Navigating contradictory narratives on sexuality between the school and the mosque in four Muslim communities in the Netherlands

Altinyelken, H.K.; Akhtar, Y.; Selim, N.

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Navigating Contradictory Narratives on Sexuality Between the School and the Mosque in Four Muslim Communities in the Netherlands

Hulya Kosar Altinyelken[1] · **Yusra Akhtar**[1] · **Nazek Selim**[1]

Abstract

This qualitative study seeks to examine the sexuality-related values and norms that Muslim youth are taught and socialised into at non-formal Islamic education settings, compares these with values and norms conveyed at secondary schools, and then identifies the ways in which Muslim youth navigate these distinct messages and competing pressures around this subject. The data are based on 62 semi-structured in-depth interviews with young adults and secondary school students from four Muslim communities in the Netherlands (Turkish, Moroccan, Pakistani and Egyptian). The study reveals that explicit messaging as well as institutional practices in mosques convey a specific narrative about proper conduct between the sexes that prohibits sexual conduct before marriage, and in some cases, even any form of touching or socialising. This collides with the institutional practices and educational content in mainstream secondary schools, which are co-educational and provide sexuality education. Three strands of attitudinal choices young Muslims make are identified: opting for chastity, re-negotiating the norm, and embracing romantic entanglements, all having different ramifications for the wellbeing and relationships of these young people.

Keywords Muslim youth in Europe · Sexuality · Agency · Sexuality education · Non-formal Islamic education · The Netherlands

Introduction

Public debates about religion in the Netherlands have increasingly focused on questions of sexuality and sexual emancipation. Such debates contrast a liberal-progressive stance towards sexuality within Dutch society with a restrictive-conservative

✉ Hulya Kosar Altinyelken
h.k.altinyelken@uva.nl

1 Research Institute for Child Development and Education, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

stance associated with religions, particularly with Islam (Beekers & Schrijvers, 2020; Bracke, 2012). As such, sexuality has gained significance in debates about citizenship and belonging in the Netherlands. Although historically, Protestant and Roman Catholic religion was influential in politics, culture, and morality until the 1960s, it lost its dominance gradually in a range of social domains following the cultural and sexual revolution. Consequently, Dutch society has come to define itself as primarily progressive, secular, and sexually liberated (Duyvendak et al., 2016). Restrictive religious morals are viewed as incompatible with Dutch progressive, open and liberal sexual norms. Muslim communities' deviancy from such norms has ended up becoming a ground for questioning their integration within and belonging to the moral nation (Mepschen et al., 2010). Hence, sexuality plays a key role in the othering of Muslims in the Netherlands as non-native and non-Dutch (Balkenhol et al., 2016; Midden, 2018). From the perspectives of Muslim communities living in the West, adolescent sexualities are a major concern, due to anxieties that they are becoming premaritally sexual at younger age and are exposed to a rather sexualised, permissive, and "allegedly less moral" secular culture (Beekers & Schrijvers, 2020, p. 151). The fact that young Muslims now marry and form families at later ages in comparison to previous periods in history also compels many religious organisations to monitor and socialize their youth over this protracted period of adolescence and youth (Williams et al., 2017).

While scholarly work on religion has tended to side-line sexuality, research on sexuality has apparently disregarded the impact of religion on sexual values, attitudes and lived experiences. Only a limited number of studies have examined the intersection of religion and sexuality (Kalmijn & Kraaykamp, 2018; Kogan & Weißmann, 2020; Wong et al., 2017; Yip et al., 2011). Few of the available studies on the role of religious affiliation or religiosity in attitudes towards sexuality have tended to focus on family socialisation, educational level, employment status, mass media, and schooling (Kalmijn & Kraaykamp, 2018; Kogan & Weißmann, 2020). However, the role of non-formal Islamic education (NFIE) has been almost entirely absent in these discussions, as if Muslim youth do not spend a relatively long period of time in these settings, learning about Islamic norms, values, and principles (Altinyelken & Sözeri, 2019; Cherti & Bradely, 2011).

This study seeks to explore the influence of NFIE on young Muslims' sexuality-related values and norms, and then compares this with their socialisation and learning on this topic in secondary schools. Schooling is important to consider since it is a key context where young Muslims engage with secular mainstream culture for a prolonged period of time. In particular, mainstream Dutch schools provide adolescents with sexuality education that is often portrayed by experts as being open, positive, and comprehensive (Ferguson et al., 2008). Consequently, young Muslims might encounter challenges in balancing Western culture, and Islamic religion (Cense, 2014; Meldrum et al., 2014; Muhammad, 2010; Yip et al., 2011).

By looking into the impact of two different learning contexts where young Muslims spend most of their childhood, this study seeks to understand how young Muslims simultaneously receive potentially contradictory messages with regard to romance and sexuality and their exposure to competing pressures and forces. We also highlight the agency of young Muslims in interpreting and negotiating their

values and norms within the contextual realities in which they live and portray how Muslim youth attempt to balance divergent expectations from peers and educators in these two learning contexts. Furthermore, rather than focusing on a single Muslim community, the study looks at four different Muslim communities: Turkish, Moroccan, Egyptian and Pakistani communities in the Netherlands. Most of the available research on sexuality and religion has taken a quantitative approach (Kalmijn & Kraaykamp, 2018; Kogan & Weißmann, 2020); using a qualitative approach enables an open exploration of the lived experiences of Muslim youth. Moreover, religious young adults could "benefit from hearing the stories of their contemporaries to understand the wide range of experiences and negotiations in their religious and sexual lives" (Yip et al., 2011, p. 5).

Theoretical Underpinnings

Islamic View on Sexuality

Although there is much diversity in the interpretation of Islamic texts, marriage offers the only legitimate framework for the expression of sexuality (Ahmed & Ezzeddine, 2009; Bøe, 2018). Various texts, including the Qur'an, underscore that premarital and extramarital sex are *haram* [forbidden]. Unlike some other religions, Islam does not condemn sexuality, nor does it recommend celibacy. To the contrary, Islamic texts point to the importance of sexual drive for the survival and procreation of humanity, evaluate sexual life positively, and emphasize the significance of sexual satisfaction for heterosexual couples within a marriage (Imam, 2000). The significance of marriage is frequently cited in the Qur'an and other religious texts, alongside motherhood. Moreover, in Muslim societies, purity and modesty are viewed as highly important for women; without an intact hymen, women are oftentimes stigmatised as "damaged" (Caruthers et al., 2011; Dialmy, 2010).

