (2002) said, “Primary education is the bedrock of rest life learning” Consequently it is very important for a parent to choose a suitable school; at the same time develop confidence in them from the beginning time of their school life (p.109); Rationally, Mariam’s mother is more conscious over her children. That is why she would like that school will provide separate sports classes between boys and girls. Also it is necessary to give a female teacher for the girls. Additionally it is crucial to organize separate swimming for Muslim girls and not to play music. What is more, Mariam’s mother required her daughter’s outside activities must be separate from the distance of men and boys.

Asia’s parents are confronting with the school system to keep religious requirements. For this reason, right at the beginning when Asia was admitted in the school they informed that she needs a separate bathroom to take a shower and an individual place to change dress. However, the proposal still hung on and the teacher responds that it is not possible to give her such facilities in school. When the situation is changing as Asia is growing up fast the religious requirements concern very much in her parent’s mind. They want to visit Asia’s school again and clarify more regarding religious obligations.

Asia’s parents are optimistic that they will not be refused any more. In the light of the above mentioned issues, they would like to convey their message to the P.E. teachers that Asia will not participate in a sauna with others. However if school provides private swimming and other physical activities classes, then it should be separate for girls and boys, specially couple dance is

Despite the mixing among boys and girls it is also necessary not to be naked or disclose all parts of the body even beside the similar sex. Since present world is under the threat to keep balance in human growths; because third gender group is rising up in societies alongside with the feminine and masculine sexual characteristics. Therefore it is very important to know that Prophet Mohammad (S) declared that,

*"A man must not look at a man's private parts nor must a woman look at a woman's private parts; neither should two men lie naked under one cover, nor should two women lie naked under the same cover. (Riyadussaliheen, H.N.1627)"*

With the similar doctrines of other parents in above, Sumaia's mother also think of her daughter's participation in P.E. lesson. She believes that sport is very important for all human beings to develop their physical and mental recreation. However, at the same time religion is also most important part for Muslim people. That is why, it is better if the both requirement set up for Muslim girls in discipline where there is no complexity to participate in sport class. Moreover, she prefers that her daughter may not participate in sport class in presence of boys; but only girls. Furthermore, she required that her daughter must wear respectable dress in Islamic context. As it is stated,

*"Women who are naked even though they are wearing clothes, go astray and make others go astray, and they will not enter the Garden and they will not find its scent, and its scent is experienced from as far as the distance travelled in five hundred years" (Malik :: Book 48 : Hadith 48.4.7).*

Besides Sumaia's mother her father supposes that naturally Allah (SWT) has created girls in different than boys; so it is beneficial if girls concern which activities they are doing. That is why he recommended to his daughter not to exercise such activities which are not Islamic. Otherwise

Sumaia can have problem in her life. Sumaia's mother asked what she thinks if school fails to accept their requirement regarding Islamic believe. She expressed her opinion that in this case she definitely disagree with them, because these requirement, are not illegal. It is well known that Finland law approves all religious rights to allow people's own etiquette. So they are optimistic that their requirements will be considered seriously.

Sumaia's parents are not out of the assembly line than others parents mentioned in above to recommend for Muslim girls sports class in the school. According to them it would be beneficial for Muslim girls if school make separation between boys and girls in sport activities.

Additionally, school may not compel any sports activities in outdoor which focus girls' body structure. Finally, if school tolerates Muslim girls dressing in Islamic comportment it may bring more effort for all circumstances.

Let see what the teachers' perception is! Almost all teachers have similar opinion that the Muslim girls' primarily demands are more or less same. And it mainly comes from their religion. Usually different cultures can have variation of food, dress, social norms etcetera; however when question arises about the religion, obviously it is same everywhere in the world, especially in monotheistic believe. That is why all teachers have understanding about what are the major difficulties in keeping all requirement of P.E. lesson in school for Muslim girls. At the same time the common requests of these Muslim girls' are:

- not to wear traditional sports outfit rather long and loose dress.
- to avoid participation in the public swimming pool.
- not to take shower in generally; neither change dress in common dressing room.

