

The Impact of Right-wing Politics on Public Policy in the Netherlands.

A Study Exploring the Expected Policy Implications of Muslim Dutch Citizens After the Victory of the Party for Freedom (PVV).

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Abstract

The outcome of the 2023 general election in the Netherlands indicated a shift towards right-wing politics. The Party for Freedom (PVV), led by far-right politician Geert Wilders, rose to victory, introducing a right-wing government. Wilders is renowned for his anti-Islam stance and extreme regulatory policy objectives aimed at restricting Islam in the Netherlands. Although Wilders has taken a more relaxed stance regarding religious bans following the PVV's triumph, news outlets largely reported concern among Muslim Dutch citizens. This paper investigates whether and how social identity impacts the expected policy implications of Muslim Dutch citizens. Additionally, this study examines whether social position and political representation are expected to be impacted. Through qualitative research, findings of 20 semi-structured interviews indicate varying expectations, yet most respondents who expect negative policy implications as well as consequences on their social positions and political representation, strongly identify as Muslim. In the case of regulatory policy implementation, several respondents intend to leave the Netherlands to preserve their religious freedom. Nevertheless, for some of those that strongly identify as Muslim, trust in the Dutch constitution and other political parties remains high. Besides policy changes, the respondents furthermore expect an increase in discrimination and intolerance, facilitated by the PVV's victory.

Key words: social identity theory, Muslim Dutch, social position, political representation.

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1. Introduction

“Islam is a religion, an ideology that does not belong to the Netherlands and certainly cannot become part of our tradition. Islam is a violent ideology, like communism and fascism. Islam wants to dominate, subject, kill, and fight a war. According to the PVV, the increasing Islamization has to be stopped”.

Geert Wilders (2007)

The above quote was part of Geert Wilders’, leader of the Party of Freedom (PVV), arguments in a parliamentary debate concerning Islamic activism (Verkuyten, 2011). This debate echoed the radical right anti-Islam stance of the PVV and its exclusion of Muslim Dutch citizens from Dutch society. In 2023, the PVV won the general election, generating uncertainty among the public on how the Netherlands will operate under a radical right-wing government (NOS, 2023b).

1.1 Historical background

The arrival of Muslims in the Netherlands can be traced to the recruitment of labour migrants from Morocco and Türkiye after the destruction of infrastructure post-World War II in the early 1960s (Doomernik, 2017). Under family reunification programs, the number of Muslims continued to increase. Before the arrival of labour migrants, the first mosque in the Netherlands was established in 1955, by the Pakistani community in The Hague (NOS, 2015), currently counting between 450 to 500 mosques across the country (Huijnk et al., 2022). The first Islamic school was established in 1971, possible under the Dutch pillarization system, which encouraged religious institutions to preserve the identity of labour migrants (Entzinger, 2006). Today, approximately 50 Islamic schools operate in the Netherlands (DUO, 2024), and approximately 5.6% of the population identifies as Muslim (Schmeets & Houben, 2023), which constitutes roughly one million individuals (Huijnk et al., 2022).

However, Muslims have not always been well-received by Dutch society. In the early 1990s, after the outbreak of the Gulf War, numerous mosques in several cities became targets of vandalism, bomb threats, and arson (Butter, 2021). In the early 2000s, post-9/11, hate

crimes targeting the Muslim population and mosques escalated (Butter, 2021). Meanwhile, political parties remained fixated on mosques as a potential source of radicalization rather than targets of violence. Both left- and right-wing political parties expressed fears over a potential growth of radicalization among the youth, allegedly supported by mosques and religious figures (Entzinger, 2013). Right-wing populist politicians such as Pim Fortuyn further highlighted the perceived dangers of Islam (Entzinger, 2006), emphasizing the necessity of strict, regulatory policies as Islamic values could not be tolerated nor accepted in Western society (Siebers, 2010). After 2010, accompanied by the rise of the PVV, islamophobia frequently rose on the agenda.

1.2 Right-wing categorization

At the core of right-wing ideology, is the clash of identities which generates the perceived threat of a population and their categorization as the ‘out-group’ (Cohrs & Asbrock, 2008). This leads to policies which protect the interests of some (in-group) while excluding the preferences of others (out-group) (Bartha et al., 2020). The in-group can be defined as a community with a shared identity, such as country of origin, marking their membership (Gonzalez et al., 2008). Muslim Dutch citizens are defined as Dutch nationals who self-identify as Muslims. However, although they possess a Dutch nationality, and therefore belong to the Dutch in-group due to shared Dutch identity, the radical-right portrayal of the Muslim aspect of their identity as threatening leads to the out-group categorization.

According to right-wing ideology, the Muslim identity, often visible through outward appearance i.e. head covering, deviates from the ethnic Dutch standards, norms, and values (Verkuyten, 2011). As such, the PVV has continuously advanced a radical right-wing narrative, aiming to “de-Islamize” the Netherlands and make it “ours again”, highlighting nativist traits which shape their policy objectives (Kaya & Tecmen, 2019). With such statements, Wilders alienates Muslim Dutch citizens by emphasizing a clear distinction between the ethnic population as deserving, and Muslims as “the root of all evil” (Siebers, 2010). Through this differentiation, Wilders presents an “us vs. them” framework (Doomernik, 2017). Such social categorization excludes Muslim Dutch citizens from their Dutch identity, while demonizing their Muslim identity as a threat to state security (Hajer & Versteeg, 2009), justifying intolerance while encouraging in-group favoritism and out-group rejection (Perdue et al., 1990). Following the negative representation, regulatory anti-Islam policy objectives, i.e. banning mosques, are rationalized by the PVV.

This poses consequences for Muslim Dutch citizens as they hold both a Muslim and Dutch identity. Muslim Dutch citizens tend to identify as Dutch predominantly due to their upbringing and future plans in the Netherlands (Fleischmann & Verkuyten, 2021). However, according to Saleem and Ramasubramanian (2017), awareness of stereotypes threatens one's identity. Thus, the negative portrayal of Muslim Dutch citizens may lead to disengagement with their Dutch identity and avoidance of interaction with the PVV's narrative, while interacting more closely with their Muslim identity. However, it is important to note that identity is not a fixed concept, as it is subject to change depending on various conditions, such as societal and cultural influences, geographic location, social interactions, and media portrayal (Vural and Rustemli, 2006). The label "Muslim Dutch" has been carefully selected to remove the emphasis on the Muslim identity being at the core. Rather than using the more common label "Dutch Muslim", the former focuses on Muslim Dutch citizens primarily being Dutch, while also identifying as Muslim.

1.3 Consequences for social position and political representation

The PVV's election manifesto (2023) is clear in its aim for regulatory policies, notably, striving to ban mosques, Islamic schools, the Quran, and Islamic head covering (PVV, 2023). Implementing such policies would categorize Muslim Dutch citizens as deviants within society, punished by restrictive and coercive policymaking (Schneider & Ingram, 1993). Consequently, the social positions of Muslim Dutch citizens would be influenced. For this study, Farkas' (2022, p. 424) definition will be utilized as the "position of the given individual (or group) in the system of social relations". For this research, social position will refer to one's professional life (i.e. career) and private life (i.e. activities outside of professional life), as they are prevalent domains within the operationalization of social position (Farkas, 2022). The PVV's abovementioned policy objectives could hamper both. For example, banning Islamic head covering could act as an exclusionary measure for Muslim Dutch women within education and the workplace, potentially jeopardizing their religious freedom.

Furthermore, such regulatory policy objectives raise questions concerning the political representation of Muslim Dutch citizens. Following the exclusionary discourse, Muslim Dutch citizens are transformed into a policy problem to be solved and controlled, rather than encouraging dialogue or adequate representation to form inclusive policies (Green, 2012). Political representation is crucial for Muslim Dutch citizens to have their interests represented

through elected representatives (Verna, 2019). The consequences the right-wing victory poses on the political representation of Muslim Dutch citizens is uncertain, yet adequate political representation of Muslim Dutch citizens would play a significant role in avoiding unfavorable policy outcomes.

1.4 Research aim

According to the PVV's election manifesto, "Islam does not belong in the Netherlands" (PVV, 2021, p. 4). This calls into question where Muslim Dutch citizens belong, how they will be represented in the right-wing government, and how the PVV aims to achieve its policy objectives. This research addresses the gap in academic literature concerning the expected real-life consequences of right-wing policy. Although studies on right-wing media and discourse widely exist (Doomernik, 2017; Hajer & Versteeg, 2009; Kaltwasser, 2012; Mudde, 2004), its perceived policy implications, especially concerning Muslim Dutch citizens, is scarce (Bartha et al., 2020). Thus, this paper aims to assess the expected policy implications of Muslim Dutch citizens by answering the following research question: **Which policy implications do Muslim Dutch citizens expect after the victory of the Party for Freedom (PVV)?** In answering the research question, the following sub-questions will be explored:

- (1) How does the (religious and national) social identity of Muslim Dutch citizens influence their expectations of the public policy implications?
- (2) Which influences do Muslim Dutch citizens assume the victory to have on their social positions?
- (3) According to Muslim Dutch citizens, what are the expected consequences on political representation following the PVV's victory?

