Effective University Leadership Practices among Muslim Women Academic Leaders

Samah Hatem Almaki[1*], Abu Daud Silong[2], Khairuddin Idris[3] & Nor Wahiza Abdul Wahat[4]

[1, 2, 3, 4] Department of Professional Development and Continuing Education, Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400, UPM, Serdang, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Higher education steadily includes more women in the leadership of the academy. Daily leadership challenges require effective leadership to engage and move others toward progress and development in the workplace. As such, women must handle complex university demands and leadership challenges, particularly as they relate to academic excellence, student achievement, and resource management. Muslim women have shown great achievements in their careers and professional life. Nevertheless, there is a lack of knowledge about leadership practices of Muslim women as academic leaders in higher education, which makes it even more difficult for organizations to address the advancement and progress of women in the academic workplace. Therefore, this paper provides an overview of research examining the status of practices of Muslim women academic leaders. The objective of this review is to reflect current knowledge on leadership topic by focusing on the most recent evidence in the area. The sources of evidence were used peer-reviewed empirical studies and reviews published in academic journals. In addition, specialist texts on leadership were examined in order to give an overview of main leadership theories.

Keywords: Gender & leadership, effective leaders, challenges, academic leadership, muslim women's leadership

INTRODUCTION

Over the last half-century, women have made significant advances in education, labor force participation, and political activism across the globe (Pande & Ford, 2011). Currently, advancing the role of women in Muslim society is one of the most critical issues that have occupied a great deal of thought among those interested in women's advancement. Such investment or advancement has not been restricted to only the elites, but also included a large portion of sectors in Muslim society (Al-Malah, 2014). In the recent years, there has been a set of research studies conducted on women's access to upper leadership positions, the differences between the leadership behavior of women and men, styles and capabilities of men and women leaders, and different obstructions that exist between women leaders and positions in higher education (O'Neil, Hopkins & Bilimoria, 2008).

Eagly and Carli addressed the increasing assertion that women have an advantage inexercising leadership because of alignment with contemporary culture. However, they warned that any advantages women have as leaders may be offset by gender prejudice and discrimination (Eagly & Carli, 2003). Societal attitudes toward education of girls, women's domestic responsibilities, and ability to provide leadership contribute to female self-image and ability to envisage careers involving leadership. Institutional structures, including qualifications and required work experience, promotion procedures and job descriptions may help or hinder women's progress to leadership. In addition, each workplace encompasses informal attitudes and behaviors that may support women, or discriminate against them (Sperandio, 2010).

Eagly, Hohannesen-Schmidt & van Engen (2003) asserts that women have the required skills for leadership; they can be effective leaders as they have novel and remarkable visions to encourage transformation. Likewise, women have unique skills, modes, attitudes, ideas and abilities to lead organizations to meet the needs of the new era. For that, women must be present in leadership positions in education systems worldwide to provide a gendered perspective on educational change and development, and to ensure social justice through gender equity at leadership and decision-making levels. The 4th World Conference on Women (1995) called for governments worldwide to "create a gender sensitive education system in order to ensure full and equal participation of women in educational administration and policy and decision making" (Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action [BPA], 1995, Chap. IV, Article 82).

Nevertheless, among the studies of women in leadership and management is a lack of research dealing with women as university presidents or chancellors; the terminology varies depending on the organization. Moreover, literature in the leadership field has a tendency to be focused on studies that basically involve men or male standards (Martin, 2008). When the viewpoints of women are included in the research, often these viewpoints are investigated from a small portion of the population, which usually consists of middle class, highly educated who are professionals, highly successful executives, or leaders (O'Neil, Hopkins & Bilimoria, 2008). Therefore, the main purpose of this paper is to provide the perceptions about the practices of Muslim women as academic leaders among Muslim communities. Consequently, the article will propose an overview of higher education leadership, Muslim women as academic leader, and then presents a framework of western leadership theories and Islamic Leadership Theory. Lastly, the paper concludes with a look at the challenges facing by Muslim women academic leaders, which prevent them from achieving their ambitions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Leadership

