

The Power of Belief:
The Role of Muslim Women's Beliefs in Organizational Management Success

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

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Abstract

The unemployment rate among Muslim women in Canada is the highest of all minority groups, and they rarely rise to leadership positions. This research seeks to identify Muslim women's beliefs about themselves and others that make them successful managers in Canadian organizations. Fourteen in-depth interviews were conducted in Ottawa with Muslim women who wear the hijab and have overcome discrimination to build successful careers in management. As a result of the analysis of the respondents' answers, it was determined that they possess firm internal beliefs about themselves as Muslim women and present themselves with strong Islamic identities. Furthermore, they have a high level of positive regard for their colleagues, and, despite having experienced Islamophobia, they do not enter their work environment expecting or suspecting others of discrimination. Once in the workplace, they possess a high grasp of organizational psychology, such as networking, mentorship, and conflict resolution. According to these belief systems, marginalized women can be successful in their careers if they have a high self-concept coupled with organizational psychology. The findings imply that they can help the gap in the literature as there is a dearth of scholarly articles on the experiences of Canadian Muslim women in the workplace. Hopefully, this research can be used to create seminars, knowledge, and workshops and can help change government and organizational policies.

Keywords:

Islamophobia, Muslim women, self-belief, Grounded theory, identity work, discrimination, hijab, career success.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This research proposal aims to contribute to the literature on the positioning of Canadian Muslim women working in management positions in Canadian organizations. The particular focus is to find the positive belief systems that Muslim women, who wear the hijab, possess for themselves and their colleagues that led them to become successful managers in Canadian organizations.

The research question requires a description of the condition of Muslim women in Canadian society: Muslim women are the most educated of any group, but they also have the highest unemployment rates in Canada (Khattab et al., 2019). Furthermore, Muslim women also face extreme discrimination, which creates a barrier to employment (Zine, 2004). *Discrimination* occurs when specific groups are marginalized and face social consequences, such as being denied equal access to services, opportunities, or employment (Ortiz & Roscigno, 2009). The politicization of Muslim women's issues by the government and the media has caused additional challenges regarding equality. A noteworthy example occurred in 2011 when former Immigration Minister Jason Kenney prohibited Muslim women from wearing niqabs during citizenship ceremonies to ensure that they were treated equally to other Canadian women (Nagra, 2018). The purpose of the ban was to ensure Muslim women were treated equally by freeing them from the niqab. However, at the time, it demonstrated that these women were not equal citizens as they could never become Canadian citizens due to wearing the niqab; this made them look weak, incapable, and oppressed (Nagra, 2018). Canadian Muslims face unconventional challenges; their marginalization and discrimination in different spaces threaten their integration into the Canadian society and their social and economic security (Nagra, 2018).

As the Muslim population grows in Canada, consideration should be given to the implications of discrimination in the labour market, as well as the perceptions of the Canadian public on the issue. One million Muslims make up 3.2% of the Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2017). The National Household Survey Counted 1,053,945 Muslims in 2011, an increase of 82% since 2001 (Hamdani, 2015). Additionally, Muslims represent 5.4% of the total population of Ottawa (Statistics Canada, 2013); thus, a high unemployment rate for Muslim women must be examined, especially since they are a highly discriminated group (Aguayo, 2009). The Canadian public's perception of Muslims is one of being an invisible threat; Muslims make up 3.2% of the population, but the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation provided information that Canadians believe the Muslim population is 17% and will rise to 27% in three years (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2016). The cause of this perceived threat is Muslim's image that depicts them as violent, militant, and culturally backward (Zine, 2012). The distorted population figures of Muslims by Canadians and the depiction of Muslims in the media as violent have caused an increase in discriminatory rhetoric against Muslims in Western media (Eid, 2014).

Discrimination and harmful media portrayals make it difficult for Muslim women to seek employment. Their professional marginalization is due to their image of obedience, incompetence, and unassertive (Nagra, 2018). Moreover, after September 11, additional attention has been paid to Muslim women in the media that stigmatized them by focusing on the Muslim veil, forced marriages, honour killings, and many other matters concerning their religious choices (Nagra, 2018). To avoid unwanted attention, stigmatized Muslim women attempt to blend in or slip unnoticed by performing identity work. *Identity* refers to an individual's distinctive qualities or characteristics (Hunt et al., 2020); *identity work* occurs when someone feels like it's necessary to change their identity to be accepted, heard, and engaged (Watson, 2008). Comparatively, this is

not something other minorities participate in with the same frequency as Muslim women (Latif et al., 2018). Identity work also occurs when one perceives danger in disclosing their identity; the goal is to protect yourself from any potential risk. However, its consequences will harm the very self it is trying to protect (Leary, 1999). For example, Muslim women may wear their hijab in one context to avoid being stereotyped and hide that they are Muslim (Latif et al., 2018). This identity work is linked directly to the *self-concept* of Muslim women, which is the combination of their convictions, abilities, values, ideas, and attitudes toward themselves (Super, 1953). The discrimination ostracizes Muslim women, depriving them of opportunities to participate in their community, and causes them to experience mental health issues (Hunt et al., 2020).

Muslim women face many challenges, including having the highest unemployment rate of any ethnic group while being stigmatized in the media. Once employed, Muslim women engage in identity work because they fear discrimination due to their religious beliefs. The instability of obtaining jobs and being forced to use identity work creates a toxic work environment that is not beneficial for Muslim women, colleagues, or employers. This research aims to find the positive belief systems that Muslim women have about themselves and others, which will make them successful in Canadian corporations. This research aims to determine whether Muslim women can be successful in their careers by using positive beliefs.

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 reviews the Methodology used to conduct this research. It begins by discussing the researcher's positionality and his reflection on the research's participants. Following that, we will discuss the selection of literature, the research paradigm, the qualitative approach, and how Grounded Theory was selected. As well as investigating ethical considerations, the sample, and the interview process, then we will describe the methods used to collect the data. The coding and analysis process will also be discussed, as well as the emerging

themes. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of the limitations and challenges of the study, as well as their impact on the researcher's reflections and methodology.

Chapter 3 will discuss the Theoretical and Conceptual Framework and the Literature Review. The theoretical framework of this research is the self-concept theory because, to understand individuals' beliefs, we first need to understand their self-concept. Self-concept is the sum of who we are, how we perceive ourselves, how we behave in a variety of situations, and our faith in our abilities (Super, 1953). This chapter will also include the critique of other approaches, such as critical race and feminism and will demonstrate the usefulness of the self-concept theory.

Still, within Chapter 3, we will discuss the themes that have arisen out of the literature. The researcher conducted a thorough literature review and came up with five themes. First, Islamophobia is causing a great deal of discrimination and pressure on Muslim women. Second, family and religion can limit the career opportunities of Muslim women. Third, having positive psychology and high self-efficacy is important for workplace success. Fourth, employees must adopt personal and organizational strategies to become successful in their careers. Last is that it's important to understand organizational psychology for career success.

Chapter 4 is the discussion section that includes the data analysis. After coding the interview transcripts, the researcher presented his results in three sections: First is the external factors section, which discusses the external factors that affect Muslim women that are out of their control. The first theme in this section is that Muslim women are resilient to Islamophobia. The second theme speaks about the influence of the family; there are three subthemes within the family: First is that husbands are very supportive, second is parents are very supportive, and third, younger children hinder their careers.

The second section within the Discussion is about the internal factors affecting Muslim women's careers, and there are three themes. The first theme is that they demonstrate strong Islamic identities; this theme has three subthemes: First, they do not perform identity work, second is that they practice Islam at work, and third is that they are unapologetically Muslim. The second theme is the importance of Islam in their career, and this had two subthemes: First is that Islam was not harmful to their careers, and second, Islam spiritually uplifted them in their organizations. The third theme is not othering others, and it had three subthemes: First is they do not *other* their colleagues from either an Islamic point of view. Second, nor do they other from an alliance-building perspective, and third, they also do not other from an educational standpoint.

The third theme of the discussion is related to organizational psychology factors. First, education is essential; second, mentors are instrumental; third, they can successfully network without the presence of alcohol; fourth, proactivity results in a promotion; and last, they are effectively capable of resolving conflict in the workplace. Within the themes, the researcher provides descriptive details of the behaviours, strategies, and steps that the participants used to become successful managers in Canadian organizations.

In the Conclusion, the researcher gives a brief background on the research and why it was necessary to conduct it. He presents the external factors to demonstrate the context and the environment in which Muslim women are operating. Then he presents the internal factors that they used to increase their self-concept, which any Muslim woman can replicate. Following the internal factors are the organizational psychological steps Muslim women perform to navigate their organization. It's important to note that external factors are not something that can be controlled by Muslim women; however, internal factors and organizational psychological factors are.

Chapter 2: Methodology

This research aims to identify the beliefs that Muslim women hold about themselves and others that allow them to be successful managers in Canadian organizations. As part of the process of selecting the methodology, the researcher thought about how the research question can be answered, while at the same time, considering the best interests of the participants. The research question must be answered in a detailed and descriptive manner so that other Muslim women can replicate the participant's success. Furthermore, Muslim women face the greatest level of discrimination out of any group, so the research must take their best interests into account. To appropriately gain insight into their life experiences, and thus answer the research question, the researcher has put the participants at the forefront of the research methodology.

Besides gaining insight into how the researcher developed his methodology, the reader will also be able to view the chronological steps and examples from his own experiences within the research. We will start by going over the researcher's positionality and his reflection regarding the research's participants. Then, we will discuss the selection of the literature, the research paradigm, the qualitative approach, and how Grounded Theory was chosen. We will describe the methods used to collect the data for the research and the interviews, as well as look at ethical considerations, the sample, and the interview process. The process of coding and analysis will also be reviewed, and the emerging themes will be presented. We will end this chapter with considerations of the limitations/challenges to the study and their effect on the researcher's reflections and methodology.

Researcher Positionality

Following a feminist approach (Song & Parker, 1995), to appropriately gain insight into their life experiences, and thus answer the research question, the researcher has put the participants at the forefront of the research methodology. This study is complex because the researcher is a

male researching Muslim woman who face Islamophobia and whose religion prohibits unnecessary interactions with men (Dale, 2005). In addition, there is also the issue of intersectionality because the participants are Muslim women who belong to various ethnic groups. It is important to note that there is a power relationship between the researcher and the participants because of the researcher's position in creating knowledge (Ristock & Pennell, 1996).

As a result, the researcher always considered these challenges and power dynamics at the time when creating the methodology. Before the selection of the methodology, he spoke with other Muslim women within his own family and asked them how they would feel if a researcher approached them to speak about the sensitive subject of discrimination. The researcher learned that Muslim women are willing to share their experiences only if it's told from their perspective because they knew it to be true; in addition, they indicated that, as Muslim women, they are often misunderstood. Therefore, anyone interviewing them should not have prejudices against their religion or cultural practices. Also, in December of 2021, the researcher received sensitivity training from the Ottawa Muslim Association (OMA) because socialization between men and women is forbidden in Islam. The purpose of this training was to be aware of the proper Islamic etiquette for interacting with Muslim women in an interview. The conversations with the researcher's relatives and the consultations with the OMA helped shape the methodology. Next, the researcher wanted to find out more about the subject and started to conduct a literature review.

Literature Theme Selection

Several online search portals, such as the University of Ottawa library and Google Scholar, were used to conduct a comprehensive literature review. To prepare for his research proposal, the researcher conducted a literature review and found three themes:

- Islamophobia can affect career opportunities;
- Family and religion can limit career opportunities; and

- Employees should adopt personal and organizational strategies to achieve success.

During the committee defense of the research proposal, two additional themes were added, based on the committee suggestions:

- Organizational psychology is an essential aspect of career success; and
- A positive mindset and high self-efficacy are important for workplace success.

This literature review examined all factors that can influence Muslim women's career success. After doing the initial review and speaking to his female family members, the researcher then embarked on choosing a research paradigm that can help answer the research question and to make sure it is a good fit for the participant.

Research Paradigm

Ontology

A *research paradigm* outlines a researcher's views and provides a step-by-step guide for designing the research and answering the research question (Kirby, 2017). The methodology begins with *ontology*, which is the study of reality that explores the nature of existence and how we can understand it (Ritchie et al., 2013). The formation of reality based on idealism can only be understood through firsthand experiences (Ritchie et al., 2013). By accepting the participant's reality and experiences, the researcher will be able to find the belief systems that are needed to answer the research question.

Epistemology

The researcher must now choose how to study and understand knowledge, which is the focus of the *epistemology* (Perri & Bellamy, 2011). The research adopts an *interpretive* approach regarding knowledge because one can learn about the world only through interpreting human actions (Kirby, 2017). This discipline promotes the social construct of knowledge rather than an

objective discovery (Carson et al., 2001). The interpretive approach is more personal and flexible (Carson et al., 2001), enabling the researcher to understand the meaning of the participants' realities and experiences (Black, 2006). Interpretive researchers enter the field with some familiarity with the research but realize that what they know is insufficient; therefore, they need participants to augment what they already know (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). For example, a specific approach was necessary to understand how Muslim women deal with female and male interactions in the workplace. Therefore, an interpretive approach is needed because the research requires direct interaction with Muslim women to construct the meaning of their experiences. Next, it is necessary to choose an approach that will best enable the data collection from participants.

Qualitative Approach

The choice of using qualitative or quantitative research frameworks depends on the research paradigm, the data type, and the research question (Grossoehme, 2014). According to Newby (2014), qualitative research focuses on the underlying processes of how humans behave and how they form experiences. In contrast, quantitative research collects numerical data and analyzes them using statistical methods to develop conclusions. Choosing qualitative is so clear because the research also deals with belief systems, which is a search for meaning. These meanings occur within the context of complex social interactions. Drawing from Kirby (2017), "Qualitative methodologies embrace the complexity of social interactions as expressed in daily life and with the participants attributing the meanings of these interactions" (p. 13).

As an example of the necessity of a qualitative approach, Newby (2014) uses the example of understanding poor youth who have a 10% chance of attending university compared to 70% of privileged youth. In his view, percentages do not inform the researcher on how to develop a system to overcome social disadvantages because the researcher would not have a thorough understanding

of the behaviour of the poor youths that were successful in university. Similarly, as our interest is also to find how a minority group can succeed, the researcher could not have explained how Muslim women became successful in their careers without adopting a qualitative approach.

Choosing Grounded Theory

The research question seeks to understand the beliefs of successful Muslim women, and Grounded Theory will facilitate the process by creating a systematic approach. In qualitative research, there are many methods; Grounded Theory is the most suitable in this case because it collects and analyzes data by comparing them to create a theory or procedure rather than having them specified beforehand (Creswell & Poth, 2016). It is an inductive approach that attempts to begin without prior assumptions, as the researcher must develop explanations from the data (Charmaz, 2006). The process of Grounded Theory helps figure out the belief systems of Muslim women because, according to Charmaz (2006), Grounded theory “invokes iterative strategies of going back and forth between data and analysis, uses comparative methods and keeps you interacting and involved with your data and emerging analysis” (p. 1). Therefore, data collection and analysis occur in cyclical manner. As soon as you start collecting data, you begin to analyze it alongside the collection of the data; this includes comparing data vs data, data vs codes, codes vs codes, and codes vs categories (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

During the interviews, the researcher naturally compared data with each participant, discovering many similarities and making discoveries. Having chosen to use a qualitative approach and Grounded theory, the researcher started to look at the most effective and efficient tools to collect data.

Data Collection Tools

One-on-one interviews were the data collection tool used in this research. Drawing from Rubin (2004), qualitative interviews offer a more personalized method of research than a questionnaire. As a result, it is crucial to pay attention to the participants when they speak about their lived experiences and engage in thoughtful communication to understand their position, which helps us answer the research question.

In addition, interviews can also be structured or semi-structured. Structured interviews have clearly defined objectives and an established set of questions; however, a semi-structured interview also includes additional questions that are unplanned (Newby, 2014). The semi-structured interview provides much flexibility to the interviewer because other probing questions may be introduced at specific points to explore some of the answers (Song & Parker, 1995). Newby (2014) emphasizes, “The best interviewers put themselves in the person’s shoes and try to imagine how they would speak, how they would react, how they would feel, and they use this awareness to phrase the questions and to determine what follow-up questions to ask” (p. 358).

Using semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to build more trust with the participants, as interviewees expected follow-up questions when discussing complex topics. One example of how the research benefitted from semi-structured interviews was how a participant answered a specific question. The participant said that, unlike her colleagues, she was introduced to the entire team before being hired. On the surface, this seemed to be a positive step from the hiring managers, which was echoed during the interview. However, when probed, the participant was under the impression that her managers wanted to know if her team was comfortable working with someone wearing the hijab. Consequently, these follow-up questions allowed us to discover the participants’ belief systems.

The interview guide was developed by looking at the research question, theoretical framework, and the literature review (Grossoehme, 2014). The open-ended nature of the questions led to detailed responses that reflected the participants' lived experiences (Song & Parker, 1995). Some of the questions asked were about the steps taken to become more proactive, if they had any mentors, and about their experiences with Islamophobia. Please see Appendix D for the interview guide.

As the researcher conducted the interviews, he was confident that this was the best method for collecting data. Several of the participants shared personal experiences regarding their struggles and their families, so choosing a different data collection method, such as a focus group, might have prevented them from sharing some painful memories. Furthermore, as the participants were being interviewed, the researcher realized he chose the correct research paradigm because the reality was based on their world view, and the answer to the research question can be created only through the construction of their own experiences.

At this point, the researcher had chosen his methodology, and it passed the committee, so the next step was the ethics application.

Ethical Considerations

Before conducting the research, an ethics application was submitted on December 15, 2021, and it was approved on January 6, 2022. In early December 2021, the researcher received sensitivity training from the Ottawa Muslim Association because socialization between men and women is forbidden in Islam. The purpose of this training was to be aware of the proper Islamic etiquette for interacting with Muslim women in an interview. Participants had the option to be interviewed in person in a boardroom at a local mosque to ensure privacy, security, and respect for their religious beliefs. In addition, participants could bring a chaperone to the meeting to avoid the

perception of inappropriate interactions with another man. Otherwise, participants could choose an online Zoom meeting with audio recording only. However, due to the COVID-19 lockdowns, all the interviews were conducted online, and the initial ethics/etiquette problem became a non-issue.