Due to hegemonic Islamic discourse on pre-marital sex and its prohibition, the ideal young Muslim is expected to transition asexually until marriage, which should preferably take place at a young age to maintain the purity and integrity of the Muslim individual and society. Consequently, adolescent sexuality becomes a serious threat to "the purity of the 'inherently sinless' Muslim child and the 'ideally nonsexual' Muslim adolescent" (Tabatabaie, 2015, p. 280). Moreover, Islamic discourse on childhood frames adolescents as immature, vulnerable and in need of protection, and incapable of making independent informed decision about sexual matters. Therefore, adolescent sexualities need to be controlled and prevented, for example, through strong condemnation and punishment of premarital sex, and delaying the awakening of sexual awareness by mandating sex-segregated environments. Within such a context, sexual information or discussion might be considered as compromising modesty and as giving dangerous knowledge to the vulnerable, possibly leading to premature sexualisation and corruption (Jayne et al., 2020). Consequently, many Muslim parents in the West tend to feel the need to safeguard their children against the "dangers" of sexuality education, which remains a major source of conflict between Muslim parents and schools. The concept of the "vulnerable and immature

child" is one of the key arguments against sexuality education, but these discussions are also closely intertwined with Islamic upbringing, identity, and community values (Tabatabaie, 2015; Wong et al., 2017).

Research with Muslim communities in Western contexts has revealed the prevalence of these understandings among Muslim youth. A study in Australia (Meldrum et al., 2014) identified the primacy of modesty, humility, and chastity as key themes in Muslim women's understandings of romance and sexuality. When attraction was felt, many never thought of communicating their feelings, because it was pointless unless marriage was considered. In addition, virginity was highly valued, and sex before marriage was seen as a sin. Hence, desires and passions, even when dictated by biological drives, needed to be suppressed to avoid actions that would eventually bring a sense of guilt or shame. Men appeared to have more freedom with their sexuality, while the moral regulation of sexuality was enforced more for women, with any transgression seen as bringing shame upon the family and the community (Bøe, 2018; Cense, 2014). Negative judgment by the family and the community, as well as God, was brought up in this context. A recent comparative study (Kogan & Weißmann, 2020) involving young people with a migration background in the Netherlands, Germany, England and Sweden revealed that religious Muslim adolescents rejected sexual liberalisation to a large extent and were the least tolerant of pre-marital cohabitation among all religious groups. However, less-religious Muslim adolescents were as tolerant of sexual liberalisation as religiously unaffiliated youths. Another recent study with 1250 s-generation migrants (ages 15–45) from Turkish and Moroccan backgrounds found that "Premarital sex is considered '(almost) always wrong' by 45% of the Moroccans and 40% of the Turks, against only 7% of the natives" (Kalmijn & Kraaykamp, 2018, p. 708). Moreover, Muslim youth tended to have received less sexual health information, especially in the areas of pleasure and intimacy. One reason for that was their religious perspectives and experiences at home and in the community. Furthermore, while many Muslim youth found sexuality education informative, they felt side-lined and criticized it for not considering experiences of individuals who did not plan to engage in sexual relationships (Wong et al., 2017).

Navigating Sexuality and Religiosity

NFIE is influential for young Muslims living in the West, as they learn about Islamic doctrine and Muslim culture and are socialised into the norms and values about what constitutes normal, acceptable behaviour for a *good Muslim*, including sexual morals. Although there are no reliable, comprehensive figures on attendance rates, enrolment in NFIE tends to be high among Muslim communities in Europe (Cherti & Bradely, 2011; Sozeri, 2021). Parents enrol their children in such training, as they feel responsible for the moral/Islamic guidance of their children yet feel unable to take on this role solely by themselves. Islamic nurture has also been seen as a responsibility before God and a requirement for preserving their ethnic/national community's collective cultural and Islamic values (Scourfield et al., 2013). On the other hand, within the European context it has increasingly been acknowledged that schools have a key role not only in economic integration, but also in the social and

cultural integration of new generations, particularly those with a migration background (Coopmans et al., 2020). After all, schools are major arenas for inter-group contact and the acculturation of immigrant children, and they represent and introduce the host society's culture, norms, and values (Vedder & Horenzcyk, 2006). We hypothesize that adolescents learn contrasting values and norms regarding romance and sexuality at schools and at NFIE settings, as schools' peer environment as well as the sexuality education offered as part of the curriculum normalizes and positively views romantic relationships and sexuality, while NFIE's formal and hidden curriculum would be opposed to any form of sexual relationship outside the framework of marriage.

A number of studies have pointed out that Muslim youth living in the West are indeed living in two different cultures (the culture of their parents' country of origin and the culture of the host society), with the added influence of Islamic religion (Cense, 2014; Meldrum et al., 2014; Muhammad, 2010). The general context of increasing sexualisation in Western societies through media and youth culture appears to make life for religious adults harder. According to Yip et al. (2011), young religious adults view the seemingly excessive presence of sex in mainstream culture (through sexualised media, easy access to pornography, omnipresent sexual references and sexual behaviour, and acceptability of wearing revealing clothes), celebration of sexual promiscuity, and pressure to have sex as major challenges. Hence, they experience tension and conflict thanks to the difficulty of managing these diverse strains. The challenges of reconciling the expectations of such divergent cultures and religions could potentially undermine the development of young Muslims' sexuality and sexual health outcomes (Meldrum et al., 2014), as well as their overall well-being.

Various studies have explored the strategies young people use to negotiate contradictory discourses. A study involving Turkish and Moroccan youth in the Netherlands identified four main pathways: conforming to parents' values, breaking away from parents, leading a double/secret life, and integrating discourses (Cense, 2014). Some Muslim youth conform to the moral codes of their parents, since they do not want to hurt them, and feel that they cannot live without their parents' support and love, or that they would be unable to cope with the consequences of choosing an un-Islamic path. Others contest the dominant Islamic, socio-cultural or familial codes on romance and sexuality, and reinterpret and modify them in line with their values and convictions. This might involve breaking free from the social norms of home or the community, struggle with parents and cutting ties. In the third mode of response, young people appear to have multiple identities and belong to different groups and values. At home they behave like dutiful daughters and sons in alignment with familial and religious codes, but in other settings they lead a different life. Studies have also revealed that young Muslims' sexualities are under-acknowledged by their parents due to parental denial and/or due to the fact that young Muslims conceal their sexual relationships from their parents (Bøe, 2018; Griffiths et al., 2010). Although some young people are comfortable with such double lives and are able to make a switch between the two easily, others feel alienated by inhabiting different identities in different worlds, and report guilt feelings, fear of being caught, or remorse (Cense, 2014). The fourth strategy entails integration of different values to

combine different elements of familial, cultural and religious influences, showing their connectedness with different social groups, and navigating divergent expectations. Bøe's (2018) study with Norwegian Muslim youth identified *halal dating* as a common strategy to reconcile religion and sexuality. This refers to informal and religious marriage (mostly around the ages of 19 or 20) to be together and sexually intimate in a religiously sanctioned way.