Leadership is often easy to identify in practice but it is difficult to define precisely. Given the complex nature of leadership, a specific and widely accepted definition of leadership does not exist and might never be found (Day & Antonakis, 2012). For example, some people think leadership means influence others to complete a particular task, leadership is abilities to transform and influence people and institutions (Astin & Astin, 2000). Regarding its distinction from management, leadership as seen from the "New" perspective (Bryman, 1992) is purpose-driven action that brings about change or transformation based on values, ideals, vision, symbols, and emotional exchanges. Mission. Winston & Patterson, (2006) indicate that leader is one or more people who selects, equips, and influences one or more followers who have diverse gifts, skills and abilities and focuses the followers to the organization's objectives and mission causing the followers to willingly and enthusiastically expend spiritual, physical energy and emotional in a concerted coordinated effort to achieve the organizational objectives. Some scholars see Leadership as a servent. Crippen (2005) point out that Servant leaders believe in, first, helping, then leading. According to BIJUR (2000, p.167) "leadership means enhancing human potential". It is about creating the right environment for people to develop as leaders.

Leadership in Islam is a responsibility given by Allah to selected individuals. Therefore, it becomes a great responsibility and demands immense conscientiousness from the person in the leadership role. The Qur'an says:

> *"...Allah will exalt those who believe among you, and those who have knowledge, to high ranks. Allah is informed of what ye do" (al- Qur'an, 58:11) (*Aabed, 2006).

In Islam, leadership is a process of inspiring and coaching voluntary followers in an effort to fulfill a clear and shared vision. Thus, in Islam, a leader is not free to act as he chooses, nor must he submit to the wishes of any group—he must act only to implement Allah's laws on the earth. Allah said in his Qur'an,

> *"And we made them leaders guiding men by our command and we sent inspiration to do good deeds, to establish regular prayers, and to practice regular charity; and they constantly served us only" (Qur'an 21:73).*

Moreover, leadership in Islam is not about practicing authority and power. It rather emphasizes on the service of encouragements and man kindness of the leader to look after his followers with utmost humility and sincerity. As the Prophet (PBUH) said:

> *"All of you are guardians and responsible for your wards and the things under your care. The Imam (i.e. ruler) is the guardian of his subjects and is responsible for them and a man is the guardian of his family and is responsible for them. A woman is the guardian of her*

husband's house and is responsible for it. A servant is the guardian of his master's belongings and is responsible for them" (Sahih Al- Bukhari, 2.13.18) (Toor, 2008).

Based on the perspectives offered above, a proposed definition of Islamic leadership as follows: "Leadership from Islamic perspectives is a social process in which the leader seeks to achieve certain organizational objectives by garnering the support from relevant stakeholders – essentially followers – while completely complying to Islamic principles and teachings (Toor, 2008).

Leadership Theories

In attempting to understand the nature of leadership practices of Muslim academic women and its different aspects, it is necessary to discuss the different theories of leadership. Leadership theories are connected with explaining the role of leaders and the influences of leadership on the effectiveness of organizations. There are various theories of leadership, which attempt to explain the factors involved in the emergence of leadership, the nature of leadership, or the consequences of leadership. These theories endeavored to identify various leadership styles, behavior in which exercise leadership (Hayward, 2005). Therefore, leadership theories provide a framework for understanding the current leadership of Muslim women academic leaders. In this investigation, effective leadership is viewed from some theoretical perspectives and findings from existing research. The dominant ideas on effective leadership have initially started with the trait theory, followed by behavior theory, situational theory and integrative theory (Mohamad, Silong & Hassan, 2009).

Trait theory concentrates on identifying the personality characteristics related to tribute innate talents for making the prominent leaders in history that lead to the concept of the "great man" theories. (Northouse, 2010). According to Northhouse (2007), the trait theory of leadership was probably the earliest leadership theory. Trait theorists proposed that some people were born leaders, those great leaders possess innate qualities. Behavioral approach indicates that leaders', behavior influence the followers to change their values and beliefs in their work. Leader with consistency and positive behavior is potentially promoting individual to be more innovative among their employees and try to consult them more often, ensure that employees have sufficient autonomy in making decision to go about their task, and recognize and support people's initiatives and innovative efforts. Creating a safe and positive atmosphere that supports openness and risk taking appears to encourage idea generation and application (Han, 2010).