Privacy

Participants chose a pseudonym when they signed the consent form which was kept in the research supervisor's office. The names will also be kept separately from any audio recordings and other documents. All audio recordings of interviews were kept in the private, secure, one-bedroom apartment of the researcher that is not shared with anyone, and the researcher is the sole keyholder. The audio recorder and all other documents, excluding the list of pseudonyms, were kept in a locked box in the bedroom closet. The audio file and typed transcripts were locked with a password on the hard drive of a desktop computer in the researcher's apartment, which will not be moved. The recorded audio interviews will be deleted as soon as the thesis passes the committee, with notifications to be sent to the participants, and all data will be destroyed after five years.

Sample Size and Eligibility

The researcher planned to recruit twenty participants, fifteen of whom wore the hijab and five who had removed it. Of the fifteen participants, five were to be entry level positions, five were to be mid-level and the remaining five from the management level. The purpose of interviewing Muslim women who removed the hijab was to conduct a comparative analysis because the literature indicated that Muslim women were removing their hijab. The participants are from a marginalized community that has faced much discrimination, so the researcher has made every attempt to ensure fairness and equity in the process. The participants are English-speaking Muslim women that reside in Ottawa; speaking English is necessary as the lack of communication will

limit one's career. Muslim women belong to any ethnic background, and the research aims to facilitate fair inclusion of all the community groups, so there are no exclusion criteria based on ethnicity.

The eligibility criteria justified using a purposeful sampling strategy because the researcher was looking for Muslim women within a specific demographic who meet the selection criteria necessary to advance in their careers. With purposeful sampling, the researcher will be able to recruit and interview individuals who meet the selection criteria, consequently increasing the credibility and trustworthiness of their experiences (Tuckett, 2004).

Women under twenty-nine years old have been excluded, as the research requires participants who have had some years to gain work experience to advance in their careers. In addition, they must not be currently in school studying a subject that is not related to their career as this indicates a possible career change and the questioning of their career. Single women who have never been married before and women without children have also been excluded, as participants with family responsibilities are more dedicated to their careers. Women who have also not expressed that they have overcome discrimination have also been excluded because the researcher is looking for the beliefs that Muslim women used to overcome discrimination to be successful. Another exclusion is participants who continuously move from one job to another at similar levels; this indicates a lack of seriousness or career-planning skills.

Ethics Application to Change Eligibility

Initially, the research question was targeting participants who were successful in the retail and service industry; however, for the first two months the researcher was unable to recruit any participants from that sector and eligibility criteria. Members of the community also complained about the strict eligibility requirements such as age and marital status. When it was explained that

this was to recruit participants who are serious about their careers, complaints about unfairness were made. At this point, the researcher was unable to recruit any participants and received a lot of feedback that some Muslim women were being excluded.

Therefore, a plan to broaden the research was developed in consultation with the thesis supervisor. An ethics application was submitted change the eligibility requirements. First, the participant no longer had to work in a retail or service corporation and were eligible from any Canadian organization. Second, the eligibility for being older than twenty-nine years old was reduced to twenty-one years old because a participant can work their way to a management position after high school. Third, participants no longer had to be married or single with children because individuals can be career-driven even when they don't have family responsibilities. Fourth, participants had to be in a management position which meant that they must be responsible for at least two people or be responsible for a program or a project. Last, there would be no disqualifications if one was studying a different subject or moving from job to job.

Recruitment

The researcher utilized three recruitment strategies. First, there was a recruitment plan to contact all the Muslim organizations, mosques, and women's groups to help spread the word among all their members. Second, the researcher utilized the snowballing technique to request referrals from the participants (Goodman, 1961). Third, posters of the study were placed in Muslim restaurants and grocery stores. Some individuals and organizations did place the recruitment posters on their Facebook timelines and in some local Muslim Facebook groups. Please see Appendix A for the posters.

The researcher aimed to recruit twenty participants, but he faced a lot of difficulties and was able to find only fourteen. Contacting fifteen Muslim organizations resulted in recruiting just

one participant. The remaining thirteen participants were recruited through personal contacts and snowballing techniques. As for the posters, the researcher placed them in ten establishments that had high traffic of Muslim people, however, this method was unsuccessful. After six months of recruiting attempts, the researcher could not recruit any participants who have removed the hijab, indicating that this is a very sensitive issue for Muslim women. After ample efforts to recruit — from January to June — the researcher stopped recruiting after interviewing fourteen participants because he felt that he had reached saturation. According to Thomson (2010), for Grounded Theory, “a sample size of ten to fifteen participants is sufficient if the researcher feels that he has reached data saturation” (p. 48).

Recruiting was the most challenging aspect of the research, as there were times when considerable efforts were expended without any results. Moreover, there were several occasions when participants did not respond and had to be contacted approximately four times to schedule an interview. Many of the participants explained that they were busy with work and family obligations, and the researcher believes that if the interviews weren't online, then he would have failed to recruit enough participants.

Connecting With the Participant

Fourteen participants were recruited, and communication occurred via email. The researcher was very transparent with the participants by providing them with the participant recruitment letter; please see Appendix B. There was clarity and disclosure from the beginning, focusing on the following:

- Interview questions and length;
- Privacy;
- Skipping questions;

- Withdrawing; and
- Deleting personal data.

The letter also included a list of risks, harms, benefits, and contact information of the university. Finally, participants signed an online consent form, please see Appendix C. The ethical considerations were strictly adhered to because any discomfort or miscommunication will impact the methodology and the quality of the data collected.

Interviewing Process

Before the interview, the participants were emailed the interview guide, recruitment letter, and the link for the online consent form. As part of the interview process, the researcher ensured that the consent form was signed and that the purpose of the study was explained to the participant.

Initially, there were plans to have in-person interviews; however, the interviews were conducted under a COVID-19 lockdown, so they had to be completed online. The interviews were approximately 45 to 60 minutes on Zoom with audio recording only. The video was not recorded because Muslim women are very private. In addition, the transcription option was used on Zoom, and the recordings were downloaded to the researcher's computer. Once the thesis passes the committee, the recordings will be deleted, and the participants will be informed.

Throughout the interviews, the participants were very comfortable. The researcher encountered only one issue — when a participant did not want to speak about her divorce. When the researcher felt that the participant was uncomfortable, he advised her that the details were not necessary, and he moved on to the next question. At the end of the interview, the researcher thanked the participants and reminded each of them about how valuable their contribution was to the community. Recognizing the importance of their participation, efforts, and, most notably, their time was essential to building trust between the researcher and the subject (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Once each interview was completed, the transcripts were downloaded onto the researcher's computer.

Coding and Analysis

In qualitative research, human behaviour can be given rich insight, but it also needs to be understood from the perspective of the meaning and purposes attached to the actions of the participants (Denzin, 2008). Consequently, the data needed to be organized to understand it within their environment for context. To become familiar with the data, once the transcripts were downloaded from Zoom, the researcher listened to the interviews and read the transcripts once more. By the time the researcher had started coding, it would have been his fourth time going over the interviews and transcripts.

The researcher found that, for some of the participants, English was their second or third language, so the transcription was not grammatically correct. In addition, there were many filler words. So, to not present the participants as incoherent, he removed the filler words from the quotes, and, if a quote was not grammatically correct, then he would just incorporate it into the discussion instead.

Data were collected and analyzed inductively, meaning it begins from the bottom up without preconceived notions or set codes; in addition, the analysis should be free of bias (Azungah, 2018). The researcher is from a Muslim background, and a comprehensive literature review was conducted before conducting the interviews. Therefore, the researcher was aware of some Muslim women's issues. Although it is challenging to dissociate oneself from one's identity and heritage, the research made significant efforts to allow the data to speak for themselves.

The researcher created broad codes, such as Islamophobia, proactivity, family, education, etc. To analyze the data, the researcher used NVivo, which is a data-analysis software tool

produced by QSR International. Qualitative data like interviews tend to have large volumes of data, NVivo assists qualitative researchers in organizing, analyzing, and finding insights. The interview transcripts were then uploaded into NVivo, and the researcher then went over each transcript and started to code the participants' quotes with the corresponding codes. Please see Appendix D for the codes.

As he was coding, the researcher had a sense of where the data was heading, and he realized that three factors affected the career success of Muslim women: first, internal factors; second, external factors; and third, organizational factors. Next, codes were exported into an MS Word document and then grouped under the three factors mentioned above. For example, external factors affecting the careers of Muslim women included Islamophobia, discrimination, husbands, parents, and children. Once the codes were in the MS Word documents, they were each analyzed and broken down even further; for example, the children's code was broken down into "children can hinder careers" and "older children support participants' careers". Moreover, the researcher counted the frequency of the codes among the participants; although this is not a quantitative study, the counts can indicate how strong the data is. For example, fourteen participants faced Islamophobia, ten out of twelve married participants had supportive husbands, etc. At this point, once all the codes were organized under the sections, themes started to emerge.

In the case of external factors, there were two themes: resilience to Islamophobia and the influence of the family. Then, there were sub-themes, such as the case of the influence of the family: supportive husbands, supportive parents, and younger children can hinder careers.

The analysis was next, as the codes were then exported into the working document. All the codes were studied so the findings could be discussed under each theme and linked with the literature.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

The research question involves three concepts that need to be defined: religiosity, success in the workplace, and self-belief. Religiosity refers to the numerous aspects of religious activities such as religious attire and internal beliefs (Cohen et al., 2017). Measuring religiosity is complex because some aspects of religious activities such as inner beliefs, are invisible. On the other hand, the visibility of the Muslim attire such as the hijab can quickly trigger direct or indirect discrimination (Hunt et al., 2020); consequently, non-visible Muslims will not face the same level of discrimination. For the purposes of this research, we will examine only those Canadian Muslim women who wear the hijab; in addition, this research will refer to them as Muslim women. The second concept is measuring success; employees measure career success in two ways: objectively through salary and promotion, and subjectively through job satisfaction in achieving your personal goals within your organization (Srikanth & Israel, 2012). The purpose of this study is to identify successful Muslim women; however, success is subjective. Some people measure their success in terms of promotions, money, or work-life balance, but this really depends on the individual's goals and needs. To make the concept consistent, the research will define success as when a participant is satisfied with the current state of their career; furthermore, if they are interested in a promotion, then there is hope that they can achieve it, or they have already been promoted. The third issue we will discuss is belief, which assesses who you are, the ability to accomplish tasks and achieve your objectives (Betz et al., 2005). Belief is also associated with positive mental health, success, and satisfaction (Mann et al., 2004). Within the context of this research, self-belief refers to confidence in one's ability to achieve career objectives. To summarize, this research investigates Canadian Muslim women's belief systems who wear the hijab have of themselves and others that made them successful managers in Canadian corporations.

The theory of self-concept allows us to understand individuals' beliefs; self-concept is a process of combining who we are, how we perceive ourselves, how we behave in various situations, and the faith in our abilities (Super, 1953). Understanding self-concept enables the researcher to map the belief systems that impacted participants' careers. An example would be a list of which beliefs worked, what did not work, any regrets, and any feedback or lessons learned.

The lack of studies on self-concept theory for Muslim women in the workplace necessitated a broader review of the literature. The result is that charismatic leaders are responsible for bringing the best out of their employees; thus, improving their self-concept can significantly improve their psychological state at work (Shamir et al., 1993). Furthermore, the challenge of discrimination was not a focus of self-concept as Judge et al. (1998) does not describe discrimination as a workplace challenge, nor is it present in the recommendations for future research. Currently, employees and corporations bear responsibility for the high self-concepts of employees without accounting for discrimination; this is problematic for Muslim women because their career success is not in their control but might be dependent on an employer unaware of discrimination. The self-concept theory helps the individuals assume responsibility for their success in the face of discrimination without the assistance of others.

The literature on Muslim women in the Canadian labour market reveals five streams. First, Islamophobia is causing a great deal of discrimination and pressure on Muslim women. Second, family and religion can limit the career opportunities of Muslim women. Third, having positive psychology and high self-efficacy is important for workplace success. Fourth, employees must adopt personal and organizational strategies to become successful in their careers. Last, the importance of understanding organizational psychology for career success.

Discrimination and Pressures Due to Islamophobia

Discrimination

Islamophobia is the fear and hate of Muslims and their religion (Eid, 2014). Drawing from Zine (2004), “Across the globe, Muslims have faced individual and systemic acts of discrimination and violence after 9/11 as a form of retaliation for the collective guilt ascribed to followers of Islam” (p. 111). Islamophobia is vital in this research because it contributes to Muslim women's discriminatory practices in the workplace. In a recent study of discrimination against professional Muslim women, almost all the participants agreed that stereotypes about Muslims exist and provided firsthand experiences of Islamophobia-related discrimination (Latif et al., 2018). Stereotyping is an idea held by members of a group that passes judgment on another group; the opinions are formulated without critical thinking, leading to an overly simplified view of reality (Schneider, 2005). At the workplace, stereotyping creates an atmosphere full of *stereotype threats*, a state of mind where people feel threatened by stereotypes about their social group that leads to underperformance (Shantz, 2012). These imposed stereotypes make it difficult for Muslim women to advance in their careers by portraying them as submissive, incompetent, and weak (Nagra, 2018). These stereotypes cause underperformance as they distract people who expend significant energy to avoid behaviours that confirm the stereotypes (Jamieson & Harkins, 2007). Additionally, men are also being stereotyped. Men are viewed as violent, patriarchal, dangerous, easily provoked, and unable to control themselves around women (Aguayo, 2009).

Negative Career Experiences

The unemployment rate for Muslim women in the Canadian labour market is extremely high. It is 16%, which is twice the rate of other visible minorities and four times that of White Christian women (Khattab et al., 2019). Not only are the numbers alarmingly high, but what is

alarming is Muslim women have four times the education as white women, but their unemployment rate is four times higher than them (Khattab et al., 2019). One of the reasons why Muslim women encounter employment challenges is that they are increasingly othered in Canadian society (Nagra, 2018). The act of othering refers to when someone divides the world into two groups, the self and the other; this leads to ingrained ideas about how we relate to other people, leading to treating them as a foreigner (Karim & Eid, 2014). For example, a dentist wearing a Hijab is asked during her job interview if she can wear a mask over her hijab and must constantly prove to her patients that she is qualified while performing an extraction (Nagra, 2018). This example shows how Muslim women are othered as incompetent and unqualified with the constant need to prove themselves. The act of othering does not only cause barriers to entry, but it also causes another challenge once Muslim women are employed. Additionally, Muslim women's families may also present additional issues in the type of employment they seek because they are required to manage their reputation of being a decent woman (Esposito & Burgat, 2003).

The other challenge Muslim women face is negotiating their identity with identity work (Latif et al., 2018). Identity is an individual's distinctive quality or characteristic (Hunt et al., 2020), and Identity work is a coping mechanism used to avoid being stereotyped as a Muslim (Watson, 2008). This work is highly uncomfortable, and it leads them to use *passing strategies*, which entail performing as a member of a set social group to obtain privileges extended to the dominant group (Leary, 1999). An example of a passing strategy is pretending to be vegetarian to avoid disclosing that you adhere to an Islamic diet (Latif et al., 2018). Muslim women employ passing strategies more often than other minority women; passing strategies is something white women do not experience (Latif et al., 2018). Drawing from Hunt et al. (2020), "Women who were born in Canada or have been Canadian citizens for an extended period reported feeling lost in terms of

their own identity as a Muslim woman in Canada” (p. 364). Therefore, Muslim women's identity is a big concern when working, as the pressures caused by discrimination and stereotyping lead them to employ passing strategies to protect themselves. However, these efforts may do more harm than good, creating a low self-concept. Furthermore, they do not work as attempting to pass as white while relinquishing their ethnicity and religion will only provide them with temporary acceptance (Zine, 2012).

There are many shortcomings regarding the literature on Muslim women in the workplace. First, the study by Latif et al. (2018) on the diversity of professional Muslim women failed to have a firm definition of what it means to be a Muslim woman. The participants were from various backgrounds and belief systems; one participant was a Christian woman who used to be Muslim. Some Muslim women were not even visibly Muslim with the option of not revealing their identity. Women wearing a Hijab are quickly identified and targeted (Nagra, 2018); consequently, their experiences are more complicated than non-visible Muslim women that choose not to disclose their religion. The second critique is that Khattab et al. (2019) did not provide any information regarding the strategies of the Muslim women who overcame discrimination to become successful. The third critique is about the marginalization and othering of Muslim women in Canada by Nagra (2018); this produced much content about Muslim women being othered. However, it never spoke about Muslim women othering their colleagues and the negative consequences of that behaviour. Have there not been any experiences where Muslim women othered a colleague and later realized it was wrong and lost a potential mentor? Going to work feeling inferior and suspecting others of oppressing you will create a low self-concept. The research question directly addresses this because being stigmatized at work harms both performance and identity (Latif et al., 2018).

Removal of the Hijab

The decision to wear the hijab is not easy because it has significant social, personal, and religious implications (Mohibullah & Kramer, 2016). We can divide the implications into two sections, internal, and external. A substantial amount of literature exists examining the factors that influence Muslim women's decision to wear the hijab or remove it. Mohibullah and Kramer (2016) describe the hijab as "a personal journey, a personal struggle" (p. 13). Several external factors influence the removal of the hijab, such as identity politics, violence against Muslim women, media, and feminist Muslims. The internal factors include a desire to assimilate, beliefs, seeking employment, and avoiding painful situations. These internal and external factors are important because they aim to forcefully assimilate Muslim women to western standards by pressuring them to remove their hijab. In other words, these factors are creating an environment of intolerance towards different belief systems and applying pressure on minorities to adapt to the standards of the dominant majority (Syed, 2013).

