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Gender gap in religiosity and interfaith marriage attitudes: Muslim migrants in Germany

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ABSTRACT

Among the various factors influencing matrimonial choices, religion holds long-standing sociological significance. Utilizing a unique dataset, "Muslim Life in Germany," this study examines the attitudes of Muslim migrants toward their actual or imaginary children's decisions to marry individuals from different religious backgrounds. The results indicate that the gender of the respondents, the gender of their actual or imaginary children, and the subjective, individual, and communal religiosity of Muslim migrants are significantly associated with the level of approval for their children's interfaith marriages. This study establishes a framework to discuss how interfaith marriage attitudes are gendered, manifesting in the differential standards applied to daughters versus sons, and further gendered by the distinct standards employed by mothers and fathers, each influenced by varying levels of different types of religiosity—incorporating the "religious gender gap" phenomenon.

Introduction

Intermarriage depicts the most intimate and often long-term interaction between groups, reflecting the social acceptance that members of different groups perceive each other as social equals (Kalmijn, 1998). Thus, weakening and consolidating the group boundaries, within the context of migrants, intermarriage has generally been studied as a proxy for social integration (Hwang et al., 1997; Kalmijn, 1991, 1998; Lehrer, 1998; Sherkat, 2004). It is often perceived as the culminating stage of the assimilation process (Gordon, 1964), and even as the ultimate social taboo to be broken (Qian, 2005).

Subsequently, the study of intermarriage has evolved into a recognized academic discipline at the crossroads of migration, religion, ethnicity, and family studies (Carol, 2016b; Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008; Van Niekerk & Verkuyten, 2018). Most of the existing scholarship has primarily focused on Christian and Jewish groups, with a notable concentration on the United States (Van Niekerk & Verkuyten, 2018). Meanwhile, the exploration of attitudes toward interfaith marriages among Muslim migrants residing in Western Europe represents an emerging field of study.

In countries hosting migrant populations from diverse religious backgrounds, understanding the factors that shape attitudes toward interfaith marriage is important for several reasons. Though intermarriage patterns rely not merely on personal attitudes and preferences, but also on available social contact opportunities and the influence of third parties within the marriage market (Kalmijn, 1998), attitudes toward intermarriage can potentially provide implicit insight into how individuals appraise outgroup members in

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favorable or unfavorable terms. These attitudes might also offer cues about the acceptance of the majority group, essentially indicating the extent to which minority groups believe the majority group views them as eligible marriage candidates. Therefore, these attitudes may not only serve as potential predictors of behavior, but also reflect the degree of social and cultural integration of migrants and their descendants. The family unit is pivotal in forming these attitudes, as it facilitates the socialization of religious values and intergenerational transmission of such values from parents to children. Through the transmission of "human religious capital," children often inherit heightened levels of religiosity from their religious parents (Iannaccone, 1990). Hence, the implications extend beyond the attitudes of Muslim migrants, also affecting their existing and future offspring. In particular, in the context of Muslim migrants in Western Europe, the attitudes toward intermarriage across religious boundaries may bring to light the pronounced ethno-religious distinctions. This dynamic can intensify the sense of in-group belonging among Muslim migrants, a group whose ethno-religious identities, values, and lifestyles are frequently devalued by the predominant cultures in Western Europe (Maliepaard & Phalet, 2012).

This study investigates the attitudes of Muslim migrants toward the prospect of their actual or hypothetical children marrying partners from different religious backgrounds. More specifically, it aims to explore how distinct manifestations of religiosity are associated with the level of approval for their children's interfaith marriages. Additionally, it examines the differences in standards of approval applied by Muslim women and men for their sons' and daughters' interfaith marriages, based on varying levels and types of religiosity. In undertaking this analysis, the research contributes to discussions on the "religious gender gap"—a pattern where women are often found to be more religious than men (Kregting et al., 2019; Miller & Stark, 2002; Schnabel, 2016; Sullins, 2006; Trzebiatowska & Bruce, 2012).

Building on this exploration, this study aims to address two specific gaps. First, while an extensive body of research has established a link between heightened religiosity and decreased approval of interfaith marriages (Carol, 2013, 2016a; Cila & Lalonde, 2014; De Valk & Liefbroer, 2007; Haji et al., 2022; Huschek et al., 2012; Sherkat, 2004; Van Niekerk & Verkuyten, 2018), little is known about how different dimensions of religiosity influence these attitudes. Adopting Guveli's (2015) three-dimensional conception of religiosity, this study distinguishes between *subjective* (self-rated), *individual* (private/nonorganizational), and *communal* (institutional/organizational) religiosity. The majority of studies utilize a single construct item to measure overall religiosity. The possibility that different forms of religiosity may have distinct effects on attitudes toward interfaith marriage, however, should not be overlooked, as each religiosity dimension may impact attitudes in unique ways. Relatedly, the construction of a single-scale item may not adequately capture the multidimensional essence of religiosity, potentially blurring the distinctions between the different dimensions. This gap serves as a departure point from previous contributions to the field, aiming to investigate how various dimensions of religiosity shape attitudes toward interfaith marriages.

Prior studies exploring different aspects of parental involvement and attitudes toward children's intermarriage or intimate romantic relationships, using different target samples, have established a critical foundation for the field. While some research studied children's perspectives on their parents' views or involvement, others examined the (future) parents themselves. Previous investigations have typically aggregated the gender of the parents (Buunk et al., 2010; Cila & Lalonde, 2014; Clark-Ibáñez & Felmlee, 2004; De Valk & Liefbroer, 2007; Giuliani et al., 2017; Hanassab, 1998; Hanassab & Tidwell, 1998; Huschek et al., 2012; Klaartje Van et al., 2014; Pepicelli, 2017; Sterckx, 2015; van Zantvliet et al., 2014; Wachter & de Valk, 2020; Yahya et al., 2016; Yahya & Boag, 2014) or those of their (future) children (Carol, 2014, 2016a; Huijnk & Liefbroer, 2012; Munniksma et al., 2012; Van Niekerk & Verkuyten, 2018). The second gap this study addresses involves the gender-based disparities in interfaith marriage attitudes. To the best of our knowledge, this study represents the first attempt to systematically explore each parent-child gender combination in parental approval in interfaith marriage, thus avoiding the mentioned aggregation. Going one step further, it also examines how these attitudes vary across different dimensions of religiosity in both mothers and fathers toward both their daughters and sons. Ultimately, the extant study aims to bridge the literatures of intermarriage and religiosity by highlighting the distinctive effects that the types of religiosity and gender of the parents and children have on interfaith marriage attitudes.

Drawing upon data from Muslim Life in Germany, the two primary research inquiries guiding this study are: (1) *To what extent are the gender of both parents and children associated with the approval rate for interfaith marriages?* And (2) *What role do subjective, individual, and communal religiosity play in shaping attitudes toward the approval of children's interfaith marriages?*

Theoretical background and hypotheses

Different standards of interfaith marriage approval for sons and daughters

Families undergo numerous transformations throughout different stages of the life cycle, introducing new members into the broader family sphere and community, confronting conflicts, and reconfiguring their relationships. The matrimony of adult children signifies a stage that can lead to a new venue for parent-child relationships (Yahirun, 2019) and a test for member-community ties (Osanami Törngren et al., 2016). In this context, the union of adult children can potentially engender profound shifts in the surrounding relational constellations. As the adult children establish their own families, they generate a complex network of new commitments, responsibilities, and obligations, similar to the old one for some context and incompatible for some other. As such, intermarriages, while facing existing challenges, may introduce a unique array of potential threats to the construction of family, intergenerational relationships, and the transmission of cultural and religious values (Tezcan, 2023). To preserve group identity, values, and traditions, communities often emphasize the significance of marrying within one's own group. They may withdraw social support and impose social and material sanctions, including the loss of inheritance rights, on individuals who deviate from established norms as necessary (Clark-Ibáñez & Felmlee, 2004; Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008). This dynamic starkly manifests in

conflict-ridden contexts, such as between Israelis and Palestinians, where interfaith marriages can be controversially termed "sleeping with the enemy" (Fogiel-Bijaoui, 2017), Christian-Muslim intermarriages are often labeled as a "family shame" in Indonesia (Connolly, 2009), and even religiosity mixed families are perceived as a threat to ethnic purity in Northern Ireland (Donnan, 1990).

