



Extended essay cover

Candidates must complete this page and then give this cover and their final version of the extended essay to their supervisor.

Candidate session number			
Candidate name			
School name			
Examination session (May or November)	May	Year	2015

Diploma Programme subject in which this extended essay is registered: WORLD RELIGION

(For an extended essay in the area of languages, state the language and whether it is group 1 or group 2.)

Title of the extended essay: To what extent has Islam influenced gender roles in Saudi Arabia, more specifically those imposed on women?

Candidate's declaration

This declaration must be signed by the candidate; otherwise a mark of zero will be issued.

The extended essay I am submitting is my own work (apart from guidance allowed by the International Baccalaureate).

I have acknowledged each use of the words, graphics or ideas of another person, whether written, oral or visual.

I am aware that the word limit for all extended essays is 4000 words and that examiners are not required to read beyond this limit.

This is the final version of my extended essay.

Candidate's signature: _____ Date: 03/03/15

Supervisor's report and declaration

The supervisor must complete this report, sign the declaration and then give the final version of the extended essay, with this cover attached, to the Diploma Programme coordinator.

Name of supervisor (CAPITAL letters) _____

Please comment, as appropriate, on the candidate's performance, the context in which the candidate undertook the research for the extended essay, any difficulties encountered and how these were overcome (see page 13 of the extended essay guide). The concluding interview (viva voce) may provide useful information. These comments can help the examiner award a level for criterion K (holistic judgment). Do not comment on any adverse personal circumstances that may have affected the candidate. If the amount of time spent with the candidate was zero, you must explain this, in particular how it was then possible to authenticate the essay as the candidate's own work. You may attach an additional sheet if there is insufficient space here.

Primary research was slightly more difficult for _____ to get hold of as ~~men~~ were less open to women asking about Islam. Under the circumstances I ~~think~~ she managed quite well to find the information she needed for ~~the~~ ~~essay~~.

learned ~~many~~ new facts about her topic through ~~conversations~~ ^{conversations} with the Imam & ~~was~~ very pleased with the information he was ~~able~~ ^{able} to provide to her.

A difficult topic from start to finish but a very good ~~attempt~~ to answer an ~~up-to-date~~ issue within the confines of Sunni Hadith.

Well Done.

This declaration must be signed by the supervisor; otherwise a mark of zero will be issued.

I have read the final version of the extended essay that will be submitted to the examiner.

To the best of my knowledge, the extended essay is the authentic work of the candidate.

As per the section entitled "Responsibilities of the Supervisor" in the EE guide, the recommended number of hours spent with candidates is between 3 and 5 hours. Schools will be contacted when the number of hours is left blank, or where 0 hours are stated and there lacks an explanation. Schools will also be contacted in the event that number of hours spent is significantly excessive compared to the recommendation.

I spent hours with the candidate discussing the progress of the extended essay.

Supervisor's signature: _____

Date: 1/8/2015.

Assessment form (for examiner use only)

Candidate session number		
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Achievement level

Criteria	Examiner 1	maximum	Examiner 2	maximum	Examiner 3
A research question	2	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>
B introduction	2	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>
C investigation	2	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
D knowledge and understanding	2	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
E reasoned argument	2	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
F analysis and evaluation	2	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
G use of subject language	3	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
H conclusion	1	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>
I formal presentation	3	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
J abstract	1	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>
K holistic judgment	2	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
Total out of 36	22		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>

Name of examiner 1: _____ Examiner number: _____
(CAPITAL letters)

Name of examiner 2: _____ Examiner number: _____
(CAPITAL letters)

Name of examiner 3: _____ Examiner number: _____
(CAPITAL letters)

IB Assessment Centre use only: B: _____

IB Assessment Centre use only: A: _____

To what extent has Islam influenced gender roles in Saudi Arabia, more specifically those imposed on women?

Extended Essay in World Religions

February 1, 2014

Word count: 3170

Candidate's declaration: I confirm that this work is my own work and is the final version. I have acknowledged each use of words, graphics, or ideas of another person, whether written, oral, or visual. I am aware of the word limit for this assignment.