1.5 Relevance

1.5.1 Academic, societal, and public management relevance

A wide range of research papers that explore the concepts of social identity and the negative consequences of right-wing politics on minority groups exist (Abbink & Harris, 2019; Abdelkader, 2017; Bernard & Whitley, 1999). However, these are often quantitative studies,

where the minority group's voice is absent. Additionally, studies have explored religious social identity (Bloom et al., 2015; Ysseldyk et al., 2010), but the role of religion as part of one's social identity as well as the response to the negative stereotyping thereof is understudied, yet of utmost relevance in the context of the right-wing government in the Netherlands due to the PVV's incompatibility narrative.

From a societal lens, exploring real-life stories may foster a more nuanced understanding among the public of how Muslim Dutch citizens expect to experience the consequences of right-wing dominance. By provoking stereotypes and preconceived notions often instigated by right-wing parties, this research may encourage dialogue. Thus, switching the narrative by giving Muslim Dutch citizens a voice which is often underrepresented (Huijnk 2018), may challenge public opinion frequently confronted with the unfavorable portrayal of Muslim Dutch citizens.

From a public management perspective, addressing the underlying expectations of Muslim Dutch citizens may aid in informing policymakers of the importance of inclusive policies and the consequences of exclusion, hate speech and right-wing categorization. By exploring the specific context of Muslim Dutch citizens' policy expectations, policymakers may be more informed of the direct consequences certain regulatory policies may have on Muslim Dutch citizens and the importance of a representative bureaucracy for policy outputs.

The following chapter will delve into various theories to conceptualize the research problem. Subsequently, hypotheses will be presented alongside a conceptual model. Following that, the research design and methods will be elucidated, and the research variables will be operationalized followed by the results and analysis chapter. Finally, the conclusion will offer a summary of the research, accompanied by recommendations.

2. Theoretical framework

Following the introduction, an overview of theories will be presented alongside the hypotheses and a conceptual model. First, the social identity theory (SIT) will be explored to demonstrate how religious and national self-identification may contribute to the expected effects on one's social position. As a sub-theory to SIT, the group-threat theory will be conceptualized to explain the dynamics between in- and out-group categorization in a right-wing context. Lastly, political representation will be applied to explore the consequences of the radical right-wing victory.

2.1 Social identity theory and social position

As the overarching theory in this study, understanding SIT is crucial in examining the differences in expected policy implications among Muslim Dutch citizens. As a social psychological concept, the SIT asserts that individuals form part of their identity based on subscription to certain social groups (Turner et al., 1979). This occurs through three different stages: (1) social categorization; assigning oneself and/or others to certain social groups, (2) social identification; becoming a member of that group due to shared characteristics, norms and values, and (3) social comparison; comparing one's group to others, which often leads to in-group favoritism and out-group categorization of groups that are considered to be rivals or threats (Turner et al., 1979).

In a religious context, Fleischmann & Verkuyten (2021, p. 165) define SIT as the depersonalization of identity, emphasizing self-categorization based on “group-based characteristics and attributes”. Therefore, embracing a Muslim identity is accompanied by different world views, moral compass and way of life (Fleischmann & Verkuyten, 2021). Since Muslim identities differ, as some Muslims commit more strictly to certain obligations (i.e. prayer) than others, Muslim Dutch citizens cannot be considered a homogeneous group (Fleischmann & Verkuyten, 2021). According to SIT, the in-group homogeneity effect indicates that members of the in-group often perceive out-group members as less diverse (Simon & Pettigrew, 1990).

As per the second stage of SIT, social identification, levels of national (Dutch) identification also differ across Muslim Dutch citizens. Fleischmann & Verkuyten (2021) discovered an inverse relationship, as the lower the national (Dutch) identification among Muslim Dutch citizens, the stronger the religious (Muslim) identification. This indicates that

where some Muslim Dutch citizens may experience a clash with their religious and national identity, others may equally identify as both. Thus, identification seems to be context-dependent, influenced by various factors. Fleischmann & Verkuyten (2016) describe this as possessing a dual identity, or the ability to identify as multiple social identities. To carry a dual identity, Fleischmann & Verkuyten (2016) argue that it is not necessary to equally identify as both. Even when one identity takes precedence over the other, self-identification with the group suffices to classify as having a dual identity.

The third stage of SIT is social comparison. Here, individuals from one group, compare themselves to those in other groups (Turner et al., 1979). Through this comparison, the us (in-group) and them (out-group) distinction is established. As briefly explained, Wilders tends to frame the Muslim identity as conflicting with the Dutch identity, frequently describing Islam as a “backwards culture”, yet Dutch culture as “advanced” (Verkuyten, 2011, p.351). Thus, Wilders frames an “us vs. them” hierarchical relationship between the ethnic Dutch in-group and the perceived threatening Muslim out-group, which he justifies by arguing that threats require self-defense. (Verkuyten, 2011). In this case, the notion of self-defense would occur in the form of regulatory policy. Such regulatory policies, such as banning mosques and visible religious symbols, would generate negative consequences by impacting the social positions of Muslim Dutch citizens. For example, if pursuing a career is met with a ban on visible religiosity, such as a head covering ban, Muslim Dutch citizens would be compelled to choose between their Dutch and Muslim identity as their dual identity is deemed incompatible by right-wing ideology, generating a potential identity crisis.

Bernard & Whitley (1999) argue that stereotypes and categorization frequently legitimize myths, used to justify negative sentiments and support for regulatory policies towards the out-group. Thus, the narrative of Muslims as a threat to state security due to inherent violence emphasized by the PVV, legitimizes the policy implications Muslim Dutch citizens would face. The PVV’s nativist election manifesto slogan of “the Dutch back in first place” highlights the prioritization of the Dutch identity and the necessity to maintain dominance, while diminishing the opportunity for the ‘lesser’ out-group to benefit from resources the PVV aims to provide through policy (Bernard & Whitley, 1999). Thus, legitimizing myths, i.e. the “fascist” Quran being comparable to Adolf Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* (Kaya & Tecmen, 2019), are used to construct policies which should logically follow from the portrayed threat, as the “Muslim” identity of Muslim Dutch citizens prevails.

As briefly mentioned, regulatory policy objectives would pose a threat to the social positions of Muslim Dutch citizens, as such policy may lead to restrictions in professional and private domains. The victory of the PVV resulted in mixed reactions among Muslim Dutch citizens, which may be impacted by social identity. When Wilders refers to the ethnic Dutch population as ‘us’, some Muslim Dutch citizens may identify as part of the Dutch in-group, yet others may identify more strongly with their religious identity. Therefore, since national and religious identification co-exist among some, yet clash among others:

H1: The higher the religious identification among Muslim Dutch citizens, the more they will expect a negative impact on their social positions through regulatory policy.

H2: The higher the national identification among Muslim Dutch citizens, the less they will expect a negative impact on their social positions through regulatory policy.

2.1.1 Group-threat theory

To explain why Muslim Dutch citizens are targeted by the PVV and how this could impact policy expectations, the group-threat theory will be conceptualized as a sub-theory to SIT. As a sociological concept, the group-threat theory follows from the rivalry, or social comparison, which occurs after identifying with a certain group. In-group favoritism, or bias in favor of one’s group, leads to an inclination to develop negative sentiments and/or a perceived threat towards the out-group (Turner et al., 1979). Thus, the social comparison between groups which occurs within SIT is an explanatory factor for the group-threat theory. According to King (2007, p. 1255), “group-threat theory posits that prejudice and inter-group hostility are largely reactions to a perceived threat by subordinate groups”. To counter the perceived threat, the in-group considers social control, through regulatory policies, as necessary (King, 2007). Comparably, Gonzalez et al. (2008) express that the symbolic threat, as conveyed by the PVV, leads to the categorization of Muslim Dutch citizens by the in-group as violent. Gonzalez et al. (2008) discovered a positive association between in-group identification and symbolic threat, highlighting that the negative attitudes towards Muslim Dutch citizens and support for social control are related to in-group nativism and favoritism. This can also be explained through Chiricos et al.’s (2020, p. 167) notion of threat-oriented ideology, which is the negative categorization of minority groups leading to the justification of “violent or

extreme forms of social control”. Such ideology exists to protect the in-group’s interests and eradicate threats by imposing social control to restrict what jeopardizes the in-group through policy measures. Chiricos et al. (2020) further argue that the larger in size and the more visible, the greater the perceived threat. Consequently, the perceived threat leads to unfavorable categorization, and the support of regulatory policy to control the problem, as intended by the PVV.