These external factors exert pressure on Muslim women from a multitude of directions. The first is the identity politics of Muslim women and the hijab. One example is the headscarf ban in Quebec public schools that aims to erase Muslim girls' identity (Al-Kazi & González, 2018). The media also plays a role in this pressure by negatively portraying the hijab as being forced upon Muslim women (Riley, 2011). Although studies indicate that this is the case in some circumstances, it is primarily the participant's choice to wear it (Latif et al., 2018). This external pressure is also applied from a young age during Muslim girls' leisure time. In Quebec, for example, an eleven-year-old girl was asked to remove her hijab because it violated the Quebec soccer federation's rule; she was then asked to leave when she refused to remove it (Zine, 2012).

Perhaps one of the most dangerous types of pressure is the violence that Muslim women experience. In Edmonton, women wearing the hijab were attacked in the streets at least ten times in six months (Sachedine, 2021). Another tragic example is the death of a family of four – two of which were hijab wearing women – who were run over in London by a 20-year-old man in a car (Sachedine, 2021). A Muslim woman interviewed about the incident said that “when we embrace our hijab, we embrace death” (Sachedina, 2021). Lastly, the least helpful pressure comes from their Muslim community's secular feminists, who portray the hijab as a form of patriarchal oppression (Zine, 2006). All these factors are constant reminders to Muslim women that wearing the hijab is not acceptable in Canadian society, which leads them to revisit their decision to wear the hijab (Nagra, 2018).

The internal pressures arise from the feelings and emotions that Muslim women experience from their immediate environment; this leads them to feel powerless as if they are imprisoned by the hijab (Syahrivar, 2021). These pressures can come from family and friends, their changing internal beliefs, their desire to fit in, or their work environment. The first experiences with the hijab occur within the family environment. Indeed, in a study of Egyptian women, 40% of the respondents claimed that a family member or friend had asked them to put on the hijab; however, only 5.7% of the women felt pressured (Al-Kazi & González, 2018). In some instances, mothers may pressure their daughters to dress like other girls and may encourage them to remove their hijab when attending events within the community, such as weddings (Clarke, 2018). Another study indicated that 13.3% of the women thought about removing the hijab because it prevented them from being fashionable and because they were constantly asked why they wore it (Syahrivar, 2021). Furthermore, Muslim women remove their hijab because they think they are adhering to a

form of Islam that is too strict; they believe that their level of faith should not be tied to wearing the hijab and that their internal beliefs are more important (Lewis, 2015).

Although some Muslim women regard the hijab as mandatory, they believe that it should be worn for the right reason, such as for the love of Allah; however, some still choose to remove their hijab because they want to fit into a multicultural society (Clarke, 2018). As for employment, Muslim women are passed over for jobs, asked to remove the Hijab and harassed in the workplace (Zine, 2004). In a study titled, “No Hijab Permitted Here,” Muslim women noted that they faced an abundance of challenges in seeking employment, being forced out of work, and not being promoted due to the hijab (Persad & Lukas, 2002). It is also important to note that no effort was made to eliminate the discrimination; instead, it was just accommodated by counsellors advising Muslim women to remove their hijab for better employment prospects (Persad & Lukas, 2002).

Muslim women face internal and external challenges when wearing the hijab. They constantly negotiate their daily experiences with every individual they encounter (Ruby, 2006). People always judge Muslim women physically; they tell them that they are beautiful and that nobody in Canada can force them to wear the hijab (Nagra, 2018). The judging of Muslim women creates an internal pressure to assimilate in which Muslim women are manipulated into adapting to the standards of western femininity (Nagra, 2018). Wearing the hijab decreases their employment opportunities (Persad & Lukas, 2002), and increases the chances for violent encounters with others (Sachedina, 2021). The consequences of wearing the hijab cause Muslim women to dissociate themselves from it. Dissociation is a defense mechanism to protect yourself from external dangers that hurt you or remind you of previous trauma (Cardeña, 1994). Muslim women then remove the hijab to be relieved. Drawing from Syahrivar (2021):

I conclude that hijab dissociation is a form of compensatory mechanism, partly in effort to minimize (religious) self-discrepancy, restore self-esteem, gain more personal control, reduce perceived alienation and cope with psychological trauma. However, it is uncertain if the aforementioned objectives are achieved at the end of the day through hijab dissociation since the participant is pretty much still suffering from depression and anxiety. (p. 1987)

As previously mentioned, there is an abundance of research literature concerning the negative experiences of Muslim women. However, it does not note the positive experiences of Muslim women who found strategies to overcome the stigma of the hijab so they succeed at the workplace. There is no literature on Muslim women's success after they removed the hijab; it is unclear if they felt happiness or regret with their decision to remove the hijab. Knowing if Muslim women were happy after the removing the hijab is important because the literature mentioned the dismay of several Muslim women when they found out that non-Muslims celebrated when they removed the hijab (Lewis, 2015). To conclude, it would be essential to know if removing the hijab was worth the advancement in their career or if they could have remained steadfast and employed other strategies that could have supported them.

Lack of Opportunities in Leadership Positions

Women have historically held important positions in the Muslim world as leaders in commerce, religious scholars, governors, and military leaders (Ghadanfar, 2001). However, many of these prominent Muslim women are no longer remembered as the patriarchy is now the dominant force in Muslim societies (Shahnaz et al., 2017). Some Muslim women eventually make it to leadership and management positions; however, breaking into senior employment is difficult because of the intersectionality of gender, race, and religion (Bagley & Abubaker, 2017). Women

in management positions face discrimination and obstacles that hinder or stop their career progression (Zubeida et al., 2016). There are some management success stories in Muslim majority countries like the UAE; however, Muslim women do not openly celebrate their success due the pressures of the patriarchal society (Tlaiss, 2013). The pressure is to maintain the order of women as caretakers of the family over pursuing their careers (Zubeida et al., 2016).

Some countries such as Canada are helping to increase the presence of Muslim women in management with their multicultural policies (Grine, 2014); however, hiring managers are still focusing on gender to promote women and are overlooking ethnicity and religion (Kamenou & Fearfull, 2006). Indeed, Muslim women in western countries that dress modestly and wear the hijab are facing employment discrimination (Ali, 2018). It is very clear that obstacles exist to prevent women from reaching the highest positions in corporations; when they do succeed, it is usually in positions such as human resources or something of a technical nature that does not need any masculine aggression (Paludi, 2013). In other words, the need for a manager to be male and masculine is a major obstacle for women to obtain management positions due to the presence of patriarchal values promote men to secure managerial positions (Arar & Shapira, 2016). The intersectionality of Muslim women is not only used by their white colleagues to discriminate against them, but also by other minority men (Tariq & Syed, 2017).

In 2016, women held 24 percent of the senior leadership positions in North America; in addition, 33 percent of Fortune 500 companies did not have any women in senior management (Bagley et al., 2018). Within management positions, Muslim women face gender stereotypes from both Muslim and non-Muslim Men. For example, Muslim men will ask a Muslim woman if she has permission from her husband when she travels for the company and a non-Muslim man will ask her to make a brew of tea at a company meeting (Tariq & Syed, 2017). This is a form of gender

regulation in which gender norms are determined in order to enforce a particular behaviour (Arar & Shapira, 2016). This is especially prevalent in Arab countries as organizations immediately think of men for management position (Tlaiss, 2013). There is no doubt that across the globe there are barriers that will prevent women from reaching the highest positions in an organization (Paludi, 2013), even though they have excellent managerial skills (Bullough et al., 2017). Regardless of women's excellence in management, men are clinging aggressively to power (Bagley et al., 2018). Therefore, women in such situations will adopt strong personalities and masculine traits to overcome the typical gender stereotypes (Zubeida et al., 2016).

Religion is also an obstacle for Muslim women when they reach management positions due to the visibility and affiliation to Islam as they are culturally distant from the dominant group (Khattab et al., 2019). In a study of 20 hijab wearing executives in the United Kingdom, they unanimously said that their struggle to leadership positions were harder than their colleagues that had more western appearances (Ahmed & Gorey, 2021). This indicates that Muslim women face penalties in the labour market due to their appearance (Khattab et al., 2019). There are also internal beliefs linked to faith that create obstacles to a Muslim woman's career progression. Islam prohibits the consumptions of alcohol (Battour et al., 2011), therefore, Muslim women will not participate and miss great opportunities in networking events due to the presence of alcohol (Tyrer & Ahmad, 2006). In addition to the prohibition of alcohol, Islam prohibits the socialization between men and women (Dale, 2005). The prohibition of male and female interactions will lower the chances of Muslim women in finding mentors that can help them progress in the company.

There was a surprise in the research by Khattab et al. (2019) on Muslim women in the Canadian market. Black and Arab Muslim women are not disadvantaged even though they face discrimination and are just as likely as most white women to obtain professional jobs. These are

the minority women who have become successful; however, what they did to succeed is unknown. Assumptions of their success were made, such as that Arab and Black Muslim women place immense importance on getting the best jobs; however, this does not provide any real insight. Furthermore, the study used quantitative methods such as surveys and statistical analysis. Therefore, we cannot determine what Arab and Black Muslim women did to succeed.

Family and Religion Can Limit the Career Opportunities of Muslim Women

The participation of Muslim women in the workforce is inevitable today; however, at the same time, they face several challenges in balancing their careers, families and religion (Ramadan, 2022). In addition to these challenges, the western media brands Muslim women as weak and oppressed, portraying them as unequal to men (Marcotte, 2010). The media portrayal creates additional issues for their careers as they are not hired or passed on for promotions (Persad & Lukas, 2002). Apart from this discrimination, it is important to understand the other factors that may affect Muslim women's careers, such as family and religion (Ramadan, 2022). Family and religion are important because they are like a chain that binds Muslim women to who they really are (Arifeen & Gatrell, 2020). Foucault describes our ethical selves as how humans are disciplined in maintaining the moral codes that are linked to their personal values (Foucault, 1984). Hence, when making career-related decisions, Muslim women are bound by their ethical selves (Arifeen & Gatrell, 2020).

Family is highly valued in Islam, and Muslims consider it a pillar of society (Muhtar et al., 2021). In addition to the importance of marriage, the influence of parents on the education and career choice of Muslim women is powerful, which can cause some tensions (Tyrer & Ahmad, 2006). There are never any disagreements between Muslim women and their parents regarding higher education; however, the location of their college or university is an issue that arises (Tyrer

& Ahmad, 2006). One can assume this may limit their ability to attend prestigious universities and accept job offers in different cities because Muslim women cannot live alone. This practice is prevalent in the Arab Muslim community, where it is frowned upon for a woman to live alone because she is thought to be more vulnerable and less capable than an Arab man (Arifeen & Gatrell, 2020).

Even though Muslim parents in the west are very supportive of women's education (Shah et al., 2010), additional challenges arise after graduation, such as obtaining permission from their parents and husbands to work (Arifeen & Gatrell, 2020). Family is so instrumental in the lives of Muslims that couples are reluctant to divorce and are more likely to reconcile (Marcotte, 2010). In addition, once a Muslim woman is married, her husband may feel threatened by her ambitions, hurting his pride and disturbing family harmony (Arifeen & Gatrell, 2020). Once married, the location is also another issue as the husband's employment may determine where the family would live; this forces the woman to view her husband's career as a priority (Ramadan, 2022). The husband's career is a priority because in Islamic societies, women are considered the powerful managers of the family; therefore, the husbands are expected to work to financially support their family (Abubaker et al., 2019). In Islam, when it comes to finances, the husband is solely responsible for paying the bills; everything the wife makes is hers to keep without any obligation to pay for any household expenses (Syed, 2008). However, there are no examples in the literature of a husband taking sole responsibility of the finances, possibly because of the requirement of having dual-income families due to economic uncertainty (Tyrer & Ahmad, 2006). Therefore, although Muslim women's educations are supported by their parents, they can still interfere with the career alongside their husbands.

Muslim women are also expected to have children early on and take responsibility for managing the family, including hosting large gatherings for any religious events (Dale, 2005). Having children is a severe obstacle to a Muslim woman's career because she now has to balance her work and family (Ramadan, 2022). In some cases, this can mean that Muslim women cannot delay having children and will have to take a break from their careers (Ramadan, 2022). In addition, Muslim women's in-laws are also very involved in family planning, and they exert pressure on the married couple to have children (Dale, 2005). As for unmarried Muslim women who choose to delay or not to have children, this decision will also create problems with their parents, as they will fear that their career ambitions will create issues in finding a husband (Arifeen & Gatrell, 2020). When balancing careers and life with children, Muslim women will make their children a priority. The priority of children is due to Islam's significant responsibility to mothers to care for their children (Ramadan, 2022). As shown, the issue with having children is a considerable obstacle to the careers of Muslim women; this is partly to their religious obligation and pressures from their family and in-laws that are very involved in their decisions.

Family is a big part of religion for Muslim women, and the influence of their family extends to their career. The way Muslim women conduct themselves is very important because Muslim women also need to manage their reputation of being decent women (Esposito & Burgat, 2003). In Islam, Muslim women are not allowed to be alone with another man, and socially interacting with other men is prohibited (Dale, 2005). So, this poses a problem when she is at work interacting with other men. However, Muslim women do consider to a varying degree that male and female integration is justified if it is within the realm of professional work (Arifeen & Gatrell, 2020). Therefore, Muslim women are developing the skills and confidence to interact professionally with

other men at the workplace; however, their families may not grant that permission (Arifeen & Gatrell, 2020).

Another problem that arises at the workplace, especially at social events, is the presence of alcohol (Tyrer & Ahmad, 2006), because Islam prohibits the consumption of alcohol (Battour et al., 2011). Since faith is a priority, Muslim women will feel that they are compromising their values by attending events in the presence of alcohol (Ramadan, 2022). Some Muslim women will have to negotiate their identities to attend these events so they can fit in; however, there is no evidence that their attempts to fit in were successful (Ramadan, 2022). A Muslim woman's reputation is closely linked to her family and religion; therefore, the management of her reputation may limit her employment options due to family and religious requirements.

Family and children negatively affect Muslim women's career trajectories (Arifeen & Gatrell, 2020; Ramadan, 2022). With Muslim women being family-oriented, employers may assume that they will eventually leave their employment once they start a family (Ahmad & Sardar, 2012). On the other hand, White women can delay having children to further their careers (Davies, 1998). Muslim women must also make sacrifices at work by limiting their interactions with men and avoiding social occasions with the presence of alcohol. Building a successful career is a problem that plagues the first, second and third generations of Muslim women (Marcotte, 2010). Unfortunately, the literature does not provide any long-term strategies to overcome the difficulties of finding mentors and networking opportunities (Arifeen & Gatrell, 2020). Furthermore, although discrimination against Muslim women is well documented, the advantages of white women advancing were primarily due to their complexion (Ramadan, 2022). Since the literature does not mention the advantage white women have due to their knowledge of organizational psychology, it

would be interesting to know if the entirety of lack of success of Muslim women is due just to discrimination.

Having a Positive Psychology and High Self-Efficacy is Important for Workplace Success

The third stream in the literature is that positive psychology and high self-efficacy are necessary to improve people's self-belief if they wish to succeed in the workplace. A high self-concept allows people to be proactive, with higher salaries, promotions, and career satisfaction; it also creates leadership opportunities, personal achievements, and high performance (Seibert et al., 1999). On the other hand, the sense of hopelessness at work due to adverse events causes individuals to interpret situations negatively, withdraw and lose motivation (Judge et al., 1998). Furthermore, a study of the barriers women face at work found that low self-esteem, fear of failure and success, and perceived consequences of advancement are barriers to success (O'Leary, 1974). Unfortunately, there are no studies on Muslim women overcoming this problem with positivity and self-belief. Muslim women's experiences have negatively impacted their mental health, limited their career opportunities, and prevented success (Nagra, 2018). These feelings persist because they have not seen other Muslim women succeed at work (Khattab et al., 2019). Positive self-images play an essential role in career success, whereas negative images are detrimental, leading to withdrawal and loss of motivation. Muslim women are underemployed, over-educated, and less successful at work. Due to the extreme discrimination, Muslim women develop mental health issues that result in an atmosphere of fear that prevents them from advancing in the workplace (O'Leary, 1974)

Due to a lack of belief in their abilities, Muslim women face challenges in their careers (Hunt et al., 2020). Albert Bandura, a psychologist, developed the concept of self-efficacy, which states that individuals require a high level of self-efficacy to be successful in their lives (Bandura

& Locke, 2003). Drawing from Bandura and Wessels (1994), “self-efficacy is defined as people’s beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives” (p.1). High self-efficacy and career success go hand in hand (Bandura & Wessels, 1994). In other words, people’s self-belief that they can excel will consistently produce positive results (Bandura, 1983).

Self-efficacy is required for career success because it gives a person insight into the importance of the beliefs needed to understand the complexities of career development (Niles & Sowa, 1992). Therefore, self-efficacy can produce motivational or suppressive career success behaviour (Bandura, 1978). Self-efficacy is important for Muslim women because they face discrimination and barriers that affect their self-belief (Syahrivar, 2021). In this regard, it is vital to determine the specific efficacies that will enable a person to make a positive contribution to a particular circumstance (Bandura & Wessels, 1994). Improving self-efficacy will increase the situational power of Muslim women as they experience times of powerlessness and hopelessness (Syahrivar, 2021); this is especially important because despite discrimination, minority women can still remain positive and possess high self-efficacy while in the workplace (Hackett & Byars, 1996).

Self-efficacy is related to self-concept theory. Self-efficacy consists of the personal beliefs of an individual, and self-concept theory is the evaluation of these beliefs and their influence on the self-worth of the person (Bong & Skaalvik, 2002). Self-concept theory seeks to explain how people perceive and interpret their existence from clues they receive from external sources, focusing on how these impressions are organized and how they are active throughout their life (Super, 1953). For example, a woman can have high self-efficacy in public speaking; that skill,

alongside the positive response of her peers, creates a high self-concept of herself and her self-worth.