Candidate's signature:

Date:

Abstract

The question discussed in this essay is a very controversial topic that raises a lot of discussions globally. It is “to what extent has Islam influenced gender roles in Saudi Arabia, more specifically those imposed on women?” Gender roles and in particular a female’s role in society has been an ongoing issue for several decades now, and because of the three waves of feminism, it is has become a serious issue to take into account. As a result of the three waves of feminism, within a holistic approach, women have now earned more rights and are able to be more independent. However, there are some areas in the world where the advancements in women independence is slower, like Saudi Arabia. This investigation is carried out by looking at the general context of how a woman’s role in society has changed over time globally, and then specifically in Saudi Arabia. With the brief history given, the essay begins with giving different reasons as to how Islam may have affected gender roles in Saudi Arabia and whether or not it has been for a good or bad reason. This essay was primarily based on secondary data and research. This essay’s conclusion is that Islam by itself did not affect gender roles in Saudi Arabia, but more precisely peoples’ perception of Islam, and how they personally interpret it. 225 words.



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Introduction

Gender roles. A very controversial topic nowadays, which seems to attract more discussions and arguments when it comes to Islamic countries and in particular, Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is arguably the country that is most recognized for being under Islamic rule, both in the Arab world and globally. This statement is true, as the kingdom's law is completely centered on the Sharia. The Sharia law is based on the words of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) and the words of the Quran ("Sharia Law", 2014).

Saudi Arabia has made its way to the top 20 most economically developed countries in the world, along with that there are several factors that make Saudi Arabia a highly talked about country. There are the good and the bad reasons, however one thing that seems to irritate people very highly is the gender roles topics, and in particular women's rights. What are gender roles exactly? They are defined as "the overt expression of attitude that indicate to others the degree of your maleness or femaleness." Your gender role is the public expression of your gender identity (WebNote, n.d., para. 3). Gender roles are also affected by social, cultural and economic factors. The way people around you act and think will most likely alter your perception about gender roles. Peoples' perception on gender roles differs between countries and an example is between the United States and Saudi Arabia. In the United States, social, cultural and economic factors may alter someone's perception of gender roles, for what most people believe, in the right direction. Over the past few decades women have now gained more rights, freedom, independence and power which is now considered as the social norm. Contrary to Saudi Arabia, social, cultural and economic factors could alter peoples' decision in the 'wrong direction'. This is due to the fact that there is a reoccurring idea running through the majority of the population's mind, which is that men have more rights than women.

There have been issues with gender roles globally, for centuries now. These issues were more prominent in the United States and in areas of Europe, like England and France. In the United States, women were still a minority group during the time of Martin Luther King. He was a spokesperson for minorities, however his most focused on topic of discussion was not gender roles. During his time and before he preached, feminism was a major part of the 19th and 20th century, because that was the time when women have had enough of all of the suffering, and they wanted to stand up for their own rights and fight for their freedom. The first feminist wave began at 1846, which mainly took place in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, and this mainly focused on suffrage (CiteLighter, n.d., para. 1). During the mid 20th century was when feminism was most successful. The image of women being inferior, dependent and sexual objects to men slowly started to fade. Women were finally becoming more powerful and gender injustice in the United States and Europe was slowly beginning to become less of a problem. However issues like these do not stop in a short amount of time. There were still issues about female inferiority and how it is a “man’s world”. These issues were not only progressing in the United States and Europe, but in most countries all over the world. This is because society was and is built in favour for males. Moving on to the context in the present, women have fought hard enough to claim places in the top of the social hierarchy. Women like Michelle Obama, Hillary Clinton and Oprah Winfrey have truly set an example to women all over the world, that we are strong and deserve to be treated equally. With a general context about the gender roles situation in the Western region of the world done, it is time to move on to specifics and talk about the history of gender roles in the Middle East, focusing majorly on Saudi Arabia.

As mentioned earlier, Saudi Arabia does not have the best reputation in the world, due to several reasons. One of them being the way women are treated in the country, and many people dislike this country because of that. Saudi Arabia is a very strict Islamic country that

follows all of the rules mentioned in the Holy book the Qur'an, which is the Shāria law as mentioned previously. This has always been the case since the time of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) until now, and there will be no changes in the future. In the 21st century, women's rights are becoming slightly more recognized because of the late custodian of the Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. He attempts to implement slight changes in order to make women feel like they have more independence and freedom. In one of his most successful projects, King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST), women have the right to do as they please. Some would say KAUST is from a completely different country, as women do not wear abayas (traditional Saudi woman wear) and all areas are open to both genders. King Abdullah has also recently decided to create a poll, to try to take a step further in the right direction. The poll asked the Saudi community whether or not women should be allowed to drive in the country. Unfortunately due to the Saudi mindset, being that this country should not provide women with a lot of independence or freedom, the poll ended in favour of the men. Women are now working in more areas, such as restaurants and banks and this allows them to be more independent and will help them strive in the future. Even though Saudi Arabia is behind in this element, if more people continue to speak on behalf of women, gender equality in this nation would not be such a huge issue. With this concept in mind and if more members of the community continue to push for women's rights, the country will be less unequal in terms of gender.