In response to the PVV’s victory, most news outlets referred to widespread concern. The chairman of Contact Body for Muslims and Government (CMO), which cooperates with 380 mosques in the Netherlands, expressed his worry by questioning whether Muslim Dutch citizens have a future in the Netherlands. He asserted that “Everyone is talking about social security (protection and safety), but I don’t know if we still have it” (RTL Nieuws, 2023). The CMO highlights the perceived threat Muslim Dutch citizens feel after PVV’s victory, arguing that a radical right-wing government may negatively impact the current political climate. Due to the anti-Islam stance of the PVV, the CMO worries that islamophobia induced hate crimes may accelerate, alongside increased intolerance, endangering the safety of Muslim Dutch citizens (Rijnmond, 2023). Such initial responses highlight the fear of exclusionary policy implications, potentially limiting religious freedom and jeopardizing the social position and safety of Muslim Dutch citizens.

Nevertheless, opposite reactions are also evident. Ali Tsouli, an inclusivity and diversity expert, expressed that portraying Muslims as a homogeneous group entices polarization (Breda Vandaag, 2023). He argues that “You must become aware of the different identities you have. For example, I am a Muslim myself. But I am also Dutch. Brabander. Father (...). We should not pretend that all Muslims are suddenly threatened by these election results. And as if every Muslim now feels unsafe” (Breda Vandaag, 2023). Tsouli offers a contrasting perspective, opposite to what Muslim organizations in the Netherlands have largely reported. Moreover, he refers to embracing the Dutch identity, positioning himself as part of the Dutch in-group, rather than the out-group. Referring back to the group-threat theory, Tsouli does not consider himself to be part of the “threatening others” or the notion of deciding between his Muslim or Dutch identity. Contrarily, the more common response by representative Muslim organizations consists of self-categorization as the out-group, and therefore expecting to encounter regulatory policy in fear of religious freedom restrictions and safety implications. Therefore:

H3: The stronger the Muslim Dutch citizens socially identify themselves as the out-group category, the harsher they will consider the policy implications to be.

2.2 Political representation

Political representation refers to “the activity of making citizens’ voices, opinions, and perspectives “present” in public policy making processes” (Dovi, 2018, p. 2). Accordingly, political actors advocate for a wide variety of citizens, with different preferences and concerns, in the political arena. Although the conceptualization of political representation varies among scholars as a complex concept, in this paper, the simple aforementioned definition will be used. Political representation is deemed an essential part of a democratic society (Hamilton et al., 2023), it ensures that the interests of citizens are considered in the decision-making process of public policy. However, with the rise of right-wing governments, political representation has become increasingly selective. As Green (2012) argues, the anti-Islam narrative has led to the diminishing value of Muslims as dialogue partners. Concerning threat perception, Green (2012, p. 338) mentions that “you do not dialogue with a threat, you control or contain it, eliminate if needed.” Along these lines, Green (2012) asserts that as long as Islam is viewed as a violent religion, political representation will be deficient as they are deemed to be unfit dialogue partners.

Nevertheless, in the Dutch parliament, the leftist political party DENK claims its presence. Contrary to the PVV, DENK’s election manifesto slogan is “The Netherlands belongs to all of us” (DENK, 2023). Among other policy objectives, DENK aims to eliminate the face-covering (niqab) ban, halt the problematization of Islam, and reduce islamophobia (DENK, 2023). Other political parties, such as the Green Party and the Labour Party, also aim to reduce islamophobia (Groenlinks-PvdA, 2023). However, DENK is more active in combatting the PVV’s anti-Islam policy motions. Therefore, although not registered as a Muslim political party, it is often considered as such. Nevertheless, this homogenizes Muslim Dutch citizens as solely identifying with their religious identity. Upon PVV’s victory, DENK members also reacted in concern of what a right-wing victory would signify for Muslim Dutch citizens. DENK’s press officer, Abdellah Dami, stated that “The Netherlands has largely said [to Muslims/immigrants]: “We don’t like you” (NOS, 2023a).

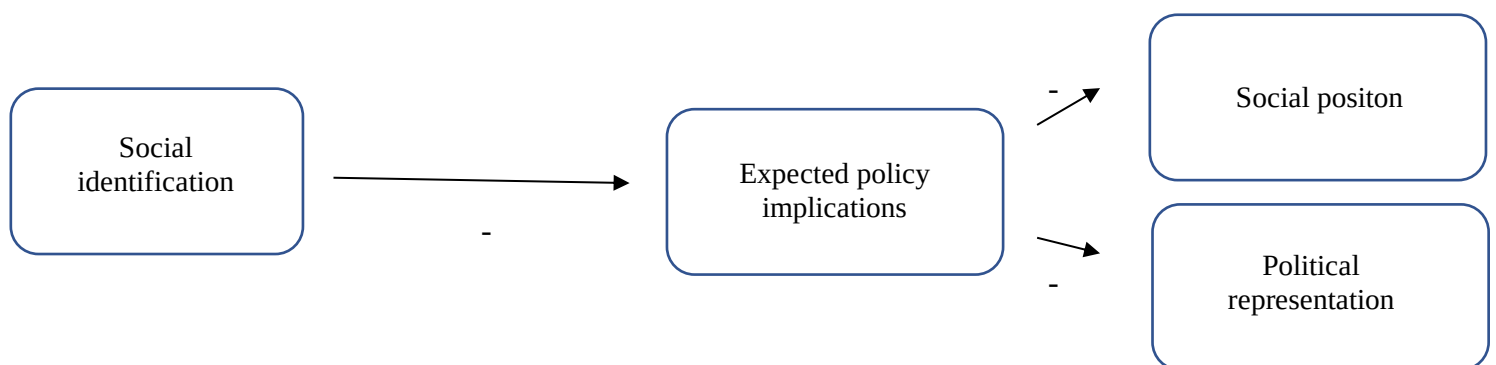
Visible Islamic representation in the House of Representatives had previously provoked the PVV. In 2021, Kauthar Bouchallikht, a former member of the Green Party and visibly Muslim by Islamic head covering, gained a seat in the House of Representatives. This

resulted in Wilders tweeting “a dark day for the Netherlands #stopislam” (Twitter, 2021), expressing his intolerance of her presence. Accordingly, although the political representation of Muslim Dutch citizens exists, the PVV has continuously expressed its adversarial views. Considering Wilders’ position on the growing number of Muslims in the Netherlands alongside his negative attitude towards their representation, it is expected that:

H4: The higher the religious identification among Muslim Dutch citizens, the more they will expect a negative impact on their political representation.

2.3 Conceptual framework

Figure 1: *Conceptual model*



3 Methodology

In examining the relationship between the SIT and the expected policy implications for Muslim Dutch citizens, this research followed a deductive, qualitative approach. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to acquire a deeper understanding of the explanatory mechanisms underlying the hypothesized relationships.

3.1 Research design and data collection

The following section will present the research design and data collection methods used.

3.1.1 Participants

Two sampling strategies were used to select the participants. Firstly, criterion sampling was chosen to ensure that all participants fit the characteristics required to test the hypotheses (Creswell & Poth, 2017). All 20 participants were Dutch nationals who self-identified as Muslim, 11 participants were women and 9 were men. All respondents were second-generation migrants, born in the Netherlands, apart from three. Respondent 12 was born in Egypt yet moved to the Netherlands as a one-year-old, respondent 8 was born in France and moved to the Netherlands when he was one month old. Likewise, respondent 9 was born in France and migrated to the Netherlands aged two months. Although all three were not born in the Netherlands, due to their young ages, possessing Dutch nationalities, and their upbringing in the Netherlands, minimal identification with their birthplace was identified. All three respondents solely recall their upbringing in the Netherlands, and thus predominantly referred to their Dutch and Muslim identities. Moreover, all participants held a non-Western ethnic background, consisting of Moroccan, Turkish, Sudanese, Iraqi, Egyptian, Somali, Kurdish, and Surinamese. Additionally, all respondents attended both primary and secondary school in the Netherlands and are native speakers, as Dutch is (one of) their mother tongue language(s). Although given the option to conduct the interview in Dutch, some interviews were conducted in English as a few respondents attended a bilingual Dutch school (*tweetalig onderwijs*) or are/were enrolled in an English-taught study, and therefore felt comfortable speaking in English.

Furthermore, all participants were at least 18 years old and eligible to vote. According to Statistics Netherlands (2019), the age of 18 often marks a spark in interest in politics as it is accompanied by voting rights. Therefore, increased political engagement is more likely.

The participants ranged between ages 19 and 42, but most participants were in their early to mid-20s. Furthermore, the Ulu Camii Mosque in Utrecht was contacted through a research invitation. The city of Utrecht was selected as it contains a high population of Muslims (Houben, 2023), and therefore a higher likelihood of meeting the abovementioned criteria.

Secondly, a snowball sampling strategy was used to recruit respondents who fit the criteria through the network of participants who had previously been interviewed (Creswell & Poth, 2017). As previously discussed, Muslim Dutch citizens have different levels of religious commitment and therefore varying strengths of religious identification. Therefore, a snowball strategy will aid in also including Muslims who do not visit the mosque frequently and are therefore expected to identify less strongly with their religious identity (Huijnk et al., 2022).

