

Factors influencing the experienced career success of Muslim women: A South African study



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Orientation: Understanding the factors that impact on the experienced career success of Muslim women empowers Human Resource departments and organisations to enhance the active participation and advancement of Muslim women in the workplace.

Research purpose: The main purpose of this article was to identify the factors influencing the experienced career success of Muslim women in the South African workplace.

Motivation for the study: Numerous studies have focused on the factors influencing the career success of women in general; however, a paucity of research focuses on the factors influencing the experienced career success of Muslim women. This paper proposes the development of a framework to assist in the career advancement of Muslim women.

Research approach/design and method: A quantitative descriptive and correlational research design was employed in this study using an online survey. Non-probability sampling methods were used, specifically, convenience and snowballing sampling. Data was collected from 243 respondents, including male and female across religion and occupation, but for this article, only the Muslim women cohort will be presented, $n = 88$. In addition, an exploratory factor analysis, descriptive analysis and Pearson moment correlations were used to analyse the data.

Main findings: This study revealed that Organisational Success Strategies, Organisational Factors and Internal Factors influence the experienced success of Muslim women. Interestingly, Family and Social Factors showed no significance to the experienced success of Muslim women.

Practical/managerial implications: Practical implications are twofold: (1) Muslim women are required to become active participants in their careers, and (2) organisations are required to provide an inclusive culture that supports the advancement of Muslim women.

Contribution/value-add: This study contributes towards the body of knowledge specifically related to the career advancement and success of Muslim women in the South African context.

Keywords: Muslim women; South Africa; experienced career success; organisational factors; internal factors; organisational success strategies; success indicators.

Introduction

Currently, Muslims in South Africa account for 3% of the population (Isilow, 2021). Despite the challenges facing many South Africans, including unemployment, access to education and crime, Muslim women face further obstacles because of gender inequality and restrictive norms. This article examines the experiences of Muslim women in the workplace, which to date has received little attention. Although research by Ballakrishnen et al. (2019), Von Bergen and Bressler (2019), Ud Din et al. (2018) and Doubell and Struwig (2014) focused on women's experiences and challenges: a paucity focusing on Muslim women and the unique cultural and social contexts in which they navigate their lives exist.

While the Quran and hadeeth claim that women and men are equal (Hassan et al., 2010), interpretations of gender roles vary, in both Islamic and Western communities (Seta, 2016). For example, in regions such as Arab States and Northern Africa, restrictive gender and cultural norms lead to the low attainment of higher education and gender inequality among Muslim women, increased levels of gender disparity and the inactive participation of Muslim women in the workplace (Osman Ibnouf, 2015; Vahed & Jeppe, 2005). In the context of South Africa, a study by Vahed and Jeppe (2005) highlights that current literature on Muslim women focuses on the hijab. In this study, discrimination towards Muslims was highlighted as a barrier to success.

Note: Additional supporting information may be found in the online version of this article as Online Appendix 1.

Globally, the studies focusing on succession or progression of Muslim women include Adhiatma et al. (2022), Sulaiman et al. (2014), Tlaiss (2015), Azmi et al. (2012) and Shaikh (2011). To date, limited studies were conducted to explore the experienced career success of Muslim women in the South African context.

There is a scarcity of research focusing on the experienced success of Muslim women. Considering the diverse nature of the South African labour market and the entry of more Muslim women into workplace, this article identifies the factors influencing the experienced career success of these women as well as the strategies currently in place to ensure their career success.

Main objective

Based on the aforesaid, the main research objective of this article was to identify the factors influencing the experienced career success of Muslim women.

Literature review

Muslim women in context

Muslim women, their faith, and varying views of gender equality in Islam are discussed in this section of the article. In pre-Islamic times, as reported by Doi (1992 in Patoari, 2019), women were mistreated by Pagan Arabs. Daughters were buried alive, as it was believed that a son continued the lineage of a family. Men had the freedom to marry and divorce according to their desires.

The teachings of Islam, however, highly favour women as mothers, wives, daughters, sisters and aunts, and further promote the rights of women in respect of owning property, inheritance, education and work (Quraan, n.d.; Surah Al-Nisa Verse 4, p. 32; Marican et al., 2011).