This topic is important to discuss because of the issues that women have to face in Saudi Arabia. It is understandable that men have more power and freedom over women globally, however the situation in other countries is not as extreme as they are in Saudi Arabia. As mentioned previously, Saudi Arabia is an Islamic country that follows the rules of the Qur'an. However Islam states that all of mankind should be treated equally. Everyone is a descendant from Adam and Eve, making us all of the same origin. Equality is an important

part in Islam. The Qur'an states, "if any do deeds of righteousness be they male or female and have faith, they will enter heaven, and not the least injustice will be done to them"

(Wikipedia, 2015, para. 1). This means that gender is not what matters, but the way people act. You have to be good and faithful in order to enter heaven, and your gender does not affect your ability to do so in any way. So why is there such a huge difference between a man's role in society, and a woman's? A brief history on women's role in society was important to discuss, as there are many issues that women have to face on a day-to-day basis. Given the brief context of the situations regarding women's rights both globally and in particular Saudi Arabia, this essay will further explore how gender roles in Saudi Arabia has been affected by Islam. Both men and women gender roles will be discussed in this essay.

Body

The Qur'an states that men should be the guardians over women (4.34). Different people interpret this in different ways. For example, many people believe that whilst women are nurturing their children, her husband should be the one to not only provide for their child, but to provide for her as well. A married man in the Saudi Arabian community is expected to represent the leader in a family, as he holds most of the responsibility disregarding household duties. Feminists believe that the way 'guardianship' has been interpreted by society is to clearly identify and divide gender roles, to allow men to have control over women. People perceive things in different ways and a large amount of the community could have misinterpreted the term 'guardianship', in a way that makes it seem as though the man has to watch over the woman at all times along with controlling her actions. Another popular belief is that female sexuality should be controlled, and that is why women are limited to certain things in Saudi Arabia. (Safra Project, 2013, para. 4). In Islam, it is better for a woman to cover her hair, arms and legs when in public, more specifically, if they will be in direct contact with men. For that reason the Saudi wear for women consists of abayas, which women wear over their clothes to cover their arms and legs as well as hiding their figure. It is also a cultural norm (due to the Quran) that women wear a hijab in public as well. If a woman is covered, this does not mean that she has a lower social standing in the community compared to men, but simply because she is modest. When a woman covers herself she is respecting herself, her family and the culture which in hind sight should be a social advantage, right? However, due to people's very strong beliefs that Saudi Arabia is a strictly patrilineal society, this alters peoples' perception which further makes them think that men are more in control.

An understanding of a woman's role in Saudi Arabian society has been provided, but a man's role was not. All leaders in Saudi Arabia, or people that have attained a high status

are men. This does not mean that men are the only ones capable of attaining a high status, as women like Oprah Winfrey prove that the female race are able to achieve great success.

However that is not the case in Saudi Arabia, because women are not able to portray their full potential through education and amongst political leaders, meaning that they do not have a role in the economy or government essentially. Most women in Saudi Arabia are stay at home mothers, or unemployed. This is not unusual because men are always expected to be the breadwinner of the family and they are expected to be the financial provider. While a man's task is to be employed in order to provide for his family, a woman's task is to stay at home and take care of the household duties and be in charge of everything that happens in the house regarding the employees and children. Most women that do work are usually younger in age or do not have any children to take care of and nurture. They usually work as a secretary, receptionist or at a salon or spa for women. Men work as doctors, businessmen, bankers and more. Just by looking at the job differences, one could already understand that men are more expected to have a white collared job that pays a decent amount of money, in order for them to be able to provide for their family. In some families, men are also expected to help their siblings in times of need or provide for their parents even when they are married, and this shows that men do have a lot of responsibility, which only further strengthens their worth in the community. Whereas women do not have as much responsibilities as men do, they are simply in control of their households. From a young age girls are raised to be someone that could take care of their husband's house. It is a mother's duty to teach her daughter how to handle her own household when she grows up and gets married. If a teenage girl does not know how to take care of her own house, it is considered rather shameful within the family. A husband relies on his wife to be able to teach their daughters how to cook, clean and watch what happens around the house. On the other hand, a man is required to teach his son about business and money and responsibilities that he should be able to maintain in the

future, all of them dealing with the outside world. The fact that young boys and girls are taught different things at a young age already segregates the genders from an early stage.