Later, situational or contingency theory came into the picture that has largely displaced the dominant trait and behavior approach. This theory sees leadership effectiveness is dependent upon a match between the situation and leadership style. It also concentrates on the degree to which the situation gives influence and control of the leaders. The essential point was that the qualities of leaders differentiate in various situations and those qualities might be appropriate to a specific task and interpersonal context (Lo, Ramayah & Wei Min, 2009).

Today, researchers study transactional leadership within the continuum of the full range of leadership model (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Transactional leadership approach is an exchange of rewards with subordinates for services rendered. These exchanges allow leaders to accomplish their performance objectives, complete required tasks, maintain the current organizational situation, motivate followers through contractual agreement, direct behavior of followers toward achievement of established goals, emphasize extrinsic rewards, avoid unnecessary risks, and focus on improve organizational efficiency. In turn, transactional leadership allows followers to fulfill their own self-interest, minimize workplace anxiety, and concentrate on clear organizational objectives such as increased quality, customer service, reduced costs, and increased production (Sadeghi & Pihie, 2012). Transactional leadership theory described by Burns (1978) posited the relationship between leaders and followers as a series of exchanges of gratification designed to maximize organizational and individual gains. Transactional leadership evolved for the marketplace of fast, simple transactions among multiple leaders and followers, each moving from transaction to transaction in search of gratification. The marketplace demands reciprocity, flexibility, adaptability, and real-time cost-benefit analysis (Burns, 1978).

On the other hand**,** Burns (1978) suggested a new theory of leadership called transformational leadership. Bass (1985) indicated that in transformational leadership leader is one who motivates followers to do more than they originally expected to do. According to Burns (1978), transformational leadership happends when leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivations and values and this outcomes in a transforming effect on both leaders and followers. In a transformational approach, the purposes of leaders and followers that might have begun as separate become related. Transformational leadership contains four components: (a), inspirational motivation, (b) charisma or idealized influence (attributed or behavioral) (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration. From a perspective of transformational leadership, leadership is considered to be about doing what has never being done, and it includes charismatic and visionary leadership (Bennis, 1994).

Competences Leadership Model

Effective leadership in any organization requires a complex set of competencies. In the higher education setting this is especially true, given the nature of the university system (Middlehurst, 1993).The concept of competencies has been popular in leadership and management literature for many years. Competencies have become standard vernacular for discussing the necessary components for successful performance. It has been argued that competencies are the "critical resource" enabling organizations to reach strategic and competitive objectives (Nordhaug & Gronhaug, 1994).

There are many definitions of competencies, they can be defined as the knowledge, skills, abilities and behaviors that enable to a defined performance outcome (Singh & Khamba, 2014; Campion, et. al., 2011; Barber & McLagan, 1980). Spendlove (2007) defined competencies as personal traits, skills, behaviors, knowledge, values and many other existing frameworks. The researchers agreed on the inclusion of four central leadership competencies or meta-competencies and their reviews are inclusive of vision, cognitive ability, managerial effectiveness, and interpersonal effectiveness. Within these four meta-competencies, seventeen broad competencies are identified. Northouse (2014) describes competencies as one part of the "Skills Model" of leadership and includes social judgment skills, problem-solving skills and knowledge. The skills based approach which includes competencies emphasizes the capabilities that enable leadership performance (Northouse, 2014).

There are several well- established lists of leadership competencies in the leadership. Based on Yang (2006), leadership competencies identified by 22 Respondents in Chinese IHL are: Enthusiasm, devotion, benevolence, selflessness, justice, self-discipline, tolerance, kindness, determination, responsibility, persistence, diligence, flexibility, commitment, charisma, openness, initiative and creativity. Abu Daud Silong et al. (2008) identified 15 core competencies of public sector leadership in Malaysia. These are competencies related to teamwork, communication, problem-solving, conflict resolution, relational skills, public relations, project management, interpersonal skills, visioning process, professionalism, and strategic thinking, leadership, training and coaching, technical skills, research skills and change management. Leaders who have higher competencies in these areas are likely to be more effective. Berke, Kossler & Wakefield, (2008) suggested the use of leadership competency models based on data that are researched and validated. The CCL wheel described 20 competencies derived from thousands of responses from leaders in all organizations. These are related to three major competency areas of "Leading Others", "Leading the Organizations" and "Leading Yourself". Each cluster of competencies is described by certain domains and specific competencies (Mohamad & Silong, 2010).