The media, continues to play a role in understanding the history of Muslim women and the Islamic teachings in respect of women and the perception people have towards Muslim women (Hoover & Echchaibi, 2023). This sensationalism perpetuates the existing stereotypes of Muslim women as oppressed, veiled, lacking attributes, having no rights, submissive, uncivilised and uneducated (Fayaz, 2020; Navarro, 2010; Terman, 2017).

Notwithstanding the promotion of Muslim women in the teachings of Islam, some still face inequality. Islam is often used to justify the 'perceived superiority' of male to female (Hassan, 2011). Even though, Muslim women are educated and employed, significant challenges exist in the advancement of their careers in general, which includes leadership roles and positions. The next section of this article focuses on career success.

Career success

Career success is the driving force that motivates individuals to succeed, which includes but is not limited to beliefs,

attitudes and values (Ghayur & Churchill, 2015). Furthermore, career success includes objective and subjective components. Objective career success encompasses salary, status and promotions while subjective career success refers to the feeling of satisfaction within one's career (Abele & Spurk, 2009; Chinyamurindi, 2016; Dries et al., 2009; Tlaiss, 2019).

Traditionally, career success was evaluated using an objective set of criteria. Recently, career success has shifted to a subjective view characterised by the fact that people have different feelings, values and beliefs, of and towards success (Tlaiss, 2019). Subjective career success is therefore described as the reaction an individual has towards their career experience (Chauhan et al., 2022). Metelski (2019) is of the opinion that career success reflects more than immediate job satisfaction; it provides individuals with a sense of identity, meaning and work-life balance.

Experienced career success thus refers to the perception individuals have of themselves, based on their idea of success. The next section focuses on the factors influencing their career success.

Factors and success

A plethora of studies exists, which explore the factors influencing the career success of women. The most relevant studies in relation to women and achieving their career success are discussed next.

Career success in research involves intrinsic (subjective) and extrinsic (objective) components. Intrinsic career success is the feeling of satisfaction within one's career. The criteria employed to determine the degree of genuine career success include how individuals perceive their career, the achievement of goals and their belief in good prospects. Priorities may differ between women and men in respect to career success (Gallos, 1989; Gibson & Lawrence, 2010; Schweitzer et al., 2011).

Factors influencing the experienced career success of women, including Muslim women, can be characterised into internal and external factors, which are considered enablers to the advancement of women.

Internal factors influencing experienced career success

Internal factors (IFs) reside within an individual and drive behaviour. These include a high level of self-efficacy, demographics, personality traits, self-confidence, assertiveness, decisiveness, and need for success (Doubell & Struwig, 2014; Kelly & Marin, 1998). Career preferences, investment in education, skill and hard work contribute to the career progression of women (Rijal & Wasti, 2018). Additionally, personal relationships with family, attitude, age, experience, core self-evaluation and personality should be considered (Afande, 2015; Turunen & Muoniovaara, 2015).

Seibert and Kraimer (2001) conducted a study on personality and career success that found that individuals who scored high on extroversion were more likely to be satisfied with their careers than those who scored high on neuroticism. A model proposed by Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller (2007) based on empirical evidence shows correlations between personality and career-relevant outcomes. Three assumptions were proposed:

1. Personality influences job choice.
2. Personality influences performance leading to higher salaries, responsibilities and opportunities.
3. Personality influences engagement.

It was further revealed that changes in personality could lead to greater career success (Hoff et al., 2021). Some authors (Cox & Cooper, 1997; Duffy et al., 2006; Keeton, 1996; Northcutt, 1987; Punnett et al., 2007; Quader, 2012) discuss characteristics and factors influencing success in the same context. This article discusses the traits and factors separately. In the above-mentioned studies, three-character traits were emphasised, namely a need for achievement, locus of control and self-efficacy.

The need for achievement is the drive to excel in any given task (Osemeke & Adegboyega, 2017). McClelland's theory (in Osemeke & Adegboyega, 2017) suggests that individuals who score high on the need for achievement have a desire for mastery and as a result outperform others.

Individuals in top management positions should be high on power and low on affiliation. Although individuals with a high need for achievement may make good managers, these individuals are not necessarily suitable for this type of position (McClelland in Osemeke & Adegboyega, 2017). Moreover, individuals who have a high need for achievement are motivated to overcome challenges, thus improving their prospects of success (Punnett et al., 2007). Various studies (Al Mamun & Ekpe, 2016; Dolan et al., 2008; Nurwahida in Khan et al., 2021; Viinikainen et al., 2017 in Khan et al., 2021) aimed at successful women present evidence demonstrating that women who possess a desire for success are successful in their careers.