Marriages that cross both religious and national boundaries may present heightened challenges, particularly in the context of differing norms and expectations within that govern marriages for women and men. Traditional approaches within Islam generally place significant importance on the religiosity of a prospective spouse and exhibit a more unfavorable stance toward interfaith marriages (Asamarai et al., 2008). While some interpretations permit Muslim men to marry women from the People of the Book,[2] this perspective is not universally accepted and has been subject to various interpretations (Ali, 2017). As for Muslim women, due to the absence of explicit directives in the Quran, they are generally discouraged from engaging in interfaith marriages (Cigdem, 2015). This stance is often reinforced by patriarchal perceptions that position women beneath men in the familial hierarchy, where concerns about the potential hindrance of a Muslim woman's religious practices by a non-Muslim husband emerge, given the traditional view of the man as the head of the household and an authority figure (Leeman, 2009). Apprehensions regarding such unions stem partly from fears that Muslim women might convert to another faith, combined with the assumption that Muslim men are usually "stronger" in their faith (Mulia, 2009). Although a recent study has shown that Muslim women married to non-Muslim men actually experience an increase in their religiosity—contrary to expectations—because they often see themselves as "ambassadors of Islam" within their families (Elmali-Karakaya, 2020, p. 407), such marriages are still often perceived as less socially and religiously acceptable (Feise--Nasr, 2022). Nevertheless, there are diversity of views and practices within Islam on this issue. This diversity is further exemplified in a study involving Turkish women in the UK, who, while engaged in interfaith marriages, were not fully cognizant of the traditional Islamic views regarding such unions (Jawad & Elmali-Karakaya, 2020).

Despite the traditionally cautious stance within Islam toward interfaith marriages and the potential for significant familial repercussions, such unions involving Muslim women and non-Muslim men are not a rarity. To mitigate family opposition and prevent social isolation from their familial circles and broader communities, non-Muslim husbands may convert to Islam purely for the sake of the marriage (Jawad & Elmali-Karakaya, 2020; Leeman, 2009). Absent such conversions, Muslim women may face prejudice, rejection, and even expulsion by their families, and marginalization within their communities (Yahya et al., 2016). However, conversion for marriage is not problem-free. Research on Chinese converts to Islam in Malaysia shows that it often intensifies tensions, with the act of conversion leading to increased antagonism and being perceived as a loss of credibility among parents, relatives, and acquaintances (Lindenberg, 2009).

Reflecting the discussions above, research on Muslims in Western Europe has identified a higher prevalence of interfaith marriages among Muslim men than among Muslim women (Carol, 2016a). Relatedly, among Iranians in Los Angeles, it has been observed that parents display greater tolerance for their sons marrying women from other religions, while they are less approving of their daughters dating or marrying non-Muslim men (Hanassab & Tidwell, 1998). Due to the higher degree of parental supervision, control, and double standard over daughters, coupled with internalized endogamy norms, Muslim parents have also been reported to allow their sons greater freedoms in their interfaith dating lives compared to their daughters (Carol & Teney, 2015; Hanassab, 1998; Kretschmer et al., 2024). These findings align with research conducted in 22 countries with a Muslim majority, revealing a greater reluctance among Muslims toward their daughters' interfaith marriages than their sons' (Van Niekerk & Verkuyten, 2018). Grounded in these empirical observations, this study seeks to test the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. *Muslim migrants show lower levels of approval for interfaith marriages involving their daughters compared to those involving their sons.*

The gendered aspect of parental approval in interfaith marriage

The analysis of interfaith marriage attitudes in relation to children's marriages not only offers a perspective through which religiosity can be evaluated but also enables consideration of the familial mechanisms through which parents may influence their children's decisions and partner choices. There is a growing body of research documenting parental involvement in partner choice within Muslim migrant populations (Asamarai et al., 2008; Buunk et al., 2010; Dupont et al., 2017; Lievens, 1999; van Zantvliet et al., 2014).

The cultural dichotomy of individualism and collectivism seems to influence the degree of parental involvement in partner choice: While collectivistic cultures emphasize loyalty to one's family, individualistic ones prioritize personal desires (Kagitcibasi, 2013). Generally speaking, collectivist cultures tend to give parents a greater degree of control over the process of partner choice than individualistic cultures do (Buunk et al., 2010; Wojcieszak et al., 2017). This is particularly the case for Muslim migrants who, in general, prioritize family bonds and solidarity (Merz et al., 2009), and marriage is perceived as a highly sacred institution (Asamarai et al., 2008). Choosing the "right" partner for one's children is important since marriage often serves as a link between cultures, communities, and families. Marriage, in many cultures, is more than just a union between two individuals; it also serves as a binding force between families and communities (Hooghiemstra, 2001). From that perspective, a spouse with compatible values ensures not only the preservation of cultural identity across generations but also the maintenance of intergenerational solidarity (Kalmijn, 1998). Consequently, Muslim migrant families might place greater emphasis on the compatibility of the prospective spouse over the romantic affection between the partners (Guveli et al., 2016).

[2] "People of the Book" is a literal translation of the Arabic term "*ahl al-kitāb*," used in the Quran to refer to Jews and Christians collectively or individually (Sharon, 2004).

The emotionally charged and pragmatically labor-intensive expectations placed upon migrant women in terms of marriage negotiation and broader family functioning should not be underestimated. Beyond managing the daily mechanics of the household sphere, migrant women are expected to fulfill rigorous familial duties and maternal responsibilities (Mahler & Pessar, 2006; Rao, 2012). Predominant Islamic religio-cultural doctrines cast women as the biological producers of the community and nation, the transmitters of religious values to future generations, and the guardians of group identity (Mohammad, 1999). In other words, since women are seen as "bearers of the collective" and are tasked with both biological reproduction and the cultural perpetuation of each social group, they are subject to more stringent control than men to ensure their choices, behavior, and appearance aligned with the group's norms and practices (Fogiel-Bijaoui, 2017, p. 215). Given the significance of marriage for cultural continuity and the perpetuation of group identity across generations (Kalmijn, 1998), the substantial parental involvement in children's marital decisions (Asamarai et al., 2008; Buunk et al., 2010; Dupont et al., 2017; Lievens, 1999; van Zantvliet et al., 2014), and the expected role of Muslim migrant women in upholding group and familial identity (Fogiel-Bijaoui, 2017; Mohammad, 1999; Pepicelli, 2017), the following hypothesis is posited for examination:

Hypothesis 2. *Muslim migrant women show lower levels of approval for interfaith marriages involving their children compared to Muslim migrant men.*

The effect of religiosity on interfaith marriage approval

The persistence of religion is largely dependent on the primary ties in the family, that is, how each generation succeeds in transferring intergenerational religious inheritance the following (Iannaccone, 1990; Myers, 1996). Should religious socialization prevail within the familial context, it is plausible that religious heritages act as a reservoir and a frame of reference for making critical decisions, such as choosing a marital partner. Beyond ensuring the perpetuation of religious practices and the conservation of religious capital, spouses sharing the same religious beliefs are likely to acquire higher efficiency and emotional support, as well as less conflict in their marriage (Iannaccone, 1990), leading to greater marital satisfaction (Asamarai et al., 2008). The principle of homophily, which posits that individuals of similar characteristics are more likely to interact than those of differing characteristics (McPherson et al., 2001), is the driving force behind this process.

At this juncture, the influence of religious upbringing in shaping marital preferences comes into play. In Germany, Muslim youth with religiously observant mothers were reported to be more predisposed toward marriage than cohabitation (De Valk & Liefbroer, 2007). Among Muslim Canadian young adults, stronger religious fundamentalism and identification were identified as robust predictors of aversion to interfaith dating and marriage (Cila & Lalonde, 2014). Moreover, across Muslim communities in Western Europe, a higher level of religious attachment was found to reduce the approval of interfaith marriage (Carol, 2013). In a similar vein, another study reported that second-generation Turks with a religious upbringing in Western European countries are less likely to favor intermarriage (Huschek et al., 2012). Further, a study involving Canadian Muslims revealed that a higher degree of religious practice and identification strongly predicted a reduced openness to interfaith marriages (Haji et al., 2022). A longitudinal study of intermarriage among 138 immigrant groups in Sweden indicated that immigrants from more religious countries, especially Muslim nations, exhibit a greater inclination toward religious endogamy and are less likely to intermarry with natives (Dribe & Lundh, 2011). The same study also suggested that religion plays a significant role in partner selection, influenced by internalized collective norms and restrictions imposed by family or religious communities.