Another important study by Williams et al. (2017) examined how religious organisations mediated and shaped sexuality. Their study identified three distinct organisational strategies: *avoidance through gender segregation*, *self-restraint supplemented with peer surveillance*, and *classed disengagement.* Each strategy suggests that gender and sexuality must be explained and controlled in the process of cultivating proper religious dispositions. *Avoidance* entails organising gender-segregated classes and activities and consistent adult monitoring that would ideally minimise cross-gender interactions among unmarried adolescents. Modest clothing is also advised, and men are told to approach women with downcast eyes; "The boys were told, and often acted, as if the presence of girls, especially Muslim girls, was the greatest challenge to their proper Islamic deportment" (p. 10). *Self-restraint* is about developing an internal moral character to ensure that young Muslims make the "right" decisions when they study and socialise in mixed-gender environments outside the mosque, accompanied with a sense of responsibility to engage in *peer surveillance* to make sure that fellow Muslims adhere to sexual chastity and do not transgress certain boundaries. Although the avoidance strategy involves adult monitoring, in this case adolescents are enlisted to monitor themselves and others. Finally, *classed disengagement* from romance and sexuality reflects a preoccupation with obtaining the best education and ensuring good life prospects, and not letting romantic relationship issues distract adolescents and take precious time away from their studies. Some of these strategies helped young Muslims to consolidate their social support and collective self-determination (strong same-sex friendships and networks, positive self-identity and cultural pride), but some might lead to increased vulnerability to mental health distress (keeping secret relationships, maintaining different identities), and social isolation (breaking up with family or the community) or exclusion from the peer group (Cense, 2014; Wong et al., 2017).

Contextual Background of the Netherlands

According to 2020 figures, around 1 million Muslims live in the Netherlands; the largest Dutch Muslim communities have Turkish (410,800) and Moroccan (408,800) backgrounds. Migrants originating from Egypt (26,152) and Pakistan (23,855) are relatively small minority groups (Statistics Nederland, 2020). The majority came to the Netherlands as guest-workers, and integration reports reveal that they continue to have a less favourable position within Dutch society in terms of educational level, employment, income level and health status (Statistics Nederland, 2020). There are almost 500 mosques in the country, serving the needs of different Muslim communities (Berger, 2014). They all offer some form of non-formal religious education to children and young adults, which is independently organised and beyond the

state's regulatory and supervisory power (Pels, 2014; Sozeri, 2021). Enrolment at such NFIE settings can start as early as age 5, and children tend to continue until they complete primary education (age 12). However, some young people continue with their religious training during their secondary education as well. There are no official figures, but some studies have suggested that attending NFIE, particularly at mosques, is the norm among Muslim communities (Sozeri, 2021). NFIE is provided outside of school hours, in the afternoon during the week or on the weekends, usually for between three to 6 hours. Although imams are involved in delivering such training, most of the training activities are carried out by volunteer tutors who are not trained pedagogically to teach but are chosen as knowledgeable about the Quran and Islam in general (Sözeri et al., 2019). Mosques, even those belonging to the same ethnic/national community, do not have a unified curriculum or textbooks (Sözeri & Altinyelken, 2019). Most of the training time is devoted to reading and reciting the Qur'an, and studying topics that are central to Islamic nurture, such as Islamic philosophy, norms and values, and performance of rituals (Sozeri, 2021). NFIE tends to have a transnational character: textbooks are imported from Turkey, Morocco, or Egypt, and most of imams come from the countries of origin of Muslim migrants. As such, values, norms, and attitudes emphasized by mosques are largely informed by the specific religious and cultural interpretations of migrant communities' countries of origin (Altinyelken & Sözeri, 2019).

Few studies are available on how sexuality is taught at NFIE in the Netherlands. However, one study (Beekers & Schrijvers, 2020) conducted interviews with 18–28-year-olds, along with participant observation at Friday prayers, talks in mosques, study groups, religious conferences, and festivals. The study found that marriage and proper relationships between men and women came up frequently, and male participants particularly referred to sexual attraction and feelings of lust as difficult temptations in their daily lives. Both of the religious leaders observed in these settings, as well as the Muslim young adults interviewed, stated that intimacy is legitimate only within the context of a hetero-sexual marriage. However, they also felt that Islam does not oppose sexual pleasure at all; it was viewed as important for procreation, and had other personal, relational, and spiritual significance. Another comparative study including the Netherlands found that an increase in frequent attendance at religious services at mosques is positively associated with an increase in negative attitudes towards sexual liberalisation (Kogan & Weißmann, 2020).

In contrast to the mosque narrative on the immorality of sexuality before marriage, Dutch secondary schools are required to provide comprehensive sexuality education since 2012, which is characterised by a positive approach to sexuality and sexual rights as essential components of personal development. Sexuality education provided by schools accepts adolescent sexuality and teaches youth about sexual responsibility (Cense et al., 2020). There are no strict guidelines nor curricula provided to schools. Hence, there is much variety in the amount of time allocated to sexuality education, and the pedagogical approaches used. Due to competing demands within the school curriculum, in most schools only a few hours are assigned for it (e.g., as part of biology class), focusing on reproduction, safe sex, unintended pregnancies and disease prevention. Despite these limitations, sexuality education in the Netherlands is credited internationally for its successful approach

and for contributing to positive adolescent sexual health outcomes (such as lower rates of adolescent pregnancies, births, abortions, or sexually transmitted infections) (Ferguson et al., 2008, p. 93). Moreover, it is commonly believed that Dutch society is more open to discussions on sexuality than some other Western countries (see Dalenberg et al., 2016), and most native Dutch parents appear to accept that sexual experiences can take place among young people when they are in steady relationships and use contraceptives (Schalet, 2011).

Method

An exploratory, qualitative research approach was adopted in this study, because it concerned Muslim youth and sexuality, a relatively new research field. Data came from semi-structured interviews with 34 young adults (24 women and 10 men, ages 19–33) and 28 students attending secondary schools (17 females and 11 males, ages 10–18), representing four different Muslim communities in the Netherlands: Turkish, Moroccan, Egyptian and Pakistani (see Table 1 for background information). Inclusion criteria for participants included belonging to one of these four Muslim communities, and having received some form of NFIE while attending formal schooling in the Netherlands. All participants were born into Muslim families and took part in NFIE that adhered to Sunni Islam. Most students were reached through three secondary schools and a few mosques in Amsterdam, and young adults were contacted through social media advertisements and e-mail invitations to all students enrolled in a MA program. In addition, some young adults were suggested by the participants.