3.1.2 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted through an interview guide (Table 1). The respondents were interviewed face-to-face or through a phone call, depending on their preference. Participants were asked to answer the interview questions and were further probed for deeper understanding. The interviews averaged around 30 minutes and were recorded through QuickTime Player and VoiceMemos.

3.1.3 Ethical considerations

Prior to data collection, the participants were informed about the sensitive nature of the topic. To ease any possible emotional distress that may arise, participants were notified of their right to withdraw from the interview at any time. Moreover, each participant was presented with an informed consent form which stated the aim of the study and participants' rights concerning privacy and confidentiality in adherence with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Due to the emotional and personal nature of the topic, respondents were notified that they may sign the informed consent form using pseudonyms. Furthermore, respondents were informed that data access was limited to the researcher and supervisor and will be stored for 10 years. Before commencing the interview, participants were notified that the interview would be recorded and transcribed for data analysis purposes. Finally, each participant was provided with the necessary contact details in case of inquiries or concerns after the interview.

3.2 Operationalization

In designing the interview questions, two sources were used. Firstly, questionnaire items by Abbink and Harris (2019) were transformed into interview questions targeting group-threat theory. For example, the statement “Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups” was modified into “Do you believe that some groups are inferior to others in society?” Secondly, questionnaire items from the Netherlands Longitudinal Lifecourse Study (2014) were used to assess social identity. Statements such as “My Dutch identity is an important part of myself” were also modified into “Do you consider the Dutch identity to be an important part of your identity?” (Tolsma et al., 2014). Before the official interviews, two pilot interviews were conducted to test the interview content and determine whether alterations were needed. Since the questions were claimed by the respondents to be thought-provoking, some were simplified in wording.

Table 1: *Operationalization of variables*

Variables	Definitions	Indicators
Independent variable: SIT.	Fleischmann & Verkuyten (2021, p. 165) define the social identity theory in a religious context as the depersonalization of identity, emphasizing self-categorization based on “group-based characteristics and attributes”.	- How do you identify yourself? - Do you identify more strongly as Dutch or Muslim (or equally) Why? - How strongly do you identify as Dutch? - Is the Dutch identity an important part of yourself? Why? - Is it possible to combine your national identity with your religious identity?
Dependent variable: expected policy implications.	The policy implications Muslim Dutch citizens expect to	<i>PVV's anti-Islam stance</i>

	experience following the PVV's election victory.	- What do you think of the PVV's stance related to Islam? - What do you think of the current political climate in the Netherlands after the PVV's victory? <i>PVV's victory</i> - What was your first reaction to the PVV's victory? - How do you expect to be targeted in policy? - Do you think policymaking will be in your favor or the opposite? - Do you think the PVV's regulatory policy objectives will be implemented? <i>Group-threat theory (Abbink & Harris, 2019)</i> - Do you believe that some groups are inferior to others in society? - Which group do you think the PVV places you in? How does that make you feel? - Which group do you personally believe you belong to? - The slogan/motto of the PVV is 'Dutch back in first place',
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		do you consider yourself part of the Dutch group that the PVV describes it serves? - How do you expect the PVV group categorization of Muslim Dutch citizens to impact policy?
Influence factor: social position.	The “position of the given individual (or group) in the system of social relations” (Farkas, 2022, p. 424).	- Do you expect your social position to be impacted? How? - How do you think your professional life will be affected? How - Do do you think your personal life will be affected? How? - Do you think your religious freedom will be influenced?
Influence factor: political representation.	“The activity of making citizens’ voices, opinions, and perspectives “present” in public policy making processes” (Dovi, 2018, p. 2).	- Can you describe how/whether you feel politically represented? By who? - Do you think you will continue to be politically represented? - Do you think the PVV will represent Muslims? How? - How do you think you will be represented after PVV’s victory? Will it be different from the previous government?

3.3 Data analysis

Following the data collection, each interview was transcribed using audio to text tool “Turboscribe”. To safeguard the privacy of the respondents, the recordings did not include any personal information and the audio files that were uploaded did not contain traceable data. Although this study is conducted in English, respondents were given the option to answer the questions in English or Dutch. Allowing research participants to communicate in their mother tongue “produces more authentic answers” (Welch & Piekkari, 2006), and therefore decreases the possibility of misunderstandings or withholding information due to a language barrier. Accordingly, the quotes were translated from Dutch to English, and each participant was anonymized through pseudonyms. Following the transcriptions, the qualitative data analysis software Atlas.ti was used to thematically code the interviews. The coding process is illustrated as a code tree in the Appendix (B), presenting the linkages between the codes and themes.

During the data collection process, a few uncertainties arose as some respondents fluctuated in their answers concerning the complex topic of social identification. Therefore, while acknowledging the contextual influence of identity, to prevent misinterpretation of the results, member checks were carried out where necessary. The transcripts were either sent to the respective respondent with certain sections highlighted to indicate where review is necessary or carried out through a phone call by asking the respondent to clarify their answers.

3.4 Validity, reliability, and positionality

Internal validity methods were implemented to ensure the accuracy of the data and tested relationships. As such, different sampling strategies were used to obtain a representative sample of the population (Patino & Ferreira, 2018). However, the low number of respondents denotes low generalizability. Thus, this study cannot be applied to all Muslim Dutch citizens in the Netherlands.

However, the reliability of this study is strengthened due to theoretical triangulation, as different theories are integrated, increasing the credibility of the hypothesized relationships. Additionally, since data collection and analysis methods are elucidated, including the interview guide and coding tree, repeatability is possible.

Regarding researchers' positionality, it is important to consider personal identity in relation to the research participants (Milner, 2007). Since the researcher shares the same Muslim Dutch identity as the research participants, cultural and religious understanding was utilized in probing questions and creating a trusting environment. Nevertheless, to tackle any potential interpretation and/or social desirability bias, the interview questions have been carefully formulated in such a way that does not push the respondents in a certain direction, and by commencing the interview with general questions concerning identity (Júnior, 2022).

4 Empirical Findings and Analysis

In the following chapter, the findings will be analyzed with the aim of rejecting or confirming the hypotheses. The results will be thematically organized, covering each variable. Firstly, social identification will be discussed, following the expected policy implications. Next, the expected consequences on social position and political representation will be explored. The findings will be summarized in respondent overview tables, which can be retrieved in the Appendix (C).

4.1 Social identification

Prior to commencing the analysis, it is important to consider identity saliency and that attachment to one identity may change overtime, and thus should not be regarded as stable. The following section of social identity aims to explore the fluctuating nature of social identity while reporting on the respondents' Muslim and Dutch identity levels.

Dual identification

A total of 5 respondents identified equally as Dutch and Muslim, explaining that it is possible to combine both identities. The most significant factors contributing to their identification as Dutch, as well as considering it to be an integral part of their identity stemmed from being raised in the Netherlands, attending primary and secondary school, and having Dutch as their mother tongue. Respondent 4 explained, *“of course it's an important part of myself, it goes hand in hand. Dutch is my first language. I was born here. I got my education here.”*

Likewise, respondent 8 mentioned, *“I was raised here, I spend most of my time here.”*

Nevertheless, many respondents of varying national and religious identity levels expressed the difficulty in identifying dually due to value clashes, which creates an intricate situation. Although respondents consider both identities to have formed who they have grown into as individuals, value clashes often prevent them from strongly and equally identifying as both. Respondent 6 explained that both identities can be *“combined to a certain degree, I think the niqab ban would fall into Dutch values where you obviously follow the Dutch law. But then I obviously don't agree with that as a Muslim.”* As such, respondents express the presence of an identity clash in situations where the different values within their identities contradict. Nevertheless, the respondents do not portray the value clashes similar to how the PVV does.

Whereas the PVV emphasizes incompatibility and threat and thus aims to minimize their Muslim identity, the respondents do not discard their Dutch identity, but instead navigate their way through both identities. Respondent 14 explained *“you just let go of things that are contradictory to each other. If my religion says that one thing is not okay and if the Dutch culture says that it is okay, then you make an active choice.”* Similarly, respondent 18 explained *“when I was still studying, I actually discovered that it was almost impossible to fit into student life. Because alcohol, just to name one thing, is a big no for me and that is really important for the students.”* Thus, when value clashes arise, the respondents identified more strongly as Muslim, in adherence with their Islamic faith. Due to the differences in Dutch and Islamic values, respondents feel that their level of identification as Dutch fluctuates, depending on whether it conflicts with their Muslim identity. Nevertheless, as Fleischmann & Verkuyten (2016) argue, even if one identity takes precedence, self-identifying both as Muslim and Dutch, regardless of differences in strength, counts as possessing a dual identity. Moreover, identity salience was evident among the respondents. As Vural and Rustemli (2006) explain, social environment heavily impacts identity. When sense of belonging is reduced due to social factors, such as exclusion, identification levels are often influenced (Vural and Rustemli, 2006). As such, exposure to discriminatory events and the PVV’s narrative may have lowered the respondents’ sense of belonging, leading to lower Dutch identification. As Verkuyten (2011) explained, the “us vs. them” hierarchical relationship classifies the Muslim identity as a threat to Dutch society, requiring acts of self-defense according to the PVV, hence justifying regulatory policy (Bernard & Whitley, 1999). Thus, when the respondents were exposed to questions concerning the PVV’s anti-Islam stance, they may have sensed an identity threat which could have increased their inclination to identify strongly as Muslim.