Arguably, one of the most prominent factors driving homophily in marriage is the aspiration to wed a religiously observant and traditional spouse who facilitates cultural continuity and transmission of religious practices to succeeding generations (Lievens, 1999; Mohammad, 1999). A study examining the perspectives of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim individuals in Israel highlighted concerns regarding the religious identity of future generations. Specifically, the ambiguity surrounding the religious affiliation of potential grandchildren, and the resultant potential for identity crises among these descendants and within the family structure, was identified as a significant reason for disapproval of interfaith marriages (Yahya et al., 2016). In India, similarly, children born to Muslim-Hindu marriages were reported to experience a sense of being religiously "misfit" within both of their parental communities (Ansari & Anjum, 2014).

The nexus between religious upbringing and marital choices has been discussed, yet a further exploration of the connection between Muslim parents' religiosity and their attitudes toward their children's marital choices remains vital. Parental involvement in shaping children's marital trajectories and the resulting "success" fuels this inquiry: Parents' approval or disapproval can influence the likelihood of a child's marriage, regardless of the child's indifference toward a prospective partner's religious beliefs (Sherkat, 2004). In this context, it is essential to recognize that parental involvement in partner selection is a prevalent and traditionally anticipated practice among Muslim migrants. Consequently, parents' attitudes toward interfaith marriages, contingent on their level of religiosity, may potentially shape their children's decision-making processes. Although the transmission of religious beliefs from parents to children is relatively common and varies in intensity, Muslim migrant families seemingly prioritize religious transmission more than Christian families (Jacob, 2020). An important motivation for encouraging religious homophily appears to be the desire for intergenerational religious transmission that children and their spouses should have skills to instill Islamic practices and values in grandchildren (Ross-Sheriff et al., 2007). The underlying mechanism for this pattern is that since individuals tend to link marital choices to religious qualities, interfaith marriage limits the production of religious values in a family (Sherkat, 2004). Based on this reasoning, the following hypothesis is tested:

Hypothesis 3. *Among Muslim migrants, higher levels of each dimension of religiosity are associated with lower levels of approval for interfaith marriages involving their children.*

The religious gender gap in subjective, individual, and communal religiosity

One of the most widely referenced and consistent findings in religious studies is that women tend to be more religious in every dimension compared to men (see Sullins, 2006 for a detailed discussion)—a phenomenon known as the "religious gender gap." From the sociological standpoint, researchers have suggested a range of explanations to account for the gender differences observed in religiosity, from structural location (de Vaus & McAllister, 1987), differential gender socialization (Miller & Stark, 2002; Trzebiatowska & Bruce, 2012) to existential security (Norris & Inglehart, 2012), noting that these perspectives are not mutually exclusive (Stolz, 2009; Vardy et al., 2022).

The structural location theory suggests that the gender-based division of labor, which allocates family responsibilities to women and workplace duties to men, is linked to the women's heightened religiosity due to their familial roles, lower workforce participation, and reduced access to formal education (de Vaus & McAllister, 1987; Luckmann, 1967; Trzebiatowska & Bruce, 2012). To put it simply, their structural location in society denies women social and economic power, imposes the role of mother and family caretaker, and confines them to the domestic sphere, which drives a high level of religiosity. Consequently, their primary role as homemakers and caregivers, along with their social and economic dependency and lower status and power position both inside and outside the household, often leads to a sense of deprivation and greater social isolation, which may cause them to turn to religion for comfort (Moberg, 1962).

Connectedly, the differential gender socialization theory argues that traditional gender roles contributes to a higher religious gender gap among mothers compared to fathers and daughters compared to sons, as particular childhood experiences of women tend to incline them toward religious values (Levitt, 1995; Trzebiatowska & Bruce, 2012). Thus, not surprisingly, parents' religiosity is found to exert a stronger effect on daughters' religiosity compared to that of sons (Bryukhanov & Fedotenkov, 2023). The maternal role and home-making process are believed to inherently include religiousness, given that it involves responsibilities such as teaching moral values and socializing children (de Vaus, 1984; Miller & Stark, 2002), with the primary reward being the fulfillment of roles as a wife and mother (Norris & Inglehart, 2008). For this perspective, a family-centered orientation of women, combined with various vulnerabilities and insecurities, may ultimately lead to increased religiosity due to the close alignment between religious values and family values (de Vaus & McAllister, 1987). This point ties into the existential security theory we will explore last.

According to existential security theory, religion serves as a safety net for those facing significant life insecurities, and this effect is especially pronounced in women, who often experience greater existential insecurity than men (Norris & Inglehart, 2008). Put simply, religion functions as an "insurance" against the hardships of poverty, poor health, and physical safety, with women showing higher levels of religiosity as a compensatory mechanism for their lack of resources, status, and authority (Bryukhanov & Fedotenkov, 2023; Kregting et al., 2019; Norris & Inglehart, 2008; Voas et al., 2013).

As guided by the literature and stated in the previous subsection's hypothesis, all types of religiosity are expected to be associated with lower approval levels of approval for interfaith marriages. In this subsection, we aimed to outline the main theoretical orientations concerning the observed differences in religiosity between women and men. We will now proceed to discuss in detail the distinct underlying mechanisms of each type of religiosity for Muslim migrants, along with their gendered patterns.

Subjective religiosity: religiosity intertwined with ethnic identity

Subjective religiosity reflects the internalized religious identity that may not necessarily manifest in observable behaviors, but rather as a subjective attraction to religion that operates at a more symbolic level (Gans, 1994). In the context of migration, subjective religiosity often serves as an alternative to ethnic belonging, especially when ethnic identity becomes salient in a foreign environment (Guveli & Platt, 2023). Thus, it may reflect a "cultural religion" (Demerath, 2000), serving to preserve and defend ethnic identity (Drouhot, 2021; Stolz, 2009). This line of argument suggests that subjective religiosity is intertwined with ethnic identity and is less concerned with religious activities and obligations. In response to a foreign and hostile environment, it becomes a boundary marker (Connor & Koenig, 2013; Mitchell, 2005) that heightens awareness of religious identity in settlement countries (Hagan & Ebaugh, 2003; Hirschman, 2004; Maliepaard & Schacht, 2018; Van Tubergen & Sindradóttir, 2011; Yang & Ebaugh, 2001).

In line with this framework, Guveli (2015) argues that Turkish Europeans may exhibit an increasing attachment to their religion as it provides a means of dissociation from the exclusionary broader society while simultaneously fostering a sense of community within their ethnic group. The same study has correspondingly shown that second-generation Turkish migrants in Western European countries exhibit higher levels of subjective religiosity than non-migrants in Turkey. Additionally, second-generation Muslim migrants display higher levels of subjective religiosity than their first-generation counterparts as well as natives in Western European countries (Guveli & Platt, 2023). Young individuals of Turkish descent in Germany, in particular, report higher subjective religiosity compared to individual and communal religiosity (Niechziol & Medeiros, 2023). When comparing the subjective religiosity of Turkish migrants in nine Western European countries, gender did not appear to be a significant factor (Guveli et al., 2016). Given that religion serves as a platform for social identity and societal positioning (Güngör et al., 2011), transcending gender, religious homophily in partner selection and the maintenance of distance from others is socially expected (Herberg, 1956). Thus:

Hypothesis 4a. *For both Muslim migrant men and women, those exhibiting subjective religiosity tend to show lower levels of approval for interfaith marriages involving their both sons and daughters.*

Individual religiosity: "From Islam of the mothers to Islam of the daughters"

Individual religiosity entails commitment and dedication to religious obligations, primarily manifested through religious practice-based behaviors, in contrast to subjective religiosity. It is the private performance of religious duties and, thus, is exclusive to the private sphere where gender dynamics are operated. Studies consistently find that women pray more frequently than men and, as a result, tend to have higher levels of individual religiosity compared to men (Kregting et al., 2019; Miller & Stark, 2002; Palmisano & Todesco, 2019; Schnabel, 2016). Women, undergoing traditional gender role socialization, primarily take care of the family, which places them in a domestic and private sphere culturally related to religion (Sullins, 2006; Trzebiatowska & Bruce, 2012). In addition, in response to existential insecurities that make lives vulnerable, religion may fill a void, offering women a refuge and well-being in their own private spheres (Norris & Inglehart, 2008).

Through socialization, parents instill their values and norms in their children, including preferences for their future spouse (Carol & Teney, 2015). In the household, which serves as the primary arena for transmitting "human religious capital," children particularly inherit their religious beliefs and practices from their mothers, who are primarily responsible for their religious socialization (Grasmick et al., 1996; Iannaccone, 1990; Trzebiatowska & Bruce, 2012; Voas et al., 2013). While religious transmission occurs universally, Muslim migrant families tend to be more effective at imparting their faith to subsequent generations than other groups (de Hoon & van Tubergen, 2014; Jacob, 2020).