Also they do like separate P.E. class between boys and girls. Moreover, they prefer female instructor.

However with the mentioned issues Mariam's teacher also finds some differences between families, for example some families like that their girls can participate in all kinds of sports activities; contrary to others who dislike it. He told that a number of girls have complained that they do not like to participate in dancing with boys; however some other has no problems. Of course in class three and four have P.E. lesson with boys and girls together. Nevertheless there are separate sport class between boys and girls from class five to forward.

Some parents do not like that their girls participate in sports. Eventually, some of them request when there is sexual discussions in biology class, their girls must be outside the class. So it is very clear that family background makes dissimilarity among Muslim girls P.E. activities in school. If girls are from religious family they are more conscious about Islamic etiquette and vice-versa. In this situation most of the teachers recommend to the guardians; that they should communicate with the school administrators that it would be more supportive to discuss seriously all the problems which Muslim girls face in school.

Sumaia's P.E. teacher is more co-operative than others and that is why she provides more facilities towards other. For example if Muslim girls have problems to participate in some sport activities, in this case they can do some alternative. Eventually, she provides opportunities towards Muslim pupils to use separate bathroom and dressing room. Muslim girls are allowed to wear any kind of dress in her P.E. lesson which they wish.

On the other hand, Asia's P.E. teacher think that there are some activities which Muslim girls can do; however if anything else which is not allowed in Islam; then parent should visit school and make discussion about the issues with the headmaster. However, she does not like to force

anybody else; as each one has his or her own right. Even though there are some Christian pupils who do not participate in music, couple dance and some other activities. In this situation they just participate on the place without doing anything.

Mariam's teacher recommended that obviously it is necessary to look after pupils in the school fairly. Also as a teacher he tries his best to exposed honour and respect towards other's religious functions. Nevertheless if parent are not agreeing with some part of the system in school then it is very important that they communicate with the teachers and inform them. Otherwise teachers do not count pupils' request.

According to Mariam's teacher, it is good not to force any pupils to do sport and physical activities either Muslim girls or others. Also if something is harmful to Muslim girls in P.E. lesson; it would be better to give them some other option which is suitable for them in Islamic context. Moreover he would propose for Muslim girls, they must be frame in everywhere. They should not hide anything if they know.

## 5. Discussion of the Findings and Conclusion

### 5.1 Discussion of Result

No.	Research Questions	Major Results
1.	How do Muslim girls participate in physical and sport activities in schools?	Most of the Muslim girls do not participate in public swimming pools, because they face problem to maintain Islamic etiquette. Some others manage private swimming pools. Almost all girls avoid participating beside boys and do not like man instructor. Moreover they do not like to practice in music lesson; neither to participate in couple dance activities. Furthermore they do not take shower after physical exercise nor change clothes for lack of private facilities. They also feel bothered to do outdoor activities in public place.
2.	What do parents perceive about the school system regarding physical activities?	There were clear expressions from almost all parents that it is very important to practice sport in school without any violation of Islamic rules. For instance, Muslim girls required to cover their body with loose garments and also use scarf on the head. Most of them are concerned about mixing activities among boys and girls. Rationally they insist separation between male and female, either pupils or instructors.
3.	What parents should do to let their girls participate in physical activities?	According to the parent's opinion, it is crucial to communicate with the school authority in order to let them know which are not allowed to do for Muslim girls in Islamic context. For example, it is allowed for Muslim girls

No.	Research Questions	Major Results
		to practice swimming; however they have to wear dress Islamically and out of male views.
4.	What should sport teachers do to accommodate Muslim girls in physical activities?	All teachers would like to give value to other religious cultures, like Islam. However, they cannot meet all requests unless it is not approved through school system. Some of them also try their best to make everything easy which is helpful to do physical activities for Muslim girls.