Higher Education Leadership

Higher Education is a lynchpin of the knowledge economy of the 21st century. It is even more critical than that of other establishments given their pivotal role in the economy and society (OBE, 2013). Higher education institutions are key actors in the dissemination and production of knowledge through instruction and research, and thus bear a unique social responsibility for promotion of citizenship, and civic engagement values. Likewise, they are producers of human capital, which is demanded by employers in the labor market and critical to the economic and social advancement (Wilkens, 2011). There has been extraordinary interest in educational leadership in the early part of the twentieth century in view of the belief that the quality of leadership makes a huge impact on the educational process, it is a process of guidance for activities of the group and influence others to achieve the goals of the group. In this matter, it is important to affect the others to make it easier to achieve objectives of the organization (Nwekeaku, 2013). Maxwell (1999) believes that leadership is an ability and will to rally men and women to accomplish a common objective and has a character that inspires confidence.

The changing demands of higher education are challenging traditional assumptions not only about the purpose and about nature of higher education and its place in society, but also about the systems of administration and leadership that ought to operate inside higher education institutions. Jones, Lefoe, Harvey & Ryland, (2012), support the old argument that leadership ought to be distributed, rather than being focused on a hierarchy, viewing leadership as 'how people relate to each other'. On the other hand, Bolden, Gosling, O'Brien, Peters, Ryan & Haslam (2012) contrast the traditional model of the university as a community of researcher's scholars with a highly democratic and decentralized process of decision making, representing leadership as a shared responsibility, with increasingly common corporate or entrepreneurial approaches to management and leadership in universities. However, modern thinking about leadership highlights new approaches which may be considered for supporting leadership in higher education.

Moreover, Voon, Lo, Ngui, & Peter (2009) illuminated that leadership in an academic learning environment is not only the emphasis on the organization needs but also is included in the task of nation. Gardner, Avolio, &

Walumbwa (2005) believe that leaders' norms of behavior are congruent between what they declare and what they do, this is required from the leader in higher education due to their role in nation-building and human capacity development. Middlehurst, Goreham & Woodfield (2009) inquired whether there are any differences about leadership in higher education in comparison to other Institutions. They believe that there is nothing to distinguish it from other institutions, and despite that there are some characteristics that are characterized by higher education institutions such as their decentralized nature, collegiality and the culture of autonomy.

Women Leadership in Islam Perspective

Islamic teaching strongly supports the education of women in social domains, political, economic and religious. The Holy Quran treats both men and women in the same way as individuals. The Quran states:

> *And their Lord hath heard them (and He saith): Lo! I suffer not the work of any worker, male or female, to be lost. Ye proceed one from another (Pickthal 3:195).*

This verse makes it clear that all people are equal in the eye of Allah for He has the same standard of justice for all, female or male. There are nurmouse verses in the Quran which state that in the matter of punishment and reward both men and women will be treated alike as individuals and will suffer the consequence of their actions. Allah says:

> *And whoso doth good works, whether of male or female, and he (or she) is a believer such will enter Paradise and they will not be wronged the dint in a date-stone (Pickthal 4:124).*

Abdulraheem (2009) explained that the Islam gave women's equal rights to participate in public affairs, for example, the right to vote as well as to run for leadership positions. Al-Hassani (2010) indicates that throughout the ages, Muslim women were participating in all areas; they were, rulers, scholars, doctors, poets and writers. For example, one of the wives of the Prophet Mohammed, Aysha, led an army including 30,000 soldiers, and helped to treat them, and cooked for them. Aysha discussed and negotiated various issues and political matters with Prophet Mohammed, who freely acknowledged her wisdom. It is also noted in Islamic historical documents that one sixth of the Hadith record 54. Aysha transmitted part of the chain of transmission of the sayings and traditions of the Prophet (Hamdan, 2005).

Moreover, Caliphate of Omar Ibn al-Khattab, one of the women urged him in the mosque and proved her point of view in front of people and he said, "the woman is right and Omar is wrong".In conclusion, the Islamic approaches of leadership are different from the Western approaches of leadership in the following ways: First, the Islamic approaches recognize the psychological, spiritual sources of human behaviors and derivations. Second, the Islamic leadership approach is a value-oriented approach that seeks to maximize ethical standards and Islamic values. Finally, the Islamic approach of leadership is a human-oriented approach rather than a product-oriented approach.