Moreover, 10 respondents described their level of Dutch identification to be context-based. Respondent 4 mentioned that *“it has ups and downs.”* He explained that when Muslims are negatively highlighted, or *“described as something alien, something foreign, something that doesn't belong, something backwards that has no place in Dutch society,”* his identification as Dutch *“goes down”* as he feels that his Muslim identity is wrongly categorized. Similarly, respondent 18 expressed, *“if I’m on holiday and people ask me where I’m from, the first thing I say is the Netherlands. I then also feel more Dutch than when I am in the Netherlands.”* Thus, the level of Dutch identification among the respondents fluctuates depending on the setting, political atmosphere, and surroundings.

It is essential to take into account that social identity is not a stable concept. It is apparent that identification as Dutch was expressed stronger in the context of language i.e., having Dutch as their mother tongue, upbringing in the Netherlands, Dutch educational system, and contributing to Dutch society through employment. Nevertheless, upon confrontation with the PVV's rhetoric, the clashes between Dutch and Muslim identities rose to the forefront and fluctuations in identification levels were evident. Although Dutch identity was given importance, throughout the interview, the respondents were often more inclined to identify strongly as Muslim when reflecting upon the injustices faced, as well as the PVV's portrayal of Muslim Dutch citizens. This demonstrates that social identity levels differ in different settings and circumstances and cannot be considered a fixed concept as it continuously shifts and evolves, frequently influenced by society (Vural & Rustemli, 2006). Although for the purpose of this study the respondents were asked to rank their identification levels and are therefore categorized into different levels of Muslim/Dutch identification, these are not definitive, as the social construction of identity is often context-based. Moreover, the distinctive features the PVV describes between Dutch and Muslim identities differ from the distinctions mentioned by the respondents. Where the PVV demonizes the Muslim part of the Muslim Dutch identity, the respondents do not criticize either but solely reflect on their struggle to hold onto their Dutch identity while their Muslim identity is viewed as a danger to Dutch society according to the PVV. The respondents do not comply with the PVV's narrative of incompatibility as they express disappointment concerning unfavorable experiences which contributed to low Dutch identification rather than a perceived threat or negative prejudice against the ethnically Dutch population.

Strong Muslim identification

Strong social identification as Muslim was observable throughout the interviews. Although the respondents differed in religious practicing levels, most respondents identified strongly as Muslim. Out of the 20 participants, of which solely one identified mainly as Dutch, 14 strongly expressed their Muslim identity to be a major part of their identity. As respondent 10 mentioned "*religion is number one*", emphasizing the significance of her faith. Different reasons were given as to why the respondents identified strongly with their religious identity. Firstly, outward appearance, i.e. Islamic head covering or racio-ethnic markers such as skin colour, contributed to low identification as Dutch. Since all respondents held a non-Western ethnic background alongside their Dutch nationality, some respondents explained that their

Dutch identity is solely connected to possessing a Dutch passport. As respondent 3 asserted *“on papers, I’m Dutch. But I don’t consider myself even a bit Dutch.”* Similarly, respondent 12 explained that *“if I am walking on the street and a Dutch person wants to ask me something, I am often addressed in English. Because they assume that I cannot speak Dutch.”* According to the respondent, such experiences have contributed to her low Dutch identification, as she expresses not to be viewed as Dutch by part of the public.

Whereas most respondents who identified strongly as Muslim still considered their Dutch nationality to be an important element of their identity, respondent 3 and respondent 9 expressed that they often adjust themselves to fit into Dutch society. Although both respondents were raised in the Netherlands, respondent 3 explained that *“I had to adjust myself to live amongst Dutch people”* similar to respondent 9 who emphasized that *“I adapt myself”*. Here, low Dutch identification is evident as both respondents mention the inclination to change certain aspects of themselves to fit in. One of the explanatory mechanisms is their strong negative sentiments towards the PVV’s hate speech and derogatory descriptions. Respondent 3 described himself as *“a nuisance and as not part of the country”* according to extreme right-wing politics. Likewise, respondent 9 described himself as *“scum”* as per extreme right-wing categorization. Interestingly, both descriptions have been used by the PVV during parliamentary debates when referring to Moroccan-Muslim youth, which both respondents have identified as (Roggeband & van der Haar, 2017). Thus, partly due to clashing values and right-wing categorization, the greater part of the respondents identified more strongly as Muslim.

4.2 Social identification and expected policy implications on social position

PVV’s regulatory objectives

Regarding the expected policy implications under a right-wing government in the Netherlands, all respondents reacted with varying degrees of worry. Mixed perceptions concerning whether the PVV would actually implement its regulatory policy objectives were conveyed. The responses can be divided into two categories: (1) those who believe that the PVV cannot achieve all its regulatory policy objectives as the constitution and other political parties will protect their rights, and (2) those who expect the PVV to realize its anti-Islam regulatory policy objectives. Out of the 14 participants who identified strongly as Muslim, 4 participants believed that the PVV would be successful in implementing the harsh regulatory

policies, such as bans on mosques, Islamic schools, and head covering, which would impact their social positions. The rest of the participants who identified strongly as Muslim expect an attempt from the PVV which is expected to be met with opposing force. Out of the 5 participants who identified equally as Muslim and Dutch, 2 expect the harshest possible policy implications. The one respondent who identified the least as Muslim also believes that the constitution and other political parties in the parliament would oppose the PVV's policy objectives.

In general, all participants believe in the possibility of regulatory policies which could restrict their religious freedom and negatively influence their social positions. However, how realistic this possibility is differed among the respondents. Commencing with the first category, on a short-term basis, 14 respondents, of which 10 strongly identify as Muslim, 3 as equally Dutch and Muslim and 1 strongly as Dutch, do not expect harsh policy implications. Respondent 18 explained, *"we have a constitution, so it would be difficult. But the past has shown us that democracy can be dismantled step by step through a democratic route. So, I'll never say never."* Therefore, immediate regulatory policy, such as a Quran ban, is not expected, yet possible in the long run. As respondent 14 asserted, *"I don't think so, on a short-term basis. Because those are simply things that are established in the constitution [religious freedom]. Which you cannot just ban in the Netherlands."* Therefore, the respondents believe that the Dutch constitution would prevent the PVV from minimizing Islam in the Netherlands due to their right to religious freedom, denoting high trust in Dutch democratic institutions and emphasizing their fundamental beliefs in Western democracy. Here, the respondents identify themselves as members of the in-group, and thus protected by the democratic institutions established. Thus, despite radical right-wing politics, the Dutch part of the overall Muslim Dutch identity remains a dominant aspect which respondents believe will defend them from regulatory policy. Since governments bear the responsibility of fair treatment of all citizens, which the state explicitly emphasizes under the constitution, the respondents do not expect restrictions as part of the in-group. Therefore, social control in the form of regulatory policy to counter the perceived threat of Muslim Dutch citizens (King, 2007) is considered to be unlikely as the Dutch constitution does not categorize Muslim Dutch citizens as a threat to society. Regarding the second category, 6 participants, 4 of which strongly identify as Muslim and 2 as both Dutch and Muslim, expect the most restrictive policies possible under a right-wing government. Respondent 9 expressed *"It seems very likely to me. If he manages all that, then it will be clear to me what kind of country the Netherlands is."* Similarly, respondent 4 explained that *"I think the first thing we*

will see is a crackdown (...) shutting down Islamic schools, mosques, and dress codes”.

Accordingly, the 4 respondents consider regulatory policy as an immediate consequence of a right-wing government, rather than a long-term realistic possibility due to the PVV’s history of regulatory policy objectives.

When referring to the possibility of regulatory policy in the Netherlands, 11 respondents linked the realistic consequence of regulatory policy targeting Muslims, to the right-wing trend in Europe. Most respondents referred to the Islamic head covering ban implemented in France. Upon further thought, respondent 14, who previously mentioned religious protection under the constitution mentioned that *“if you look at neighboring countries, like France (...) where you also can’t wear head covering at school, then it cannot be ruled out”*. Similarly, respondent 17 expressed, *“let’s just look at one of our close neighbors, France. They are doing it there, so why not here?”* Thus, the *“shift towards right-wing politics”*, as mentioned by respondent 19, contributes to the perceived attainable regulatory policy objectives of the PVV, some of which have been carried out under a right-wing government in France. As per the respondents, the regulatory policies implemented in France confirm that the Netherlands may follow. According to Whitney & Bernard (1999), stereotypes and categorization legitimize myths. Thus, since France and the Netherlands both hold similar negative perceptions and stereotypes of Muslims (Abdelkader, 2017), yet France has implemented regulatory policy justified to manage the threat (Chiricos et al., 2020), the respondents would not be surprised if similar regulatory policy would be implemented in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, this would lead to a flawed representative bureaucracy as religious discrimination would negatively influence the accurate diverse demographic composition of Muslim Dutch citizens within a bureaucracy (Kennedy, 2012). Consequently, this would decrease the legitimacy of bureaucratic power as decreased bureaucratic representation could lead to unfavorable policy outcomes and the exclusion of Muslim Dutch citizens within the policy-making process (Kennedy, 2012).