## 5.2. Discussion

According to the analysis and literature review it is presumed that Muslim girls are staying in the front line to participate in sport and physical activities class, as some part of the system is not suitable along with the etiquette of Islam religion. The early studies of the similar issues like, Muslim pupils in the school and in physical education lesson (*Muslimioppilaat Koulussa ja Koulunliikunnassa*) have also examined that it is required for Muslim pupils' to conduct anything else in the life which Islam has permitted. Consequently, they need to draw an excellent attention of school authority in order to adopt some principles in physical education lesson which are more preferable and apt according to Islam religion.

Nevertheless, some other can think differently, however Islam does not make any differences to practice religion; rather the obligation is the same for every single human in the universe. If people are obedient with the Islamic rules they are being a perfect Muslim. Moreover it is explained that in the judgment day those people will be rewarded to go paradise whose were practiced Islam exactly according to the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). That is why it is expressed in the research which is based on the analysis and literatures that why Muslim girls

are different than others and that the reason that parents is concerned if the system is not suitable in Islamic perspectives.

Therefore, if the school system in Finland considers adopting some special rules regarding Muslim girls sport participation in Islamic context. This may help pupils' development of their mind and body as well as parents support. At the same time it may contribute to the policy formulation regarding diversity and tolerance in Finland.

### **5.3. Conclusion**

In conclusion, it is very clear from the study that Muslim girls were not less required to do physical activities as others do. If the system in school is suitable for Muslim girls considering the religious obligations, the participation of Muslim girls in sport would be high. Consequently it may vital for school authority to make counseling in order to get solution for these problems. Otherwise the situation of Muslim girls' sports and physical activities can be worse. For instance, the teacher may not compromise with the differences of Muslim girls' participation in sport activities: if the rule is very strict and which is not suitable for them. On the other hand Muslim girls may not attend in their class unless the activities will not be suitable with them. Moreover parent will not agree to let their girls' sport participation; unless they are not satisfied with the system in school. So it will be more worthwhile to provide some requirement facilities, in order to formulate a balanced healthy environment. At the same time it would be beneficial to ascertain more tolerance towards divergence between multicultural perspectives.

To resolve the requirements for Muslim girls' participation in P.E. lesson in school can be lengthy process. The reason is two different cultures. In one hand Finland has material culture, where majority inhabitants are busy to earn money and prefer luxurious or exclusive life style. Whereas in other hand Muslims want to share everything according religion and their first priority is religion over everything. They believe fortune can favour or not favour in their life

because everything in Allah's (SWT) hand. Just they obey to Allah (SWT) without any doubt; moreover they think that they are in the test by Allah (SWT) in earth life. A Muslim has a successful life who keeps his subservient to Allah (SWT) until he dies; because she or he would be awarded paradise for submitting his will to the Lord. A practicing Muslim regards as earth life as short and a test; conversely eternal life has no end; that is why they stay patient and suffers in many cases in order to become eligible for paradise which is forever.

When people from these two different cultures have transaction each other, obviously disparity can be seen in many cases or one can confront in life business. Such as sport and physical activities are important for both Finnish and Muslims; however the principles for Muslim girls are different than Finns about doing exercises. In this situation problem may arise for either teacher or girl. In one hand P.E. teacher follow school rules and regulation; then again Muslim girls must regard criteria for doing exercise beside others. This dilemma can be compromised with counseling that which way school authority can minimize the problems and meet up the needs of Muslim girls in P.E. lessons.

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## **Glossary of Islamic Terms**

*A:* (Alaihi wasallam) Peace be upon them.

*Allah:* Creature or Sustainer of the Universe. Arabic word Allah expresses in singular and not allied with masculine, feminine or neuter. There are not any other words except Allah.

*Amanat:* Things entrusted to someone else and keep it safely until return it to the owner.

*Aqeedah:* Belief to Allah, not to compromise with anything except His order. try to best doing and avoid doing wrong.

*Awrah:* Parts of the body that are not supposed to be exposed to others

*Deen:* Transaction of life which include all aspect of humanity.

*Dhikr:* Remembrance of Allah and asking blessing on the Messenger of Allah

*Fatwa:* To resolve problems according Qur'an and Hadith by Islamic scholar.