Islam did not prevent women from leadership positions in the academic field or any other fields on the contrary, Islam has declared their full responsibility along with the responsibility of the man entrusted with the honor of the human succession in the ground. The historical record shows that discussion of Islamic teaching with regards to women's education refers to the participation of both sexes as God gave them the qualifications and capabilities in development and succession process on the earth (Alrqub, 2009).

The Concept of Leadership among the Muslim Women

Behavioral theories of leadership are based on the belief that great leaders are made, not born. A special presence and charisma, which are considered born traits, are of little significance if they are not accompanied by other characteristics and skills that are learned (Bolden, Gosling, Marturano & Dennison, 2003). In the study of Dubai Women Establishment (2011), about how Arab women leaders define themselves, most of them agreed with the behavioral theorists, given the hurdles that they face while striving for leading positions. From their point of view, leaders might be born with particular characteristics which give them a competitive advantage. They also agreed that successful leaders are firstly made through perseverance, hard work, extensive experience and determination to overcome all obstacles they face in their career. Moreover, in the study of Ali (2003) that conducted an interview with 27 women who assuming leadership positions, they defined Leadership as a shared responsibility with the staff to achieve the desired objectives. They also thought that Leadership is a science and art. Science is the administrative aspect and art is the leadership one which is related to the inspirational aspect. Every leader is the leader of his group who is on the head of hierarchy (Ali, 2003).

Over the past decades, attitudes about women in the workplace have significantly changed (Cherlin and Walters 1991), women have made significant advances in education, labor force participation, and political activism across the globe. Gender gaps still exist in most of the countries, but are much smaller than in previous decades (Pande & Ford, 2011). Bornstein (2007) states that there are very few women in positions that might prompt to roles of leadership, leaving few women prepared, available and ready to assume roles of leadership. Similarly, Dugger (2001) confirms that representation of women in higher professorial positions is scarce on the administrative career ladder, relatively few women advance to top academic leadership positions such as president, dean. Moreover, Madsen (2008) referred to the lack of literature and scholarly studies on this topic. There is a requirement for publishing studies that investigate the experience of high-level women leaders in developing the skills, knowledge, and competencies that have helped them to get and maintain positions of impact in higher education (Madsen, 2008). On the other hand, Literature on the differences between men's and women's desire for progression is scarce and often conflicting ideas, making it hard to determine whether women really do differ from men in this perspective. Lepkowski (2009) founded that women do not vary from men in their desire for positional progression in higher education. Men and women also do not vary in their desire to be president. Consequently, there are varied perspectives on the degree of the eligibility of women to occupy leadership positions.

A few opinions have supported the right of women in leadership positions as equal as to men. While the other views considered women inferior in performance and they need to be continuously controlled and supervised, this implies that some departments still consider differences between men and women at work. Therefore, women cannot effectively perform leadership position as performed by men (Al-Shihabi, 2001). Al-Hussein (2011) stressed that women have unique leadership skills and traits in leading educational institutions, even though they face certain challenges and difficulties that obstruct their leadership effectiveness. White's study (2012) also demonstrated that there is a clear prejudice between women and men in accepting the managerial leadership position in favor of men, an indicative of marginalization of women's leadership roles. Meanwhile, Wilkinson (2009) believed that the woman has a pioneer role in the academic position.

Brunner & Schumaker (1998) showed that the academic leadership in education is not constrained to men rather than women, as the effect of gender on the individual behavior in leadership is worth being studied and paid attention to, because of its widespread effect on work. The study also demonstrated that women are characterized by leadership aspects that may not exist in men. In the same context, Al-Minqash (2007) sees that women had roles in leading, following-up academic works, and there were no differences between the leading methods of men and women in the academic institutions, offering a further clear evidence on the existence of the women's leadership role in different educational roles. Furthermore, he stated that nevertheless limited positions of leadership occupied by women, however, they make an effective contribution to the development of society and its advancement, they argue that one problem with the concept of women's leadership is the lack of data on how women in fact behave in senior attitude. In the same context, Bilen-Green, Froelich, & Jacobson (2008) argue that women in top of academic, can encourage institutional change and develop retention, recruitment and progression of women within the professional ranks. They assert that more women in leadership positions give a greater understanding of realistic work policy obstacles, promoted networking possibilities, and demonstrated a shifting of organizational culture that can facilitate more equal involvement of women within the academy. Hence, having more women in academic leadership attitudes provides a vigorous signal of the desired ongoing culture change.