Daughters are primarily targeted by religious transmission—and most religious norms—as they are seen as bearers of cultural norms and values, representing the continuity of cultures (Carol & Teney, 2015; Kretschmer et al., 2024). Families prioritize passing down highly valued principles of social and physical control to their daughters, reinforcing their role as guardians of cultural and religious traditions (Kregting et al., 2019). Muslim mothers bear the weight of accountability for their daughters' perceived "missteps," becoming perceived custodians of "family honor" and the originating society's values (Pepicelli, 2017). As such, social sanctions are imposed on women not only when they engage in interfaith marriages but also when their children do so (Fogiel-Bijaoui, 2017). Perhaps not surprisingly, a study in which self-evaluations from Muslim migrant adolescents revealed divergent expectations: sons indicated that being a "good" son requires achieving educational success and ultimately becoming the family's breadwinner, whereas daughters reported that being a "good" daughter involves preserving cultural heritage and conforming to traditional marriage practices (Giuliani et al., 2017). Research has already documented the phenomenon of religious transmission "from Islam of the mothers to Islam of the daughters," with daughters remaining under their mothers' wings in the home, where individual religiosity predominates, meanwhile, sons typically undergo their religious training by following their fathers in mosque settings, where communal religiosity prevails (Pepicelli, 2017, p. 62). As evidenced, the values of daughters were influenced most by direct religious transmission from mothers to daughters among Turkish-German migrant families (Idema & Phalet, 2007). Thus:

Hypothesis 4b. *For Muslim migrant women, those exhibiting individual religiosity tend to show lower levels of approval for interfaith marriages involving their daughters.*

Communal religiosity: "Bastions of male dominance"

Women have consistently been found to attend religious institutions more regularly than men in the Christian Western world (de Vaus, 1984; Miller & Stark, 2002; Norris & Inglehart, 2008; Sullins, 2006). However, this pattern is reversed in the Muslim world, where men demonstrate higher levels of communal religiosity. In the context of Islam, communal religiosity is embodied in the public expression of faith, including communal worship or Friday prayer in mosques (Guveli et al., 2016).

Although mosques in non-Muslim majority countries may appear more gender-inclusive than those in Muslim-majority nations, this inclusivity is limited by physical segregation and male approval, ultimately reinforcing mosques as "bastions of male dominance" (Gilliat-Ray, 2010, p. 202). Mosques are male-dominated spaces, with governance and leadership roles exclusively held by men (Nyhagen, 2019). Women participate in mosque life from behind the scenes, a situation compounded by the fact that Friday prayers are not mandatory for women in Islamic tradition. Interestingly, mosque attendance is significantly higher in non-Muslim majority countries than in Muslim majority countries for both men and women, with men's attendance being dramatically higher (Alexander & Welzel, 2011; Guveli, 2015).

The central issue at hand is whether communal religiosity acts as a channel for religious socialization that ultimately instills patriarchal values in Muslim migrant men, which in turn, could shape interfaith marriage attitudes. Religious institutions are perceived as inherently supportive of patriarchal gender regime, as they tend to promote traditional gender role socialization (Voas et al., 2013), potentially reinforcing a unique community experience that upholds patriarchal values within the Muslim community (Azabar & Van Aelst, 2024). Nevertheless, the social context matters. Analysis of the fourth and fifth waves of the World Values Survey, which engaged over a hundred thousand individuals from 83 societies globally, illustrated that, while mosques are not necessary for upholding traditional values in societies predominantly consisting of Muslims, the frequency of mosque attendance in societies with a non-Muslim majority tends to align with more traditional values for men (Alexander & Welzel, 2011). This result implies that in non-Muslim majority societies, high levels of communal religiosity, facilitated by social gatherings and collective religious practices, may enable the adoption and more distinct expression of traditional values. Patriarchy reproduced in collective religious socialization as well as in the household result in differential socialization and expectations of sons and daughters in terms of their future marriage (Collett & Lizardo, 2009), resulting in greater control over daughters than sons (Carol & Teney, 2015; Grasmick et al., 1996; Kregting et al., 2019; Kretschmer et al., 2024). This is primarily because, in traditional interpretations of Islam, the father's religion determines that of the children; thus, interfaith marriages involving Muslim women, but not Muslim men, threaten the continuity of religious

beliefs across generations (Cila & Lalonde, 2014). This leads:

Hypothesis 4c. *For Muslim migrant men, those exhibiting communal religiosity tend to show lower levels of approval for interfaith marriages involving their daughters.*

Method

Data and sample

The data are from Muslim Life in Germany, a large-scale cross-sectional survey displaying an extensive information on Muslim migrants, including but not limited to the everyday religious life, beliefs, and social and structural integration (Haug et al., 2014). Conducted by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge) between March and July 2008 through Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI), the survey constitutes the first nationwide representative study comprising Muslim migrants from 49 countries of origin. A total of 6004 people aged 16 and above are surveyed, with the response rate of 31.2 %.

The employed sampling procedure consisted of a two-stage process. In the initial stage, migrants from predominantly Muslim countries of origin were identified through a linguistic screening of names within the telephone directory. This step was crucial in preventing an overrepresentation of specific groups; to achieve this, the countries of origin were categorized into distinct strata. In the second stage, a probability sampling technique was applied to each stratum, randomly selecting a total of 6004 respondents (Haug et al., 2009).

For the present study, respondents who identify as Muslim (41.37 %) and Alevi (1.23 %) were included, other respondents who identify as Christian (33.61 %), Hindu, Buddhist, Druse, Yezidi (3.55 %), Jewish (0.85 %), and stated no belonging to a religious community (18.75 %) were opted out. As a result, the final sample consisted of a total of 2558 respondents.

Measures

Criterion variables

Respondents were asked to express the degree to which they would approve of their actual or imaginary son's or daughter's decision to marry a partner of a different religious affiliation. Those with children in the household were asked the following question, based on the gender of their child: "*Would you agree with your son/daughter marrying a man/woman with a different religious affiliation?*" For respondents who either had no children or no sons/daughters in the household, a hypothetical scenario was posed: "*Imagine that you had a son/daughter; would you then agree with him/her marrying a woman/man with a different religious affiliation*?" The response categories of the items were: 1 = yes; 0 = no.

Predictor variables

The main predictor variable of interest is *religiosity*, which was measured by three separate items. *Subjective religiosity* measures self-rated religiosity on a scale from (1) not at all religious to (4) very religious. *Individual religiosity* is operationalized by how often people pray: (1) never, (2) a few times a year, (3) once a month at most, (4) a few times a month, (5) once a week, (6) several times a week (7) daily. The *communal religiosity* measures the frequency at which people attend religious events, with the same response categories as the individual religiosity variable.

Attachment to the country of origin and *attachment to Germany* were assessed through the items of "*How closely connected do you feel to your country of origin (or the country of origin of your family members)?*" and "*How closely connected do you feel to Germany?*", respectively, with the following responses: (5) very close, (4) close, (3) moderately close, (2) not close, (1) not at all close.

The index of *total contact* was created from four items measuring the frequency of contact, conversations, and activities that respondents reported with people of German origin, using a scale of 1 (daily) to 6 (not at all). These items, reverse coded to ensure a higher score indicated greater contact level, asked how often they have contact with people of German origin (a) within their own family and relations, (b) at their workplace (or at school, university), (c) in their neighborhood, and (d) in their circle of friends (Cronbach's alpha = 0.73).

Control variables

The following control variables were used. *Gender* was coded as (1) woman and (0) man. *Age* was measured in years. Since half of the respondents received their last educational degrees in either country of origin or Germany, *Education* was coded as (1) no degree, (2) primary/secondary, (3) high school, (4) student. *Employment* distinguishes who were (1) employed from those who were (0) in education and not working. *Generational status* was coded as (1) first-generation and (0) second-generation. *Marital status* was coded as (1) married and (0) non-married.

Macro-level variable

The region of origin was used as a random effect. As suggested by the principal investigators of the survey (Haug et al., 2009), the 49 countries of origin were categorized based on geographical and cultural criteria into eight regions (1) Southeast Europe, (2) Turkey, (3) Central Asia, (4) Iran, (5) Southeast Asia, (6) Middle East, (7) North Africa, and (8) other parts of Africa.