Individuals who perceive an outcome because of their own behaviour show an internal locus of control while those who perceive an outcome because of forces outside of their control show an external locus of control (Rotter, 1966 in Tyler et al., 2020). An individual's beliefs, attitudes and expectations are further enhanced through 'their interaction with others, the environment and individual differences' (Tyler et al., 2020). Individuals who possess an internal locus of control believe that their success or failure is based on their own actions, behaviours and abilities. These individuals are unlikely to participate in counterproductive behaviours in the work context (Punnett et al., 2007).

Epstein and Bronzaft (1974) and Ragins and Sundstrom (1989) assert that women may have negative opinions about

their abilities and demonstrate lower career ambitions that command authority. Gender role socialisation may also contribute to a woman's level of self-esteem. Successful women demonstrated higher levels of self-efficacy and believed that perseverance and tenacity contributed to their overall experiences of success (Sadri, 1988 in Cox & Cooper, 1997).

Furthermore, the following character traits of successful women have been identified: Highly talented, non-conformance to stereotypical beliefs, exceptional leadership skills, easy to work with, friendly and dedicated (Cox & Cooper, 1997; Duffy et al., 2006; Keeton, 1996; Northcutt, 1987; Punnett et al., 2007; Quader, 2012). In the context of this article, focusing on Muslim women, the character traits of successful Muslim women are explored. Prominent Muslim women believe that their parents' level of education and strong belief system contributed to their success (Agarwal, 2009; Carli et al., 2016; Dimitrova, 2019; Dream Africa, 2017; Smith et al., 2021). These women utilised courage, persistence, independent thinking and challenges to achieve success.

A study in Pakistan by Raja and Haider (2022) on Muslim women within the higher education sector revealed that individual traits such as utilising strategies to respond to inter-role conflict, delegation skills and career fulfilment and its impact on work-family life facilitation were instrumental to their success. The findings suggest that the attitude one has towards work and life is essential for success. Examples included having a passion for work and life, being assertive, time management, the ability to adapt and having career and personal satisfaction (Raja & Haider, 2022).

In the same study, it was found that effectively delegating tasks and activities contributes to promoting satisfaction and success. Correlations were found between personal traits and work-life balance, which enabled these respondents to effectively organise and manage their careers and their lives; as well as between career fulfilment and feelings of achievement and esteem (Raja & Haider, 2022). To these respondents, their careers provided them with a sense of accomplishment, which made them feel valued thus influencing their personal fulfilment (Raja & Haider, 2022). Other factors that were noteworthy were the type of family, family structures and personal traits. The aforementioned led to the development of the following hypothesis:

H₁: A relationship exists between internal factors and experienced career success.

Social factors influencing experienced career success

Social factors (SFs) for purposes of this article include aspects of religious, cultural and societal expectations in relation to career success. Al-Asfour et al. (2017) assert that the 'patriarchal collectivist and masculine' nature of the Arab world impacts the careers of Arab women globally. Consequently, according to Hofstede's model (2011), South Africa is regarded as a patriarchal society, which influences

the gender gap. In a subsequent study by Dryding (2019), the term patriarchal was used to describe the culture at a South African organisation. Dryding (2019), in his analysis of the Afrobarometer Survey (2018), indicated that less than half of the men surveyed promoted gender equality. More than half of the men believed that being employed is more suitable for males than females and believed that women are more suitable for familial responsibilities. In support, Jaiyeola (2020) believes that gender disparity exists within patriarchal cultures. The aforesaid describes a patriarchal society, which influences the public and culture at organisations.

Additionally, societal factors are not limited to patriarchy, gender roles, cultural barriers and partial career advancement opportunities. These factors lead to the lack of representation of Muslim women in the workplace. Muslim women are framed as submissive, weak and oppressed and these views are often carried into the workplace.

Furthermore, Varshney (2019) maintains that the lack of boundaries between religious and secular thinking has created the development of 'wrong' habits and traditions by men, and thus within society. Islam has also been used as a tool to control the behaviour of women within Saudi society. Although there has been a rise in Muslim women entering the labour market, these beliefs of 'men and women' exist resulting in feelings of isolation and control, contrary to the teachings of Islam (Koburtay et al., 2020; Varshney, 2019). Varshney's (2019) study revealed that most of the participants believed that Islam promotes gender equality, and that Islam is often misinterpreted.