The majority of the participants were second- or third-generation migrants, and they lived or studied in Amsterdam. At the time of data collection, young adults had either graduated from higher education or were still studying at a higher education institution, which was assumed to imply that they would have relatively more developed critical thinking skills and would be willing to critically reflect upon their NFIE experiences with greater openness, depth, and insight. Secondary school

Table 1 Background information of participants	Turkish	Moroccan	Egyptian	Pakistani	Total
Young adults					
Female	6	6	5	7	24
Male	3	2	3	2	10
Total	**9**	**8**	**8**	**9**	**34**
Secondary school students					
Female	2	6	2	7	17
Male	2	1	3	5	11
Total	4	7	5	12	28
Total number of participants	**13**	**15**	**13**	**21**	**62**

students in Amsterdam were also included in this study. The majority were studying in vocational tracks; students with a non-Western migration background are overrepresented in such tracks (Statistics Nederland, 2020). They were included because for Muslims, puberty marks a significant milestone in social, emotional, and spiritual development. During this period, young Muslims are socialised into sex segregation, curtail interactions with the opposite sex, and are expected to observe Islamic dress codes, fasting and daily prayers (Zine, 2008). Furthermore, according to Islamic teachings, children are considered to remain sinless until puberty because they have not yet reached the age of intellectual reasoning. With the onset of puberty, individuals are assigned more responsibility and agency regarding their actions (Delaney, 1988).

The interviews were conducted between February 2017 and May 2019 by the authors in English, Dutch, Turkish, Arabic or Urdu depending on the participants' language skills and preferences. All three authors are female and come from Muslim-majority countries (Turkey, Pakistan, and Egypt). Because of their familiarity with Islam and personal experiences with NFIE in their home countries, the researchers were viewed as insiders by the participants. At the same time, they were received as outsiders, since none was born and raised in the Netherlands. The personal histories, gender and age of the researchers were instrumental in establishing good rapport and trust with the participants.

Interviews lasted between one to three hours with young adults, and 30 min to 1 h with secondary school students. They were conducted on a one-to-one basis except for Dutch-Pakistani students, who were interviewed in their parents' presence. The interview locations included university premises, secondary schools, home, cafés, NFIE organisations or public libraries. All participants were informed about the scope and objectives of the research before the interview, and consent forms were completed and signed. They were also assured about the confidentiality and anonymity of the study. For students under the age of 16, parental consent was also obtained. All researchers used a jointly developed interview protocol that provided a common framework across the interviews. With the permission of the participants, all interviews were tape-recorded and fully transcribed. Interviews in Arabic and Urdu were translated into English, which allowed for analysis and interpretation by the first author, who supervised the overall research project. The coding was facilitated using a computer software program (Atlas.ti version 8.043). To ensure further reliability, the first author coded and analysed all the interviews conducted by other two authors. Thematic analysis was used in this process to identify, interpret, and report patterns within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Pseudonyms are used throughout the paper to ensure the anonymity of the participants, and background information revealing the identities of the participants, schools or mosques is omitted.

Results

The students and young adults who participated in this study attended NFIE mainly in mosques established by their communities. They attended these mosque classes during the weekend, from 2 to 6 h per week. Most participants took part in NFIE until they finished primary education (age 12), although some continued until they were 16. In addition to mosques, NFIE was provided at home by tutors, or at private tutoring centres specialising in religious education. The discussions on NFIE experiences in this paper focus on mosques, because mosque education was the dominant form of NFIE among the participants. Moreover, several participants also noted that the emphasis on values and norms or opportunities for socialisation was much stronger at mosques. Home tutoring, Skype lessons or religious education at private tutoring centres tended to focus on the fundamentals of Islam, Arabic, and memorisation of the Quran, while mosque classes were more comprehensive.

From the perspectives of the participants who took part in this study, conflicting norms and values were conveyed at mosques and schools with regard to romance and sexuality, and these contradictions clearly illustrate how Muslim youth were living between two different life worlds—school and mosque—in the Netherlands. The sexuality-related norms and values were not always explicitly part of the taught curriculum, but socialisation through institutional practices played an important role at both schools and mosques. The discussion on this issue also highlighted convergences between Islam and the national cultures of Muslim-majority countries and underscored the difficulties of reconciling the differences between Islamic and Dutch norms and values pertaining to sexuality.

Dominant Narrative of NFIE on Sexuality

Almost all participants confirmed that NFIE promoted an ideally non-sexual young Muslim image, as they were taught that romantic and/or sexual relationships before marriage were *haram* (religiously forbidden) in Islam, and any form of sexual intimacy was permissible only within a marriage. Prohibitions mainly included sexual conduct and dating, but in some cases also any form of physical touching (e.g., handshaking, hugging or kissing), gazing into eyes, or socialising with the opposite sex. Such actions were perceived as undesirable, viewed as a sin, and consequently needed to be avoided to cultivate proper religious dispositions and to feel close to God. The emphasis on these different aspects varied per mosque, depending on the mosque's religious orientation or the convictions of individual imams or tutors. However, the discussions did not encompass romance or sexuality between same-sex peers, since homosexuality itself was also perceived as a major sin.

> Love… a relationship is only allowed if you marry. That is their [mosque tutors] view. You want to have a relationship? Then get married. (Mehmet, male young adult, Turkish background)
> Muslims cannot have romantic relationships before marriage. Allah is not proud. If you want something *halal* [permissible religiously], it is just like go,

go get married. Why not? But not do it the wrong way. (Lena, female student, Moroccan background)

Avoidance was used by mosques as an organisational strategy to maintain proper boundaries between the sexes. Mosque environments (building entrances or prayer rooms) as well as the learning settings were sex-segregated, except in a few cases when there was no available space to separate children or when the number of students was low. Sex segregation was ensured by organising lessons for girls and boys on separate floors, rooms, or different times of the day. Children were also taught by same-sex tutors or imams, and they socialised and played only with same-sex peers during the breaks. Furthermore, as Fatma (female young adult with a Moroccan background) affirmed, there was also a pervasive psychological space between boys and girls. In addition to sex segregation, prescribing modest clothing for girls (headscarf, loose clothing, avoiding showing of arms and legs) and boys (prohibiting shorts) was important to ensure proper behaviour and avoid temptations. Some participants believed that sex segregation was simply a social convention rather than indicating a moral concern about sexuality, yet several others noted that it was a norm dictated by Islam and aimed to prevent desire and lust between the sexes. Separating sexes would arguably prevent undesirable interactions and could ensure better concentration during the lessons. Nonetheless, some participants suggested that sex segregation and requiring girls to put on a headscarf from an early age unnecessarily sexualizes childhood, and paradoxically signifies a mental preoccupation with sexuality. According to some, these practices also imply a negative judgement and mistrust of boys and men:

It's like as if when men would see a woman, they would instantly get feelings or whatever… I understand the reasoning, but I also feel like you don't trust men with how they are. Perhaps it was like that 1400 years ago... I think they have this view that men cannot control their urges. So, that kind of troubles me. (Mehmet, male young adult, Turkish background)

Several participants confirmed that the mosque's message on this issue largely overlapped with how they were raised and counselled at home. Hence, there was often an alignment between familial and religious codes on sexuality. However, in a few cases parents were more open, permitting romantic relationships within certain boundaries. For instance, Mido (male student with Egyptian background) remarked that his parents "do not make a fuss about it" if they know. However, these boundaries consistently ruled out any sexual involvements, emphasizing the importance of chastity as a moral imperative and religious duty. Furthermore, the participants highlighted that norms around romantic relationships were informed both by Islam and by the cultures of their parents' countries of origin. Due to Islam's long history in these countries, it was difficult for the participants to determine where the religion ended, and culture begun. These two have merged over the centuries, with Islam having a major influence on national culture, norms, and values, while national culture itself informs specific interpretations of Islamic principles. For instance, the participants with Pakistani background expressed more conservative values on the subject, emphasizing the importance of refraining from romantic relationships and sexual conduct altogether.

School Culture and Sexuality Education

While Muslim children were counselled about the necessity of chastity at the mosque (and oftentimes at home as well), they encountered different norms and values at secondary school. First, in contrast to sex-segregated mosque environments and classes, all participants (except for a few who enrolled in Islamic primary schools) attended coeducational schools, where classrooms, cafeterias, and playgrounds were all shared. Some schools or teachers further facilitated interactions by seating boys and girls together or assigning joint collaborative assignments. Moreover, although some mosques explicitly advised against handshaking, at various schools, handshaking between teachers and students was a ritual observed before lessons. Furthermore, school culture appeared to have an affirmative approach to romance and sexuality, allowing and normalising romantic relationships before marriage. The peer culture in mixed schools and teacher attitudes conveyed the message that it was natural to have romantic feelings at their age, to act upon those feelings when they seemed mutual, and to pursue a relationship without guilt or shame. They observed that much dating went on at their schools. For instance, the whole school was partying at Christmas parties, and there was obvious flirting and playful gossip around "Who likes whom?":

> "I think she is looking at him. What do you think?" "Yes, I think she is looking at him too." And then, there will be kissing maybe, but some people, not all, because they were really young. So, flirting was definitely going on. Saying that, "someone was looking at you" or saying that "I think he likes her." These are like the regular conversations that you have as a teenager. (Asli, female young adult, Turkish background)

In fact, several participants described their school environment as *open* and *free* on the issue of romantic relationships, where "you could do whatever you want", or a learning space where "everything is allowed." For many, this was a sharp contrast to their religious education and home environments, and the norms they had been socialised into since their childhood. The fact that native Dutch peers could have romantic relationships openly and could even introduce their romantic partners to the parents, and that they seemed to be free to change their partners as they wished was astonishing:

> It's difficult because in high school… we are young, and everything feels good and new. For the Dutch people, everything is okay. And they can even…, bring their boyfriend, girlfriend home. But let's say, not even for Islamic, but for Pakistani people, it's a big no. (Arisha, female young adult, Pakistani background)
>
> Today there is one, tomorrow someone else. So, it's not the same for us. For us, we are Muslims, there is only *one* for us. That we can't make relationships like this. Marriage is… important for us and besides that no boyfriend… nothing. (Sana, female young adult, Pakistani background)

Moreover, sexuality education lessons offered at various schools further reinforced the messages that romantic relationships were a natural part of life. The mere fact that this type of education was offered to young people when they were around 13–14 years old implied that educators expected that issues related to sexuality would come up in young people's lives in the foreseeable future or that they were already sexually active. As part of their biology course, various students received lessons on romantic attraction and sexuality. This concerned aspects such as birth control, and demonstrations with condoms. When some students shared their impressions of sexuality education at home, parents seemed alarmed, considering discussions around such topics as dangerous and unwelcome. Qurrat (female young adult with Pakistani background) noted that these topics were discussed at secondary schools, because native Dutch parents expected that their children would engage in sexual activities sooner or later. However, she thought that Muslim parents were unable to comprehend such a possibility. So, for many of them sexuality education was "inappropriate" and "intrusive". What was worse, parents thought that by introducing such themes, teachers were even "giving children some ideas", and perhaps igniting their interest in sexuality prematurely. Although Qurrat could converse about these topics with her parents (because they were *open*), many of her friends did not even mention sexuality education at home or the sorts of things they were instructed about.

Moreover, there were obvious differences between school cultures depending on student composition. Two secondary schools, in which most of the student participants were enrolled, were Muslim-majority. This means more than 90% of their students had parents originally coming from Muslim-majority countries. The dominant peer culture in such schools was influenced by Islamic norms and values, although the official school policies and curriculum were based on Dutch norms and curriculum guidelines. Student participants who studied at such highly segregated schools reported less collision between the norms and values of mosque and school, as they were less exposed to divergent cultural norms and values among peers at school. Moreover, they reported the existence of some form of *social control* among Muslim peers, reminding each other about Islamic norms and attempting to correct "misdirected behaviour". In contrast, almost all young adults had studied at secondary schools or in educational tracks where Muslim students were a minority. This is not surprising, since the young adults who took part in this study were all highly educated and mostly followed the highest secondary education track, which allowed them to attend university. Being a minority at a school implied that young adults were more often confronted with contradictory norms and values on romance and sexuality during their adolescent years.

Navigating Through the Contradictory Norms and Values

A common theme that emerged from the discussions with Muslim students and young adults was a sense of confusion. Confusion appeared to set in with age and with further socialisation within Dutch society. Several participants highlighted that Muslim youth were confused because, although they received specific messages

about this at home and from their religious tutors, they were also influenced by their peers in their environment, particularly at school.

> Because you are quite influenced by them [peers]. If you enter such a group in high school… you will learn from them and copy them. Which now that I am seeing it, hurts me a lot. That nowadays girls and boys, their parents themselves are confused. (Sana, female young adult, Pakistani background)

Deniz (male young adult with Turkish background) also confirmed that Muslim youth struggled a lot on this issue, because they wanted to date and to get to know the persons they were attracted to, but their religion dictated otherwise: "So, they are stuck in a marriage because they have to marry to have a date, let's say, but they didn't want to marry…They do struggle a lot." Some other participants, however, did not feel so confused. Although they acknowledged receiving contradictory messages on this issue in different learning spaces, and recognised peer influence as a factor to reckon with, they believed parental influence, followed by mosque instruction, had the strongest impact on their behaviour, clarifying any possible confusions.