Analytic strategy

Eight mixed-effects logistic regression models were generated to assess the cumulative influence of control variables (Model 1 A Model 1 B), attachment with country of origin and Germany, and contact with people of German origin (Model 2 A and Model 2 B), types of religiosity (Model 3 A and Model 3 B), and the interaction terms between religiosity predictors and gender (Model 4 A and Model 4 B) on approval of their actual or imaginary son's and daughter's decision to marry a spouse from a different religious background. Descriptive statistics table is presented in Table 1. Table 2 displays the average marginal effects and standard errors from mixed-effects logistic regression models across eight models. The average marginal effects (AMEs) displayed quantify the mean shift in the probability of interfaith marriage approval for each predictor variable. A positive AME points to an increased probability of interfaith marriage approval for every unit rise in the variable in question, while a negative AME implies a reduced probability of interfaith marriage approval. All variance inflation factors (VIFs) were less than 10, with the largest VIF being 2.01 and average VIF being 1.38, which signifies a low risk of multicollinearity.

Results

Table 2 reports the results of eight models, each of which introduces region of origin-level random effects to correct for unobserved heterogeneity. We first establish a baseline for hypothesis testing, revealing the gendered patterns of interfaith marriage approval and the extent to which gender difference exists, after controlling for attachment, contact, and types of religiosity. Building on the baseline, we then test our specifications through mixed-effects logistic regression models. Models A were run for the attitudes toward interfaith marriages of sons, and Models B were run for daughters. The full models account for between 26.8 % and 31.6 % of the variance in attitudes toward interfaith marriages for sons and daughters, respectively.

While control and other predictor variables are not the primary focus of this study, we initially provide a summary of their effects prior to examining the impacts of gender and types of religiosity. The baseline models (Model 1 A and 1 B) illustrate that employment status, marital status, and age are significantly associated with the probability of approval of interfaith marriages for both sons and

Table 1
Descriptive statistics: proportions and means (standard deviations).

	All		Men (55 %)		Women (45 %)		*Univariate associations*[a]
Variable	*N*	*Mean (se)*	*N*	*Mean (se)*	*N*	*Mean (se)*	
Approval for interfaith marriage of sons	2408	0.81	1321	0.87	1087	0.75	$\chi^2 = 56.975$***
Approval for interfaith marriage of daughters	2379	0.64	1300	0.68	1079	0.59	$\chi^2 = 17.245$***
Age	2536	35.82 (13.22)	1383	37.92 (13.85)	1153	33.30 (11.96)	$t = 9.03$***
Married	2557	0.62	1396	0.62	1161	0.63	$\chi^2 = 15.94$
Having a son	2558	0.26	1397	0.24	1161	0.28	$\chi^2 = 5.81$*
Having a daughter	2558	0.23	1397	0.20	1161	0.27	$\chi^2 = 18.25$***
First-generation	2501	0.80	1392	0.84	1109	0.76	$\chi^2 = 25.03$***
Education							$\chi^2 = 278.33$***
No degree	524	.21	279	.20	245	.22	
Primary/Secondary	860	.34	413	.30	447	.39	
High school and higher	939	.38	612	.45	327	.29	
Student	180	.07	68	.05	112	.10	
Employed	2542	0.46	1385	0.60	1157	0.30	$\chi^2 = 217.3$***
Attachment to the country of origin	2524	3.61 (1.16)	1381	3.53 (1.16)	1143	3.71 (1.15)	$t = -3.84$***
Attachment to Germany	2527	3.96 (0.95)	1382	3.97 (0.94)	1145	3.94 (0.96)	$t = 0.75$
Total contact	2463	4.63 (1.26)	1358	4.78 (1.15)	1105	4.45 (1.36)	$t = 6.40$***
Subjective religiosity	2493	3.12 (0.77)	1350	3.03 (0.81)	1143	3.22 (0.72)	$t = -6.14$***
Individual religiosity	2518	4.32 (2.57)	1372	4.08 (2.57)	1146	4.61 (2.55)	$t = -5.17$***
Communal religiosity	2533	2.58 (1.77)	1380	2.78 (1.84)	1153	2.33 (1.66)	$t = 6.55$***
Country of origin							$\chi^2 = 99.65$***
Turkey	574	.24	231	.17	343	.32	
Southeast EU	235	.10	124	.09	111	.10	
Central Asia	19	.01	7	.01	12	.01	
Iran	138	.06	72	.05.	66	.06	
Southeast Asia	444	.18	276	.20	168	.16	
Middle East	502	.21	318	.23	184	.17	
North Africa	412	.17	258	.19	154	.15	
Other Africa	92	.04	68	.05	24	.02	

Note: [a]Group differences were determined using chi-square tests for categorical variables and t-tests for continuous variables. Significance levels are, respectively: * $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$; numbers in bold are statistically significant.

Table 2
Mixed-effects logistic regression models for interfaith marriage approval.

	Model 1 (A)	Model 2 (A)	Model 3 (A)	Model 4 (A)	Model 1 (B)	Model 2 (B)	Model 3 (B)	Model 4 (B)
Predictors	*AME (se)* **Son Approve**	*AME (se)* **Son Approve**	*AME (se)* **Son Approve**	*AME (se)* **Son Approve**	*AME (se)* **Daughter Approve**	*AME (se)* **Daughter Approve**	*AME (se)* **Daughter Approve**	*AME (se)* **Daughter Approve**
(Intercept)	**1.49*****	0.34	**2.17*****	**2.11****	0.35	−0.22	**2.12*****	**2.48*****
	(0.28)	(0.49)	(0.59)	(0.66)	(0.28)	(0.44)	(0.51)	(0.56)
Age	**0.02*****	**0.02*****	**0.02*****	**0.02*****	**0.02*****	**0.03*****	**0.03*****	**0.03*****
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Woman	**−0.54*****	**−0.46*****	**−0.50*****	−0.26	−0.15	−0.07	−0.18	−0.90
(ref. man)	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.14)	(0.68)	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.56)
Married	**−0.45****	**−0.41***	−0.23	−0.24	**−0.59*****	**−0.59*****	**−0.41****	**−0.42****
(ref. non-married)	(0.16)	**(0.18)**	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.13)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.15)
Having a son	0.29	0.28	0.29	0.30	0.09	0.05	0.07	0.09
	(0.17)	(0.18)	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.13)	(0.14)	(0.15)	(0.15)
Having a daughter	0.13	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.03	−0.05	−0.07	−0.06
	(0.16)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.14)	(0.15)	(0.16)	(0.16)
First-generation	−0.10	0.01	−0.02	−0.02	−0.26	−0.20	**−0.33***	**−0.33***
(ref. second-generation)	(0.17)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.14)	(0.15)	(0.16)	(0.16)
Education								
(ref. high school)								
Student	0.06	−0.09	0.02	−0.02	0.27	0.13	0.31	0.31
	(0.26)	(0.27)	(0.28)	(0.28)	(0.21)	(0.22)	(0.24)	(0.24)
No degree	**−0.54*****	**−0.72*****	**−0.69*****	**−0.70*****	0.04	−0.11	0.01	0.01
	(0.16)	(0.17)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.13)	(0.14)	(0.15)	(0.15)
Primary/Secondary	**−0.32***	**−0.42****	−0.32	−0.32	−0.05	−0.11	0.07	0.07
	(0.15)	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.14)
Employed	**0.48*****	**0.35***	0.21	0.20	**0.47*****	**0.42*****	**0.26***	**0.27***
(ref. non-employed)	(0.13)	(0.14)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.12)
Connected to country of origin		**−0.30*****	**−0.21*****	**−0.21*****		**−0.34*****	**−0.24*****	**−0.24*****
		(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)		(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Connected to Germany		**0.24*****	**0.24*****	**0.24*****		**0.24*****	**0.23*****	**0.24*****
		(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.07)		(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Total contact		**0.27*****	**0.27*****	**0.27*****		**0.19*****	**0.19*****	**0.19*****
		(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)		(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Subjective religiosity			**−0.47*****	**−0.51****			**−0.58*****	**−0.70*****
			(0.11)	(0.16)			(0.09)	(0.13)
Individual religiosity			**−0.08***	0.01			**−0.09*****	−0.02
			(0.03)	(0.05)			(0.03)	(0.04)
Communal religiosity			**−0.12****	**−0.18****			**−0.22*****	**−0.31*****
			(0.04)	(0.07)			(0.04)	(0.05)
Woman X Subjective religiosity				0.05				0.23
				(0.22)				(0.18)
Woman X Individual religiosity				**−0.13***				**−0.11***
				(0.07)				(0.05)
Woman X Communal religiosity				0.07				**0.19***
				(0.08)				(0.07)
Random Effects								
σ^2	3.29	3.29	3.29	3.29	3.29	3.29	3.29	3.29
τ_{00}	0.11 $_{country}$	0.13 $_{country}$	0.10 $_{country}$	0.09 $_{country}$	0.27 $_{country}$	0.34 $_{country}$	0.18 $_{country}$	0.19 $_{country}$
ICC (%)	3.29	3.79	2.93	2.69	7.69	9.48	5.01	5.33
N	8 $_{country}$	8 $_{country}$	8 $_{country}$	8 $_{country}$	8 $_{country}$	8 $_{country}$	8 $_{country}$	8 $_{country}$
Observations	2187	2066	1997	1997	2166	2046	1981	1981
Marginal R^2 / Conditional R^2	0.088 / 0.118	0.170 / 0.201	0.251 / 0.273	0.248 / 0.268	0.048 / 0.121	0.117 / 0.201	0.271 / 0.308	0.278 / 0.316
AIC	2003.8	1781.6	1672.7	1674.6	2714.2	2464.5	2185.8	2182.2
BIC	2072.1	1866.1	1773.5	1792.2	2782.3	2548.9	2286.5	2299.6
log-Likelihood	−989.9	−875.8	−818.4	−816.3	−1345.1	−1217.3	−1074.9	−1070.1

