Article

Towards a Model of Muslim Women's Management Empowerment: Philosophical and Historical Evidence and Critical Approaches

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Abstract: This paper constructs a culturally appropriate model for Muslim women's empowerment in management and leadership positions that addresses sustainability goals of quality education, gender equality, economic growth and reducing inequalities, as well as national and cultural differences from Western women's empowerment models. The approach to model building begins with two sources of evidence for women's empowerment—first, the empowerment of women recognised in the Qur'an and Sunnah, and in the historical-biographical record, particularly in the early Islamic period that draws to some extent on hermeneutics. This is followed by identifying four approaches that can be used in constructing a comprehensive model of Muslim women's empowerment: Bourdieu's social, cultural and intellectual capital theory; multiple modernities theory that recognises societal diversity; cultural security arguments for the preservation of cultures; and postcolonial critiques that argue for diversity through decolonising. The main argument of this paper is that sustainability goals cannot be achieved without a model appropriate to the valuational, cultural and societal context in which women are educated and work. The final section of this paper proposes a multidimensional and multilevel model that can be used as a guidance for empowering Muslim women in management and leadership positions. The model construction is based partly on Côté and Levine's psychosocial cultural model that identifies multiple levels and dimensions of identity, role and social institution construction. This article contributes to the current literature by proposing a theoretical foundation and a multidimensional model that can inform and shape the empowerment of Muslim women in management and leadership positions in different societies.

Keywords: empowerment of women; empowerment model; Muslim women; women in management and leadership

Paradise is beneath her (mother) feet' (Sunan an-Nasa'i 3104, vol. 1, Book 25, Hadith 3106)

1. Introduction

The literature on Muslim women has expanded rapidly in recent decades, reflecting to some extent the changing conditions in many countries that have allowed for more education, opportunities in the workplace, and assuming increasingly senior-level management and leadership positions (Zahidi 2018). A number of sources have reported these increasing numbers and levels of participation in all fields, including many that have been conventionally seen as a male domain, such as the corporate world, policing, the military, engineering and IT, clearly evident in countries such as the United Arab Emirates (Augsburg et al. 2009). In addition, many books have been published on women's place in Islam in the *Qur'an* and Sunnah, many of which are reinterpreting the reading of these core sources (e.g., Wadud 1999), and supported by historical and biographical studies in Muslim societies (e.g., Kamaly 2019). This literature is part of an expanding study of

women in many historical periods and parts of the world. For example, information on women's activities, including leading roles, has been made available from the prehistorical period (e.g., Adovasio et al. 2016; Barbert 1995) and in ancient history in all societal sectors (e.g., Bahraini 2001; Brosius 1998; Halton and Svärd 2018; Lion and Michel 2016; Vivante 2017), which also had influence on women's roles in the Islamic period (Ahmed 1992). Many of the historical studies, such as El Cheikh's (2015) work on women's identity in the Abbasid Caliphate, investigate actual roles that women played in all societal sectors and classes in politics, economics, religion and culture in response to and contrasting with the stereotypical views of women as simply subjugated and dispossessed of capabilities, roles, influence, and power while retaining the complex gender politics of society. Walther's (1993) overview of Muslim women's history described their integral roles in social and economic life in early pastoral societies through to their variable roles in later periods ranging from the highly engaged and even leading roles to those of suppression due primarily to political and cultural practices. It is the contention of Walther, like many other recent writers, that the misrepresentation of Muslim women has been constructed in the West to support feelings of superiority and political aims, and that many political and cultural causes of oppression are mistakenly attributed to Islam. While patriarchal individuals and cultures existed, the attitude of Islam towards women as an egalitarian perspective is part of a general tolerant view that also extended to Jews and Christians even in some of the most senior administrative positions (Walther 1993).

To some extent also, this literature is a response to Islamophobia and the marginalisation of Muslim minorities in non-Muslim countries (e.g., Pratt and Woodlock 2016). For example, Khan (2019) argues in *It's Not About the Burqa* that Muslim women and Islam are misunderstood in the West. The theologian Hans Küng, in his book on Islam (Küng 2004), argues that the 'walls of prejudice' (p. xxv) need to be replaced by actually existing bridges, based largely on ideological constructions that are historically inaccurate, politically driven, and grounded in ignorance. It is this approach that has been adopted by the Humanistic Management Network in reaction to a dominating functionalism in management by advancing a humanistic paradigm grounded in human dignity, well-being and cooperation, values that are shared by many belief systems including that of Islam (e.g., Amann and Stachowicz-Stanusch 2013).

The purpose of this article is to construct a culturally appropriate model of Muslim women's empowerment in management and leadership studies related to key UN sustainability development goals—quality education, gender equality, economic growth and reducing inequalities—and the Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 30 September 2016, "Cultural rights & the protection of cultural heritage", which "*Calls upon all States to respect, promote and protect the right of everyone to take part in cultural life, including the ability to access and enjoy cultural heritage*" (United Nations 2018). Empowerment is part of a cluster of core human rights values—of human dignity and social justice. As such, this article is a theory- and model-building treatment of Muslim women's empowerment to counter many negative stereotypes and Islamophobic assumptions that affect views on Muslim women and Islam, a purpose shared by a large body of recent literature in depoliticising Islamic studies to reconstruct the actual principles and values in Islam as they relate to women and their empowerment, quite often highly divergent from the cultural and political conditions in many societies that deviate from Islam. This purpose is line with Lynham's (2002) discussion of theory-construction in applied disciplines, focussed on creating an understanding and explanation of a topic, making more explicit something that often remains implicit. It also follows general principles in Glaser and Strauss (1967) for reviewing theory, data, and various critiques that have arisen in the international literature in the way that Islam is often reduced to faulty or misguided practice that are referred to as Islamic, but actually do not conform to its philosophical and theological principles—in this case, the actual rights and empowerment of women that are embedded in the core texts of Islam that at times, in the historical record, took empirical form, from which to build a model that should guide laws, policies and practices.

It is this intent that guides the selection of material examined, the myths and falsehoods, the philosophical foundation, the history of exemplary practices, and a number of critical perspectives that need to be taken into account in reconstructing the authentic Islamic conception of women's empowerment.

In exploring the potential for Muslim women's empowerment, there are many factors that need to be considered. Empowerment is a complex construct involving values, cultural and other societal factors in which women are educated and work. It also consists of the many individual and social levels in which it forms: self, identity, personality, character, role and interaction styles, and community and social expectations as well as social institutions and regional and international dynamics and forces. For such a multifaceted and variable concept, approaches need to be taken that collectively address not only historical and philosophical aspects, but psychological, social, political and cultural dimensions. This article uses a predominantly interpretive approach that allows for the identification and consideration of multiple sources of evidence and dimensions, along with critical perspectives.

This article first examines the problems associated with Muslim women and their empowerment in the form of Islamophobia, colonisation, neoliberal globalisation and associated myths and false assumptions. The second section examines two forms of evidence to support Muslim women's empowerment derived from the Islamic tradition: the religio-philosophical foundation from the main Islamic texts and the historical-biographical record. The third section examines a few key theories and models, allowing for contextual factors that support an authentic Muslim women's empowerment model, including intellectual and cultural capital theory from Bourdieu, multiple modernities theory, cultural security and postcolonialism that include cross-cultural concepts. The final section describes a suitable multilevel and multidimensional model from which Islamic management practices derive that include women as empowered actors.

2. Problems: Definitional, Neoliberal, Globalisational, Mythic and Fallacious

2.1. Definitional

One of the major hindrances in understanding Muslim women's empowerment is definitional—those conceptions in fields such as management that are still dominated by Western schools of thought shaped by economic and political assumptions, ideas about the status of the individual in society, and governing principles and values that are often secular, materialist and functionalist. The term 'empowerment' is usually understood in the sense in which it has been defined by Western feminism as the effects women have on their societal environment, 'circumventing, changing, or eliminating the society's values, practices, norms and laws in order to lessen the extent to which they constrain her activities and choices' (Ackerly 1997, p. 141). However, as will become clear in this article, empowerment for women in non-Western contexts involves working within social institutions informed by different values and practices. For example, where many Western traditions are secular, nationalist, assuming different political and even democratic models, a high individualism that is increasingly becoming narcissistic in some countries and materialist (e.g., Twenge and Campbell 2009), the Islamic, like many other non-Western systems, has a different approach, grounded in the Qur'an and Sunnah, in extended family, tribe and community (Ummah), in alternate conceptions of modernity, and conceptions of ethics and social justice, of consultative practices (*Shura*) and a stronger sense of the welfare of community.