Human accomplishments and personal well-being are enhanced when a strong sense of self-efficacy exists (Bandura & Wessels, 1994). With high self-efficacy, a person will have a positive outlook on challenges; they are viewed as tasks that need to be learned and perfected instead of a threat to one's well-being (Bandura, 1978). High self-efficacy causes increased motivation to complete the task and to recover from setbacks and failures; individuals are not threatened by specific tasks and do not avoid them at all costs (Bandura & Locke, 2003). These beliefs allow a person to be aware, in control and present when focusing on tasks because they believe they can control the outcome (Bandura & Locke, 2003). The opposite is also true: a lack of control and low self-efficacy in competencies that are needed in these situations contributes to higher levels of stress, depression, and failure (Bandura & Wessels, 1994). There are four ways to increase self-efficacy. The first way is through mastery of experiences; the second is through vicarious experiences of social models; the third is verbal persuasion and encouragement for belief in success; the fourth is through physiological and emotional states (Bandura, 1978).

Albert Bandura states that one of the most effective methods to build self-efficacy is to participate in the mastery of experiences (Bandura & Wessels, 1994). Mastery of experiences are positive personal experiences that create success; one way of achieving mastery experiences is to build confidence and self-belief in being competent in a specific task (Bandura & Wessels, 1994). Mastery of experiences will also increase perseverance and resiliency (Lent & Hackett, 1987). As a result, if an individual is exposed to challenges, mastery of experiences will cultivate a sense of confidence and an understanding of the skills necessary for a successful outcome.

The second way is through vicarious experiences of social models (Bandura & Wessels, 1994). As you model someone successful who has overcome similar difficulties as yourself, you are motivated to believe that you, too, will gain the same skills to achieve your goals (Vianen, 1999). In other words, if the role model is successful and similar to you, you are more likely to succeed; however, if there is no equivalent role model, your chances of failure will increase (Bandura & Wessels, 1994). It is especially true for Muslim women, as there are few role models in the workplace (Lewis, 2015).

The third element is verbal persuasion, during which somebody is verbally convinced that they can achieve a particular objective; this can help ameliorate negative thinking (Betz, 1994). Encouraging others to change their behaviour is essential to increasing self-efficacy of people, while lack of encouragement can decrease and destroy self-efficacy (Hackett & Betz, 1981). In other words, people with low occupational self-efficacy need to be developed with the use of encouragement to promote positive behaviour (Bandura & Locke, 2003). Encouragement is especially important during the education of children; parents, teachers and friends treat boys' choices of studying science with more excitement than those of girls (Hackett & Betz, 1981). Consequently, this will reduce the confidence of women to enter certain fields or to apply for certain jobs because a lack of verbal persuasion lowers one's self-efficacy.

The last element for increasing self-efficacy is reducing the physiological reactions that one may experience as a result of stressful situations; this can be the result of either experiencing failure or misrepresenting the event (Bandura & Wessels, 1994). For example, in a study, a Muslim woman chose to remain out of public spaces because of the perception that women wearing the hijab are incompetent (Nagra, 2018); therefore, if a woman can reduce the physiological stressors of these thoughts, then she can increase her self-efficacy to socialize. Additionally, it is vital to

realize that physiological conditions such as heart racing and anxiety are a normal part of the process and do not relate to your performance ability (Bandura & Locke, 2003). Once a person realizes that heart racing and anxiety are normal, this will reduce the physiological stresses when performing the same activities (Bandura & Locke, 2003). In addition, if people are placed in situations that are beyond their capacity, they may experience a loss of self-efficacy (Bong & Skaalvik, 2002).

Increasing self-efficacy is important because the level of self-efficacy in a person determines their day-to-day behaviour; if self-efficacy is low, they will avoid specific tasks, whereas if it is high, they will be motivated to undertake those tasks (Betz, 1994). This high self-efficacy and more substantial mastery of experiences also put them in a more motivated state that makes them proactive; consequently, they will exert more effort to complete their tasks (Bandura & Locke, 2003). On the other hand, a low sense of self-efficacy will create a sense of hopelessness, as it inhibits one's beliefs that their effort will be beneficial (Betz, 1994). Hence, self-efficacy is essential to a career because it can create opportunities or create obstacles (Bandura & Locke, 2003). Women that hold negative self-beliefs, or negative occupational self-efficacy avoid taking risks, lack visibility in the workplace and negatively present themselves within the organization (Heilman & Kram, 1978). The low self-efficacy of Muslim women is evident in the literature, as Muslim women in Canada perform identity work because they hold negative self-beliefs of themselves (Latif et al., 2018).

Self-efficacy has been used as an approach to study women's career development by Hackett and Betz (1981). Career self-efficacy proposes that low self-efficacy is detrimental for both men and women (Betz & Hackett, 1997). Therefore, occupational limitations and disadvantages women face may be directly related to their differential expectations in gender

(Hackett & Betz, 1981). Due to gender stereotypes, men are evaluated positively, and women are negatively assessed (Heilman & Kram, 1978). Men tend to achieve more than women primarily due to the masculine characteristics that motivate them to try and succeed at new tasks, which increases self-efficacy (Bandura & Locke, 2003). In addition, due to socialization processes for men, they are more likely to have high efficacy, as women are encouraged to look into non-traditional careers (Gainor, 2006). According to Hartman and Barber (2020), “socialization and parental beliefs help to explain the early conception children have of their career opportunities” (p. 5). For example, women in male-dominated careers had higher self-efficacy in math and science because their parents did not socialize them under traditional gender roles (Bona et al., 2010). This socialization factor encourages and rewards men for building successful careers much more than women (Betz & Hackett, 1997). As a result, women are underrepresented in many professions and, consequently, are less likely to have a role model and fewer opportunities to advance their careers (Hartman & Barber, 2020). The lack of role models is specifically the case for Muslim women as they lack representation in senior management positions (Bagley & Abubaker, 2017). For example, a Muslim woman who is a manager in a male dominated organization does not have any role models that are similar to her (Zubeida et al., 2016). This leads to less opportunities and support which creates stagnation in their careers.

The study of self-efficacy is essential for developing career interventions to help individuals improve their career efficacy; these interventions can take the form of counselling and mentorships (Bandura & Locke, 2003). The design of interventions should be for a specific group; individuals can learn how to be self-aware about how their thoughts and emotions negatively affect their lives (Bandura & Wessels, 1994). The interventions must include the four elements to help modify self-efficacy: masters of experiences, vicarious experiences of social models, verbal

persuasion, and physiological state (Gainor, 2006). There is a lot of literature on self-efficacy relating to gender; however, it was lacking for minorities and, more specifically, Muslim women. In addition, the recommendations to improve self-efficacy were aimed at the organizational level and not on an individual level, thus giving power to the organization (Hartman & Barber, 2020). One must wonder if organizations can handle Islamophobia without any outside assistance as Muslim women face the most challenges of any group. They are imagined as incompetent and weak, ultimately marginalizing them professionally (Nagra, 2018). Therefore, increasing their self-efficacy is essential in empowering Muslim women from a personal level.

Adopting Personal and Organizational Strategies to Become Successful in Their Careers

A strategy is required for career management; career *self-management* is the extent to which employees intentionally collect information and execute plans to solve problems that arise in their careers (Kossek et al., 1998). Globally, women face obstacles to enter management (Schein, 2001). Some Muslim women eventually make it to management positions; however, breaking into senior positions is difficult because of gender, race, and religion (Bagley & Abubaker, 2017). During their careers, women experience gender-based discrimination, such as doubts about their abilities (Davies, 1998), which restrict them from accessing career-building opportunities (Bank & Vinnicombe, 2002). Even though Muslim women face various barriers in the workplace, they can overcome them with personal strategies (Tariq & Syed, 2017); such as overcoming shyness, being proactive, finding a mentor, and networking.

Overcoming Shyness and Workplace Bullying

Shyness manifests as anxiety, fear of new social situations, and a reluctance to take action (Cheek & Buss, 1981). As a result, shyness can affect one's ability to perform work-related activities; thus, shy individuals may experience interpersonal and professional obstacles at the

workplace (Taormina, 2019). According to (Phillips & Bruch, 1988), the “problems of shyness could presumably also influence how one implements a career choice in terms of job search strategies, resume writing, oral communication in an interview, and satisfaction with the initial job” (p. 164). As serious as the consequences of shyness are to one’s career, this is a problem that counsellors can help students address during their college years, leading to a productive career (Hamer & Bruch, 1997).

Muslim women are portrayed as shy, passive, submissive, and oppressed (Samier, 2021). However, this is not always the case, as people are surprised when Muslim women speak up to defend themselves (Nagra, 2018). Still, Muslim women are bullied at their workplace (Persad & Lukas, 2002). Workplace bullying is a constant, repeated, unwarranted and threatening harassment that can be physical, psychological or sexual; it is an abuse of power within the workplace (Djurkovic et al., 2003). In a study about helping shy employees with career success, it was concluded that shy people lack self-confidence and are emotionally exhausted from anxiety (Taormina, 2019). According to MacIntosh (2012), “workplace bullying creates hostile work environments, affects mental and physical health, and has social, economic, and career implications” (p. 762). Compared to men, women experience a higher intensity of internal emotions, which negatively affects their career progress (Brotheridge & Lee, 2010). In addition, when women cannot stop being bullied at work, this causes them to become sick or take leaves of absence on long-term disability (MacIntosh, 2012).

One strategy to demonstrate and increase your confidence is to become an excellent public speaker (De Paola et al., 2021). Public speaking is an essential tool to increase your presence and create a positive reputation for yourself in a competitive environment (Fallows & Steven, 2000). According to (De Paola et al., 2021), “Public speaking is generally thought to be an important

factor for career prospects and leadership positions. The ability to articulate publicly, clearly and eloquently, gives an essential competitive advantage” (p. 15). Therefore, it is important for Muslim women to be good public speakers because public speaking anxiety is higher in women when compared to men, and this has severe implications for women’s career success and personal satisfaction (Hunter et al., 2014). Thus, if Muslim women become good public speakers, then they will be able to not only defend themselves verbally from workplace bullying, but to also prevent it because they will have demonstrated their presence.

Muslim women are portrayed in the media as docile and submissive (Nagra, 2018), making them a target for workplace bullying (MacIntosh, 2012). The consequences of workplace bullying are detrimental to Muslim women’s careers and personal health (MacIntosh, 2012). The literature was very broad but helpful in identifying some factors. However, the research would undoubtedly benefit from more specialized research on Muslim women. In addition, public speaking positively correlates with increasing confidence and creating a presence at your workplace; however, there were no instructions on how to do that (De Paola et al., 2021). A strategy to become an excellent public speaker is required because changing women’s aversion to public speaking is difficult due to deeply ingrained social norms (De Paola et al., 2021). The only recommendation is to learn public speaking in college with a counsellor. Unfortunately, this is unhelpful to Muslim women who have finished their education.

Being Proactive

Taking personal responsibility for one’s career involves being proactive, which is more likely to result in job mobility and creating other opportunities at work (De Vos et al., 2009). Proactivity means that one can behave in an adjustable way to increase their motivation (Parker & Liao, 2016). As a result, they will be able to acclimate to their new work environment and develop

personal networks (Hall & Mirvis, 1995). Proactive individuals are more likely to identify and capitalize on opportunities that lead to positive change (Seibert et al., 1999). Failure to be proactive will result in professional stagnation due to a lack of initiative (Chiaburu et al., 2006). Being proactive is especially important for Muslim women. They face the stereotypes and biases of being oppressed, weak, and submissive (Samier, 2021), often resulting in a withdrawal from their workplace (Hezlett & Gibson, 2007). Proactive individuals must possess particular behaviours to succeed (Seibert et al., 2001). One such behaviour is public self-consciousness, which is how one perceives themselves as a social object; this is an essential trait because it can impair your ability to cope with negative emotions when others observe a person in social settings (Marquis & Filiatrault, 2003). Therefore, if an individual has low public self-consciousness, they will not care what others think negatively of them; this causes the individual to become resilient in facing difficult circumstances without reacting with any dysfunctional behaviour (Conner, 2000). In addition, it would permit an individual to respond with a behaviour that would transform situations positively (Arora & Rangnekar, 2015). For example, if a Muslim woman faces the stereotype of being weak, she will not react in a defensive way. This public self-consciousness and resilience are critical because self-career management requires individuals to seek information about career opportunities and to ask for feedback from their management team (Hall & Mirvis, 1995). Someone with low public self-consciousness will take more risks; furthermore, since people's opinions do not affect them, they will not be afraid to speak out and ask to be given more opportunities at the workplace.

Finding a Mentor

Another way to become more resilient is through mentoring, which is an excellent method to lead people for career success (Bozionelos & Wang, 2006). According to Hezlett and Gibson

(2007), mentoring is “an intense, dyadic relationship in which a more senior, experienced person, called a mentor, provides support and assistance to a more junior, less experienced colleague, referred to as a protégé or mentee” (p. 385). Mentoring also increases emotional stability, which is an essential factor for predicting success in the workplace (Rothmann & Coetzer, 2003); furthermore, it helps to create good working relationships with your colleagues (Lee et al., 2000). One strategy used to get a mentor is through increasing your social capital. According to Adler and Kwon (2002), “Social capital is the goodwill available to individuals or groups. Its source lies in the structure and content of the actor’s social relations. Its effects flow from the information, influence, and solidarity it makes available to the actor” (p. 23). One can gain a mentor by having social capital in the workplace to improve their career goals, especially when mentoring from higher contacts within the organization (Hezlett & Gibson, 2007). In addition, this opens up prospects for networking; however, deeply rooted male networks are an obstacle that denies women entry, so networking with other women is required to share strategies for success (Davies, 1998). Unfortunately, Muslim women do not have someone they can look up to at the workplace; one example was a Muslim manager in a male-dominated field who explained that a lack of role models from her cultural background was detrimental to her career (Zubeida et al., 2016). Another major obstacle for Muslim women’s networking ambitions is that Islam prohibits the socialization and encounters between Muslim women and men (Dale, 2005), so this will stop Muslim women from having male mentors at work.

Networking

Muslim women face difficulties when networking at work because interacting with men is against their religious and family values (Dale, 2005). The lack of networking leaves them at a disadvantage because networking improves career opportunities (Bank & Vinnicombe, 2002).

Some Muslim women attempt to manage networking based on their comfort levels when it exists within the context of a work environment and is linked to their career trajectory (Arifeen & Gatrell, 2020). However, many of them do not utilize networking as it is too risky for them because they are unwilling to compromise their religious beliefs (Tariq & Syed, 2017). One of the struggles they encounter is the presence of alcohol at gatherings; Islam prohibits alcohol (Battour et al., 2011), and simply being in its presence damages the reputation of their family and their religious honour (Arifeen & Gatrell, 2020). Therefore, Muslim women can miss out on opportunities to further their careers if they do not network (Tariq & Syed, 2017).

The literature brings together many essential concepts such as career self-management, overcoming shyness, proactivity, mentoring, and networking. Moreover, family, and religious values may be incompatible within the workplace where Muslim women will have to come into contact with men in addition to networking in the presence of alcohol. There are some shortfalls within the literature. First, it does not mention any networking empowerment strategies that non-white women can learn from white women (Davies, 1998). Second, there are no strategies to help Muslim women catch up to their white colleagues who are taught many essential traits from a young age such as confidence, assertiveness, and speaking out for themselves (Tariq & Syed, 2017). Third, there are no solutions to build any infrastructure for organized mentoring, networking, and coaching that are religiously accepted. Muslim women have no strategies for alternative networking events that are in line with Islamic values. Building these long-term support networks for Muslim women alongside these non-traditional networking events will allow them to compete for senior positions. The lack of networking is critical because it builds unity and comradery to overcome barriers (Davies, 1998). Fourth, Muslim women do not reach out to non-Muslim women or men for support, networking, or mentoring at their workplaces (Tariq & Syed,

2017). Even when it comes to having men as mentors, there is no information that would suggest a Muslim woman has asked a man to be her mentor while explaining her religious beliefs to him. Lastly, Muslim women can now overcome the lack of opportunity to network with men as online meetings are widely accepted form of communication due to Covid-19; however, there are no online strategies being utilized.

The Importance of Understanding Organizational Psychology

Power and Resistance

In many cases, women who encounter bullying and harassment feel powerless and disappointed when their human resource departments and unions are influenced by the power of the bullies (MacIntosh, 2012). In one study, the feeling of powerlessness was the reason why a Muslim woman dissociated from wearing the hijab (Syahrivar, 2021). Power is constructed by creating forms of knowledge, understanding, and truth of the world (Foucault, 1982). Power is also an essential element in developing society (Russell, 1938). In other words, when someone has power, they can exert their influence, even when they are being opposed (Lewis & Simpson, 2012). The power within organizations is critical because it creates unequal access to leadership positions, making it difficult for minority groups to contribute and participate; consequently, this has a detrimental effect on women and people of colour by way of policies of those in power (Lucas & Baxter, 2012).

Discrimination, especially when it is subtle, creates an unsafe and hostile environment for vulnerable employees that negatively impacts their careers (Lewis & Simpson, 2012). A study of whiteness and power in organizations found that the top organizational hierarchy consisted mainly of whites, while minorities occupied low-status bottom positions (Macalpine & Marsh, 2005). Power has a hidden dimension as it is protected and concealed; people with power keep it invisible

to hide their privilege and are agitated when those excluded seek to challenge them (Lewis & Simpson, 2012). The goal for individuals with power is not to show their hand, not be questioned, and to retain their control (Lewis & Simpson, 2012). Despite the work that has been done to change the gender demographics in top positions, white elites resist change with the continued aim of preserving patriarchal power (Smolović Jones et al., 2021).