Social position expectations

The expected consequences on social position differed among the respondents. Upon asking whether their social position would be negatively impacted in the case of regulatory policies, the responses were divided. Commencing with social position in relation to professional life (i.e., career), 14 respondents, 12 of which identify strongly as Muslim and 2

equally as Dutch and Muslim, expect negative consequences in their professional domain. Notably, most female respondents referred to the expectations of a head covering ban. Respondent 2 mentioned, *“I don’t think men will notice anything, but women and girls will notice it because of their appearance, headscarf, long clothes.”* Various respondents touched upon the existing policy in France contributing to the high likelihood of the Netherlands implementing a similar restriction. Moreover, respondent 15 mentioned that the potential restrictions on Islamic schools would lead to a lack of freedom to choose her desired workplace. She explained, *“because I study pedagogy, and I want to do a few more years of teacher training. I would prefer to go to an Islamic school (...) but if he is against religious schools, I no longer have that freedom.”* Thus, on a professional level, the respondent would be disadvantaged as she would be denied the freedom to select her choice of school to advance in her career. The implementation of a head covering ban would coerce Muslim Dutch women to withdraw part of their identity to be accepted within the workplace. In this case, the PVV would foster an environment where loyalty to the Dutch identity requires visualization, consisting of adherence to Dutch regulatory policy (in the case of a head covering/religious ban) rather than solely holding the Dutch nationality (Entzinger, 2006). This would have a negative effect on the careers of Muslim Dutch citizens, as most respondents mentioned that they would refuse to adhere to any policies which would limit their religious freedom, leaving them with limited career options.

Out of the 6 respondents who do not expect their professional lives to be negatively impacted, 3 respondents equally identify as Dutch and Muslim, 2 respondents strongly identify as Muslim, and 1 as strongly as Dutch. Similar to the arguments used by those who do not expect harsh policies, most respondents refer to the constitution. Respondent 12 mentioned, *“luckily we have a constitution, we have a democratic, constitutional state.”* Again, it is expected that the PVV will have to adhere to the constitution, which forbids discrimination on the grounds of religious orientation. Respondent 3 explained, *“in this day and age there are enough people that don’t agree with Geert Wilders, and it wouldn’t affect a possible position for me to apply to.”* Thus, the respondent believes that he would not be disadvantaged under a right-wing government due to his religion nor that discrimination would increase. Remarkably, the Dutch national identification is higher among those who expect little to no influence on their professional lives compared to those who expect worsened conditions.

Concerning their private lives, 14 respondents, 12 of which strongly identified as Muslim and 2 equally as Dutch and Muslim, expect negative consequences. Similar to the expected consequences in their professional lives, many respondents referred to a possible head covering ban. Respondent 14 expressed, *“if I am no longer allowed to wear a headscarf, then my entire life will actually be limited, because I would not want to go out without a headscarf.”* The possibility of a head covering ban seemed to be of high concern among the female respondents. Comparably, a few male respondents touched upon Friday prayer at the mosque, which is deemed a compulsory act in Islam for men. Respondent 17 explained, *“every Friday I go to the mosque. If they close the mosques, I would be affected because I can’t go to the mosque anymore.”* Therefore, if restrictions are carried out on mosques, the respondent would be limited in his options. Similar to the abovementioned head covering ban, the male respondents also mentioned that they would not adhere to regulatory policy as they refuse to discard their Muslim identity, even if it jeopardizes their professional or private lives.

Out of the 6 respondents who do not expect their private lives to be negatively impacted, 3 identified equally as Dutch and Muslim, 2 identified strongly as Muslim, and 1 identified strongly as Dutch. Most respondents refer to their religious beliefs as a private matter which they can privately practice without interference. Respondent 3 explained, *“what I do in my free time, spending on my religious life, that’s my free will and they can’t take away my free will.”* Thus, the respondent does not expect the PVV to be able to impede his religious life as it is practiced in private. Similarly, respondent 2 explained *“for example fasting, I’m in my own house, no one will enter and tell me I’m not allowed to fast.”* The respondent views religious acts as a private matter, and therefore believes that her religious freedom would not be negatively impacted.

As previously mentioned, there are no fixed positions of national and religious identification, as the levels of identification reported fluctuated throughout the duration of the interviews. For example, although respondent 3 does not expect a negative impact on his social position, entrusting Dutch democratic institutions and therefore highlighting his Dutch identity, he does intend to leave the Netherlands in case of anti-Islamic policies, stressing the measures he would take to protect his Muslim identity. Nevertheless, most respondents who expect a negative impact on their social positions through regulatory policy strongly identify as Muslim. Therefore, H1 is accepted. Out of the respondents who expect the least negative impact on their social positions through regulatory policy, there is a variation among

identification levels. However, the Dutch national identification is stronger in comparison to those that expect a negative impact on their social positions. Thus, H2 is also accepted

4.3 Social identification and out-group categorization

Right-wing categorization

In examining how Muslim Dutch citizens categorize themselves according to right-wing social constructions, all 20 respondents placed themselves in the deviant category. According to Schneider & Ingram (1993), social groups that are portrayed as deviants, often receive little to no beneficial policy and/or are targeted through regulatory policy. The respondents seem to refer to this concept by describing their societal construction through the lens of the PVV and how they would be negatively targeted through policy in a right-wing government.

Respondent 3 categorized himself to be part of the group the PVV describes as causing *“ruckus [commotion] and inferior to the Dutch group.”* Here, the respondent creates a distinction between the ethnic Dutch population and Muslim Dutch citizens with a non-Western immigrant background. Similarly, when asked whether the respondents feel a sense of belonging to the “Dutch back in first place” slogan of the PVV’s election manifesto, all participants explained that the PVV is not referring to Muslim Dutch citizens. According to respondent 4, *“we’re not part of the Dutch people they’re talking about (...) we, according to them, have no place in society.”* Likewise, respondent 17 explained *“I think they would see me as a danger for society (...) I’m the opposite. They want to get rid of people like me.”* Thus, the respondents believe that the PVV would not serve in their interest, even as Dutch nationals they pledge to prioritize, due to their Muslim identity being perceived as a threat. This is linked to the right-wing “us vs. them” framework which Wilders has often alluded to, negatively categorizing Muslim Dutch citizens as the out-group (Chiricos et al., 2020). Respondent 10 mentioned that Muslim Dutch citizens *“are seen as less valuable by real Dutch people.”* Again, an ethnic distinction is made by the participants regardless of Dutch or Muslim identification levels. This indicates that, although expected policy implications vary, the respondents expect to be burdened by policy changes. Additionally, if the constitution and existence of opposition political parties were not present, the PVV would be successful in its policy objectives targeting Muslim Dutch citizens.

The respondents believe that the PVV considers Muslim Dutch citizens to be part of the detested out-group and the ethnic Dutch population as part of the favored in-group. Thus, in the case of a one-party state rather than a representative democracy, the respondents would expect the PVV to implement regulatory policies which reflect their previous anti-Islamic statements. All respondents of varying Muslim and Dutch identification levels demonstrated strong right-wing out-group self-categorization yet varied in policy expectations. Therefore, H3 cannot be fully accepted since the out-group self-categorization is not directly linked to harsher policy expectations as hypothesized. However, notably, the awareness of stereotype threat is apparent among all respondents. As a consequence, the respondents have mentioned feeling devalued due to their negatively portrayed Muslim identity by right-wing politics. This may spill-over to other domains, such as education or career. As Spencer et al. (2016) argue, one's self perception and abilities may be undermined due to the negative stereotypes. In this case, the stereotype threat of Muslim Dutch citizens may negatively influence their job or educational performance.

4.4 Social identification and political representation

Expected consequences in political representation

In total, 14 respondents, of which 10 strongly identify as Muslim, 3 equally as Muslim and Dutch, and 1 strongly as Dutch, expect a negative impact on their political representation. Upon questioning whether they currently feel politically represented, most respondents who demonstrated high political representation referred to the political party DENK. Those who did not feel politically represented, mentioned their lack of identification or connection to a political party. As a consequence of a right-wing government, many participants mentioned the possibility of reduced political representation by DENK. Respondent 19 explained, *“they would get more suppressed in the government, because a right-wing government would be less tolerant of them (...) The difference in their political stance is so wide that they would not support a lot of dialogue.”* Rather than the PVV engaging in a dialogue with DENK, the respondent believes that the differences in political positions are too wide to reach a consensus, or dialogue, as explained by Green (2012). Likewise, respondent 20 explains, *“it will be diminished because if there's a government that is slowly trying to strip away my Muslim identity, I just don't see myself at all being part of the political spectrum. I don't think that I'm represented whatsoever.”* According to the respondent, since the PVV aims to

limit Muslim Dutch citizens from practicing their religion freely, they will equally attempt to minimize their voices in politics through decreased political representation. This could lead to harmful consequences as under a representative parliamentary democracy, “all Dutch citizens who have the right to vote can choose who to represent them in the parliament” (Government of the Netherlands, 2022). However, the representative aspect of a parliamentary democracy would suffer under the expected consequences of reduced or diminished representation. Consequently, this would also undermine the democratic quality of the representative bureaucracy if a head covering ban was imposed as representation would be further restricted. Thus, the respondents fear that regulatory policy would be passed in the void of Muslim Dutch representation.