In Saudi society in general, it is believed that the role of women was to maintain the basic structure of the society and family, therefore, women do not have power in any positions and are subjected to male individuals who may often have inferior qualifications to their female counterparts in both private and public sectors (Hamdan, 2005). This implies that conservative attitudes toward women's education - which have gradually been facilitating since the 1960s – have arisen not because of the impact of Islam, but largely due to the cultural traditions that developed around it. Women need to learn how to connect and treat each other as sources of knowledge. Because Saudi women, like all Muslim women in any given society, vary in race, class, and cultural background, there is a pressing need to cross boundaries and ignore their cultural and class differences to challenge gender inequalities. These women collaborate and unite with each other to solve male dominance in their society (Hamdan, 2005). But today the Saudi government started establishing series of initiatives to promote access to higher education for women, including the establishment of the Princess Noura bit Abdul Rahman University for women, which has been designed to become the largest university for women in the world (Ministry of Higher Education, 2010).

Likewise, in Malaysia, a country high in cultural tightness, women leaders report that they have to lead as if they were mothers or teachers to their subordinates so that society and their followers will be more accepting

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and tolerant of their leadership. Malaysian women, along with other women in other parts of the world, have attempted for decades to prove their value in the workplace (Ameen, 2001). However, they still encounter personal leadership characteristics and challenges in an academic environment that prevent them from attaining and staying in higher education administrative positions (Suzana & Kasim, 2003).

In summary, it is important to involve women in the decision making process on the universities. It is fundamental for women to see that they can achieve leadership roles; particularly while they are in the process of self- develop, both professionally and personally, which happens while they are in university (Ropers-Huilman, 2003).

Challenges Facing Muslim Women Academic Leaders

Many studies ascertained the woman's eligibility and her professional and leadership efficiency, which sometimes exceeded the man. The first conference, held in the State of Kuwait in (2010) under the motto "Women and the Renaissance of the Nation" referred that women have an effective role and wide participations in leading several community organizations to success, even though there are many pressures and challenges standing in their way for the continuity of the institutional work and assuming their leadership positions. Also UNIFEM and UNICEF (2002) eliminated all forms of prejudice and discrimination against women, especially in assuming administrative leaderships in community organizations, especially the educators, in the preservation of the woman's role and rights in the inclusive development. Yet, the occupational and leadership status of the woman is still suffering from a wide gap, as there is unequal representation in the leadership and administrative positions between women and men, which became clear in many countries, especially, in Arab countries (Al-Shihabi & Mohammad, 2001). The woman faces several challenges that stand in the way of her success in leadership. Moreover, to the negative beliefs about women's leadership and her feminine nature, which creates kind of difficulties and problems preventing her development and progress in terms of leadership and administration (Al-Shaddi, 2010). Various factors contribute to limiting Muslim women academic leaders potential to seek positions of leadership.

Gender Stereotypes

Women face challenges as they seek leadership positions because society has reinforced strict expectations about what women can and should do with their time and energy (Hoyt, 2010). Women leaders often find that they are judged whether they conform to feminine norms or masculine norms, creating a double-bind (Catalyst, 2007). Walsh & Turnbull (2014) indicated that women struggle to navigate their careers in a gender domain. The male-domain society impacts daily working practices and the evidence suggests that exclusion from networks limits opportunities for career advancement. Moreover, they found that the male-dominated culture led women to feel threatened and consider leaving the organization. He also shed lights on how many women lack self-belief in their ability, this lack of confidence, acts as a barrier to their professional success.