The power of the elites is invisible, and so are the subtleties of discriminatory interactions between minorities and their colleagues (Van Laer & Janssens, 2011). Overt discrimination is no longer tolerated in our society and can have legal consequences (Van Laer & Janssens, 2011). Therefore, discrimination has become subtle and ambiguous to create power relations; this is accomplished by creating discourses in the workplace that normalize unacceptable behaviour. According to Macalpine and Marsh (2005) “discourse is a concept that helps us construct notions of power which are more complex, not purely economic and which help us to understand its intractable nature” (p. 431). For example, minorities are pressured to talk about their religious and cultural background, especially the parts that are not detectible; it is subtle because the questions are always related to the part of their identity that can be used for discrimination while other elements of their identity are ignored (Van Laer & Janssens, 2011). As a result of its subtle nature, discrimination cannot be proven and thus cannot be punished legally (Van Laer & Janssens, 2011). For example, many Muslim women are being seen as objects of jokes (Brotheridge & Lee, 2010). Discrimination is also subtle because it seeks to deny people resources (Jo & Park, 2016). Depriving people of resources weakens people and takes away their power which ultimately pushes minorities to the ranks of the underprivileged (Van Laer & Janssens, 2011). Moreover, the mindset of non-minority employees is also problematic because they do not seem to recognize their privilege. In a study on taking being white for granted, the respondents thought that their

privilege was normal and there was no need to think about it, and some even refused to participate in discussions (Macalpine & Marsh, 2005)

Although minorities face discrimination and unequal power relations, there are some strategies they can employ to counter these measures. In a study of Muslim professional women, Muslim women seem to relax and are open about their religion once they are in power. For instance, they joke about starving when fasting in Ramadan and excuse themselves from functions where food is present (Latif et al., 2018). It is interesting to see that some Muslim women are in a position of power, but there is no information on how they accomplished their success. According to (Lucas & Baxter, 2012), “Members of disadvantaged status groups can increase their influence by moving to more highly valued categories on status characteristics within their control, acting assertively, and presenting their contributions as motivated by the best interests of the group” (p. 65). Members of minority groups can engage in behaviours that will help them gain influence by showing their presence in a position of power. The strategic behaviour can range from compliments to manipulative tactics; some examples are creating a positive image, building alliances, praising others, doing favours or even putting others down (Bodla, 2013). Unfortunately, the strategic behaviours mentioned by (Bodla, 2013) are general in nature and do not consider Muslim women’s visibility and the discrimination that Muslim women are facing (Persad & Lukas, 2002)

Organizational Culture

Due to the discomfort Muslim women experience at work, they carry out identity work, as they do not feel included in their organization (Latif et al., 2018). The organization is like a living organism composed of all the people who wake up and go to work every single day; unfortunately, some of these individuals leave parts of themselves at home (Morgan, 1986). For example, some

Muslim women will go to great lengths to hide praying at work (Latif et al., 2018). Identity work indicates that their Muslim women's identity is not only absent from the organizational culture, but they fear its rejection by their peers. The evolution of culture within organizations can be explained by enactment theory, which argues that managers make sense of their environment through the actions and responses of their employees (Weick, 1979). Essentially, enactments are how people express themselves with behaviours, activities and the result of these actions (Mahling, 1993). People enact their reality in their day-to-day lives, which plays an important role in approaching culture. Therefore, culture must be looked at as a sequence of proactive processes that people use to construct reality; with this view, culture can now be looked at as something that is in control of ordinary people as opposed to only those with power (Morgan, 1986).

Social interactions create culture, which means that one may change culture, especially on a micro level within an organization. The micro-level of enactment occurs within groups as people strive to create norms and collect information about their surroundings; consequently, people can contribute to their environment and influence change (Mahling, 1993). Therefore, knowingly, or unknowingly, everyone is involved in the creation of the world that they live in. In this case, Muslim women can play a part in creating an organizational culture that incorporates them. However, Muslim women are doing the opposite as they are performing identity work to avoid discrimination (Latif et al., 2018). Micro-level enactments for Muslim women are difficult due to their image of being obedient, incompetent, and unassertive (Nagra, 2018). So instead of being proactive in asserting their identity, they are counterproductive by performing identity work.

Enactment theory has its shortfalls. First, the culture of the country shapes management and organizations adopt management practices that are in line with the national culture (Morgan, 1986; Newman & Nollen, 1996). The Canadian public perceives Muslims as violent, militant, and

culturally backward (Zine, 2012). Since the dominant cultures influence people and organizations, this may cause them to express opinions contrary to their personal beliefs (Berger, 1972). In addition, national culture can create ethnocentrism because people see their everyday interactions as normal; therefore, this can make people blind and dismissive to behaviour to which they are not accustomed to (Morgan, 1986). Second is the Ineffectiveness of management in interpreting information. Managers interpret their employees' responses by creating a mental representation of those actions (Weick, 1979). It is troubling to have the managers responsible for analyzing their environment because enactment theory does not mention anything about empathy. Therefore, managers may have an agenda or process information based on popular culture or their own biases. How many managers are aware of identity work? How many are qualified to spot it and reverse it? Managers will be bombarded with information daily as they perform their managerial tasks, so there are no guarantees that they can do that without biases in such a chaotic environment (Weick, 1979)

Complaining and Fear of Retaliation

Organizations offer various options for addressing discrimination, including formal complaint procedures, and speaking with management. In some cases, individuals may confront the aggressors themselves (Gaffney et al., 2012), they may stay silent (Ballard & Easteal, 2018), or they may be helped by other employees (Eliezer & Major, 2012). In the event of discrimination, personal and situational factors are considered (Ngo et al., 2002); this would be in the form of a cost-benefit analysis (Withey & Cooper, 1989). Several factors will influence an employee's decision to report discriminatory behaviours, such as their gender, family structure, job tenure, and educational background (Wallace, 1997). A person with higher education, more experienced, and

part of a larger organization where power is distributed will most likely voice their concerns (Wallace, 1997).

According to Kaiser and Miller (2001), “Recent research indicates that stigmatized people may avoid claims of discrimination because such attributions are costly in terms of perceived control over the outcome of an investigation and its effect on their social self-esteem” (p. 254). Confronting a colleague at work will require a considerable amount of mental energy, which may not be worth the effort (Haslett & Lipman, 1997). Consequently, the inability to confront the abuser can also lead to additional physical and psychological problems resulting from the abuse (Ballard & Easteal, 2018). People who criticize others for their poor results are viewed as complainers, which is one of the main reasons an abused employee would keep silent (Kowalski, 1996). In contrast, if an employee attributes a poor outcome to internal factors, they are regarded favourably (Jellison & Green, 1981) because they align with social norms that emphasize taking personal responsibility for failure (Eliezer & Major, 2012).

According to a study on discrimination, complainants stand out as hypersensitive, irritating, and argumentative (Kaiser & Miller, 2001). When someone confronts another person due to discriminatory action, observers dislike them, even if their complaints are legitimate (Garcia et al., 2005). The consequence is a situation where complaining presents high costs without any actual benefit, which could cause them to exit their employment or not be taken seriously by their organization (Withey & Cooper, 1989). In addition, they may take long-term sick leave, after which they may resign and move to another job (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2005). It is also common for employees to remain silent due to the implications of assigning blame and naming individuals; it is especially challenging when you have to work with them frequently (Kaiser & Miller, 2001). An employee may also be discriminated against by someone who has a great deal of power and

resources, through which they can retaliate against them (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2005). Indeed, several factors prevent stigmatized individuals from speaking out against discrimination (Swim & Hyers, 1999).

There is some literature on intervention strategies people can implement to help them speak up; these strategies will undoubtedly be beneficial when combined. The first is to increase your emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence allows one to be aware and cognizant of the subtleties of interpersonal communication and not respond immediately and in a thoughtless manner (Ryback, 1998). Consequently, people will recognize and understand their own emotions and those of others (Sheehan, 1999). It is important to note that emotional intelligence was only recommended for managers (Sheehan, 1999); yet it would undoubtedly be beneficial for employees since the emotions caused by discrimination can be debilitating, especially if the employees remain silent (Ballard & Easteal, 2018).

A second strategy is a shift in perspective on dealing with discrimination. The second strategy was the result of research based on nurses' experiences with workplace bullying, and it consists of four steps. Nurses believed that if they encountered bullying, they should aim to improve the situation for everyone involved. The first step is to define the problem by recalling when, where, and who was present with specific and detailed information about the experience. The second step involves assessing the situation. After the nurses described the event, they deconstructed it and examined their environment. In the third step, the nurses involved themselves and their colleagues. This stage was emotionally demanding; it required extensive support, which was unavailable internally from the organization. Nurses also reported that support was related to career satisfaction and healing. The last step is judging outcomes. Upon evaluating the results of their actions, the nurses concluded that some were positive, some were ignored, and some had

adverse outcomes (Gaffney et al., 2012). Even when strategies are involved in dealing with workplace bullying, there are chances that you may have a negative result, and this explains why many employees will remain silent.

Although the strategy used by the nurses is an excellent place to start for anyone seeking to confront a bully (Gaffney et al., 2012), the third step of involving everyone is emotionally draining. Adding emotional intelligence can enhance its effectiveness to their response (Sheehan, 1999). Support was also critical but lacking (Gaffney et al., 2012). It is vital to have this support inside and outside the organization, but the author failed to present any internal strategies to gather support. In addition to coping strategies, outside help is vital because it is unlikely to stop a bully without external assistance (Tehrani, 2012). Much of the literature also recommended that it is up to the managers (Sheehan, 1999), and organizations (Ballard & Easteal, 2018), to implement anti-bullying strategies; consequently, this leaves discriminated employees are at the mercy of the bully and the response of their employer. Furthermore, there were no recommendations to act preemptively and prevent discrimination or bullying, in contrast to Ballard and Easteal (2018) recommendation for targeted employees to seek counselling. To conclude, there is a significant gap in strategies for Muslim women and any approach to enhance employees' confidence and emotional intelligence.

The literature review highlighted five streams: Islamophobia is causing a great deal of discrimination and pressure on Muslim women, the private life of Muslim women based on family and religion can limit their career opportunities, positive psychology, and personal development to improve your self-image are required to succeed in the workplace, employees must adopt personal and organizational strategies to become successful in their careers, and last stream is organizational psychology. The gap in the literature is that there is no research on the positive

belief systems that Muslim women can rely on to become successful. Hence, the research seeks to find the belief systems that Muslim women have of themselves and others in their journey of becoming successful in Canadian corporations; this includes positive self-belief for themselves and their colleagues. The positive belief in oneself refers to how Muslim women view themselves individually. In contrast, the positive belief in their colleagues refers to how they perceive them in light of potential discrimination that might cause them to perform identity work.

Chapter 4: Discussion and Analysis

This research aims to identify Muslim women's beliefs about themselves and others that enable them to succeed as managers in Canadian organizations. To study belief systems, the research utilized the use of the theory of self-concept, which is the process of combining our personal qualities, our perception of ourselves, our behaviors in different situations, as well as our faith in our abilities (Super, 1953). The researcher interviewed fourteen participants who are currently working as managers in Ottawa. The participants consist of two supervisors, five managers, two program managers, and five senior analysts. Professional Muslim women suffer from discrimination, due to Islamophobia, which creates obstacles to entry into the workforce (Latif et al., 2018). Even though the research shows that Muslim women have the highest level of education of any group, they suffer from the highest unemployment rate (Khattab et al., 2019). Moreover, Muslim women face additional obstacles in reaching leadership positions (Ahmed & Gorey, 2021). Therefore, the study aims to map the belief systems they used to overcome these obstacles; belief is associated with positive mental health, success, and satisfaction (Mann et al., 2004).

Qualitative interviews were used to collect data from participants, and a grounded theory approach will be used to develop a process. Several themes emerged from the data analysis that will help answer the research question from a self-belief perspective. The themes will be divided into three sections: The first section focuses on the *external factors affecting* Muslim women, the second are the *internal factors* affecting Muslim women, and the last is about *organizational factors*.

External Factors That Affect Muslim Women's Careers

There are external factors that can affect the careers of Muslim women. The research

includes external factors because our environment can also influence our self-beliefs if they are above our capacity to cope with (Bong & Skaalvik, 2002). When interviewing fourteen Muslim women, two themes emerged: First, most Muslim women are resilient to Islamophobia, and second, for many Muslim women, their families positively affected their careers. These two themes are important to keep in mind when attempting to answer the research questions because Islamophobia can destroy careers, and support from family members can influence — either negatively or positively — career success.

Resilience to Islamophobia

Twelve out of the fourteen participants experienced Islamophobia at some point in their lives, and the two that didn't are recent arrivals to Canada. Amani for example would get asked if “She is hot in that and how long is your hair?” (Amani, personal communication, June 20, 2022). Another participant, Sarah, would bring up incidents of discrimination; however, the manager would make a comment such as “Tell people them how (good) we treat you” (Sarah, personal communication, June 8, 2022).

Kay is a senior risk analyst. While at a work lunch with one of her directors, he started asking inappropriate questions, “After he got himself a drink ... he's like, ‘How do you wear that thing? It's so hot outside.’” Kay was caught off-guard and now wonders if he was always thinking that way. She said, “Now that he's drinking, he feels looser to say it [now] that we're not in the office setting ... I get those types of comments a lot. It's really weird” (Kay, personal communication, June 5, 2022).

Hope faced a similarly awkward situation. She was at a meeting when she had to leave for a pre-existing appointment. Coincidentally, she left at a time when her colleagues were talking about dogs. Later, her colleague reached out to her to ask if she had left because she hates dogs.

Hope said, “They think we don’t like dogs, but we are not like this; we love animals ... so I take these opportunities to educate my team about who we are and be proud of who I am” (Hope, personal communication, April 1, 2022).

These are experiences that can create uncomfortable and unnecessary conversations because they made the participants feel as if they are being studied by other people. They go to work every day, and they wonder what their colleagues think of them and if they will possibly wind up in another uncomfortable situation at some other point in time. In the workplace, these comments create an environment full of stereotype threats, where people are consciously threatened by the stereotyping of their group (Shantz, 2012).

Sarah is a psychotherapist who had enough of the discrimination to the point where she quit to become self-employed. She had worked for an organization that served the Muslim community. At one point, her office did not have any chairs and, when she brought this up to her management team, they responded with a racist remark, “Well, people from your culture sit on the ground anyway. Why would you need chairs?” (Sarah, personal communication, June 8, 2022).

Other participants faced blatant and offensive discrimination on a higher level. Iman previously worked as a university professor, and she asked her senior male colleague for some advice because she lacked experience. Her colleague’s response shocked her when he said, “You will face four struggles or four barriers: The first one is you are a woman, the second is you are a Muslim wearing hijab, the third is you are an immigrant, and the fourth is you have an accent.” (Iman, personal communication, May 15, 2022). The professor was insinuating that she would not be able to handle her position because of these barriers. Her colleague continued, “If you have a problem with a student, you have to reach out to me first.” Although he did not believe she could handle this position, she finished her contract with great reviews from her students and was

conflict-free (Iman, personal communication, May 15, 2022).

According to the literature, a study indicated that almost all of its participants had experienced Islamophobia at work (Latif et al., 2018) and had been on the receiving end of systemic acts of discrimination (Zine, 2004). Moreover, the literature described a workplace that is full of discrimination, portraying Muslim women as incompetent and weak (Shantz, 2012). The notion that participants are resilient to Islamophobia indicates that this research question can be answered. In addition, one must understand the background and struggles of Muslim women to truly understand the challenges they had to overcome to build their belief system.

In response to these stereotypes, the literature suggests that employees would leave their organizations and take sick leaves of absence (MacIntosh, 2012). While it is true that the fourteen participants faced discrimination early on in their careers, none of them quit their jobs; they simply completed the contract and left with the experience to find employment elsewhere. For example, Iman was at the receiving end of racist and sexist remarks from her colleague, so she just finished her contract and moved on to another organization.

Islamophobia can take many forms, from microaggressions hidden in questions about why you wear a hijab to statements insinuating that you are inferior. Despite Islamophobia being prevalent in our society, the participants were able to rise above and become successful managers in Canadian organizations. Despite facing outright discrimination, they continued to stay strong, worked in different roles in different organizations, and, ultimately, achieved leadership positions. Muslim women reached leadership positions given two additional obstacles; first is because they are culturally different from the dominant group (Khattab et al., 2019); second, management positions are harder to reach because they lacked a western appearance (Ahmed & Gorey, 2021). It is also interesting that apart of maintaining their Islamic identity, they did not exhibit any

masculine traits as the literature indicated that women in such situations will adopt strong masculine traits to overcome the gender stereotypes (Zubeida et al., 2016).

The Influence of the Family

The family has a major influence on the lives of its members. Muslim women are daughters, mothers, and wives; therefore, the complexities of family life can have an impact on their careers. So, it follows that it has also had an impact on these fourteen women's career choices and self-beliefs. Twelve participants had families and it had a major impact on their life; for example, Amani is now able to plan for her career because "My kids are now finishing high school and University" (Amani, personal communication, June 20, 2022). Family is very important to Muslim women because it is like a chain that binds them to who they are (Arifeen & Gatrell, 2020).

Thirteen out of the fourteen participants had a family, and they were all extremely dedicated. Suad provided family details by saying, "I have a big family, so it is not easy to juggle everything. However, because my husband and my kids are the biggest responsibility, I have to provide the best environment possible" (Suad, personal communication, June 15, 2022). Again, this was also demonstrated by Amani, who quit her job when she first had kids because she did not want them in daycare, "I did not finish my university and I got married at a very very young age...and I did not want to send my kids to daycare" (Amani, personal communication, June 2022). This is summed up in the literature because family is highly valued in Islam, as it is considered a pillar in Muslim society (Muhtar et al., 2021).

For Muslim women, there are three themes of how the family will influence their careers.

- First, husbands are very supportive;
- Second, parents are very influential; and
- Third, children have a significant effect on their careers.

The Husbands are Very Supportive. Out of the fourteen participants, eleven were married, two were divorced, and one was never married. Out of the eleven married women, ten participants highly praised their husband's role in their careers. Sophie said her husband played an instrumental role. "He has always been the one that encourages me to apply to higher positions because I tend to get comfortable" (Sophie, personal communication, June 1, 2022). Suzy is a construction manager, and her husband is also in the same industry. Since she works in a male-dominated industry, he helps her with her confidence. Suzy's husband gives her 'pep talks' and tells her, "You are strong, and you know how to do this" (Suzy, personal communication, March 20, 2022).