There are many limitations to Western models that are relevant in constructing an Islamic women's empowerment model: leader centredness that conflicts with contexts of egalitarianism in power; male dominated; assumption of universal traits such as individualistic self-confidence that does not work well in collectivist cultures as defined by most of the cross-cultural literature such as Hofstede (1994), Trompenaars (e.g., Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1997) and the GLOBE studies (Chhokar et al. 2019); a task–relationship balance that conflicts with contexts of more centralised control; quantifiable performance

from neoliberalism and technocratic contexts that conflict with more humanistic cultures and where there is an emphasis on developments that cannot be quantified like nation building and cultural preservation; individualistic cultures, and those with increasing narcissism, where the emphases are on self-interest and individual achievements; and a secularity that conflicts with spiritual or religiously-informed cultures (House et al. 2004; see also Branine 2011; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1997). It is also acknowledged here that some of the cross-cultural theories are deficient, particularly the universalist approach of Hofstede (1991) which has been outdated and superseded by other approaches and formulations of cultures in comparison (Baskerville 2003; McSweeney 2002). In addition, culture, as it is intended in this article, is not at all presented as a 'container' in which other aspects of human experience are located, but rather a complex qualitative dynamic variable that changes and evolves over time. What is argued here is that a religion's philosophical and theological meaning is subject to interpretation and variable practices including all dimensions of a society, including the cultural factors and elements that compose a society.

There are, however, broader definitions that are transferable across many contexts like that of Krause (2008): 'any form of agency from which greater fulfilment, satisfaction, consciousness-raising, skills development, or piety may result' (p. 23). Elliott (2008) proposes a community-based model for women's empowerment where their lives are 'embedded in relationship in which they feel responsible to others and make choices to protect them, often at the cost of their own autonomy' (p. 3). This is in reaction to conceptions of women's rights that are individualistic and selfish, imposed on them by a Western dominating discourse. A model of women's empowerment is a complicated matrix of many factors: personal, community based, etc. Elliott contrasts two models: a rights-based citizenship one with an identity-based community one. Further, she introduces a tri-dimensional model of: (1) individual capabilities of health, education, knowledge, self-confidence, having a vision or aspirations; (2) and institutional level including culture, and other social resources of opportunities and constraints; and (3) an agency or process dimension in which choices can be made and acted upon.

Another limitation in the field is a reliance upon primary disciplines that do not reflect non-Western or diverse contexts. Models for empowerment, like those for other socio-political roles, are dependent upon how primary disciplines accommodate ideas and concepts across cultures. For example, dimensions of personality—motivation, personality development, self, unconscious, psychological adjustment, and social relations—and standards of moral behaviour are understood and expressed differently in Islam, and vary considerably across the many countries and cultures in the Muslim world (Smither and Khorsandi 2009). A critical element of Islam is the belief that people have individual self-determination even though Allah controls events and has prescience, in other words people have social responsibility and the ability to choose among the three main motivational dimensions of striving to be at one with Allah and are held responsible for their choices and actions, succumbing to stagnation and an acceptance of the status quo, and the drive for achievement and 'perfection' (Smither and Khorsandi 2009). Along with other aspects of an Islamic conception of personality, going through developmental phases, self that has collective and personal dimensions (consisting of three innate levels, ego, conscience or sense of morality, and tranquillity), the existence of an unconscious level, a conception of adjustment that is based on remaining in contact with beliefs and community, and achieving harmony between individual and societal requirements (Smither and Khorsandi 2009). Major disciplines have begun to change the scope of their work to reflect the diverse conditions internationally (e.g., Shiraev and Levy 2017), a development that applied fields still need to work on incorporating.

2.2. Neoliberalism

Neoliberal ideology has been critiqued across disciplines and fields now for a number of decades, due mostly to its promotion of an economic view of life, and its application to human endeavour that reduces it to economic terms only and materiality. This critique

was developed early by Max Weber (1968) in his seminal work *Economy and Society* in his critique of the process of 'bureaucratisation' that is solely focussed on one category of values to the exclusion of others, an economic bureaucratisation being the most destructive form. This position on neoliberalism as an exclusion of other values, including the moral, is dealt with in considerable detail in the many book publication of the Humanistic Management Network (e.g., Amann and Stachowicz-Stanusch 2013; Dierksmeier 2016; Spitzeck et al. 2009). One of the most common forms of it is a 'market model' applied to principles, values, organisations and roles across sectors. Neoliberalism is regarded by many as a moral desert, where everything is reduced to economics; values, roles and relationships are defined in consumerist terms; deregulation, privatisation and marketisation are accepted as fundamental principles; and quantitative measurement applied to human qualities and relationships is the norm (Davies 2016). Its nature runs against all religious and belief systems that argue for spiritual and humanistic values, including that of Islam. Women's studies and feminism are also contrary to neoliberalism, since it is not predicated upon the dimensions of the human condition and values upon which women's gains in equality have been based (e.g., Diamond et al. 2017).

2.3. Globalisation

One additional problem is the colonising effects of Western powers in many countries that have reduced or removed the empowerment women had prior to colonisation, requiring a liberation from colonisation, including many globalised Western values and conceptions that hinder women. Many of the changes due to contemporary globalisation apply (re-)colonisation practices that undermine or are destructive of non-Western societies, such as reinforced supraterritorial governance organisations, e.g., the World Bank and International Monetary Fund that affect national systems, increased interdependence of administrative systems and policy regimes, increased 'information age' disparities favouring hegemonic powers (Farazmand 1999), increased hegemony of major powers (Ripsman and Paul 2010), and a clash between regional and global levels and the autonomy of individual political units (Mandel 1994). There is also increased public–private sector partnerships, creating favourable corporate 'environments' and a shift from the welfare to corporate state model, causing a fragmentation and disintegration of governmental authority and societal cohesion (Mandel 1994).

A number of other globalisation effects that produce definitional problems for Muslim women's empowerment are termed global monopolism, or 'necrocapitalism' by Banerjee (2008) who defines this as a dispossession by hegemonic Western practices producing social or cultural death. Dresch (2013) attributes to globalisation the creation of cultural and intellectual colonies through globalised, that is, exported goods and images, education, pedagogy and large numbers of expatriate teachers and faculty who thereby create a threat to culture. Globalised neoliberalism promotes the commodification of the cultural sector (including religion), the reproduction of foreign societal structures and practices, an international homogenisation of society that can compromise sovereignty, identity, values and roles, and privatisation and individual interests over that of community and society. These changes operate on an essential level against the many levels and dimensions of women's empowerment that depend upon these processes.

2.4. Myths and Fallacies

One additional problem in examining Muslim women's empowerment is that much that is written about them in the West comes from outsiders who tend to politicise garments such as the burqa, the veil or hijab as a way of defining Muslim women—what one can term an 'Abaya Complex', assuming that many traditions are necessarily oppressive—in contrast to the voices of Muslim women who see themselves as much more complex and multidimensional, that is fully human, in collections such as that edited by Khan (2019), or differentiate Muslim women from practices such as the use of an abaya, headscarf or veil from other groups who do the same, but are not attributed the same criticism. This

apparent symbol of oppression is seen by many Muslim women in an opposite way—it is an indication of, and motivation for, service to the poor and the pursuit of social justice (Ahmed 2012; Mernissi 2011). Further, despite experiencing prejudice, harassment and misunderstanding, many Muslim women have persisted in achieving their goals such as the many veiled women in professions in a country such as the US (Gehrke-White 2006).

Part of Islamophobia is the assumption that Islam, itself, is oppressive of women, when the evidence (discussed in this article) demonstrate that it is politics and culture in Muslim contexts that operate contrary to Islamic principles in the Qur'an and Sunnah. That culture and politics have been major factors in disempowering women politically and economically, rather than Islam itself due to significantly different interpretations of principles and values and reflected in constitutions and laws (Metcalfe 2011). This is a key feature of Abu-Lughod's (2013) argument—that women do not need saving from Islam; it is culture and politics that create many of their problems (sometimes affecting interpretations of the foundational texts), and Islam gives them the sustenance psychologically, morally, and religiously to manage their lives in meaningful ways for themselves and their communities.