Note: Coefficient estimates are presented as average marginal effects (AME). Standard errors (se) are in parentheses. Significance levels: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

daughters. When dimensions of religiosity are incorporated into the models, first-generation Muslim immigrants appear less inclined to approve their daughters' interfaith marriages, while approval of sons' interfaith marriages appears to be uninfluenced by generational status. A lack of education or having only primary/secondary education is negatively associated with the probability of approving interfaith marriage for sons, but this pattern does not hold for daughters. This result, in itself, seems to favor the idea that the level of

education does not constitute a robust predictor of attitudes toward interfaith marriages for daughters, though it does for sons. Notably, having a son or a daughter is not associated with attitudes toward interfaith marriage either.

The descriptive statistics reveal that 81 % of Muslim migrants approve of interfaith marriages for sons, in contrast to a lesser 64 % for daughters. To determine the statistical significance of this observed discrepancy in approval rates, a chi-square test of independence was conducted. The analysis yielded a pronounced difference, χ^2 (1) = 834.46, $p < .001$, indicating that the approval rates for interfaith marriage of daughters are significantly lower than those for sons among Muslim migrants. This result provides empirical

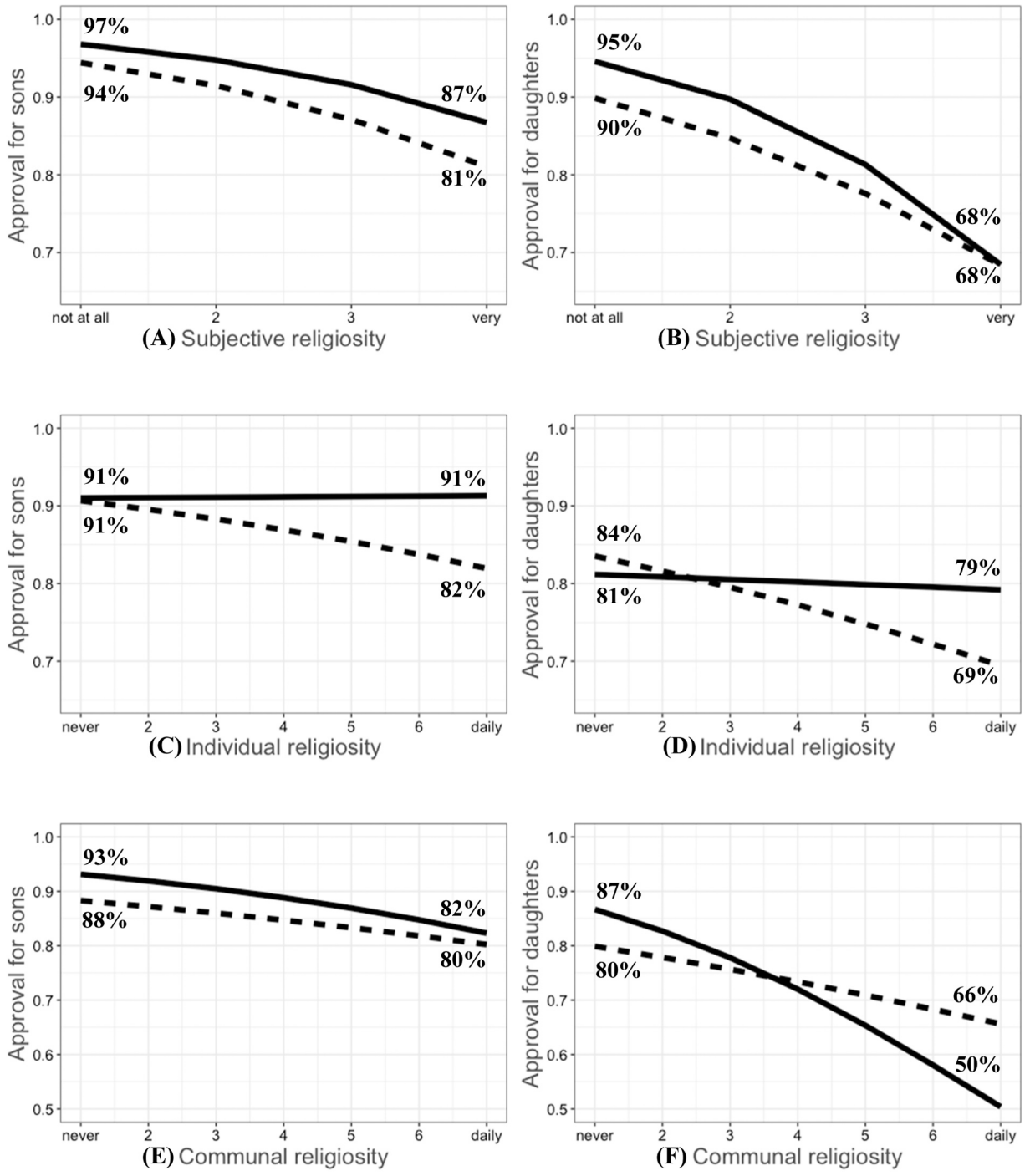


Fig. 1. Predicted Probabilities of interfaith marriage approval: two-way interaction effect. Note: Dashed lines (—) indicate women; solid lines (—) indicate men.

support for the Hypothesis 1, which posited that Muslim migrants show lower levels of approval for interfaith marriages involving their daughters compared to those involving their sons.

To investigate the degree to which Muslim women and men approve interfaith marriages for their sons and daughters, we tested our second hypothesis, proposing that Muslim migrant women show lower levels of approval for interfaith marriages involving their children compared to Muslim migrant men. Upon comparing the results across various models and controlling for other variables, we found that women's and men's attitudes toward interfaith marriage for daughters were broadly similar. However, for interfaith marriages involving sons, women were consistently less likely to approve compared to men, with reduced probabilities of 54 %, 46 %, 50 %, and 26 % in the respective models. Thus, the results offer partial support for the Hypothesis 2.

To assess whether interfaith marriage approval persists after controlling for attachment and contact, we now turn to Model 2, which introduced attachment to country of origin and Germany, and total contact level with people of German origin. The added variables are all strongly significant in all models. Attachment to one's country of origin notably affects approval for interfaith marriage, reducing the probability of approval by 30 % for sons (Model 2 A) and 34 % for daughters (Model 2 B). Conversely, a strong attachment to Germany heightens the likelihood of approving interfaith marriage, increasing it by 24 % across all models. This observation aligns with a previous study that found increased attachment to the host country correlated with a greater acceptance of intimate interfaith relationships among Muslim youth in Canada (Cila & Lalonde, 2014). Interestingly, when dimensions of religiosity are added in subsequent models, attachment to the country of origin continue to depress the likelihood of approval. In contrast, the probability of attachment to Germany remains consistent, suggesting that religiosity is not associated with the effect of attachment to Germany on interfaith marriage approval, unlike attachment to the country of origin. Considering the intergroup contact theory (Allport, 1954), which predicts a favorable change in attitude when an individual has personal contact with members of outgroup, the results suggest that increased contact with individuals of German origin could indeed lead to a higher likelihood of approving interfaith marriage for both sons and daughters. Specifically, a one-unit increase in total contact with individuals of German origin is associated with an increase in the probability of approving interfaith marriage by 27 % for sons and 19 % for daughters, across all models.