Faten's husband also supports her when she is working late, especially since she has four children. Furthermore, her husband helps her with her professional growth: "He is a consultant, and he helps me with ideas and suggestions ... he coached me on the use of project-management software until I became confident at using it" (Faten, personal communication, May 13, 2022). Iman's family is everything to her, and her husband helps her "Day and night" (Iman, personal communication, May 15, 2022). Hope's husband will do mock interviews with her and works extra hours when she takes time off for school (Hope, personal communication, April 1, 2022).

A sense of inequality is conveyed by the literature when it refers to Muslim women in that they might be forced to make decisions by their parents, husbands, or other family members (Marcotte, 2010). A number of these decisions are made because they relate to obtaining permission from family members and spouses to work (Arifeen & Gatrell, 2020), as well as the importance for Muslim women to maintain their reputation as decent women (Esposito & Burgat, 2003). However, none of the participants discussed the need to have permission from their families or husbands to work. In fact, their husbands *were* instrumental in their career development. For

example, Sophie would become complacent in her current role, and her husband would motivate her to seek better opportunities. As for the risk of not being a decent woman, there is no evidence to suggest that any of that is true because all the participants worked in a professional setting without any interference from their family members.

There is no doubt that Muslim husbands contribute greatly to the success of Muslim women. However, it was quite surprising to read in the literature that Muslim men may feel threatened by ambitious wives which hurts their pride (Arifeen & Gatrell, 2020) and that Muslim women are forced to view their husband's careers as a priority (Ramadan, 2022). Again, for the currently eleven married participants, none of their husbands were described in this manner by their wives, and only the two divorced participants stated that they were held back. Bliss is one of the women who was held back because she had to move to a few different countries in support of her husband's career, because the husband's choice for employment will determine where the family will live (Arifeen & Gatrell, 2020); however, this was only experienced by Bliss.

The way the participants spoke about the support of their husbands shows how their career success is influenced by their partner's support. They include Sophie's husband who encourage her not be complacent in her position, Faten's husband who taught her valuable project management skills, and Hope's husband who prepares her with mock interviews and works extra hours when she is taking extra courses. Clearly, having a positive and supportive partner increased the participants' confidence, which significantly increased their self-belief. Having constant support encouragement increases self-efficacy (Hackett & Betz, 1981) and the higher the self - efficacy the more motivated an individual will be (Betz, 1994).

Only two participants were held back by their husbands, and both were divorced. After Bliss got married, she moved around with her husband outside of Canada and returned home after

the divorce. Her family has strong opinions about how she was held back, and now they are glad that she is now “Back on her feet” (Bliss, personal communication, April 20, 2022). Amani felt similarly about not being supported and being held back by her husband, but she volunteered little details. “I think there was a lot of hold-back. I was held back in that relationship” (Amani, personal communication, June 20, 2022). The literature mentioned that the location of the husband’s career will determine where the family will live (Ramadan, 2022); however, there was little evidence in that in this research. Regardless of being held back, both women demonstrated much resilience and consider themselves successful, and they are proud of what they have accomplished.

The Parents are Very Supportive. Out of the fourteen participants, thirteen mentioned how helpful their parents were. The one exception is Gabrielle, who said, “I am living by myself, so they are not a part of anything that is going on here. They live abroad” (Gabrielle, personal communication, July 2, 2022). The rest of the participants spoke highly of their parents and how they supported them. Maryam was raised by her mom. She said, “I owe everything to my mom ... she pushed me to thrive and to be the best person I can be” (Maryam, personal communication, March 31, 2022). Amani’s mother raised her to be a hard worker and a good person. At the end of each day, her mother would ask her, “What have you done today for the family” (Amani, personal communication, June 20, 2022)? Kay’s father prepared her for any discrimination that she might face and told her, “We don’t care what people say about you or say to you, whether it’s Islamophobia, whether it’s racist ... as long as you are not being physically hurt, just push past it and do what you got to do” (Kay, personal communication, June 5, 2022).

Many participants shared very personal and profound moments of the support and validation provided by their parents, which helped prepare them for adulthood and their careers. Encouragement is especially important during the education of the children, which will increase

self-efficacy (Betz & Hackett, 1997). The parents provided outright support, the literature mentioned that Muslim parents influence the education and career choices of their children, which can cause some tension (Tyrer & Ahmad, 2006); in addition, there can also be some challenges for Muslim women as they need permission from their parents to work after graduation (Arifeen & Gatrell, 2020). However, this was not the case in this research, and none of the parents interfered with their children, nor did they require permission to work.

Younger Children Hinder Careers. Having children certainly affects the career trajectory of Muslim women, especially when mothers have younger children. Among the fourteen participants, twelve have children, which plays an important role in their career planning. However, analyzing this theme is difficult because each woman's situation is unique. Some participants do not have children, some have more children than others, and some of the children are in different age groups.

Many participants planned their careers around raising their children. Sophie is selective about her job and prefers one that gives her flexibility. "I have four children, so I have to be available to get up and go if a kid is sick because my husband works farther out across the city" (Sophie, personal communication, June 1, 2022). In this situation, she chose a job that fits her lifestyle and remains in it because she does not know if the next position will be flexible as well. Suzy wants to get her master's degree. "That would be very hard with two kids; maybe when they are both not at home" (Suzy, personal communication, March 20, 2022). Amani's children are adults now, but she married at a very young age and did not finish university. "I did not want to go into debt and did not want to send my kids to daycare" (Amani, personal communication, June 20, 2022). Not finishing her university did hold her back because most of her colleagues have master's degrees.

Muslim women are very dedicated mothers and plan their careers around their children. In Islam, women are expected to have children early on and are considered powerful managers of the family (Dale, 2005). Children slow their career progress as Sophie remained in a specific job because of its flexibility, Suzy delayed pursuing higher education, and Amani dropped out of university to take care of her children. Balancing careers and children is difficult, which will create obstacle in a Muslim women's career (Ramadan, 2022). When balancing careers and life with children, Muslim women will make their children a priority. The priority of children is due to Islam's significant responsibility to mothers to care for their children (Ramadan, 2022).

An interesting finding occurred with two of the participants. When their children grew up, they ended up helping their mothers with their careers. Faten's children are in different age groups, and they are extremely supportive when she works late. Her older children will "Prepare dinner or they will help me with my younger children ... my older children will take their brother to his activities and bring him back" (Faten, personal communication, May 13, 2022). Hope also received much support from her daughter: "Whenever I had a question about writing, editing, or reading, especially at the beginning of this role, she would help me. Sometimes she volunteers and supports me in some projects when I don't find any volunteers" (Hope, personal communication, April 1, 2022).

These external factors are important to the research question because they provide insight into the types of environments that the participants are experiencing. According to the literature, a study indicated that almost all of its participants had experienced Islamophobia at work (Latif et al., 2018) and had been on the receiving end of systemic acts of discrimination (Zine, 2004). Within this study, twelve participants experienced discrimination and they were all resilient to Islamophobia and worked their way up to senior positions. As for family, they were extremely

dedicated to their families because for Muslim women it is like a chain that binds them to who they are (Arifeen & Gatrell, 2020). Their parents and husbands support them and do not interfere with their choices, one can assume there is a lot of trust within their relationships and do not require permission to work.

Overall, unfortunately, due to Islamophobia, Muslim women *have* historically had difficulty succeeding, which explains why they have the highest unemployment rate of all groups (Khattab et al., 2019). The influence of Islamophobia and family members on the lives and careers of Muslim women is beyond their control, because they cannot choose their environment, parents, or predict the success of their marriage. However, the purpose of this section is to provide important contextual information for one to see how their self-beliefs suffer or benefit from those factors.

Internal Beliefs of Muslim Women

It is important to understand the internal belief systems of Muslim women in order to answer the research questions since they have the potential to determine their success or failure.

A person's internal beliefs are the fundamental views about themselves, others, and the world they live in, which is the basis of the self-concept theory (Super, 1953). The self-concept theory was chosen over a feminist framework because a feminist approach aims for social transformation in our society (Orloff & Palier, 2009). Although it is difficult to tell how much of the participants' success was due to systemic change, this section will demonstrate that their high self-concept made a major contribution.

In this section on inner beliefs, we will discuss three themes contributing to the participant's success: The first is that Muslim women have strong Islamic identities; second, Islam plays a vital role in their self-belief; and, lastly, there was no othering of others.

Strong Islamic Identities

Twelve participants have experienced Islamophobia; however, none have considered removing the hijab or performing identity work, as mentioned in the literature. The fourteen participants in this research are visible because they wear the hijab and demonstrated strong Islamic identities in the workplace. All the participants interviewed have always worn the hijab. As Sue mentioned, “I am not shy about how I look; I do wear the hijab, and people accept it” (Sue, personal communication, April 4, 2022). The decision of all the participants to wear the hijab is significant because the visibility of Muslim clothing such as the hijab, can quickly lead to direct or indirect discrimination (Hunt et al., 2020).

Additionally, the participants never hesitated about wearing the hijab, even under direct pressure. Iman once posted a request on LinkedIn asking people for feedback on her profile, then a woman responded to her in the comment section telling her to remove her hijab. However, she refused and explained to her in a public forum that “The hijab is part of me, it’s part of my religion, part of my identity, and I cannot just remove it to please people.” (Iman, personal communication, May 15, 2022). The decision to wear the hijab is difficult because it has severe personal, social, and religious implications (Mohibullah & Kramer, 2016). Muslim women are accustomed to pressures to remove their hijab from a young age; for example, the Quebec soccer federation asked an 11-year-old to leave the game because she refused to remove the hijab (Zine, 2012). Although participants faced those types of pressures, none of them ever removed the hijab at any time in their lives. There were three subthemes in how Muslim women presented their strong Islamic Identities; First, they do not perform identity work, second, they practice Islam at work, and third, they are unapologetically Muslim.

Not Performing Identity Work. None of the Muslim women in this research perform identity work, as put by Gabrielle, “Never, ever, ever do something that you don’t feel comfortable doing” (Gabrielle, personal communication, July 2, 2022). The literature said that Muslim women perform identity work by pretending to be vegetarian to avoid disclosing that they are following an Islamic diet (Latif et al., 2018). An interesting finding which is not reflected in the literature is that the participants are not only in a reactive mode to the pressures of discrimination and microaggressions, but actively engage others regarding their religious identity. Typically, these types of pressures can cause n people to leave their identity at home (Morgan, 1986). Some people may even resort to passing strategies, such as identity work, to gain acceptance from the dominant social group (Leary, 1999).

However, participants never performed such identity work, Bliss remembers walking around with a prayer matt without hiding it and would explain Islamic prayers to people when they asked her, ” You could pray at any time, but the five prayers are to be prayed on a particular time, but God is always available anytime you feel like you need to call on to him and pray” (Bliss, personal communication, April 20, 2022). Hope is also uninhibited by her identity by helping to bring awareness to her organization, she said, “I did a presentation about Ramadan and those kinds of traditions” (Hope, personal communication, April 1, 2022).

Interestingly, the literature indicated that identity work might cause more harm than good, creates a low self-concept, and provides only temporary acceptance (Zine, 2012). Quite the opposite happens when maintaining your identity. Muslim women who kept their identity built great relationships with their colleagues, received religious accommodations at work, and reached senior positions within their organizations. The literature indicated that a high level of self-

confidence results in higher salaries, promotions, career satisfaction, and leadership opportunities (Seibert et al., 1999).

Practicing Islam at work. Practicing religion at work made the participants more visible than they already are; in addition, it requires explanation, planning, and action. What stands out the most is that thirteen out of the fourteen participants pray at work, and one prefers to pray at home. For Muslim women who have a history of discrimination and other microaggressions, this takes a lot of courage and confidence because obvious religious acts will draw a lot of attention when they can easily be avoided.

One scenario that brought much-unwanted attention, humiliation, and embarrassment occurred early in Faten's career. Her manager walked in on her while she was praying; the manager walked into Faten's office without knocking and yelled to everyone to come to see that Faten was dead. The manager's comment left Faten feeling ridiculed and traumatized; she was also confused how the manager thought she was dead. So, the follow-up question to Faten was if she continued to pray after this incident. Surprisingly, Faten said, "I have to pray, and I told her these are the movements that we perform" (Faten, personal communication, May 13, 2022). The literature said that Muslim women perform identity work by pretending to be vegetarian to avoid disclosing that they are following an Islamic diet (Latif et al., 2018). However, the participants in this study not only avoided using passing strategies, but they also avoided falling back on them when they faced a lot of discomfort and embarrassment.

Another religious practice is when Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset for a whole month once a year during Ramadan. If you are working, you need to time your breaks so you can eat at sunset, which changes daily. In this regard, Gabrielle is another participant that practices her religion at work. "I do my prayers at work ... I was fasting that day, and I asked the manager to

change my last break to sunset time, and they were very cooperative” (Gabrielle, personal communication, July 2, 2022).

The participants in this study approached their careers with the mindset that Islam is not an obstacle and that they had nothing to hide because it benefitted their careers. The benefits uplifted them spiritually and taught them to strive for excellence in everything they do, which is an Islamic teaching. The literature focused on the challenges of Muslim women and did not mention anything about their assertiveness. It talked about their fears, and participants in this demonstrated strong identities even when they were harshly treated. Iman was put on the spotlight on LinkedIn for her hijab, and Faten was embarrassed in front of her colleagues when her manager thought she was dead. Additionally, none of the participants who asked for religious exceptions were denied, and none of the participants ever stopped practicing their religion in face of difficult circumstance.

Unapologetically Muslim. Although Muslim women wear the hijab and must practice their faith by praying and fasting, there are instances where their belief systems clash with social norms. At work, Suad does not shake hands with her male colleagues. “Part of practicing my religion [is] not shaking hands with my colleagues [and] it’s something not very known ... however, I respectfully explained [that] in religion, physical touch is a sin. So now everyone is respected, and no one is offended” (Suad, personal communication, June 15, 2022).

Another situation where Islamic boundaries are set is when it comes to alcohol. Oumaima is very clear when it comes to purchasing gifts for others at work, “If it’s something like alcohol or an LCBO gift card, I’m very, very clear and very confident to say ... ‘I’m going get a separate gift’” (Oumaima, personal communication, April 28, 2022). Amani is also very vocal about alcohol at events, and she informs the planners ahead of time by saying: “Absolutely no alcohol on the table that I’m going to be sitting in ... my organization is such a great organization; the

coordinators and the organizer would absolutely know that” (Amani, personal communication, June 20, 2022).

Social interactions between men and women that include handshakes, hugs, and alcohol are seen as normal practices; however, Islam prohibits alcohol and the socialization between men and women (Dale, 2005). These internal beliefs that are linked to faith create obstacles and hinder the progress of Muslim women’s careers (Battour et al., 2011). However, Muslim women are openly expressing their wishes to not have their religious values compromised and are able to create a new norm within their organizations; this includes not having alcohol present at their table and not shaking hands with male colleagues.

A robust Islamic identity is needed for Muslim women to be successful; it takes a lot of self-belief and not setting boundaries can create negative self-belief at work. Muslim women face the stereotypes of being submissive, incompetent, and weak (Nagra, 2018). Consequently, the stereotypes distract them and cause them to underperform because they spend a lot of energy to avoid behaviours that validate these stereotypes (Jamieson & Harkins, 2007). However, the participants did not succumb to these stereotypes. Refusing to shake hands with a man and refusing to be in the presence of alcohol can make for a very awkward situation because they are socially acceptable behaviours for most people. However, Muslim women have the maturity to respectfully set boundaries and to succeed in those environments.

The Importance of Islam in Careers

Islam has positively influenced the participant’s careers and is instrumental in answering the research question. Islam did not negatively impact the participants’ careers, but instead, they benefitted in two ways. In the first instance, their faith was not harmful to them because it did not hold them back, and second, Islam spiritually uplifted them in their professional pursuits.

Not Harmful. None of the participants expressed that being Muslim hurt their careers. Sophie thought about it and said, “I don’t think it does, I’m like ‘maybe’ because I’m Muslim; maybe that’s why it stopped me from getting an opportunity, but I could be just speculating” (Sophie, personal communication, June 1, 2022). Sue also agreed, “I don’t think it would affect my career ... in the sense of being turned down for something” (Sue, personal communication, April 4, 2022). Suzy has also not been harmed; she is a female manager working in the construction industry and considers herself a workplace ambassador. “So, basically, I’m representing Islam as a hijabi” (Suzy, personal communication, March 20, 2022).

Spiritually Lifted Them. Four participants went further by not only saying that Islam did not hinder their careers, but it gave them additional benefits. Suad said that Islam made her an exceptional worker, “My religion teaches me if you do any work, you have to do it perfectly” (Suad, personal communication, June 15, 2022). Oumaima shares a similar mindset and looks at her job as a blessing from God, “I always have this mindset that your job ... that’s your *rizque* (blessings from God)” (Oumaima, personal communication, April 28, 2022). Bliss said it was with God answering her prayer that she is in the position she is today, “When I came out of that situation [divorce], I got hired at where I am working now, and I just feel like it was just prayers, having that connection and having your prayers answered” (Bliss, personal communication, April 20, 2022).

There was an abundance of sources in the literature regarding negative consequences that Islam brings to Muslim women. Muslim women’s unemployment rate is very high at 16% (Khattab et al., 2019) and Muslim women that dress modestly and wear the hijab are discriminated against in the workplace (Ali, 2018). However, the participants have high levels of self-belief, which is associated with positive mental health, success, and satisfaction (Mann et al., 2004). The

behaviours of Muslim women mirror what the literature says about having low public self-consciousness, which means that they do not care what others think of them (Conner, 2000). Low public self-consciousness allows them to become resilient in difficult circumstances which prevents them to react in a dysfunctional way (Conner, 2000). Having low self-consciousness allowed them openly to practice their religion and help them overcome stereotypes. In addition, none of the participants ever mentioned any situations where they lashed out against others, they were always in control.

For members of a highly discriminated group to enter the workforce believing that their religion will not harm their career represents a unique belief system. Muslim women are better off having the mindset that Islam is an asset, rather than a barrier, to their career development. The next theme is about how Muslim women view their colleagues.