Out of the 6 respondents who do not expect a negative impact on political representation, 5 strongly identify as Muslim and 1 equally as Dutch and Muslim. Identical to the previous arguments, the respondents principally do not expect a negative impact on their political representation due to the constitution and positive expectations of opposing political parties. Thus, 4 respondents referred to their trust in the political party DENK, which they expect to grow following the right-wing victory. Respondent 10 explained that the reality of a right-wing government may nudge Muslim Dutch citizens who are usually inclined not to vote, to vote during the next election. She asserted that it is essential for Muslim Dutch citizens to retain a voice under a right-wing government, which she believes DENK represents. Similarly, respondent 13 clarified, *“I think that they used it quite well [DENK’s representative voice] (...) If they continue, I expect that their voice will certainly have an impact.”* Thus, the political party DENK is associated with the main voice of Muslims, which the respondents expect to continue. Correspondingly, respondent 2 expects a *“positive change”* in political representation. She explains that *“today’s generation is more daring (...) they are more concerned with political matters and accept discrimination much less.”* Thus, the respondent envisions positive changes in political representation by the present generation of Muslim Dutch citizens who are considered to be more outspoken. In summary, due to the strong religious identification among the participants that expect a negative impact on their political representation, H4 is accepted.

Adverse effects

Although not directly linked to the hypotheses, a few respondents touched upon relevant expected consequences following the right-wing victory. Besides the expected policy

implications, some respondents expect the PVV's victory to validate discriminatory and prejudiced ideas and actions among extreme right-wing supporters. Respondent 6 described a situation where *"this lady tried to push her [a friend] onto the metro tracks (...) the lady went up to her and said you're not coming out of here alive."* Respondent 11, who was aware of the incident, mentioned that she believed it to be incited by the PVV's victory. Here, a signaling effect is apparent as the PVV's victory may legitimize such discriminatory incidents and normalize the intolerance towards Muslim Dutch citizens. Through the PVV's victory, prejudiced behaviors and attitudes may give rise to increased attacks. Respondent 6 further explained that the potential implementation of regulatory policy would *"confirm that threat"* and validate the feelings of extreme right-wing followers. Likewise, respondent 12 mentions that, *"it can give people more motivation, more confidence to be more racist and discriminatory in public. Because a lot of people hold back due to social pressure. But if the PVV holds power, it will be more socially acceptable."* Therefore, the respondents believe that the right-wing domination will generate a more comfortable environment for extreme right-wing supporters to act more discriminatory towards Muslim Dutch citizens.

Additionally, some respondents mentioned their decision to leave the Netherlands if the Dutch right-wing government implements regulatory policy. The respondents expressed that sentiments of exclusion and a reduced sense of belonging would elicit them to migrate to a different country. Respondent 12 asserted that *"I would never let a government dilute my hijab and religion (...) So to me, I would just leave the country."* Accordingly, it is evident that a few respondents would take significant measures to protect their Muslim identity from being restricted.

5 Conclusion and Discussion

This study aimed to explore the expected policy implications of Muslim Dutch citizens after the PVV's right-wing victory in the Netherlands. To gain a deeper insight, the expected impact on social position and political representation were investigated.

Through the 20 interviews, results confirmed the predicted negative relationship between social identification and expected policy implications. The strong Muslim identification may be influenced by the negative portrayal of Muslim Dutch citizens in predominantly right-wing political discourse and the media. Moreover, the expected increase in discrimination in addition to the right-wing categorization and discriminatory events they have previously faced, may have impacted Dutch identification levels (Dagevos et al., 2022). According to Verkuyten's (2016) a reactive identity is formed in which active separation from the dominant Dutch group occurs as a result of perceived exclusion, discrimination and devaluation. Therefore, experienced discrimination is accompanied by a decreased sense of belonging and higher disengagement from Dutch society (Verkuyten, 2016). As evident by the analysis, most respondents identified strongly as Muslim and placed themselves within the out-group category. Notably, although policy expectations differed across the respondents, due to the awareness of the PVV's threat-oriented ideology (Chiricos et al., 2020) negatively categorizing Muslim Dutch citizens, all respondents alluded to a realistic possibility of anti-Islam regulatory policy. Some respondents, including those who identified strongly as Muslim, displayed high trust in the Dutch democratic institutions and placed themselves within the Dutch in-group, yet the respondents who expected harsh policy implications mainly touched upon the PVV's policy objectives concerning Islam, mentioning that religious bans are inevitable due to Wilders' many years of anti-Islam stances. Thus, they expect punitive policy to be unavoidable due to the negative social construction of their identity by the PVV (Schneider & Ingram, 1993).

Moreover, this insight aids in answering the first sub-question which intended to explore how the (religious and national) social identity of Muslim Dutch citizens influence their expectations of the public policy implications. It can be concluded that both the respondents who identified strongly as Muslim and those who possessed a dual identity, expect negative policy implications in different degrees. While some trust that the Dutch constitution will protect their religious freedom and other political parties will intervene if the

PVV introduces regulatory measures, others, including two with a dual identity, expect immediate religious bans. Yet most importantly, all respondents consider the implementation of the PVV's policy objectives concerning Islam a possible future prospect. Due to the PVV's negative social classification of Muslim Dutch citizens (Verkuyten, 2011), the respondents assume that the PVV's rise to power could be accompanied by unfavorable policies, which may lead to migration to avoid being subjected to religious restrictions.

This leads to the second sub-question which focused on the expected influences on Muslim Dutch citizens' social positions. Numerous female respondents alluded to the likelihood of an Islamic head covering ban, which would reduce their career opportunities. Here, a gendered dynamic is apparent as women are more likely to be visibly Muslim than Muslim men, and thus experience more discriminatory incidents. According to the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) most incidents of Islamophobia reported concerning career opportunities, involved perceived discrimination against Islamic head covering, hampering recruitment. Thus, although discrimination in the workplace exists, their professional lives would further be impacted in case of a head covering ban as the respondents mentioned not to adhere to this. Therefore, the religious bans would obstruct the respondents' freedom of choice in practicing their religion while contributing to Dutch society. For example, the already existing religious symbol ban for the police force (Ministry of Justice and Security, 2021b), obstructs Muslim Dutch citizens from freely selecting a career choice, since head covering is a compulsory religious rule rather than solely a symbolic expression. This gendered dimension indicates that Muslim Dutch women may experience increased policy burden in comparison to Muslim Dutch men.

The final sub-question aimed to discover the expected consequences on political representation. Remarkably, most respondents expected a decrease in political representation. In accordance with Dagevos et al. (2022), perceived exclusion and a decreased sense of belonging are often accompanied by low perceived political representation. Additionally, all respondents do not expect to be positively represented by the PVV, demonstrating that Wilders' years of anti-Islamic discourse remains of concern. Nevertheless, some respondents expect a positive change. The presence of the political party DENK instills hope among few as they expect DENK to undergo a continuous stride against the PVV.

5.1 Limitations

In this research, three main limitations have been identified. Firstly, the sample size solely consisted of 20 respondents. Thus, the findings are not generalizable to the larger population of Muslim Dutch citizens, consisting of approximately one million individuals. Additionally, the sample size lacks variety in identification levels, as merely one respondent identified stronger as Dutch than Muslim. Moreover, all respondents, with the exception of one respondent who was half Surinamese, were not ethnically Dutch. Future research could aim at investigating the intersectionality of ethnic background and religious orientation. Secondly, since women are often more visibly Muslim, i.e., through Islamic head covering, a distinction between female and male respondents may have generated more insight on the differences in lived experiences and expected policy implications. Future studies could compare the expected policy implications of Muslim Dutch men and women, whether their social identification differs and the differences in expected religious restrictions.

Thirdly, despite efforts to minimize bias, the shared Muslim Dutch background of the researcher may have introduced subject bias. As a result, the findings could have been influenced if the respondents felt compelled to provide desirable answers due to their awareness of the shared background and purpose of the study. Nevertheless, the shared identity could have also fostered a more comfortable environment, encouraging the respondents to provide honest answers, assuming the researcher may have shared experiences. Finally, since the PVV's victory and the right-wing government is a current event, future studies could continue to examine the expected policy implications of Muslim Dutch citizens over time and explore the adverse effects of right-wing dominance in the Netherlands.