Turning to Models 3 A and 3 B, and considering dimensions of religiosity, several other key insights regarding interfaith marriage attitudes emerge. All forms of religiosity—subjective, individual, and communal—decrease the likelihood of approving interfaith marriages for children. The size of the AMEs indicates that subjective religiosity has a more substantial impact on the approval of interfaith marriages than communal and individual religiosity, respectively, for both sons and daughters. These findings lend support to Hypothesis 3, which contends that each type of religiosity is negatively associated with the approval of interfaith marriage.

To test for gender variations in the influence of religiosity dimensions, we incorporated interaction terms into the final model: "*gender*×*subjective religiosity*," "*gender*×*individual religiosity*," and "*gender*×*communal religiosity*." The results, as disclosed in Model 4 A and 4 B, brought forth several intriguing findings. The interaction between subjective religiosity and gender failed to achieve statistical significance, implying that the negative effect of subjective religiosity on interfaith marriage approval does not appreciably differ between women and men. In other words, as suggested in Hypothesis 4a, subjective religiosity is associated with more or less similar interfaith marriage attitudes toward both daughters and sons for both women and men. On the other hand, the "*gender*×*individual religiosity*" term, which pointed in a significantly negative direction, suggests that the impact of individual religiosity is more potent for women, pertaining to both sons and daughters. This result offers partial support for Hypothesis 4b, as we only expected a difference for daughters. When it comes to the "*gender*×*communal religiosity*" term, the picture gets even more complicated. The influence of communal religiosity is more pronounced for men concerning daughters, but not for sons, which confirmed Hypothesis 4c. The presence of statistically significant AMEs for both the primary effect and the interaction term suggests the existence of a curvilinear relationship.

To better illustrate the separate religiosity effects for men (represented by solid lines) and women (depicted by dashed lines), we calculated the predicted probabilities of interfaith marriage approval for each religiosity dimension and response category, keeping all variables constant at their respective means (see Fig. 1). Despite some interactions exhibiting statistically insignificant slopes, the observed values exhibit interesting general trends.

Observing the Fig. 1A and B, we see that women exhibit a parallel decline in approval of interfaith marriage for both sons and daughters as their subjective religiosity strengthens. The likelihoods of approving interfaith marriage plunge from 94 % to 81 % for sons and from 90 % to 68 % for daughters as they shift from not being religious at all to identifying as very religious. Men, maintaining a consistent 6 % higher likelihood of approving interfaith marriage for their sons compared to women, nonetheless coincide with women's approval rates for daughters' interfaith marriage when they identify as very religious. In short, Muslim women and men who identify as very religious exhibit similar attitudes toward interfaith marriages for daughters.

Moving on to Fig. 1C and D, we observe that individual religiosity does not significantly influence men's attitudes toward interfaith marriages for either sons or daughters. Conversely, the likelihood of approving interfaith marriages significantly decreases as women's frequency of prayer increases from never to daily, with approval rates dropping from 91 % to 82 % for sons ($p < 0.05$) and from 84 % to 69 % for daughters ($p < 0.05$). Notably, at the point of daily prayer, the predicted probability difference between women and men expands to 10 % for both son and daughter interfaith marriage approval. This shift is noteworthy given the negligible initial difference when prayer is absent. These results imply that the gendered effects of individual religiosity are more prominent in women than in men.

Fig. 1E and F demonstrate that men are 5 % to 2 % more likely to approve interfaith marriages for sons across different categories of communal religiosity ($p > 0.05$). However, this trend alters when we consider the predicted probabilities of communal religiosity for daughters. Although men initially display higher likelihoods of approving daughters' interfaith marriages at response levels of attending religious events ranging from "never to a few times a year" to "once a month," an increase in attendance frequency corresponds with a dramatic decline in approval rates ($p < 0.01$). To such an extent that the probability for men becomes 16 % less than

that for women in the category of "daily" attending religious events.

Discussion

Established in the literature is the adverse effect of religiosity in interfaith marriage approval. The specific impact of different dimensions of religiosity—subjective, individual, and communal—on the approval of interfaith marriages remains unclear, particularly in terms of how these attitudes fluctuate depending on the gender of the parents and that of their actual or imaginary children. It is important to acknowledge that, like any religion-based group, Muslims do not possess a monolithic theological understanding or uniform practices relating to interfaith marriage (Becker, 2022). With this in mind, a few generalizable patterns remain.

Muslim migrants are less inclined to approve of their daughters' potential interfaith marriages compared to their sons'. This finding aligns with prior studies which highlight gender-based disparities in norms and expectations pertaining to intimate relationships among Muslims (Giuliani et al., 2017; Hanassab, 1998; Hanassab & Tidwell, 1998; Klaartje Van et al., 2014; Mohammad, 1999; Pepicelli, 2017; Van Niekerk & Verkuyten, 2018; Yahya et al., 2016). In terms of partner selection, Muslim women's contemplation of interfaith relationships frequently centers around narratives of "impossibility" and "unacceptability," as well as parental expectations and restrictions—a dynamic less prevalent among Muslim men (Hanassab & Tidwell, 1998; Klaartje Van et al., 2014). Connectedly, while Muslim women and men hold similar negative views on interfaith marriage for daughters, Muslim women are more likely than Muslim men to oppose interfaith marriages for sons. We will explore this pattern in more detail shortly, as it relates to a specific form of religiosity.

Next, we observed that all dimensions of religiosity—subjective, individual, and communal, ranked by the size of their effects—contribute to a lower probability of approval for interfaith marriages of children among both Muslim women and men, and this holds true for both sons and daughters. These relatively predictable outcomes, while consistent with previous research (Carol, 2013, 2016a; Cila & Lalonde, 2014; De Valk & Liefbroer, 2007; Haji et al., 2022; Huschek et al., 2012; Sherkat, 2004; Van Niekerk & Verkuyten, 2018), are complicated by the subsequent inquiries: What type of religiosity, whose religiosity, and for which children's (son or daughter) interfaith marriage has more pronounced effect? These questions were addressed through interaction terms between the gender of the respondents and the specific religiosity type, utilizing the theoretical constructs of religious gender gap. Below, the emerging patterns are explored in detail.

We found that subjective religiosity exerts a more pronounced influence on the approval of interfaith marriages compared to communal and individual religiosity, respectively. Subjective religiosity, measuring individuals' perception of their own religiosity, does not seem to serve as a differentiating factor between women and men, nor does it distinguish attitudes toward interfaith marriage for either daughters or sons. Empirically speaking, this can be attributed to the trend where both Muslim women and men have reported similar (and quite high; see Table 1) levels of subjective religiosity, aligning with research that examines Turkish migrants across nine European countries (Guveli et al., 2016). Subjective religiosity is the only religiosity type that the gender gap in religiousness does not translate into gender differences in attitudes toward interfaith marriage. Why does this observation specifically apply to subjective religiosity, as opposed to other types of religiosity? While the data do not offer conclusive insights, we interpret this pattern as indicative of subjective religiosity's role in boundary-making, functioning as a symbolic marker of identity in the migration context that appears to transcend gender differences. It is likely that high subjective religiosity serves a more symbolic role, reflecting an ethno-religious identity that arises in response to material insecurity, discrimination, and transnational connections (Drouhot, 2021).

When the individual religiosity is considered, the approval rate among Muslim men remains almost unchanged across the spectrum from the lowest to the highest levels of individual religiosity, whereas the approval of interfaith marriage among Muslim women decreases for both sons and daughters. The association between individual religiosity and Muslim women's interfaith marriage approval decline could be partly attributed to the prominent role Muslim women are perceived to play in maintaining religious and cultural continuity, often characterized as the "custodians of tradition" (Giuliani et al., 2017). A child-in-law from a different religious background may be seen as a threat to family's cohesion, group identity, and the transmission of cultural and religious heritage (Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008). Going one step further to explain, interfaith marriage practice may invalidate grandparental goals regarding the questions of to what extent a foreign child-in-law would follow the family's cultural and religious footsteps and to what extent Muslim grandparents would involve in their grandchildren's upbringing and cultural training (Tezcan, 2021). How can we then explain Muslim women's heightened disapproval of sons' interfaith marriages? This could arguably be rooted in informal expectations regarding future eldercare, including the preservation of traditions and arrangements for care. According to multiple studies, children's spouses are actively involved in providing informal eldercare (Henz, 2009; Szinovacz & Davey, 2008). Additionally, the quality of care and assistance is determined by the quality of the relationship between children-in-law and parents-in-law (Peters-Davis et al., 1999). Notably, daughters-in-law contribute more hours of care than sons-in-law (Henz, 2009). Given that women often continue to serve as key figures in family dynamics, as kin keepers and preservers of traditions, mothers-in-law traditionally anticipate their daughters-in-law to take on the primary caregiving role (Santos & Levitt, 2007). This expectation, however, might not be fulfilled when the daughter-in-law comes from a different religious background.