Not Othering of Others

In this research, none of the participants spoke negatively of their colleagues and they highly praised them. Muslim women experience discrimination within the various spaces in society and they are increasingly othered (Nagra, 2018), this may cause them to other people with their suspicions. This is evident in the literature in which Muslim women use passing strategies at work and suffer the feeling of being stigmatized at work (Latif et al., 2018). This sub-theme will help us answer the research question because how Muslim women feel about other people. It will be presented how Muslim women create relationships and have great connections with their colleagues. The foundation of social capital is created with building social relationship between people, creating solidarity, and building goodwill (Adler & Kwon, 2002). If there was one takeaway from this research, it was the discovery that Muslim women do not other their colleagues, which helps them build trust, allies, and relationships. None of the participants voiced a negative

opinion of their colleagues or looked at them suspiciously. The reason for not othering their colleagues came from three different points of views. Firstly, it was based on the Islamic viewpoint, secondly, from the perspective of alliance building, and thirdly, from the perspective of educational development.

Islamic Viewpoint. Five participants treated their colleagues based on Islamic principles that requires one to focus on yourself instead of others, Kay said, “It’s also an Islamic teaching...you focus on your own deeds, whether they’re good or bad. The only time I would concern myself with my colleagues is if they’re extremely incompetent.” (Kay, personal communication, June 5, 2022). Maryam looked at everyone in the same way and said: “There is absolutely no difference to me.” She believes that thinking negatively of other people is ‘un-Islamic’ (Maryam, personal communication, March 31, 2022). Iman appreciates the goodness she sees in her colleagues: “I see a lot of bad behaviours from Muslims, and I notice that some of my colleagues, who are not Muslims, are acting the way we should act” (Iman, personal communication, May 15, 2022).

Building Allies. Four participants viewed their colleagues as strategic allies. Faten described her relationship with her colleagues as highly respectful and mutually beneficial. In one instance, he mentored her, and she later mentored him. “I supported him later on, actually” (Faten, personal communication, May 13, 2022). Amani received a lot of support from her non-Muslim colleagues and described them as very supportive. “I have learned so much from them being a new immigrant to Canada” (Amani, personal communication, June 20, 2022).

Educational Standpoint. Five participants take an educational approach. Sophie said that she understands that non-Muslims are exposed to negative media discourses and lack understanding, “I honestly think they just don’t know ... it’s a chance to educate them to the best

of my abilities, and I don't let anyone's ignorance bother me" (Sophie, personal communication, June 1, 2022). Suzy must constantly deal with customers who have invested a good amount of money in construction projects. When they first encounter her at work, they are surprised and confused that she is in that position and that she speaks English. She uses positivity and jokes to make them laugh. "I make a joke out of it. I don't get offended by people's ignorance ... you kind of have to teach them" (Suzy, personal communication, March 20, 2022).

The fourteen participants spoke highly of their colleagues and did not resort to othering. As Muslim women experience discrimination within the various spaces in society, this may cause them to other people with their suspicions. This is evident in the literature in which Muslim women use passing strategies by attempting not to be seen praying at work and pretending to be vegetarian, so they do not disclose that they adhere to an Islamic diet (Latif et al., 2018).

Others learning from the participants should remember that othering people is not part of any Islamic principle; instead, they should look at others as equal members of our society and that God is there to protect them through prayers. Consequently, this will open the doors for them to build allies that will benefit their careers. If they do encounter any misconceptions, it might not always be out of malice, but it could simply be a blind spot, which can be solved with education.

This section on the internal belief systems highlights the importance of individuals taking responsibility to increasing their self-concept. The current literature on self-concept places the burden on charismatic leaders to improve the employee's psychological state (Shamir et al., 1993). Furthermore, they do not discuss the employee improving their own self-concept while facing discrimination (Judge et al., 1998). Consequently, these findings can possibly new opportunities for research for research on increasing self-concept in a discriminatory environment.

Participants have high levels of self-belief in which they are openly practicing their religion and identity, which is associated with positive mental health, success, and satisfaction (Mann et al., 2004). A person's internal beliefs are the fundamental views about themselves, others, and the world they live in, which is the basis of the self-concept theory (Super, 1953) The behaviors of Muslim women mirror what the literature says about having low public self-consciousness, which means that they do not care what others think of them (Conner, 2000). Low public self-consciousness allows them to be freer and feel comfortable, which is when they can openly practice their religion and help them overcome stereotypes.

The research, at this point, has started to fill in the gaps in the literature by showing that Muslim women have strong Islamic identities at work and do not perform identity work. They believe that Islam is an asset to their career, and they have extremely positive views about their colleagues, which help them build relationships at work. Not othering people is instrumental in answering the research questions because it includes what Muslim women think of other people. Muslim women positively start their interactions with non-Muslims with this belief system, opening opportunities to build relationships and increase social capital that is required for career success (Hezlett & Gibson, 2007).

Organizational Psychological

This section describes the themes relating to organizational psychology, which relate to the behaviours that led to the participants' development of their self-belief at work, resulting in their promotions. Organizational psychology is how employees' study and assess other individuals, groups, and organizational dynamics in the workplace; a high grasp of organizational psychology improves the employees' well-being, and performance (Lefkowitz, 2008). Participants were able to navigate within the organization, becoming aware, motivated, and putting themselves in a better state of mental health. Having a high level of self-belief is not sufficient for success; one must possess the necessary organizational tools to compete for senior positions. It was found that the participants utilized a variety of strategies that assisted them in becoming psychologically aware within their organizations. There were five sub-themes:

- Education is essential;
- Mentors are instrumental;
- Successful networking without alcohol;
- Proactivity results in promotions; and
- Resolving conflicts effectively.

Education is Essential

All participants hold college or university degrees: three hold college degrees, four hold undergraduate degrees, six hold master's degrees, and one holds a doctorate. Ten participants needed their degrees as a minimum requirement for their position. Kay has an undergraduate degree in sociology and experienced a stringent selection process after graduation. When asked how important her degree was in getting her job, she said, "Oh, huge, I wouldn't be in my stream [job classification], and I need a degree in economics or sociology ... and it has a lower acceptance rate than Harvard" (Kay, personal communication, June 5, 2022). Sarah is a psychotherapist, and

her degree was required to become a counsellor. She said, “My master’s degree, I think, was very practical, and shaped a lot of how I started in my career as a therapist” (Sarah, personal communication, June 8, 2022). Without their education, the ten participants would not be in their current positions.

For eleven participants, completing specialized courses provided a competitive advantage, resulting in a promotion. Suzy has a university degree and works as a construction manager. She took a technical course on home warranties: “I took a Tarion course so that I can understand the aspect of building the warranties.” The Tarion course allowed her to learn more about the construction industry and compete in an office full of “dominant men” (Suzy, personal communication, March 20, 2022).

Oumaima, another participant, has a master’s degree in economics and recently added a post-graduate certificate. Oumaima said, “This diploma is offered at the university in their Public Policy faculty. It’s very relevant to my work.” Before becoming a manager, Oumaima had discussed her program with her manager and the potential for advancement. She said, “At the same time I was discussing with him that I will be joining an online university program.” This strategy paid off for Oumaima because she said, “The next time he asked to talk to me, he told me, ‘There’s this opportunity. Are you interested?’” (Oumaima, personal communication, April 28, 2022)? Also, Sophie was strategic in taking additional courses, noting in her performance review: “This is where I want to go. This is the goal I want to achieve. There are the courses I want to take” (Sophie, personal communication, June 1, 2022).

Within the literature, Muslim women have the highest education rate and the highest unemployment rate out of any group (Khattab et al., 2019), and their parents are very supportive of their education (Shah et al., 2010). Education is crucial to Muslim women’s success since it

allows them entry into the organization and leads to advancement. To become successful managers, the participants received their initial education and continued their education with courses relevant to their position and helpful to their organizations. In addition, discussions regarding upgrading their education should be held with the management team and even documented in the performance evaluation. Muslim women's families are extremely supportive of education (Tyrrer & Ahmad, 2006); however, not much is said in the literature about the strategies they use with their education. In view of the fact that eleven participants upgraded their education to acquire specific knowledge within their organization which resulted in a promotion, further research is needed to determine whether this tool is effective in combating workplace discrimination.

Mentors are Instrumental

Islam prohibits unnecessary interactions between men and women, so having a male mentor makes Muslim women uncomfortable. However, thirteen out of the fourteen participants had male mentors, and these Muslim women demonstrated a lot of confidence and professionalism within these relationships. Gabrielle had the confidence to approach a male supervisor to ask for mentorship, which got her promoted. "There was someone at work that helped me during my initial training. I told him I wanted to grow with the company" (Gabrielle, personal communication, July 2, 2022). Faten was proactive in seeking a mentor, so she approached her senior colleague for help; she described the relationship as "A very respectful relationship and kind of a big brother relationship" (Faten, personal communication, May 13, 2022).

Amani does not have any problems with male mentors but would not want to be alone with one. "No, I have no problem, as long as there are women around. But I would absolutely not be comfortable being the only woman" (Amani, personal communication, June 20, 2022). Bliss

echoed Amani's preference: "I already work with men; as long as I'm not in a room alone with a man, then I'm good" (Bliss, personal communication, April 20, 2022).

While most participants were comfortable with male mentors, some preferred women mentors, but this was not due to religious reasons. Kay said, "A woman of colour would be able to provide better advice to me than, let's say, a white male" (Kay, personal communication, June 5, 2022). Sophie echoed Kay's feelings as she reflected on a good experience with a female mentor. "She was a woman with kids. That's what I wanted — somebody that has the experience and was successful having a good work-life balance" (Sophie, personal communication, June 1, 2022).

Maryam had a unique strategy: She hired a Muslim life coach she talks to weekly because life was getting more and more difficult. "This life coach helps me a lot in managing my reactions." The life coach also helped Maryam manage her workplace conflicts (Maryam, personal communication, March 31, 2022). By hiring a life coach, she inadvertently raised her self-efficacy, because she now had someone that was helping her reduce her physiological reaction that one can experience in a stressful environment (Bandura & Wessels, 1994)

Thirteen of the fourteen Muslim women have mentors, and none have a problem with having a male mentor. Therefore, to become successful and reach leadership positions, Muslim women should strategize and be mindful of finding mentors who can help them with their careers. Muslim women should always look for mentors within their community, university, work, family, and friends. Finding mentors within their organization is also quite beneficial, as Gabrielle had a mentor who possessed organization knowledge, which helped her get promoted within a year. One of the ways to increase self-efficacy is to have mentors (Bandura & Locke, 2003)

Mentorship indeed leads to career success (Bozionelos & Wang, 2006), as thirteen participants had mentors, and Kay is the only one without a mentor but is currently looking for

one. Gabrielle credits her success to her mentor; when she approached him and asked him for guidance, she was promoted within a year. Mentoring also promotes emotional stability (Rothmann & Coetzer, 2003). Another example is Maryam, who has a life coach as a mentor who successfully guided her through a workplace conflict.

The central theme in the literature regarding mentorship and Muslim women is that Islam prohibits the socialization between men and women, which would mean that they would not be proactive in seeking male mentorship (Dale, 2005). However, this research indicates that is not true, as thirteen participants had male mentors and did not have any problems unless they were alone with a man. For example, Gabrielle approached a male colleague and asked for mentorship, which led to her promotion within a year. In addition, none of the participants had any issues with it for religious reasons. Kay and Sophie preferred female mentors because they could relate to them more as women. Also, there was no interference from the families or husbands with expectations of Muslim women to manage their reputation as decent women (Esposito & Burgat, 2003).

The literature also mentions that Muslim women are just starting to develop the skills to interact professionally with other men (Arifeen & Gatrell, 2020). Within the literature review, one of the critiques of Tariq and Syed (Tariq & Syed, 2017) was that Muslim women do not reach out to male colleagues at work. In this research, Muslim women demonstrated their confidence and professionalism in having male-female professional relationships. There was no evidence of that in this research. Muslim women seem to be quite confident in managing relationships and ensuring that it stays professional. Not a single participant complained about uncomfortable moments and always felt safe and respected. One can argue that the literature is 'behind the times' regarding Muslim women's advancement and confidence in navigating mentor-mentee relationships with

male colleagues. This is indicative in Faten's actions; she is now mentoring her male colleague. In addition, these Muslim women have the confidence and support of their family members to build those relationships at the professional level.

Successful Networking Without Alcohol

Drinking alcohol is forbidden in Islam, and twelve out of fourteen participants were firmly against it; the remaining two would limit their presence but were uncomfortable. Amani said, "Oh, yeah, no, no! I draw a line on that, no ... that's not the area I'm willing to compromise" (Amani, personal communication, June 20, 2022). Bliss chooses to stay away from anything that does not have any benefit. "I don't feel like anything that has *haram* (sinful) on in it will benefit me. I feel like that can be replaced, so, you know, you stay away from what is disliked" (Bliss, personal communication, April 20, 2022).

However, sometimes the participants were put in situations where there was alcohol at mandatory work events. Oumaima is very cautious about being at establishments with the presence of alcohol. "If there's alcohol, I try to limit it. I would go just for an hour, just to, you know, [show up] because sometimes you can't control it ... but I'm very clear about where my boundaries are, and they are respectful" (Oumaima, personal communication, April 28, 2022).

An excellent sign was that nine participants successfully networked in ways that did not have alcohol present. Sophie would attend conferences and would "get the contact information" (Sophie, personal communication, June 1, 2022). Sue would join groups within her organization. "So, there are a lot of programs and a lot of groups that are through the banks. So, for example, women in leadership, our diversity, and inclusion teams" (Sue, personal communication, April 4, 2022). Suad demonstrated how some simple networking on Facebook could be very effective, as

she used a Facebook group to obtain her current position (Suad, personal communication, June 15, 2022).

Sarah was the best at networking out of all participants. She started networking in the community and through family and friends when she was younger. Once she was in university, her circle expanded. She was also very effective in building relationships within her network because, to her, it's not just a contact. So, she follows up with people after meeting them and explains what their relationship means to her. "It's checking in ... 'Hey, it was great to meet you. This is what I enjoyed about the conversation' ... 'I heard some of your talks, and this is what I liked about it'" (Sarah, personal communication, June 8, 2022).

The participants demonstrated they can network without being exposed to alcohol and socializing with men at events. Muslim women find it difficult to network because interacting with men is against their religious values (Dale, 2005), so some of them find this field too risky (Tariq & Syed, 2017). Moreover, the presence of alcohol at events compromises their religious values and damages the reputation of their family and their religious honour (Arifeen & Gatrell, 2020). Therefore, Muslim women can potentially miss out on opportunities to further their careers if they do not network (Tariq & Syed, 2017).

Muslim women showed that they could successfully network without going to networking events that have alcohol. Sophie networks at conferences, Sue networks with old colleagues at work, and Suad found her position by networking on a Facebook group. None of the participants felt that they were missing out when not attending work functions with alcohol because they already knew these people and echo Bliss's attitude that these events could be replaced.

Since nine of the fourteen participants were successful in networking without the presence of alcohol, then this may eventually cease to be an issue. Furthermore, with the current COVID-

19 climate, these Muslim women will have even more opportunities for networking since many events are now online. A multitude of options are now available, including online events and social media, people within their organizations, at conferences, and within their circles. Further, they should develop the relationships the same way Sarah has by reaching out to the people that she meets and emphasizing the importance of the relationship.

Proactivity Results in a Promotion

Of the fourteen participants, three were external hires, and eleven were promoted internally. Promoted participants were very proactive and received recognition from their management teams. Taking personal responsibility for one's career requires being proactive, which creates opportunities within their organizations (De Vos et al., 2009). Seven participants added value to their organization by closing knowledge gaps. Amani is an HR manager who transformed her organization's approach to customer experience. She stated, "I've changed the culture." In addition, she quickly steps up to ensure that her organization does not fall behind by taking on additional tasks. "We were short-staffed ... so, I just took it and added it to my already full ... to-do list." In recognition of her efforts, her manager increased her salary to the top tier of the company's salary scale (Amani, personal communication, June 20, 2022). Proactive individuals are more likely to seek and take advantage of opportunities that lead to positive change (Seibert et al., 1999).

Similarly, Sophie contributed by improving her organization's training. "The training was horrible. My manager had to sit with me and train me on every little aspect, and nothing was written down." So, Sophie created a training manual that was shared with many employees across the organization. In addition, she always volunteers: "If something comes through the email, I usually will volunteer." Being proactive requires adjusting your behaviour to become motivated

(Parker & Liao, 2016). Having moved to another department on loan to assist them, Sophie was noticed by her manager, who helped her with her promotion. “Within two weeks of working with me, he asked, ‘What you are doing as an admin?’ and was very encouraging. He’s the one who told me, ‘You should be applying to be a financial analyst’” (Sophie, personal communication, June 1, 2022).

The participants were all integral members of their organizations and supported their teams daily. An example is Hope, who is always looking to contribute. “When my manager or colleague walks by my cubicle, and I see they are tired or they are sick, I would say, ‘Is there anything I can do for you’” (Hope, personal communication, April 1, 2022).

Gabrielle is a supervisor that her management team can always count on. “I’m always available and even whenever they ask for any overtime. I’m always here whenever they ask me to change my shifts. I’m very serious about my work, and I’m never late for my shift.” This attitude helped Gabrielle get noticed and promoted quickly. “I feel so proud of myself that I got promoted in less than one year ... I love my work. I love everyone there, and it’s like a family for me” (Gabrielle, personal communication, July 2, 2022).

Proactive people must possess particular traits to succeed (Seibert et al., 2001). Participants were all proactive, dependable, and a problem-solver; in addition, they were all able to adjust to their organization’s needs (Hall & Mirvis, 1995). As a result, their efforts are immediately recognized as they become an integral part of the team, which leads to them being approached for opportunities for senior positions

Resolving Conflicts Effectively

Successfully maneuvering conflict at work is vital because it can cause mental health issues and can cause lower performance, as well as eventually can cause someone to quit (Lewis &

Simpson, 2012). Participants in this research have encountered such situations and demonstrated that they possess the necessary tools to not let others have power over them. In addition to being protected and concealed, power has a hidden dimension. Those in power conceal their privilege and are agitated when those excluded challenge them. (Lewis & Simpson, 2012). Powerful individuals strive not to show their hands, not to be questioned, and to maintain control. So, if someone does not know how to manage conflict at work, it could mean the end of their career. However, all the participants were capable of managing workplace conflicts by employing different strategies.