> I think that in school we do learn about it, but at home what we learn at home from our parents has a greater influence on our thought. So, if parents think that you should not keep any relationship before marriage, so children mostly learn that and that is what I have learnt. So, for me, school's influence in that case is not much. (Razia, female young adult, Pakistani background)

The narratives of young adults also pointed to major contradictory norms, practices, and expectations beyond school environments, comparing their understandings with what they observed in the broader Dutch society. For instance, Deniz (male young adult, Turkish background) described how his native Dutch friends did not want to get married but wanted to have a romantic relationship. In contrast, his family and Turkish friends wanted to get married before they had a relationship. He questioned the fact that in both cultures, clear distinctions were drawn between relationship and marriage, and there was a proliferation of confusing terms around this issue. Mehmet, another young adult with Turkish background, confirmed that while young Muslims were basically told to get married if they wanted a romantic relationship, they encountered a variety of different forms of relationships in Dutch society.

The study identified three major strategies among Muslim youth as they attempted to navigate the contradictory norms and values around romance and sexuality. These included *opting for chastity*, *re-negotiating the norm,* and *embracing romantic entanglements.*

Opting for Chastity

Several students and young adults chose chastity out of religious conviction, believing that sexual expression should be limited to marriage. In such cases, religious and familial codes were often allied, and the religious conviction was compounded with sentiments of loyalty to parents and/or Muslim identity. For instance, Firuze (female

young adult, Turkish background) had no romantic relationships during her secondary education. She knew that it was not allowed in Islam. Not having a boyfriend did not bother her; however, later she discovered that some of her peers wondered if she was a lesbian. She noted that she was one of the very few students at her entire secondary school who did not have a relationship and who did not go out to party. This had some negative consequences for her, as she felt increasingly alone and isolated. Her religion and choices about sexuality appeared to separate her from her peers at school. The topics of romantic attraction, love, boyfriends or going out were pervasive and constituted a major part of peer conversations. As she could not take part in these dialogues due to her abstinence, she felt increasingly alienated and distanced from her peers.

In the case of Sarah (female young adult. Egyptian background), peer pressure was more significant in her decision to avoid romantic relationships. At one period during her youth, she joined a conservative Muslim community that frowned upon relationships outside of marriage, while at the same time it cherished a romanticized view about marrying young to support one another's spiritual growth as a couple ("to be stronger in Islam together") and to prevent themselves from dating or having sex outside of marriage. Marrying at a young age appeared to be a virtue:

> Within the community, no, I felt it [dating] was not a possibility… But you could put your energy into marrying. I was also feeling that everybody was looking forward to get married. It's really a big issue. They were just like; someone have sisters and brothers… who wants to get married? Are you interested? There were a lot of girls in that community at my age [22] who really got married… They were all with men that they didn't know. It was shocking. But at that time, it was not shocking.

Mehmet (male young adult, Turkish background) also confirmed the existence of social control within the Muslim community. For instance, within the Turkish community, he observed little or no judgment of native Dutch people having relationships outside of marriage. However, he encountered judgmental attitudes towards Turks who had such relationships without getting married. Such social control (e.g., fears about social exclusion or damaging one's social standing) appeared to reinforce chastity among Muslim youth.

Re-negotiating the Norm

Young adults also critically reflected upon Islamic norms on chastity and attempted to re-negotiate or re-interpret the norm according to their own understandings. Although for some, proper behaviour meant an absolute ban on romance, including feeling attracted to someone and having or expressing romantic feelings, these young Muslims believed that you could not help having your feelings and you were entitled to feel them, but you should not act upon them under any circumstances. However, another group thought that boys and girls could date if no physical contact (e.g., hugging, kissing, holding hands) was involved during such interactions, and parents were notified:

> You can have a relationship but in the right manner. So, no sex, kisses, touching, hugging and that sort of things. That you cannot do before marriage. But you can love someone and have feelings. And, parents should also know about it. (Ahmed, male student, Egyptian background)

However, it appeared that such permission within specific boundaries was often granted to male participants; parents were a bit more relaxed with their sons while remaining stricter with their daughters. Sevval (female student with Turkish background) confirmed that "Generally boys are allowed to do a lot of things, but if girls do the same, they are judged." This included going out in the evening or having relationships. According to Lena (female student with Moroccan background), these gender differences were justified because women and men are different. For woman, refusing any sexuality or any form of touching was a matter of self-respect and protecting one's purity, dignity, and bodily integrity. She likened women to candy: "If you pick it out… if you touch it, it gets dirty. That is the same thing that a man can do to you." Suraya believed that it should be appropriate to get to know someone before marriage within certain limits, such as meeting in a crowded place, informing the parents, and avoiding physical intimacy:

> But it should not be that you don't have a proper relationship and you are completely free with each other, because it is a source of sadness for yourself, to be honest. These rules don't just exist, it will make you sad yourself. That is why I think that it has to be okay if you get to know someone, but within limits. (Suraya, female young adult, Pakistani background)

Very few female participants openly had a relationship while at secondary school, with the knowledge of their parents. Fatima (female young adult, Egyptian background) was one of them. She had a boyfriend while she attended secondary education, and her father defined the boundaries of her relationship. She and her boyfriend could spend time together, but they were expected not to hold hands, kiss, or engage in anything remotely sexual before marriage:

> My dad always told that it's important to feel that you can have a boyfriend, you would have more confidence when you get older to know that you are beautiful because you are a girl and you need to have those feelings…"There is a boy who wants me. That's the boy I like too."

Embracing Romantic Entanglements

Despite the socialisation and counselling they received at the mosque and at home exalting chastity as a virtue, some Muslim youth nevertheless chose to seek romantic (and sexual) relationships before marriage. Few secondary students admitted having boyfriends or girlfriends during the interviews, but they reported that at their Muslim-majority schools, many of their peers had been dating. Some students attempted to gauge how many, and these estimates ranged between 40–60%. Dating was often done in secrecy from peers to escape social control, but more importantly, in secrecy from parents for fear of their judgement or possible punishment. This led to a double

life and to the creation of a mask-self that simply affirmed the Islamic norm on chastity. Arisha recalled her adolescent years at secondary school:

> This library would be a dating spot, everyone would just come here, lie to their parents, and just sit there, and read books and stuff. But actually, you are there for each other, you know? So, everybody knew it was a big no, but because you are young, you want everything. (Arisha, female young adult, Pakistani background)

In some cases, the participants were not convinced at all that romantic relationships should be avoided before marriage, and they felt strong resistance to such rhetoric even when they were still attending mosque education. For instance, Asli (female young adult, Turkish background) described a lesson during which the class was discussing dating in Islam with their mosque tutor:

> She [mosque tutor] said, "Of course we recognize flirting, we know that happens, but actually it's not allowed in Islam. It's way better not to flirt but to find your partner in a different way. Maybe with the mediation of your parents, maybe with the mediation of someone else. But try to find each other in neutral places... Because even though it might seem harmless to you, it can guide you to worse stuff and harmful stuff." She was just explaining this. I was just laughing, but not out loud. I said [to myself], "F.ck you, I am gonna do it!"