This led to the development of the following hypothesis:

H₂: A relationship exists between social factors and experienced career success.

Family factors influencing experienced career success

Family factors (FFs) refer to the overall support and guidance received from immediate family including the spouse. In a study by Kettle (1996), familial support among other factors has a positive impact on the success of women at work. On the contrary, Adhikary (2016) explains that family responsibility was one of the most significant barriers to the advancement of women. Ugwu (2018) in support of Kettle (1996), indicate that these responsibilities also affect the career success experienced by women. Matot et al. (2020) further suggest that supporting their work-life balance is fundamental to their experience of career success.

While this article focuses on experienced career success, Weijing and Zhang in Dai and Song, (2016) studied the influence of FFs on the experienced success of women and found that work-family relationships yield positive outcomes. As mentioned, Muslim women are confronted with more challenges because of familial and religious expectations. Within Muslim families, it is widespread practice that daughters require permission or consent from

their parents to work. In addition, upon marriage, women need their spouses consent to work, and at times their in-law's permission (Arifeen & Gatrell, 2020).

This led to the development of the following hypothesis:

H₃: A relationship exists between family factors and experienced career success.

Organisational factors influencing experienced career success

Organisational factors (OFs) include the support of supervisors and colleagues, inclusivity, mentoring, religious freedom, training and development. Kundu and Lata (2017) assert that employees are attracted to organisations that provide supportive environments for successful career development.

Abu Bakar et al. (2012) and Van Der Walt et al. (2016) theorise that inequality and discrimination are factors hindering the career advancement of women. Organisations have as such, undertaken to create structures, policies and practices to promote the career advancement and success of women (Chinomona et al., 2016).

Considering the role of an organisation in the advancement of women, equal opportunities were highlighted. Dicke et al. (2019) based on the works of Larsen and Long (1988), as well as Brewster and Padavic (2000), posit that emphasis is placed on the career trajectory of males rather than that of females. The above led to the development of the following hypothesis:

H₄: A relationship exists between organisational factors and experienced career success.

The focus of this article is to identify whether additional factors influence the experienced success of Muslim women. As mentioned previously, there is a sparsity of research relating to Muslim women in the South African context. The factors therefore cited in this section provide a global outlook, and it should be noticed that varied factors may be identified unique to a specific country.

Research methodology

This study adopted a positivist paradigm, which undertakes that the reality is objective and can be revealed by collecting data from a sample of a population. Elements of an interpretive paradigm based on the subjective experiences of the population were also used (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020; Hair et al., 2018). This study forms part of a larger study and follows a mixed-method approach encompassing both a quantitative and qualitative component. For this article, only the quantitative data will be utilised and discussed in relation to the objectives of the article. The purpose of this study was to identify whether additional factors influence the experienced success of Muslim women in the workplace because of their unique cultural background. An online

survey was used as the data collection tool, and the data were processed and analysed to identify the factors influencing the experienced success of Muslim women.

Research population and sampling

Non-probability sampling methods were used, namely convenience and snowball sampling. The population for this study included 243 geographically dispersed respondents across South Africa. However, for this article, only the Muslim cohort will be addressed $n = 88$.

Research procedure

An online survey was developed and administered using QuestionPro. Direct links to the survey were distributed on various social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook and WhatsApp and via email to personal and professional networks including Business Women's Association. Initially, the survey comprised of five sections namely, IFs, External Factors, Organisational Strategies, Success Indicators (SIs) and Biographical Data. Each section further comprises Likert scale questions, ranging from agree to strongly disagree and open-ended questions. A synopsis of the sections is as follows: IFs focused on factors residing within the individual such as locus of control, belief and capability. External factors which at the time of administering the survey clustered social, family and religion as one section incorporating items relating to resources and support. Organisational strategies incorporating the current strategies employees are aware of and exposed to. Success indicators largely focused on the predictors of career success. Biographical data related to the demographics of the participants. This instrument was developed for the purpose of this study and based on literature and other validated scales such as the Self-Efficacy Survey by Sherer et al. (1982); the Self-Concept Survey by Robson et al. (2013); the Assertiveness Formative Questionnaire by Gaumer Erickson et al. (2016); the Interpersonal Guilt Questionnaire by O'Connor et al. (1997); *A Practical Guide to Measuring Women's and Girls' Empowerment in Impact Evaluations* Hirschi et al. (2018) were consulted and utilised.