One prevalent myth is that Muslim women are disadvantaged legally, particularly in family law. However, Rosen (2018), in an extensive review of legal cases, found that because of equitable (rather than identical) treatment, they win cases between 65 and 95% of the time. Another dimension, is that Muslim women cannot be as intellectually able as non-Muslim women in higher and professional education—a prejudice that is extended more broadly also to non-Westerners, discussed in Dabashi's (2015) *Can Non-Europeans Think?*—expressed in lower expectations of them in learning and contributing to knowledge production.

Many other fallacies are prevalent, especially in Western countries: that knowledges originate in the West or in Greco-Roman roots; that Muslim women are necessarily oppressed compare with Western women, particularly by family and tribe; that there is only one way to modernise (by imitating Western countries); being empowered cannot coexist with humility, modesty and other related virtues; that only Westernisation will liberate women since it cannot happen from within Islam; that Islam is necessarily opposed to humanism, when in fact, Western humanism in part is base historically on the Islamic humanistic tradition; and that women could never have been rulers or scholars (Graham-Brown 2001; Lamrabet 2016; Keddie 2002). Some of these myths are also assumed in ideological feminism that presumes an oppressive patriarchy (Bouachrine 2015). Further, perhaps more fundamentally, often what people think is Islam is culture, politics or psychopathology, deviating from Islamic values and norms (Guthrie 2001), demonstrated by Abu-Lughod (2013), in her decades of anthropological studies, that injustices and oppressions against Muslim women are not derived from religious sources, and which have been used to justify Western misguided interventions. Further, too often, theories and approaches to studies of Muslim women are constructed in Western environments where many false assumptions are made about women's history in Muslim countries where actual contextual factors are not included (Sonbol 2006). An additional false assumption is that Muslim countries and communities are homogenous, when in fact, high levels of diversity exist, including the forms and degrees of empowerment (Spierings 2015).

At the root of many of these problems is an Islamophobia or negative stereotyping that has been studied and critiqued by many sources now for the misrepresentations created and perpetuated in politics, in the media, and in academia (Kurzman 2019; Lean 2012; Pratt and Woodlock 2016). These sources not only affect people's ideas, attitudes and actions, but also influence foreign policy, such as Huntington's (1997) clash of civilisations concept (Achcar 2002) and internal security policy by securitising Islam (Croft 2012). The significance of this for Muslim women is a misunderstanding that affects their lives, their potential, and their achievement of empowerment as members of minority groups in non-Muslim countries, but also internationally in Muslim-majority countries.

3. Evidentiary Sources for Empowerment

Two main sources of evidence in Muslim women's empowerment are the primary texts of Islam, and the historical-empirical evidence of women's empowerment in Muslim contexts. The main question is, is Islam inherently misogynistic? (Jones-Pauly 2011). From a number of perspectives, large bodies of literature have re-examined the Islamic tradition and practices to demonstrate that women's empowerment is integral to fundamental principles and to legitimate practices, despite not being followed in many interpretations and in many periods in history disempowering women due to pre-Islamic cultural traditions and politics that have caused it to deviate, also affecting the interpretation of Islamic law that often removed from women the initial legal empowerments that Islam brought to society.

3.1. Philosophic Evidence: Core Islamic Texts

A considerable body of knowledge in English has been published on women in the primary Islamic texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah, and Hadith studies. Contrary to many uninformed sources, argues Ramadan (2009), Islam is grounded in an egalitarian ethics and equality of women and men, and which can also be consistent with many cultural values where women's equal rights exist to education, professions, the economic sector, and political positions, such as those one finds in a number of Gulf countries, evident already in women's councils, training programmes in leadership for women, elections to national councils, a rapid provision for and participation of women in higher education, and other policies and programmes that have developed (Metcalfe 2011) that also play a strong role in nation building.

There has been a reinterpretation of women in Islam in a growing literature on women in the Islamic tradition on many dimensions, topics, and historical periods. One of these is literature on women in the Qur'an, Sunnah, hadith and various legal traditions that support a fundamental equality. For example, Ibrahim (2020) discusses the nearly 300 verses in the Qur'an on women covering a broad range of topics from the historical, family life, education and contributions to community to the moral and legal, emphasising as it does for men a submission to Allah and moral accountability. Lamrabet (2016) focusses on three suras establishing women's equality: (1) Be conscious of your Sustainer, who has created you out of one living entity, and out of it created its mate, and out of the two spread abroad a multitude of men and women (al Nisa 4:1); (2) 'Whoever does an atom's weight of good, whether male or female, and is a believer, all such shall enter into Paradise' (Ghafir 40:40); and (3) 'And in everything have We create pairs, so that you might bear in mind [that God alone is one]' (al-Dhariyat 51:49). The main argument Barlas (2002) makes is that those who perpetuate a false reading of the Qur'an, either through a political, social or psychological motivation, are assuming a patriarchal attitude that ignores evidence, for example, assuming that because women and men are discussed differently in the Qur'an this necessarily means unequally and are often using inappropriate textual analysis practices. Studies have also been conducted on the Hadith to identify cultural and patriarchy factors at play in how fundamental principles were interpreted over time disadvantaging women in relation to the egalitarian nature of the Qur'an and Sunnah (Barazangi 2016).

The status of women in Islamic law and their rights—the Shari'ah traditions—which rest upon the Qur'an and Sunnah and the Hadith derived from the latter as well as the *ijma* (consensus resulting from the exercise of rationality) of community, the work of Islamic scholars historically, and modern laws being enacted in Muslim countries and involves the dispelling of many myths about Muslim women (Nasir 2009). There are also many Muslim countries that have updated their laws regarding women in recent years, such as Morocco, Oman, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates (Nasir 2009). The topics addressed are 'respect, security, marital rights, maintenance, guardianship and custody of their children' (Nasir 2009, p. 2). There are also rights to inheritance, to divorce, to employment, and to a free bridal gift, and a heavy burden placed on husbands in providing

for the family and household (Tucker 2008). An important factor to remember, argues Tucker (2008) is that Islamic law is expected to grow and develop in interpretation and application as societies change, for example, in the modernisation processes of the last two hundred years—while the principles and values are constant, their interpretation and application are not static and are based upon complex, rational and sophisticated, and largely hermeneutic, methodologies. What is important, also, is the very small proportion of the Qur'an that address differences in familial roles that, as Tucker argues, tend to be extended to other roles—6 verses out of 6660 that reference gender, with the balance being egalitarian (2008, p. 24).

However, Islamic law is not uniform across cultures and countries. Law, like other fundamental principles of ethics, values, governance, etc., can be viewed as cultural phenomena, interpreted and expressed through cultural systems producing variations internationally where many forms and levels of influences are at play affecting women's many rights such as marriage and divorce rights (El Fadl 2001; Jalajel 2017; Rosen 1989). Not only the text of laws, but their interpretations over time reflect the changing historical conditions of society, the roles of prominent individuals, state powers, and the communities of Muslims themselves (Tucker 2008). The degree of women's empowerment is a function of these traditions and their changes and modifications due to social, political, economic and cultural forces. One limitation in some of the literature on women, particularly that of Western feminists, is the contextual dislocation of some studies and critiques that make false assumptions about Muslim contexts especially those that emphasise a high individuality at the expense of one's social self in community, and colonial factors and traditional social institutions (Tucker 2008).

Important topics such as social justice and foundational principles to follow in life are expected equally from men and women. The main principles and values in social justice, for example, require equal duties, obligations and responsibilities such as fairness, equity and equality in the protection of diversity, and social relationships that are practiced with solidarity for the collective good and to distribute justice. The aim of social justice is harmony and balance in society using consultative methods, as well as cultural coexistence and international cooperation using conflict resolution, arbitration, mediation and reconciliation. It is these ethical principles and spiritual values that shape a humane and just order in society and which regulate institutional activity in a form that is beneficial and meaningful for society requiring effort, transparency, responsible conduct, and professional good character (Samier 2015a; Syed and Ali 2010). Talaat et al. (2016) identify a number of Qur'anic principles that are equally expected from men and women: Al-Ubudiyyah, an organising principle based in [equal] devotion to Allah; Al-Syura, decisions that are logical and informed—made through consultation with those who are knowledgeable, experienced and skilled; Al-Hurriyah, principles of human rights and freedom; Al-Musawah, principles of equality and equity; and Al-Adalah, thoughts and actions are grounded in justice, that is, truthfulness, honesty, and trustworthiness.