*Fitrah:* Natural circumstance of human beings

*Hadith Qudsi:* Saying of the Messenger of Allah; in which he mentioned, Allah(SWT) has said...However it is not the same quotes which sent by angel Jibril (a) in the Holy Quran.

*Hadith:* The saying, recommendation and approval of prophet Mohammad(S) to his follower.

*Hajj:* to participate in major pilgrimage to the holy place beside the *Kabah house* in Makkah. It is compulsory to do for every capable Muslim at least once a life.

*Halal:* Allowable anything else according Islamic law.

*Haram:* Prohibited according Islamic policy.

*Haya:* Covers a large number of concepts which are to be taken together; amongst them are self respect, modesty, bashfulness, and scruple, etc.

*Hijab*: Besides whole body, covering head and chest ordained by Allah (SWT) for believing women.

*Hijrah*: Which signifies migration from a land where a Muslim is not capable to live according to the precepts of his belief to a land where it is likely to do so. The *hijrah* par excellence for Muslims is the *hijrah* of the Prophet (S.A.W.) which not only provided him and his followers refuge from persecution, but also an opportunity to make a society and a state according to the principles of Islam.

*Imam*: In broad sense chief of the Mosque or a best person in the Muslim community who lead to perform five times pray a day. Also a person to whom to follow for prays either at the Mosque or anywhere else.

*Iman*: Faith or belief of six fundamental doctrine of Islam.

*Islam*: The Arabic word Islam means to propose and to present peace. The peach accomplish through willing obedience and submission of Allah's (SWT) heavenly guidance. That is why this word uses for the religion as a whole.

*Judgement Day*: The day after life evaluated according the deeds of earth life.

*Mahar*: The marriage gift from groom to a bride, which is obligatory in Islam. Without *Mahar* marriage is not acceptable. The amount of *Mahar* depend on the ability of the person, it can be cash money or valuable things.

*Maharam*: The blood related person with whom marriage is forbidden.

*Mohsana*: Modest, virtuous, pure, immaculate, married said of a woman.

*Muslim*: A believer who submits to Allah (SWT) and is obedient of Him.

*Muttaqeen*: Fearful attentiveness of Allah(SWT);being aware of Allah(SWT); pious devotion; being cautious not to disobey the bounds set by Allah.

*P.B.U.H.*: Peace and blessing be upon him.

*Qur'an*: The latest holy book and revelation from Allah (SWT) to humankind. It revealed to the Prophet Muhammad(s) with the mediator Angel Jibreel (a) over duration of 23 years.

*Ra/raa*: (*Radi'Allahu 'anhu/anha/anhum*) May Allah pleased be upon him/her/them.

*Ramadan*: The 9<sup>th</sup> month of the Islamic calendar, when Muslim does fasting from dawn to sun set.

*SAW*: (*sallellahu alihi wasallam*) Peace and blessing be upon him.

*Sahabah*: The companion and perfect follower of the Messenger of Allah (SWT) during his time. It has authenticates through many hadith that *sahabah* were the best human among all humanity.

*Sahih*: Such a hadith where there are no doubt about its authentication.

*Salat*: Literally, one of the five pillars (2<sup>nd</sup>) of Islam. Person, after converted in Islam, his or her first duty to perform *salat*. It called the Key of paradise. A Muslim has to perform salat five times a day in time. However there are different kind of salat which are not obligatory to pray; but people will be benefited with that in the judgment day. Salat has three kinds like, *Farj* (obligatory), *Sunnah*, which is not obligatory; but required to perform very often, *Nafal*, not mandatory; although it helps to reduce sins. It is said in *hadith* that *Sunnah* is the wall of Farad and *Nafal* for *Sunnah*.

*Sawm* : Literally 'fasting': one who stop his or her eating and drinking only for Allah's sake from dawn to sun set. The obligatory fasting is the month of Ramadan; however, for purification of body and mind people can do fasting in other months as well, except the mentioned day, like Eid-UI-Fitr or Adha.

*Shahadah*: The oath of declaration to being a Muslim.