To evaluate the reliability of the scale, Cronbach's alpha was used. Scales are considered reliable and acceptable if it measures 0.6 or above (Hair et al., 2006). Table 1 shows the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for sections A-E of the survey, which ranges from 0.653 to 0.936 and were therefore acceptable.

Statistical analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to process and analyse the collected data. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27 was utilised to conduct an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) on both the independent and dependent variables. Five factors were extracted using principal axis factoring for the independent variables. For the dependent variable (SIs), one (1) factor was extracted using

TABLE 1: Cronbach's alpha.

Factors	Number of items	Cronbach's α
Internal factors	5	0.653
Social factors	4	0.720
Family factors	9	0.902
Organisational factors	12	0.936
Success indicators	10	0.866

principal axis factoring. This was then used for further analysis.

In order to measure sampling adequacy and data suitability, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test of sphericity were used for the independent and dependent variables (Hair et al., 2007). In relation to the independent variable, sampling was considered adequate KMO (0.825) and the data suitable value significant at 0 ($p < 0.05$) to carry out an EFA.

The same was conducted on the dependent variable resulting in a KMO (0.835) and Bartlett's test of sphericity (significance of $p < 0.001$). With the exception of one item that did not load and was subsequently removed, all other items loaded on the factor. Based on the EFA, five items emerged using the Promax with Kaiser normalisation. Furthermore, the five items describe the 45.762 of the variance. Each item that loaded onto the factors was above 0.3, which according to Tavakol and Wetzel (2020) indicates a moderate correlation between the item loaded and the factor.

For noting purposes, only four of the factors have been included for this paper. Two items were removed as negative items indicate a poor fit to the factors. The nature of the variables loading onto each factor was considered, and the factors were relabelled as follows:

Factor 1: Internal factors

Factor 2: Social factors

Factor 3: Family factors

Factor 4: Organisational factors

For clarity, the factors that appear in the results can be described as follows: Factor 1: IFs focus on motivational factors and include self-efficacy, guilt, assertiveness, self-concept, locus of control and agency. Factor 2: SFs focus on religion, religious teachings and societal perceptions. Factor 3: FFs deal with types of support from family including spousal support; and lastly, Factor 4: OFs include support from supervisors, mentoring, religious freedom, training and development and so forth.

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the Faculty Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Business and Economic Science, Nelson Mandela University, and a clearance number was issued: (H21-BES-HRM-066). During this process, ethical considerations such as voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and withdrawal of

participation were scrutinised. A cover letter highlighting the main purpose of the study was provided, including a link to the consent form. All participants completed the consent form before partaking in the study. The use of an online survey enabled the anonymity of respondents and their right to withdraw at any time by exiting the survey.

Results

As previously alluded to, the focus of this article is on the Muslim women who participated in the study. The cohort of Muslim women that participated in this study were mostly mixed race ($n = 44$), between the age of 25 and 34 ($n = 33$), married ($n = 42$), had no children ($n = 32$) and obtained a diploma or degree ($n = 34$).

Pearson moment correlations

Pearson moment correlations were conducted to determine whether relationships exist between the constructs. Based on Table 2, a moderate relationship exists between OF and SI (0.479). This implies that the more importance is placed on OF, the more aware and exposed Muslim women are to the career-related interventions, which may result in their experienced career success. In relation to OF, a medium significance showed that the more importance is placed on OF, the more successful and vice versa. Additionally, motivation plays a substantial role in the success achieved by Muslim women as a high-end medium significance was observed (0.484).

For noting, no significant differences were found in the factor scores between Muslim women.

Discussion

Table 2 presents the correlation analysis exclusively for Muslim women, with no differentiation made between FF and other variables concerning Muslim women. This indicates an absence of relationships between familial support and OF, IF, SF and SI. In contrast to these findings, Al Maseb and Julia (2007) assert in their study on Muslim women empowerment that familial support significantly contributes to their success. This perspective is further supported by Oplatka and Lapidot's (2012) subsequent study. Notably, both investigations were conducted in regions characterised by strict adherence to traditional gender roles, potentially influencing the outcomes. This study, situated in a South African society identified as patriarchal by Hofstede (2011), may yield disparate results because of varying gender role dynamics.