These extend into personality and character traits that allow for empowerment, for full participation in societal sectors, and assuming senior positions. Personal qualities consist of physical power, courage, patience, endurance and humility, while character includes practical abilities, personal austerity, acquiring prestige, strength and firmness, perceptiveness, vision and far sightedness, and trustworthiness—all qualities that appear in many modern theories and models of leadership. One's social interactions should be governed by the humanistic principles of mercy, good manners, brotherhood, the equality of humankind, freedom and benevolence necessary in producing generosity, kindness, justice, good examples such as role modelling and mentoring and benevolence towards others as well as responsibility and accountability to community (Kalantari 1998; Sarayrah 2004).

The emergence of Islam brought with it many rights that women did not have at the time, nor even much later in many parts of the world, including Western societies that are means by which empowerment can be achieved. The Qur'an introduced many

that correspond to non-Muslim conceptions of women's rights such as a fundamental principle of equality and an equal dignity, conscience and liberty. To support these, specific rights include inheritance and property, divorce, testifying in court, the right to education and work and an equal obligation to fulfil religious duties with equal punishments for violating laws and moral principles. Important also are the prohibitions against violence against women and duress in marriage and in the community (Jones-Pauly 2011; Lamrabet 2016; Wadud 2006).

An instructive Sura in the Qur'an, al-Naml, for women's empowerment and a high regard for capabilities discusses the case of Balkis, the Queen of Sheba (Lamrabet 2016). The case illustrates a number of principles, first, the use of consultation (*shura*) when she requested advice from senior officials and members of society: 'O you nobles! Give me your opinion on the problem with which I am now faced; I would never make a [weighty] decision unless you are present with me' (al-Naml 27:32). Their acceptance of her authority is evident in the response provided in the text: 'We are endowed with power and with mighty prowess in war—but the command is thine; consider, then, what thou wouldst command' (al-Naml 27:33). The depth of her understanding and moral attitude is evident in she commented on corruption in rule which she condemns: 'Verily, whenever kings enter a country they corrupt it, and turn the noblest of its people into the most abject. And this is the way they [always] behave? Hence, behold, I am going to send a gift to those [people], and await whatever [answer] the envoys bring back' (al-Naml 27:34–35) (Lamrabet 2016).

One topic of importance to any sector, including that of the economic and women's managerial and leadership empowerment, is the relationship between Islamic principles and modern democratic and liberal rights premises. Jamal (2018), for example argues that there are not contradictory features between Islam and modern democracy and liberalism, but that the latter can inform a Muslim state without denying Muslim principles particularly in relation to liberal justice concepts. In other words, Islamic principles can be applied to modern conditions, including political concepts and rights. Al-Jabri (2014), also, argues that democracy, human rights and law in the modern world are consistent with Islamic doctrine—the divergences originating in the political and social context. Khan (2006) assembles a large number of political scholars for whom Islam can provide a foundation for a democratic theory.

3.2. Historical-Biographical Evidence: Women in Politics, War, Economics, Jurisprudence and Scholarship

Contrary to the many negative stereotypes of Islam, and also contrary to a number of political systems and cultural norms, Muslim women have played many and critical roles in Islamic societies historically. From the very beginning, they have gone to war, supporting and even protecting men on the battlefield, actively participating in politics, providing intelligence, insight and guidance in decision making, in policy development, managing public trade and commerce, running the affairs of state, and in granting sanctuary and safety explicitly supported by the Prophet Muhammad in a case (Ghadanfar 2001). Women have played many critical roles in education and research, most notably, in contrast to how Islam is portrayed in the non-Muslim world as a male activity, in the development of Islam and its principles, interpretations and commentary that shaped the history of Islamic thought including the Hadith, tafsir literature, jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) decisions, and in providing consultation on points of law (Ghadanfar 2001). As Islamic society grew and developed into powerful empires, from the very beginning and continuing through much of this history, women excelled in medicine and surgery, literature, and in later periods in all academic disciplines.

Since 1990, there has been a significant increase in writings on Muslim women's history, although there are notable sources prior to this such as Beck and Keddie's (1978) *Women in the Muslim World* examining their roles in law, politics, culture and religion in a range of traditional and modern societies and Hambly's (1998) study of women in the medieval Islamic world where they served as rulers, politicians, and writers and similar portrayals in literatures of the period, contrary to stereotypical views that have excluded

them—often originating in the West, and Sadiqi's (2011) accounts of how women have contributed to significant changes and developments in Muslim countries. The literature tends to fall into four main categories of biographical, social, cultural and political topics. The first is on the early Islamic history on ideas, laws and practices from the time of the Prophet Muhammad and the four successors, referred to as the Rashidun period, beginning with the very early source of Muhammad ibn Sa'd's *The Women of Madina* in the ninth century. A number of women are well-known for the empowerment they exhibited and positions or roles of great responsibility they held in many spheres for example the first wife of the Prophet, Khadija, a successful merchant and a later wife Aisha [bint Abu Baker], who was a scholar and source of interpretations of the Qur'an and Sunnah on the activities of women (Walther 1993).

The second focusses on the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates (e.g., El Cheikh 2015; Walther 1993), a period in which many women, albethem from privileged social status exercised considerable power and influence (Al-Sa'l 2017). The second is the role of women in the Ottoman Empire (Goodwin 2006; Zilfi 1997), exploring their lived experiences in all societal spheres, sometimes highly curtailed and sometimes occupying roles of power and empowerment including significant roles in building Ottoman infrastructure (Ozgules 2017) and playing many roles, some empowered, in public space (Boyar and Fleet 2016).

Finally, there is a rapidly growing literature on Muslim women in the modern period including the effects of Western colonisation and 'orientalist' prejudiced attitudes (Keddie 2002). The literature demonstrates that women in an Islamic context have played significant roles in all sectors, although not always to the same extent, however, much more than the myths and fallacies allow for. Sources such as Keddie and Baron's (1991) *Women in Middle Eastern History* demonstrates that women play significant and even leading roles in politics, economics, culture, education, jurisprudence and in social organisation.

The story of women's empowerment in Islam begins even before the Prophet Muhammad was publicly known. The first to become Muslim was his wife Khadija bint Khowayled, a woman, in her own right who exercised strong empowerment as the owner of a large trade company in Makkah, described by Spierings (2015) as the first economically independent Muslim. She was remarkable in many ways, and in ways that are not restricted to her time and country, even more remarkable in a time and culture when women were considered generally to be weak, fragile and inferior, however, in a society that contradictorily had more literate women than men, and in which women, such as Khadija, could own property and wealth, a problem not uncommon even to Western countries that generally regard themselves as equity minded. She deserves to be recognised as a premiere role model in many ways not restricted to Islam or an Arab country. Referred to as the first *mumin* (believer), she was successful, honourable, principled in her business dealings and had earned high social status along with inheriting a privileged position through the distinction of her tribe the Quraysh, and given respect and deference. For her husband Muhammad always provided support, loyalty, and love, was asked often for her counsel, advice and given trust.

Her personal qualities, that rarely failed were compassion, wisdom, strength of character, the ability to manage men and women employees, balanced emotions and intellectual capabilities, and most importantly for empowerment, independently minded, all the more remarkable during a period in history when society's values had disintegrated into frequent injustice, immorality, ignorance, and spiritual emptiness (Kamaly 2019). Her exceptionality can be seen also in some of her personal actions, for example, proposing marriage to Muhammad, seeing in him many traits that were well known—his positive demeanour, sociable and for some charismatic qualities. When Muhammad disclosed his visitation by the angel Gabriel she sought advice from a member of the community, Waraqa, who had great knowledge and wisdom, whose judgement after her disclosure of the relevant facts was to recognise Muhammad as the Prophet who had been prophesied in the Torah and Gospels (Kamaly 2019). Waraqa also, wisely, warned Khadija of an opposition to him and

enemies that would emerge, to which Khadija was determined to provide protection and safety for Muhammad, backing him up in public when necessary and accompanying him into an exile to a barren valley forced upon them by the Quraysh who refused to accept Muhammad's calling, resorting to persecution and even torture of those who followed him, eventually dying in exile.