Finally, the findings indicate that as communal religiosity strengthens, Muslim men are more likely to disapprove daughters' interfaith marriages compared to Muslim women. The unique nature of communal religiosity as a form of "social gathering" and "collective religious practice" highlights its role as a powerful socializing institution in shaping interfaith marriage attitudes. For Muslim men in particular, communal religiosity serves as a mechanism for socialization and religious values transmission (Hassan, 2007), is associated with more traditional attitudes (Röder, 2014) and more conservative gender role orientations (Diehl et al., 2009; Lewis & Kashyap, 2013). Why do we observe this pattern for daughters but not sons? Speculatively, Muslim women who marry

non-Muslim men are often viewed as lost to both their patrilineal family and Islam, as their children are expected to adopt the father's religion, unlike Muslim men who marry non-Muslim women, whose children are still expected to be Muslim (Lucassen & Laarman, 2009). All in all, this finding emphasizes the distinct impact of communal religiosity on Muslim migrant men's attitudes toward interfaith marriage of daughters, a pattern not observed for sons and absent in the effects of subjective and individual religiosity.

Theoretical implications and conclusion

Here, we would like to discuss several considerations that help substantiate our results and draw our conclusions. The primary dynamics of group boundary formation in European societies, both historically and in contemporary settings, have centered on distinctions between Muslims and non-Muslims (Song, 2009). Although Muslim communities have been present in Europe for centuries, the distinctive feature of contemporary Europe in terms of attitudes toward out-groups originates from the establishment of Muslim communities through migration (Nielsen, 1999), which simultaneously actives both the anti-migrant and anti-Muslim sentiments (Martinovic & Verkuyten, 2012). Given the context of widespread stigmatization and discrimination against Muslims in the Western world due to their ethno-religious identities (Kunst et al., 2013) and considering religion's role both as a buffer against discrimination (Ebaugh, 2003; Maes et al., 2014; Shah, 2019) and a means to maintain group boundaries (Güngör et al., 2011), the preference for religious endogamy in marriage is not overly surprising. This pattern can be conceptualized within the framework of uncertainty reduction theory (Berger, 1986), which suggests that individuals—and by extension, their families—seek to minimize future uncertainties in relationships. Interfaith marriages introduce inherent uncertainties due to potential differences in beliefs, traditions, and expectations, and disapproval of such unions may serve as a strategy to reduce this uncertainty by promoting homogeneity in significant relationships like marriage.

Migrant religion has been seen as the marker of a fundamental social divide in Western Europe, resulting in heightened tensions that revolve around the integration of primarily Muslim communities into predominantly Christian or secular societies (Foner & Alba, 2008). This Muslim versus non-Muslim divide also contributes to segregating dynamics (Drouhot & Nee, 2019). This context sets the stage for further consideration of how religiosity intersects with migrant identity. The theologizing hypothesis posits that migration, as an experience marked by challenges and insecurities, heightens migrants' religiosity (Smith, 1978). Several research found evidence that increased awareness of religious identity in settlement countries is attributed to religion offering resources for meaning-making (Hagan & Ebaugh, 2003; Hirschman, 2004; Maliepaard & Schacht, 2018; Van Tubergen & Sindradóttir, 2011; Yang & Ebaugh, 2001). Supporting the theologizing hypothesis, a study on recently arrived Turkish migrants in Germany reveals that, two years post-resettlement, they exhibit increased religiosity (Tezcan, Gedik, et al., 2023). Thus, the unique influences of various dimensions of religiosity on reducing approval of interfaith marriages, which differ between parents and for daughters versus sons, may not solely be attributed to religious identity but also to migrant identity, which could reinforce the former.

A caveat that must be considered to avoid the discourse that finds regular expression in Western societies that religious endogamy in marriage is Muslim migrants' preference is that the other way around may also be the case. As for the parents on the "other side," the fear of their child turning to Islam and the worries of wellbeing of their child in the hands of a different religio-culture constitute the other side of the coin. It was reported that Ethnic Dutch parents often feel threatened by the prospect of "losing" their son or daughter to a partner from Turkey or Morocco (Sterckx, 2015). Thus, negative attitudes toward interfaith marriages could be indicative of some Muslim migrants' apprehension that their children may not be perceived as "marriageable candidates" by others. Therefore, these attitudes may not solely originate from the belief system of the attitude holder but may also take mainstream viewpoints into account. Briefly, attitudes are shaped by a two-sided process that involves not only Muslims but also non-Muslims. The pervasive narrative suggesting that Muslim migrants are not "integrating sufficiently" and are instead "protecting their in-group boundaries" through religious endogamy, consequently, generates a convenient trap to fall in.

The results presented here bridge the literatures of interfaith marriage and religiosity by highlighting the distinctive effects that the types of religiosity and gender of the parents and children have on interfaith marriage attitudes. To date, intermarriage scholarship has predominantly concentrated on the principles of homophily, examining the ways in which the unequal distribution of economic and social resources is often perpetuated along racial or ethnic lines, with some exploration into the roles of religiosity and gender. Our findings add to this discourse by introducing a less frequently examined perspective, indicating that attitudes toward interfaith marriage can indeed vary along gender lines but with differing levels of different types of religiosity. This becomes particularly important considering the widespread inclination to perceive Muslim migrants as uniformly religious, thereby overlooking the subtle differences in levels and types of religiosity. In conclusion, this study establishes a framework to demonstrate that interfaith marriage attitudes are *gendered*, manifesting in the differential standards applied to daughters versus sons, and further *gendered* by the distinct standards employed by mothers and fathers, each influenced by varying levels of different types of religiosity.

Limitations and future directions

This study should be interpreted in view of a few limitations. A notable limitation pertains to the issue of causality. Given that this research is based on cross-sectional data, the capacity to establish causal relationships is limited. While the models employed provide valuable insights, the causal assumptions underlying these models can only be grounded in theoretical frameworks and findings from previous research. Consequently, the validity of the causal directions suggested remains tentative and requires further substantiation with longitudinal studies.

Furthermore, the reliance on data collected in 2008 (and became available in 2014) needs to be emphasized. The utilization of the "Muslim Life in Germany" survey data is justified by its unique characteristics. To our knowledge, this dataset represents the only

known comprehensive source that specifically focuses on Muslim migrants while addressing their attitudes toward interfaith marriages for both sons and daughters, and simultaneously differentiates between subjective, individual, and communal religiosity. The use of such data, while seemingly outdated, offers significant value to our understanding as a historical snapshot. Nevertheless, its relevance may be limited given the continuous societal challenges, such as the rise of right-wing populism and anti-immigrant sentiment in Germany. Consequently, this research aimed to establish a baseline for future scholars to compare and contrast with evolving attitudes in similar studies.

Additionally, employing single-item indicators for measuring complex constructs like intermarriage attitudes also poses a limitation. Single-item indicators may not accurately reflect the depth of individual attitudes, potentially missing variations in attitudes influenced by cultural, religious, or personal factors. Furthermore, it risks reducing the reliability and validity of the findings, as single-item indicators are more susceptible to random errors and less capable of capturing complex emotional and cognitive processes compared to multi-item scales. Future survey designers may use a variety of measures for attitudes toward interfaith marriage. Similarly, religiosity was assessed using three separate items: subjective, individual, and communal religiosity. On one hand, our data confirms Guveli's (2015) assertion: in the presence of distinct underlying mechanisms of each type of religiosity, they cannot be combined into a single scale. Creating a composite measure from these three items blurred the significant distinctions between the high levels of communal religiosity observed among Muslim men and the high levels of individual religiosity observed among Muslim women, resulting in nearly identical levels of religiosity, which justifies distinguishing between separate items, not only theoretically but also empirically. On the other hand, although these indicators provide some level of insight, they may fall short in capturing the nature of religiosity comprehensively. Future survey designers could implement a more extensive array of items, each covering different aspects of religiosity, to provide a more accurate representation.

Conflict of interest

None.

Statement on replication

The replication code for this publication is available on the Harvard DataVerse repository at https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/VDYWLY.

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Tolga Tezcan: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Software, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization.

Data availability statement

The data is accessible by request in the GESIS Data Archive at https://doi.org/10.4232/1.12023, with the reference number ZA5244.

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