The first strategy is some participants do not believe in confrontation and will immediately seek management's help. Organizations offer various options for addressing discrimination, including formal complaint procedures, and speaking with management (Ballard & Easteal, 2018). Sophie said, "If I need to, I escalate through the proper channels. I don't need to be confrontational because I don't think it's the right place, at work." She looks at this as a much safer approach because things can be documented using the proper channels. One example is when a manager played an inappropriate video of a sexual nature at a meeting. So, Sophie left the meeting and addressed the incident with her director (Sophie, personal communication, June 1, 2022).

The second strategy requires the need for time, space, and outside support when dealing with workplace conflicts. Maryam was in a meeting when one of her colleagues mistreated everyone. Following the meeting, the same woman called and accused Maryam of "Not doing your job". Maryam did not want to confront the woman in the meeting. "I will not talk back in that atmosphere, where there are a lot of people." Then Maryam gave herself time and space over the weekend because it happened on a Friday. She did not react right away to what was said in the meeting, so she slept on it and talked to her life coach. On Monday, upon reporting the incident to

her manager, the rude woman apologized and became very professional with Maryam (Maryam, personal communication, March 31, 2022).

The third strategy is to confront the aggressor. One participant dislikes blatant disrespect — Bliss works at a call center and once had to shadow and support another man from her training class on practice calls. During a call, her colleague started to raise his voice and told her that she was doing it wrong. In some cases, individuals may confront the aggressors themselves (Gaffney et al., 2012). Bliss then stood up for herself and immediately spoke up, “I said, ‘First of all, that’s no way to speak to anyone. I’m not gonna tolerate that. I’m not going to let you raise your voice here. ... So, you’re going to apologize for speaking to me like that’” The individual apologized to her, but he continued to doubt her abilities. “When I became a supervisor, I went to help him, and he said to me, ‘I don’t know if you can, help me with this, OK’” (Bliss, personal communication, April 20, 2022).

The fourth strategy is to keep a detailed log. Kay had such a severe conflict with her manager that she had to get the union involved. Her manager would set her up to fail by giving her tasks that were impossible to complete because of a lack of data. Then he would pick on her. “‘You shouldn’t be eating at your desk,’ and mind you, everyone around was eating at their desks.” At this point, Kay realized this was personal and not about the work. Kay sought support from her friend; it is a good strategy to have an insider support you within the organization (Eliezer & Major, 2012). Eventually, “The union got involved, and then public relations ended up getting involved” and the manager was removed from his position. Kay was very strategic in how she handled the situation. First, she did not get upset, angry or triggered. Second, she kept a diary of all the details and incidents she encountered with that manager. Her strategy was very effective because it “Helped my case because it wasn’t something that was off the cuff, or it wasn’t that I wasn’t just

overreacting. They could see that it was meticulous and detailing what was going on. I wrote it down at that moment in time, and I kept time stamps” (Kay, personal communication, June 5, 2022).

This theme is significant because a conflict at the workplace can derail your career and seriously affect your mental health; therefore, it is very helpful to address this issue in answering the research question. Many people stay silent (Ballard & Easteal, 2018) because they feel that they do not have any control over the investigation, which can cause stigmatized people to lower their self-esteem (Ballard & Easteal, 2018). However, there are no indications that participants were at any point out of control when attempting to resolve the conflict, and none of them faced any retaliation. In addition, they were all confident and assertive as soon as the conflict was initiated, indicating that they have high emotional intelligence because they were aware of these microaggressions, and they did not respond in a thoughtless manner (Ryback, 1998). There is no doubt that conflict-resolution skills are very important for success because one can be confident, educated, and hardworking, but the inability to confront your abuser can lead to psychological problems (Ballard & Easteal, 2018).

The organizational psychology factors are extremely important in career success. They include striving and upgrading education, having mentors, networking, being proactive and resolving conflict. By implementing these strategies, participants demonstrated awareness by analyzing their environment; this allowed them to modify their behaviours to take advantage of these strategies without compromising their identity.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Muslim women face discrimination due to Islamophobia, which creates barriers to entry into the workforce and limits their career advancement. The research question aims to find the belief systems that Muslim women have of themselves and others that enabled them to be successful managers in Canadian organizations. The themes were divided into three sections as a way to organize them. The first section focused on external factors affecting Muslim women. The second section examined internal factors affecting Muslim women, and the last focused on organizational psychology.

The data analysis produced themes from three factors. First, there were external factors; second were internal and last were organizational psychology factors. The first major theme in this research is found in the external factor section. The external factor themes were presented first for a specific reason because they are out of the control of Muslim women. The themes in this section were that Muslim women were resilient to Islamophobia and the influence of the family; within the family, parents, husbands, and children had an effect on the participants. Although this research aims to provide steps for others to replicate the success of the participants, there will be no steps to follow here as these themes can have a positive, neutral, or negative impact on people. There is no way to know how these external factors will affect Muslim women; they are out of their control. Muslim women do not have control over the levels of Islamophobia they encounter, nor do they have the choice of choosing their parents or predicting how their marriage and family life will end up. However, this theme is important because these factors can influence self-belief and faith in our abilities, which will affect our self-belief (Super, 1953).

The first theme in the external factors is that Muslim women are resilient to Islamophobia. Twelve out of the fourteen participants faced various degrees of discrimination. However, this did

not stop them from pushing forward and having successful careers. The second theme was about the influence of the family, which had three subthemes. The first subtheme is that their husbands were very supportive, and the second is that their parents were very supportive. The third subtheme is that younger children hindered the careers of the participants. Again, these external factors were listed because they can positively or negatively influence the self-concept of Muslim women. We are unable to choose our parents or predict family relationships; however, it is important to know that even if you don't have the support of your parents, then you have the example of Gabrielle, who became a supervisor after just one year in Canada. If your marriage ends, then you have the examples of Amani and Bliss, who were both able to also become successful. Regardless of the difficulties and lack of support, these participants remained resilient and became successful in their careers.

The second section is about the internal factors, which have three descriptive points that Muslim women can replicate. The first point is that Muslim women have strong identities, and this point has three subthemes, which are that Muslim women do not perform identity work, Muslim women practice Islam at work, and Muslim women are unapologetically Muslim. The second point is the importance of Islam in their careers, and it has two subthemes, which are that Islam was not harmful to their career and that Islam spiritually uplifted them at work. The third point was not othering others, which had three subthemes. They are that the Muslim women did not other their colleagues from an Islamic point of view, that the women used an alliance-building approach, and also took an educational standpoint. The three above points in the internal factors section are ideas that any Muslim can follow and replicate.

The third section was the organizational psychology factors because knowing how to navigate your organization is important for career success. There were five themes in this section.

The first one was that education is essential. The second was mentors are instrumental. The third was to successfully network without alcohol. The fourth was that proactivity results in promotions. And the last one was resolving conflicts effectively. These five themes are important because not taking advantage of them can slow down your career and sometimes end them. For example, for a group that is facing discrimination, it is important to have the capacity to manage conflict in the workplace.

Muslim women should consider the external, internal, and organizational factors if they wish to achieve success in Canadian organizations. Having to face Islamophobia starting at a young age will slowly undermine the confidence of young Muslim girls, leaving them unprepared when they enter the workforce. All Muslim participants expressed a wish that they had been more confident and courageous at the beginning of their careers. As a result of the visibility of their hijab, Muslim women have the highest unemployment rate of any group of people. Despite this, the participants in this study have demonstrated that obstacles are not permanent and that they can be overcome.

Throughout the study, the researcher learned from the participants and applied the knowledge gained at his own workplace. He assisted two Muslim women in getting promoted but fell short on a third. He realized that everyone is at a different place in life, and their self-concept may be very low depending on their life experiences. It is best to share beneficial knowledge at the earliest time. As Sophie said, she wished she had access to these resources earlier. Therefore, the researcher will be presenting his findings to Muslim communities across Canada. In addition, there is the hope that others will find gaps in knowledge in this research and help solve additional problems. Furthermore, although the researcher critiqued critical race and feminist approaches because they do not focus on the individual, the researcher still advocates for systemic change,

hoping this research can be used to change government policies and make organizations aware of discrimination within the workplace.

The researcher gained a lot of experience from this thesis with the help of the participants and professors. The knowledge created is very important, and he plans to build on it by continuing interdisciplinary studies with a master's in psychology and counselling and obtaining a graduate certificate in transformational leadership. In addition, he is embarking on training to become a professional public speaker. He wants his research, education, and training to be useful and to be applied professionally; in addition, this research is assisting him in putting a new program in place. Currently, he is in discussion with Costco Canada to create a program for newcomers and is looking for a local community partner. The program entails hiring visible minority women who are newcomers to Canada in which they will receive mentoring and training. The mentoring and training will include after-hours coaching and workshops for the employee and their families during their first year of employment. The purpose of this training is to increase retention and the quality of employees for Costco; in addition, it will provide stability and support for newcomers to Canada and their families.

Limitations to Research

The first limitation of the research was that the sample was not homogeneous, so the participants did not have much in common. The participants were from different age groups, ethnicities, and marital statuses and worked in different industries; some were single, married, divorced, and either without children or had up to six children. Second, with qualitative research methods, some participants may have been too shy or reluctant to share some personal experiences with the researcher, especially since he was of the opposite gender. The third is the contribution to knowledge; many factors affect Muslim women, such as networking, mentoring, type of organization, family, children, self-efficacy, religion, etc. Therefore, it was beyond a master's research capacity to focus intensely on each issue. Fourth, there is the absence of scholarly articles on Canadian Muslim women in the workplace, so the researcher had to broadly pull from articles about Muslim women living in the middle east and the experiences of Caucasian women working in western countries. Last, there was not enough time to focus on organizational structures and their contribution to helping participants increase their self-efficacy. Despite the limitations, there is hope that this research will be a better starting point for further research on this topic.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Posters

Original Poster

Research

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Master's Research on Discrimination of Muslim Women at Work.

Are you a Muslim woman living in Ottawa who wears a hijab and has overcome discrimination and built a successful career in retail or service? If so, then you should consider participating in a research study regarding the beliefs Muslim women have about themselves and others, which have led them to build successful careers.

Do you have a successful **Career**

Did you overcome **Discrimination?**

Do you wear the **hijab?**

This research aims to find the positive belief systems that Muslim women have of themselves and of their colleagues that have made them successful in their careers..

1-2 hour interview City of Ottawa In-person or online



UNIVERSITÉ
SAINT-PAUL
UNIVERSITY

Eligibility

- Over 29 years of age.
- Overcame discrimination.
- Have a successful career.
- Married or single with children
- Work in retail or service sector
- University or college degree unless in a management position.

Contact Ghassan at gzahr053@uottawa.ca

Women Who Removed the Hijab Poster

Research

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Master's Research on Discrimination of Muslim Women at Work.

Are you a Muslim woman living in Ottawa that felt that you needed to remove your hijab to become successful in your career? If so, then you should consider participating in a research study regarding the beliefs Muslim women have about themselves and others, which have led them to build successful careers.

Do you have a successful Career?

Did you overcome Discrimination?

Did you remove your hijab?

This research aims to find the positive belief systems that Muslim women have of themselves and of their colleagues that have made them successful in their careers.

1-2 hour interview City of Ottawa In-person or online



Eligibility

- Over 29 years of age.
- Overcame discrimination.
- Have a successful career.
- Married or single with children
- Work in retail or service sector
- University or college degree unless in a management position.

Contact Ghassan at gzahr053@uottawa.ca

Updated Poster

Research

Master's Research on Discrimination of Muslim Women at Work.

Are you a Muslim woman living in Ottawa who wears the hijab, has overcome discrimination and built a successful career? If so, then you should consider participating in a research study regarding the beliefs Muslim women have about themselves and others, which have led to building a successful career.

Are you a successful Manager?

Did you overcome Discrimination?

Do you wear the hijab?

This research aims to find the positive belief systems that Muslim women have of themselves and of their colleagues that have made them successful managers.



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Eligibility

- At least 21 years old.
- Overcame discrimination.
- Have a successful career in a management position. Management is defined as being responsible for at least two other people.
- Saint Paul University ethics certificate number 1360.22/21.
- Saint Paul office of ethics 613-236-1393

Contact Ghassan at gzahr053@uottawa.ca

Appendix B: Participant Recruitment Letter and Consent



Title of the study: The Power of Belief: The Role of Muslim Women's Beliefs in Corporate Career Success

Invitation to Participate: You are invited to participate in the aforementioned research study conducted by Ghassan Zahran for the purpose of his master's thesis. This research is supervised by Dr. Aliaa Dakroury from Saint Paul University. Before accepting to participate, please carefully read the remaining content of this recruitment letter to fully understand the purpose of this study and how you can contribute. If you have any questions regarding this research, please contact the researcher directly:

Ghassan Zahran: gzahr053@uottawa.ca (email) or you may call/text him directly at 514-582-9757.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to find the belief systems that Muslim women have of themselves and of others that will make them successful in Canadian retail and service corporations.

Participation: You will be in a one-on-one interview on Zoom with audio only recording, which should last 1-2 hours in total. You will be asked a series of questions provided to you in advance regarding your beliefs, career, and experiences as a Muslim woman. You may withdraw from the research without prejudice up until the start of the data analysis on March 31st, 2022, this date is also the last day in which you may request your interview transcripts before the data analysis. In addition, you will be reminded at the beginning of the interview of your right to withdraw. Your participation also entitles you to all its findings. The researcher will provide you with the final report in addition to providing you with a free workshop.

Risks: Your participation in this research will require that you volunteer information about your personal experiences related to your self-beliefs and what you think of others within the context of your career. This interview will be conducted in a safe, accepting, and compassionate environment. However, it may cause you some distress if you recall some negative experiences and feelings about being discriminated against as a Muslim woman. In addition, there is also a risk of the perception of an inappropriate male female relationship between the interviewer and the participants; this may tarnish your reputation and the reputation of your family. To mitigate this risk, interviews will be conducted on Zoom with audio recording only. In addition, the researcher recommends that a participant brings a relative to act as a chaperone as they will be more sensitive to your faith and experiences. Furthermore, it is also recommended to disclose your participation in this research with your family members.

Before consenting, you will be provided with all the risks that the researcher can foresee, and we assure you that minimizing these risks is a priority for this research. If you do feel distressed after the interview, you may contact the Crisis Line at 613-722-6914 which can assist you with any mental health issues that may arise free of charge.

Benefits: Your participation in this study will provide an important contribution to an area of knowledge with regards to what beliefs Canadian Muslim women can utilize to become successful in retail and service corporations, which has not been previously explored. This knowledge will contribute

This research has been approved by the Research Ethics Board (REB) at the university of Saint Paul and you may email their office at recherche-research@ustpaul.ca or call them at 613-236-1393.

Appendix C: Letter of Consent

Included within the recruitment letter via a link : <https://bit.ly/3y6tty5>

The role of Muslim women's beliefs in corporate management success - Consent form.

Invitation to Participate: You are invited to participate in the aforementioned research study conducted by Ghassan Zahran for the purpose of his master's thesis, this research is supervised by Dr. Aliaa Dakroury from the Saint Paul university school of social innovation. Before accepting to participate in this research, please carefully read the recruitment letter to fully understand the purpose of this study and how you can contribute. If you have any questions regarding this research, please contact the researcher directly at gzahr053@uottawa.ca or at 514582-9757.

1. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I have up until march 31st, 2022 to withdraw from the study. I do not have to give any reasons for withdrawing and I will not be facing any consequences. All of my data and records will be deleted.

Yes

No

2. I have read the participant recruitment letter for and I understand the purpose of the research that is being undertaken by Ghassan Zahran.

Yes

No

3. I agree that my consent to participate in this research is voluntary.

Yes

No

4. I understand this research will not expect me to do anything that I don't want to

Yes

No

5. I have been thoroughly informed about all aspects of this research, and my questions have been answered

Yes

No

6. I am giving permission for this interview to be audio recorded using the recording function on Zoom or with a portable digital recorder.

Yes

No

7. I understand that my name and the name of my employer will not be published alongside any other information that can identify me.

Yes

No

8. I would like to use the following pseudonym for this research.

Enter your answer

9. Your email address

Enter your answer

10. I understand that my words may be used as quotes in publications, journals, and other reports. The researcher has also made it clear that my name will not be used in these publications.

Yes

No

Submit

Never give out your password. [Report abuse](#)

Appendix D: Interview Guide

Question Guide

1. Opening questions to build rapport and trust

Q: Tell me about your job.

Q: How did you get to this position and what are the biggest highlights and the biggest challenges?

2. Promotion

Q: Do you think you can be promoted and why?

3. Career self-management

Q: What are the steps that you have taken to be promoted in the company?

4. Being proactive

Q: What steps do you take at work to become more proactive?

5. Mentors

Q: Who are your mentors and how do they help you with your career?

6. Networking

Q: What are the steps that you take to network?

7. Public self-consciousness

Q: How does positive and negative feedback affect you at work?

8. Education

Q: What role has education played in your career?

9. Success

Q: How do you define success in your career?

10. Self-concept theory

Q: What are the beliefs that you have of yourself that made you successful in your career?

11. Islamophobia

Q: What are the stereotypes that you face at work and how do you overcome them?

12. Othering

Q: What do you think of your colleagues from a perspective of a Muslim woman?

13. Identity

Q: How do you practice your identity as a Muslim woman at work?

14. Family

Q: What does your family think about you having a career?

Appendix E: Codes

- Advice to younger self
- Alcohol
- Career planning
- Challenges
- Confidence
- Conflicts
- Education
- Efficacy
- Family
- Fear
- Hard worker
- Highlight of career
- Husband
- Interesting
- Islamophobia
- Manager approached
- Men at work
- Mentor
- Networking
- Organization
- Othering
- Proactive
- Promotion
- Public self-consciousness
- Public speaking
- Religion
- Resilience