Several other women in his family played critical roles in a number of fields, the most famous of these, after Khadija is his wife 'Aisha, a jurist and scholar whose influence and expertise plays a significant role even today as a model and ideal to achieve in many ways (Spellberg 1994). Another notable wife is Umm Salam who worked as a political councillor.

Many other women in these earliest years are notable for their strength and sense of purpose. Sixteen of these were recognised as companions of the Prophet, whose work equalled that of male companions, referred to as the *Sahâbiyât* who preserved traditions, disseminated knowledge, and challenged authority (Ghadanfar 2001). In religion, Umm Sa'ad bint Sa'ad lectured regularly on the Qur'an, in politics Shifa' bint 'Abdullah worked as an advisor to 'Umar on political intelligence and affairs of state, in the judiciary, 'A'ishah prepared verdicts and was a recognise authority in legal interpretation, in medicine, Rufaidah Aslamiyah set up and operated a surgery near the main Mosque in Medina, and in war, Nusaybah bint Ka'ab defended the Prophet in the battle of Uhud and participated in a number of other battles. Another notable example is Nusaiba bint Ka'ab, a soldier who defended the Prophet during the battle of Uhud, participated in other battles and in the negotiations of the Treaty of Hudaybia (Ghadanfar 2001). Women's later participation in the military and war has been examined by Shirazi (2010), and has been reflected also in Arabic popular literature on representation of Muslim women in military roles (e.g., Kruk 2014).

In addition to direct empowered roles, women also have complementary ones to men in influencing their decisions and behaviour. Following the steps of Khadija and the prophet's other wives, they also provide advice, support, comfort, and counselling to their husbands, brothers, and other family members. In addition to their equal rights to education, knowledge is also necessary for consultative roles in all spheres of life, making seeking of knowledge a form of worship for men and women.

One way to measure Muslim women's empowerment is in their political activity including assuming roles of political office. This measure includes economic status, participation in senior commercial roles and in political roles, including their influence historically in the appointments and dismissals of viziers and other prominent caliphal officials and the shaping of policies. (Walther 1993). The literature of women in rulership has expanded recently such as Haeri's (2020) *The Unforgettable Queens of Islam*, Mernissi's (1993) *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*, and Khan's (2017) *Sovereign Women in a Muslim Kingdom* (Aceh). Throughout Islamic history there have been women rulers with significant achievements such as Arwa al-Sulayhi who ruled in eleventh century Yemen for 71 years, Sultana Raziyya in thirteenth century Delhi and Sultana Shajarat al-Durr in thirteenth century Egypt, and Begum Kaikhursau Janan in nineteenth to twentieth century Bhopal. Seventeenth century Aceh (modern Sumatra) saw several women rulers (Khan 2017). Bennett (2010) profiles a number of notable women in modern history in the highest political offices in their countries: Benazir Bhutto, Prime Minister of Pakistan (1973–1977), Tansu Çiller, President of Turkey (1993–2000), Khaleda Zia, President of Bangladesh (1976–1981), and Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh (1972–1975). In addition, Bennett reports on the percentages of parliamentary positions held by women in 2009 ranging from a low of single digits in Egypt (1.8%), Bahrain (2.5%), Iran (2.8%), Jordan (6.4%), Kuwait (7.7%) and Turkey (9.1%) to double digits of Morocco (10.5%), Syria (12.4%), Indonesia (18.2%), Bangladesh (18.6%), Pakistan (22.5%) and Iraq (25.5%).

The evidence of women's participation in the economic sphere is also well developed. Zahidi (2018) identifies a number of ways in which women's participation in the contemporary Muslim world has increased significantly: rapidly increasing educational levels and completion including graduate levels and in professional degrees; rapidly rising numbers of business start-ups; rising entrepreneurialism; the creation of women's associations and

networks; assuming positions in politics, the civil service (including ambassadorships and judiciary appointments) and corporate sector governance opening to women on boards; and in traditionally male-dominated fields such as STEM where the numbers of women in some Muslim countries exceed that of the US.

Probably less well known is women's involvement in law and jurisprudence from the earliest of Islamic history (Zahidi 2018), a significant indicator of empowerment for at least some women in society. Historically, many women were involved in legal research and practice, A number of other women excelled in and were respected for their scholarship, for example Nafisa in the eight century who relocated from Medina to Cairo where she was revered for not only her theological-judicial knowledge (and tutelage of ash-Shāfi'i, founder of the Shāfi'i school of law), but for publicly standing up to the Egyptian governor for his tyrannical behaviour (Walther 1993). Other prominent scholars of hadith and jurisprudence were Shudah bint Ahmad al-Ibar, in twelfth century Baghdad, Amra bint Aburrahman in the seventh to eighth century, and Aisha bint Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqass in the seventh century, who taught Imam Malik who founded the Maliki school of law (Walther 1993). In spite of the disagreements and controversies over women's involvement in legal professions, in many countries there is an expanding number of women lawyers, legal scholars, and judges. (Sonneveld and Lindbekk 2017).

Finally, their role and involvement in scholarship stretches across the historical periods in all fields, determined by Nadwi (2013) to number 8000 and their participation consistent with Qur'anic principles. They are found across all disciplines and fields, including Qur'anic and Hadith scholarship, having played important roles throughout Islamic periods (Sayeed 2013) in interpretation, transmission and application of fundamental values and principles, throughout the Islamic period, varying in levels of activity across the fourteen hundred years (Alwani 2013). Their scholarly involvement in recent decades have increased, augmented by women's movements in a number of countries engaged in textual studies. The Arabian Gulf has provided for women many opportunities and education that can now be seen in their education and workplace activity. While engagement in the workforce is still at low levels relative to other parts of the world, women's educational achievement is at a very high ratio level at 70%, 67% and 85% in Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates respectively (Abdalla 2015). The rising numbers of educated women have also been noted by Zahidi (2018) to increase significantly their participation in the economic sector, management and leadership, as well as in other fields in the Middle East such as media (Sakr 2007) that lead to greater empowerment.

4. Approaches in Constructing a Model: Intellectual and Cultural Capital, Multiple Modernities, Cultural Security and Postcolonial Critiques

Given the complexity of this article, this section will only identify a number of approaches that should be considered in constructing a model of Muslim women's empowerment that also informed the model presented below, and their main features that collectively cover many of the factors that a comprehensive model should have. Given the diversity of cultures within which psychosocial and political roles are formed, the approaches discussed here also are categorised as generally constructivist, with a critical purpose that include the necessity of contextualisation as factor. In order to construct an authentic Muslim women's empowerment multilevel and multidimensional model, many diverse aspects need to be included, such as the historical and religious of cross-cultural recognition—those approaches designed on this assumption need to be used. Those selected here are the intellectual and cultural capital of Bourdieu's (1977, 1984, 1993) critical sociology, that emerged from his former anthropological studies creating an approach that transfers well across cultures and societies. Eisenstadt's (2000, 2005) multiple modernities theory was developed to acknowledge contextual factors in modernisation processes, allowing for different approaches and practices, particularly in non-Western countries where other knowledge traditions and values exist, and where roles can differ from Western assumptions. Cultural security is a relatively new concept that comes out of the constructivist security studies schools in Europe to analyse societal security having

to do with health, water, agriculture, and other dimensions of a society other than the Anglo-American militaristic/realist studies that had dominated until recently. Finally, postcolonial critiques are used to accommodate the nation building being done in many countries still emerging from colonisation and the current re-cnlonisation occurring under globalisation that have a negative effect on local women.

While cross-cultural studies, such as those of Branine (2011) and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997), have produced important insights and comparisons of many countries, this literature will not be examined here, but it is important to note that the discussion in this article assumes this comparative knowledge, and also inform the approaches discussed here. The empowerment of Muslim women also rests upon not only the development of their individual capacities, but also the effective use of their culture's values, knowledge traditions, structures and practices. This includes the intellectual and cultural capital of Islam and how it informs their societies in authentic ways. The critical approaches discussed below also are presented for the foundational values they represent upon which the model constructed is based. For example, this article is informed by the critique of epistemicide (Hall and Tandon 2017; Mignolo 2011) in assuming that non-Western cultures and countries have knowledge traditions of value that have to be considered in a non-colonised approach to Muslim women' empowerment, forming part of the capital they draw on as resources. Another dimension of the epistemological foundations comes from intellectual history, often neglected in assumptions about where knowledge was constructed and where it comes from—what is often assumed to be 'Western' knowledge originally was constructed in non-Western cultures such as the Islamic 'Golden Age' of scholarship that was transferred into Europe through the 'Renaissance' and Enlightenment serving as a foundation for many disciplines, pure and applied (Bevilacqua 2018; Saliba 2007). In other words, the approaches discussed here condition the construction of the model and how it various elements are interpreted as philosophical and theoretical foundations rather than as separate elements in the diagram. It is important to situate theory- and model-building work in the paradigmatic traditions in which they are formed.