Organisational factors exhibit a high-end moderate correlation with SI, suggesting that greater commitment from top management in emphasising OF corresponds to heightened success among Muslim women (Al Balushi et al., 2022; Chinomona et al., 2016). Additionally, a moderate correlation is observed between IF and SIs (0.484), indicating that the motivation level of Muslim women influences their success reciprocally. This aligns with prior assertions that successful Muslim women attribute their achievements to perseverance, determination, dedication and persistence (Agarwal, 2019; Dream Africa, 2017; High Profiles, 2022; Smith et al., 2021). No significant differences are discerned between SF and SIs, signifying that religious and societal views have no discernible impact on the success of Muslim women.

Responses from Muslim women exhibit alignment, with low variances in their responses. While the factors identified as influencing all women also apply to Muslim women, the emphasis on OFs in relation to success is notably heightened among Muslim women, surpassing that of other groups, including men and women from different religious backgrounds. The findings indicate that the availability of organisational interventions exerts a greater impact on perceptions of career success than the mere exposure to these interventions. Demonstrated commitment to promoting success is construed as an indicator of organisational values and culture, thereby influencing the career success of individuals.

This study highlights IFs as the most influential in the success of Muslim women, emphasising that the level of motivation experienced by them significantly contributes to their success. Organisational factors emerge as pivotal in the experienced career success of Muslim women, with the level of commitment from top management to career-related interventions being particularly significant. This factor is notably more pronounced among Muslim women compared to other groups in the study. Consequently, dedicating greater importance to the career development of Muslim women correlates with heightened career prospects for this demographic.

Acceptance or rejection of the hypotheses:

H_1 : A relationship exists between internal factors and experienced career success.

Accepted

H_2 : A relationship exists between social factors and experienced career success.

TABLE 2: Pearson moment correlation: Muslim women.

Factors	Family factors	Organisational factors	Internal factors	Social factors	Success indicators
Family factors	1.000	0.156	0.089	0.065	0.080
Organisational factors	-	1.000	0.205	0.183	0.479**
Internal factors	-	-	1.000	0.045	0.484**
Social factors	-	-	-	1.000	0.157
Success indicators	-	-	-	-	1.000

** ,significance.

Rejected

H₃: A relationship exists between family factors and experienced career success.

Rejected

H₄: A relationship exists between organisational factors and experienced career success.

Accepted

Development of a framework: As a consequence of the key findings, external factors, when considered collectively, do not exert an influence on the experienced success of Muslim women. However, upon disaggregation into family, social, and OFs through EFA, discernible differences were observed. Figure 1 illustrates the developed model, delineating the factors shaping the experienced career success of Muslim women and outlining the organisational strategies essential for fostering their inclusion and success.

The study's revelations indicate that the experienced success of Muslim women stems from their self-belief and organisational commitment to enhancing their lives through the prioritisation of various career-related interventions. Awareness of and exposure to these interventions directly influence their level of success.

Authors such as Smith et al. (2021), Tyler et al. (2020), Rijal and Wasti (2018), Bergh (2017), Osemeké and Adegboyega (2017), Doubell and Struwig (2014), Quader (2012), Agarwal (2009), Punnett et al. (2007) hypothesise that IFs such as confidence, need for achievement, hard work, passion, accountability, personality, agency, attitude, experience, feelings of satisfaction, self-efficacy, and locus of control contribute to an individual's experienced success. The findings affirm a positive moderate relationship between IFs and the experienced success of Muslim women. Consistent with the literature on successful Muslim women, attributes such as hard work, determination, self-motivation, drive, work ethic and passion emerge as key drivers of success.

Organisational factors pertain to the significance placed on various career-related interventions by the organisation. This affirms that culture, environment, support from supervisors and colleagues, opportunities, inclusivity and gender balance initiatives all contribute to the success of Muslim women. Authors (Aycan, 2004; Bajdo & Dickson, 2001; Chen, 2011; Chinomona et al., 2016; Culpan & Wright, 2002; Johns, 2013; Knorr, 2005; Schmidt & Duenas, 2002; Van Vianen & Fischer, 2002) contend that organisational support, culture and



FIGURE 1: Promoting the experienced career success of Muslim women.

commitment from top management enhance the experienced success of women. As corroborated by the correlation analysis, the relationship between these factors and the experienced success of Muslim women is notably robust.