In the same vein, La Rey (2011) confirmed that there is slight variation between men and women in leadership; women have different leadership styles from men. He adds that one of the most significant challenges we face nowadays is the transformation of relationships, not only gender relationships, but also relationships across other social boundaries such as ethnicity and race. Whether this behavior is uncommon or even unintentional, it does happen and there is no clarification for why men outnumber women in roles of leadership in higher education (Smith, 2002). This is known as the stereotypes that are protecting men who can threaten women, this phenomenon is known as stereotype threat. For instance, the awareness that women are less likely to succeed in leadership can undermine women's performance on leadership-related missions such as, managerial decision-making or negotiating, motivating employees (Tellhed & Björklund, 2011).

Drury (2010) generates a list of barriers that inhibit women such as: stereotypes (via comments and preconceived notions), lack of trust from colleagues, attributes (not being masculine enough), lack of perceived recognition, support and trust, marginalization (going unrecognized for contributions), and jealousy from co-workers. Simmilary, Ely, Ibarra & Kolb (2011) affirms that leadership has long been thought of as a man's domain and women incapable of possessing the appropriate qualities of a leader. Women are ordinarily thought of as weaker, less decisive, and more emotional than men. He believes that some women who have assumed leadership positions may be compelled to sacrifice or hide feminine qualities, so they are considered as more capable. However, this might reduce their amiability as they may be seen as not being realistic.

Conventionally, women are seen "too sensitive, too emotional to others' criticisms" (Qiang et al., 2009), therefore unsuitable for leadership (Strachan, 2009). Thus, women should prove their worth" as a leader by working harder to break the stereotypes associated with them in leadership and especially to overcome their "domestic role stereotyping" (Coleman, 2002). Kloot (2004) indicates that women achieved leadership status

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through a merit-based appointment system. Nevertheless, they were not able to beat the dominated masculine culture. Masculine reasoning might have resulted in the males not really believing that the women were in those positions because they had demonstrated their "merit". Even when women break through into leadership ranks, they face propositions that they did not achieve their positions through worthiness, as merit is perceived diversely for women and men within institutionalized discriminatory practices.

From the above it is very apparent that there is a need for alternate leadership practices that help women to be themselves and be the best leaders they can be. However, it is still clear that not all women have been properly trained for these positions and need to find an intact supportive environment. Moreover, society needs leaders who are idealistic, motivated servants of the people, and who are able to highlight new meanings of what it means to be a leader (Malinga, 2011).

Cultural Challenge

Notwithstanding women's education and entry into the labor market, the woman play typical role as housewife. The man, on the other hand, is the breadwinner, head of family and has a right to public life (Sadie, 2005). The literature has acknowledged the impacts and interactions between leadership and culture. Shein (2004) perceives leadership and culture as "two sides of the same coin". Culture defined as the enduring set of values, ideologies and beliefs underpinning processes, practices, and structures that distinguishes one group of people from another. The groups of people may be at national level (societal culture) or at an academic level (organizational culture) (Walker & Dimmock, 2002). Much research on women' leadership has indicated the function of patriarchal culture as a barrier to women's progress (Akao, 2008; White, 2003). Dana (2009) asserts that "culture itself raises obstructions for omen's aspirations simply because of the routine practices, attitudes, and learned behaviors that are reinforced and practiced".

Badran (2005) indicated that over the long history, Islamic ideology has been firmly established as an undeniable system governing different aspects of Arab individuals. The general impression among some Islamic scholars is that Islam accords a low status to women in comparison to men and treats them differently. Furthermore, Islamic law is regularly utilized as the fundamental reason for the exclusion of women from the public sphere. He adds that conservative religious groups, in particular, enhance a traditional family structure in which women who married are expected to focus on family life rather than focusing on attaining a career (Sidani, 2005). Therefore, many authors agree that Islam has been exploited by patriarchal societal structures to legitimize discrimination against women (Metle, 2002). Al-Lamki (1999) explains that Islam does not prevent women from pursuing a career or from seeking an education. In reverse, Islam confers both women and men's equality in their ethical, religious, and responsibilities and civil rights duties. Islam made it compulsory for each Muslim to gain knowledge to understand the true spirit of Islam and does not discriminate against female regarding their rights to pertaining education.