Bourdieu's (1977) field theory can be used in a number of ways, two of which are focussed on here for women's empowerment. First, the field includes a number of features that are challenges for women, which need to be critiqued and changed, to include them equally, and which are regarded as forms of symbolic violence: the reproduction of self-perpetuating hierarchies of domination; the internalisation of socio-cultural, economic and political structures; and the shaping of politics through symbolic power that derives from various kinds of capital. Secondly, field theory also consists of various kinds of capital—economic, social, cultural, and intellectual (valued language and knowledge)—that women acquire that form the basis of symbolic power that confer legitimacy, status and authority and inform their 'habitus' as participants in the various fields they participate in. From a Bourdieuian perspective, agency is the acquisition and use of capital and power to choose and achieve, allowing for women's greater participation, particularly in expressing power and influence and the construction of roles. Achievements can include visible or observable activities such as owning businesses, having seats on councils, holding senior management positions and effective motivation and purpose, as well as how law, decrees and policy are interpreted that does not exclude women. The Bourdieuian elements of the model below are represented by the Islamic consistent values and cultural norms from which they draw in constructing empowered roles.

Multiple modernities theory was developed to create a greater international equality and social justice, and provide an alternative to convergence theory which, through globalisation, tends to measure countries' development by how much they imitate dominating Western countries. Eisenstadt (2000, 2005) introduced this formal theory in sociology to demonstrate that some forms of modernisation from the West are not necessary for modernising and may even be significantly inappropriate or damaging to another society, particularly features of secularisation, the nuclear family, materialism and unfettered individualism. Multiple modernities theory demonstrates that industrialisation, technolo-

gisation and internationalisation are not dependent on these; they can develop in societies that are religious, have tribal and extended family structures, have strong cultural traditions, and different forms of social institutions. In the model, multiple modernities is assumed in economic, technological, and management practices that would take forms consistent with the culture and style of social institutions of a country.

Alternative modernities also allow for women to maintain their religion and culture while participating in the modernisation of their communities in managing roles rather than further disadvantaging them, given the responsibilities and obligations to support all family members (Joseph and Slyomovics 2001). This also affects conceptions of citizenship that are different from Western countries, where political rights are based on an individual and family and tribe balance. Conceptions of civil society differ also in Muslim countries. The Western is based on individualistic modernism and democratic institutions that arose in the European Enlightenment period, reflecting their socio-political conditions and developments and refers to spheres of lives not regulated by the state, and from this perspective does not recognise civil society forming outside of these limited criteria. In the Muslim context, civil society is defined in broader terms, such as that of many traditions, based on community, quite often extended families and tribes whose autonomy from the state is grounded in social authority, legitimacy and socioeconomic institutions (such as the bazaar or souk, and the ulama—learned religious leaders providing guidance) (Kamali 2002).

Related to the multiple modernities theory is cultural security—including the existential threats to culture from inappropriate modernisation and globalisation among other historical forces that have this effect, including educational curricular content and pedagogy. In contrast with American security studies that has been realist in approach and focussed on military and intelligence spheres, a number of constructivist European developed in recent years, initially referred to as the Copenhagen, Aberystwyth and Paris schools focussed more on societal security relevant to agriculture, water, economic and social activities, the environment, and other organisations and structures that can be subject to existential threats (Mandel 1994). These have more recently been examined for their similarities, drawing on critical theory, discourse analysis, Foucault and Bourdieu. As part of this, culture, language and religion have been subjected to existential threats from external factors and forces (Samier 2015b).

These three schools contribute ways of identifying and analysing the security of culture in ways that correspond to capital theory and multiple modernities that are relevant to the development of new models of Muslim women's empowerment and how a model developed within this context contributes to addressing problems of cultural security internationally that have arisen from a Western-dominated approach that threatens the integrity of other societies and their existential continuation necessary to sustainability. The Copenhagen brings an emphasis on discourse analysis that is applied to ontological security, such as identity, self and one's subjectivity. The Aberystwyth is aimed at a normative demand for emancipation, critiquing the social construction of threats that affect self–other relations, and the use of communicative action theory to bring equality in communication—in this case, to women and Islamic values. The Paris school, influenced most by Foucault and Bourdieu examines hidden transnational networks, the role of higher education in creating unequal security status by privileging the West and men, and the discursive power in producing images of the enemy (Cavelty and Balzacq 2017; Krause and Williams 1997; Shepherd 2013). The substance of 'cultural' for Muslim women in their societies includes many aspects of Islam that inform their identity, aspirations and achievements such as constitutions, laws, forms of welfare statism, extended family, religious and humanistic values, the maintenance of cultural norms and traditions, and ways of critiquing external influences on their communities. These security aims are evident in the model in the way that a number of the contextual factors such as values and norms are interpreted as Islamic principles interpreted and practiced differently in cultures.

There are a number of ways in which these security studies approaches aid women's empowerment: they take into account context that is diverse, including culture and religion; they increase the priority of the issue; they are multidisciplinary, allowing for multiple levels and dimensions of empowerment; and they are concerned with identity and subjectivity. They also align with many postcolonial critiques, including the emerging non-Western security studies literature (e.g., Barkawi and Laffey 2006; Bilgin 2008). The range of postcolonial approaches, representing a multidisciplinary attention to countries emerging from or being re-colonised on multilevels and dimensions apply also to Muslim women's empowerment where values, identity, role and knowledge have been compromised as the potential sources of empowerment contextually. Some such as Thiong'o (1987) and Spivak (1988) have examined the influence on mind and identity and role respectively. Others, such as Gandhi (1998) and Hall and Tandon (2017) examine knowledge traditions that have been suppressed through Western globalised domination they call 'epistemicide', or Fricker (2007) who classify this as epistemic injustice, essentially negating the knowledge that women need to empower themselves in their own societies. Said (1978) laid the foundation for societal and comparative critiques, and Mignolo (2000) has pursued the necessity and strategies of decolonisation.

For Muslim women's future empowerment, the decolonisation critique is critical—colonisation in the past and current recolonisation through globalisation forces, including higher and professional education, separate people from their own traditions and values which serve as essential cultural and intellectual capital. They introduce Western patriarchal practices (Dabashi 2013), along with the assumptions of denigration and devaluing of non-Western cultures that produce the 'subaltern' role that Spivak (1988) describes in which people subordinate themselves in relation to the coloniser and their knowledge traditions, university degrees, and professional roles. For Kurtiş et al. (2016), neoliberalism, in particular, has promoted an empowerment that causes harm by dissolving people's connections to their local environments, and reproduces the historical and ongoing colonial and neo-colonial dominations. The various postcolonial critiques aide in reconceptualising principles, values and practices represent indigenised and internationalised forms that are authentic and consistent with non-colonised constructions.

5. Towards a New Model of Muslim Women's Empowerment

One major problem with many Western definitions of empowerment is that they focus too heavily on individuals (Huis et al. 2017) and are decontextualised from the societies in which many women live. They are disconnected from non-Western social and cultural structures one is embedded in, sometimes in cross-cultural research described as 'collectivism' (although this is often taken to mean complete subjugation and dependence on others, and sometimes claim a lack of a sense of individuality). Muslim women's empowerment needs to use more complex models that are also decolonised (see Huis et al. 2017). Huis et al. (2017) propose a tri-dimensional model consisting of the micro-level of personal beliefs and actions, a meso-level of relational empowerment in beliefs and actions with others, and the macro-level of societal dimensions in law and policies, in education, and in the workplace. A similar internationally informed model is that of the DGDC's Commission on Women and Development (Charlier et al. 2007) aimed at measuring indicators of women's empowerment for development goals in communities of poverty, using a multilevel and dimensional approach that is transferrable to many contexts. It consists of individual and collective dimensions, with community factors including socio-cultural characteristics, types of cooperation among stakeholders, macro- and micro-levels of the capacity for personal change and political and social change, as well as forms of conflict and power and symbolic referents and deep social structures.