Top management is, therefore, tasked with supporting and committing to the career advancement of Muslim women, fostering a supportive environment marked by inclusivity, fairness and equality. As these strategies directly influence the experienced success of Muslim women, emphasis should be placed on top management's commitment to the career development and advancement of Muslim women.

Numerous interventions aimed at enhancing the careers of women are currently underway. The study evaluated the awareness and exposure to these identified interventions, revealing a direct positive correlation between awareness, exposure, and the experienced success of Muslim women.

Muslim women are required to possess innate drive, passion and work ethic to achieve personal and professional goals, contributing to their success. These IFs are intrinsic to these women. The organisational commitment to the advancement of Muslim women, discussed as the second aspect, carries implications for organisational culture. The culture needs to be supportive, open, transparent, gender-neutral and inclusive to enable Muslim women's full integration into various organisational spaces for achieving success.

Limitations of the research

This study exclusively focused on women and Muslim women within the South African context. Extending the research on an international scale, encompassing both first world and developing countries, would be advantageous. Such a broader study could yield valuable insights and comparisons, thereby offering practical implications for the global advancement of Muslim women.

Recommendations

Individual factors

- Individualised Career Plans

Muslim women should be involved in the development of Individual Career Plans as it will allow for greater commitment to their careers, job and organisation leading to success.

- Motivation

Based on the results of this study, the level of motivation of Muslim women, directly influenced their level of experienced success. Consequently, a need to cultivate intrinsic motivation is crucial to their success. The reliance on extrinsic motivators can be detrimental to one's belief in themselves and their capability. It is known that when one is intrinsically motivated, feelings of satisfaction, contentment and progress are evident, which provide a sense of achievement and build confidence and competence.

- Learning and Development

The respondents were in possession of a diploma or degree implying that they possess the necessary education to fulfil their work obligations. It is important for Muslim women to seek out opportunities to foster growth and advancement within their careers. Learning, relearning and unlearning on a personal and professional level are essential to the success of Muslim women, currently and in the future.

- Accountability

Individuals who consider themselves to be successful, attribute their accomplishments to their ability to develop and manage their own careers. Accountability allows individuals to seek not only opportunities that enhance their careers but also provide them with a toolkit to overcome obstacles to their success.

The study concluded that those who believed themselves to be successful, strongly agreed that they can develop and manage their careers. The respondents indicated that they were constantly seeking opportunities to enhance their personal and professional lives.

Organisational factors

- Organisational culture

This study highlighted that the culture of an organisation influences employee behaviour towards each other, gender balance and the advancement of women in general. Organisational culture must be one of openness and transparency, inclusivity, which results in a conducive enabling environment that supports growth and development for all employees.

- Resources and Support

It is well known that adequate resources and support promote the success of women. This article revealed that top management commitment, support for career-advancement interventions and the integration of Muslim women into the workplace have a direct impact on the experienced success of Muslim women.

If Muslim women are provided with adequate support and access to a career coach and personal and, career counselling; they will be better prepared to mitigate some of the career and personal challenges they currently experience, leading to an increase in the level of success they experience.

- Interventions

There are various interventions aimed at improving the career success of women. However, the advancement of women needs to be driven, and, Muslim women should be made aware of and exposed to these interventions, thus providing them with the skills, competence and confidence to develop, manage and succeed in their careers.

Concluding remarks and limitations

Women face various personal and professional challenges in the workplace. These include but are not limited to a lack of

advancement and developmental opportunities, coaching, mentoring and support. Over and above these challenges, Muslim women often face religious discrimination, prejudice and biases.

Considering the aforesaid, the factors influencing the experienced success of Muslim women in the South African context were identified. The study found that external factors do not influence the experienced career success of Muslim women; however, the results highlight a direct impact between IFs and experienced career success as well as OFs and experienced career success.

Based on the key findings of this study, the more committed top management is to the advancement of Muslim women, the greater the experience of career success, which enables these women to flourish within their careers. In addition, the following was recommended to factor individual career plans, learning and development opportunities, resources and support and interventions aimed at advancing the careers of Muslim women.

This study was limited to Muslim women in the South African context. A study of this nature on an international level may provide valuable insight, which could have practical implications for the career advancement of Muslim women globally.

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The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

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Data availability

The data are property of Nelson Mandela University.

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