Modesty plays a huge role in Islam, which is why many people believe that women have to be kept at their homes in order to prevent any shameful actions. In Islam, as long as a woman is modest and maintains her integrity and self-respect, she will be well respected amongst the community. Islam in no way shape or form downgrades the female gender. In fact, it promotes equality more than anything. Teenage girls usually do not have a lot of freedom compared to teenage boys. The girls are usually staying at their homes helping their mothers around the house, and the boys are allowed to be more social. One could argue that it is the parents' decision to allow their daughter to go out or not, however a parent's decision is not enough as girls are not supposed to go out as often as men do. This is due to modesty issues, as parents do not want their daughters to act immodest, as this is considered unfaithful within the community. A boy has more freedom because their reputation is not as easily ruined as a girl's reputation. There are also a group of people called "Muttawas" who are the Islamic religious police in Saudi Arabia (Blue Abaya, 2010, para.1). The religious police will usually go around the cities during the weekends, and will most probably visit popular malls. If they witness something that they would consider to be irrational behaviour, they will approach the person. This usually consists of girls or women not wearing a hijab and covering their hair, or if a man and woman are together, whom do not look like they are married. The "Muttawa" reinforce the Sharia law by reminding people to think of Allah, and pray however sometimes when it comes to gender issues it is taken to the extreme. A group of men can be seen in public without raising any questions however a group of women together will make the Muttawa approach them, even if they are not doing anything wrong. This shows that it is the people who choose to perceive what is right and wrong in Islam in different ways, and from that point they will make judgments on gender.

The percentage of arranged marriages in Saudi Arabia is 65+% (Wikipedia, 2015, para. 15). Due to the high percentage of arranged marriages a man's role is even more powerful in that family. Again due to modesty, a large number of husbands do not want their wives to be exposed to other males, which is why privacy is important. Given that, a large percentage of Saudi women wear a burqa to hide their face. Women often do not have a choice, as their husbands force them to do so. This is an important issue that should be discussed because women are usually forced into marriages, which is shown by the high rate of arranged marriages in Saudi Arabia. Several women usually do not have a say in their marriages, getting a divorce or getting custody of their children (Safra Project, n.d., para. 2).

Conclusion

In conclusion I do not believe Islam itself has affected gender roles in Saudi Arabia, but instead, peoples' perception of Islam. As mentioned in this essay, Islam is a religion that promotes equality between all of mankind, and the large gap between male and female superiority contradicts that statement. People in the Saudi Arabian community tend to reinforce stereotypical ideas of women being inferior to men and that makes people believe that it is acceptable to look down upon women. On the other hand, because Islam preaches about equality it makes people open up their minds about the issues taking place and it makes them more acceptable to different thoughts. This shows that it depends on perception and the way someone is raised.

Women in Saudi Arabia face a lot of issues however it was not always the way it is now. Centuries ago, women were independent and although men had more power, gender equality was not an issue. The Qur'an states that everybody, man and woman, are spiritually equal and what matters is faithfulness. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was God's messenger for Islam, and during his time, which was in the 7th century, gender equality was not an issue. So why does it have to be an issue now? It seems like even though time has progressed, and there have been developments in technology and our way of living is made a lot easier than it was before, issues like gender equality are still present and are in fact worse. It is as if mankind has taken a few steps backwards regarding social issues. Gender inequality is not the only issue as there are other major issues such as racism.

When people think about Saudi Arabia, they think about male dominance and a patrilineal society. This is due to the fact women are not allowed to drive, and people perceive it to be a strictly Islamic country, to an extreme point. In this generation, a large amount of people no longer believe that there is a huge gap between male and female equality

and believe that women are no longer that inferior compared to men. By most people, I am leaning towards people with a younger age, as the new generations have been more open to globalization and are exposed to more equality rights and female rights. However people who are older in age and still tend to think that men are in control. Most of these people have a more old fashioned way of thinking, and they often raise their children to think the same way too. As a result, there is a rather equivalent amount of people who think with the old fashioned mindset and people who are more exposed to modernization. However another existing issue is that there are “Muttawas” who in a way reinforce the idea of male superiority and male dominance. Muttawas are religious men who roam around popular places in cities and ask women to cover themselves, and make sure women are not interacting with men. This has raised issues pro and con women inferiority, because some people will agree with them and have the idea engraved into the minds, and others will maybe realize that these situations are taken to the extremes. Most people you will encounter nowadays will believe in gender equality, which is the right thing to do, because at the end of the day we are all equal and no matter the race, ethnicity, background or gender we should all be treated the same.

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