Support for a broader conception of women's empowerment that is defined for diversity comes from a number of sources. One of the prominent definitions of women's empowerment from development economics is that of Kabeer (1999) for whom it is the ability to make strategic life choices that derive from three interdependent factors: first,

having the resources in material, human, social expectations and social allocations; secondly, agency in the sense of defining one's own goals, the ability to act on them, and to set one's own strategic life outcomes; and finally, achievements ranging from well-being to participating in societal spheres of action such as politics and the economic system. A similar model is that of Desai (2010), who identifies a number of conceptions that draw from a broad range of international sources: (1) Sen's (1999) concept of 'development as freedom' focussed on expanding people's choices; (2) Bennett's (2002) concept of the an enhancement of capabilities and resources to examine and hold accountable institutions; (3) Batliwala's (1994) concept of having influence over external actions; and (4) Kabeer's (2001) concept of the ability to make strategic life choices. Malhotra et al.'s (2002) model reflects such conceptions as well in their six dimensional empowerment model of economic, socio-cultural, family/interpersonal, legal, political and psychological. Charmes and Wieringa (2003) propose a model consisting of the physical, socio-cultural, religious, economic, political and legal along with six levels: individual, household, community, state, region, global.

Hafez (2003) provides a definition of empowerment relevant to Muslim women in their achievement and fulfilment that meet the ideals and goals of Islam for both personal and community development. It includes the bolstering of women's self-esteem, solidarity, and confidence, which comes from an inner satisfaction brought by the improvements they implement in the community. It is an empowerment that is predicated upon relinquishing the forms of power deriving from overt resistance and relies instead on notions of perseverance, submission and higher levels of religious attainment. Being empowered also involves having choice, agency, access and an identity based on a greater awareness of one's capabilities and possibilities. It also involves being able to exercise influence, power and governance, as well as acquiring respect and social status. A critical factor in cross-cultural considerations of women's empowerment is the role of social responsibility within the context of communitarian-style collectivist societies (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1997; Wood et al. 2021), including Muslim ones where responsibilities to the community equal that of those to themselves as individuals. To support these, finding a role model is important in seeing oneself in an empowered role with the knowledge, skills and personal and character qualities necessary (Hafez 2003).

Empowerment of women in general and Muslim women in particular is a complex, multidimensional (Allagui and Al-Najjar 2018; Kundu and Chakraborty 2012) and multilevel process that requires deep analysis of several factors. According to Gram et al. (2019), empowerment (1) may be a property of individuals or collectives, (2) may involve removing internal psychological barriers or external interpersonal barriers, (3) may be defined on each agent's own terms or by external agents in advance, (4) may require agents to acquire a degree of independence or require others to 'empower' them through social support, and (5) may either concern the number of present options or the motivations behind past choices and/or experiences (Gram et al. 2019). In many Muslim countries, women are ill prepared for full participation in public life due to either a lack of economic resources or traditional cultural values that give preference to domestic care roles over public participation in the community. The challenges of empowerment are different in non-Muslim countries, where Muslim women are skilled and well educated but suffer from discrimination issues due to the visibility of Islamic rituals and/or the traditional assumptions of Muslim women as being passive, shy, and submissive (Keddie 2011; Kundu and Chakraborty 2012).

In this section, we propose a model for Muslim women empowerment (see Figure 1). The model discusses the key determinants of women empowerment in Muslim and non-Muslim countries. It is developed based on a through and critical review of literature and empirical research as well as personal observations of the lived experiences of Muslim women and the factors contributing to their personal and professional success. These factors are classified into three sections: personal, family, and workplace. The first represents the

factors that facilitate women empowerment such as woman's personality, competencies, and level of autonomy. For developing one's personality, women need to have:

1. A high level of conscientiousness, self-regulation, and self-reflection.
2. A vision for the future or a sense of purpose.
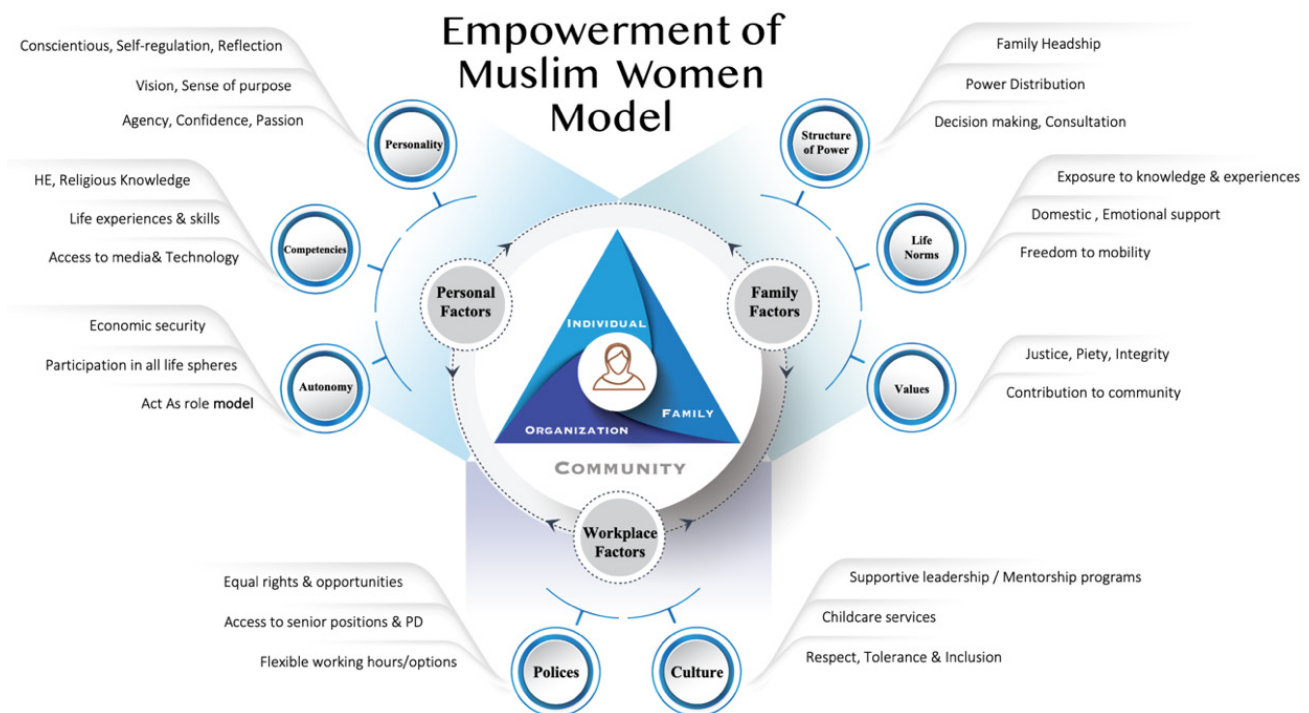3. An ability to show agency, confidence, and passion to contribute.

Figure 1. Empowerment of Muslim Women Model.

Through reflection, cognition and self-regulation, women can evaluate present events and develop a visualised future where corrective actions are taken to overcome environmental and/or organisational challenges and achieve favourable outcomes (Bandura 2006). Further, being an agent means having a high level of control over one's life and course of actions. According to Bandura (2006, p. 164), being an agent means being able to deliberately influence one's actions and life events. He discusses four properties of human agency: (a) intentionality, which refers to developing an intention that includes strategies and action plans for achieving them; (b) forethought, through which people set personal goals and visualise future outcomes to guide and motivate their behaviour; (c) self-reactiveness, or self-regulation, which refers to the ability to monitor one's actions and 'to motivate and regulate their execution' (p. 165); (d) self-reflectiveness, which refers to the ability to evaluate and reflect on the effectiveness of one's thoughts and actions and take corrective adjustments as needed. Self-reflectiveness, as argued by Bandura, is the core of human agency.

Women who work on developing their intellectual and personal competencies, self-awareness, and agency skills would have more control over their life circumstances and courses of action. Developing one's competencies and interpersonal skills requires the acquisition of:

1. Higher education and religious knowledge,
2. Exposure to different forms of life experiences, and
3. Access to all forms of media and technology.