Vianello (2004) notes that women require a stronger socio-cultural background than men in order to get leadership role, denoting that parents of women leaders have a higher education level on average than their male colleagues. Therefore, women need a more favorable socio-cultural background than those men in order to obtain the same work role. Research on women's leadership has found that women face challenges on their way to the top position, and while in those positions they may experience role conflict and unequal employment opportunities, and patriarchal attitudes towards women (Shah, 2009). Cubillo & Brown (2003), in a study of women from nine countries undertaking advanced degrees in British universities, concluded that the barriers to women accessing educational leadership were not consistent across societies and cultures, or even homogeneous within society or culture. They suggested that barriers were determined not only by the more familiar institutional and organizational power structures, but also by specific cultural, religious beliefs, values, socioeconomic and political factors. These factors stem from culture, whether third world or western for women who want to access top of leadership positions (Weyer, 2007).

Work Life Balance

The issue of work-life balance has been a constant topic of debate in both professional and academic circles for the past three or four decades. Lately the employees and the organizations have been more aware of the work-life balance consequences (Robbins & Judge, 2007)..Ungerson & Yeandle (2005) defined work–life balance as an employee's perception that multiple domains of family care, work, and personal time are integrated and maintained with a minimum of role conflict. As well Kalliath and Brough (2008) stated a comprehensive definition of work life balance: "Work-life balance is defined as an individual outlook that work and non-work activities are promoted and compatible growth in accordance with an individual's current life priorities".

Higher education has experienced significant transformation and growth during that time, the challenges of balancing between family and work have become one of the issues among the scholars (Mukhtar, 2012). Work-life balance is one of the most fundamental factors for women that consider as challenge in achieving balancing between the family life with their career (Drago et al., 2006). Numerous of the reasons that hinder women to achive leadership position, for example;career interruptions due to pregnancy and motherhood might consider as a barrier for women to achieve leadership positions (Matsa & Miller, 2011). According to Wolfinger, Mason, & Goulden (2009) women are more successful in getting academic careers if they sacrifice or delay children and marriage, therefore, single women fare better in academia", also they add that academic women presidents are less likely to be married than academic men presidents. In the same vein, one study stressed that female board members were less likely to be married or have children and more likely to be divorced than their male counterparts (Groysberg & Bell, 2013).

However, studies have indicated that women tend not to leave management positions due to family commitments, but rather they leave these positions because there is no opportunity to advance (Ryan & Haslam, 2007). Furthermore, Wolf-Wendel & Ward (2006) pointed out that due to the demands of mother roles and ideal worker, women with young children are less likely to pursue roles of leadership in higher education. Academic women presidents are less likely to have children than academic men presidents. Balancing the roles of worker and mother is challenging, causing some women to abandon motherhood for career or vice versa (Williams, 2000). Since, often women carefully plan when to have kids so as not to overlap with academic pursuits such as tenure. Some women may even feel stressed to time of childbirth for breaks in the academic year; for example, summer, so as not to interfere with work. For numerous women, this delay could mean choosing not to have kids in order to follow an academic career (Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006). Commenting on the above, in order to advance women, these barriers must be both understood and overcome by academic organizations and their employees, both male and female.

Conclusions and Implications

Women bring diverse perspectives, strengths, and innovation to the exercise of leadership in higher education, however, these changes have not happened overnight, it happened as a result of increasing awareness of the need and importance of the presence of women in leadership positions and take advantage from its experience and skills. Therefore, this paper addressed practices of Muslim women in leadership position in higher education, the ways women lead, and the challenges faced Muslim women in leadership position. Moreover, leadership frameworks in previous literature have offered a unique perspective into issues related to the women's leadership in higher education. Furthermore, this paper addressed the disparity in the numbers of women academic in elite leadership positions and their representation in the top of higher education, specifically the lack of women serving in senior position. In addition, the literature shows that many factors which influence the limited number of women leaders such as gender stereotype, social perceptions issues balancing work and family. As well as, this paper shedding light on the advantages of women in leadership and what can be probably done to increase the number of women in leadership to achieve balance of gender in leadership that can change organizations to add a competitive advantage.

Therefore, this review may help in provided knowledge and understanding about the way that Muslim women leaders lead in higher education and help to support and develop women who show interest in leadership and creating a work environment which seems more welcoming and less hostile to the women and thereafter enabling the women to be more productive. On a larger scale, this study plans to build the numbers of Muslim women academically in the upper ranks of leadership in all fields.

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