Islamic Volunteering and Charitable Giving in the Netherlands

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Volunteering and charitable giving are subjects that have received serious attention of scholars during the last decades (for overviews, see Musick & Wilson 2008; Bekkers & Wiepking 2007). This literature mainly focuses on individual determinants of volunteering and charitable giving. Religion is often claimed to be a very important individual determinant in predicting volunteering and charitable giving. Being religious and religious activity are positively related with volunteering (see e.g. Campbell & Yonish 2003; Wilson & Janoski 1995) and charitable giving (see e.g. Bekkers & Schuyt 2008). As far as we know, no studies so far have compared Islamic volunteering and charitable giving and members of other religious denominations in a country in which Muslims are part of the immigrant population.

To what extent do Muslims volunteer and give to charitable organizations in the Netherlands? Philanthropy and charity are central tenets of Islam, and many Muslims look upon charity as a form of worship. Philanthropy unites Muslims. Muslims think of humans as linked to each other through their obligations to God. Therefore charitable acts are not only acts of faith, but also act of community. The Islamic concept ‘takafull’ describes the responsibility of each Muslim for every other Muslim (see e.g. Alterman & Hunter 2004).

In this paper, we address two research questions: (1) To what extent do volunteering and charitable giving by Muslims differ from members of other religious denominations in the Netherlands?, (2) To what extent can we explain differences in volunteering and charitable giving between Muslims and members of other religious denominations by variation in church attendance, resources and integration?

We compare charitable giving and volunteering of Muslims with that of members of other religious denominations. It is important to notice immigrants are overrepresented in the Islamic population and underrepresented among members of other religious denominations. We hypothesize that because of the focus in Islam on the responsibility of each Muslim for another Muslim that Muslims are more likely than members of other religious denominations to focus on their own religious community regarding volunteering and charitable giving. In contrast, we hypothesize that members of other religious denominations are more likely than the Muslims in the Netherlands to focus on secular giving and volunteering. We expect only to be able to partly explain the differences between Muslims and members of other religious denominations by means of variation in resources and integration in the Netherlands.

In order to test our hypotheses, we use data from the immigrant study of the Giving in the Netherlands Panel Survey 2007 (GINPSI07, 2009). In the spring and summer of 2008, we conducted face-to-face interviews among five groups of immigrants and native Dutch about their charitable giving and volunteering. Nine hundred and six respondents participated in this study, consisting of approximately 150 respondents of Antillean, Moroccan, Turkish Surinamese and native Dutch descent, and about 110 respondents of Afghan descent.

Literature