Higher education is an instrument of enriching women's knowledge, intellectual capabilities, employability skills, and bargaining power. It is the most important factor in achieving social, economic and political transformation (Mandal 2013; Kundu and

Chakraborty 2012). Similarly, religious knowledge helps women develop their Islamic identity, become aware of their rights and take appropriate actions to defend them. According to Chraibi and Cukier (2017), Islamic identity would enhance organisational performance and contribute to its overall success due to Islamic perception of work as a form of worship and Islamic work ethics that emphasise perfection, justice, consultation, honesty, compassion, forgiveness and dedication. Islamic identity was also found to be a source of dignity, security, self-confidence, empowerment, and liberation for Muslim women (Al Wazni 2015).

While Islamic identity involves visible religious practices such as prayers, wearing hijab and fasting which make women vulnerable at the workplace, several women perceive Islamic identity as a crucial factor that contributes to their success and indicate that these rituals help them to 'express agency and . . . influence corporate structures' (Chraibi and Cukier 2017, p. 168). These rituals are embedded in Islamic work ethic values, critical to any model for Muslim women's empowerment: life without work has no meaning—it is a virtue and creates life balance; it is a source of independence, personal growth, self-respect and self-fulfilment; engagement in economic activity is an obligation; there should be honesty and justice in trade and workplaces should be governed by justice and generosity; there should be an equitable, and fair distribution of wealth (e.g., zakat); one should acquire skills and technology and expending effort is obligatory; there should be cooperation and consultation; and intentions are valued more than results (Ali 1988; ElKaleh and Samier 2013; Yousef 2000).

Exposure to different forms of life and work experiences helps women to socially construct one's self (Bandura 2006) and increase self-confidence and self-efficacy through personal accomplishments. Having access to media (electronic and print) and information technology keep women informed of global events (Kundu and Chakraborty 2012; Mandal 2013) and allow them to become social influencers who can make significant contributions to the local and global community. The increasingly digitally technologised world we live is how information communication technologies (ICTs) have contributed for some to social empowerment and reducing social isolation, a greater sense of freedom, increased knowledge access, to a minor extent their economic empowerment, and making the plight of some women known publicly, allowing for a greater redress although it has also contributed to replacing social interaction with technological communication and producing a harmful effect on families (Abbasi 2015).

Finally, women's empowerment cannot be achieved without having a high level of autonomy which can be realised through:

1. Economic independence through paid jobs or having own financial resources,
2. Participation in all spheres of life (e.g., social, economic, political), and
3. Acting as a role model for others to follow.

For achieving economic independency, women need to be involved in paid work or have access to financial resources and/or businesses. Being involved in the labour market not only secure financial independence but also allow for social interaction and personal development. Economic independency also has a positive impact on one's self-confidence and self-esteem (Kundu and Chakraborty 2012; Mandal 2013). Participating in the social, economic, and political aspects of life provides women with opportunities to influence organisational and/or governmental decisions and introduce policies and procedures that defend women's rights, eliminate oppression and discrimination, and guarantee equal opportunities and egalitarian gender beliefs (Mandal 2013; Varghese 2011). Finally, acting as a role model and embodying one's values and beliefs strengthen women's character, sense of responsibility, and self-confidence.

People neither operate autonomously nor are their actions fully determined by situational or environmental factors. Human behaviour is an outcome of the interaction of both personal and societal factors (Bandura 2006). Therefore, family traditions and workplace environment play a significant role in facilitating or hindering women's empowerment. The second section of the model refers to the family factors such as structure of power

among family members and the level of women involvement in decision making, family socio-cultural norms and life practices, and cultural values and expected code of conduct of family members. Family headship plays a significant role in women's empowerment. Kundu and Chakraborty (2012) found that woman empowerment increases under the headship of husband rather than other family members (e.g., father, brother or father-in-law). Involving women in decision making and conflict resolution processes and using *Shura* (consultation) for making strategic decisions play a pivotal role in developing women's critical thinking and argumentation skills through the exploration of different alternatives and selecting the ones that would produce favourable outcomes. Further, the duration of marital life and receiving support with domestic and childcare responsibilities were found to have a positive impact on women's empowerment and on achieving work–life balance (Kundu and Chakraborty 2012). Similarly, household income and the level of education and social status of family members we found to have a direct impact on the life experiences that women are exposed to (Chaudhry et al. 2012; Mandal 2013). For example, families with high levels of education, social status and economic incomes would be more able to travel and explore new cultures and learning experiences. Such exploration helps women develop their knowledge, competencies, resilience and character.

The third section of the model discusses workplace factors which include organisational culture and policies and procedures. Developing a culture of inclusion, collaboration, respect and tolerance not only contributes to women's empowerment but also improves organisational performance and guarantee sustainable economic growth. Acceptance of religious rituals and providing a sacred or meditating room for practicing them would eliminate racism and discrimination within the organisation. Many organisations provide childcare facilities to increase women's participation in the labour market and help them achieve a balance between work and domestic responsibilities. Further, having supportive leadership and developing mentorship programs across the organisation are crucial for advancing women's career and increasing empowerment capabilities. Organisational legislation and policies should be developed to promote this inclusive culture and support women access to all positions by guaranteeing egalitarian rights and equal opportunities in leadership positions and professional development programs (Varghese 2011). Organisational policies should also offer flexible working options for women (e.g., working remotely, flexible hours, maternity benefits). The United Arab Emirates is an example for women empowerment where women hold senior leadership roles in all field and aspects of life. The government imposes an obligation on public and private organisations to include women in executive councils and boards of directors (Allagui and Al-Najjar 2018). Companies are also required to offer flexible working options for women to increase their involvement in the labour market.

6. Conclusions

Women constitute almost 50% of the population in most Muslim countries. The empowerment of Muslim women is imperative not only to improve the social and economic status of women and achieve social justice within society but also to ensure sustainable economic growth and reduce poverty among Muslim populations. While women in some Muslim countries such as UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Jordon, Lebanon, Egypt and Turkey enjoy high levels of empowerment, in other countries, such as Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan, women have low levels of education, economic independency and empowerment. However, women empowerment has been a concern and has received increasing attention in recent years. Islam is a religion where women enjoy prestigious status and equal rights and responsibilities with men. Throughout history, Muslim women have played significant roles in establishing Islamic society and made remarkable contributions to its advancement. Khadeeja, the first Muslim and wife of the Prophet is a great example for that. Her wealth and high status in the society secured protection and safety for the Prophet. Further, her wisdom and strength of character enabled her to provide advice, counselling, support and comfort to the Prophet. Thus, it is not Islam but colonial heritage, traditional cultures, mis-

interpretation of Islamic laws and the orientalist approaches that portray Muslim women as being passive, shy, oppressed, weak, and submissive that led to a lack of empowerment for Muslim women. On the contrary, most Muslim women perceive Islamic identity as a source of strength, dignity, liberation and empowerment that greatly contribute to their personal and professional success.

Empowerment of Muslim women involves equipping women with the knowledge, skills and personal qualities that enable them to take control of their life choices and make informed decisions that lead to favourable outcomes. Women empowerment will not be realised unless all concerned parties work in collaboration toward securing egalitarian rights and opportunities for Muslim women. Empowerment of Muslim women should be a priority in government agenda and needs to be incorporated in constitutions and governmental policies. Further, taking leadership roles and active involvement in the political sector will allow Muslim women to influence and change organisational and/or governmental decisions, structures and practices that promote women's rights and guarantee equal opportunities with men.

The Empowerment of Muslim Women Model proposed in this paper suggests that factors contributing to personal development such as having a vision and sense of purpose, conscientiousness and self-reflection; the ability to practice human agency; seeking higher education and enhancing one's religious knowledge; having access to media and technology; exposure to different life experiences; being economically independent; participating in all aspects of life and acting as a role model have positive impact on women empowerment. Factors related to family norms and practices such as family headship, power distribution and involvement of women in decision making, educational and economic level, domestic and emotional support, and freedom to mobility significantly contribute to women's empowerment. Finally, organisational factors such as establishing policies and procedures that ensure egalitarian rights and opportunities for women, offering flexible working options, developing a culture of inclusion and tolerance, offering childcare services, establishing mentorship programs and hiring supportive leadership would greatly contribute to women's empowerment. In contrast, factors such as a lack of education, ignorance of Islamic teachings, traditional practices that contradict Islamic teachings, Islamophobia and orientalist assumptions of women, lack of support from family and supervisors, and the absence of organisational policies and procedures that ensure egalitarian rights for women hinder women's empowerment.

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