Contrary to how he was taught, Mohammed (male student with Moroccan background) also believed that he could have a girlfriend if he wanted, but he needed to be careful about its impact on school time and his grades. According to a few participants, this issue was a matter of personal choice and was not even dictated by Islam, since "Islam just gives you a guideline, but it never forces you to do something" (Kareem, male young adult, Pakistani background). Consequently, individuals needed to use their personal autonomy, and rational and moral faculties to make choices for themselves. Indeed, some participants were convinced that adolescents should feel free to date and interact with those they felt attracted to, because as such they would explore and learn about themselves, the other, and their emotions. This was a natural part of growing up and becoming an adult. As Deniz (male young adult, Turkish background) noted: "If you are spiritual or not, everybody is interested in these subjects. Because the point is, we all want to be in love. We want to be madly in love."

Discussion

This study describes how NFIE influences young Muslims' values about romance and sexuality, compares this with their experiences in school contexts, and then identifies three strands of attitudinal choices they make. The study reveals that explicit messaging as well as institutional practices (such as sex segregation and prescriptive dress codes) convey a specific narrative about proper conduct between the sexes that prohibits sexual conduct before marriage, and even any form of touching

or socialising. This collides with institutional practices and educational content in secondary schools, which are all co-educational and provide sexuality education. Moreover, the dominant narrative of schools communicates that romance and sexuality before marriage is natural and legitimate.

The study corroborates some earlier studies confirming the sense of confusion (Wong et al., 2017) and "being pulled in opposite directions" (Yip et al., 2011, p. 22), or concerns about "how to relate to such diverging expectations" (Bøe, 2018, p. 279) and "having a hard time negotiating their complex affiliations" (Cense, 2014, p. 846). The study also highlights the agency of young Muslims in interpreting and negotiating their values and attitudes on romance and sexuality within their lived contextual realities and portrays how Muslim youth attempt to balance divergent expectations from peers and educators in these two learning contexts. When the participants chose chastity in alignment with familial and religious codes, and "dared to be different" (Williams et al., 2017, 1), they experienced the challenges of failing to pass as a "normal" adolescent at a secondary school where normality implies dating. These participants felt a strong sense of difference and even stigmatisation at schools where Muslim students were a minority. At the same time, Muslim students who were liberal about dating and interacting with the opposite sex were also frowned upon by Muslim peers, which amounted to a form of peer surveillance and social control. For them, endorsing romantic relationships also involved continued efforts to preserve secrecy from some Muslim peers and more importantly, parents (see also Bøe, 2018; Cense, 2014). Dating through mediation by parents or reliable adults to get to know someone intimately exemplifies one of the strategies to pursue romance in a 'safe' and religiously sanctioned manner, and it highlights how diverse and fluid these strategies can look.

The interpretations of Islamic teachings, their adaptation to the contemporary context, and the commitment and loyalty of Muslim youth to their faith and family varied considerably. Consequently, the way in which they discussed this issue, the choices they made, and their lived experiences differed. This affirms that the Islamic faith tradition is not monolithic; Muslim communities and their young members approach sexuality in dissimilar ways (see also Cense, 2014; Jacobsen, 2011). The findings underscore that Muslim youth are a vibrant and dynamic group who are exposed to different perspectives, as well as larger societal perceptions about their own religion, and they use these inputs to constantly reflect and evaluate their own strategies and stance regarding key issues that matter to them. It is also important to highlight that young Muslims actively think about sexuality and romance, and they undergo comparable transitions as their non-Muslims peers. They are often perceived as linked to their religion, but they need to be also viewed as young people who are in flux, who actively engage with, choose and reject different perspectives. While young Muslims demonstrate resilience and agency in navigating contradictory messages, they might also face increased vulnerability to mental health distress. Prevalent sex segregation policies coupled with a lack of open discussions on sexuality and romantic relationships and strong peer surveillance might lead young Muslims to feel unprepared and overwhelmed (Ahmed & Ezzeddine, 2009). These challenges are compounded by the fact that the experiences of young Muslims are

embedded in the larger context with its forces of patriarchy, racism, and heteronormativity (Wong et al., 2017).

The study underscores the need for having open discussions on faith, romance, and sexuality at home, school settings, and various NFIE spaces. Parents, schoolteachers, religious leaders, and mosque tutors need to be open to such dialogues and reflections on young Muslims' lived experiences and interactions with religious and secular cultures. Such engagement is important to support young Muslims' education, socio-emotional well-being, and cultural integration. Likewise, social workers or school psychologists interacting with Muslim youth need to improve their awareness about the impact of NFIE in young Muslims' lives in general, and how religious faith impacts their values, attitudes, and experiences regarding sexuality. Such open discussions, engagement and greater awareness are indispensable to formulate policy and practice that acknowledges the dilemmas of young Muslims and offers consistent advice and guidance (Yip & Page, 2013). The findings of this study can inform the development and implementation of culturally sensitive sexuality education at secondary schools, which would incorporate diverse beliefs, needs and understandings of cultural and religious communities. Future research on sexuality and religion, or more generally, studies on the development of Muslim children's norms and values, need to consider the impact of mosque education.

Declarations

References

Ahmed, S., & Ezzeddine, M. (2009). Challenges and opportunities facing American muslim youth. *Journal of Muslim Mental Health, 4*(2), 159–174.

Altinyelken, H. K., & Sözeri, S. (2019). Importing mosque pedagogy from Turkey: An analysis of contextual factors shaping re-contextualisation process in the Netherlands. *Comparative Education*, *55*(1), 47–65.

Balkenhol, M., Mepschen, P., & Duyvendak, J. W. (2016). The nativist triangle: Sexuality, race and religion in the Netherlands. In J. W. Duyvendak, P. Geschiere, & E. Tonkens (Eds.), *The culturalization of citizenship: Belonging and polarization in a globalizing world* (pp. 97–112). Palgrave Macmillan.

Beekers, D., & Schrijvers, L. L. (2020). Religion, sexual ethics, and the politics of belonging: Young Muslims and Christians in the Netherlands. *Social Compass, 67*(1), 137–156.

Berger, M. (2014). The Netherlands. In J. Cesari (Ed.), *Oxford handbook of European Islam* (pp. 1–83). Oxford University Press.

Bøe, M. (2018). Halal dating and Norwegian youth culture. *Journal of Muslims in Europe, 7*(3), 265–282.