*Shariah*: Islamic rules which Muslim have to obey without any argument.

*Shirk*: Associating partner with Allah (SWT).

*Sunnah*: The life style of prophet(S) associated from the Al-Quran.

*Surah*: Chapter of the Qur'an. There are 114 *Surahs* belongs in the Qur'an, some of them revealed to the Prophet Muhammad(S) in his life duration of Mecca and others in Madina; which named *Makki* or *Madani surah*. The characteristic of *Makki surah* mostly stated about the effectiveness of religious function, for instance, *salat* (pray),*Ramadan* (fasting),*hajj* (pilgrimage),*Zakat* (charity),*jannah* (paradise),*jahannam* (hell) etceteras. On the other hand, *Madani Surah* revealed about economic, politics, socialization and so on.

*SWT*: (*Sobhana wataala*) Glory to Allah (SWT), who is the high.

*Taqwa*: Being obedient of Allah (SWT) which leads not to doing wrong and embodiment to perform right. It also clarifies of frightened, consciousness, pious dedication for Allah (SWT).

*Tawhid*: The confidence of absolute oneness of The Almighty Allah (SWT). It is one of the obligatory beliefs to being a Muslim.

*Ummah*: The follower of Prophet Mohammad(S) or the global community of Muslims. *Taqwa* can be inner feeling towards Allah (SWT) or the effecting of deed.

*Zakat*: Obligatory charity which collect from wealth person to the poor people. *Zakat*, consider from money, gold, silver, crops and cattle. People have to pay *zakat* 2½% from their wealth if they have extra money after a year. The amount of extra money depends on the contexts. A person required to pay from gold if he or she has over 95 grams, similarly from silver 595grams 10% or 20% of crops and specific proportions of the cattle.

*Zulm*: Arabic word means wrong doing over other.

## Appendixes

### **Appendix: 1**

- A. How do Muslim girls participate in physical and sport activities in schools?
- B. What do parents perceive about the school system regarding physical activities?
- C. What parents should do to let their girls participate in physical activities?
- D. What should sport teachers do to accommodate Muslim girls in physical activities?

### **Appendix: 2**

#### **Interview for Muslim Girl:**

- A. How do Muslim girls participate in physical and sport activities in schools?
  1. Do you participate in all sport activities?
  2. How do you change your cloth?
  3. Where you take shower?
  4. Does the teacher forces you to take shower together with other students?
  5. Can you take shower privately?
  6. How do you dress in for sport class?

7. Which sport activities are difficult for you as a Muslim girl?
8. Do you participate in a music class?
9. Do you participate in all dance activities?
10. What about in a couple dance?
11. Can you participate normally in physical education class if you are fasting?
12. Does the teacher give you less difficult exercises when you are fasting?
13. What do you recommend to improve the sport class for Muslim girls?

### **Interview for Girl's Parents:**

B. What do parents perceive about the school system regarding sport activities?

C. What parents should do to let their girls participate in sport classes?

1. What do you think about the participation of your daughter in sport class at school?
2. Have you ever discussed with the school regarding the situation from the Islamic point of view?
3. Did the school improve any of your concerns regarding your girl's sport participation from the Islamic point of view?
4. What would be your decision if the school fails to accommodate your girl's interest based on the Islamic rules?
5. What do you recommend to improve the sport class for Muslim girls?

**Interview for Sport Teacher:**

- A. What should sport teachers do to accommodate Muslim girls in physical activities?
1. Have you ever encountered any Muslim girls complaining about any of the sport related activities in your school?
  2. What were the common requests of these Muslim girls?
  3. Have you ever considered the interest of these Muslim girls to participate in the sport activities based on the Islamic rules and obligations?
  4. What did you do to accommodate the differences for your sport class?
  5. Is there any difference among the Muslim girls regarding the interest to participate on the existing sport activities in your school?
  6. Do you think that it is necessary to provide the facilities for these Muslim girls to participate in the sport activities respecting the Islamic rules?
  7. What do you recommend to improve the sport class for Muslim girls?