6 Recommendations

The following chapter will present two recommendations which were selected to address the negative portrayal and categorization surrounding the Muslim segment of Muslim Dutch citizens' identity, which has justified the anti-Islamic regulatory policies previously proposed by the PVV. Since representation and accountability are at the core of a functioning democracy (Przeworski et al., 1999), it is essential to review the quality of both and introduce improvements.

6.1 Increased hate speech monitoring and political accountability

The hostile language used to describe and categorize Muslim Dutch citizens by certain right-wing politicians, i.e., “root of all evil” shapes a negative image and promotes polarization and intolerance (Hajer & Versteeg, 2009). It is essential to address the feelings of exclusion and the expected unfavorable policy targeting, especially under a right-wing government led by the political party which is well-known for its negative portrayal of Islam. Although hate speech regulations exist, Article 71 of the Dutch constitution assures that politicians taking part in parliamentary debates will not be held accountable for any utterances made (Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, 2018).

Recently, Mona Keijzer, member of the right-wing Farmer Citizen Movement (BBB) and vice minister-president, publicly stated that hatred towards Jews is part of Islamic culture (Groenewoud, 2024), and did not face detrimental consequences as the BBB deemed her statement to be factually correct (BBB, 2024). To tackle hate speech and prevent hate crimes from increasing, measures should be taken. The Dutch parliament could introduce an oversight body which monitors hate speech and discriminatory language by politicians. For example, a Parliamentary Ethics Committee could impose ethical standards for members of the parliament, including codes of conduct strictly addressing hate speech. Moreover, such a committee could also increase political accountability through investigations of hate speech, scrutinizing politicians. This proposal would need to be initiated by a member of a political party and requires approval, which may be a timely process. However, it is of utmost importance that hate speech is confronted and sincerely addressed.

6.2 Minority quotas to enhance political representation

To ensure continuous political representation of Muslim Dutch citizens, with an emphasis on those with religious interests, the Dutch government could introduce minority quotas in the parliament. Minority quotas would guarantee a justifiable number of Muslim representatives in the parliament that would embody the presence of Muslim Dutch citizens in policymaking. Since Muslim Dutch citizens make up 5.6% of the population (Schmeets & Houben, 2023), this should be reflected upon in a representative bureaucracy. To foster inclusion and promote the political representation of Muslim Dutch citizens, the Ministry of Interior and Kingdom relations could propose a bill introducing this measure. Although ambitious, the Dutch government recently implemented the Dutch Diversity Act (2022) which mandates at least one third of companies' Supervisory Board's seats to be held by women (Ministry of Justice and Security, 2021a). This gender quota indicates that the government strives to ensure that women are adequately represented. For that reason, a minority quota in the Dutch parliament would assure that Muslim representation will not suffer nor be suppressed under a right-wing government. Having a representative number of Muslims in the parliament representing religious interests could decrease the expected negative regulatory policy overtime, as apparent among respondents who rely on the political party DENK to represent their interests.

Introducing minority quotas would also reflect a more accurate representative bureaucratic composition of Muslim Dutch citizens, vital to favorable policy outputs (Bishu & Kennedy, 2019). Not only is the shared Muslim Dutch identity important as it fosters trust and a sense of security (Riccuci & Ryzin, 2016), a representative bureaucracy adequately representing the social demographic of Muslim Dutch citizens, could improve public legitimacy and social equity (Riccuci & Ryzin, 2016), crucial to confront the perceived exclusion and devaluation the respondents expressed. Even in void of active representative bureaucrats, studies indicate that symbolic representation may generate increased interaction with the group represented, including them in the policymaking process (Riccuci & Ryzin, 2016). For example, during a recent Islamic head covering debate, Esmah Lalah, member of the Green Party, visibly Muslim by head covering, defended Muslim Dutch women's right to wear Islamic head covering as right-wing politicians claimed its oppressive nature. She asserted, "I wear this head covering among many other women, it is a personal, conscious,

and free choice” (RTL, 2024). Therefore, introducing a minority quota would mandate the presence of Muslim Dutch representatives, which Muslim Dutch citizens would entrust to represent and defend in case of anti-Islam policy motions or debates and introduce specific matters on their agenda.

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Appendix

A. Interview guide

Before the questions:

- Purpose of the interview
- Emphasis on confidentiality and guaranteed anonymity
- Mention that the interview will be recorded and transcribed

Introductory questions

- Nationality
- Religion
- Residency

Social identity: NELLS (Tolsma et al., 2014)

- How do you identify yourself?
- Do you identify more strongly as Dutch or Muslim (or equally) Why?
- How strongly do you identify as Dutch?
- Is the Dutch identity an important part of yourself? Why?
- Is it possible to combine your national identity with your religious identity?

PVV's anti-Islam stance

- What do you think of the PVV's stance related to Islam?
- What do you think of the current political climate in the Netherlands after the PVV's victory?

PVV's victory

- What was your first reaction to the PVV's victory?
- How do you expect to be targeted in policy?
- Do you think policymaking will be in your favor or the opposite?
- Do you think the PVV's regulatory policy objectives will be implemented? (if they stated previous knowledge of these)

Expected policy implications

Group-threat theory (Abbink & Harris, 2019)

- Do you believe that some groups are inferior to others in society?
- Which group do you think the PVV places you in? How does that make you feel?
- Which group do you personally believe you belong to?
- The slogan/motto of the PVV is 'Dutch back in first place', do you consider yourself part of the Dutch group that the PVV describes it serves?
- How do you expect the PVV group categorization of Muslim Dutch citizens to impact policy?

Social position (professional and private life)

- Do you expect your social position to be impacted? How?
- How do you think your professional life will be affected?
- Do you think educational attainment will be influenced?
- Do you think job opportunities will be influenced?
- How do you think your personal life will be affected?
- Do you think your religious freedom will be influenced?

Political representation

- Can you describe how/whether you feel politically represented? By who?
- Do you think you will continue to be politically represented?
- Do you think the PVV will represent Muslims? How?
- How do you think you will be represented after PVV's victory? Will it be different from the previous government?

B. Code tree



C. Respondent overview tables

Table 2: Overview social identification of respondents.

Participant	Stronger identification as Muslim	Stronger identification as Dutch	Dual identification
1			X
2	X		
3	X		
4			X
5	X		
6	X		
7		X	
8			X
9	X		
10	X		
11	X		
12	X		

13			X
14	X		
15	X		
16	X		
17	X		
18	X		
19			X
20	X		
Total	14	1	5

Table 3: *Overview of policy and social position expectations.*

Participant	Expecting harsh policies	Expecting less harsh policies	Expecting professional life to be negatively impacted through policy (social position)	Not expecting professional life to be negatively impacted through policy (social position)	Expecting private life to be negatively impacted through policy (social position)	Not expecting private life to be negatively impacted through policy (social position)
Social identification total number of participants	Strongly Muslim: 4 Dual identity: 2	Strongly Muslim: 10 Dual identity: 3 Strongly Dutch: 1	Strongly Muslim: 12 Dual identity: 2	Strongly Muslim: 2 Dual identity: 3 Strongly Dutch: 1	Strongly Muslim: 12 Dual identity: 2	Strongly Muslim: 2 Dual identity: 3 Strongly Dutch: 1
1	X		X			X
2		X	X			X
3		X		X		X
4	X			X		X
5	X		X		X	
6		X	X		X	
7		X		X		X

8		X	X		X	
9	X		X		X	
10		X		X	X	
11		X	X		X	
12		X	X		X	
13		X		X		X
14		X	X		X	
15	X		X		X	
16		X	X		X	
17	X		X		X	
18		X	X		X	
19		X		X	X	
20		X	X		X	
Total	6	14	14	6	14	6
H1	ACCEPTED					
H2	ACCEPTED					

Table 4: *Overview respondents' out-group categorization.*

Participant	Expecting harsh policies	Expecting less harsh policies	Social identification as the out-group category
Social identification total number of participants	Strongly Muslim: 4 Dual identity: 2	Strongly Muslim: 10 Dual identity: 3 Strongly Dutch: 1	Strongly Muslim: 14 Dual identity: 5 Strongly Dutch: 1
1	X		X
2		X	X
3		X	X
4	X		X
5	X		X
6		X	X
7		X	X

8		X	X
9	X		X
10		X	X
11		X	X
12		X	X
13		X	X
14		X	X
15	X		X
16		X	X
17	X		X
18		X	X
19		X	X
20		X	X
Total	6	14	20
H3	REJECTED		

Table 5: *Overview of political representation expectations.*

Participant	Expecting a negative impact on political representation	Not expecting a negative impact on political representation
Social identification total number of participants	Strongly Muslim: 10 Dual identity: 3 Strongly Dutch: 1	Strongly Muslim: 5 Dual identity: 1
1	X	
2		X
3	X	
4	X	
5	X	
6	X	
7	X	
8	X	
9	X	

10		X
11	X	
12	X	
13		X
14	X	
15	X	
16		X
17		X
18		X
19	X	
20	X	
Total	14	6
H4	ACCEPTED	