Bracke, S. (2012). From 'saving women' to 'saving gays': Rescue narratives and their dis/continuities. *European Journal of Women's Studies, 19*(2), 237–252.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101.

Caruthers, A., Curtin, N., Merriwether, A., & Ward, L. M. (2011). Femininity ideology and sexual health in young women: A focus on sexual knowledge, embodiment, and agency. *International Journal of Sexual Health, 23*(1), 48–62.

Cense, M. (2014). Sexual discourses and strategies among minority ethnic youth in the Netherlands. *Culture, Heath, and Sexuality, 16*(7), 835–849.

Cense, M., Grauw, S. D., & Vermeulen, M. (2020). 'Sex is not just about ovaries.' Youth participatory research on sexuality education in The Netherlands. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 17*(8587), 2–15.

Cherti, M., & Bradley, L. (2011). *Inside madrassas: Understanding and engaging with British-Muslim faith supplementary schools*. Institute for Public Policy Research.

Coopmans, M., Ten Dam, G., Dijkstra, A. B., & Van der Veen, I. (2020). Towards a comprehensive school effectiveness model of citizenship education: An empirical analysis of secondary schools in The Netherlands. *Social Sciences, 9*(9), 1–29.

Dalenberg, G. W., Timmerman, M. C., Kunnen, E. S., & Van Geert, P. L. C. (2016). Young people's everyday romance and sexual experiences in relation to sex-related conversations with parents: A diary study in the Netherlands. *Sex Education, 16*(6), 692–706.

Delaney, C. (1988). Mortal flow: Menstruation in Turkish village society. In T. Buckley & A. Gottlieb (Eds.), *Blood magic: The anthropology of menstruation* (pp. 75–93). University of California Press.

Dialmy, A. (2010). Sexuality and Islam. *The European Journal of Contraception and Reproductive Health Care, 15*(3), 160–168.

Duyvendak, J. W., Geschiere, P., & Tonkens, E. (Eds.). (2016). *The culturalization of citizenship: Belonging and polarization in a globalizing world*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Ferguson, R. M., Vanwesenbeeck, I., & Knijn, T. (2008). A matter of facts… and more: An exploratory analysis of the content of sexuality education in The Netherlands. *Sex Education, 8*(1), 93–106.

Griffiths, C., Prost, A., & Hart, G. J. (2010). Understanding social and cultural influences on the relationships and sexual experiences of young British Pakistanis in London: Is there unmet sexual health need? *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, 64*(Suppl. 1), A28–A29.

Imam, A. M. (2000). The Muslim religious right ('fundamentalists') and sexuality. In P. Ilkkracan (Ed.), *Women and sexuality in Muslim societies* (pp. 121–138). Women for Women's Human Rights.

Jacobsen, C. M. (2011). Troublesome threesome: Feminism, anthropology and Muslim women's piety. *Feminist Review, 98*(1), 65–82.

Jayne, A., Koch, J. M., & Federici, D. J. (2020). Predictors of sex anxiety: Emphasis on religion in childhood, religious values, and family communication. *Sexuality and Culture, 25*(2), 525–539.

Kalmijn, M., & Kraaykamp, G. (2018). Determinants of cultural assimilation in the second generation. A longitudinal analysis of values about marriage and sexuality among Moroccan and Turkish migrants. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 44*(5), 697–717.

Kogan, I., & Weißmann, M. (2020). Religion and sexuality: Between and within-individual differences in attitudes to pre-marital cohabitation among adolescents in four European countries. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 46*(17), 3630–3654.

Meldrum, R., Liamputtong, P., & Wollersheim, D. (2014). Caught between two worlds: Sexuality and young Muslim women in Melbourne, Australia. *Sexuality and Culture, 18*, 166–179.

Mepschen, P., Duyvendak, J. W., & Tonkens, E. H. (2010). Sexual politics, orientalism and multicultural citizenship in the Netherlands. *Sociology, 44*(5), 962–979.

Midden, E. (2018). Rethinking 'Dutchness': Learning from the intersections between religion, gender and national identity after conversion to Islam. *Social Compass, 65*(5), 684–700.

Muhammad, M.Z.A.-D. (2010). Perceptions of sex education among Muslim adolescents in Canada. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs, 30*(3), 391–407.

Pels, T. (2014). Dilemmas of educating Muslim children in the Dutch immigration context. In M. Sedgwick (Ed.), *Making European Muslims. Religious socialisation among young Muslims in Scandinavia and Western Europe* (pp. 56–73). Routledge.

Schalet, A. T. (2011). *Not under my roof: Parents, teens and the culture of sex*. University of Chicago Press.

Scourfield, J., Gilliat-Ray, S., Khan, A., & Otri, S. (2013). *Muslim childhood: Religious nurture in a European context*. Oxford University Press.

Sozeri, S. (2021). *The pedagogy of the mosque: Portrayal, practice, and role in the integration of Turkish-Dutch children*. Gildeprint.

Sözeri, S., & Altinyelken, H. K. (2019). What are children being taught in the mosque? Turkish mosque education in the Netherlands. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction, 22*, [100326].

Sözeri, S., Altinyelken, H. K., & Volman, M. (2019). Training imams in the Netherlands: The failure of a post-secular endeavour. *British Journal of Religious Education, 41*(4), 435–445.

Statistics Nederland. (2020). *Jaarrapport Integratie 2020 [Annual report on integration 2020]*. Statistics Netherlands.

Tabatabaie, A. (2015). Childhood and adolescent sexuality, Islam, and problematics of sex education: A call for re-examination. *Sex Education, 15*(3), 276–288.

Vedder, P., & Horenzcyk, G. (2006). Acculturation and the school context. In D. L. Sam & J. W. Berry (Eds.), *Psychology of acculturation: International perspectives* (pp. 419–438). Cambridge University Press.

Williams, R. H., Irby, C. A., & Warner, R. S. (2017). "Dare to be different": How religious groups frame and enact appropriate sexuality and gender norms among young adults. In P. N. Claster & S. L. Blair (Eds.), *Gender, sex, and sexuality among contemporary youth* (pp. 1–22). Emerald Publishing Limited.

Wong, J. P., Macpherson, F., Vahabi, M., & Li, A. (2017). Understanding the sexuality and sexual health of Muslim young people in Canada and other Western countries: A scoping review of research literature. *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality, 26*(1), 48–59.

Yip, A. K. T., & Page, S. J. (2013). *Religious and sexual identities: A multi-faith exploration of young adults*. Ashgate.

Yip, A. K. T., Keenan, M., & Page, S. (2011). *Religion, youth and sexuality: Selected key findings from a multi-faith exploration*. University of Nottingham.

Zine, J. (2008). Honour and identity: An ethnographic account of Muslim girls in a Canadian Islamic school. *Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies, 19*, 35–61.